Gretchen Geng · Pamela Smith
Paul Black *Editors*

The Challenge of Teaching

Through the Eyes of Pre-service Teachers

Springer

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Foreword

Scholarly books are often hard to get into. The way they are written often seems pretentious. There are too many technical terms and acronyms and too much jargon. As a result, it just seems easier for us to learn about what's happening in schools by watching television, exchanging tidbits of information with friends and family and scanning the newspapers. However, what we manage to glean from the media and our personal experience can only give us a partial glimpse of what is going on. This is why a book such as this one is so valuable.

The writers who have contributed the chapters in this book do not pull punches. They are surprisingly willing to tell some uncomfortable truths about themselves and the circumstances they have found in themselves as teachers in training. It was their frankness that kept me turning the page.

Have you ever wondered why playground bullies behave the way they do? One of the chapters provides a clue. Have you given much thought to why there seems to be quite a drift away from government schools to private and independent ones? Jillian Bedworth offers an interesting and a worrying explanation. Can teaching be challenging and rewarding when others say it is a low-status job dominated by women? Lance Albrecht tackles this question head-on.

The book has the modest aim of putting together the views of teacher education students on their practicum experiences. Such a volume could have been difficult for a general reader to wade through. In this case, however, the editors of this collection have gathered their material over several years and made sure to include a wide range of interesting and insightful pieces. The end result is surprisingly compelling.

The editors point out that Chaps. 5 to 35 explore a diverse array of topics from some quite personal vantage points. Each contributor was asked to write a personalised account and to do so using a common template and touching on some of the

relevant research. Even so, as a reader, I did not anticipate how searingly honest some of the chapters would be.

It is this mix of the scholarly and the personal that gives this book its distinctive feel. I think you will find, as I did, that it has the ring of authenticity.

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Part I
Background to the Book

Introduction

Gretchen Geng, Paul Black, and Pamela Smith

This part includes four chapters, written by the editors of the book and by two other teacher educators to provide background information relevant to the remainder of the book.

Chapter 1, led by Gretchen Geng, introduces the book and why it should be written. The chapter emphasises the importance of self by inviting pre-service teachers to view the challenge of teaching through their own eyes. It also characterises the 31 student chapters that constitute the main body of this volume as an excellent source of information for other pre-service teachers, as well as for teacher educators.

Chapter 2, written by Jennifer Buckworth, discusses the issues of the teaching practicum, a prominent part of teacher education programs that plays an important role in becoming a teacher. These practicums, while rich and dynamic, remain multifaceted and uncertain, as learners form new professional identities and develop relationships with school-based practitioners. Placements can differ widely: Emotional experiences, the nature of feedback and the quality of relationships all impact the emerging pre-service teachers' professional identity. This chapter seeks to identify, enable, guide and support pre-service teachers in strengthening their sense of self and competence, harnessing inner strength, and developing a subsequent professional identity in order to pursue worthwhile, autonomous and transformative outcomes within the teaching practicum.

In Chap. 3, Gary Fry, an Indigenous educator, discusses the importance of self. By describing his own study experience, Gary discusses the social complexity that exists deep within the organisational fabric of schools and that requires teachers to

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develop strong interpersonal behaviours that enable them to build effective working partnerships with their peers, students and the students' families. At the core of such abilities is knowing the 'self', given that the inner, private world of the individual is the point from which the external world is engaged. In this regard, meta-awareness and meta-cognition emerge as the driving psycho-social planks that determine the capacity of teachers to survive not only the turbulence and pressures that the industry presents, but equally in their ability to participate successfully in social actions with others and to liberate children's capacities to produce high quality learning outcomes.

Led by Pamela Smith, Chap. 4 investigates pre-service teachers' critical reflection in educational areas. Reflective teachers are those who are aware of decisions they make and the consequences of those decisions. There are many issues within classrooms, schools and the wider education context that teachers need to continually reflect on and sometimes as a result of reflection change their thinking and practice or question practices and innovations. This sometimes involves 'reframing their thinking' (Geddis 1996). The ultimate aim of helping teachers to reflect is to produce the 'reflective practitioner'. Teachers then not only question their own practices but also other, broader issues around education, values and ethics.

Reference

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Chapter 1
Listen to the Voice of Pre-service Teachers

Introduction to the Book

Gretchen Geng, Paul Black, and Pamela Smith

Abstract This chapter introduces the significance, aims and development of a volume whose centrepiece is a collection of 31 chapters written by pre-service teachers on issues that they became aware of during their professional experience programs, or practicums. After explaining the purpose of the volume, notably to support less advanced pre-service teachers in preparing for the practicum, the chapter describes the structure of the book. The volume is divided into eight parts, the first consisting of four chapters of background relevant. Parts II to VII consisting of the 31 student chapters, and Part VIII consisting of a final chapter that comments on the student contributions and then looks into the problematic issue of how research might be used to foster teacher reflection and the changing world of teacher education.

Introduction

> I start my first teaching contract in less than two weeks and I'm very excited! I will be teaching in the community where my book chapter's reflection and learning stemmed from, so it's a nice end to the story, that now I truly feel like I can continue what my research and reflection was trying to achieve in the first place. It's hard to believe that I'm finally on my way. Thank you for the support to get there. (Sadie Sandery, student author in this book)

Sadie Sandery is the author of the chapter 'Looking at Learning through Children's Eyes' (Chap. 22) in this book. In her chapter, Sadie described how she has grown as a 'pre-service teacher' in her teaching practicum, particularly in teacher planning via using children's voice.

Like Sadie, before being eligible to be registered, tertiary students who are studying for a degree in teacher education are called 'pre-service teachers'. This group of 'teachers' is not yet fully qualified because they are under training; they need to undertake several teaching practicums in schools to complete their degree.

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We have been working in the teacher education industry for many years. During this period we have seen many pre-service teachers beginning their studies as first year university students and leaving as successful graduate teachers. Studying to be a teacher is not an easy task: Students have to work very hard to grasp not only theoretical knowledge, such as understanding children's development and teaching pedagogies, but also ways of dealing with all sorts of situations while on placements, such as working together with mentor teachers, schools and communities (e.g., Hattie 2009; Pyne 2014).

During their journey, the pre-service teachers experience many issues and challenges, particularly while they are on their teaching practicums. Currently heated topics include literacy and languages, use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), play-based learning, knowing students' learning needs, engaging students, and parental and societal issues. These topics are discussed and examined by many teacher educators, like us. However, these discussions are mainly topic-based, theory-focused, and written in an alienating academic style rather than in a voice that teachers could recognise as speaking to them (Keyes 2000).

From the perspective of pre-service teachers themselves, one might expect that they would have a lot to learn from their more advanced classmates, namely those who have already experienced their practicums and are in the process of completing them. However, there is a lack of communication between fourth-year pre-service teachers and other years' pre-service teachers. Although pre-service teachers receive support from placement schools and their mentors within them, there is very limited opportunity for pre-service teachers to communicate with each other, especially in different schools placements, and especially as the more advanced students are busy finishing their studies and moving on to graduation and their careers.

In this volume we are attempting to provide the next best thing, namely 31 chapters by fourth-year pre-service teachers to provide both guidance and insight for less advanced students of teacher education to explore educational issues in classroom practice. By telling a story about themselves in relation to the topics, these pre-service teachers help make their reflections on these issues clear to others (Peeler and Jane 2003; Peeler 2006). For example, currently some schools do not encourage the use of homework for students, while others do. While on teaching practicum, the pre-service teachers start to face the challenge on their own: Should they use homework or not in their own practice? They need to explore the issue and come to a conclusion, whether to use it or not.

Just as our student author, Sadie Sandery, wants to look at learning through her students' eyes, we too are listening to the pre-service teachers' voices in our teacher education practice. By listening to the pre-service teachers themselves, and where they are coming from, we learn the 'stories' behind each individual and the challenges of teaching through their eyes. By emphasising the importance of every story from the pre-service teachers, this book reinforces the power of 'self'. No doubt, these stories add a fresh perspective to our understanding of these educational issues or challenges.

We hope these student voices can also be heard by other pre-service teachers who are yet to experience similar concerns while completing their teacher education.

More generally, we also hope this book will be effective in fostering the development of reflective teachers and positive attitudes towards the value of research into teaching and classroom practice. In addition, we believe that teacher educators may find this volume interesting for what it reveals about students in their field.

Structure of the Book

This book has eight parts. The first part includes four chapters, written by the editors of the book and two other teacher education academics. It covers the theoretical and teaching and learning background to readers that why this book was produced and how to understand the challenges that the current pre-service teachers are facing in their learning journey.

Parts II to VII include 31 chapters that are basically narrative stories from successful and experienced pre-service teachers. Their stories include personal perspectives, sometimes confusion and yet also understanding of the teaching profession in the settings of early childhood, primary and secondary education. They amount to accounts of reflective qualitative research that can help other pre-service teachers make sense of their own practicum experiences. A life history approach seeks to identify those political, economic, and social forces which have impinged on the individual at different points in their life and contributed to the process of changing their identities. The use of narrative stories in this book reveals the contradictions of control that pre-service teachers and new graduates face when any issues arise against their own beliefs and professional judgement.

It seemed convenient to group these chapters into six parts based on the topics they deal with, although this grouping is imperfect in that some chapters may relate to more than one of the topics, and the groupings may also suggest that there is more homogeneity in each part than there actually is. In any case, each part begins with an introduction that provides some orientation to relevant theoretical background as it introduces each student's chapter.

Part II includes six chapters (by Caire, Angela Foulis, Lidbetter, McNicol, Whittaker, and Zanki), all dealing with literacy or language. These range from teaching sight words and giving students free choice of readings to teaching other languages and how to make use of the students' first languages in school settings.

Part III includes four chapters (by Adami, Andreae, Castle, and Ogilvie-Mitchell) which explore the contemporary issues around the value and use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) from early childhood education to primary or secondary schools settings.

Part IV contains five papers dealing with aspects of play-based learning (by Clark, Dangerfield, Mead, Pedrotti, and Scott), such as the roles of educators and children's construction of their own knowledge through play.

Part V has four chapters (by Cardillo, Cam Foulis, Sandery and Sharp), all dealing with knowing the particular needs of a range of students in a classroom and the need to make learning accessible and meaningful for all.

Six chapters (by Booth, Gomes do Rosario, Gugliotta, O'Loughlin, Spyropoulou, and Woolley) are included in Part VI, which covers how to engage students in teaching and learning, to accommodate different needs from different students.

Part VII includes six student chapters (by Albrecht, Bedworth, Cordy, Dobell, Tucker, and Young) that deal with issues that involve the parents of the students and/or society more generally, including issues of bullying, school choice, homework, and issues of being a male in the teaching profession.

These student chapters thus cover a good range of topics, representing matters that came to be of particular interest to the pre-service education students. As personal accounts, they also tend to be relatively informal and even colloquial. This matter is discussed along with further commentary on the student contributions in the final part (VIII) and chapter (36) of the book, led by Paul Black. That chapter also returns to the issue of fostering teacher reflection and the problematic matter of how it might be promoted by helping teachers learn to research their classroom situations.

Summary

This book is valuable for providing a mentoring framework and means of helping fourth-year pre-service teachers or new graduates share their valuable experiences and insights into such things as how to manage practicum requirements, thus hopefully helping improve retention rates and increase course completion through enabling less advanced students to become better prepared for the practicum experience. This book also helps establish a supportive relationship between more and less advanced pre-service teachers, providing them with access to valuable peer experiences.

Looking back, we wonder what else we could do to make these peer experiences better. During our editing of the book, we had multiple eureka moments, which made us hunger for more answers. We are wondering whether and how we could do better to assist this cohort of pre-service teachers to be more successful and reflective! We hope that via this book we can start to understand more about the challenges and issues, and at the same time attract more classroom teachers, researchers and teachers educators to team up and explore these matters further. As each graduation season arrives, we, as teacher educators, are as excited and proud as our students. We can see how much these students have 'grown' during their precious period of study, and we can even get a glimpse of how our graduates can contribute to schools and communities as great teachers.

To end this chapter, we would like to express our gratitude to these students for the opportunity to extend our knowledge about the challenges faced by current pre-service teachers. We learned from all the participating authors, such as Sadie Sandery, by listening to these pre-service teachers' voices, and we understand more deeply about the current challenges faced by them and us. Thank you for sharing your interesting stories; we have learned a lot from you all. Thanks also to our

colleague Brian Devlin, who kindly read through a draft of these chapters and provided us with valuable comments and suggestions. Naturally, any remaining inadequacies are our own responsibility.

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Chapter 2
Issues in the Teaching Practicum

Jenny Buckworth

Abstract This chapter offers glimpses into the world of the pre-service teacher and identifies some of the vulnerabilities that might be encountered during this time. An important part of this period is the school-based professional experience, in which pre-service teachers observe and participate in authentic teaching and learning settings where they become acquainted with the requirements and practice of their future profession, learn about teachers' work, implement university learning and gain experience in schools. These rich, dynamic periods are, surprisingly for many, imbued with multiple layers of learning and uncertainty. Along with the excitement of becoming a teacher, learners must grasp the obligations of the profession, form and maintain relationships with school-based practitioners and demonstrate effective pedagogical practices. Strategies are described that can help to strengthen a sense of self and competence and support the development of pre-service teacher identity as these teachers engage with localised social and cultural norms.

The following is from the practicum journal of a pre-service teacher I will call 'Lou':

> As I set off for another day at the 'coalface' I wondered what surprises the teacher and the class had in store for me. My first few days had been a bit of a whirlwind as I tried to observe what was happening in the classroom, in the school, and then link these ideas to my learning at the university. It didn't seem to matter how well prepared I was, each day seemed to be a bit of a 'lucky dip' of events and I was not sure that I would ever really be ready.
>
> So far 4 weeks of my Professional Experience is complete, I am about halfway through my university course and I am proud to say that I am doing well in all aspects. At school my teacher has been great. We have had rich conversations and there has been an abundance of opportunity for planning and teaching. The pupils were energetic, enthusiastic if often surprising, and overall I felt welcome at the school.
>
> But a nagging thought persists...
>
> Am I really cut out for this profession? Will I relish the challenges and triumphs of the classroom, the staffroom and associated educational spaces? At what point will I feel like I have become a teacher? I know I am not there yet and wonder if there is a piece of the puzzle that I have not yet located.

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Unfortunately for Lou, there is no infallible recipe for teacher success. Attempts to produce a mechanistic recipe for teaching have invariably been made by those who have never facilitated learning in a classroom, or simply fail to capture the complexity of teaching and the diversity of needs in today's classrooms.

Today, the guidelines for the preparation of a teacher are defined around academic expectations and demonstrable pedagogical success within situated practices. Across Australia teachers are typically prepared for the profession via higher education courses, whether a 4-year undergraduate Bachelor of Education degree or an approved post graduate teaching qualification. Upon completion, graduates can register as a teacher and teach pupils from zero to 18 years of age, according to their nominated teaching stream or specialisation. Academic coursework in the university is supplemented by a requirement to undertake incremental and supported teaching roles as identified in the accredited course structure. These periods, known as professional experience or practicum, are integral to all teacher education programs and play an important part of becoming a teacher. Exciting, rich and dynamic, professional experience remains multifaceted and uncertain, as pre-service teacher learners form new professional identities and develop relationships with school-based practitioners.

This chapter seeks to inform, guide and support pre-service teachers in strengthening their sense of self and self-competence as they become a teacher. In particular, it addresses some key ideas that have been instrumental in forging constructive change in teacher education. The work of Donald Schön, Dan Lortie and Deborah Britzman, in particular, provide background and some strategies around harnessing inner strength and developing a subsequent professional identity in order to pursue worthwhile, autonomous and transformative outcomes during the teaching practicum.

Professional Experience

Professional experience is acknowledged as an essential requirement for initial teacher education, offering pedagogically sound, scaffolded approaches that mesh the principles and theories of education with a transparency of practice that embeds differentiation for a diversity of learning needs. In defining professional experience, Schön (1987, p. 37) suggests that it 'approximates a practice world, students learn by doing, although their doing usually falls short of real-world work. They learn by undertaking projects that simulate and simplify practice; or they take on real-world projects under close supervision'

Traditionally known as 'student teaching', professional experience or practicum is the period of time that pre-service teachers spend observing and participating in authentic teaching and learning settings and, in this respect, it has changed little from Schön's description. A primary purpose of these periods is to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to become acquainted with the requirements and practice of their future profession, learn about teachers' work, implement university learning and gain experience in schools.

Undertaking professional experience triggers a connection between the worlds of the pre-service and the practicing teacher. During this time the pre-service teacher meets a triad of requirements: the immediacy of classroom practice, the needs of educational organisations, and the expectations of the classroom teacher. As Dan Lortie explained, during this 'apprenticeship of observation' period an emphasis is placed upon on a capacity and willingness to learn. The interplay of motivation, behaviours, attitudes and interpersonal communications remains contingent upon the lens with which normalcy is perceived. Paradoxically, as Britzman (2007) points out, pre-service teachers will innately bring prior experiences into in-school placements, combining important parts of their personal history and emerging teacher identity, yet these knowledges can often be unnoticed or disregarded by practising teachers, who may view the pre-service teacher as a blank slate.

Assessment of pre-service teachers' professional experience has been variable, with students undertaking observations and scaffolded teaching, and with evaluations provided by academic and school-based staff. Across Australia, methods of evaluating pre-service teachers normally include assessment approaches that identify academic and practical progress. Largely modeled on the US designed Performance Assessment for Californian Teachers (PACT 2008) and Authentic Teacher Assessment (ATA) (Allard et al. 2014) these assessment approaches typically comprise a capstone portfolio that demonstrates evidence of a pre-service teacher's learning and teaching ability, with explicit responses aligned to expected standards of practice. The current national standards (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, AITSL 2011) that have been developed for Australian teacher graduates, teachers and school leaders represent mutually agreed expectations for Australian educators and have been designed to promote excellence in schools.

Despite this uniformity of articulated standards and expectations, today's teachers increasingly represent a rich diversity of age and backgrounds, cultures and life experiences that offers a wealth of learning opportunities for Australian classrooms. Valuing, embracing and integrating these accumulated histories and biographies with educational practices are a part of the overall challenge in readying the next generation of teachers. While many hold a view that a national and consistent approach to teacher quality will be of benefit for all learners across the nation (Santoro et al. 2012), others view the present prescribed teaching standards as narrowly instrumental, with inherent limitations that signify inflexibility and a failure to meet the complexities and uncertainties of the contemporary educator in the twenty-first century (Biesta 2015; Britzman 2007; Reid and O'Donoghue 2004). Whilst discourse about what constitutes best practice for education continues, there remains an acknowledged need for teacher succession, in which the renewal of educators in our accountable and competitive world is critical.

We are reminded again of Lou's predicament. Questioning whether there is some marker of true readiness for the classroom and wondering at what point this will become apparent is a quandary that pre-service teachers regularly encounter. There is no question that teachers must be adept, flexible, and able to judge learning in terms of usefulness and applicability to life matters. However, in today's

competitive, accountable, and transnational world sits an irony where corresponding educational practices are equally as uncertain as those global developments that surround us. For example, schools are increasingly required to demonstrate (Bradley et al. 2008), to be publicly accountable for student learning outcomes with improved school performance exposed through national assessment examinations. As a consequence, the duties of the teacher are increasingly difficult and demanding as they take on greater responsibility, with repercussions on the demands placed on pre-service teachers.

An unwritten requirement for successful transformation to teacher is the development of a teacher lens that is attainable through observations and close, interactive working relationships with practising teachers. Yet this lens can be unsettled and disoriented by challenges that emanate from the pre-service teachers themselves. So too can the emotional experiences; the nature of feedback and the quality of relationships form a sphere of colliding forces, impacting upon the emerging pre-service teacher and their corresponding, professional identity. In pre-service teacher education, an integral teacher-student relationship is embodied within the professional experience. In the increasingly complex role of becoming a teacher, it is critically important that beginning teachers explore their own experiences, relationships and interactions in order to develop a growing sensitivity and attunement to the needs within the situated experience. Should relationships be sound, success can be a conclusive outcome with dialogue and ongoing support being mutually beneficial (Buckworth et al. 2015). In instances where relationships are symbiotic, reciprocal and collaborative, sound and seamless pedagogic practices can evolve, with options to mutually shape and align the outlooks and skills of the pre-service and practising teacher. Where relationships are power-based, emergent identities and relationships are particularly vulnerable and demand that pre-service teachers exercise discreet and informed judgments that comply yet engage with the localised social and cultural norms. Unlike Lou there may be many pre-service teachers who struggle to form sound relationships during placement. Recognising that relationships are not static, that personal interactions are subject to change and that proactive discussion can advance opportunities for improving collegial interactions are aspects of relationship-building that require encouragement.

The importance of instilling active awareness of the emergence of teacher identity cannot be understated, as this is pivotal in shaping outlooks and obligations. Becoming a teacher integrates the biography of the learner as they mesh not merely theories and practices, but also their values and beliefs played out as practices and framed within the context of their classrooms. Lortie (1975) explains this time as a fundamental period in which pre-service teachers begin to understand, not only what teachers do, but why they are who they are. Yet acceptance and a level of comfort in this new role are not automatic. In Greene (1973) Maxine Greene identified the teacher as a ‘stranger’, an outsider in a pre-existing community. As one yet to be qualified, the pre-service teacher is more of an outsider, an incomplete, unfinished project, in the process of becoming a teacher, unsure of their future, and uncertain of their place. Exploring these colliding biographies, Alsup (2005) describes ‘situated identities’ in which ‘borderland discourses’ emerge during

initial teacher education as the pre-service and practising teacher become familiar with and accepted by each other.

Returning once more to Lou's dilemma, we are reminded of a deep-seated human need for certainty. We remain wary of the unknown yet nostalgic around our past, as it is our past that confirms our approaches to today's realities. One challenge for pre-service teachers according to Britzman (2003, p. 221) is the negotiating, constructing, and 'consenting to their identity' as they become teachers. In reality the pre-service teacher is entering a space where there are inherent expectations of learning to live with others and beginning to understand others, although Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) questions the notion of a requisite 'acquiescence to an identity' and suggests that this represents acceptance of non-negotiable institutional values, with little room for negotiation or mutuality. Beauchamp maintains that identity development builds on a fundamental requirement of internalised awareness of the ongoing shifts taking place in their experiential learning. Alongside these perceptions, new constructions of knowledge, often moulded by managerial discourses in school and universities and accountability requirements by regulators, may generate conscious and unconscious challenges for students (Hastings 2010), with factors that influence identity development, including emotions, resilience, efficacy and trust.

Perhaps Lou's doubts are fueled by deep-seated reservations of self-worth. Studies of pre-service teacher silences and voice (Bloomfield 2010; Britzman 2003) highlight some of the hesitancies and emotions for students and identify feelings of isolation, inadequacy, resentment and vulnerability along with the fundamental need to feel accepted. As teachers interact and intersect with others, their sense of identity and agency can be a powerful and productive force, yet forming this teacher identity remains largely premised on relationships with others, and relies on outlooks of competency, self-esteem, and self-direction (Pearce and Morrison 2011). Traversing new territories and relationships during professional experience can result in unease that may be hard to identify.

Working in unfamiliar settings can pose challenges with unfamiliar social norms. For pre-service teachers this may be accompanied by a feeling of a loss of belonging and increasing uncertainties as they seek to integrate new learning into classroom practices. For some this is a time of discomfort and uncertainty, and compounded with other factors, it can generate conditions where the student, as an individual, can feel disempowered. Transitioning to this new perspective is not spontaneous and, while Lou has indicated a history of success, hesitancy towards the future continues to loom large. On the one hand, the teacher is the expert, demonstrating normative, unchallenged practices whilst offering opportunities for the pre-service teacher to contribute. On the other hand, the pre-service teacher is in the midst of constantly becoming and is not well positioned to question the nature or direction of the relationship.

These situations are evocative of an earlier era where didactic approaches to education practices were customary. Supplanting the apprenticeship style or craft approach of the earlier twentieth century have been new approaches to contemporary initial teacher education programs. Replacing the practices of acculturate and

replicate that were grounded in copying, modelling and repetition is a focus on mutual, collaborative and reciprocal approaches. The changed practices additionally offer a capacity to overcome the theory–practice binary that has prevailed for decades in teacher education. While different to the copy-and-reproduce apprenticeship model, imbalances of power endure. Students with prior experiences, internalised values and understandings that are in conflict with host schools and teachers can place the successful completion of the practicum and the course in jeopardy. A conscious and unconscious expectation held by many teachers is that pre-service teachers will demonstrate teaching as an emulation of their own normative and uncontested practices, values and beliefs (Britzman 1986). These processes of transference involve an unconscious transfer of attitudes and feelings from one relationship into another and can generate difficulties in supervision where different theoretical and value-laden standpoints prevail. Evaluation of pre-service teacher performance may reflect a replay of their own teacher training and unintentionally perpetuate practices of the past, whereby beginning teachers are legitimately instilled into a homogeny of practice. Placement evaluations entrusted to site-based teachers whose perspectives are incongruent with those of the pre-service student teachers can result in difficulties as the placement progresses. For example, viewing classrooms through a behavioral lens will offer different perspectives to a constructivist lens, and the resultant divergent values and expectations bring the potential for anomalous relationships. In essence, an otherwise nuanced lens can lead to deficit development that can be shaped by conflicting beliefs around morality, power, justice, investment, privilege, and interest. As a successful teacher, a mentor may make assumptions that the pre-service teacher will follow what they share, model and demonstrate.

Professional experience connects the world of the pre-service teacher with reflective practices where meanings are constructed through personal and social experiences. Central to Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice is the 'enabling' that results as learners begin to theorise their own practice. In advocating this, Schön notes:

> Perhaps we learn to reflect-in-action by learning first to recognise and apply standard rules, facts, and operations (characteristic of the academic curriculum); then to reason from general rules to problematic cases, in ways characteristic of the profession (characteristic of academic curriculum and the practicum); and only then to develop and test new forms of understanding and action where familiar categories and ways of thinking fail (characteristic of extended practicum and ongoing professional experience) (Schön 1983, p. 40).

Deliberate and active reflection foregrounds the development of teacher identity and, as Schön has described, grows from informed and certain knowledge that can then lead to new perspectives and actions. As pre-service teachers learn to change or 'transform' their frames of reference and begin to answer the question 'Who am I as a teacher?', new outlooks can inspire and stimulate future action. New views will embed pragmatic, ethical and moral qualities, each quality drawing on personal values about what is good, with clear connections between the receptiveness, reflexivity and reciprocity of individuals, as collaborative and productive networks ultimately contribute to the development of teacher identity.

Three underpinning qualities that pre-service teachers are advised to bring to their professional experience can be captured under the banners of receptiveness, reflexivity and reciprocity, where:

- **Receptiveness** is demonstrable through situationally appropriate and contextually relevant readiness and adaptability, in particular a capacity for coping with change, unpredictability and uncertainty.
- **Reflexivity** involves deliberate, regular and critical reflection of self in relation to others, that becomes evident in the degree to which collaborative actions become established, and
- **Reciprocity** inherent within the sharing of information, goals and responsibilities is a positive outcome that serves to expedite the mutuality of roles.

Acceptance into classroom spaces, however, is not automatic for all pre-service teachers, nor do classrooms stop to accommodate new teachers. In this critical time the pre-service teacher must be proactive, responsive to, and become part of the form and feel of the learning environment. Being accepted eases the ambivalence that a pre-service teacher might bring to teaching and this in turn strengthens the quality of experiences and capabilities. Key considerations for pre-service teachers to take to their professional experience are grounded in interpersonal endeavor. Pre-service teachers can look to develop these foundational qualities by directing explicit focus on clarity of vision, establishment of practices, and active engagement.

Clarity of vision provides a basis for pre-service and mentor teachers to interweave their understanding of personal and learners' needs with sound pedagogical approaches to further that learning. Rich conversations and collaborative planning can provide key opportunities for joint clarity of vision and the construction of frameworks for future pedagogic opportunities.

Pre-service teachers may need to be assertive to ensure adequate opportunities to contribute to this collegial discourse. Active endeavor towards this can be beneficial in establishment of clear direction that is aligned seamlessly into a framework of planning for the school.

Establishment of practices consists of those efforts required by pre-service teachers and their mentor teachers to establish the means by which they will work together and communicate with each other. In the classroom environment, social interactions are integral to seamless and productive operation. Interpersonal awareness, flexibility and reciprocity are required as pre-service teacher and teacher colleagues negotiate roles and intertwine formal communiqués (such as student assessments and meetings) with opportunistic meetings (such as playground or staffroom chats).

Active Engagement with the class and classroom practitioner involves actively positioning oneself to make sense of others' expectations and one's own capabilities. It reflects openness to alternative perspectives and skills and acknowledgement of the diversity of approaches in the classroom. Importantly, active engagement is about developing a positive attunement to others, demonstrating respect for difference and a readiness to interact beyond the superficial, at professional and personal levels. For some this will be a gradual process, whereas for others it may be rapid.

It is unlikely that Lou will ever be absolutely certain of the teaching profession as a lifelong destiny. The rapidly changing world has generated a cascading effect on educational practice that has seen the development of policy and practice trailing behind the advances of the twenty-first century. If Lou can meet the professional experience requirements of today and then demonstrate adaptability, clarity of vision and active engagement, then the teaching profession will have secured a quality teacher for the future.

The Reflective Dozen

To conclude this chapter a collection of 12 questions, the 'Reflective Dozen', is offered for pre-service teachers to consider when embarking upon professional experience. These questions provide a useful tool in determining and enhancing the development of collaborative practice, and communicating and working together.

Clarity of Vision

- How do I determine shared understandings about goals and directions?
- What is the nature and value of my contributions to these goals?
- What mutually agreed outcomes are sought?
- What organisational policies and procedures need to be addressed?

Establishment of Practices

- How are learners' goals, values and anxieties heard in discussions?
- What features are key to these discussions?
- What structured and opportunistic communications do I seek?
- Where do valuable discussions occur?

Active Engagement

- How willingly do I engage with my mentor teacher?
- How do I demonstrate my willingness?
- How is respect for others evident in my practice?
- How clearly have I understood the current classroom practice?

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Chapter 3
The Importance of 'SELF'

Gary Fry

Abstract The industry of education is often discussed in relation to the technical-rational toolkits that are used to drive student learning and schooling outcomes. Modelling has emerged over the past 20 years as a core driver in problematising and seeking solutions to the many challenges that emerge across schools, but this in itself has only been part of the story. The other element to schools is that they are in fact social institutions that (by their very nature) require strong social and emotional foundations to enable the transmission and flow of quality learning to occur. Moreover, the social complexity that exists deep within the organisational fabric of schools requires teachers to develop strong interpersonal behaviours that enable them to build effective working partnerships with their peers, students and families. At the core of such abilities is 'knowing the self', given that the inner, private world of the individual is the point from which the external world is interacted. In this regard meta-awareness and meta-cognition emerge as the driving psycho-social planks that determine the capacity of teachers to survive not only the turbulence and pressures that the industry presents, but equally in their ability to participate successfully in social actions with others and to liberate children's capacities to produce high quality learning outcomes.

Throughout the past 100 years, schools have undergone significant structural changes in their service delivery models. In the present day these are reflected in segmented pathways of childcare centres, preschool/early childhood, primary, middle and senior secondary, which branch further through various post compulsory schooling years into vocational employment and training and higher education. These structural shifts have been consistent with education being increasingly seen as a central institution and building block of society. With these changes schools have become sites of high expectations to deliver on their charter, producing what in recent years can be described as staggering levels of scrutiny and accountability that ultimately have come to rest on the shoulders of the teaching profession!

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This challenge has meant schools today need to be well designed to cater for the mass of pupils and the broader community that descend on their grounds for a minimum of 40 weeks per year. Much of this preparation and response modelling is featured within the technical domains, such as curriculum implementation and its associated layering of resource supports, as well as a plethora of physical and inanimate properties that schools require. However, and above everything, schools are social institutions which are fundamentally about people. They are organisations set up by people to serve the interest of people, and in this regard can be viewed as essentially a reflection of the participants who work and occupy their spaces and generate the socialisation dynamics through which such exchanges occur. In this respect the following unpacks this view and why knowing the self is probably for this writer the most important challenge for us all.

A Sense of Self: Discovering the Fishbowls

As a young person in 1990, going into schools for the very first time to teach other people's children was a scary, if also exciting, proposition. Scary, because I felt that after years of training I was entering the profession with a lot of concern about how many deficiencies I had as a teacher after watching the high performers in action, though also excited at being a member of the teaching profession after many years of study and late nights of getting assignments completed. However, in these early years I felt I really didn't know what it actually meant to be a teacher, due in part to my inexperience, but also due to the fact that there wasn't a job description available that stated what my duties in either the classroom or school were. In this regard my constructed view of a teacher was to be the expert on curriculum and all things worldly that connected into the teaching/learning environment. This view set me up for many years of interesting, colourful and at times painful bruising that on occasion saw the welts evolve into emotional scars that to the present continue to provide indelible prints on my psyche and sense of self!

My early view of being the all-knowing oracle was not outwardly obvious because intellectually I recognised that I wasn't, though I didn't let anyone else know—especially my colleagues or parents—for fear of being branded an idiot and shunned as a social outcast. At the time I saw that no-one else (especially in staff meetings) was revealing much of their inner self as well, so I put it down to either they were fake like me or were brilliant, which caused me to draw even deeper inward. In either scenario I was situated within the shared social space engaging the world from a protected and well-guarded inner sanctum of insecurity. Looking back now, several decades after the event and still involved in education and schools, the lessons of such experiences are still being understood! In trying to understand why these have been so impacting and long lasting, I eventually came to a realisation that this was because the lesson was about me! This was hard to understand because I had always thought I knew myself well. After all, my inner voice (meta-cognition) had remained active through each and every wave of my social journey. The problem

of course was that my voice all too often was employed to rationalise my position as correct and 'the truth', that the external world was either controllable or non-controllable, and that my position of self was divorced from what was happening around me.

The radiation of this position was profound, though for me this wasn't obvious. As a teacher I brought many skills and knowledge to the classroom and broader school context, honed through the experiences of tertiary training and life skills that we all draw upon. I enjoyed working as a teacher and asking questions, trying to learn new techniques, strategies and approaches to working with students, families and colleagues. As a teacher I felt committed to my new profession, but the emphasis on my professional development was essentially how to fix problems and challenges from a detached standpoint, that the issues were at a distance from me, that the problem was in others, not me. The radiation was profound because it was invisible to me in any conscious or sub-conscious way, and profound because of its impact on me and those I encountered. It meant I was situated in my fishbowl not understanding my external behaviours and how these impacted others (meta-awareness) and their responses to me. In my world I was oblivious to the subtle social and psychological interplays that influence and shape the social and emotional textures of each interaction I experienced, and to the bruising that resulted in the formation of an outer crust to protect myself.

This personal problem I later recognised was a condition of many, that in fact my journey had been very much the same as those around me. The evidence behind this view has been the ongoing display of social fracturing that I have witnessed amongst individuals and groups, where differences of opinions so often have resulted in trauma and open conflict, but more commonly in lower level resistance that disrupts and stagnates group social enterprise. In schools, student learning is achieved through functional social and emotional platforms, but real learning about how to be a fully realised socially connected, humane being that is socially robust with strong interpersonal skills is affected through the ethical and moral embodiment of the organisation. That is, human and social capital in this writer's view is the foundation that educators craft, which they do through a projection from the self. In this regard, knowing the self is the hardest lesson of all because it is deeply personal but immensely important in the construction of social platforms in schools.

Egocentricism and Ethnocentrism: Filtered Lens to Social Exchanges

The unfortunate part of my journey was that I had little in the way of mental toolkits to assist such internal challenges of self. My way of understanding the world had been highly egocentric, and like a racehorse galloping down a track with blinders, my peripheral vision was limited to the point where I missed much of the complicit nature of my behaviours during social exchanges. I too often didn't factor enough

understanding about where others came from in presenting their points of view, which meant I wasn't readjusting my inner thoughts around how issues might be seen or understood differently. These challenges, emerging from my ego, were, in my view, also compounded by the cultural indoctrination I carried in my lens to social interactions, a feature that everyone shares. Like dust collecting on my glasses, the images of the social forces swirling around me blurred, but I thought everything was clear! I didn't know that cultural factors impact human consciousness, distorting both the way information is received and delivered. In my world view and sense of self, people were functioning from the same position and the relationships between cause and effect were constants among the human population.

Problematising and Solving Social Dilemmas: Dichotomised Dynamics

The main challenge this generated to my sense of self was how I went about the business of determining the nature and scope of issues, and whether I placed labels of 'problem' on certain issues over others. On each occasion such labelling of determining something was a problem (such as a different opinion on a matter of collective concern, such as working out the yard duty roster) propelled a trajectory of solution that on many occasions led to ineffective or short lasting results. That is, the very act of defining a problem was problematic because of the fact that it was so heavily weighted with my biased position. The net result that I have found time and again over many years is that the true nature of social problems I have encountered within my working life has featured myself as the common denominator and that poorly constructed problems cause the solutions to actually also be the problem!

A Sense of Self and Group Social Enterprise: Navigating Social Complexity

These collective experiences outlined thus far have reminded me that I need mental strategies and toolkits to be effective as an educator. This is because schools and learning institutions require strong social fabrics to function well as organisations, but also in delivering optimal socialisation practices that participants can perform. The sense of self I have commented on is expressed within the collective, so the meta-cognition and meta-awareness need to be part of my repertoire of knowledge and skills. The social spaces are inherently dynamic, fluid, unpredictable, complex, unstable and fraught with an infinite sea of variables flowing through our collective social universes. In meeting some of this, at least, participants require strong interpersonal behaviours to allow others to work with them. The visibility of such

behaviours are commonly observed in team social enterprises, where not just actions are occurring, but invisibly hierarchical and relationship-based power is continually shaping and reshaping with the flows of the group. In this dynamic I have come to see that the collection of identities also form into a group identity that is determined by its membership.

For this writer the challenge for all organisations, in particular those that have a strong social charter such as schools, is that the real work has always been in the quality of the social process that underpin their performance. As a participant long involved with schools as both a teacher and school principal, the social world cannot be controlled because it is uncontrollable, and with this viewpoint I have recognised that what I can control are my responses to the phenomena swirling through my eyes into my central mind. This of course hasn't meant for me a utopian existence, but it has meant more people have been able to work with me and that problems in more contemporary experiences have been collectively determined and resolved. In this way the collective genius has been cultivated and nurtured as a key strategy in building functional shared social spaces from my, as much as everyone else's, projection from Self.

Chapter 4
Teachers as Reflective Practitioners

Pamela Smith, Gretchen Geng, and Paul Black

Abstract Pre-service teachers, as they progress through their education program, are confronted with a range of theories of learning, teaching strategies and educational philosophies, which they then have to balance with the real world of schools and the classrooms they experience during their practicum placements. This can be a time of stress and confusion. Learning the skills of critical reflection can help them make sense of the situations they face and helping them learn these skills during their course of study can set them on a path to become reflective teachers in their future careers. This is a long process, the benefits of which include helping them become more effective teachers, develop positive relationships and deliver better learning outcomes for the students they will teach. This chapter looks at why, how and what teachers should reflect on and how this is fostered during the pre-service years of teacher training. It leads into the 31 chapters written by our pre-service teachers which show their early reflections on issues they have encountered within their practicum experiences and their thinking about these issues as they work towards the start of their teaching careers.

'Reflection or reflective thinking usually means looking back at something and then thinking about what happened and why' (Killen 2009, p. 100). When you are learning to be a teacher it is particularly useful and important to reflect about yourself as both a learner and a teacher. Reflective teachers are those who are aware of the reasons behind the decisions they make and the consequences of those decisions. There are many issues within classrooms and schools and the wider education context that teachers need to continually reflect on and sometimes as a result of reflection change their thinking and practice or question practices and innovations.

Pre-service teachers are confronted with a bewildering array of theories of learning, teaching strategies and educational philosophies. Balancing these against the realities of the classroom and their immediate concerns for survival and preservation of self-worth can be confusing and stressful. Reflective skills can help them understand the situations they face when teaching and thus minimise concerns.

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Reflection can make them realise that they do have educational knowledge and insights gleaned from experience that will help them better understand teaching and learning challenges (Killen 2009). Reflection is claimed as a goal in many teacher preparation programs, but its definition and how it might be fostered in student teachers are problematic issues.

Defining Reflection

In our everyday lives, as has been stated previously, when we use terms such as 'reflection' or 'reflective thinking' we usually mean that we are looking back at something and thinking about what happened and why. We are trying to learn from our experiences so that we can use this knowledge to guide us in the future. Even though researchers adopt various definitions and theoretical frameworks for reflective thinking, they are in general agreement that the most important thing is the quality of reflective thinking.

John Dewey (1933, p. 7) identified reflection as 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the future conclusions to which it tends.' He also talked about reflection as a process whereby you make meaning from one experience which you can connect to other experiences and ideas and about the cyclical nature of the reflective process. Linking this to education, he said that through the reflective process educators aim to develop effective teaching habits (Dewey 1933).

Defining Teacher Reflection

Although there are different views regarding reflection, there is generally agreement on the importance of actively and carefully examining one's thoughts in order to improve one's teaching. Geddis (1996) talks about teachers 'reframing their thinking.' When teachers are able to deliberately change the way they look at a situation they are said to 'reframe' it. On the level of reflecting on individual lessons they teach, which can occur at the moment or at a later time, teachers employ self-evaluative reflection. This is a deliberate attempt to understand or evaluate the success or otherwise of the teaching and learning experiences in order to shape future action. Killen (2009, p. 103) describes this as reflection in action or on the run. Schön (1987) refers to this as the artistry that effective teachers display in their everyday work. Whether reflection occurs as you are teaching, afterwards or on issues beyond the classroom, two factors are important: the depth of the reflection and the changes that might result from reflection. All approaches to reflection encourage teachers to think about what they do, question their own practices or current theories and innovations, and make changes where necessary.

For the practising teacher, whether it be reflection on their teaching practice or on wider educational issues, reflection begins either when there is a problem that the teacher cannot resolve or when a teacher simply wishes to reconsider an educational situation or a conclusion previously reached. One approach has been to view such problems as 'critical incidents' to be described and analysed (e.g., Tripp 1993; Burgum and Bridge 1997; Farrell 2008). In any case, good practitioners usually engage in reflection as a means of understanding the nature of teaching, how outcomes can be best achieved, and how their personal values and beliefs guide both their teaching and their understanding of the role of education as an instrument of change.

Why Is Reflection Important?

Whatever approach is taken to reflection, the ultimate aim of helping teachers to reflect is to produce the 'reflective practitioner.' Teachers then not only question their own practices but also other broader issues around education, values and ethics. To be reflective means that you are actively challenging existing practices and how effective they might be and what the alternatives might be. Reflection is a form of enquiry through which teachers question their own actions and contexts and what can influence those actions and contexts. Experience alone is insufficient for teacher growth, while reflection on experience can be a powerful tool for improving teaching (Killen 2009).

The benefits of reflection are many. Reflective teachers are said to have better interpersonal relationships with students and they experience higher job satisfaction. They are confident about what they think and do and are more ready to engage in professional conversations about their experiences. They also have the confidence to give students some control over their own learning. Because of the changing demands and responsibilities placed on teachers they must be reflective to respond appropriately to their changing circumstances and the changing ideas about best practice (Dobbins 1996, p. 270).

Valli (1990) focused on the content for reflection and quality of reflection. Content for reflection refers to what teachers think about, and quality of reflection refers to how they think about their teaching or the processes of thinking they go through. It is important that pre-service teachers engage in reflective activities while involved in their teacher education courses not only to better learn new ideas but also to sustain professional growth after graduating.

How Reflection Is Fostered in Pre-service Teacher Education

Teacher education programs usually aim to develop teachers who have the skills and dispositions to continually inquire into their own practice and into the contexts in which their teaching is embedded. Undertaking small-scale individual or group research projects is a normal requirement of most undergraduate programs and is often firmly rooted in personal interest and professional experience. This requirement is usually attached to a professional experience placement.

Pre-service teachers need to balance reflection with reading authentic literature and research on the issues that concern them and come from teacher reflection. This is the purpose of having a research unit as part of the teacher education course. This research activity usually occurs in the final semester of the teacher education program and is aimed at allowing the pre-service teacher to reflect on an issue that has come to concern them during the cumulative practicum experience and one that they may have commented upon in a reflective journal. It is recognised that sometimes students come to this research activity with a recognised 'problem' ready to investigate and appear at this stage more inclined to presuppose to know what the solution to this problem is (Hine 2013). The nature of these projects is that students are asked to suspend any preconceived ideas and make observations, talk with mentors and other teachers and read and reflect more deeply on the chosen issue. Of course, this is just the start of their reflective journey with this issue, which will ultimately have many more layers than might be evident at the start of their journey into the teaching profession.

In an increasingly complex and challenging profession, the seeds need to be sown in pre-service teacher education for teachers, administrators and school systems to become involved in and to know how to carry out action research which will provide those professionals working in the education system with a systematic, reflective approach to address areas of need within their respective domains. Providing teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and focus to engage in meaningful inquiry about their professional practice while in the pre-service teacher phase will enhance this practice, and effect positive changes concerning the educative goals of the learning community.

Keeping a reflective journal, as evidenced in the following chapters, is usually encouraged throughout the duration of the teacher education course and particularly during the practicum experience. This is used for promoting reflective thinking and it should allow students to identify viable topics of concern about school classrooms and wider educational issues. Engaging in this process should encourage the improvement and development of reflective teaching practice. It is also linked to the development of pre-service teachers' beliefs. The use of a reflective journal coupled with a supportive environment is an excellent way of encouraging pre-service teachers to explore issues and concerns that are of personal and/or professional interest. Giving students a framework for reflection in the pre-service teacher education program gives them an opportunity to see that there is more to learning to be a teacher than just being concerned about what to do and how to do it (Freese 1999).

The Practicum and Reflection

A significant aspect of teacher education programs is the school experience, often referred to as professional experience, practicum, or student teaching. Dobbins (1996) highlights several reasons why teachers should be reflective and why the practicum in teacher education programs should have a focus on reflection. She suggests that through reflection student teachers can make the most of their learning from the practicum and accept responsibility for their own professional development, and that this can empower students to think and learn for themselves. Pre-service teachers need to have the opportunity for guided critical reflection—this can be done with the help of an effectively reflective mentor teacher.

The practicum has the power of experience to critically shape the student teacher's perceptions of teaching and learning (Gustafson and Rowell 1995). How do pre-service teachers develop the theoretical and practical knowledge and skills necessary for understanding, analysing and responding to the issues and problems they encounter in the teaching situation? How do they become reflective practitioners? It is more than just observation and experience. Freese (1999) says that we need to structure learning events that encourage collaboration and reflection between the mentor teacher and the student or the university supervisor and the student. Burant and Kirby (2002) say that unless structures are in place to promote reflection and evaluation, the practicum can be just an experience of uncritical practice:

> ...the newcomers' legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an observational lookout post: It crucially involves participation as a way of learning—of both absorbing and being absorbed in—the culture of practice... with opportunities to make the culture (of teaching) theirs. It is our belief that neophytes' knowing about teaching develops not only through membership in a community, but through their interest in becoming agents of its activity. (Burant and Kirby 2002, p. 720)

Lecturers and mentors in schools should be aware of the goals of the teacher education program and provide ample time for pre-service teachers to observe as well as teach in schools during professional experience placements and then analyse these experiences. The student teaching context should provide students with opportunities to experiment with the ideas they are developing during their coursework. The lecturer and mentor can serve as a guide to help students realise the importance of evaluating their teaching and reflecting on the issues that arise both in the classroom and the wider educational context.

What Do Pre-service Teachers Reflect on?

The development of concerns depends on the pre-service teachers' experiences as their minds are not blank slates but they come to teaching with ideas from their own schooling experience or often adult involvement in schools and school communities (Zeichner and Tabachnick 1981). According to Fuller (1969) there are levels of

concerns. The first type of concern in the early years of training relates to *self.* Then concerns become task related. Finally, the student teachers move away from both self and task related concerns to a concern with the *impact* their teaching and education more broadly has on students' well-being and learning, as well as meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of students (Boz 2008).

In the following chapters you will see that these issues range from such pedagogical issues as play-based learning in early childhood, to such curriculum issues as the importance of LOTE in primary schools, to such social issues as the effect of gaming on primary school boys, to such cultural issues as the role of first languages in multicultural schools and such value issues as school choice. The full range of topics was sketched in Chap. 1, and they will also be apparent from scanning the chapter titles in the Table of Contents. The following section describes how these papers were developed.

Narrative Stories from Pre-service Teachers

The following chapters are 31 student papers written for a unit of study to promote reflective thinking in pre-service teacher education. While the unit 'looks at ways of researching one's own practice', this could only be a somewhat programmatic introduction, rather than any sort of systematic introduction to research and research methodology. The importance of evidence-based practice was stressed, and a range of sources of evidence were noted, including systematic observation of classroom interaction as recorded in the pre-service teachers' practicum journals; the results of student work and assessments; eliciting the views of others, whether teachers, students or parents; and certainly the value of looking at the research literature. Students were then induced into implementing this learning by undertaking a project to write a narrative style essay on some issue that attracted their attention during one of their teaching practicums, based both on their experience in the practicum situation, including discussions with teachers there, and on looking into relevant scholarly literature. In this way they were induced to both reflect on these issues in their practice teaching situations and to take an evidence-based approach in doing so.

These 31 chapters are a selection of the best of these essays received over several years. We believe they are of general interest for what they reveal about the interests, views and ways of thinking of these (generally) young people as they work towards starting their teaching careers. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that these papers were written by students at an early stage of their careers, not polished academic offerings. They are not being presented as solidly developed evidence and arguments for particular positions, although the ways in which the issues have been handled by the various authors is not without interest in themselves, as discussed further in Chap. 36.

In accord with this, and the narrative nature more generally, the language of the papers is often fairly informal or colloquial. In editing the papers, as one would expect in a published work, we have tried to ensure that the writers' voices come

through as much as possible. Readers of the papers will note that each begins with a journal entry which has prompted reflection on a particular issue or concern, and then proceed to use much the same section headings; these were in fact provided by a template for the student writing.

Conclusion

> Good teachers are made, not born; and, the making of a teacher is a complex process. Reflection is a crucial part of that process and it cannot be expected to be developed without training, modelling and structured experience. (Selinger 1991, p.1)

There are many challenges facing pre-service teachers at the beginning of their journeys towards becoming reflective teachers. Real teaching situations are very complex and teachers do not have time to reflect on all the numerous and complex relationships between all the various factors embedded in every teaching situation (Korthagen and Kessels 1999). Nonetheless teachers need to learn how to reflect to the extent they can, and this process can and should begin during teacher training. Pre-service teachers are usually encouraged to start with what they believe about teaching and learning. They are often asked to write their teaching philosophy and revisit this during the course of study and teaching practice. They are encouraged, as stated earlier, to keep a journal and where possible share this to enable collaborative reflection. With knowledge and practice pre-service teachers can begin to interpret their experiences more critically. Unless teachers understand what they are doing there is little chance their efforts will result in student learning or their efforts will be morally and ethically appropriate. 'By developing the disposition and the ability to be reflective, teachers can insure that what they do is both effective and defensible' (Killen 2009, p. 114).

In the following chapters we can see evidence of pre-service teachers' reflection and how they have made meaning from their early experiences in the classroom and school environment. We must continue to provide in our undergraduate and postgraduate programs opportunities to develop reflective skills so that we empower teachers to improve practice within classrooms, schools and communities.

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Part II
Literacy and Language

Introduction

Paul Black

The six chapters in this part all deal with literacy or language, at least incidentally. Three relate to teaching sight words in early primary school, one to promoting literacy in year 6, one to the teaching of other languages and one to the use of the students' first languages in schools.

While the first three relate to the teaching of sight words, this is actually incidental to the main concerns of the second and third of the chapters. Even so, these chapters assume the importance of the popular notion of sight words as referring to some selection of the most frequent words in written English, such as ones identified by Dolch or Fry (see Farrell et al. 2013). These words account for large percentages of written English text, so that a learner who can recognise Fry's 100 most frequent words by sight, for example, can read about half the words in most texts. While it is common to think of just such more frequent words as 'sight words', ultimately, of course, a mature reader should be able to recognise virtually all words as sight words, with no need to consciously work them out from their spelling (Ehri 2005).

Georgia McNicol's chapter (Chap. 5) describes how she was inspired by a workshop on visual learning to develop a system of 14 coloured hats to introduce 12 sight words each, and how this was met with great enthusiasm by both the children and their parents. Such a grouping of sight words under the names of colours is of course not uncommon, with the dozen or so highest frequency words often labelled 'goldern words'; see Sight Word Apps (2013) for an example of a more elaborate scheme. Georgia's contribution is how she was able to do this in a particularly successful way.

In Chap. 6 Ashley Lidbetter also deals with sight words, but her main concern is with how to provide integrated learning support for all students in a class, and thus without treating some students as different and tending to isolate them from their

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peers. In this she acknowledges the importance of parental support for practising sight words, as well as the value of praise, encouragement, and animation.

Melanie Zanki's concerns in Chap. 7 are broadly similar, but in the context of an Indigenous classroom. More than the others she details the multimodal teaching strategies she used, having students do such things as running to the correct word on the floor when it was called out and copying out the words using clay and shaving cream. She also presents a record of just how much the students improved; even without a control group for comparison, this can seem significant in view of how little the students seemed to have been progressing earlier.

Some readers may be surprised that Melanie bothered to suggest that her results highlighted the fact that the 'gap' in Indigenous education is not genetic, since they would not have expected a genetic basis for it anyway. However, one can find popular opinion to the contrary, e.g., that 'The gap will never be closed, because it is ingrained in our genetics (at least to some extent)' (GM 2016). Even some research can appear to suggest that at least a small portion of the gap is due to racial factors (e.g., Leigh and Gong 2008).

Tim Caire has quite different concerns in Chap. 8, namely the pros and cons of giving students free choice in what they read as against having the teacher select readings. His own exploration of this found only one difference, namely that students given a free choice found their books more challenging, but from research by Carver and Leibert (1995) this seemed irrelevant to improving student's reading ability. Naturally the matter is more complex than can be resolved with such a simple study, and indeed, it may be a delicate matter of finding the right balance for each student. For example, while too much choice can actually be demotivating (e.g. Iyengar and Lepper 2000), to the extent individual students perceive teachers as controlling rather than autonomy orientated it can lower their feelings of self-worth, perceived competence, and intrinsic motivation to learn (e.g. Ryan and Grolnick 1986; Kohn 1993).

Shifting from literacy to language more generally, in Chap. 9 Angela Foulis presents an enthusiastic account on how learning an additional language can also help children learn about and come to appreciate the speakers and their culture. While her chapter is positive and generally well justified, specialists in the area might chaff at a few points, such as a student's stereotyping of Indonesians as living 'in huts not houses'. Furthermore, research by Ingram et al. (2004, p. 11–12) actually found no general correlation between the study of languages and cultures and positive attitudes towards other cultures; apparently it depends heavily on just how these are taught. As for the 'incredibly vibrant and inviting' Indonesian classroom Foulis describes, it is regrettably common for such languages to be taught by visiting teachers using classrooms borrowed from teachers who can then take a break from teaching (see e.g., *Attitudes towards the study of languages in Australian schools*2007, p. 54). Note also that specialists in the area have generally abandoned Foulis' term 'Languages Other Than English (LOTE)' in favour of 'languages education' in order to avoid the notion of 'otherness'.

In Chap. 10 Amber Whittaker writes of her experiences in bilingual schools and explores the extent and ways students in mainstream multicultural schools are also

able to use their first languages. The value of such an 'additive' approach to linguistic and cultural incorporation has of course been known since the work of Cummins (e.g., 1986). Unfortunately, while the research literature also makes a strong case for bilingual education as well (e.g., Grimes 2009), that has been receiving less and less government support, at least in the Northern Territory (e.g., Devlin 2011).

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Chapter 5
The Tricky Word Wall

Motivating Young Students' Desire to Succeed

Georgia McNicol

Abstract A professional development day on 'visible learning' inspired me to create a new approach to teaching sight words, using 14 coloured hats, each introducing 12 sight words; I called it 'the tricky word wall'. As I used this over a full term, students made amazing progress: Every single child had success, although I soon realised that success looks different for everyone. An above average student not only raced through increasingly advanced hats but also began to use the sight words in his writing. A recently arrived student with little English progressed far more slowly, but with each step a huge achievement and source of pride, celebrated by the whole class. Parents were very supportive, and from their feedback I learned that the children were talking about the tricky word wall at home, where they were desperate to practise their words so that they could move onto the next hat. Making a big deal out of every single child's success made them all feel valued and special, and motivated them to try hard to learn their words. I had planned to compare my class to a neighbouring one, but when its teacher saw the success we were having she decided to introduce her own tricky word wall. It is exciting that my visible learning display encouraged these students to succeed, sparking their self-motivation and allowing them to take charge of their own learning.

Journal Entry, October 9th 2014, Driver, Northern Territory:

> I am so excited! Logan, Harry and Rodel [not their real names] have all moved from the blue tricky word hat. I have tested Harry during the past two days and he has been getting closer and closer, and today he has reached his goal—HIS goal! Rodel has worked so hard, with so many barriers to overcome. I am so proud of these boys—beyond proud. I think this is why teachers keep going in what can be such a challenging job—that rewarding feeling you get when students succeed, not only succeed but have a desire to succeed. The look of determination on their faces, the pride that washes over you, both when they accomplish something that you weren't sure would happen, but so strongly hoped for.

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It may seem insignificant to some, but these three students achieving this—learning their blue sight words—is an amazing accomplishment for them. With Harry having been absent from school for over half of the year, and his attendance sporadic the rest of the time, I believe that this achievement has had a huge impact on his education. Beresford and Partington (2003) suggest that a 'lack of emotional and social wellbeing in the school years can contribute to poor school attendance, limited attentiveness and poor learning outcomes', and this is something that, sadly, I feel is apparent in Harry's case. Logan being extremely young, immature and unmotivated, I cannot believe my eyes that he is choosing to practise his 'tricky words' instead of playing with the Lego in investigation time! And Rodel, he is an English as Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) student, who has only been in Australia for half a year, and currently under assessment for special needs. Words cannot describe how rewarding it feels to be part of their success.

The focus on tricky words hasn't been as difficult for some students. With this cohort within my placement class there are the high achievers who have blitzed through 14 tricky word hats (all containing 12 sight words) and are now learning to spell the words. I feel as though this endeavour has helped everyone achieve success, and as proud of my students as I am, I must admit that I am also very proud of myself! Not only have I helped *all* of my students to succeed, but I have encouraged colleagues to do the same. This was my idea, my experiment and everyone has managed to succeed.

Introduction

I am a wife, mother, student and proud Australian woman. I am cautious and kind; I like structure and guidelines, and this has caused me to possibly become a little complacent in recent years. Not like the old me! Before I was a mother or a wife I was a risk taker, outgoing and bold. I was always the leader, maybe even a little bossy and never the one to just follow suit. I am not sure when my transformation occurred, but I didn't even notice it happen. My previous job as a tutor meant I was always the sidekick, never the hero. After having my son, he (naturally) became the star. I think I may have somewhat lost myself to these roles, and lost touch with what it actually feels like to be the one in control, or taking the lead. During my recent practicum I was handed back the reins and my journey has become amazing.

Who Was I?

I have had the opportunity to work in my role as a tutor and on placements with many different teachers, from teachers fresh out of university to teachers ready to retire. Senior teachers, play-based teachers, even my own mother who is a teacher!

I feel lucky to have had the amount of exposure to different teaching styles that I have had, almost like I am at an advantage going into my own teaching career. During my previous practicum, I left feeling accomplished and like I was ready to teach on my own. Since then I have had a son, been married and taken a year away from the classroom.

Coming back to study was definitely a struggle. The expectations were so high, and I felt so out of touch having been occupied changing nappies, attending playgroups and nursery rhyme sing-alongs over the past year. In the beginning I felt as though I had forgotten how to teach. I had forgotten how to help my students learn. The behaviour management aspect (thankfully) never left me. Having a toddler definitely helped in maintaining that! But as I moved into my practicum, I started to pick it up again, learning new strategies as well as remembering them from the past. Then there was a Professional Development (PD) day, and I began to do something that had not happened before—not something from my past and not being taught something new, my very own bright idea. My own take on the teaching strategy mentioned in the PD which was around 'visible learning', which involved allowing the students to take control of their own learning.

> When we are committed to a goal, we are more likely to learn as a function of positive feedback, but when we undertake a task that we are not committed to (and hence have to do), we are more likely to learn as a function of negative feedback (we need to be driven, in the older motivation terminology). (Hattie and Timperley 2007, p. 99)

My creation would be known as 'the tricky word wall'.

Where Am I Now?

I am at the end of a 5-year journey into teaching and learning. I am finishing my degree and finally feeling that I am completely ready to be a teacher. I know the importance of learning from others, taking the good and leaving the bad, learning from my students, knowing how to best help them achieve their success as well as making my own way. The recent final practicum that I have completed gave me all the opportunities I needed to really consolidate everything that I have learnt in the past 5 years. The relationships that I formed with the staff, students and parents allowed me to investigate my success as a teacher whilst there. The feedback that I received was amazing and that shows me that I am ready.

> What is needed is quality feedback and where that feedback has the greatest effect is when teachers receive more and better feedback about their teaching, and then the ripple effect back to the student is high. (Hattie and Timperley 2007)

The discussions that I held with parents really showed me that my strategies were reaching their children—yes they were having success, but they were motivated to excel and achieve more. Some parents seemed as excited as I was about this, especially parents of the children who in the past have not made too much of an effort toward their learning. I now feel like I have direction and meaning.

Of This Much I Am Sure

A clear indicator of the success of my practicum is results. Results speak for themselves. Every single student in my class has had success with the introduction of the tricky word wall. It is difficult to say whether they would not have continued to have success without it, but for the sake of their education I felt as though we couldn't deny any of the students the chance to be involved. I started at my placement school in week 5 of term 2. I was there for the remainder of that term, and introduced a visible learning display—the tricky word wall—in week 1 of term 3. The progress made by my students during the term was amazing. Yes, of this much I am sure: There was a huge difference in how much success my students experienced—every single child had success. While I thought this project would be about trying to measure the amount of success each child had, e. g. how many sight words they could recognise, I soon realised that success looks different for everyone.

For one of my students, Jordan, his success came in his writing. He is an above satisfactory student across the board. He has a fantastic memory and I found myself having to create more and more sight word hats (which I had not anticipated with a transition class) to continue to extend him. Yes, this is brilliant, but what's more is that Jordan began using his newly learned sight words in his writing, creating magnificent stories involving *castles* and *knights*. This is how Jordan *really* achieved success via this wall. He was already above satisfactory, but my introduction of the tricky word wall helped him build the courage to take risks in his writing and get creative, which is something he had not been doing previously.

For Rodel, my EALD student from the Philippines, when I left he had recently moved to the second hat. While for some students this was not difficult, for Rodel this was a huge achievement and we were both so very proud of him for working so hard to get there. Rodel had basically no English when he arrived (the week before I did) at the school. His progress has been outstanding, his speech has improved greatly and his confidence is starting to show. The beauty of this tricky word wall is that with such a variety of abilities in the class, each and every student can have success in their own way, and because of their age (5–6 years old) they are not yet wired to be overly competitive or put down fellow classmates who are at a different level to their own. This is also the culture that is instilled in the class, and everyone's success is something to be celebrated. The whole class clapped for Rodel when he moved off the blue hat, and the excitement and pride was obvious to see on his face.

From the feedback that I received from the parents, it seemed that their children were going home and talking about the tricky word wall. They were desperate to practise their words every night so that they could move onto the next hat. One mother suggested that we create a visible learning display for reading levels, to encourage the students to want to read (her daughter was not particularly fond of reading) because she attributed the reason for her child's sudden interest in sight words to the visible learning display. Another parent said, 'I can't believe he actually *wants* to do his homework! This never happens!' By making a big deal out of every single child's success, no matter how big or small, they all feel valued and

special. This encourages them to want to succeed and motivates them to try hard to learn their words. Of this much I am sure, that I did not expect the success that we had with the students learning sight words. I am so happy that I decided to try this approach with this class.

Conclusion

It is difficult to say how much of an impact my visible learning display had on my students, as I haven't anything to compare my results to. Originally I was going to compare half my class to the other half, then thought I may compare my class to our neighbouring class, but when they saw the success we were having the teacher decided to introduce her own tricky word wall. I make my observations based on the feedback received from the parents of the students, fellow staff members and the children themselves.

The parents were very supportive of the visible learning display, coming in each morning to drop their children off and asking, 'Emma would like to be tested on her red words today; she got them all right last night and is very excited to move on. ' I would hear this request from parents almost every morning, which upon reflection leads me to believe that the word wall may have even encouraged parents to work harder with their children on their homework. This was exciting as it indicated I had reached beyond the student and managed to motivate the parents as well! This is obviously just a thought, and was not researched.

Fellow staff members also introduced their own visible learning displays in their classrooms. Some were to encourage effort in writing, others in reading. All teachers who used a visible learning display in their room said that they strongly agree that it contributed significantly to their students' progress in the area.

The children are obviously the ones who benefit most from the discovery of useful teaching tools. It is for them that we are constantly trying to better ourselves as teachers and uncover new ways to help them learn. 'Learning can be enhanced to the degree that students share the challenging goals of learning' (Hattie and Timperley 2007, p. 103). My class responded better than I could have hoped for to this visible learning display and I am so proud of all that they have accomplished this term.

It is exciting that my tricky word wall encouraged in these students a desire to succeed. I managed to spark their self motivation, allowing them to take charge of their learning and push themselves so that they could achieve what they want to. It was completely inclusive, which Hyde et al. (2010) describe as 'successful inclusion of children will most often occur when the strengths and weaknesses of individuals are understood, and when these varying abilities are used to develop individual learning.'

Positive results were what I was aiming for with the visible learning display, and while I did achieve this I think I uncovered something more valuable, and that is a tool to help my students love learning. This is my most exciting discovery yet.

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Chapter 6
Benefits of Integrated Learning Support for Early Childhood Children When Learning Sight Words

Ashley Lidbetter

Abstract While working as a teaching assistant and on practicums, I noticed that students can significantly benefit from positive one-to-one adult support. I accordingly developed my teaching approaches to allow this, focusing on sight word development because the students that I was working with often had limited knowledge of sight words and were below school standard average PM Benchmark reading results. Initially I believed that integrated learning support could be a 'double edged sword', with a potential to benefit students but also to make them feel isolated from their peers, identifying them as different. Hence I planned to encompass all students in my class, so that I wasn't isolating or leaving anyone out, and to address students' needs in a way as to leave them feeling positive and confident. With the inclusion of all students I found them encouraging each other and discussing each other's progress, and no student had a negative experience or seemed to feel isolated. I also noticed that the use of praise, encouragement and animation can make a significant difference in student engagement, and I also received a tremendous amount of support from parents for practising sight words and completing readers at home; parent support was paramount, and without it, student progress was much slower. After my 10-week learning support program I documented significant growth in the number of student identifying sight words and a positive change in student attitudes towards sight word and reading practice.

Journal entry, August 2014, Larrakeyah, Northern Territory:

> It shocked me to find out the lack of at home parent engagement in their child's learning. During parent teacher interviews, I asked each primary caregiver how often they would practise their child's sight words at home with them and out of 22 students I found that only five of them practise their sight words every night. The students that are practising also make up part of the top seven students in the class according to the standards predetermined by the school. I have noticed many other children came from families that only had one (if

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that) fluent English speaking carer at home. Some of these parents stated that they were not confident with the pronunciation of the words themselves, so they didn't want to pass on incorrect pronunciation of words.

Introduction

I am a passionate and committed graduate teacher, who believes that we as graduate teachers can be positive role models, inspiring students to develop a 'love of learning'. I have worked in child care centres, pre-schools and primary schools in the Northern Territory (NT) for the past 3 years while completing my Bachelor of Teaching and Learning degree. This journey has opened my eyes to all aspects of the teaching profession. I have been a permanent resident of Darwin for almost 4 years and feel completely at home teaching in this diverse society. My teaching experience has been located in local public and Catholic schools in the NT. Each experience has exposed new challenging aspects of education and living and teaching in the Territory.

While working as a Special Education Student Assistant (SESA) and on practicums, I have noticed that students can significantly benefit from positive one-to-one adult (or knowledgeable peer) support. This is why I have developed my teaching approaches into a way that students will receive additional time with an educator in a positive and encouraging setting. The reason I chose to consider sight word development was because at my current placement school, the students that I am working with (on average) have a limited knowledge of sight words and below school standard average PM Benchmark reading results. I wanted to use this research project as an opportunity to support the students in their learning and encourage them to improve their reading fluency.

Who Was I?

This study is very close to my heart because as a young child I experienced significant struggles when trying to learning how to read and remember sight words, and it affected my capacity to read. Not all my learning support experiences were positive, and it ended up that I didn't develop a passion for reading until I was about 13 years old, and I didn't get to really acknowledge my love of learning until my university years. Interestingly, after having had all these negative experiences, I decided to become a positive and passionate educator who wishes to never allow any student to ever feel the way that I felt towards education.

Initially I believed that integrated learning support could be a 'double edged sword'. It can really benefit students and give them the confidence to have a go and try read new words and keep trying even when they are making mistakes, because eventually everything just starts to fall into place, but it can also have the opposite

effect, and the student can feel isolated from their peers, identifying them as different or as thick/dumb. I formed these opinions from working with students as an SESA in a range of different primary schools and from talking to young adults who have been through a similar program. In a personal conversation with another preservice teacher, she stated that, 'I felt socially isolated in primary school when I was forced to work specially with adults, as the other students then identified me as dumb and I felt like I was outcasted from my peer group'.

Hence I changed my plans just before I started working on this project, just to encompass the students within my class, so that I wasn't isolating or leaving anyone out. Also I reconsidered how I was going to address students' learning needs but still leave them feeling positive and confident about the whole process. In addition, I had to consider the time constraints that are placed on the class in relation to the optimal learning time for the students, in deciding when I was to run the learning support program so that I didn't disrupt their other education. Previously, having these time constraints on the class was why the main classroom educators relied on parent contributions to help students practise and read their home readers. Even with the sight words and the readers going home daily and having parents help some days a week, students were not making any significant growth in this area of their education.

Herein lies the problem: How can I make rote learning of sight words fun and memorable? From my own experience and previous research, I know how effective visual recognition of words can be in developing successful readers, but how to demonstrate this to 5–7 year olds is the challenge.

Who Am I?

We live and breathe words, and they are how we connect as beings. Young children are not an exception to this, from the moment they make their first sound they are trying to connect with you and their world. As educators we need to equip students to the best of our ability, giving them the tools to express themselves verbally and in written text, enabling them to make their mark in the world. This is why I embarked on this journey to inspire a passion for reading and learning to read. It is because 'The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go' – Dr. Seuss (1978), *I can read with my eyes shut!*

As the English language is the most used/recognised language worldwide, it is necessary to obtain at least a basic understanding of the most frequently spoken and written words. The English language is not just spoken; it is written, and students need to be able to decode and read this language and make relevance to what it is telling the reader. To do that the students need to start with the foundations, which are made up of the more commonly used words in the English language.

Trierweiler (1990) states that 'sight word lists provide a good benchmark for measuring children's familiarity and recall of the words that experts agree need to come "automatically" in order for them to be strong, fluent readers'. Research states

that knowledge of sight words is paramount, as sight word list are made up of the most commonly used words in the English language (Reiter 2013). Therefore, if students are able to visually identify these words while reading, they then will be able to focus on sounding out and making meaning of the other unknown words, using the known words to form connections in the text (Ehri 1995). Being able to use these strategies is the sign of a good reader.

During a parent-teacher interview my questions about sight word practice and home readers sparked a discussion about one parent's eldest child, John. He is an older brother of one of my students. Early this year he was put into a learning support program that was to focus on building his knowledge of sight words, as he is in Year 3 and was still unable to remember the first 12 words of the sight word charts, and these first 12 words (golden words) are the expected exit level of a transition student at this primary school. John was given full support and was doing his words every day, up to four times a day with either a teacher or assistant or parent helper and at home. This was for a period of 10 weeks (one school term). The people that were involved with this child used to carry around the sight words in their pockets so that they were able to pop in and practise with him whenever there was a spare moment, which sounds like it made it less routine and fun for John. John now knows the first hundred sights words confidently and his PM Benchmark Levels are climbing at a very rapid rate. John's mother was very passionate while telling this story, as she has seen such a major shift in her sons' confidence and willingness to come to school and be a part of a class, as he used to be reluctant to read and would try many different excuses to try get out of coming to school.

After playing the role of the informed adult leading the learning support program, I believe that adult-integrated learning support has a very significant role to play in student learning and confidence. In none of my observations did a student have a negative experience or suggest that they felt isolated from their peers, nor did I see the peers isolating any child because they were part of the learning support program. The students actually were excited to work with me and practise their words one-to-one and would often request to be the next student to practise.

Through my observation I noticed that the simple use of praise, encouragement and animation make a significant difference in student engagement with the program. Also, through having many discussions with all students' parents, informing them on the relevance and the impact that sight word knowledge can have on their child's development and showing them the already collected data demonstrating the child's growth in that small amount of time, I received a tremendous amount of support in the form of regular practice of sight words and completion of readers at home.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Of this much I am sure, that the journey to understanding that there is a place for rote learning sight words in the classroom has been an exciting one, highlighting how the simple repetition of words presented in the correct way can significantly affect students' reading ability. Starting from a place of uncertainty that stemmed from my own past experiences, and then travelling into a state of complete faith in the effectiveness of the learning support program, I can now see why the use of learning support programs to support the teaching of sight words and reading is necessary. As a graduate teacher, seeing this gives me great excitement, courage and joy for future personal learning.

A recommendation from my discoveries is that parent support is paramount. If parent support is not present, then from my observation, student progression is much slower. Also, the inclusion of all students made an imperative difference to all student attitudes towards the practice of their sight words. I found that the students were encouraging each other and discussing how they were progressing. The more they were exposed to the sight words, the more confident they felt and they were more willing to give it a go: Of this much I am sure.

Conclusion

After completing my 10-week learning support program with my students I documented a significant growth in the number of student identifying sight words and a positive change in student attitudes towards sight word practice and reading practice. This journey has had both unexpected and interesting outcomes, which has changed my opinion in a highly positive way. Reflecting on the journey, I was able to understand where I stood in relation to one-to-one learning support programs designed to help student development of reading and to see how this has changed. Through this investigation I have identified that my previous stance on my topic was highly influenced from my personal experiences. Having researched and effectively implemented my learning support program, I believe I can now assist in educating and providing confidence to students who are learning how to read, remember or retain, and comprehend English words.

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Chapter 7
Impact of Literacy Sessions on the Reading Abilities of Indigenous Students

Melanie Zanki

Abstract This chapter discusses how my view on the education 'gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has changed through my practicum placement within an Indigenous school in which I trialled a range of strategies to improve the reading levels of low-performing readers in a year 1/2 class. These students had demonstrated minimal improvement through standard full-class instruction over two terms, when the classroom had only one teacher and one Indigenous Education Assistant. During my placement the classroom had three adults, which enabled me to provide the low-performing students with small group instruction utilising a range of teaching strategies. Each student was given activities that focused on words that they were having difficulty with, and resources were tailor-made to suit. The reading abilities of the students improved by an average of two levels over the eight weeks, with one student improving by five levels and one showing no improvement due to attendance issues. That the students were able to improve their literacy levels with appropriate instruction highlights the fact the 'gap' is not genetic and that smaller class sizes and higher staffing ratios could be effective in decreasing the 'gap' in Indigenous students. If the Australian Government is truly serious about eliminating the education 'gap', funding is required to lower class sizes to enable all students to have the maximum chances of success.

Journal entry 16 July, 2014, in an Indigenous community:

> Our class got two new students today, and one left over the school holidays. That brings the number of students in the class to 25, with 23 being regular attendees. It is crazy! There are far too many low-level students in the class to be able to do full-class instruction. I'm beginning to try and think about how I'm going to make it more manageable for myself when I start to take the class on a full-time basis. The class seems to work well in maths rotations. There are 5 groups of 4-5 students, with 20 minutes rotations. Three activities are adult-led, and two are independent. While the independent activities tend to be puzzles/blocks/iPads etc., the high engagement factor results in minimal behaviour issues. This allows the adults leading the other activities to provide 20 minutes of solid learning time. This gives the

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students one hour of quality learning, and 40 minutes of 'fun', independent work that also has an educational purpose. This seems to be more effective than full-class instruction, which results in a large amount of time being devoted to behaviour management, and also makes it difficult to extend the higher students and support the lower students.

We currently have 4 groups for reading rotations. Rotations consist of 3 groups reading with a staff member and 1 doing an independent activity and then it is followed by a full-class L4L [Learning for Life] lesson. I'm thinking about trialling 6 groups of 4. Having one group reading with an adult, two groups completing an L4L activity with an adult, one group completing sight word/phonics activities with an adult and the other two groups completing an independent 'fun' activity (such as word searches/crosswords/iPads) in a rotation basis.

Introduction

I am a final year university student completing my final practicum in an Indigenous community. I have an extensive background in special education and have always operated under the assumption that everybody is capable of learning and that it is the path that individuals need to undertake that differs.

In this chapter, I will discuss how my view on the education 'gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has changed through research into strategies and throughout my practicum placement within an Indigenous school.

Where Was I?

Due to my studies, and the frequent media attention, I have been aware of the 'gap' in Indigenous health and education; however, I have never had an understanding of the cause of said 'gap'. Research into NAPLAN scores state that students from very remote Indigenous schools consistently score significantly lower than non-Indigenous Australians. For example, in Craven et al.'s (2013) compilation of work, Fogarty (2013, p. 255) states that from the 2011 NAPLAN tests, there was a gap in meeting the national benchmarks in year 3 of 69.7 % in reading, 70.0 % in writing and 47.9 % in numeracy. Research such as this rarely discusses the cause of this 'gap' and it can almost be inferred that the 'gap' is genetic and beyond the realms of control.

In some ways, it is almost assumed that low-level learners are incapable of learning, and therefore, not worth teaching. However, as Partington (2013, p. 232) states 'each Aboriginal child should be "given a chance" as an individual person rather than as an anonymous figure in a social group'. The research into Indigenous learning styles is endless. Andersen (2011, p. 98) states that programs that work well are 'small, holistic, tailor-made and flexible', implying that strategies that work with one Indigenous student may not work with another. This prompted me to trial a range of different strategies to see if I would be able to improve the reading levels of low-performing Indigenous readers in a year 1/2 class.

Table 7.1 Improvement in reading of seven students over eight weeks

Student name[a]	Attendance	PM benchmark level			M100 Words		
		Start	End	Increase	Start	End	Increase
Mona	100 %	5 (96 %)	7 (94 %)	2 level	51/100	82/100	31 words
Sharyn	100 %	6 (93 %)	11 (97 %)	5 levels	57/100	100/100 +59[b]	102 words
Kobi	30 %	5 (95 %)	5 (94 %)	None	39/100	40/100	1 word
Sarah	60 %	5 (93 %)	6 (93 %)	1 level	42/100	76/100	34 words
Nate	100 %	6 (93 %)	10 (97 %)	2 levels	61/100	100/100 +41[b]	80 words
Carl	100 %	6 (94 %)	9 (93 %)	1 level	63/100	100/100 +6[b]	43 words
Betty	60 %	6 (95 %)	8 (95 %)	2 levels	61/100	74/100	13 words

[a]Student names have been changed for privacy purpose
[b]M100 Words completed, students moved onto next 100

Where Am I Now?

The students who participated in the strategies demonstrated minimal signs of improvement through the standard classroom full-class instruction and larger reading groups (up to eight students) throughout terms 1 and 2. These teaching methods were necessary as the classroom had 24 students and only one teacher and one Indigenous Education Assistant. Only a small number of students within the class were capable of performing at their year level, which meant that most students were unable to work independently. During my placement within the classroom, there were three adults, which enabled more rotational activities, as the students were able to spend more time being guided and were only required to work independently for a minimal amount of time.

Accordingly I was able to remove the students that were participating in my study to a quieter environment in which to complete their activities. Through small group instruction and the utilisation of a range of different teaching strategies, the reading abilities of the students were able to be improved by, on average, two levels over the course of the eight weeks in which I carried out my efforts; see Table 7.1. One student improved by five levels and one showed no improvement; however, his attendance was an issue throughout this period of time.

The strategies that were utilised included:

- Writing sight words on the ground with chalk and racing to jump on words called by a teacher
- Writing sight words on the ground with chalk, with the letters spread out. Jumping on each letter and saying the sound the letter makes. After saying the sound of each letter, jumping on the letters and saying the sounds quickly to make them almost join together and then saying the whole word
- Using letter stamps to make the sight words
- Using alphabet magnets on hand-held whiteboards
- Using playdough to make the words

- Writing the words in shaving cream
- Playing sight word bingo (each bingo board was custom-made)
- Sight word dominoes
- Sight word memory (pick the pairs)

Students were assessed on a fortnightly basis, through a PM Benchmark Running Record assessment and through retesting the M100 Words. This testing demonstrated the areas in which the students were having difficulty; for example, one student was demonstrating that she was having difficulty with producing the right sound when sounding out, so her strategies were aimed towards increasing her phonemic awareness. Each student was given activities that focused on words that they were having difficulty with, and resources were tailor-made to suit. Each student had his/her own bingo board, sight word cards, domino cards etc. This ensured that the students were working on words that were particularly beneficial to them.

My study has proven to me that the students are able to improve their literacy levels if given appropriate instruction that is designed to complement their learning styles. This highlights the fact the 'gap' is not genetic. This level of instruction within the classroom in which I completed my study was only possible due to the increased number of adults in the room. Typically this classroom has 25 students, with one teacher and one Indigenous Education Assistant; however, as I was a third person in the room, it enabled the students to complete their work in smaller groups. This proves to me that smaller class sizes and higher staffing ratios would be particularly effective in decreasing the education 'gap' for Indigenous students.

Of This Much I'm Sure

The implementation of this strategy has led me to believe that the 'gap' is environmental. The Australian Government's Prime Minister's Report on *Closing the Gap* (Australian Government 2014) states that the NAPLAN results 'vary sharply by remoteness area' and that '81 % of Indigenous students from metropolitan areas met or exceeded the NMS (National Minimum Standards) for Year 9 Reading compared to only 31 % of Indigenous students in very remote areas.' If genetics were the cause of the education 'gap', the results should be the same, nation-wide. Andersen (2011, p. 98) argues that the first years of schooling favours non-Indigenous students that are raised in an environment in which they are 'read to before reaching school age and who have access to books at home', and that most Indigenous students are not raised in this environment and are therefore 'disadvantaged in learning from day one of school'. Of this much I am sure, that while I can acknowledge that this is, indeed, a significant factor in the lower academic levels and the subsequent 'gap' in education, as a teacher I am unable to rectify this situation. I am, however, able to provide my students with the opportunity to be exposed to an environment conducive to learning whilst they are at school.

Partington (2013, p. 229) suggests that rather than '[honing] in on what is different in Aboriginal students', teachers should be looking at what they have in common with other Australian children. This aligns with research from Wheldall et al. (2010), in which they claim that Indigenous and non-Indigenous low-progress readers are able to achieve the same levels of improvement through intensive remedial reading projects. Accordingly I chose to utilise the same techniques that I would use with non-Indigenous students, ensuring to include strategies that cater to a range of different learning styles. Small groups were utilised to provide the students with the opportunity to achieve the greatest levels of gains. Research by Lou and others (cited in Marzano 2007, p. 40) reports that the greatest percentile gain is made when students are in groups of 3–4 students (9 percentile gain, as compared to a 6 percentile gain by groups of 2, or a −1 percentile gain by groups of 5–7). Accordingly it was decided to split the target group of seven students into a group of three and a group of four and provide each group with an intensive, 60 minute literacy session.

Conclusion

I am happy with my success, and it gives me hope that the 'gap' will eventually be non-existent. However, it is disheartening to know that the community school where I am to be employed by next year will have a low staffing ratio. It is unlikely that I will be able to have an extra adult, and it is quite likely that I will have a class size similar to the one in which I completed my practicum. If the Australian Government is truly serious about eliminating the education 'gap', funding is required to lower the class sizes to enable all students to have the maximum chances of success.

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Chapter 8
Choose to Read

Tim Caire

Abstract This study investigates the impact that assigned versus free choice of reading had on a year 6 class. I gave 11 of the students a set text and another 11 free choice of text, with the guideline that they read for two hours per week and record any comments or feelings towards the book in a journal. This failed to find any impact on reading times, and unfortunately many students simply provided no journal sheets at all. Students with free choice found their books more challenging than those reading the set text, but a study in the literature found no evidence that reading at higher than one's ability improves one's ability, so that set books that are not challenging may improve readers' ability at the same rate. The results for comprehension between free choice and set text was exactly the same, and students in both groups read almost the same amount. I conclude that it does not matter if you give students set texts or free choice; they will benefit from reading.

> It seems as though I am complicating my instructions too much, I need to make my lessons less complicated and focussed on outcome rather than the creation of the perfect lesson. The students get what I am saying, however with too many instructions they seem lost and distracted by the final instruction. I may need to prepare step by step instructions for more intense lessons and for smaller outcomes create or find more concise lesson resources. Maybe I'm focusing too much on instructions, and maybe I should be focusing on the outcome and the student giving them a choice in how we reach that outcome? Just a thought. (Journal entry, 2012)

Introduction

Free choice, it just sounds nicer. But does an abundance of choice leave students feeling overwhelmed? Or is it that having that choice actually engages students in picking up a book, sitting down enjoying it and reading for long periods? For this study I investigate the time spent reading of a year 6 class and the impact that choice

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or no choice has. Is free choice a motivator to get students to use their leisure time to read over other activities? Does choice improve student interaction and comprehension when reading and therefore improve their reading skills?

My Initial Thoughts on Free Choice or Set Text

People make choices countless times during the day, sometimes instinctively and other times only after much thought. Choices generally improve a person's position or in some way benefit that person. Research by Schraw et al. (1998) shows that experts suggest that 'choice is an important determinant of interest, cognitive processing, motivation, and even long term health'. From this statement it would be plausible to say even before any research that free choice when it comes to reading would be of huge importance.

When I first thought of this study I began to wonder how much students read at home, either for enjoyment or as a set reading task. It was my initial thought that as a teacher it would be OK to set a text according to the skill level of the class, with intentions of working on the one book as a class for future assessments. I was conflicted, however, because I also believed that in order to engage students, free choice would improve interest in reading. A point supported by Kohn is that 'choice among younger students positively affects activity level, enthusiasm, creativity, depth of comprehension, self-regulation, and rate of learning' (cited in Schraw et al. 1998). So with the support of Kohn, I believe that in order to engage students in reading that may improve time spent reading, they would need free choice.

I had a suspicion going into this topic that with or without free choice the male students may very well read less than the female students. Personally, during my years at school I was more interested in physical activities than sitting and reading a book; admittedly, though, the texts that I read were predominantly teacher set. With the bulk of the literature suggesting that free choice improves interest and motivation (Schraw et al. 1998), more research should be carried out on the reverse effects of denied choice of reading. Very little literature can be found on male attitude towards reading and whether it can be attributed to denial of choice or choice to do something other than read.

As part of my pedagogy I feel it is important to be inclusive and approach outcomes for all students, including the reading development of boys. As a teacher I believe in adapting and learning new techniques or avenues to achieve current goals. It is my thought that as we are in a digital age, future research will include the effect of reading digitally.

> Do not train boys to learning by force and harshness, but lead them by what amuses them, so that they may better discover the bend of their minds. (Plato)

Other avenues could also be explored beyond novels, for example, specific interest books including biographies, instructional text or even magazines. For this study I gave no mention of limiting students' free choice to novels, nor was looking past

novels a suggestion. It is my belief that many students may have been reading, whether it be internet blogs or magazines; however, they may not associate this with actual reading.

Having the choice as explained by literature is important, but when does too much choice become a distraction? When beginning this research topic that was a big part that I believed may be a factor in students preferring set texts. Studies by Iyengar and Lepper (2000) actually saw a decrease in motivation after students being given an abundance of choice.

Current Thoughts on Free Choice or Set Text

Introducing this study to the participants gave me an instant feeling towards how students felt about the task. A majority of the boys gave a negative comment towards reading, with the suggestion from one student that 'I never read at home'. An opposing reaction was seen from the female students, with many excited about the study. The assumption could be made that I would gain a better result from the female students.

Throughout the implementing of this study 11 students were given the set text of *Surfing Mr. Petrovic* (Bowles 1997), a book recommended as suitable for year 6 students. I noticed a particular student with a large amount of frustration and what looked like frustration across his face. I enquired with the boy about his emotions and he told me that he was very frustrated at the fact the he was supposed to read for one hour over two nights, however he will be finished with that book in about 45 minutes. Without even starting the study I had gained access into the thinking of the students. I was also asked repeatedly by a female student to be switched from the set text to free choice; the answer was no.

Equally 11 students were given free choice of reading with the guidelines that they read for two hours per week and record any comments or feelings towards the book. All students were given paperwork to record in journal format to keep it standard as well as it containing the instructions. I was underwhelmed by the participation and recording from the majority of the class.

Interestingly some of the comments were very revealing, with a student starting a book on the first night, reading for 22 minutes before giving up. This student with free choice then began a separate book and read for 48 minutes, commenting on how much she enjoyed it: 'I only stopped because I was tired'. Surprisingly the feedback for a set text was very similar, with one student initially commenting that they liked it before revealing they were 'having trouble putting the book down'.

I believe it is the connection that the students have with books that makes them interesting for them and this is why the majority of the class would prefer free choice. Gordin and Messenger (2012) add, 'When they are reminded of what they know or have already read, they are able to make connections between and among texts.' What this says to me is students will most likely read books with a common theme. This sort of connection would be hard to get across the classroom through

teacher-set books. It is probable that few students would likely enjoy the text and spend more time reading than usual.

This research study failed to retrieve adequate information towards improved reading times. Unfortunately the initial research questions were not specific enough. Additionally many students failed to provide their journal sheets at all, with most blank.

What did come out of this was the evidence that the students reading the set text did not find the book challenging at all. Alternatively the students with a free choice text commented that they found the book they read challenging. A study by Carver and Leibert (1995) finds no evidence, however, that reading a book at a higher reading level than one's ability improves reading ability. Thus class set books may be beneficial as they are not challenging, and according to Carver and Leibert (1995) they improve the readers' ability at the same rate.

Reading a book that is not challenging may however cause students to lose a connection with the book. I do not believe the connection is completely lost through a teacher-set text, with many of the students showing their knowledge and understanding of the set text. The results for comprehension between free choice and set text were exactly the same.

Of This Much I Am Sure About Free Choice and Set Text

What I have learnt from this study is that comprehension of reading does not equate to more time reading. At the beginning of this study I was sure that I was going to find that free choice surpassed set text in out of school hours reading. What I found, however, was that students read almost the same amount.

Although students were reading the same amount, I did find out that students will choose books which they are drawn to either because of interest or popularity. Sometimes these books will challenge readers; however, through my research I now know that challenging books do not necessarily improve the reading ability of students. The reading ability comes from reading itself.

I have also discovered that there is no less comprehension of a reader reading a book which has been teacher set. I originally thought that students would start on a set text book and if it did not look interesting or begin well and catch their interest, they would put the book down. Even if they were to read it, they would not connect and remember the book. This however did not happen, as evidenced in my study.

What was also evident in my research was the lack of reading completed by many of the male students. I originally thought that this may be the case; however, I was confronted with a large number of male students who did not read and still do not read outside of school. I would like to conduct further study into what level of reading these students do conduct throughout their normal lifestyle. Additionally, as a teacher it would be beneficial to look at having students read on a medium such as Kindle or iPad. An exercise to encourage or trick students into reading is to have them watch a film in foreign language with subtitles.

Finally, what has become clear to me through this study is my understanding of the importance of a comprehensive research plan which is well thought out. Having performed this study on a class whose teacher was absent for the majority of the time as well as the interruption of school holidays severely impacted on this study. Research projects require time dedicated to the participants and the data.

Conclusion

After researching free choice over set text I have come to realise that there are benefits and drawbacks to each. My original thinking was that free choice, and engagement with a book, would improve time spent reading. I have concluded that time spent reading comes down to individuals and their choice to read. I have additionally found that it does not matter if you give students set texts or free choice; they will benefit from reading.

This study can be altered with free choice student only having three or four books to choose from, to limit the abundance of choice. I believe future research studies should focus on the benefit of setting reading tasks on student preferred medium. Let's get the children reading.

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Chapter 9
Languages Other Than English Being Taught in Primary Schools

The Educational and Cultural Benefits

Angela Foulis

Abstract Learning a Language Other Than English (LOTE) is not only a fantastic way for a student to learn to speak a language of another country, but more importantly during LOTE lessons students are also learning about the other culture and people. They will be encouraged to ask questions to understand the reasons why other ways of life can be so different from theirs in Australia. They also learn that Australian behaviours may not be acceptable in the other culture and may actually offend. Learning a LOTE not only encourages children to be respectful of other cultures and beliefs, but also instils in them a keenness to meet new people and to be accepting of the decisions people make and how they choose to live without judgment. Teaching staff recognise that learning a LOTE provides opportunities and career pathways that might be guided by the knowledge of the subject. Parents gave feedback that they valued a LOTE for broadening their children's perspective about the world and the people in it. The feedback and data collected support the value of teaching primary students a LOTE to both the student and the school community as a whole, cross-curricular opportunities being countless and future career pathways for students being more accessible with their knowledge of a LOTE.

Journal Entry, 13th October 2014, Orroroo, South Australia:

> Monday, first day of the school week and a busy day ahead in the Indonesian classroom. The first of the students line up outside, waiting to be welcomed inside. When given the word by the Indonesian teacher Mrs Wyman [not her real name], they happily all file through into the Indo den to begin their journey of learning. Collecting the last of the data for my research report is my priority for the day. One method I chose to use to collect the data was speaking with students about what they have learned in their Indonesian lessons. Generally, from the majority of the primary age students I received a variety of short one sentence answers which I thought was very useful. I was blown away however by the

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response I received from a particular student. This quiet, unassuming year two boy, excitedly gave me feedback on everything he had learned in Indonesian, this is the wonderful list that he shared with me.

'I have learned about the food they eat, the transport, animals and the weather. The people are poor, they work hard and don't get much rest. Indonesia is really close to Australia and they live in huts not houses. Indonesia has heaps of islands. They spell words different to us. They don't have much food and the main food is rice. Indonesia is a small country with heaps of people and they don't have much money. They have a different language and some talk English. They have tall people. They don't own much property and they eat wheat too. The kids don't have as many toys as us. They call colours different names. They have small jetties that they going fishing off. Art is different, lots of bright colours. They wear different clothes. They have darker skin than me. They don't have carpet in their huts, they have dirt. Schools don't have many books and the kids use little black boards to write on, they don't have white boards. They have no apartments.

'The bad part is – they have no video games.'

What a response! He would have continued to give me even more but it was the end of the lesson. Learning a Language Other Than English is so much more than learning the language. This subject offers unlimited cross-curricular opportunities that would enhance any student's learning experience.

Introduction

I am a mature age student studying for my teaching degree, which I have nearly completed with lots of sacrifice, late nights and juggling life issues. I am a Mum, I am a wife, I am a daughter, I am a sister, I am a friend and I am caring, loyal, passionate and strong. I grew up in a small rural community called Pekina in South Australia, which was proud of its Irish heritage, proud of its sport and proud of its people. Nothing has changed. I travelled thirteen kilometres everyday by bus to attend the local area school with my two brothers. Good times were had at school as well as bad times; luckily the good outweighed the bad. I was taught by some fantastic teachers and some not so fantastic; I am actually doing my last teaching placement with one of the fantastic ones. The only language I studied at school was German, during a six week elective in year eight. Counting to ten and the German words for 'window' and 'idiot' are still stuck in my memory. An interesting combination I know! I played tennis and netball and travelled around the countryside with my family every weekend to compete with neighbouring towns. Significant days in the year to me were the first day of school, the first day the local swimming pool being opened for the summer, the Christmas Eve pageant held in Orroroo and the celebration of birthdays of family and friends. My first job was working at the Orroroo cinema on Saturday nights; I can still remember shopping with my Mum for my first frost coloured lipstick, blue eye shadow and foundation to wear.

I still have the curly hair that I cursed for years, which I now embrace, as bed hair is in. I have not grown much taller than I was in primary school and am a similar height to students in the year three class I teach in this placement. Although I shifted the grand thirteen kilometres to Orroroo to live, I am still a Pekina girl at heart and happy to be involved in the magical community where I grew up. I still play tennis for Pekina Tennis Club—well, slowly—and have been the Secretary/Treasurer for more years than I can remember. I am now part of the Pekina community leadership that I grew up admiring, happily taking on the role of Secretary to the Pekina Community Association, who sort out everything to do with Pekina.

As an adult I have worked in banking, health, tourism, child care and education. I like problem solving and helping people, and this is why I decided to choose education as the area I would focus on for my future. I enjoy working with children, especially those that need extra help to succeed. I love gardening, quilting and spending time with my family. I am an excellent communicator: Yes, I can talk lots and I am proud of it.

Who Did I Think I Was?

For the last 23 years I have been a wife and for the last 22 years a mother. Although I did work in part-time or casual positions during this time in a variety of fields, my priority was to be there for my family, to give them a happy and stable home life. Looking back, I didn't do a bad job. When my children started school and I learned that one of their subjects was Indonesian, I was elated. My children learning a foreign language, educational opportunities that I did not have the chance to experience, how lucky!

When we hear that a school student is learning a Language Other Than English (LOTE), we are more likely thinking how fantastic it will be for the student to learn to speak a language of the people from another country. Students will be introduced to speaking and writing in a Language Other Than English, but there is so much more involved in learning a LOTE. Both of my children studied Indonesian for the whole of their primary years. Like most other parents I also believed they would learn how to speak and write Indonesian, not knowing where this may lead them in the future, but it all looked promising. I would never have imagined the benefits both of my children would experience from not only learning a LOTE, but being inspired to be interested in other people and how they live—to be compassionate. I felt the success achieved by students studying a LOTE was due to the physical environment that the students were welcomed into for their learning.

> There is so much that can be done to set up the physical environment of a classroom. The amount of freedom you will have to arrange the classroom to reflect your approach will depend on the year level you teach, the available resources and the leadership at your school (McDonald 2010).

The school's creative LOTE teacher had created an incredibly vibrant and inviting room where the students would learn about everything Indonesian. The walls were dripping with exotic sarongs, carved masks, various musical instruments, handicrafts teamed with bright eye catching posters, and various wind chimes, all themed around Indonesia. This classroom for both my children was the favourite in the school. When they walked through the beaded doorway they were transformed to somewhere interesting, exciting and faraway.

> It is important to understand different cultures so that we may be informed about appropriate behaviour on our part in different situations and avoid being offended or shocked by the practices of others (Kenny 2010).

During the LOTE lessons, the students were being taught Indonesian language and writing, but more importantly they were being taught about the Indonesian culture and people. The meanings behind the mysterious and beautiful masks, what ceremony they would be worn at and who would wear them and why. Students would be encouraged to ask questions, discuss and ask more questions to understand the reason behind some of the Indonesian ways of life that were so different from theirs in rural Australia. The students also learn that certain behaviours that are acceptable in Australia may not be acceptable in the eyes of an Indonesian person and may actually be inappropriate. Simple everyday activities that could offend for reasons very obvious to an Indonesian person may not make as much sense to an Australian.

> Cultures Education is teaching about cultural norms and differences with a view to learning to interact and engage with many different groups (Reynolds 2008).

Learning a LOTE not only encouraged both of my children to be respectful of other cultures and beliefs, it also instilled in them a keenness to meet new people, to be accepting of the decisions people make and how they choose to live without judgement. I am so thankful they were lucky enough to have been involved in a subject which has so many cross-curricular outcomes.

Of This Much I Am Sure

When I compare the wonderful LOTE experiences my children had with those of current students, nothing has changed and that is great. From my research observations, students are still enchanted by the happy Indonesian room and the inspiring LOTE teacher Mrs Wyman. I found it quite interesting from my interviews that although students were also taught Science and Design and Technology in the very same room, they actually felt like they were still studying Indonesian. Because of the busy and engaging setting of the classroom, the students are highly motivated to learn and participate in every subject with the same zest as they do in Indonesian lessons.

Educationally, the response given to me by the year two student, as recorded in my journal entry, is proof that the students are collecting and retaining an incredible amount of information from studying a LOTE. Students also gave feedback that it

felt very special when they were each treated to the singing of happy birthday in Indonesian by the whole class and Mrs Wyman throughout the year. This is a ritual which has been in the Indo room since my children attended, a lovely ritual that has become a highly valued norm. Many students spoke about the pen pal they had in Indonesia, keenly showing me the letter they had received, patiently awaiting reply from the last letter sent. It made me smile when year one students with basic writing skills spoke about how neatly their Indonesian pen pal wrote. It was really nice to hear them complimenting someone so far away.

Fellow teaching staff are very aware of the positive outcomes that are being achieved with the school still offering a LOTE when many other schools around the district are not. These outcomes being experienced could be threatened by the ever expanding Australian Curriculum, new areas being added only resulting in subjects being removed completely. Staff recognise the importance of students learning a LOTE, providing opportunities that could arise and the career pathways that might be guided by the knowledge of the subject. Parents gave feedback that they valued a LOTE being taught to their children, broadening their children's perspective about the world and the people in it. This can create an awareness of children that do not have a lot in life and live without the comforts Australian children take for granted. The parents expressed hope that a LOTE will continue to be offered to the students at Orroroo Area School long into the future.

Conclusion

From the feedback and data collected, the evidence is very supportive that teaching primary students a Language Other Than English is valuable to both the student and the school community as a whole, cross-curricular opportunities being countless and future career pathways for students being more accessible with their knowledge of a Language Other Than English. The popularity of the Indo room is due to a combination of the effective and inclusive teaching methods of the LOTE teacher, as well as the presentation of the learning environment the students are welcomed into. The educational and cultural benefits are recognised and appreciated by the school and the wider community. I would like to thank the teacher I have here called Mrs Wyman for sharing with me her Indo den, allowing me to experience the magic Language Other Than English can inspire in students.

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Chapter 10
The Language of Belonging

What Role Can First Languages Play in Multicultural Australian Schools?

Amber Whittaker

Abstract I became interested in the place of languages in schools through experiences with bilingual schools. Here, however, I will explore teacher and student opinion on first language use in multicultural mainstream schools, where I have undertaken placements in South Australia and in Darwin. The teachers varied as to whether they incorporated students' first languages in lessons, some doing so in connection with geography by asking for equivalents of English words. The teachers nonetheless agreed that first languages played a role in their classrooms through sharing of culture and experiences, languages sometimes being spoken within groups in the class. All teachers were happy for first languages to be used at recess or lunch time and with friends, and they also listed Harmony Day, welcome to country, library resources and visuals as ways different languages were acknowledged. All the students I spoke with were literate in their first language. Whether or not they used it at school generally depended on there being other speakers of the language there, when they mainly used the languages at lunch or recess, but with some use for project work or performances. Mainstream multicultural schools cannot have bilingual education due a lack of funding and resources for dealing with multiple languages, which might also promote the segregation of language groups. Even so, with the intense English focus often found in multicultural schools, it is important to provide an environment and opportunities where students feel comfortable to share their languages.

Journal Entry, 14th September 2013. Arnhem Land, Northern Territory:

> It was amazing to see the confidence in which the students were writing, sounding out words and breaking them into syllables if unsure of spelling. These were the same students who, whilst learning in and through English, had been unwilling or unable to take risks in spelling words, were now taking the lead in their learning and independently writing in their own language using skills they could later apply to English.

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Introduction

I, like the majority of teachers around Australia, come from a monolingual English speaking background. I am a seventh generation Australian of English and Irish heritage. I was born and have spent most of my life in a country town in South Australia, with members of my school and community being widely of a similar background to myself. This is not generally a setting which leads one to invest too much thought into the needs and challenges of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) speakers.

My interest in other languages was sparked during a window of my childhood when I moved to the Northern Territory. I spent four years of my childhood in a town with around half its population consisting of Indigenous people, of whom the majority spoke an Indigenous language as their first language. At school I was surrounded by children from different backgrounds who spoke differently to me, and I was often fortunate enough to be immersed in the culture, tagging along with friends on hunting or pandanus collecting trips with my family.

Upon returning to my home town, I became bored with the monocultural nature of the place and my interest in languages and culture grew. While I had learnt words here and there in the Northern Territory, I wished I had made more of the opportunity to really sit down and learn a new language whilst there. I wanted more. Inspired, I attempted to learn new languages. I made the most progress with two Australian Aboriginal languages, Pitjantjatjara and Djambarrapuyngu, as I was able to practise them with native speakers. I am by no means a fluent speaker, but I do have a level of understanding, which is unfortunately diminishing through lack of use. I also attempted learning Spanish, only to fail dismally, having no Spanish-speaking friends with whom I could practise and make the learning meaningful.

It is maybe my lack of gaining fluency in new languages which led to my admiration of those who are able to speak multiple languages. It also makes it easy for me to imagine how challenging it must be for a child to go to school and not just learn a new language but be required to learn through it, with no scaffolding in language from home. With one quarter of Australian students being English language learners (de Courcy 2014), this is a common scenario for the students around the country. I wanted to explore the opinions of teachers and students who were involved in multicultural mainstream schools in regards to first language use in these schools. To explore this I have talked with teachers and students and reflected back on instances I have observed throughout my time on placements and interactions with multicultural schools.

Who I Was

The majority of my schooling took place in rural South Australia, where I can remember just two students at different times who were from non-English speaking backgrounds. This was in contrast to my schooling in the Northern Territory, where there was a significant number of Australian language speaking Indigenous students. At that school, the language spoken was incorporated and acknowledged through the inclusion of Aboriginal Support workers who spoke the same language, language and culture classes where the language was shared with all students in the school, and having some of the sports teams given Australian language names.

After completing my schooling, I moved with my family and witnessed the setting up of an independent bilingual school in Arnhem Land. This school had the strongest community support I have seen for a school, and the family and community were clear that the place of their first language was to be of equal importance to English. Seeing this school in its infancy, where the program was more bicultural than bilingual, and then returning a few years later on teaching placement and seeing the transformation in students was amazing! Students were doing independent writing in the own language, sounding out words and breaking them into syllables so confidently. Where they had been dependent on help as they didn't know the words or sounds in English, they were now using decoding skills confidently in a language they had strong knowledge of. I felt that this approach takes into account Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development (Berk 2009, p. 266) by scaffolding new learning. Students are introduced to literacy skills in the context of their own language, in which they are already confident. Students who have comprehensive knowledge of their own language can transfer and use these skills within another language (Clarke 2009).

While I was interested and passionate about the place of languages in schools, my experiences had almost solely been confined to schools where the home languages had been Australian (Indigenous) languages. Because of this, the majority of EAL/D students came from the same linguistic background, and it was easy to include both languages in varying ways within the school. Seeing the community fighting for their children to be taught through their first language as well as English demonstrated to me the importance of first languages for a person's identity, as well as its connection to their families and history.

My main source of interaction had been with the teachers, students and community at the bilingual school. They were all, naturally, strong supporters of first languages in schools. I hadn't, as yet, had any exposure to the perspectives on the importance of first languages in schools of teachers and students of multicultural schools, where numerous languages and backgrounds would be present.

Who I Am Now

It was interesting to reflect on my beliefs after having some experience in diverse multicultural schools. I have undertaken placements in two schools with considerable EAL/D student populations, observed another through workplace interactions, and have gained some teacher and student perspectives.

The two schools I undertook placements in were a semi-urban school in South Australia with a year 3/4 class and an urban school in Darwin with year 1/2s. Both classes had around 25 students enrolled, with varying attendance. Due to the number of EAL/D students, the focus on English was strong. Effective English literacy and communication are vital for greater job and life opportunities within Australia (Molynuex 2009). Students with proficient English can express their ideas in a way that is understood, engage with others and learn concepts which are taught through English. Numerous teaching strategies were used to help EAL/D students have greater comprehension of English, including visuals, explicit teaching, extra support for students and scaffolding.

Whilst contact was made with numerous schools across the Adelaide region, only one school agreed to further inform me of student and teacher views on the subject, meaning that responses were limited to that school.

During my placements, the inclusion of first languages within the classroom took place only through informal conversations between student and teachers. One instance I recall was when was chatting with a core group of Ngarrindjeri boys who were the source of most of my behavioural management issues. After I had expressed understanding of a Ngarrindjeri word they had used, their ears pricked up and they keenly asked me if I knew the meaning of other words from the language. My knowledge of the language was limited but lasted me a few rounds of the game, when they then started teaching me new words.

They then went to the teacher and started testing her on Ngarrindjeri words. While willing to participate, it was clear she was uncomfortable, which I imagine would due to the limited knowledge she had of the language, the mischievousness of the boys generally and the vulnerable position it placed her in. The boys were quizzing her with questions like 'Are you a *mimini* (girl) or *korni* (man)?' and then went on to confuse her by giving her the wrong meaning of the words and having a great time doing so. I think this scenario demonstrated some of the positives and negatives of the inclusion of first languages in the classroom. That encounter built rapport with the boys who I had been having trouble with during my instruction time, and they had seemed genuinely keen to interact and teach me. However, it was clear that they were willing to take advantage of the teacher not being able to understand and to use their first language to make fun of someone and exclude them.

Other times I have witnessed first language reference include a brief chat between teacher and student talking about some words of first language, a hearing specialist using a word of their client's language looking for understanding, and students proudly sharing with me the languages they can speak at home.

Similar to my placement experience, some teachers did not incorporate students' first languages in their lessons. Some other teachers incorporated languages 'possibly in geography around the world activities'. An EAL/D teacher told me that she 'sometimes asked for equivalent words in students' own language or us[ed] Google translate to help with translation and understanding.'

Teachers agreed that students' first languages played a role in their classrooms through sharing of culture and experiences, languages sometimes being spoken within groups in the class. One teacher stated, 'Yes, this is a big part of who and where the student is at in their life.' Another teacher discussed the limited schooling refugees had in their own country and the potential that including home language could be traumatic. When asked their personal opinions of students using their first languages at school, all teachers were happy for it to happen at recess or lunch time and with friends, with two pointing out that it shouldn't be enough to inhibit English, and one saying that whilst English should be encouraged, students may use what they know from their language to aid other subject areas as needed.

I found it interesting to talk with students, as it was a perspective I hadn't had much access to previously. All the students were literate in their first language and were between year levels 4 and 7. Whether or not the students used their first language at school was dependent on whether there were any other speakers of the same language at their school, apart from one student who also used their language to teach a friend. The students mainly used their languages at lunch or recess, but some used them as part of their schoolwork, for example, a project or performance. I found it especially interesting as some students had indicated that they used their first language at school, including just translating work in their head.

On a school-wide level, first on my placements I saw a student doing a dance performance to a song in her first language and a visiting performer teaching students some words from his language and showcasing his culture. Teachers listed Harmony Day, welcome to country, library resources and visuals as ways different languages were acknowledged in their school.

A school I was able to observe through my employment had what I felt was a great approach to celebrating the languages and culture present at their school. This ranged from having a teacher say 'good morning' in a different language every day to making Harmony Day a week-long celebration with the entire school community encouraged to be involved. Students could represent their own home language or look up a country and language to represent. It was also nice to see an open night with representatives of different language groups in attendance and organised by the school to liaise and help with translation for any parents as required, with 'welcome' in different languages displayed around the school. A good sense of identity and wellbeing are important factors that can impact student learning (Clarke 2009) and at this school the sense of belonging and community was amazing.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Of this much I am sure: In an ideal world, students would be able to undertake their learning in schools through the language they know best, and through which they have built their fundamental knowledge of the world. However, this is often not the case. It is interesting to note that the majority of the world is bilingual and for many children 'it is as natural to grow up speaking many languages as it is speaking one' (Clarke 2009).

It is clear that in mainstream multicultural schools, the place of first language is not going to come in the form of bilingual education. Whilst bilingualism has a number of advantages, a lack of funding and resources means that a mainstream school taking on the role of teaching through students' first languages would be unachievable. I also feel that within a setting with numerous languages, it could lead to segregation between language groups and damage the sense of community as a school. It would also restrict time spent practising English, meaning some students might not bother to communicate with others outside their language groups.

Of this much I am sure: While I don't think that bilingual education is possible in most mainstream schools, it is important that the diversity and backgrounds of students are acknowledged, represented and encouraged within the school. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority curriculum support document provided for teachers of EAL/D students (ACARA 2014) encourages teachers to promote the sharing of language and culture and to provide opportunities for students to have first language resources to support their English if needed. I feel that this demonstrates that students' first languages do have a role within mainstream schooling, whether it be through the students sharing language, being provided resources to do with the topic in their language or performances in first languages. I also feel that sharing of language and experience can lead towards an inclusive and accepting classroom and school.

Conclusion

Considering where first languages belong in a school with students from a range of language backgrounds has been an interesting journey. While I am a passionate supporter of bilingual schools in Indigenous communities, I don't feel that bilingual education is a feasible answer in multicultural schools. Even so, with the intense English focus which often accompanies multicultural schools, it is important that students can still feel confident in their identity as speakers in their home language. Providing an environment and opportunities where students feel they can share their language and providing resources in a student's home language if needed create some roles that first languages could play within a multicultural school. School-wide acknowledgement can also be achieved through events, support staff and visuals. This is a topic in which I am still growing my understanding and I am looking forward to discovering more about it in my future teaching profession!

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Part III
Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Introduction

Gretchen Geng

All four chapters in this part explore contemporary issues around the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) among different aged children, from early childhood education to primary and secondary schools settings.

We are undergoing the most rapid technological transformation in relation to information, and our younger generations are being born into and growing up in a digital age in which how they gather and interpret information is different to that of their parents and educators (Palfrey and Gasser 2008). There are a perceived number of benefits of the technological devices for children, but not all educators and parents welcome the integration of technological devices. There is an undercurrent of feeling that technological products are drastically altering the landscape of childhood to its detriment (Plowman et al. 2010).

Ashlea Ogilvie-Mitchell's chapter (Chap. 11) is about teaching with the use of iPads in early childhood education. Her opinions about use of iPad did not start positively at the beginning of her journey. She describes how she thought their use in classrooms resulted from the teachers' laziness, as she grew up with very limited ICT use in her family and during her teaching practice it seemed that students only played games during maths lessons. Those people resistant to the notion of digital play maintain that much of the technology and associated software is a waste of time for children, and they doubt young children's readiness to use technology in terms of both cognitive and physical development.

Despite her initial concern about a potential negative impact of ICT on children's learning, Ashlea nevertheless ended up deciding that she could 'understand the use and see great purpose in iPads'. In the new digital age, parents and educators have access to and are allowing children to be exposed to a wider variety of technological devices to enhance and build on the children's experiences and develop their own pedagogical practices (Colker 2011). The associated software can be more motivat-

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ing and educationally effective by using animation and children's voices and by giving simple, clear feedback (Clements and Sarama 2007), and its use can involve children through strong motivation and engagement with the technological devices (McCarrick and Li 2007).

Cognitively, educators are worried that it is too abstract and difficult for children to use the technological devices and the software, and that learning objectives may get lost when children engage in complicated software not specifically tailored to the children's needs or learning styles (Plowman et al. 2010; Struppert et al. 2010). In Tessa Castle's chapter (Chap. 12), she found that the students who mainly used computers in undertaking an assignment sometimes strayed off task and needed to be reminded to refocus on the assignment. Castle further looked at what effect reliance on computers would have on their composition. In particular, Castle concluded while occasionally students wasted time playing games, they were highly engaged during lessons that incorporated ICT.

Naomi Andreae's chapter (Chap. 13) explores the contemporary issue of the impact of online gaming on (upper) primary children's social interaction. She described the issues of ICT's impact on children's wellbeing, that long term physical concerns such as repetitive strain injuries, eyestrain, obesity, and sedentary lifestyle diseases have been noted as potential side effects of the overuse of the technology associated with digital play (Finegan and Austin 2002; Plowman and Stephen 2003; Struppert et al. 2010).

Interestingly, all the four authors identified an important factor which could influence the use of ICTs in classrooms, this being the provision of proper training for teachers. In particular, Jess Adami's chapter (Chap. 14) explores the issue of teacher's computer literacy in modern society. It addresses the importance of teachers understanding the technologies and using them in a proper way so that their negative potential is averted and their positive potential is boosted in the educational learning environment. Both parents' and educators' involvement in children's education is essential, and the amount of time and appropriateness of the games being played should be monitored to ensure a balanced and healthy lifestyle (Rettner 2010).

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Chapter 11
Integration of iPads into Early Childhood Classrooms

Ashlea Ogilvie-Mitchell

Abstract This paper explores the place of technology, and especially iPads, within the classroom. In every placement I saw teachers hand students iPads during maths lessons for them to play games. This really irritated me, since despite my admiration for my mentor teachers I assumed that part of the reason for the iPads was laziness. My early observations of children using iPads in mathematics also produced negative feelings because I saw brilliant mathematical apps being used as guessing games and turned into mindless tasks, and I found that there was a lack of teacher training in relation to technology and the use of iPads. Even so, I found that technology, and particularly iPads, can enhance and enrich the classroom by creating daily opportunities to give students a better understanding of the mathematical concepts being taught. From my observations, the iPad does not have the potential to teach new concepts effectively, but it is great at providing revision for students. However, for students who only see iPads as a game, instruction in the use of iPads in the classroom needs to be a part of lesson planning. The problem is that most schools are under resourced in terms of technology and there is a lack of teacher training in how to effectively use technology in the classroom. This can be changed by teachers taking responsibility for their own professional development and teaching one another.

Journal entry, May 2012:

> Today was the first time I entered a primary school classroom in well over 10 years. I could not believe how much it had changed. After putting their chairs down and lunchboxes in the fridge, students all walked towards the smart board, selected the bubble that had their name in it, and moved the bubble upward to show that they were at school. Students then sat down and went through the whole morning routine from marking the roll to writing notices on a smart board. Throughout the whole day technology was integrated into the classroom. The teacher used the smart board for behaviour management and used 'computer time' as a chance for students to blog. During maths, one small group were even given iPads to work

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on. It all seems so foreign and different to me and I am a little unsure how I feel about technology in the classroom.

Introduction

I am a young women, wife, pre-service teacher and university student. I have lived in Darwin for almost 4 years and feel that I am just coming to understand what it is to teach in this diverse society. My practicum experience has been in local public schools, in Northern Territory Christian schools and in a remote community school. Each experience has opened my eyes to the different aspects of education, living and teaching in the Territory. I also have a military background, which has shaped the way I think and the approaches I take to teaching and to life.

Education has greatly changed since I went through school. Technology was beginning to enter the classroom as I began my schooling, but it was happening at a very slow pace and always a step behind where technology is today. Today there is a huge push for teachers to creatively integrate technology into all areas of education, yet from my observations this is happening without proper training and the support that is required. This is something that has not changed and most classrooms are still a step behind where current technology is up to. Thus, what I will explore throughout this paper is whether technology, primarily iPads, has a place within the classroom. If so, how do teachers effectively integrate iPads into the mathematics curriculum in a way that enhances student learning?

Who Did I Think I Was?

Growing up in a family where the TV was watched only once a week for a specific children's program and where assignments had to be written perfectly before you were allowed to use the computer to type them up, the idea of technology being a constant part of the classroom was foreign to me. In every placement I saw teachers hand students iPads during maths lessons for them to play games. A part of this really irritated me. I thought all my mentor teachers were amazing and had definite areas of strengths, but I assumed that part of the reason for the iPads was laziness.

My early observations of children using iPads in mathematics led to negative feelings about their use. I saw brilliant mathematical apps being used as guessing games and turned into mindless tasks. Children were not using some of the apps as intended and this raised questions: Do students not feel confident to complete the tasks given to them? Do students see the iPad as a game and not an educational tool? Or have the students not received the correct instruction on how to use the tool as required? A journal article by Murphy (2014) stated that students had the tendency to view iPads as toys, and for this reason iPads were being exchanged for Chromebooks as they were seen as a more effective educational tool. IPads are

increasingly available and therefore students who have access to one outside of school may have the predisposition to see them as toys.

In addition to this, my observations have shown that there is a lack of teacher training in relation to technology and the use of iPads. Being a pre-service teacher and completing current teacher training, I believed that universities were not giving upcoming teachers the knowledge and skills required to effectively integrate technology into the classroom. Universities placed a high importance on the use of technology in the classroom, but in my opinion did not give students the skill set required to effectively use technology. This effectively left mentor teachers as the ones to show their pre-service teachers how they used technology and iPads in the classroom, but often they had not been trained in their use either. A study by Leh (cited in Okojie et al. 2006) revealed that teachers admitted that they did not resist technology but agreed they could not fully integrate it into their own teaching practices due to organisational, administrative, pedagogical or personal constraints.

How Do I Think I Am?

I believe the more you learn about certain topics, the more you discover what you do not know and need to learn. This is certainly true of my faith and true in regards to teaching. I once thought teaching was a simple task—the teacher teaches, the students learn—but I now realise that there is much more to the profession than I once thought.

Technology, particularly iPads, can enhance and enrich the classroom in a way that I never imagined possible. Fletcher (in Okojie et al. 2006, p. 87) describes technology perfectly:

> When you go to the hardware store to buy a drill, you don't actually want a drill, you want a hole. They don't sell holes at the hardware store, but they do sell drills, which are the technology used to make holes.

IPads are an amazing tool that creates new opportunities daily to give students a better understanding of the mathematical concepts being taught. I have now come to see the iPad as an additional teacher within the classroom. Whilst the iPad from my observations does not have the potential to teach new concepts effectively, it is great at providing revision for students. In conversation with fellow teachers one made a comment that stood out to me:

> IPads are fantastic at repetition games and children in their early years of education need repetition in order to learn simple concepts such as basic facts. Children are engaged by iPads so if you can find good apps that encourage repetition, the students will be able to learn. This also allows teaching time to be used for the more complex areas of mathematics, leaving the iPads to teach basic number knowledge.

Even over a hundred years ago, Ebbinghaus (1885) described the effectiveness of repetition and stated that repetition over time is really beneficial.

IPads are not used every day by students in my current classroom. They are used to complement other small group activities, including manipulatives, games and teacher instruction. Having variety along with repetition allows students to gain knowledge in a number of ways to be able to completely understand the concept.

Further from my early observations and the questions first raised I have come to realise that it is a combination of all these ideas. For some students they only see iPads as a game, so instructional teaching in the use of iPads in the classroom needs to be a part of lesson planning. From my observations I have seen that without the correct instruction on how to use each app, students can feel lost, although when comprehensively shown or one-to-one demonstration is completed, students can effectively use the tool. Comprehensive instruction needs to be implemented at the introduction of a new app and there should be a quick review every time it is to be used. As stated earlier, repetitive tasks for junior primary students allow them to practise over and over until eventually they know them off by heart. Therefore the continuous use of iPad apps along with other activities will give the students the knowledge and confidence to answer questions and learn the right answers.

My opinion in relation to the lack of teacher training and schools being under resourced has not changed. Limitations to finance, as well as recent budget cuts, constitute a restraint on the amount teachers and schools have to invest in the use of technology. Whilst most schools have brilliant technology, teachers are unsure how to use it and it is often left unused. A major factor in this is teacher confidence. Topper (cited in Okojie et al. 2006) believes that for teachers to use technology in support of their teaching, and to see it as a pedagogically useful tool, they must be confident and competent with the technology they are planning to use. I truly believe if teachers try different strategies with technology they will discover the ways in which technology works effectively in the classroom.

Of This Much I Am Sure

The journey to understanding the place for iPads in the classroom has been an exciting one where I have discovered more than I thought I would, and my perceptions have completely changed. Going from a naive state of confusion to a place where I understand the use and see great purpose in iPads has been a freeing experience. I know I would have greatly struggled to implement something into my classroom that I did not completely agree with and did not understand. Of this much I am sure, that seeing how perfectly it can complement what I as the teacher am doing and how it can effectively act as an additional teacher gives me great reason for excitement, and great courage and joy.

A recommendation from my discoveries is that Math Slide, Sky Numbers HD and Math Evolve are brilliant apps for children to use. I am sure that given the correct introduction and the correct teaching around iPads, students would feel confident to experiment. The more they are exposed to the app the more confident they will feel to give it a go.

Of this much I am sure, that what did not change throughout my journey is the knowledge that most schools are under resourced in terms of technology and there is a lack of teacher training in how to effectively use technology in the classroom. This can be changed by teachers taking responsibility for their own professional development and teaching one another. I have seen teachers and schools do this, and it is fantastic when teachers bring a piece of technology to staff meetings and demonstrate to their colleagues how they use it within the classroom. I believe this is the best way with limited time and resources to expand the use of technology and increase teachers' confidence.

Conclusion

This journey has been both unexpected and interesting in a highly positive way. Reflecting on the journey, I was able to understand where I stood in relation to iPads in the classroom and see how this has changed my ways of thinking and my teaching approaches. Throughout this journey, I have identified that my previous stance on iPads in maths would be how most current teachers feel. Having researched and effectively understood how iPads can assist in classrooms, I believe I can now assist in educating and providing confidence to other teachers in the use of iPads in a way that enhances their classrooms.

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Chapter 12
The Implementation of Computers in Middle School Classrooms

The Changing Nature of Teaching

Tessa Elizabeth Castle

Abstract Computers have become the norm in classrooms, allowing students immediate access to boundless information and changing teachers from instructors and imparters of knowledge to doing more monitoring of learning. Whilst on placement I investigated computer use for an assignment on expository writing, for which students could research their topic using any available resources. I kept a record of students who mostly chose to use books, newspapers and archive files and those mainly using a computer. Only a few of the latter strayed off task and needed to be reminded to focus on the assignment. When I marked the assignments it seemed clear which students had used computers and which had not; whilst the content was quite similar, students using computers made far fewer spelling and grammar mistakes, whether this was a result of the their own ability or simply due to the computer program. I also concluded that middle school students paid more attention during lessons that incorporated ICT, but on occasion wasted time playing games instead of staying on task. I also realized how the role of a teacher had changed from the 'chalk and talk' approach of my middle school years to doing a lot more monitoring, directing, engaging and motivating students. Whilst I now view computers as an important research resource for students, I also still see negative aspects in their frequent use, particularly the loss of handwriting, spelling and grammar skills.

Journal Entry, Monday September 1st 2014:

> Upon starting my second teaching placement this semester, I was nervous yet excited at the prospect of being given more responsibility as a teacher. I am on placement at my town's local high school this time around, and I prepared myself for a big day. To my delight, it held more surprises than I first anticipated. Today I sat in on a year 8 English class and was given the opportunity to sit back and observe how the teacher operated her lesson. I was told at the start of the day that this was the class that I would be teaching for the next three

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> weeks. I noticed during my lesson of observing the year 8s that their teacher did a lot less instructing and a lot more monitoring than I had expected. The students were finishing a unit on poetry, and they were using computers to research for their final assignment of the unit. It dawned on me today that computers and other forms of technology are not only changing the way students research information, but they are also changing the way that we teach.

Introduction

Before beginning my next placement, I had a clear picture in my head of how I would go. I was organised, had my lesson plans ready to teach and execute without incident. However, upon arriving at the school and observing the year 8 English class I was set to teach, I threw all of that out the window and thought about how I could use progressive teaching pedagogies to enable students to research more effectively. Students in the contemporary modern classroom of today learn efficiently in very different ways than they would have 50, 20, or even 5 years ago.

The traditional school classroom has transformed in many ways over the last two decades, resulting in major changes due to the influx of rapidly changing technology. Computers have become somewhat the norm in contemporary classrooms, allowing students immediate access to boundless information whenever they require it. When I was at high school, we as students were lucky to have a computer to complete research on for one lesson per day, while the students I taught on placement were using them for almost every lesson they participated in. Although this wasn't what I was used to in a learning environment as a student, the students in this class, who were growing up during the digital revolution, saw it as the norm.

The issue of whether using computers for such a large amount of lesson time is beneficial or harmful to a middle school student's learning capacity is one that has to be addressed. Although relevant literature surrounding the use of computers in the middle school classroom investigates how the implementation of computers can affect a student's learning habits, attention span, knowledge retention abilities, and fact recall abilities (Braiker 2013), middle school learners have been identified as being at a critical learning age (Cobbold 2005). The question has to be asked, does the implementation of computers into their classrooms have positive or negative effects on their educational outcomes?

Computers have also changed the way we as teachers operate within the classroom. While previously in the traditional classroom environment teachers have been pure instructors and imparters of knowledge, computers have allowed for students to conduct research of their own accord. Due to the digital revolution and the influx of technology into our classrooms, teachers are now doing a lot more 'monitoring' of learning than ever before.

Who Was I?

Before beginning my placement, I was writing full-blown traditional lesson plans relating to learning outcomes and objectives. While these lessons were informative and useful, upon starting my placement I realised just how much the use of technology such as computers has had an impact on the running of the modern classroom. The contemporary classroom was very different to my own high school classroom environment of only 5 years ago, because of the changing nature of technology available and students having been brought up during the Internet Age.

I used to view technology such as computers as an 'add-on' to lessons, rather than as the main focus or resource used. This was because of the way that I was taught when I was at school. I believed the way I was taught was effective, as I never had any trouble whilst at school or when I eventually progressed to university. Before reviewing the use of computers in the classroom whilst on my placement, I would have deemed it acceptable for students to be using computers for only one lesson a day, as I regarded them at times as somewhat of a distraction from learning.

Throughout my university education thus far, teaching twenty-first century learners has been a great topic of interest to me. Before beginning my second teaching placement I was very interested to see how successfully the theory that I had learnt and the different teaching pedagogies available to me would be applied in a hands-on classroom environment. During preparation for my teaching placement I tried to incorporate as many interesting lesson elements as I could, as I aimed to inspire and motivate my students to be active in their own learning process.

The literature on technology use in the classroom that I had consulted prior to starting my teaching placement held mixed outlooks on the frequent use of computers during lesson time. While certain studies have shown that computers can be used to empower students to engage and be present in their own learning through different aspects of research (Knutson 2014), other investigations uncovered downsides to the incorporation of such technology. Several studies showed that many students who use computers on a daily basis during lesson time have poorer performance on standardised literacy tests (Braiker 2013). Due to computer programs with automatic spelling and grammar checks, many students are also gaining low assessment scores for their year level in these literacy areas (Martin 2013).

While there are many obvious positives of incorporating technological resources such as computers into the everyday classroom in a research sense, as an aspiring English teacher, before my placement I seemed to view the downsides of computer use as having a greater impact on students overall than the positive outcomes.

Who Am I Now?

After completing my teaching placement and learning more about the use of technology in the contemporary classroom, I no longer see the use of computers as a distraction from learning. While observing lessons planned by my mentor teacher, I watched in awe at how well students seemed to behave when technology was incorporated into their lesson. They paid more attention, they sat up straighter, they listened, and more importantly (I could hardly believe it) they absorbed the information being presented.

I can now see through my own experience with twenty-first century learners that they respond well to the incorporation of computers into everyday lessons. While I am open to incorporating computers into the majority of my lessons, I am still worried about the statistics that several pieces of literature suggest. General academic abilities such as spelling, grammar and handwriting skills have been noticed to decline based on the amount of time students are spending on computers during lesson time (Braiker 2013). The ability to word process assignments, while a great way to produce a neat, polished piece of work, can mean that students spend less time honing these important basic skills (Reeve-Boles 2011).

Whilst on teaching placement I decided to do a bit of an investigation into how the use of computers correlates to better scores on the final assignments of the unit I was teaching. I was teaching a unit on expository (argumentative/persuasive) writing, and students were given the opportunity to research their assignment topic in the library using any of the resources available. The final assignment of the unit was a polished expository piece of prose written by the students on a topic of their choice. Students were instructed to write about just one side of the issue (either for or against, not both perspectives).

Throughout the assignment process, I kept a record of those students that chose to research using mostly books, newspapers and archive files. I also monitored those using mainly a computer to conduct their topic research. It wasn't compulsory for the assignment to be word-processed, so some students hand wrote their final assignments and handed them up in a written format. Throughout the assignment process a series of lessons were devoted to researching the assignment topic, collating information, drafting and lastly writing a final copy of the students' expository pieces.

Whilst teaching the lessons involved in the assignment process I was able to monitor students on their computer use. What I found was that most students spent their time studiously researching their expository topics. Several students strayed off task whilst using computers and needed to be reminded to focus on the assignment. The majority of the students who researched using resources other than computers did so diligently, without needing to be monitored.

Upon marking the students' assessment pieces, it was clear to me which students had used computers during their assignments and which had not. Whilst the content of the expository writing was quite similar, attesting not much to the difference between students completing computer and book research, students who wrote

computer-generated assignments made very few spelling and grammar mistakes throughout the body of their assignments in comparison to those who had handwritten their expositions. Whilst this led to a better mark in the literacy column of the marking rubric, it needs to be questioned whether this was a result of a computer program or the students' own literacy abilities. Students who handwrote their assignment in this instance were able to learn through reflecting on their mistakes upon the marking of their assignment.

While those students who used computers to generate their assignments may have gained extra marks for their literacy skills, were they on task the majority of the time when conducting their research? Were the students who handwrote their assignments and edited for spelling and grammar mistakes worse off in the long run? Many questions came to the fore as a result of my investigation whilst on teaching placement. The most important was:

- Does the frequent implementation of contemporary technology such as computers in the middle school classroom affect the outcome of student learning in a positive or negative way?

Of This Much I Am Sure

Throughout my teaching placement and upon its conclusion I continued to ask myself a series of questions relating to the frequent use of computers within the middle school classroom.

- How does frequent computer use during everyday lesson time positively influence a middle school student's learning capacity?

Throughout my placement experience I noticed that middle school students seemed to pay more attention during lessons that incorporated ICT elements such as computers. As the 'chalk and talk' teaching methods of the traditional classroom are on their way out, students seemed to engage better when information was being presented in various different ways using technological resources. The frequent use of computers during lesson time also serves as a useful research resource for middle school students and allows students to become more actively involved in their own learning. Of this much I am sure, that becoming familiar with modern computer software and developing internet research skills also helps to ready middle school learners for senior secondary and tertiary education.

- How does technology negatively impact a middle school student's ability to learn effectively?

Whilst on teaching placement I also noticed some of the negative impacts of frequent computer use on middle school students' learning ability. On occasion students wasted time during lessons whilst using computers, choosing to play games instead of staying on task. Whilst they are a great research tool and assist learning,

using computers means teachers must be constantly monitoring student behaviour (Braiker 2013). Literature also suggests middle school students who use computer devices for the majority of their lessons per day gain lower literacy scores on standardised tests such as NAPLAN (The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy) (Thomas-Fox 2013). During my placement I also became concerned, as several students appeared to be having issues with spelling and grammar due to relying on computer program software to automatically correct their work.

- How does the implementation of technology in contemporary middle school classrooms change the role of the teacher?

Whilst on placement I realised just how much the role of a teacher had changed, even over the last 5–10 years. During my middle school years, the 'chalk and talk' teaching method was still in full swing, and while computers were used for a research lesson maybe once a day, the main focus of the lesson was around the teacher. Teachers can now partake in many different learning pedagogies, depending on the class of students they are assigned. Throughout the last few decades, a switch from traditional learning pedagogies to student-centered learning has taken place (Glencoe 2005). Of this much I am sure, teachers are now expected to do a lot more monitoring of research, by directing, engaging and motivating students to become involved in their own learning process.

- What amount of technology use is the most beneficial for middle schooling students? (i.e.- how many lessons per day should be spent working with computers?)

Upon completing my teaching placement and investigating how middle school students work in a computer-centered learning environment, I would recommend students spending three to four of six lessons per day using computer research technology. This recommendation is based on my experience in a metropolitan public high school, and teachers may decide that less or more computer time is needed depending on their specific classroom environment. Of this much I am sure, that this balance of both ICT technology and teacher-centered lessons gives students a chance to experience both ways of learning, to find what works for them, to develop lifelong skills and to become actively involved in their education.

Conclusion

Whilst completing this task, the process of investigating, collecting data and analyzing what I have found whilst on placement has been an enlightening one. While teaching theory and research literature may suggest certain standpoints on classroom issues, each class and indeed each student is different and therefore learns in different ways. The incorporation of information technology, and more specifically computers, into everyday lessons can have a definite impact on a student's learning abilities. The task for teachers, therefore, is to gauge how well their classes react to

using computers. Many questions should be asked, such as are the intended learning outcomes being achieved? Is meaningful research taking place? Is each lesson enhanced by the use of a computer? If the answers to these questions are yes, then the use of computers in the classroom on an everyday basis is a positive one for both students and teachers alike.

Upon completing my placement and this reflection upon my teaching practice, I have changed my viewpoint on the use of computers within the classroom to a degree. Whilst I now view computers as an important research resource for students, as an aspiring English teacher I also still see the negative aspects of its frequent use. Loss of handwriting, spelling and grammar skills are the main problems associated with the prolonged use of computers in the classroom, and for this reason I believe computers should be used where they are beneficial during a lesson, and not as a time-filler or where other resources are available.

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Chapter 13
Online Gaming

The Effect on (Upper) Primary Boys Social Interaction

Naomi Andreae

Abstract The purpose of this reflection was to find out whether engaging in regular online gaming activities affected the social interaction of boys in the primary years. In my own family my older brother was too active in sports to play such games, while my younger brother became addicted and obsessive in his upper primary and secondary years of schooling, with bad effects on his social interactions, although this passed as he entered the workforce. During my practicum I found that year 4 boys played computer games on average two to three days per week, with the girls averaging less than one day per week, the most popular game for both being Minecraft. A majority played games appropriate to their age level and believed that they could go without their games for a whole week. A minority played ones inappropriate for their age, including MA15+ games with strong violence and Grand Theft Auto with a rating of R18+. Meanwhile, my literature search found that gaming can be beneficial to children by developing their abilities in team play, turn taking, and a sense of equality. Aggressive or stressed children are more inclined to display antisocial behaviours, but these may not be solely due to the games themselves. What seems important is having support within the home, with recent studies showing that the more involved parents are in their children's play time, the less likely the child will participate in violent games and behave in an aggressive manner.

Journal entry, 24 September 2014, Darwin, Australia:

> Whilst on my final placement in an urban school I was given the opportunity to work with students aged between nine and ten in Year 4. During a conversation about online gaming with one of the students on my placement, the student admitted to regularly watching his older brothers' play games of a violent nature which he also participated in whenever he got the opportunity. From my observations and my own family experiences I was interested in exploring the issue of online gaming and social interactions for boys in particular in this age

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group. What were they playing and what effect might online gaming have had on these young individuals' social behavior?

Introduction

I am a mother of two young children and a university student studying a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (Pre-service) degree. I was born and raised in Darwin, Northern Territory, and come from a large local family. The purpose of this reflection was to find out whether engaging in regular online gaming activities affected the social interaction of boys in the primary years. The more recent generation of children are being born into a world of technology and are more competent than previous generations as they are exposed to and surrounded by these varying technologies at a much younger age (Neal 2007). The main audience for these console games, such as the Playstation, Wii and Xbox, are boys between the ages of 8 and 14 years (Subrahmanyam et al. 2000). Engaging in these violent computer/console games increases the risk factor for aggression in our youth (Bijvank et al. 2012).

What Am I in Relation to the Topic?

In relation to this issue, I firmly believed that the involvement of children in regular unsupervised violent online games played a major part in aggressive and isolating behaviours. Due to my age, being in my late 20s, gaming was very limited in terms of the choice of games, quality and availability when I was growing up. I felt it would be interesting to see the social changes over the years and the impact it's having on each decade.

My older brother of four years was very active and competitive in outdoor activities within the sporting world, which rarely gave him time to play such computer or console games. When he found the opportunity to play, it was only non-violent games that were appropriate to his age group, for instance, Alec the Kid and Sonic, which were not online games that were played through the internet.

My younger brother of nine years, who did not enjoy organised sports like our older brother and I, was very addicted and at times displayed obsessive behaviours to his gaming in his upper primary and secondary years of schooling (see Raising Children Network 2014). This behaviour may have partly been related to the fact that he was the only child living at home with our parents at this stage of his life. This obsession was such that he would come home from school and go straight to his room to join his fellow gamers. His gaming started as harmless fun, with games such as NBA Live 14 and racing car games. As he got older his interest turned to the more violent types, like Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty, as these games were the most popular amongst his peers. He would stay in his room until he was made to join the family for dinner. Then he would return back to the game after dinner. This

addiction did have an effect on his social interactions in the real world. However, in the virtual world he communicated for hours with gamers both near and far, as these online games are now played by gamers around the world both young and old. This communication was extremely competitive, and with this competitiveness came foul abusive and verbal aggression to the point where my mother found it so unacceptable that she would switch the modem off, as this would ultimately force him out of the game.

He has now completed his Year 12 certificate, works full time and rarely engages in online gaming these days. He is a happy and friendly young man and does not exhibit signs of aggression, which I believe is due to the fact that our parents had a rather protective and supportive relationship with all three of us, which has played a major role in guiding our personalities towards non-violent behaviours. This active parenting style I believe has made us aware of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behaviour. Violence in any form, verbal or physical, is not acceptable (see Beresin and Schlozman 2012).

My nieces, nephews and my own child by two years of age have had ready access to interactive electronic games through various hand-held, console and online devices, including iPads and iPhones. While often these devices have been used to entertain or educate our children through educational applications, such as memory games, Phonics Farm and Reading Eggs sight words, the popularity of violent games being played, particularly by boys, is rapidly increasing (Olsen et al. 2008).

According to my mother,

> Cyber Bullying is also now a constant worry, as most of these games are multiplayer and online. Online chat is available for these gamers to communicate and through this chat system players can 'team up' and 'gang up' on other players which can ultimately cause anger and frustration in the players constantly losing and being ridiculed. These players may then believe they are being targeted, which can result in that child having negative emotions and this then leads into aggression if they don't have the skills to deal with these feelings.

She also believes that verbal abuse can psychologically affect these players (K. Andreae, personal communication 2014).

What Am I Now?

I found through conversations with my year 4 students while on my placement that Minecraft was the most popular game with both boys and girls. It was evident from the boys I talked to that they played on average two to three days per week, with the girls averaging less than one day per week. A majority of both boys and girls believed that they would be able to go without their games for a whole week. The majority of the students played games appropriate to their age level, for example, Cool Maths Games and Minecraft, with a minority playing games that were inappropriate for their age group. Those games included MA15+ games which contain strong violence and Grand Theft Auto with a rating of R18+, which contains strong

violence and drug use. It seems to be that once children start playing games that are online and which have a tendency to be games of a violent content, they are then exposed to people of all ages worldwide.

While I was reflecting on the pros and cons of online gaming versus the social interactions of primary boys, I came across a study by Hong et al. (2006) titled 'Gender difference of social behavior in the cooperative-competitive game'. The study mentioned that, depending on the content of the video/console game, children may improve their collaboration, team building and problem solving skills when playing games that require the player to play in a team. Further research found that, according to Gentile et al. (2009), games like Grand Theft Auto which have a violent content and high classification rating were more likely to promote an increase in violent behaviours.

I believe through my literature search that gaming can be beneficial to children's social interactions by assisting them with the skills needed to work together. Therefore, children who are playing games that are from a nonviolent genre, for instance, Cool Maths Games or Mario Racing Kart, have a pro-social behaviour pattern (Noonan 2015). Some other social benefits of gaming include team play, learning the importance of turn taking, and developing a sense of equality (Raising Children Network 2014).

Of This Much I Am Sure

Of this much I am sure, reflecting on the conversation in my journal entry, that if I were to do more reading and reflection on this online gaming issue, I would be extremely interested in finding out if playing these higher rated games of MA15+ and R18+ had any significant tie to being introduced to these games at an earlier age through older siblings or other family members, for example, uncles or cousins.

Through my reading and reflection I strongly believe it is important for parents of children that are using these devices to monitor the amount of time and appropriateness of the games being played to ensure a balanced and healthy lifestyle (Rettner 2010). The key to avoiding any problems that may arise, including aggression and or inclusiveness, is moderation and the child having the maturity to distinguish the difference between reality and fantasy in such games (Beresin & Schlozman 2012).

According to Eugene Beresin and Steve Schlozman in their 2012 study titled 'Violent video games and movies causing violent behavior', those who have traits that are aggressive or are stressed are more inclined to have antisocial behaviours and may become bullies in the playground or when playing these violent games. However, we cannot expect that these behaviours in real life have come solely from playing violent games. As mentioned earlier, my older brother played a lot of team sports; due to being so competitive he would take his aggression out on the field or track; for example, when he became stressed and frustrated he would go to the athletics track to relieve these emotions during training sessions.

Conclusion

There are a number of reasons for aggressive behaviours depending on the child and their upbringing. Online gaming cannot be solely responsible for these behaviours, as the child may have underlying issues, such as learning difficulties, a medical diagnosis, for instance, autism and or ADHD. Another issue may be whether there is aggression and lack of support within the home. These children may struggle with differentiating what is reality and what is fantasy.

Technology is now readily accessible in our everyday life and continues to improve from generation to generation (Suoronta 2003). Recent studies have shown that the more involved parents are in their children's play time, the less likely the child will participate in violent games and behave in an aggressive manner (Raising Children Network 2014). Children who are given the freedom to make all their own choices, for example, playing MA15+ games at the age of ten, have 'been there, done that' in their early years. The question could be asked, 'Where to next?' Will they continually push the boundaries to find their next thrill?

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Chapter 14
ICT–The Dawn of a New Age of Teaching or the Barrier to Successful Quality Teaching?

Jess Adami

Abstract Information and communications technology (ICT) has become a means for students to access a wealth of information from the internet, create digitally and visually enhanced documents, and be assessed on the basis of electronic documents and PowerPoint presentations. At the same time, in my practicums I noticed how the ways teachers chose to integrate ICT into their teaching sometimes had huge benefits for the students but in other cases could halt or diminish their learning potential. Even worse was when ICT was ignored in favour of outdated learning experiences due to lack of teacher training or the confidence to integrate ICT to ensure learning. As a pre-service teacher I found that using ICT was a successful way to engage students while simultaneously catering for different types of learners. Especially important is the laptop computer, which even technologically less competent teachers utilise to meet their day-to-day requirements. Even more impressive is how students pick up ICT skills at a young age and gain more proficiency than many adults, demonstrating a maturity and concentration not shown in other activities, as well as an ability to self-manage, solve problems and help each other in their work. Educators not only need to be ICT proficient, but also to include as much ICT learning experience as possible within an already crowded and demanding Australian Curriculum.

Journal Entry: 12th September 2014, Alice Springs, Northern Territory:

> As I walked around my Year 6 class today, I distinctly remembered being stumped by the prevalence of technology in my classroom. To be fair, at the start of my practical, my mentor teacher had said that she was very focused lately on the inclusion of ICT into her own teaching and would be happy to share what she had learned. I remember thinking then that I was up to date and confident in my own prowess in technology and quietly believed that there was not much more she could teach me. As I walked around my class today I remember being baffled by how wrong that assumption had been. Sure, I already knew that the YouTube clip we just watched had huge learning potential for the students, but the class management system, Class Dojo, which I replaced the screen with, until a few weeks ago

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would have been a mystery to me. Sure, I knew booking the class into the computer lab was a great way to ensure my students had sufficient research time to get their assignments completed, but my one special needs student who was unable to operate and create word documents would have been left behind if it wasn't for the presentation apps loaded on their school supplied iPad that allowed for them to complete a modified version of the same assignment. Sure, I knew that my students were old enough and technological efficient enough to use email as a means of communication if necessary, but I was in the dark that communication technologies had progressed to programs such as Edmodo, where I was able to assign homework, post whole class tasks, create quizzes and set times where I will be available online after school hours to assist with homework and queries the students may have. As I walked around my classroom and watched my students navigate with ease advanced technologies that never existed until recently, I remember thinking that the potential benefits of this inclusion are limitless, but at what cost do they come?

Introduction

I grew up in the Northern Territory town of Alice Springs, commonly referred to as the 'Red Centre of Australia'. I completed all of my schooling from transition right up to year 12 in the same college, allowing me a unique insight into how the school and teaching environment changed and restructured with the advancement of Information Communication Technologies (ICT). In my gap year I was even given the opportunity to hold my first adulthood job working at my old school as an Inclusion Support Assistant (ISA), working with students that had academic needs but more often than not working with students that had behavioral problems and difficulties adjusting to the environment of the school. This is a job I've held on and off for the duration of my university degree and more than likely the initiating spark that led to me choosing education as my own career path.

During this time, with education as a possible future in the back of my mind, I couldn't help but notice the different ways the teachers I worked with choose to integrate ICT technologies into their own teaching pedagogy. More than that I couldn't help but notice the way these teaching practices could have huge benefit for all students involved or in other cases halt and diminish the potential of the learning experience. However, worse than this was when the potential use of ICT technologies were completely ignored in order for outdated learning experiences to be continued due to lack of teacher training or confidence in an ability to successfully integrate ICT to ensure learning. This is an issue for me because the importance of ICT literacy has now been recognised in the Australian National Goals for schooling in the twenty-first century. According to these goals, when students leave school they should be 'confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly Information Communication Technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society' (Ainley 2005). As stated by Kuraishy and Bokhari (2009), the traditional classroom can no longer meet the learning needs of the present day world, as modern technologies have changed the way in which students learn.

What Was I?

As stated above I spent my whole student life in the same college, which I believe was very beneficial for me in developing the person I have become today. Although it could be argued that before my placements it gave me a very narrow view of what schools were like, it did however give me the opportunity to witness how much society and in particular technological advancements can impact upon the way in which students learn. In my very early years of school, computers were not commonplace in schools yet. In fact the most ICT inclusion in my education were the old fashioned projectors and the occasional educational movie displayed on the television that was shared and wheeled between ten different classrooms. Looking back on this time of life through the eyes of what I have learnt now has shown me that when ICT technologies were available they were used only as a means to transfer knowledge.

It wasn't until I reached my middle years of primary school that I was witness to the first major technological advancement of my old college. This came in the form of the creation of a computer lab with enough computers to cater for a whole class at once. It is sad that I remember this so clearly, not because we were given our first opportunity to develop our ICT skills, but because with the computers came computer games that we were allowed to play every once in a while as a special treat. As a young student I saw no merit or fun in the weekly typing lessons or the educational games that taught us where each letter and numeral was on the keyboard or even why extra credit was given if you were able to type without looking at the letters using all ten fingers instead of the two digits I had used to type before that. It is only now that I see that this was the first step in teaching our hands, so used to holding a grey lead, to communicate with speed using a keyboard.

It was almost as if the creation of one computer lab to be shared across the college was the breaking of the gates and in rushed the technological army. By the time I reached high school multiple computer labs had been set up across the college, printers were available in all labs and no longer were we restricted to educational typing games. Technology had advanced to a point where the use of computers was no longer a one-lesson ordeal, but instead used as a means for the students to gain access to a wealth of information using the internet and to create digitally and visually enhanced documents, with our assessments slowly moving away from hand written essays in favour of Microsoft Word and PowerPoint presentations. As I continued my schooling, ICT technologies became increasingly prevalent, being utilised as a means of research, to access a range of resources, visual and audio enhanced learning environments before finally reaching the level where whole classes would take place in a computer lab compared to a traditional classroom, for example, my Year 12 English class.

What Am I?

Since finishing my own schooling and now at the tail-end of my university degree, the rise of technology has shown no sign of slowing. For instance, as of 2009 nearly three quarters of households had access to the internet. This is a massive increase when compared to the one in six households with access to the internet from a decade earlier (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). By now this figure is only expected to have increased significantly.

With the increasing prevalence of the internet came such opportunities as completing my teaching degree as an external student and becoming accustomed to an online learning environment. In doing so it required me to further develop the way in which I use ICT technologies in order to support my own learning, becoming accustomed to managing technology while using technology as a means of managing information, acquiring information, transferring information and communicating information (ACARA 2014). It is only from reflecting on my own schooling and my own current professional practice have I realised how much ICT technologies have become a part of my own teaching pedagogy, both in terms of practice and planning.

As a pre-service teacher I found that the inclusion of ICT technologies was always a successful way to engage my students in the current topic and found that I was simultaneously able to cater for the different types of learners that made up my classroom. Previous practical experiences have taught me that teachers will utilise ICT in a way they feel confident to do as teachers to successfully maintain the overall goal of providing our students with quality learning experiences. Throughout my degree I have been given opportunities to work with very different styles of teaching and inclusion practices. Maybe it's from the generation I was born in or the way my old college was quick to embrace the potential power of ICT technologies in supporting education, but it still surprises me today to see the disparities that can exist between school to school, teacher to teacher, and class to class when it comes to harnessing these potential learning tools.

Whether it be to jump on board the technological train and embrace the potential fully, as seen by the mentor teacher in the above journal article, or alternatively to maintain that ICT technologies should be left for assignment production and are no great benefit to the normal running of the everyday classroom, all have been important in shaping the way I, myself, integrate ICT into my own teaching practice. However there is one tool that stands tall amongst the rest, and through discussions with multiple mentor teachers and other professionals I was able to confirm this theory, namely the power of the laptop computer. No matter the technological competence of each teacher, all utilised the laptop in their workplace to ensure they were able to meet the requirements of day-to-day life in the field of teaching. In all my professional experiences, my personal laptop was beside me all the way. This was so whether it was in creating and sorting a multitude of lesson plans, accessing the internet and its countless learning tools and activities, using the laptop as a means of communication with parents, or even storing important information like marking,

attendance, EAPs or journal entries. I have utilised the laptop in all practical experiences with the intent to provide quality learning experiences for my students and accurately keep important information about the students safe and in a location only I could access.

But having an even greater influence than my mentor teachers were the actual students that I had the opportunity to teach. It was truly an eye opening experience to witness firsthand the way the students of today's world are able to work with and through digital technologies, picking up the skills required to manipulate these technologies at a younger and younger age and with more proficiency than many adults using the same tools. During a year-one professional placement I was able to include the use of iPads and apps such as Reading Eggs and Mathletics as part of our daily rotational activities. At first I was hesitant in leaving students unsupervised with such an important but mainly distracting learning tool. However, by the end of the placement I was able to clearly identify the way students embraced the responsibility of handling such a learning tool and were able to demonstrate the maturity and concentration that they had not shown in the other activities I provided. Furthermore, I witnessed firsthand a willingness to be independent in their work and an ability to successfully self-manage, solve and help each other in their work. By allowing students the opportunity to utilise a tool they were interested in with the intention of improving reading and math skills, I was rewarded and proud to see the students demonstrate a dedication and attention to their work not witnessed before.

Of This Much I Am Sure

As I've tried to make clear, schools have now gained access to a wealth of technologies aimed at improving student learning, providing for their learning needs and catering to all forms of student learning. It is an important resource that I try to take full advantage of when on professional placement. The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on the Education Goals of Australia (MCEETYA 2008) states that in a digital age with rapid and continuing changes in the ways that people share, use, develop and communicate with ICT, it is recognised that young Australians must be highly skilled in its use (see also ACARA 2014). This recognition has sparked many governments and school communities across Australia to attempt to harness this potential in order to improve educational opportunities, boost outcomes and energise the learning experience (White 2008). What has not yet been fully embraced by the government is the development of teacher training to ensure competence in the use of these ever changing, ever advancing and ever increasing information communication technologies. Through discussions that have taken place with a range of professionals in the field of education, the wish or intent to fully embrace ICT in all aspects of the curriculum has been highlighted by many, but there is a lack of knowledge or training to competently do so without putting the students at risk of inefficient learning experiences.

Conclusion

Now, I am not arguing for the burning of books and grey leads and a complete stripping of the old ways. Far from it, actually. What I believe to be important in today's world of technological advancement is for teachers and students alike to be prepared for the challenges of the future. We live in society that is addicted to technological advancement. This is not limited to education but in all facets of life. You only need to stop and look around you to see the way technology has become an everyday part of our life, aimed at improving the standard of living or, generally speaking, making things easier for us. With technology a part of almost every facet of twenty-first century students' lives, both in school and outside educational institutions, it has become more important than ever for both students and educators alike not only to become 'ICT literate', but to have a deeper understanding of the ever increasing tools, applications, learning resources and internet-based learning activities (Northwest Territories 2014). This puts increased pressure on educators not only to be ICT proficient, but also to include as much ICT learning experiences as possible within an already crowded and demanding Australian Curriculum. However, ICT technologies provide the opportunity to improve quality of teaching, learning and management in schools in order to reach both students' personal standards and the national Australian curriculum standards (Livingstone 2012).

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Part IV
Play-Based Learning

Introduction

Gretchen Geng

All five chapters in this part are about aspects of play-based learning. Based upon Piagetian theories that emphasise the importance of developmentally appropriate practice, play-based settings enable children to learn through play (Cutter-Mackenzie et al. 2014). Interestingly, play-based learning was already being used back in the 1700s (Wood 2010), and it has continued to be used in early childhood education to promote the learning of young children. Critical theorists such as Roussau, Froebel, and Dewey believed that play was critical as a primary mode for young children's learning and development (Platz and Arellano 2011). Roussau (1712–1778) in particular emphasised child-centred education and that adults needed to offer a secure environment (Dahlberg et al. 1999). Froebel (1782–1852) introduced the concept of first-hand experiences for young children in children's play (Wood and Attfield 2005). Dewey (1589–1952) also believed it was important to provide different experiences to enable children's learning through play (Platz and Arellano 2011). Over the years, early childhood education has progressed through various values based on many generations of theorists and educators. Based on such theories, early childhood education becomes a field of evolving play for children and of increasingly valued roles for educators during play to support children's learning (Cutter-Mackenzie et al. 2014).

However, despite critical theories emphasising the importance of play in early childhood education, they are not always endorsed (Lillemyr 2009). In the latter part of the twentieth century, political, social and economic pressures have taken a great toll on controlling how early childhood education should be done, which is increasing product-driven in how to produce a future workforce (Dahlberg et al. 1999).

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Similar issues are identified in current pre-service teachers' work. The chapters by Dayna Clark (Chap. 15), Linnea Mead (Chap. 16), and M'Lis Scott (Chap. 17) start with accounts of the importance of play-based learning as they themselves were growing up, and then consider how to use and support it in current early childhood education. In all of these chapters, the authors discuss current issues in early childhood education, with an emphasis on how play is 'lost' in education, and the educators' role in play-based learning is misunderstood and product driven. This issue is heatedly discussed among educators as the need is emphasised for adults to interact during children's play to support learning (O'Brien 2010; Wood 2013) and to promote balanced or integrated play that provides opportunities for children and adults to interact to support child-initiated play. Two authors in this part carefully discuss the issue of educators' role in children's play from different perspectives. M'Lis Scott (Chap. 17) is especially carefully to distinguish make-believe play from teacher-directed activities. Karen Dangerfield (Chap. 18) also starts with the role of play in her early life, but in the classroom she seems more concerned with the distinction between teacher-directed play-like activities as opposed to teacher-centred explanation and instruction. There represents a shift in the nature of interactions between children and adults, suggesting that the content needs to be more explicitly provided by teachers (Fleer 2011).

Heather Pedrotti's chapter (Chap. 19) also relates to play-based classrooms, but her concern is more with types of motivation, and particularly questions on the value of extrinsic motivation as opposed to intrinsic motivation, though she may not really make the workings of the latter very clear. This is quite consistent with recent arguments towards more critical consideration of the role of play-based learning in early childhood education (Cutter-Mackenzie et al. 2014; Stephen 2010).

In summary, while the historical information is used as theoretical background, play-based learning has gradually reconceptualised with more focus on (a) the roles of educators during play to support learning (Cutter-Mackenzie et al. 2014), (b) the use of current resources, including new technologies as well as traditional materials to promote play-based learning that allows children to learn and construct their own understandings of the world (Krieg 2010), and (c) more developmentally appropriate practice to engage children in learning and play (Corsaro 2011; Nolan and Kilderry 2010). Although all the five authors in this part explore play-based learning in contemporary early childhood education from their individual different perspectives, the relationship between children and educators during play and children's construction of their own knowledge have been increasingly highlighted in how children access and study content through play-based learning (Hatch 2010). By reading the following five chapters, you will explore the current issues in play based learning in early childhood education through the authors' own experiences.

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Chapter 15
Play-Based Learning Within the Early Years

How Critical Is It Really?

Dayna Clark

Abstract This chapter explores play-based learning, drawing upon my own experiences and on research within the early childhood sector, specifically on how play can impact on the social, emotional and physical and cognitive development of children from birth to eight years. My own childhood was filled with play, exploring the local quarry with my brother for hours on end, although this was less true of my schooling. While some literature stresses the importance of play as both a facet of development and the source of energy for development, some academics seem more concerned with children learning fundamental concepts underpinning Maths and English. At the same time, in my own teaching practicum I saw examples of how play can harness children's capabilities and create a 'can do' disposition for learning. Through placements, observations, and practice and research I have been able to solidify my belief that the development of play within early childhood is essential and fundamental to learning. While I am aware of some cultural differences, it is evident that children learn best through play and that it is highly beneficial to incorporate it within the curriculum, utilising educationally rich materials for children to play with. Play should no longer be a topic for scrutiny within the curriculum, but rather the question is how we as educators, parents and adults can help maximize and harness the potential that play has to offer.

Journal entry 25.08.2014 practicum, Henley Beach Kindergarten, South Australia:

> The students are so engaged in their learning and the passion that is seen in the early childhood educators is something to marvel at. I can only feel but slightly overwhelmed. Student D looked at his friends across the yard, and began running, at what I can only imagine was his fastest pace, full pelt forward, with open arms and an open heart, eager and ready to engage in what I personally believe to be one of the most powerful learning styles—play. It amazes me how long children can play for, and full of life their play is watching them engage with each other, resolve conflict and develop into independent thinkers.

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Introduction and Who Did I Think I Was

When I think back to my childhood, it is somewhat different to the lives that children live today, filled not was my bedroom with structured toys and instructions on how to create a masterpiece, but rather paints, crafts, sticks and rocks that I had collected from the local quarry and, of course, the occasional captured bug or insect, nestled safely in a glass jar for constant inspection. I grew up in Belair, living across from a vast quarry, which beckoned to be explored on a daily basis. I had a younger brother, who was as gregarious as I and couldn't grasp the notion of sitting still, and so was a perfect playmate. What I recall most is getting up in the morning, going through the motions of daily living and then when my mother allowed it, my brother and I would run free to play and explore in the quarry for hours on end. Children from the city couldn't understand how we could play for so long, without toys, without computers and televisions, but simply each other. To me it was easy: One day I was a pilot, the next an explorer, closely followed by a police officer, with my brother as my captive, who had to break free at every opportunity. Looking back now, with the knowledge I have gained and the clearer understanding I have developed, it is obvious to me that I was engaged in constant learning through play, and whilst my friends and fellow classmates were glued to their computer screens and PlayStations, I was extending my critical thinking skills, becoming a fundamental asset in society and a well rounded individual.

When I finally started school, for what to me felt like I had waited an eternity, I was eager and full of life, ready to soak up the worldly knowledge that would be imparted on me by my ever so knowledgeable teachers. Looking back, what I didn't realise at the time was that some teachers have 'demons' of their own; some have given up that passion and sense of life that they once breathed into the youths of today, and rather they count down the clock, until they can rid themselves of the burden they call their class. Don't get me wrong, not all my experiences as a youngster in school were bad: I had some marvelous teachers; some teachers showed me what it felt like to be praised, and what it felt like to achieve and learn and taught me how to empower myself. Without both the 'good' and 'bad' teachers, I wouldn't have gone into education; I wouldn't have this thirst to discover the truth to the unanswered question that lies beneath me, 'Is play-based learning all it's cracked up to be? Or should we be pushing like Mrs. Truman, my first grade teacher, to all "sit still, do our work and be quiet"?'

Within this chapter, I will explore play-based learning, drawing upon my own experiences and research-based evidence in the early childhood sector, with specific regards to children aged birth to eight years of age and how play can impact on their social, emotional and physical and cognitive development. For the purpose of confidentiality, all names have been changed within this chapter.

Who Do I Think I Am?

Let's start with what is play. How can it be incorporated within our curriculum to assist our children to develop into well-rounded individuals capable of understanding the world we live in? Is play simply an easy way out of education, something to make things easier for teachers?

Van Hoorn et al. (2007, p. 5) indicate that 'play is a human phenomenon that occurs across the lifespan', an aspect that is integrated in many cultures and lives. It is not biased towards age or race, but rather something that everyone can enjoy and partake in. 'Play is fundamental because it drives children's development, it is simultaneously a facet of development and the source of energy for development' (Van Hoorn et al. 2007, p. 5). Play is instinctual; it encourages children to behave freely without fear of consequences. However, not everyone feels so strongly about the power of play within Early Childhood. Academics indicated that children ought to engage in educational activities such as learning about the fundamental concepts underpinning Maths and English, as this prepared children for the heavy demands that school had to offer (Nicolopoulou 2010, pp. 2–3). Some parents indicated that further funding within the education system would benefit our children to learn basic Maths and English concepts.

Whilst there are indeed critics to the notion of play and some notable holes within the most recent NAPLAN testing, indicating that the South Australia Education System is falling well below the national average, Wood and Attfield (2005, p. 215) indicate that if play is presented in an appropriate manner that harnesses children's capabilities, then it can create unity between development and education and create a 'can do' disposition for learning. I can recall an example that solidifies this statement within my most recent teaching practicum, whereby a discussion with the early childhood educators assured me that setting up the environment to create rich and inviting areas would encourage children ripe with a thirst for knowledge to commence their own learning adventure. Peter, a 4 year old within the center, often found himself in mischief, throwing stones and creating havoc. Now, whilst Peter had an abundance of energy, his eagerness to play was ready to be steered in a direction that would foster his development; rather than encouraging Peter to do as he pleased, with his play-based learning experience, the early childhood educators captured the situation and were able to scaffold new learning for him to explore, converting a stone throwing situation into a moon pie hunting mission, where all the stones were delicious moon pies that needed to be sought after and shared with his fellow classmates. Answers to questions I asked indicate that it is the teachers' responsibility to facilitate an appropriate learning environment that fosters development whilst being conscious of safety. From my experiences in early childhood environments, changing the environment that children come into contact with encourages children to freely play, as it keeps the area interesting and inviting.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Before commencing my education degree I had very little knowledge about the positives of play-based learning. Whilst I enjoyed watching children play and relished in the opportunity to engage in play activities myself as a child, I didn't know or fully grasp the concept of play within the center of the curriculum. It is through placements, observations, and practice and research that I have been able to solidify my beliefs on how important play within the curriculum is. Of this much I am sure, the development of play within early childhood is essential, and fundamental to learning within the early years. Play is 'emergent and needs to be at the center of the curriculum, in order to create balance and harmony' (Van Hoorn et al. 2007, p. 9). Rhonda, one of the teachers, indicated that

> play never stops, you simply change the manner in which you play; you play as children, you play as teenagers and you play as adults, and when you play you are learning, learning new skills and ways of being and belonging.

My opinion is not a question of whether play is important, but rather how important and how we can ensure that play captivates all learners, ensuring it is culturally inclusive and ensuring every child gets the most out of each play-based enriched experience.

Some other people, such as Sonja, indicated that she herself didn't support the notion of play, because when she was a young child, originating from India, she found herself the subject of torment and bullying, and rather preferred to throw herself into books and study than engage with other children. Sonja further went on to identify that had she been engaged within a learning environment that supported equal opportunities for fair play, she might hold differing values surrounding the topic now.

Through my experiences within the education system, in particular my work history, I have encountered many Indigenous Australian children who indicated that they often 'tuned out' when the teacher was speaking, because they didn't relate to what was being taught, or how it was being implemented. I believe that if educators took the time to adapt their curriculum and play-based learning styles to that of other cultures, such gaps would cease to exist. I personally know that through my research, experiences and observations, I have strengthened my view on play, but also fostered a more positive and inclusive way of implementing it within my teaching philosophy.

All differences aside, it is evident that children learn best through play and that it is highly beneficial to incorporate play within the curriculum and to utilise the educationally rich materials that are available for children to play with. Play isn't about incorporating toys that demonstrate ways on how to use them, as so many of the toys within the toy store now offer, but rather about using materials that offer children opportunities to develop a deeper understanding about the world around them, promoting a sense of control within their environment. Wardle (2008) indicates that a 'child playing with tadpoles learns about the cycle of life, the properties of water... and concepts related to water safety'. Now you tell me, do you think they would

learn all that from a structured toy that can only be used in one way, as per the instructions?

Conclusion

Upon completing my research and observations, it has become abundantly clear that play is fundamental towards development and a necessity within Early Childhood. The new Australian Curriculum (ACARA 2010, p. 11) indicates that 'In the early years of schooling, children have a natural curiosity about their world and [a] desire to make sense of it, [which is captivated by] interactions with others, experimentation, scaffolding... and play...' It is through these aspects that:

> The Australian Curriculum builds upon the Early Years Learning Framework and is able to harness the opportunity to assist students to meet the key learning outcomes, namely; children have a strong sense of identity, children are connected with and contribute to their world, children have a strong sense of wellbeing, children are confident and involved learners and children are effective communicators, all of which are supported by play within the early years. (ACARA 2010, p. 9).

In conclusion, I feel that my findings can safely validate the necessity for play-based learning within the early years, for it is through play that children commence their life long journey to learning and it is through appropriate measures that we as teachers can facilitate the learning that takes place through incorporating educationally rich materials, which foster positive learning opportunities and encourage a world of wonder. Play should no longer be a topic for scrutiny within the curriculum, but rather how can we as educators, parents and adults help maximize and harness the potential that play has to offer. A special mention to all the staff and parents who took the opportunity to express their opinions and insight, and to all the children who were observed throughout my study; as mentioned earlier all names have been adjusted for confidentiality reasons.

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Chapter 16
Importance of Play-Based Learning in Early Childhood

Birth to Eight Years

Linnea Mead

Abstract For a number of years part of my role was to incorporate books into educational programs for preschoolers. This did not always succeed in engaging the children, so after investigating what and how parents wanted their children to learn I also incorporated play-based learning into the program. In my school placements as well I observed how play-based learning engaged students, compared to excluding play. This does not mean the importance of children engaging with literature and other supportive methods should be overlooked: My story time sessions, supported with play-based activities, helped to engage children in a fun way to become literate. At the same time, while children from different cultures may not play in the same way, they learn best when engaged in play. From classroom observation it was evident that with play-based learning opportunities children remained continually engaged in learning, constructing new knowledge and building on existing knowledge to increasingly develop their cognitive, social and emotional worlds through conversation, role play, experimentation and exploration, observation, imagination, modelling, scaffolding and encouragement. Clearly all educators should provide play-based learning opportunities to help children become the best citizens they can be socially, emotional, cognitively, and physically, both in their early years and as they progress throughout life.

Journal entry, June 15, 2012, Port Lincoln, South Australia:

> During my practicum, I often observed students engaged in play-based learning, both unstructured and structured, witnessing children developing skills in social, emotional and cognitive areas, as they experienced turn taking, sharing and thinking skills while playing with props such as huge cardboard boxes, classroom puzzles and games supporting multiple curriculum areas including maths and literacy, opportunities to develop creativity in arts and crafts, and imaginary play. I can still recall the fascination on students' faces as they

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played with science creations constructed during structured play-based learning. Within my most recent practicum, it was evident that play based learning best supported students' learning needs and outcomes, connecting existing knowledge and creating new ideas.

Introduction

I am a woman—daughter, sister, aunt, and hopefully considered best and lifelong friend to all of my friends. Above all, I am an extremely proud mum of an incredible son. My heritage is Australian, and from birth through to my teens I grew up on a farm, without modern technologies like television (due to poor reception) or mobile telephones. Many young people today would view this lack of entertainment as a disadvantage, probably with comments like 'How boring!', or 'How on earth did you manage to have any fun?' Play for me as a young child consisted mostly of free play, through exploration: investigating local creeks in search of tadpoles, playing board games, and many other ways, limited only by my imagination, and the unlimited space and freedom that accompanied farm life. This, I'm sure, is where my interest in being creative came from. I don't remember having toys such as dolls, apart from my pushbike—my mum tells me she did buy me a doll, but I was more interested in our many cats, which it seems were a substitute for the lack of human playmates close by to play games with, and I can still remember the many times I dressed my poor cats in clothes, and wheeled them around in a pram, caring for them like the human beings they weren't quite meant to be.

Weekly shopping trips to Port Lincoln also resulted in visiting relatives, and I can remember being fascinated with their television, taking home new ideas to incorporate into my play. One was tennis, and of course, I always won the matches against my invisible opponents, becoming the next superstar of the tennis world. I prefer to look back on my play experiences as a time where I was engaged in the wonders of learning and knowledge creation that were constantly 'play based', finding opportunities to develop a creative mind through playing with creatures in the garden, making mud pies, pretending to drive our family car, or bike riding, assuming the role of the school bus driver, becoming a nurse to a teddy bear, and teacher to the farm chickens, cattle and sheep. I can still recall the stitches I carefully sewed on the teddy's tummy, following his emergency appendectomy. Those days, I can understand why the chickens, sheep and cattle often gave me perplexing looks, and the cats never really looked thrilled at being dressed up in their Sunday best either. Lucky for me, I guess, that they couldn't talk my language!

Who Did I Think I Was?

For a number of years, my career was surrounded by a paradise of books. Part of my role involved incorporating these resources into educational programs for preschoolers. Previous sessions hadn't incorporated play-based learning, leaving children often not engaged. I incorporated play-based learning into the program after conducting a questionnaire to investigate what and how parents wanted their children to learn.

As most early childhood educators in my local area incorporate play-based learning into their curriculum, I wanted to further explore the advantages of play-based learning to adequately provide support and continuation of learning styles for the young children as they progress through kindergarten and school. This was also a topic of interest developed while participating in school placements, observing how play-based learning engaged students, compared to areas that excluded play, and the advantages/disadvantages.

In this chapter I will discuss my viewpoint, which supports the advantages of play based learning on the social, emotional, cognitive, physical and communicative developments of children, birth to 8 years of age, based on pre-existing knowledge, experiences, and from conversations and observations within early childhood environments.

Who Do I Think I Am?

While investigating the advantages of play-based learning I read opposing views on the benefits, generally as a result of comparisons made between the academic achievements of children in other countries. Play was defined as an unnecessary element in learning by educators, viewing academic instruction and skill development in literacy and maths as essential ingredients. Many parents also viewed play as a low priority as it did not 'prepare young children for formal education' (Nicolopoulou 2010, p. 2).

While play is such a vital part of a child's learning and development, I believe the importance of children engaging with literature and other supportive methods cannot be overlooked. My story time sessions, supported with play-based activities, helped to engage children in a fun way to become literate. This, and the inspiration I discover when observing the social, cognitive and emotional growth of young children, is a reason I hope to be part of providing wonderful play-based learning opportunities as a facilitator of learning, to support children's development.

Investigating the importance of play-based learning has helped me in placement practices to provide children with play-based opportunities that extend their own personal knowledge development and growth, rather than me informing them of how they should learn within their world. However, I do feel a teacher or adult can support children's unique and meaningful knowledge development by offering

suggestions. An example of this took place recently, when I was observing a young child at an early childhood centre playing in a sandpit. The child was busy making an apple pie out of sand, informing me of the ingredients, how it would be mixed, and its preparation for baking. Close by, while sifting sand through my fingers, I discovered a small toy horse hidden under a mound of sand, which the child did not appear to notice. I realised I needed to be careful not to inform the child of how or what they should learn, but wondered how I could best support the child's natural curiosity or development of knowledge. In the first instance, I moved the toy horse around in the sandpit without speaking, intending to capture the child's attention; however this didn't occur. Not knowing the pre-existing knowledge of the child, my objective was then to provide play through scaffolding to determine the child's existing knowledge or support new knowledge. I seized a suitable moment, taking advantage of a 'teachable moment'. Approaching the 'apple pie' that the child was making, with the horse, I launched into a Disney movie character voice, saying 'I'm hungry—do you think I could please have a piece of pie?'

The child, aged between 3 and 4 years, observed me for a short while, with a puzzled look. I can only assume that the wheels of imagination, inquiry and natural curiosity to assimilate or accommodate further knowledge development were turning in the child's mind, as after a period of time, the child picked up the toy horse, and launched into her own creative play. The behaviour of this child, and other observations I've made, demonstrates that children take on some form of active role when engaging in play, whether it be physically engaging with toys or other children, or just developing ideas and mental pictures in their own minds.

The opportunity for scaffolding learning was also used on another occasion while observing early childhood participants. A small section of the play area contained a circle of large solid plastic bowls turned upside down, joined with a rope, for children to practise their fine motor skills. While observing several children moving from one bowl to another in silent skill development, I decided to experiment by suggesting to one of the children, 'Be careful you don't fall off that stone into the water.' While some children clearly informed me that it was only grass underneath and they weren't standing on stones, other children made links through play to existing knowledge, pretending there were crocodiles in the 'water'. Their creativity was interesting to observe as I wandered off to experience more wonders within young minds, with some children continuing the role playing, sharing their knowledge with other children joining the activity, and creating their own unique new play.

Of This Much I Am Sure

While I had always realised that children enjoy being a part of play environments, I had not fully comprehended how much children learn real world concepts, linking new knowledge with existing knowledge through play until I had my own son and watched him develop emotionally, socially and cognitively in environments that

offered both structured and unstructured play. My views on the benefits of play-based learning have been confirmed as essential to develop critical thinkers and problem solvers within all children, based on my own experiences, knowledge attained through my studies, observations in learning environments, and conversations with parents and other teachers. In fact, in one conversation, a teacher stated that it is vital for children to engage in play-based learning 'throughout life', by saying that we *all* learn best when it is play-based.

While my current opinion supporting play-based learning reflects my previous opinion of its wide reaching benefits, it is equally essential to ensure play-based learning is available throughout all cultures, as well as cultural learning integrated into the environment. As an educator, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that not all cultures share the same views on play, resulting in not all children learning to play in the same way (Dockett and Fleer 2003, p. 125).

Regardless of the age and culture of students, my observations have shown that children learn best when engaged in play. Within a classroom observation, it was evident that when students were supported through play-based learning opportunities, they remained continually engaged in learning. When learning involved more complex, academic, teacher-directed learning, students quickly became disengaged. This notion was also supported by a parent, who communicated that her child had experienced a wealth of play-based learning throughout the child's early years. The child has since moved to an age/year level, where play-based learning is not encouraged, and now dislikes school and is disengaged from learning; this has caused the child emotional, cognitive and social difficulties. Nicolopoulou (2010, p. 4) also confirms such risks to a child's mental, physical and emotional wellbeing when play is not supported in their learning.

In a previous environment, I observed that a young child of diverse cultural background who was at a beginning stage of learning English enjoyed engaging in play-based learning within my practices. The creative elements, natural curiosity, confidence and learning that took place within the child shone through with the child's imagination, role playing, modelling and exploration, and I was delighted to witness the growth within this child. The child's family preferred highly academic learning practices, which minimally included play-based learning, and sadly, I witnessed nervous habits develop in the child that were only evident each time the child's carers tried to enforce their academic expectations over play. This is a time to encourage parents to see the values and associated benefits in play-based learning.

Play-based learning is not just about playing with toys and learning through hands-on experiences. It is also about engaging in the social element that goes with this learning. This means that play-based learning also needs to occur throughout older children's environments, to continue the benefits of learning that encompasses all avenues of child development. Children learning through play are able to learn essential life skills, such as turn taking, regulating emotions, cooperating and sharing, problem solving, and developing imagination, giving these children a vital sense of 'being, belonging and becoming' (DEEWR 2009).

Of this much I am sure: It is through play-based learning that children construct new knowledge and build on existing knowledge to continually develop their cognitive, social and emotional worlds through conversation, role play, experimentation and exploration, observation, imagination, modelling, scaffolding and encouragement, in an environment that is 'set up age appropriately', offering challenge and opportunity.

Of this much I am sure, that it is clear that all educators must provide play-based learning opportunities for children to have an active part in becoming the best citizens they can be socially, emotional, cognitively, and physically, both in their early years and as they progress throughout life. It is also of equal importance that observations of play occur, so 'planning and evaluation of learning experiences' can be conducted in a manner that best supports a child's outcomes (Dockett and Fleer 2003, p. 196).

Conclusion

Through exploring literature; my own knowledge, thoughts and views; observations; and conversations, it is evident that providing play-based learning in early childhood presents a multitude of advantages that far outweighs any disadvantages. One of the ultimate predictors of lifelong success is a child's ability to self-regulate their behaviour, such as social and emotional areas of development, which occurs through play-based learning (Nicolopoulou 2010).

In a recent local newspaper article interviewing young school age children, a question posed was, 'What do you like about school?' I was excited to read that the child's response also confirmed the benefits and importance of play-based learning: 'When I play in the classroom.'

It is in closing that I confirm the expected outcomes of this study—to validate play based learning within the early years, birth to 8 years—have been reached. Through play-based learning that ranges from open ended, holistic, safe and supportive environments, some explicit teaching, one-on-one teaching and interaction, combined with teacher/adult support, children in these early years can experience an 'amazing learning' journey. Adults and teachers who provide ways for children to learn through play can successfully connect play to learning and social development while building academic success in literacy and maths (CA Staff 2013). I also believe play-based learning can be viewed as essential for children to become socially responsible and confident learners, while they also gain essential skills, knowledge and 'understanding of literacy and numeracy' (Aussie Childcare Network 2009).

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Chapter 17
The Importance of Make-Believe Play in the Pre-school Years

Supporting Cognitive and Socio-emotional Development

M'Lis June Scott

Abstract Make-believe play was important in my own childhood experiences, and during 4 years as a co-ordinator of a Steiner early childhood playgroup I observed the development of language skills, negotiation, planning and interaction that occurred in play. This led me to look into how play was viewed in the pre-school where I did my practicum. Observing the children at play confirmed my belief that it supported autonomy, independent thinking, negotiation, problem solving, reasoning and perspective taking, although teacher scaffolding might be necessary for children who had English as a second language, behavioural or learning difficulties, or developmental issues. While my mentor teachers wholeheartedly supported make-believe play in theory, in practice I rarely observed them scaffolding children's make-believe play, while increased accountability in schools for literacy and numeracy has seen make-believe play reduced in importance and an increase in teacher-directed play activities with a literacy and numeracy focus. Teachers stated that they support make-believe play more in the first part of the pre-school year but in the latter half of the year they dedicate their time to explicitly teaching literacy and numeracy competencies. Even so, my own experiences all point me back to my own beginnings and confirm my initial belief that make-believe play as an activity supports socio-emotional and cognitive learning in 4- to 5-year-old children.

Journal entry, 18th August 2014, Alice Springs, Northern Territory:

> It is the second day of my fourth practicum. I am in a pre-school, sitting in the sand pit, playing with the sand, modelling to the children how to make sand castles and tunnels in the sand, listening and fascinated as they engage with me, the sand and each other. A, M and W are playing with two tip trucks and a cement mixer. M and A both want the cement mixer.

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A had been playing with it and had wandered off to do something else. Now he was back asserting his authority over the cement mixer but M had it and didn't want to let it go. 'I want it,' A complained. M eyed him warily and held it even tighter. I watch, considering what suggestion to make to help resolve the conflict when A says enthusiastically, 'I know, we'll take turns being the cement mixer driver. You have a turn now M then I'll have a turn.' 'OK,' says M happily, and so they played co-operatively for the rest of outside play-time with the cement mixer and the trucks in the sandpit.

Introduction

My own childhood was rich with make-believe play. I grew up in an isolated environment, on a cattle station in Central Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. My family had no telephone or TV and only a two-way radio for contact with the outside world. My playmates were my brothers and a sister, and the accomplices in our games were our pets or our toys. As we grew, the land around us became incorporated in the games we played. We had hours of time for play, for apart from school and station chores, there were no distractions, such as screen time or adult-organised activities. It was just us, my sister, brothers and me, to play out our fantasies, make roads in the dirt, build cubbies in the bush, organise dolls' tea parties on the front lawn or lie in our swags under the stars and dream up imaginary worlds. Adults were never involved. Our play was our own. In our games we were the protagonists fighting the 'baddies', bush fires, or Indians; we were the nurses or doctors fixing wounds and broken legs; we were resolving the conflicts. Our imaginations were nurtured through our play, as was our creativity as we changed and transformed play objects and situations with ease. Play cultivated and fostered our resourcefulness, conflict resolution abilities and our understanding of the world around us. There was a freedom I found through make-believe play and also a peace, timelessness and sense of well-being.

In this chapter, I will discuss make-believe play for 4 and 5 year olds, from my perspective as a woman, mother and pre-service teacher, working towards my early childhood teaching degree, and from the experience I have had working for 7 years in both in a pre-school and playgroup environment. I am committed to creating time and space for 4- and 5-year-old children to play, with a deep belief in the importance and value of make-believe play in fostering a child's development.

Who Did I Think I Was?

When I had my own children, the memories and impact of my own childhood surfaced both consciously and unconsciously in my mothering. Although I hadn't studied play in general and make-believe play in particular, I felt the intrinsic value of it, and as my children grew, I noticed how their play became more complex and imaginative, their language and cooperation skills deepened and their ability to resolve

their conflicts in play situations increased. When my third and youngest child was three, I became a coordinator of a Steiner (or Waldorf) inspired playgroup.

Steiner or Waldorf Education is a worldwide alternative education and is based on the philosophies of Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner. In Steiner early childhood education, high priority within curriculum planning is given for play, in particular make-believe play. I co-ordinated the playgroup for 4 years and then spent 3 years working in a Steiner pre-school. During this time I attended Steiner early childhood conferences to deepen my learning and knowledge. I spent time on observing children at play, fascinated by children's depth of engagement and wholeheartedness when playing. I watched the development of language skills, negotiation, planning and interaction that occurred in play. I gazed in awe at the depth of peace, satisfaction and ability to be present in the moment that children attained when playing. I watched children acting out pieces of their lives, imitating their life experiences and making sense of their world through play.

Before my academic degree had begun, I felt within my being, at a non-academic level, the importance of make-believe play for young children. But why was it important? Why did I feel it was equally if not more important than teacher-directed play activities at this age? In the wider community I saw a greater emphasis on academic content in early years curriculum and saw play becoming less prioritised both in schools and in family life, as parents ferried their children from one adult-directed activity to another and children had greater access to extended periods of screen time. I read the philosophies of Rudolf Steiner, who regarded child-directed play as a foundation for creativity in later life and a source for present and future physical and emotional health in a child (Long-Breipohl 2010). But did anyone else in the world consider play and in particular make-believe play important? This I didn't know. It was time to study!

Who Do I Think I Am?

I observed pre-school children's engaging in make-believe play and discussed the matter with two pre-school teachers. During my observation, I would often see the play moving and leaping with such plasticity and speed I could hardly follow it. I would watch in amazement the grasp children had over the moving boundaries and fluidity of the play scenarios. Their play was rule based and to join and participate in a game, you had to understand and abide by the rules.

My observations showed that when engaging in make-believe play, children develop a certain level of self-regulation, which includes impulse and emotion control, self-guidance of thought and behaviour, planning, self-reliance and socially responsible behaviour—all attributes considered important for academic and social requirements at school (Berk and Meyers 2013). I also observed that it was rare for children to call teachers for support when playing make-believe play. Autonomy, independent thinking, negotiation, problem solving, reasoning and perspective taking increased. This did not always occur, particularly for children who had English

as a second language or behavioural or learning difficulties or developmental issues. In these situations, opportunities existed for teachers to sensitively scaffold play with ideas or skills to further develop these abilities (Stagnitti and Cooper 2009).

I observed that while the teachers allocated time, space and resources to ensure make-believe play occurred and wholeheartedly supported it in theory, in practice I rarely observed them scaffolding children's make believe play. In conversations the two teachers highlighted for me a predicament they face. Increased accountability in the schools for literacy and numeracy has seen make-believe play reduced in importance, and an increase in teacher-directed play activities, with a literacy and numeracy focus. Teachers stated that they give more support to make-believe play in the first part of the pre-school year, but in the latter half of the year they dedicate their time to explicitly teaching literacy and numeracy competencies. When pre-schoolers engage in make-believe play, in comparison to teacher directed activities such as puzzles or drawing, their 'interactions last longer, show more involvement, draw larger numbers of children into the activity and are more cooperative' (Berk 2009, p. 237). So this now becomes my internal dilemma, as I feel out of step with my colleagues and perhaps the system, caught in between my own knowing based on my life experiences, my academic knowledge based on current and past research supporting make-believe play and what is happening in practice in many pre-schools in Australia, including the one where I conducted my investigation.

Of This Much I Am Sure

The journey of expanding and deepening my knowledge and gaining a sense of my own teaching philosophy is one of change, growth and experience as I am confronted with new ways of being, doing and learning. I am not fresh out of high school. Life's experiences have impacted me deeply and much of my life I have been surrounded by children. Yet of this much I am sure: To not continually challenge my ideas, thoughts and reasoning will result in complacency and an inability to articulate and advocate for my personal practice and philosophy. So I have come to this place of internal dilemma which forces the questions to arise. Can literacy and numeracy competencies attained while engaging in make-believe play be considered of educational value, on a similar level to explicit teaching of these competencies, particularly when self-regulation, cognitive and socio-emotional skills are developing in this type of play? Additionally, why is make-believe play not given the same status of importance within not only the school system but also in our Australian society? Personal experience, observations and conversation with other teachers convinces me that make-believe play can encourage harmony, peace and a sense of wellbeing, qualities considered essential for learning (*DECS learner well-being framework* 2007). Can I, as an early childhood practitioner, prioritise make-believe play in my planning of curriculum, in my methodology and in my personal teaching practice? If I do, how will this fit with common practice occurring now in pre-schools?

Of this much I am sure: When children engage in make-believe play, they play an active role in their own learning. I observed a student, D, for whom English was an additional language, unable to sit still on the mat at story time. Yet D could engage in five to ten minutes of continuous make-believe play with his peers. This same child does not participate in teacher-directed language activities and yet is developing English language through interactions in play. A, in my initial journal entry, is currently experiencing a family trauma and his behaviour in daily life is reflecting his distress and uncertainty. Yet in make-believe play he displays maturity and self-regulation skills not evident in most other pre-school activities.

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed that when engaging in make-believe play, children show a level of maturity more advanced than in non-play contexts, and for that reason he argued that make-believe play was a leading factor in child development (Berk and Meyers 2013). He also proposed that abilities developed in play can gradually transfer to real-life situations.

My knowing of the world is shaped and given meaning through my life experiences, both academic and non-academic, through my intellect and intuition, through my heart speak and my social and cultural interactions. Of this much I am sure: I learn as I watch experienced pre-school teachers at work and engage in conversations with them that traverse the landscape of child development theory. I learn as I watch children engage in make-believe play and understand that these children and their play experiences validate my understanding of its importance. I learn as I study the theorists and researchers and engage in academia. As a pre-service teacher, I am developing my own personal ideas, practice and philosophy. As a graduate teacher, to give make-believe play priority in my planning and practice, I will have to articulate why and advocate for its predominant role in my classroom. And while I must find a way to be accountable to both the children, the school system, state and parents, of this much I am sure: The interweaving of my life experiences up until now will lay a path for me to travel and assist me in staying true to my integrity and to advocate for the beliefs and values I uphold as my own.

Conclusion

My early childhood experiences remain deep in my own unconsciousness. Self-reflection shines a revealing light on the central impact of these experiences. It draws them into my consciousness, showing me what informs my actions, values and beliefs. Hours spent in make-believe play as a child transformed me into supporting my own children to have time and space to do the same, and attracted me to a philosophy of early childhood education that holds make-believe play as fundamentally important for a child's development. My personal experiences are broadening through practice in the classroom and academic study. All point me back to my own beginnings and confirm my initial belief that make-believe play as an activity in early childhood supports socio-emotional and cognitive learning in 4- to 5-year-old children.

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Chapter 18
Play-Based Learning

The Educational and Social Benefits for Students in Junior Primary Classrooms

Karen Dangerfield

Abstract Whilst on practicum I conducted several lessons using different approaches to gain a deeper understanding of children's learning. I have been especially influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach, with its belief that children have rights and should be given opportunities to develop their potential by putting into practice many of the insights of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and others. At present I am focusing on children's play. While the overuse of technology impacts on children's sensory, motor, speech and learning development, play involves the manipulation of physical objects, the engagement of children's senses, and the interaction with their three dimensional world, giving students good habits and attitudes towards learning as well as a positive sense of themselves. I accordingly constructed my lesson plan so that it would foster play to build children's problem solving ability, critical thinking and social and emotional resilience. When I planned more traditional, teacher-centred lessons, the students looked to me to construct meaning for them, passively waiting to be given the answers rather than seeking ones themselves. However, this does not mean that children's learning should be characterised by play alone. Early years education should focus on whole-child learning with teaching methods appropriate for young children. My challenge is to find a medium between formal and informal learning so I can meet all the expectations of students, parents, leadership and the Department of Education and Child Development of South Australia.

Journal entry, September 2014, Mount Gambier, South Australia:

> Play is the one common denominator that encapsulates all children. As early as birth babies' play—moving fingers and toes exploring what their bodies can do. As toddlers children play—learning how objects move and how to pull them apart. At kindergarten children explore and construct. Why then when a child arrives at school do we feel the need to

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> remove a child's natural instinct to participate and develop understanding about their world through play, and sit them at tables in classrooms to 'learn'? There has to be another way to cater for all learning styles and abilities. Is play what is missing in the junior primary classrooms?

Introduction

I am in my 40s and completing my teaching degree. I am guessing that I may have a different perspective on teaching because of my age and life experiences. Life has been good to me. I have four wonderful children and we have a roof over our heads and our health is looked after. Having seen the development and growth of my own children, I am passionate about giving the best education I can to all children who will be in my classes in future years.

Whilst on my practicum I have spoken to many experienced teachers about my concerns in meeting all students' differing learning requirements, and how to best manage the various learning styles of all students in a classroom. With my mentor teachers' support I conducted several lessons using differing styles of approach to gain a deeper understanding of children's learning. This chapter therefore was aimed at addressing how as a teacher I could create units of work and lesson plans that would engage students in their learning and address individual learning needs, as stated by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA):

> ACARA is committed to the development of a high-quality curriculum for all Australian students that promotes excellence and equity in education. All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs drawn from a challenging curriculum that addresses their individual learning needs. The Australian Curriculum recognises that the needs of all students encompass cognitive, affective, physical, social, and aesthetic curriculum experiences. (ACARA 2013)

What Am I?

During my Primary School years, I lived in a small country town in South Australia. My home life was shared with two other siblings and my parents. The town was like a big family. We all knew each other. Most families had lived there for generations. Other parents knew who you were just by looking at you. As a child I was encouraged to play with our neighbours' children and we were able to ride our bikes to the playground and meet other children without fear. Hours were spent in the backyard digging in the sandpit and playing in the cubbyhouse. Father Christmas always brought books, sports equipment and active games. Life was simple, but abundant with active play and love.

Educationally, classrooms were academically orientated. We learnt by rote; we wrote what was written on the chalkboard into our books. We didn't ask questions

and there was no differentiation among students' learning. I was not encouraged to problem solve, ask questions or seek to gain a deeper understanding. Personally I found this style of learning a challenge. Retaining information and knowledge was difficult for me. I did not enjoy learning. Consequently, I wanted to learn more about authentic learning, its approach and its effectiveness for all children across all cultural, economic, geographical, religious and social spectrums.

Delving into the Reggio Emilia approach I discovered the foundation of the approach lies in its unique view of the child (Rankin 2004). In this approach, there is a belief that children have rights and should be given opportunities to develop their potential—something I also feel strongly about. The Reggio approach is a complex system that respects and puts into practice many of the fundamental aspects of the work of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and many others. It is a system that lends itself to the role of collaboration among children, teachers and parents. It also lends itself to the co-construction of knowledge, the interdependence of individual and social learning and the role of culture in understanding this interdependence.

This philosophy drives my journey as a pre-service teacher to be considered a co-learner, collaborator and facilitator of children's learning through play. To establish and outline what play is to me, it consists of defined purposeful child or teacher initiated activities that are motivational, interactive, involve problem solving, and enhance language development, social competences, creative imagination and thinking skills.

Who Am I?

At present I am on a journey of discovery focusing on children's play. Foremost in my mind is the rapid advancement in technology, and its impact and changes to family and lifestyles of young students. The essence of my emphasis is the overuse of technology and its impact on children's sensory and motor development, in addition to speech and learning development.

Reflecting on the benefits of play I can see the manipulation of physical objects, the engagement of children's senses, and the interaction with their three dimensional world, giving students good habits and attitudes towards their learning and giving them a positive sense of themselves. This has informed how I constructed my lesson plan, so it fosters play so that it builds children's problem solving, critical thinking and social and emotional resilience.

Max is working with a peer group on a maths task that I have set. The task involves five meters of elastic that the students need to form into shapes. At the moment Max's group are forming a square. I hear him tell his peers that a square has to have four equal sides and four corners, and a mathematical discussion takes place amongst the group as to how they are going to achieve this.

In English I am working on procedure writing. I have planned the lesson where the children follow a procedure to make Tic Toc Tea Cup Biscuits, allowing the children to identify the importance of the construction of the text and its layout.

There is much excitement and hands shooting up in the air to be the next person to read the materials required and the steps we need to follow to create our special biscuits.

By creating an environment where students have some control over their learning, the children have been able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, seeing, and hearing. This is an integral part of the developmentally appropriate program that I constructed. These and other opportunities I created within my programming allow the children to experiment with material items within their world. It also allowed the children to explore and develop a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught. Through these social interactions, children have had the opportunity to develop and improve their communication skills. These social skills are the foundation for successful relationships and interactions throughout a child's life.

I also planned the more traditional lessons, where the teacher transmitted instructions/information and the students were required to learn from passive listening, bookwork and testing. It was interesting to see that the children now looked to me to facilitate and construct meaning for them. They become passive learners and waited to be given the answers rather than seeking the answers themselves. During these lessons I addressed behaviour issues and inattentive students. There were children talking and seeking guidance. It seemed less informative for the students and these lessons were by far harder to teach and students struggled to gain understanding of the concepts being taught. This was evident when the test results were analysed.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Evaluating the lessons I conducted has helped me as an educator to question the benefits of dominant discourses of skilling, curriculum, and testing, and encouraged me to look beyond the narrow confines of traditional education. The theoretical views of Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky have guided my thought processes as I reviewed the relationships of play and child development.

Although Piaget (1962) felt that play had a primary role in the child's development, he placed little emphasis on play as a factor in the child's responses to the social environment. More specifically play, for Piaget, provided children with opportunities to develop social competence through ongoing interactions.

Erikson (1963) states there is a relationship between play and wider society. Moreover, play facilitates the understanding of cultural roles and helps children to integrate accepted social norms into their own personalities. For Erikson, like Piaget, play promotes social competence (Creasey et al. 1998).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has a significant role for play, in that he proposed that play is vital for the acquisition of social and cognitive competence. Through play, children develop an understanding of social norms and try to uphold those social expectations (Berk 1994).

My challenge is to find that medium between the formal and informal learning modes so I still meet all the expectations of students, parents, leadership and the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) of South Australia.

Conclusion

At this stage of my career, I have reflected on the significant theoretical views and contributions, along with my investigation of how children respond to differing teaching styles. This has led me to believe that there are significant educational and social benefits for students in the junior primary classroom when educators provide purposeful child or teacher initiated activities that are motivational, interactive, involve problem solving and enhance language development, social competences, creative imagination and thinking skills.

However, this does not necessarily mean that children's learning should be characterised by play alone. Early years education is a distinctive phase in children's learning that should be characterised by a curriculum that focuses on whole-child learning and by teaching methods that are appropriate for young children.

My experience on placement and my reflection is of course limited to one context. I would love to explore further literature about the efficacy of 'play' as a form of developmentally appropriate practice, compared with didactic approaches to early years teaching pedagogy.

Initially my concern was to develop learning programs that challenged students within a relevant and engaging curriculum that also encompassed all students' individual needs. Relating back to my own personal experiences in school, I am worried that young children are being unduly stressed by the prominence on formal learning. Research has found that children in developmentally appropriate classrooms—especially boys—suffered considerably less stress, and enjoyed improvements in motivation and educational development, when compared to children in more traditional classrooms (Dunn and Kontos 1997; Van Horn et al. 2005; NAEYC 2009).

The introduction of a single intake for reception students instead of the present intake system in South Australia will mean that we have children as young as 4 years old entering reception. This will again widen the gap between the developmental and knowledge base levels of students. Taking into consideration children's previous experience with the more structured forms of formal education, teachers may need to reconsider how they present their curriculum to cater for all students' needs.

Thus, my work as an educator is to maintain this continuous process of educating myself, not to become stationary, but to remain open to the direction of innovative research into child learning, continuing my passion and belief that 'Children and young people are at the centre of everything we do and we will work to ensure positive outcomes for all young South Australians' (DECD 2012).

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Chapter 19
Care, Inquiry and Values

Successfully Integrate Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in a Central Australian Play-Based Classroom

Heather Pedrotti

Abstract To assist student education and behavior, either extrinsic or intrinsic rewards or a combination of both can be used. My teaching philosophy aims to foster personal responsibility, which I connect with being intrinsically motivated, and thus I did not see a reason to use extrinsic rewards. However, my practicum in an early years Central Australian classroom used both good learner characteristics (GLC) to promote intrinsic motivation and a school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS) for extrinsic motivation. The latter awards 'bee points' that can be converted into 'bee money' that can be spent at the 'bee shop'. From studying the 36 students I found those with a better understanding of the GLC generally received more extrinsic rewards, while the ten students with English as a second language had the least extrinsic rewards and least understanding of the SWPBS and GLC. At the same time, extrinsic motivation benefitted many students, who knew they were behaving in an expected manner when their behaviours were made explicit and rewarded. This is especially important for teaching tasks that are not enjoyable, where extrinsic motivation can be used to encourage children to work on these tasks, and when they succeed they will become more confident to try new tasks and gain new skills. Extrinsic motivation can thus develop into intrinsic motivation as students realise that new learning, difficult tasks, and challenges can be fun and rewarding due to effort and achievement.

Journal reflection May 19, 2014, Alice Springs, Northern Territory:

> I have entered a classroom with extrinsic rewards. Where self-management and engagement is successful, extrinsic rewards are not necessary as a students' reward is the growth and learning itself. Most of my training has focused on enhancing intrinsic motivation to enable preferred learning attributes. I have studied in primary not early childhood education. Could this be the difference? Why do they have it and whose purpose does it serve? A tour of the classroom shows they have intrinsic rewards also. This confuses me. How can the children relate to both? What about autonomy? Acculturation?

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Introduction

Myself: wife, mum, friend, student; an indecisive, procrastinating, chocoholic photographer and teacher. I am compassionate and caring, trying to understand life's injustices. I have experienced many joys and challenges, giving me insight into people's successes and dilemmas. Teaching gives me an opportunity to share knowledge within my community. I live in an Alice Springs community, yet I was a Melbourne dweller until my latest 4 years in this eclectic town. I was not sheltered, yet I come from a white, middle class, urban environment. My university studies have made me deeply conscious of cultural hegemony. I want my students to make their own informed choices and not assimilate to a dominant culture. I want to live my life in the way I choose, and I afford others the same choice.

This Was Me

Knowledge is socially constructed. Pedagogy has the potential to acculturate students. As a member of the dominant class (in some theoretical paradigms), I did not want my teaching to influence or impact negatively on my students' values, beliefs and psychology.

Strategies that I planned to use for classroom management factored extolling my values onto other students, particularly for Indigenous students, who make up a large component of the student cohort, and come to school with other ways of knowing. Systemic racism due to poor understanding of Indigenous culture led to students being unfairly disciplined for behavioral issues when cultural difference was the cause, asserts de Plevitz (2006, p. 49). I have learnt that Indigenous students have more autonomy than Eurocentric students, and was cognisant of this when beginning my practicum, and indeed this chapter.

To assist student education and behavior, either extrinsic or intrinsic rewards or a combination of both can be used. I interpret extrinsic rewards as those external to the person and bestowed by others. Intrinsic rewards are personally satisfying and lead to greater educational outcomes in the long term. My teaching philosophy states that I will foster personal responsibility. I connect this with being intrinsically motivated and did not see a reason to use extrinsic rewards.

My practicum in an early years Central Australian classroom promotes intrinsic motivation through good learner characteristics (GLC). These are admirable learning qualities that include persistence, having a go, making improvements, knowing what they are learning and taking responsibility. The school has derived these learner characteristics from the Visible Learning framework that is being implemented across the directorate of Central Australian primary schools. I consider them intrinsic as no tangible reward is given to the students. Extrinsic motivation is encouraged through a school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS). Its purpose is to instill a school-wide environment of known and expected appropriate

behaviors. Students learn qualities of being respectful, being caring and doing their best. Bee points are awarded to the students. These bee points are converted into bee money that can be spent at the bee shop, where students purchase novelty items, their tangible reward for good classroom behaviours. The challenge was to find ways for both systems to be effective simultaneously in a play-based classroom.

This Is Me

Education is about developing character and imparting values. However, it is the process that is of importance. Cultural competence must be considered in the way that values are communicated. Hill (2004, p. 6) calls for:

(a) the right of students to know the nature and sources of the values impacting on them;
(b) the development of their capacity to empathise with these values, and also to evaluate them;
(c) the encouragement of commitment to worthy values.

In developing character traits through values, parents must be consulted and their views respected and applied and these traits need to be developmentally appropriate. Students are then able to appraise and apply values in a manner that is suitable to them.

I believe the purpose of imparting these values is that students have to actualise the school society, and thus global society. It is important for them to develop strong identities and respect for others. In an early years classroom this can effectively be achieved via three areas: relationships within the classroom, particularly the care and trust of the teacher; inquiry and play-based learning, so that students achieve success, and explicit teaching of these values. When efficacy in these areas occurs, students can move from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, leading to augmentation of educational outcomes.

The SWPBS and GLC link motivation and character education. Responsibility and respect of self and others are examples of intrinsic motivation. When teachers modeled and taught these traits, academic achievement and behaviour around the schools improved (Benninga et al. 2006, p. 451). In my investigation of the 36 students, those who had a better understanding of the GLC generally received more extrinsic rewards. The ten students with English as a second language had the least extrinsic rewards and the least understanding of what the SWPBS and GLC were. It was difficult to determine if this was solely due to their paucity of English or because the school expectations were culturally different to their social worlds. Students are unable to effectively apply abstract concepts in Piaget's pre-operational stage from 2 to 7 years. Therefore, extrinsic motivation was beneficial to many students. They knew they were behaving in an expected manner when their behaviours were made explicit and rewarded.

This experience has demonstrated the benefits of my study and reflection on this issue. Without it I was relying on my assumptions. It has enhanced my teaching, as I have learnt from others and changed my perspective.

Of This Much I Am Sure

I struggled to find purpose, as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are so well studied before. My journey has been a collaborative effort with input from quality teachers. Their strategies and insights have informed my reflections.

Of this much I am sure: Students are unique. An envisaged theoretical paradigm of social justice was not realised, as I found Indigenous students received the highest amount of extrinsic rewards. Indigenous students received the lowest amount of points; however, this correlated with school absences, rather than being a reflection of behavior. One teacher stated the need to strike a balance: The reward has to fit the child and the task. Motivation depended on the set undertaking and the individuals' propensity to it, rather than any group dynamic. Previous studies confirmed that extrinsic rewards undermine intrinsic motivation, especially for tasks that students find enjoyable. There are degrees of extrinsic motivation, from students wanting to please others to motivation because it is of benefit to them.

> Students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest or, alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task. (Ryan and Deci 2000, p. 55)

Of this much I am sure, that the aim of the SWPBS is to move children towards behavioural actions that increase responsibility and intrinsic values, whilst the GLC focus is academic achievement. For competent application of SWPBS and GLC, the teachers needed to understand the system and its goals and impart this effectively to the students for it to be effective. SWPBS aims to instill ethical values by communicating fairness, responsibility and respect (Benninga et al. 2006, p. 450).

In the playground, two students were unable to swing themselves because it was too hard. I provided instruction and a reward by standing close by and encouraging them to hit my hand with their feet. The students experienced success by touching my hand. I moved further and further away, as they swung higher and higher. I was able to provide immediate feedback on their GLC by indicating they knew what they were learning, had a go, kept improving and they persisted. This shows these are the GLC they need to display in the classroom. They understood this discussion, as they then asked for a bee point. This example may appear simple, though it exhibits the highest degree of extrinsic motivation. This experience can be linked to other learning opportunities.

Of this much I am sure, that teachers who have effective partnerships are better able to understand the underlying causes of bad behaviour, enabling them to employ methods that are individually and culturally sensitive to prevent the misbehaviour from occurring. Relationships built on understanding and trust have the potential to overcome obstacles and disagreements. In classrooms, this means that students are more able to accept the values when imparted by a respected teacher (Ryan and Deci 2000, p. 63). A specific focus on quality teaching—through professional development and cultivation of growth mindsets—will assist the relationships and class environment.

Of this much I am sure, that changing the mindset can make a difference. I am imparting my own values. Students need to know and have the ability to choose their own values. I have a greater understanding of the role of schooling, realising that values are central to the ambitions of education (Gross 2013, p. 89). It is the school's role to educate students to think critically, to be generous and to make judgments in how they can become effective members of society.

Students are explicitly taught school values for tasks that are not enjoyable. Good teacher and student models are not sufficient. It is imperative to praise effort. One teacher immediately awarded two students who did not normally receive points. The students were then given the option to be leaders going to assembly. They were enthusiastic and responded well to this responsibility. Student circle time chaired by the students and positive/negative discussion games, role-play and sequencing are other ways to teach values. If this teaching is in the moment, it is more authentic.

Of this much I am sure, that young children have a natural curiosity. To assist students to work on tasks that do not interest them, extrinsic motivation is used. To continue this curiosity, and natural motivation, tasks should be enshrouded in play, rather than forced on them in a regimented time scale and set times. Whilst routine is important to students, if the learning occurs over a longer, but more relaxed, time, children can go to the tasks when they are ready rather than coerced. When children are successful, they are more stable and comfortable in their abilities, leading to increased confidence to try new tasks and gain new skills. Teaching strategies that include role-play and drama encourage extrinsic motivation to develop into intrinsic motivation. Students realise that new learning, difficult tasks, and challenges can be fun and rewarding due to effort exerted and achievement attained.

Conclusion

Initially I could not find the significance in what I was studying, but it found me at the end. As it progressed, I found that this journey was about the resolution of my classroom management theory and thus my teaching philosophy. I will incorporate care, inquiry and values into my classroom practice.

This experience has helped me reflect on my beliefs towards values and imparting values onto others through enculturation. Understanding the values of the society they will be living in, providing skills to move towards intrinsic motivation and thus lifelong learning are admirable goals. Whilst I was concerned with 'enacting my preferred pedagogy', I have found that I can still embrace my beliefs and follow the school wide systems, as ultimately a teacher's purpose is to ameliorate students' education.

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Part V
Knowing Students' Learning Needs

Introduction

Pamela Smith

To effectively plan and help students learn, you must first know something about the needs of those you are teaching. Your students will come from very different backgrounds and have various learning needs, and thus Murray and Moore (2012) talk about the need to recognise individual students' needs and strengths rather than viewing the class as a single unit. Teachers need to create a classroom that caters for all students' different ways of learning, linking this specifically to Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI).

The four chapters in this section all deal in some way with knowing the particular needs of the range of students you might find in a classroom and the need to make learning accessible and meaningful for all. The issues explored and reflected upon range from engaging students through visual aids, the issue of inclusion for students who are challenged with their learning, the idea of listening to the children's voice, through to the issue of readiness for formal schooling.

Nikki Cardillo in Chap. 20 was led to reflect during her practicum experiences on the use of visual aids and why teachers valued visual aids within the classroom in a range of school settings. She came to teaching with a prior belief that the visual was beneficial, but she had not thought deeply about why this was so. She explores the issue of students who are visual learners, reflects on the displays in classrooms and their effect on the classroom climate and their use as aids to learning, including the visual charts and posters used for behaviour and classroom management.

In this regard, Fisher et al. (2014) recognise that teachers can use visual aids to encourage students to better connect to new concepts, but they say that as number lines, shapes, artwork and other materials tend to cover elementary classroom walls, too much of a good thing may end up disrupting attention and learning in young children.

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In Chap. 21 Cam Foulis reflects on his own school experience of being a student who struggled with learning and experienced being withdrawn from the classroom for extra help. During his practicum experiences and seeing similar students challenged by learning expectations, he was led to reflect on his own experiences and on how these students were catered for and encouraged in their learning in today's classrooms.

The issue of inclusion and differentiated learning has been a much researched area, with the issue of withdrawal or in-class support being much contested. Wiener and Tardif (2004) found in their research that children in more inclusive classrooms had more positive social and emotional functioning. Children receiving in-class support were more accepted by peers, had higher self-perceptions and fewer problem behaviours than children receiving withdrawal group support. Cam's experience led him to believe that there is certainly more recognition and knowledge about how to work with children who need extra help or individual programs in schools today. He concluded that it is important to highlight strengths, have constructive communication with parents, and have high expectations for all students.

In Chap. 22 Sadie Sandery explores the question of children having a voice in their learning. Do we allow for children's own experiences and interests when planning? She reflects on whether adherence to curriculum can also allow children's ideas and interests to lead the learning direction. Copple (2003) says that allowing children to participate in the planning in early childhood can lead to empowerment. Children's play should be valued, verbal interaction plentiful, and children should be encouraged to frequently engage in planning and reflection.

Readiness for school is the issue taken up by Elke Sharp in Chap. 23. Sometimes it takes only one child to cause us serious reflection on a broad issue. Elke concludes that she still has a lot more thinking to do about this issue, but acknowledges that being equipped with the pedagogical knowledge to assist all students no matter what their entry skills is important. Lewit and Baker (1995) ask the question, 'is it the child who should be ready for school or the school that should be ready for the child?' It is very difficult to measure how ready the child is or how well equipped the school is to cater for differentiation. Julia Haynes (2013) writes that the current emphasis on the concept of school readiness can place some children under pressure to perform educationally in ways that they are developmentally not ready for, particularly with an earlier starting age, and can lead to early labelling. However the effective provision of pre-school education can lead to improved cognitive and social outcomes.

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Chapter 20
Visual Aids Supporting the Learning of Children in Our Classrooms

Nikki Cardillo

Abstract The focus of this study was to find out how teachers valued visual aids within the classroom, what students or learners they felt benefit most, and what visual aids they incorporate in their teaching practices. From observation I saw examples of visual aids being used beneficially for behaviour management, for modelling tasks to be undertaken by students, and for classroom management through the implementation of a visual timetable. I also discussed visual aids with six teachers, all of whom indicated that visual aids were very important for creating interest and engaging students, although the types of learners they felt benefitted most and the type of visual aids they incorporate varied. I had initially thought that visual aids were there to assist visual learners and students with learning difficulties, but this experience opened my mind to their various benefits for many more students than I had originally thought. Students and classrooms are different and it is up to the teacher to select the most appropriate resources to maximise effectiveness. Selecting relevant visual aids can support and enhance learning opportunities for all students, not just individuals or a select group.

> When I look around the classroom I can see so many different visual aids to assist the students. Alphabet and blend posters full of images beginning with that sound/blend, posters full of shapes, number charts with pictures, written words and numerals, pictures on tubs that show what the contents are (e.g., MAB blocks, counters). The room looks fantastic—bright, colourful, interesting—but also gives students places to go for visual assistance in different areas of their learning. —Journal entry, 19th September 2014, Tongala, Victoria

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Introduction

I am a mature age Bachelor of Teaching and Learning student with three school-age children of my own. Returning to study at a mature age was a decision not taken lightly; family, work, financial commitments all had to be factored in. What I do know is that as a mature age student I had something that a lot of students who attend university straight from secondary school don't have: life experience. When reflecting on how I learn and retain information from both being a primary school student all those years ago to my current life as a working/studying mother, I have realised that it is not through spoken and written word alone. Experiences, images or pictures have assisted in conveying meaning.

The focus of this study was to find out how teachers valued visual aids within the classroom, what students or learners they felt benefit most, and what visual aids they incorporate in their teaching practices. Many informal conversations were held with teachers and support staff regarding the use and benefits of visual aids.

'Who Did I Think I Was?'—My Original Thoughts on Visual Aids

I have always had the belief that visual aids were beneficial to students, although I had not thought deeply about why. Why are visual aids beneficial? How do they help students?

When I think about my primary school years I remember lessons where visual aids were used. I remember how in one mathematics lesson we were all given a small packet of smarties. I remember sorting the smarties into their different colour groups and working out what percentage each of the colours made up. I do not remember any dialogue that was spoken, but I do remember enjoying the lesson and understanding the concept. For me, retrieving images seems to be easier than retrieving words.

If I were to select a particular type of learner that I felt would benefit more from visual aids, I would have said visual learners, EALD students, students who are non-readers, hearing impaired students, language delays and children on the spectrum. I had the view that visual aids were there to assist with visual learners and students with learning difficulties. I held this belief as I felt these types of learners would be the ones that would have the most trouble making connections to the written word and therefore would benefit most from a supporting image.

I have always thought that to ensure students have the best opportunity to learn, teachers need to deliver content in a variety of ways. Visual aids have been used in classrooms for many years—even more so now with current technology.

Research has shown that 65 % of the world's population are visual learners, or learn through seeing (University of Alabama 2005). Based on this statistic, it is likely that a large percentage of students within any classroom are visual/spatial

learners, and so would definitely benefit from the inclusion of visual aids. However, in saying this, there are other additional needs or groups of students who could benefit greatly from the incorporation of such resources.

During my practicums I have worked with students who have language delays and with children who are on the autism spectrum. It can be so challenging for teachers to try and communicate, but it is equally challenging for the students. Not being able to communicate or convey messages because you can't find or speak the words is frustrating. Having a nephew with an intellectual disability and ASD has given me an insight into the challenges families, educators and the child themselves face. It has also given me an insight into the benefits of introducing visual aids for communication and education.

I also felt that students who speak English as an additional language could make connections by having a combination of resources, including visuals. Visual aids could help scaffold learning by assisting with content, helping students progress in their achievement of English. Words are nonconcrete and retention can be difficult. Visual aids are concrete, which can then be remembered more easily.

'Who Do I Think I Am?'—My Current Views Today

Observations have enabled me to see how visual aids or pictures can be of great assistance in many areas. In the past I thought more about the learning difficulties or challenges that could be assisted by visual aids as opposed to other areas in which they could be beneficial.

I have observed first-hand the effect visual aids can have on behaviour management. During my final practicum, I observed the incorporation of a picture of a snail that said 'slow down'. This was implemented for a student who has a severe behaviour disorder. When the student would start to unravel, the aide would recognise this and put the picture of the snail on the table in front of the student. I found this interesting, as although this child could not identify feelings and triggers for this severe behaviour resulting in outbursts, the child did understand that the snail picture meant slow down and take a breath. This had a positive impact on behaviour, reducing the number of outbursts. This in turn directly impacted on learning by calming the student down to remain focussed and on task.

This observation started to change my thoughts of the benefits of visual aids when it comes to behaviour management. Although it was such a small, non-elaborate resource, it was one that had such a positive impact on this child. In addition to the snail, the classroom had some poster displays of positive and acceptable social behaviour. I like the idea that positive behaviour is being encouraged and reinforced as opposed to focusing on what students shouldn't do.

Watching students learn, listening to the questions they ask, and trying to understand how they think and process information is interesting. During my final practicum, over a period of three weeks I taught a short unit of work, an author study on Pamela Allen for Grade 1 students. One of the lessons required students to design

and then make their own 'potato person', like the ones in the story *The potato people* (Allen 2005). Prior to the construction phase students had many questions: 'How do we make it?' 'What do we use?' I then produced one I had my daughter make the night before. When students had the visual of the pre-made model, they seemed to process what was required much faster. There were no more questions, just excited little faces wanting to get busy creating. This observation then led me to ask the question, 'Do visual aids assist students to process information quicker?'

Classroom management can also be assisted with visual aids. Upon implementation of a visual timetable, I observed all students curiously looking at the daily schedule. I then observed some students checking it throughout the day, followed by them getting resources ready prior to commencement of the lesson. This was done without their being asked. I feel that the new interest generated also helped in individual resource organisation for some students.

I believe children, like adults, like to know what is going to be happening during their day. I know myself I feel a lot more organised and calmer if I have an idea of how the day is going to transpire. I have often had students come up to me throughout my practicums asking questions such as, 'What are we doing after recess?', 'What are we doing after lunch?', 'Do we have Art today?' Having a visual timetable enables all students to be able to see their daily schedule. This could assist students who have anxiety issues and students who like to be organised. The inclusion of visual timetables and schedules can help organisation: 'They minimise anxiety and confusion and maximise structure, security and independence' (Department of Education Training and Employment 2014).

I also feel this is keeping communication open with the students. Although it is not verbal communication, a message is still being conveyed through images in conjunction with the written word.

Teacher Views

I approached six teachers to informally discuss visual aids, the benefits, the types and students they assist. All of them indicated that visual aids within the classroom were very important. I can therefore confidently say 100 % of all teachers I conversed with highly value the incorporation of visual aids within the classroom.

The teachers believe that visual aids create interest and engage students. One believed the benefits to the students included giving them a 'go to' in the room for procedures, spelling and math strategies and that it gave the students an example of the topic being presented. This teacher believed students who benefit more were those who had trouble visualising and students with learning difficulties, such as autism, processing difficulty, Asperger's, ADHD and ADD. The resources this teacher incorporated were interactive whiteboard, videos, posters, books, words around the room, concrete models and daily routines.

A second teacher thought the benefits were catching the attention of students and manipulation aiding learning and spatial awareness, and believed that visual learners

and slower learners benefit more from visual aids. This teacher incorporates MAB, manipulative tools for counting, operations, patterning, and fractions. She also makes her own visual aids as a part of the lesson, such as place value discs for lessons on place value.

A third teacher believed that visual aids within the classroom are an important tool to maximise student engagement, the benefits to the student being that they support learning, cater for students with language difficulties (especially reading), engage students, and provide a scaffold for learning. The students or particular learners this teacher feels would benefit more from visual aids would be students with reading problems and students with short attention spans. The visual aids incorporated are pictures to accompany instructions and routines and the use of colour in worksheets to highlight important aspects for the students to focus on.

A fourth teacher felt that visual aids cater for different learners, create interest, and help with classroom organisation of lockers, materials, resources and the classroom timetable. The types of learners this teacher believed would benefit more would be students who were non-readers, who are less confident, children who like organisation, and visual learners. Visual aids used by this teacher include visual timetables, word walls, tubs/drawers with labels, charts for learning terminology or examples, and examples of children's work.

Although these teachers value visual aids, the types of learners they feel it benefits most and the type of visual aids they incorporate are varied. The teachers used many different types of visual aids when teaching, however they teach different age groups and different subjects and so that is to be expected. To me this reinforces the importance of ensuring that you select visual aids that are relevant to both the content and the group of students.

Of This Much I Am Sure

This project has really opened my mind to many of the different benefits visual aids have within the classroom. My personal view on visual aids has been strengthened. Visual aids within a classroom setting benefit many more students than what I had originally thought. Students are very diverse: All have different learning styles; all face different challenges and all are unique.

This has increased my understanding of the importance and benefits of having things visual. As teachers you can model and explain different activities, concepts or ideas; however, if you *show* the students you can create those 'ah ha' moments. Seeing students make connections and develop understandings is very rewarding.

Visual aids used constantly within classroom settings in conjunction with the spoken word can be even more advantageous. I believe this is because it appeals to more than one sense. Letting children *see* as well as *hear* and possibly *touch* provides them with a fuller experience. It is these experiences that help them learn, and then create understandings and connections. To me this gives merit to the sayings 'Seeing is believing' and 'A picture speaks a thousand words.'

Collaborating with colleagues has proved to be invaluable to me. The teachers I talked with have worked in this field for many years and have had experience working with many different types of learners. Listening to the thoughts and views on visual aids of those who have been teaching for many years has also reinforced the value of collaboration. Getting different perspectives and views from other professionals can then encourage self-reflection. It is this reflection that makes you ask yourself questions and think at a deeper level.

Conclusion

I believe that creating a learning environment for students that maximises learning opportunities includes the incorporation of visual aids. Students need a variety of resources to engage all of their senses.

All students and classrooms are different and it is up to the teacher to select the most appropriate resources to maximise effectiveness. Visual aids within the classroom have to be relevant and appropriate.

Visual aids support the development of thinking and learning skills, such as organizing and communicating ideas. Visual aids can help students make connections and encourage deeper thinking. This to me indicates that the use of visuals again supports and enhances learning opportunities for *all* students, not just individuals or a select group of students.

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Chapter 21
Inclusive Learning for Students with Disabilities

Cam Foulis

Abstract The topic of this chapter I am very passionate about as I struggled with it first-hand whilst at school. Having an auditory processing disorder, I was ignored by the majority of the teachers who taught me and who thought I was too hard to deal with. In those years students with a learning disability were taken out of class to do extra literacy practice, thus missing such activities as physical education, learning a different language, and craft and creativity, which enforced feelings of unintentional punishment. Fortunately I had private tutors coming to my home to teach me life skills, strategic tips for managing my disability, control, and to be open to my own learning. My passion is thus to ensure that similar students do not have to go through exclusion and the feelings it engenders. Nowadays teachers seem more knowledgeable and accepting about working with students with disabilities, who are not withdrawn but work within the classroom as much as possible with School Services Officer assistance There are also multiple interactive methods available to students with disabilities, such as computer programs and iPads with special apps, as typing is sometimes easier than handwriting. There is also more constructive communication between the parent and teacher, fewer examinations, and more group work, which enhances communication skills whilst helping students feel connected. The use of inclusion has reached a point where students without a disability are most commonly desensitised from the stigma surrounding those living with disability.

Journal Entry, 19 August 2013, Port Augusta, South Australia:

> I was placed into a classroom of year 5-7 Aboriginal students and their home-group teacher. The subject being taught was mathematics and from my observations, many of the students needed assistance with the given math questions. A majority of the class had various learning disabilities, behavioral issues and attendance issues. Compared to the females within the classroom, a greater number of the male students had a learning disability. During this lesson, I found myself assisting five male students all at once, all who had different questions.

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Whilst assisting the group of boys, one of the quieter boys who was sitting behind the group I was helping took me by surprise as he stormed out of the classroom swearing. Immediately, I followed him out of the school grounds to examine what his issue was in the classroom. The student exclaimed that he was and always was trying his best in his schoolwork however there have been times, and that day especially, where he needed assistance because he was 'stuck'. He explained that he was frustrated that he wasn't receiving any help even though he was waiting patiently, unlike the 'other' students who would call-out and demand immediate attention from the staff.

At that moment I had a flashback to one of my memories from when I was in primary school. I was like this child, who would sit and wait patiently for the teacher(s) to approach me and ask how I am going with my work. I believed I was a nuisance to the teachers if I had to ask for help, however in the long run I found that I was depriving myself of the opportunity to fully understand concepts being taught. So I told the student of my own lived experience, which was almost identical to that of his. The student appreciated the fact that both he and I shared the same type of feeling, so then I proceeded to convince the student not to give up and to come back inside the classroom. Along the way back to the classroom, I apologised to the student for letting him down the same way I was let down at school. Once we had returned back into class, I sat with him and helped him work solutions to his math problems. Those few moments had reminded me of why I want to become a teacher and also, to help a class as a whole, that it is wise to observe more closely the students who perceptibly portray a need for assistance.

Introduction

I grew up living in a small country town within South Australia called Orroroo. Both my father and mother came from families who were farmers, and all of us were born and lived in the area for over eight generations. I was educated at the town area school until year 11 before I moved to a neighbouring town with a school that provided greater educational opportunities. After finishing year 12, I decided to have a gap year to work with farmers and grain silos. Soon within the year, I realised that I did not want to spend the rest of my life making money for large companies. Instead, I had a strong feeling that I wanted to help children with their education.

For myself I experienced a very stressful period in my life whilst at school. Having an auditory processing disorder, I was ignored as a student by the majority of the teachers who had taught me and who thought I was too hard to deal with. However, when I was 7 years old, I was tested by an audiographer, who assessed my ability to answer questions vocally. It was discovered that my verbal answering skills were at the level of a 12 year old. A disadvantage to studying in a classroom with many other students was my inability to concentrate due to the loud noise. I had always been a very quiet student who tried my best in all situations and met all the benchmarks set by classmates. I remember hating to ask a question for fear of getting a curse reply from my teachers. Therefore, instead I would recite the information I already knew in accordance to the task requirements. However, by this stage, the standard of my work was far behind that of my peers.

During one of the parent-teacher meetings, my teachers informed my mother that I seemed to have been a 'daydreamer' or a 'bludger', when in reality I was putting more thought into the work than the person sitting next to me. By the end of each day of school I would feel mentally exhausted. My mother would always ask me how my day went and I'd tell her all my issues whilst beginning to feel emotional and quite infuriated. I believed that the average student slipping behind in their grades would not care at all about the situation and go about the rest of their day freely. However I was different, I had expectations for myself to achieve at least some level of competency. School was a battle for me to prove that I was not the type of student I was initially labeled as.

The topic being covered in this chapter is something I am very passionate about as I have dealt with the struggles first-hand. This topic is my main motivation to become an educator for all students.

Who Did I Think I Was?

Throughout the late 90s, which was the commencement of my schooling years, the two terms 'disability' and 'inclusion' weren't considered amongst my teachers and peers in the way they are today. Students with a learning disability like myself were not able to participate in activities that were perceived as enjoyable. We were taken out of class to do extra literacy practice in the hope that we would become more intellectually inclined in that particular subject. Practical and group activities, such as physical education, learning a different language such as Indonesian, and attending 'Busy Time', which involved craft and creativity, are some examples of areas where exclusion was prevalent. Personally, I believe that an exceptional amount of effort was dedicated to my studies; however, while constantly being taken out of the classroom for a perceived beneficial reason, the feeling of unintentional punishment was being enforced. I was asked not to sit the state assessment tests, as I would lower the school's average, which would not give them a good reputation. I had realised then that the school did not place the students' best interests first, and therefore self-hate developed and it became difficult for me to accept myself as having a disability.

From year 2 through to year 7, a retired teacher who focused on developing my literacy skills privately tutored me. Additionally, throughout year 10 to year 11, I was again tutored with a focus on developing my mathematical skills. For two days a week, from 7:45am to 8:15am, my private tutor came to my home and strategically taught me skills that I currently use in everyday life. In contrast to the teachers and their teaching methods used at the schools that I attended, my tutor focused on my interests, which made learning enjoyable. I was taught strategic tips to help me manage my own disability, to have control and to be open to my own learning. Through these processes, I was empowered and my perspective had changed for me to then feel engaged within an educational setting (Groundwater-Smith et al. 2010).

Who Do I Believe I Am Now?

I believe that today, I am an individual of worth and one who is dedicated, inspired and open to creating and taking advantage of situations to better others and myself with disability. My passion lies within my lived experience, as I want to ensure that students and individuals like myself do not have to go through exclusion and the feelings that are dragged behind it. I want to inspire others to believe in themselves and to know that there are no limits when reaching their dream goals, despite whether they have a disability or not.

From working between two primary schools, I have noticed that nowadays students are not withdrawn but work within the classroom as much as possible with School Services Officer assistance at all times. Despite the range of literacy levels, they are able to participate in their year level group with their peers (Groundwater-Smith et al. 2010). This offers students the opportunity to achieve their best without being withdrawn from the class. Furthermore, there are multiple interactive methods available to students with a disability, such as computer programs and iPads that contain apps or applications that can specifically make literacy enjoyable, as typing is sometimes easier than handwriting (Hyde et al. 2010).

Of This Much I Am Sure

Teachers now seem to be more knowledgeable and accepting about how to work with students with a disability. I have commonly witnessed teachers highlighting students' strengths and working with the students and their particular needs, instead of treating them as all having the same learning standards. Through giving responsibility, such as writing the date on the board and checking the roll, students with a disability feel included and not so different from their peers. There is now more constructive communication between the parent and teacher, fewer examinations and more learning activities to help engage students in group work, which therefore enhances their communication skills whilst helping them feel connected. The use of inclusion has reached a point where students without a disability are most commonly desensitised from the stigma surrounding individuals living with disability. This again makes learning easier for students with a disability as they feel more supported and not ashamed to have a learning disability. I believe teachers have now realised that students with a disability can leave school and still become successful adults, as the use of inclusion has great impact on a student's psychological and emotional state.

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Chapter 22
Looking at Learning Through Children's Eyes

A Self-Reflection on Planning Practice and a Journey to Reconceptualise, Using Children's Voice

Sadie J. Sandery

Abstract As an early childhood educator I found that children's learning was often teacher centred and led, with predetermined outcomes to be reached through a single pathway. Having been taught the importance of using children's ideas in our planning, I wondered why is it not equally important to acknowledge their changing interests, and whether learning outcomes are really improved if kept the same for all children. To challenge my beliefs I revisited a previously successful learning experience centring around a children's book on Indigenous life. After sharing the book with four to five year olds, I left natural material outside for them to access in their own way and time. As a result, some of them tried to make their own paint brushes by bashing the ends of sticks with a hammer to fan out the ends, and some began painting rocks they had collected while others tried to crush them, mixing the dust with water to make their own paint. I could not have predicted their interests, but by promoting children's voice in the planning process, saying and doing less from my own perspective, I was able to hear and see more of the children's, in a non-biased way. I also found greater potential to scaffold individual children's thinking and understanding, generating a higher level of cognitive challenge, stimulation and engagement than I had previously experienced, which I believe resulted from the learning context being created through the children's voice.

Children are the seeds of tomorrow's future: In order for them to grow and flourish, we must nurture uniqueness, support emotional development and hear their voice.

Journal entry (2nd of June, 2011, Barossa Region, South Australia):

> Today is the 6th day of my first placement, and although I have been working in education and with young children in this community for many years, it will be the first time that I present a learning experience as a pre-service teacher. As I stand before the 20 preschool

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children, gazing excitedly but sitting quietly before me, a wave of warmth floods over my body. This is really happening, I am where I have longed and worked so hard to be… but can I make a difference in these young impressionable lives; will their voice shine through the lack of empowerment that has restrained them?

Introduction

I am one of three daughters, an immigrant to Australia in my early years. I was English born, and although I have lived, grown and developed predominately through Australian culture, I hold a deep spirituality and connection with my ancestry. As a young teen I happily cared for other people's children, during a time when some were to be 'seen and not heard', a time in hindsight that my journey as an educator and advocator of child's voice began.

As a mother of four, my experience with caring for my own young children has been divided over two different stages of life. Mature minded in a young body, I was barely an adult when motherhood unexpectedly followed. Initially surprised but overwhelmingly excited, doubt never shadowed my mind. Holding a life, a part of me, I promised to live, laugh, play and learn together, valuing her voice always, even if I didn't like what I heard. The journey only beginning and against all certainty, a second life began to form, a vow of partnership followed, before the developing life was sadly lost. A little over one year later, my second child was born, a beautiful son, a father's dream.

Life back then was more than a challenge: It still should have been a very happy time, but place to place, job to job, on his roller coaster of instability, dreams unravelled, as my partner struggled to find any satisfaction. A depth of sorrow and emptiness took me to a place that I never want to go again. Mechanically functioning, it was the voice of my young that brought me back, imparting a realisation that their voice had been obscured and would now have a significant influence over the changes that were about to occur.

Independently rebuilding identity, family connections and my children's stability, new friendships formed and one man became irreplaceably special. Unavoidably tested by past and present through a decade of time, our love continues to strengthen today. With the addition of two more beautiful children, our life can be demanding and exhausting, but as one, we are dedicated and happy. Unconditionally supportive, his encouragement assisted my professional transition into early childhood education and the value of children's voice, from a new perspective, began.

Who Was I in Relation to Recognising Children's Voice in Questioning My Practice?

Entering into a foreign working environment in a strangely familiar world, I felt comfortable and at home in my new role as an early childhood educator. The children, families, staff and community were welcoming and through accessible relationships they quickly embraced the support I provided. Learning under the direction of an experienced educator, the children's learning was often teacher centred and led, and although my opinions were sought and input gratefully accepted, mine was not to question why this was. The outcomes were predetermined and the same path, with minimal variance, was designed for all to get there.

Why must children be quiet in their own learning?

> Excitement reigns as a young child discovers mixing blue and yellow makes green. Experiences are planned around mixing colours but when tomorrow comes, the young child is only interested in catching bugs outside; only planned experiences are offered, made to stay inside until its 'outside time', the young child now wanders the room, unenthused and unengaged, chastised for disruptive behaviours (S. Sandery, personal journal entry, 22nd May 2005).

If on the one hand I'm being taught that it is important to use the children's ideas in our planning, why is it not equally important to acknowledge their changing interests as they occur, to support planning development? From my own experience as a parent, I knew that what helps to support idea development in play for one child would not prove successful or necessarily be enjoyed by the other; were the learning outcomes somehow improved or more beneficial if kept the same for all children, once they enter into an educational facility?

I had so many questions, but so few answers. There seemed to be an imbalance between the learning environment and experiences and the children's developing interests, which made me feel uneasy, but it was difficult to question, discuss or even reflect in partnership with the teacher about these practices, without negative consequences. After a considerable length of time, in consultation with knowledgeable others from the same site, I found my voice, and as I began to diplomatically advocate for the children's, I realised my own hunger for learning desired a deeper theoretical understanding of early childhood, not only to support my future development as an educator, but also the use of children's voice with in it.

Who Am I Now in Relation to Using Children's Voice to Strengthen My Practice?

There is no doubt that the last four years of tertiary education have enriched my understanding of early childhood in ways I never dreamed possible, enabling me to see the child as a whole, in his or her social, cultural and political context, through dynamic and interactive programming (MacNaughton 2009). Research and

literature have helped to both inform and reaffirm my beliefs of birth to eight being a significant and important time, in which adults, experiences and environments shape uniquely different individuals and where the importance of developing learning programs that stimulate and engage young children, promoting wellbeing and success, is emphasised (DECS 2007). However, it is with respect to my recent placements, working collaboratively with knowledgeable others, especially within a study on reconceptualising planning using children's voice, that a prominent desire to think openly about planning practices has grown.

In an effort to significantly challenge my own beliefs, I revisited a previously successful learning experience, which centred around a children's book in what I refer to as 'book based' learning; an area of passion and practice confidence, as the inclusion of early literacy skills supports language development and cognitive, reading and writing skills in the process (ACARA 2014), and is a huge factor in of school and later life success (Dockett et al. 2007). The original plan centred around the book *Kami's country* by Notley (2009), a lovely adaption of an Aunty Wendy's mob song, about going bush walking with Kami in Pitjantjatjara country, learning from her about listening to the land. Additional books on Aboriginal culture were also presented with the help of Indigenous children in the class, to promote the importance of their family orientated culture and to show how paints and brushes were made in traditional ways, with an art experience of painting on bark that followed. When revisiting the experience the books were shared in the same way, however no art activity followed; instead, natural material was left outside for children to access in their own way and time. What followed for me was inspirational, in my study into discovering new ways of planning and improved practice through the inclusion of children's voice.

Of This Much I'm Sure

After sharing the books, some of the four- to five-year-old children tried to make their own paint brushes using sticks, bashing the ends with a hammer from the work bench to fan out the ends. Some began painting rocks they had collected, while others (sparked by the hammering of the stick) tried to crush them, mixing the dust and dirt with water to make their own paint. One normally enthusiastically active child sat alone on a bench seat, with the book *Kami's Country* (Notley 2009) read earlier. Thinking he may be upset and need comfort, I sat alongside him, he acknowledged me with brief eye contact, as he ran his hand over one particular page of the book. After a minute or so I said 'There are some beautiful colours in that picture.' Gazing up at me, he smiled but said nothing, as he continued to run his hand over the page. Shortly after two children ran over to his side and at that very same moment he said. 'Hey you guys (pointing at the picture), did yous know thems are my friend's family in there?'

Did I think the children would demonstrate their interest in Indigenous people's traditional ways of making paint and tools? Paint rocks instead of the bark? Or make

a deeper connection with their friend's cultural background? Surprisingly no, but by increasing my willingness to promote children's voice in the planning process, initially saying and doing less from my own perspective, I was able to hear and see more of the children's, in a non-biased way. I don't feel that my original planning or implementation of the learning experience was wrong—there is no right or wrong way of planning for young children's learning. However, by authentically valuing their perspectives in the reconceptualised model before, during and after the planning process, I was able to consider their uniqueness as capable individuals, and see the way they viewed themselves, others and the values they hold, while capturing the interaction between them, adults and the environment. This enabled me to see the child as a whole and use their individual and collective ideas, interests and play to develop further experience plans that explored other traditional indigenous tools and involved the children's families, as we learnt more about each other's different cultures, through photos, cooking, artefacts from home and invitations for family members to speak.

It was during those activities that I found a greater potential to scaffold the individual children's thinking and understanding, generating a higher level of cognitive challenge, stimulation and engagement than I had previously experienced with them before, which I believe was as a result of the learning context being created through the children's voice. For example, in an experience derived from the children's interest in mixing, measuring and Australian culture, they made damper. During the cooking process the power went out, enabling me to initiate group conversation and hypothesising about 'What would happen to the damper now?' This led to a group decision and experimentation of opening the oven door on one batch of damper, to check and see what was happening, and leaving the other batch undisturbed, with the oven door closed, to wait and see what would happen, and then comparing the differences, which led to the co-construction of new knowledge and understanding about the results. The disturbed batch did not cook through and the undisturbed batch cooked perfectly, even with the power off.

I believe I have always been a reflective thinker, from my early experiences: baby-sitting, as a mother and as an early childhood worker. Comparing the similarities and differences has also helped me to be reflective in practice, but to be critically reflective is a whole new dimension, which can challenge a reluctance to question certain beliefs and, for me, value other perspectives in its construction and use. I noticed a similar comparison in discussions with mentors, who teach children in the first year of school. I found that they also have some reluctance to analyse areas of confidence and are highly willing to allow the children to assist in the decision making process, for example, in choosing books for their program. But often like me, they only incorporated children's voice during and after the planned experience and rarely before, as the whole foundation of the planning process. They highlighted many constraints that can affect their ability to plan differently, such as curriculum, mixed year level classes and the principal's or broader stakeholders' views. In contrast, those surveyed in pre-school consistently incorporated children's voice prior to planning, as it is a high priority in the Early Years Learning Framework that guides their practice. My discussions with them provided a valuable insight into

how to incorporate children's voice prior to planning, such as an increased willingness to include children in more of the decision making processes, varied observational techniques and peer/self-assessments, as they support shared thinking, learning conversations and feedback with and among students and teachers (Brady and Kennedy 2012), therefore promoting an understanding of each other and co-construction of learning (Dockett et al. 2007).

It is difficult to acknowledge all the possible problems or constraints that I may face when planning from this renewed perspective in future working environments. However, in light of these knowledgeable educator perspectives and the results of action research into including children's voice in the planning process, as well as current literature on providing continuity of learning in the transition from preschool to school, to promote positive starts and future success (Dockett et al. 2007), the value of these views would help facilitate my future avocation and consultation with all stakeholders and validate my desire to comprehensively include children's voice in planning processes, for increased wellbeing and learning potential (DECS 2007).

Conclusion

People, past, present and place shape uniquely different lives: Individuals bring completely different perspectives to the same situation, even when they come from similar backgrounds. Early childhood is indeed a precious time that has a profound impact on who we become, how we cope and our ability to adapt and change. My journey into the value of children's voice was formed through my own childhood origins and experiences; it has been confronted by personal circumstances and by professional politics and ethics, which led to the desire for a better understanding through academic research and inquiry. In a critical self-review, I holistically applied using children's voice to my planning practice, with very rewarding results, promoting its potential and worth to all aspects of my future practice. As I continue to grow and evolve in early childhood education, I acknowledge that I can't change my or the children's pasts, nor would I want to, but as an educator I can promote the value of their voice to support healthy learning dispositions and a positive future path.

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Chapter 23
Can Age Really Define a Child's Readiness for Formal Education?

Elke Sharp

Abstract While teaching and observing at a kindergarten I began to question children's 'readiness' for formal education, especially under the 'same first day' policy, which allows children to start school on the first day of school year if they turn five before May 1 or else to wait until the following year. In my final placement in a reception classroom I was easily able to identify children who were displaying the same behaviours I had observed in kindergarten. This made me wonder if age really defines a child's readiness for formal education. The parents I discussed this with had all decided to send their child to school as soon as policy allowed, rather than wait the additional year. All believed their children were ready for formal education emotionally, cognitively and physically, although many also agreed that the decision of when to begin needs to be an individual one. At the same time, most teachers I spoke with believed the 'same first day' policy was not effective and that two intakes each year would allow greater flexibility. I conclude that age can not define readiness for formal education, and that the decision needs to be made on an individual basis, with more flexibility in the start date. I also agree with the suggestion of one teacher that the 'same first day' policy could be more effective if preschool settings introduced some formal education while reception classrooms introduced more of a play-based environment to help ease the transition.

Journal entry, 23 July 2015, Millicent, South Australia:

> I was looking at basic addition with one boy. We were using aeroplane manipulatives to assist in counting on from two when 'nnneeeeerrrrrwww', the boy started using the manipulative as a toy aeroplane. Even in an assisted, one-on-one approach he was unable to complete the simple addition task. I decided to change the type of manipulative thinking as his eagerness to play could come from his interest in aeroplanes. Using fruit manipulatives, to again heavily scaffold the child to find the answer, only led him to pattern the fruits in two colours which was obviously not the concept I was hoping to review during this activity. I discussed this experience and my concerns with my mentor teacher who admitted her concerns about this child also after observing similar incidences, along with the child's

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inability to consistently toilet himself. I continued to think, was this child really ready for formal education, or would he have been more suited to a kindergarten setting judging by his behaviours?

Introduction

Prior to starting my studies back in 2012, I never imagined myself going to university, mainly due to the regional location I lived in all my life. I enjoyed visiting the city but knew I preferred my small coastal town and home and family. It was not until 4 years after high school that I found the full external options in higher education. At the time I began my Bachelor of Teaching and Learning I was working in the financial services industry and competently moving up the ladder, as I had, and still have, a love for helping people achieve, especially through the home loans area. In saying that, I could not picture myself still in that industry in 10 years time. It is with the great support of my husband I am now about to graduate, 4 years on, after working 4 days a week in a stressful job, assisting him to run our own small business while carrying our first child on my final 12 week placement. I feel overwhelmed with gratitude to be in such a position, and about start a career in something I am very passionate about.

I have known since later years in primary school I had a love for and ability to communicate well with children, which is how I arrived at the decision to consider studying teaching. I have also been aware of my interest in the 'readiness' of children for formal education for quite some time, as I have a deep concern for children and want to ensure their best interests are being considered at such life changing stages. I watched nephews, in particular, begin school and noticed their changes in behaviour and felt concern for their readiness in small things, such as inability to last the week without a 'rest day'. Back then, the 'same first day' policy was yet to be introduced in South Australia, where I am located, and children were beginning school the first term after their fifth birthday, just as I did as a child.

What Was I?

I began to question the 'readiness' of children for formal education and what behaviours should be expected for the children I was teaching and observing whilst at a kindergarten. I was encouraged to research developmental stages and found a great resource that I have referred back to countless times, 'Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards' (Australian Government 2009). This resource was excellent for understanding the observational expectations of kindergarten children and below, but I was still questioning that first year of school. How do we really know children are ready for the

demands of school, especially now the 'same first day' policy is in full effect in South Australia, aligning with all the other states in Australia?

> In South Australia, from January 2014, children in public schools can begin school on the first day of term one if the child turns five before May 1.... Parents do have the right to wait an additional year for their child to begin school, as long as the child starts school by the compulsory age of six. (Department of Child and Educational Development 2013).

Starting my final placement in my first reception classroom made me nervous, as I was yet to teach this age group and was not confident in my expectations of them cognitively, physically and emotionally. It did not take long before I was able to easily identify those children who were displaying behaviours I had observed when in a kindergarten setting.

This led me back to the consideration of my questioning: how to know children are ready for formal education when the time comes. From what I was observing, this child was not ready cognitively, or even physically, according to those comments from my mentor teacher. As I am yet to become a parent, I can only assume, as an educator, the decision must be difficult in some circumstances, to decide to begin your child's formal education as soon as policy allows. It is for the reasons mentioned above I have decided to look at school readiness age for children, more specifically, 'can age really define a child's readiness for formal education?'

What Am I?

I used different methods to assist me in finding an answer to this often debated question of school readiness. I made contact with teachers, parents and some school and preschool leaders in our area. They have found at various times children have began school too soon and are unable to cope with the demands of formal education, including routines, poor spatial awareness, low level social skills, below average oral language skills, inability to independently toilet and failure to concentrate entirely on tasks. All parents I talked with believed their children were ready for formal education emotionally, cognitively and physically in line with the 'same first day policy'. Parents shared some similar opinions about the behaviours they observed that assisted them to arrive at the decision to start their child at school as soon as policy allowed. These behaviours included excitement, eagerness and confidence. Many parents also agreed the decision to begin formal education needs to be an individual decision for each child. I would have to agree with this.

All parents I talked to decided, it seemed, to send their child to school as soon as policy allowed, in relation to the 'same first day' policy, rather than wait an additional year, to a maximum of 6 years of age. This information is interesting because it was different from the opinion of several teachers. Talking with teachers, I found most believe the 'same first day policy' is not an effective method to regulate the start date for a child to begin formal education. Many shared the view that two intakes would be more beneficial to the child as it would allow for additional time

in preschool and greater flexibility for individualised start dates. One teacher made an excellent point by indicating that the ‘same first day policy’ could be more effective if the preschool settings introduced more formal education and the reception classrooms introduced more of a play-based environment to help merge the environments and/or stages.

Of This Much I Am Sure

I do feel it is difficult to entirely evaluate this topic based on the limited time I had to explore the issue. The views of parents are specific to their child, while the views of teachers have been gained from the experiences of many children over many years in the profession.

In deliberation, I conclude that age can not define readiness for formal education, and I agree with many parents and teachers that this decision needs to be made on an individual basis, while considering the cognitive, social and physical abilities of the child. Of this much I am sure, I believe parents and educators need to be given more options and flexibility, as having to wait an additional year is not entirely practical. One year is a long time when children change and develop so rapidly in the early years.

What I have taken from this topic is the belief that the ‘same first day policy’ could actually be more effective if the preschool settings introduced additional formal education and the reception classrooms introduced more of a play-based environment to help merge the environments and/or stages. I liked this idea because I feel it really could work and benefit the children. In both environments the learning could be more differentiated for the individualised requirements of each student. I also like this idea because I feel it could be achieved at a local level through the collaboration of early years educators without having to attempt to change government policy or working in a manner that is against personal belief but a requirement of policy.

Conclusions

I conclude this topic still believing there is much to be investigated. In saying this, I believe age cannot define a child’s readiness for formal education. I also feel satisfied as an early years educator that I am now equipped with knowledge about how to assist children during this period, which can be viewed as a ‘grey area’ because of the conflicting views of teachers and parents about students’ ‘readiness’ for formal education. Changing teaching approaches is a small step educators could make that could potentially affect a child’s entire outlook on school; what a fantastic and powerful notion that is.

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Part VI
Engaging Students

Introduction

Pamela Smith

There is widespread use of the term ‘engagement’ in educational literature. Engaging students is an obvious component of a quality learning environment. It has evolved from reactive responses built on control to student-centred classrooms that focus on self-control. Engagement is a complex concept that involves factors of student disposition as well as the pedagogy of the teacher. Australian classrooms aim to develop productive sociocultural environments for students. Teachers need to deal with a range of diverse issues and develop learning environments where all students feel secure and confident.

The first two chapters in this section deal with the issue of positive feedback and reinforcement as contributing to greater student confidence and engagement in learning. Miroslava Woolley in Chap. 24 observed during her practicum experiences that teachers can tend to focus on the negative, particularly in terms of behaviour. She found that if you reverse this and look for opportunities to praise the positive behaviours, this can influence engagement and therefore academic outcomes. Sally Booth (Chap. 25) in a similar vein talks about planned ignoring, that is ignoring, if possible, negative behaviours aimed at seeking attention. She came to reflect on this issue when students in one of her practicum classes told her she was ‘being too attentive’, needing to fill in the gaps with too much talk. In her self-reflection she realised that strategically choosing to focus on the positive had greater effect on student engagement and management.

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Dreikur in McDonald (2010) talks about the benefits of encouragement and makes the distinction between encouragement and praise. Encouragement is more accurate feedback regarding work and behaviour than mere praise. Both of those student chapters promote the role of the teacher in creating a learning environment that facilitates and supports active learning. As McDonald says, this does not just happen by itself!

In Chap. 26 Carmen Gomes do Rosario, an international student from Timor Leste studying in Australia, talks about experiencing the issue of ADHD in her Darwin teaching placement schools and the differences in how we understand and cater for children with specific learning difficulties in this country from her experience in her own country. The observations that she made caused her to feel strongly about the rights of all children to be given the opportunity to reach their potential. She particularly recognised the importance of the relationship between home and school in developing individual learning plans for these students.

Harlacher et al. (2006) write that school-based interventions are effective for managing ADHD symptoms, but interventions work best when used with the whole class and with parent-school communication. Interventions often benefit other students, and this also does not draw attention to any particular student. Carmen has now taken this knowledge from her Australian pre-teaching experience back to her workplace in Timor Leste.

In Chap. 27 Anthony Gugliotta talks about his struggles with engagement in a secondary school practicum were he was teaching Physical Education. He was confronted by students who did not always share his passion for and experience with sports and physical activities and who often felt threatened by such activities if they had had negative experiences in the past. Jenkinson and Benson (2010) say that exercise and activity habits commence early in life, while Dobbins et al. (2009) believe quality physical education at an early age is paramount. Hence, schools have been identified as key health settings and are being called upon to give greater attention to their physical education and physical activity programs (Naylor and McKay 2009).

Anthony was challenged to firstly understand the reluctance of particular students and find ways to engage and promote the importance of physical exercise for a healthy lifestyle. Despite what research says about the changing fitness levels of students, student unwillingness to participate, a dislike of activity, a lack of understanding of the benefits of physical activity and a decline in student interest, physical educators are becoming more accountable than ever before. Their role continues to evolve as they pursue opportunities to facilitate activities that engage students and provide education on lifestyle choices and healthy behaviours (Boyle et al. 2008). Anthony concludes that there are multiple factors to consider and that further reflection and experience will inform his practice. He also recognises that the quality of teaching and resources can lead to an interest in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Speaking of a different way to engage students, in Chap. 28 Alison O'Loughlin explores the use of music in the classroom to deal with distraction and 'soothe busy young minds', allowing concentration on learning tasks. Educators may encounter many challenges within the classroom when it comes to the distractions that stu-

dents face. Research has shown that music may be an effective tool at breaking down some of the barriers students might face with their learning. When music is properly used as a background enhancer, a learner's ability to concentrate within the classroom environment increases (Hallam et al. 2002). Hallam et al. (2002) also suggests that the effects of music on task performance are mediated by arousal and mood rather than affecting cognition directly. Therefore there is an argument for the use of music in the primary classroom. Alison found a sense of calm when she tried to use music in her practicum class, but with the proviso that he choice of music is important.

In the final chapter (Chap. 29) in this part, Constantina Spyropoulou writes about the issue of recognising and catering for the gifted child in the mainstream class. In every class students are on a continuum in terms of ability. Constantina came to teacher training with a set view about 'giftedness' but found that there is a range of giftedness, and also that gifted students can be disruptive if not challenged enough. She wondered how teachers can work with such a range of students, giving each what they need. Diezmann and Watters (1997) write that a major concern is the lack of challenge that extends gifted children in ways that enhance their emotional, social and cognitive development. They also say that because the development of potential may not occur spontaneously, deliberate intervention practices are essential. While acknowledging this, Constantina concludes that all students actually need to be challenged to reach their potential and teachers need to develop a range of strategies to properly engage all learners.

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Chapter 24
The Effects of Positive Teaching on Success in Children's Learning

Miroslava Woolley

Abstract On one of my placements I disappointed myself by paying too much attention to inappropriate behaviour instead of rewarding appropriate behaviour. I accordingly decided to look into the influence of on-going positive reinforcement, which was sorely lacking in my own schooling in communist Czechoslovakia. My own observations and analysis of literature indicated a connection between positive teaching and higher educational outcomes, and most teachers seem well aware of the impact of using positive reinforcement. From observing teachers and questioning parents, teachers and students, it seemed that everyone knew what the positive strategy was. While many people admitted using this strategy to some level, the students supported the theory that teachers and parents focus more on the inappropriate than the appropriate behaviour. I came to the conclusion that teacher or parent praise is one of the most powerful motivators for students and adults. Developing positive teacher/student relationships through positive teaching strategies helps create an effective and positive learning environment. Students and adults who are treated with respect, love and care tend to behave appropriately and have expected or higher academic outcomes. All of us, including students, want to feel recognised, valued and respected for our work and behaviour.

Journal entry, 14 September 2014, Darwin, the Northern Territory:

> I have found myself moving away from my main focus on how to keep children on task. Today I have acknowledged inappropriate behaviour more than the appropriate and expected behaviour, which made me think and reflect on this issue. I focused more on inappropriate behaviour instead of rewarding the appropriate behaviour. I gave children the attention they wanted, for all the wrong reasons. It is very easy to just tell children what they are doing is wrong instead of picking up on what is expected and modelled well by the other students. As stated by discipline expert Morin (2014), children crave attention even if it is negative attention. Any attention is better than no attention at all. They want an adult who will give them the attention by looking at them, prompting them or giving them any kind of verbal or nonverbal instructions. During my first placement in this centre I had very positive

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> feedback from my mentor, who praised my positive teaching approach and said, 'I forgot that it works and it was so good to see it in practice. Miroslava's positive attitude influences the children and staff and is something to aspire to.'
>
> That is why I am feeling disappointed with myself today and will try to ignore negative behaviour and praise positive behaviour as it is the best way to deal with attention seeking behaviours.

Introduction

I am a mum, an educator and a good citizen, and I believe that it is our job and responsibility to look after and support our children and value all life, as well as be a good example and a role model in doing so. Each and every child is unique, and their diversity in upbringing and cultural background means that children will experience learning in many different ways. They will bring and share their own knowledge and experiences, and it is of great importance to me to recognise their beliefs and learning approaches and to include, support and guide each and every one of them.

Who Was I?

Throughout my life I have come across many different teaching strategies from different points of view, as a student, teacher and a parent. Being an educator, student and parent made me constantly reflect on my teaching and learning, and therefore I decided to look into the influence of teaching strategies and particularly the influence of on-going positive reinforcement.

I grew up in communist Czechoslovakia and my upbringing and education were very structured. From what I can remember, in our class there were only children who were academically advanced and who were not. The focus was on children who were not able to perform academically, therefore the inappropriate behaviour escalated as they were constantly picked on and compared to the smart children. As I was one of the children in between, I felt like I was not really good at anything. I was rarely praised for my good behaviour or effort, and as the years passed I lost most of my inspiration. Only when I started grammar school my History teacher acknowledged my efforts and behaviour, which made me feel valued and respected. She believed in me and that helped me to get motivated as I started to believe in myself too. It was my favourite subject and she was my favourite teacher.

Things have changed as the years have gone on, but there are some things that have stayed the same. I have been a parent for the past 17 years, and I clearly remember the day my firstborn came home and told me about a boy who was always acting inappropriately and how he was rewarded every time he did something well:

> Mum, I am always doing the right thing but the teacher never sees me. This boy is always misbehaving and today he lined up with the rest of us and now he is going on a trip. Why can't I go too?

I tried to explain to my daughter her teacher's strategy, but she was not satisfied. I said, 'It is a hard job to motivate all your students and to be fair in everyone's eyes.'

I didn't realise just how hard it is until I took the journey of an educator myself. Since I started my teaching journey I have always strongly believed that classroom management and discipline should be the main focus for every educator. All children need to feel safe, secure, happy, supported and valued for learning to take place. How to manage your class and what is the best strategy to use is the question that I have been trying to find an answer to. I am well aware that we are all different and that there is not just one answer to my question, but what I am sure of is that having positive teacher/student relationships is one of the most effective teaching strategies that will help to create a positive learning environment. My review of different studies seems to indicate that classroom environments which lack a clear behaviour management strategy and positive teacher/student relationships are at risk of losing students even before the learning and teaching begins.

Who I Am Now?

Four years ago, when we moved to Darwin, I got myself a job as a literacy tutor, and positive teaching played the main role in this program and its effectiveness. I had used positive teaching strategies in England, but they weren't used as effectively and appropriately as I have experienced in this literacy program. Use of positive teaching strategies showed me benefits that I have never seen before. Forming relationships with children and their families, believing in them, supporting them and praising them helped many children across Darwin to improve their reading and reading-related skills.

My own observations as well as an analysis of literature and research on positive teaching and its effectiveness are indicating the connection between positive teaching and higher educational outcomes. As stated in research by Emeritus Professor Kevin Wheldall AM and Dr Robyn Wheldall (2014) of Macquarie University, teachers who use positive teaching methods are able to build less stressful and more effective teaching and learning environments.

After my investigation, I came to the conclusion that in today's classrooms most teachers are well aware of the impact of using positive reinforcement. However, as research indicates, most teachers are focused on academic performance instead of praising the social behaviour which increases students' work effort. In general, students who are misbehaving encounter high rates of negative feedback from their teachers and receive high rates of teacher commands (Lago-DeLello 1998). Further, these students receive more attention from their teachers following inappropriate behaviour, which takes the focus away from the appropriate behaviour.

I believe that in order to create an environment where students will reach their full potential, teachers need to be able to support students to meet their academic outcomes and goals. They must build a classroom culture of achievement where students are inspired to work hard to reach those goals while being supported and encouraged, a culture in which students are highly motivated to learn and collaborate with their peers to bring the whole class to a higher level of achievement.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Looking back on my observations and conversations relating directly to positive teaching strategies, I came across many different opinions; however, they all indicated the same outcome. I chose to observe teachers during their teaching time, and asked questions of parents, teachers and students. From what I have gathered, there was not one person, child or adult, who didn't know what the positive strategy was. Many people even admitted using this strategy to a certain level; however, children supported the theory and research by Lago-DeLello (1998) that teachers and parents focus more on the inappropriate behaviour than the appropriate one.

'Why is that?' was my next question. 'Is it easier to just give children attention for misbehaving and ignore all the children who are doing the right thing? Is it in our nature to be negative?' I'm not sure how to answer this question. Most answers were very similar: Picking up on inappropriate behaviour is something we do on impulse. Of this much I am sure, that we need to train ourselves to ignore negative non-threatening behaviour to a certain extent and emphasise the behaviour that is expected. Based on my own experiences and what I have observed, it is always nice to hear encouraging and positive things said about oneself and one's own performances. It will give you encouragement and will help your self-esteem and confidence to try new things and to feel good about yourself. Speaking to one of the mums whose child has been through our literacy program and experienced a positive teaching strategy, she said, 'If it wasn't for a positive teaching approach my child would never have the confidence to stand in front of the whole school and host the assembly.' Using on-going positive teaching in schools has been recognised by parents and carers, but mainly by the students and teachers. Of this much I am sure, that the impact of positive teaching on children's self-esteem and confidence is influencing their academic outcomes and modelling the behaviour that is expected by a teacher.

Conclusion

Based on my own experiences, conversations, and observations, I came to the conclusion that teacher or parent praise is one of the most powerful motivators for students and adults. It does not matter in what stage of your life you are, you can never get enough praise.

From my point of view, being positive and supportive will set the foundation to build a positive relationship between students and teacher. Developing on-going positive teacher/student relationships with positive teaching strategies is one of the most effective methods that we can use to create an effective and positive learning environment. It doesn't take much to understand that students and adults who are treated with respect, love and care have a tendency to behave appropriately and have expected or higher academic outcomes. The reason is simple. We all, including students, want to feel valued and respected and recognised for our work and behaviour.

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Chapter 25
Planned Ignoring

Managing Disruptive Behaviours

Sally Scollay Booth

Abstract This chapter critically evaluates the way 'planned ignoring' is used in the classroom setting by using observations and conversations from in-school placements as well as relevant literature. Planned ignoring is a strategy predominantly used with mild and low impact behavioural problems resulting from power struggles and attention seeking. It is characterised by lack of eye contact and no verbal or physical response, thus depriving the student of the desired attention without making them aware that their actions are not in accordance with classroom rules and routine. Initially I thought ignoring a child was fundamentally wrong and highly unacademic, but I came to realise its value through working with two highly experienced mentor teachers on my placements. I learned that providing attention to students who were misbehaving simply gave them a further platform for disruption. As my placement progressed I found that many academic works promoted planned ignoring in some way: If used appropriately it can maintain the balance of respect and teach a student to monitor their own behaviour. My investigation into planned ignoring has highlighted the fact that even after years of theoretical study, a concept can arise that can challenge my mode of thought: The strategy I originally believed to be contrary to current academic thinking was in fact a highly utilised and valuable tool.

Journal Entry, 22nd August 2014, Nelson Bay, New South Wales:

> The primary lesson I learnt today was how to 'strategically ignore'. To put it in a more academic way, to ignore secondary behaviours. These are behaviours that a student does to push your buttons or avoid moving on with the lesson. With this particular class I have learnt that this is an effective tool to maintain the flow of the lesson, at the same time remembering that it is important to address behavioural issues the student may have at a later time. I must learn when to negotiate and when it is best to simply walk away. Various times during this placement I have chosen to further conversations with students that would be best handled by simply ending the dialogue.

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Introduction

I am a university student. First and foremost, I am a woman, a daughter, a sister and a wife. I am an academic person who already finds joy in being an educator. I strongly believe that our society would be ultimately better off if we all took responsibility for our own actions, and bestowed this belief upon our children. This hard line viewpoint on modern society has had a significant impact on my own philosophies on life and education. I would like to demonstrate how this philosophy, my life experiences and my upbringing have impacted the way I teach and the way I manage the classroom.

This chapter will critically evaluate the way 'planned ignoring' is used in the classroom setting. The use of reflection in this chapter will assist exploration of my personal development on the topic of planned ignoring through a systematic evaluation of my own practice and that of my peers and mentors. Furthermore, the use of reflection will assist to divulge the contradictions that lie between pedagogical theory and practice for a pre-service teacher. The chapter will use observations and conversations from in-school placements and literature examining and demonstrating the use of planned ignoring in the classroom.

Planned ignoring is a behavioural management strategy that promotes seemingly overlooking negative behaviour. The focus is placed on positive reinforcement as opposed to responding in any way to negative behaviours. The student therefore does not receive the desired attention (Conroy 1989), or becomes aware that their actions are not in accordance with classroom rules and routine.

Planned ignoring is characterised by lack of eye contact and no verbal or physical response. The role of the teacher is to monitor the student's behaviour and strategically choose opportunities to engage with the student. Planned ignoring is a strategy predominantly used with mild and low impact behavioural problems resulting from various forms of power struggles and attention seeking (Buck 1992). Repeated calling out, whinging and sulking are all negative behavioural problems that may suit the implementation of planned ignoring. Higher-level behavioural issues can be exacerbated by this strategy (Rogers 2006).

What Was I in Relation to the Tactical Ignoring Strategy?

At no point in my university experience had I addressed 'how to ignore a child'. The concept seemed fundamentally wrong and highly unacademic. I was unsure what the literature would indicate. I assumed that ignoring is terrible, that you are a terrible teacher; that is nowhere near the quality teaching model you learnt in semester 1, year 1 of university.

I have been fortunate enough to have had the privilege of working with two highly experienced mentor teachers on my placements. I was conducting a lunch duty with my mentor teacher on my second placement when a student was observed

chasing another student with a plastic cricket stump. We intervened, addressed the negative behaviour directly, and asked the student to sit and reflect for five minutes. The student began to complain and fight the point. My mentor teacher advised me to simply ignore the behaviour and walk away.

As a pre-service teacher you feel that everyone is assessing every detail of your teaching abilities under a highly academic light. I realised that my interaction with students was relentlessly attentive. I proceeded to learn very quickly that this can work to my disadvantage. It hit home most significantly when a group of my year 6 students said to me, 'Mrs, you're too nice to us and you listen to everything we say.'

As much as this was flattering to me as a new teacher and ideally the positive feedback one would want, I did learn that I was beginning to provide my attention to students who were misbehaving, providing them with a further platform for disruption. The student with the cricket stump did not need negotiation and a platform for discussion. The consequence was immediate and the clear and concise explanation was given. The student was clearly aware that they had acted inappropriately and simply needed time to reflect.

The key concept my mentor teacher for my second placement wanted to impart upon me was, 'Don't talk too much'. Particularly with his current year 6 class, he encouraged me to let them use their initiative. If they needed help they could asked a teacher or peer. He confirmed to me that overdirection can confuse and bore. The classroom environment can be severely impacted by a teacher who does not know when to stop talking and when to start allowing growth through acknowledgement of responsibility. 'What do I need to be doing?', 'Am I on track?', 'Am I behaving appropriately?' Silence, a minimisation of dialogue or just a sustained pause can go a long way in managing classroom behaviour and can be the best basis for a student to think for themselves.

We try to fill in the gaps, constantly talking at children. I was introduced to strategic ignoring formerly during my placements. I did originally find it difficult to ignore. It was not because it did not feel it appropriate; rather, it went against all the theoretical pedagogy I thought I knew. Unless you are looking for it, you do not often come across literature that promotes ignoring a student. From actively investigating the current pedagogy on planned ignoring, however, it becomes apparent that it is one of the oldest and best tricks in the book.

As my placement progressed I was surprised to see how many academic works promoted planned ignoring in some capacity. If I had not specifically searched for the information, I would still believe that ignoring a child in any way in the school environment would be frowned upon. Mostly the articles referred to this strategy in terms of 'common sense' (Rogers 2012). And it does make sense. The literature indicated that planned ignoring is part of a large collection of strategies in a teacher's repertoire. If used appropriately it can maintain the balance of respect and teach a student to monitor their own behaviour.

The ability to settle oneself is a crucial life skill that continues, for most individuals, their entire life. Teaching a child to settle themselves can avoid anxiety and stress. The pains of leaving an infant to cry and fret until they settle themselves can be disturbing and difficult for a parent. The ultimate advantage is a child without

attachment issues and the beginnings of self-management strategies. In just the same way, a student can be deliberately left to settle themselves. The question I asked myself was, 'Is it always appropriate to respond to specific behaviour?' Strategic ignoring can be the best means for a student to become aware of themselves in the context of the situation.

I initially began my research by investigating the use of detention, suspension and expulsion in a school setting. Effective discipline is crucial to the management of any class (Nunnelley 2002). I found that during both my placements my mentor teachers and I focused heavily on classroom management strategies and discipline, particularly with the 'difficult' year 6 class I had for my second practicum. The 'difficult' mainly referred to a scattering of mild behavioural issues and one student with Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD).

I began to evaluate discipline and punishment in schools. I reflected heavily on how I would approach discipline in my own classroom and what I felt comfortable with. Megan Mitchell, the National Children's Commissioner, proposed that detention, suspension and expulsion of students was a violation of basic human rights (Williams 2014). I disagreed. I believe that with the right tools at my disposal I can endeavour to minimise punishment in the classroom and focus on discipline.

Glenn Buck (1992) suggests in his article 'Classroom management and the disruptive child' that discipline, 'describes a system made up of prevention and intervention strategies, designed to manage rather than control student behaviour'. The literature indicates that the key to this strategy is to pair different forms of discipline with positive reinforcement and a series of other behavioural management methods. For example, tactical ignoring in isolation can be dangerous to student's sense of belonging and significance (NSWDET 2003). Pairing planned ignoring with positive reinforcement for good behaviour can send just as strong a message as a long-winded discussion on the student's actions.

How Do I Approach Planned Ignoring Now?

Growing up, my family did not necessarily negotiate. We were highly communicative, but negotiating with a child was always observed as behaviour of the insecure and unsure parent, who hoped the child will always know best. This leads to anxious and stressed children (Nunnelley 2002). On the other hand, in the classroom context, negotiating is paramount to establishing a sense of ownership and belonging for students. There still exists a need for the teacher to clearly identify when the adult is to be explicitly followed, for safety as well as maintaining the flow of the curriculum.

I realised I had developed a fear of defining myself as the adult in the classroom. I put this down to my background in childcare (a Diploma of Children's Services) and the naive ideals of a pre-service teacher. Establishing the appropriate boundaries did not take long, although the process was intriguing. You are not their peer, you are their teacher. You are attempting to build strong and meaningful connections,

while sustaining an authoritarian demeanour (Rogers 2012). The contradictions go on, although the fine line is manageable and essential for best practice classroom management.

Payne et al. (2005), in their article 'Consequence-based interventions for classroom teachers', explain how the use of planned ignoring and other strategies can challenge attention seeking behaviours. Planned ignoring can have significant effects on a student who is seeking the attention of the teacher, as well as others. Students who predominantly seek the attention of their peers may find planned ignoring attempts from the classroom teacher motivation to continue the behaviour. In this case a more direct behavioural management technique should be employed.

Planned ignoring can significantly decrease the chance of a student becoming embarrassed from disciplinary actions or confrontations. Ignoring high level behaviour can be detrimental to other students, as their understanding of what is appropriate behaviour can be altered. By clearing stating the appropriate behaviour and the consequences, and then ignoring any further negative behaviour, the flow of the lesson can be maintained. Planned ignoring is commonly used for secondary behaviours. An adverse tone of voice, negative body language and inappropriate verbal communications are all examples of secondary behaviours.

I am aware that much of the management for Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) revolves around teaching the parent, as opposed to direct management in the classroom (McLean and Dixon 2010). The pressures of peers on a student with ODD can be significant. In my experience in the classroom with a student with ODD, the student frequently opposed starting or completing work, much to the distress of their peers. Many students found the continuous disruption to classroom routine highly annoying. The backlash often was humiliating for the student with ODD. The student had already become determined to oppose the teacher's direction, therefore leaving little wiggle room for themselves. To avoid conflict and embarrassment, the classroom teacher often strategically ignored the behaviour to allow other students to feel collectively accomplished in the successful completion of a task. The tactical ignoring is often paired with, firstly, explicit instruction that would provide the student with a simple understanding of the expectation of the teacher. Secondly, there is a clear and concise follow-up. A problem with the latter is a continuous withdrawing of the child from lunch and recess breaks where they could be developing positive peer relationships that might be already suffering in the classroom. Thirdly is a significant increase in monitoring of the students' progress, followed by immediate praise for completing small work-related milestones (Polsgrove 1991).

In the case I observed on my second placement, the child benefitted greatly from planned ignoring. The student was given the opportunity to amend their own behaviour without confrontation and embarrassment. The implementation of a series of intervention and prevention strategies (explicit scaffolding, modelling and positive reinforcement) proved to aid the student with ODD and the class as a whole (cf. Fagen 1986).

Of This Much I Am Sure

My understanding of planned ignoring has changed due to three key factors, namely the advice of my mentor teachers, the literature I absorbed during my exploration of discipline and punishment, and my own personal journey and reflections on myself as a pre-service teacher. Being a non-confrontational person has led me to seek different avenues to manage and deal with the behaviours of others.

I walked into the classroom on my first day of placement hoping above all things that I would not have to raise my voice and discipline a student. I realised that good discipline is good practice, and good teaching practice encourages happy, healthy students. After much research and investigation, and finding that the literature supported these less intrusive methods of discipline, I found it easier to reconcile my years of pedagogical study with my new formed experience in the field. Of this much I am sure, that my understanding of behavioural strategies will not always save me from a horrific day in the classroom. Of this much I am sure, by understanding that behavioural management strategies are not to be implemented in isolation, I will be better equipped to manage a class with possibly 30-plus unique personalities. I needed to understand that there is practice and there is theory, and sometimes they do not perfectly align. By understanding the basics, you are able to tailor a management strategy to the student.

What I personally need to focus on, as a new teacher, are the positives of behavioural management and the use of behaviour management strategies as a developmental tool for students. Planned ignoring can be a negative strategy for student mental health, but used wisely it can assist students to assess and manage their own behaviour. Our role as teachers is to give students opportunities to develop through strategic organisation. Balance is the key: a little of column A and a little of column B. Too much from either can result in distress, dislike and imbalance in the classroom. It is the role of the school teacher, parent or sporting coach to instil in young people a sense of responsibility and a sense of self in the community.

My teaching philosophy significantly stands upon this fact. I feel that this produces active, engaged and aware members of the community. People think beyond themselves. This is ultimately learnt behaviour. As teachers we need to model and scaffold this behaviour. I feel that I now clearly understand the legitimate use of planned ignoring as a strategy, and it has become another part of my ever expanding array of tools for managing a classroom.

Conclusion

Sometimes ‘ignore’ is not such a negative word. To ignore a person’s less desirable traits can be a gesture of good faith and kindness. Some children need time to reflect on behaviour that simply has slipped out or occurred due to excitement, peer pressure or inattentiveness (Rogers 2006). Due to my research and experience on

placement, I have become aware not only of the academic argument for planned ignoring, but also in the process learnt that it is a small part of a web of interlinked behavioural strategies.

Planned ignoring is a strategy that should be used wisely. When used effectively it can assist the positive flow of a class, limit embarrassment and humiliation (otherwise promoted by verbal discipline), and provide a platform for students to monitor their own behaviour. Each student needs an array of behavioural management strategies to suit them on any given day. Planned ignoring is one such strategy that can help to establish a sense of responsibility for one's own actions.

My investigation into planned ignoring has highlighted the fact that even after years of theoretical study, a concept can arise that can challenge my mode of thought. The strategy I originally believed to be contrary to current academic thinking was in fact a highly utilised and valuable tool. The topic has prompted me to continually assess the literature and extend my understanding of theory versus practice. As my formal years of educational training come to an end, I will be exceedingly cognisant of this lesson and endeavour to challenge my own practices and beliefs.

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Chapter 26
Strategies to Engage Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Mainstream Students in the Classroom

Carmen Ferreira Gomes do Rosário

Abstract In this chapter I share my opinion about strategies used to engage ADHD and other students in the mainstream classroom. In Timor, where I am from, we do have children with special needs, but unfortunately they do not get the opportunity to go to school; their parents ask them to stay at home and do nothing, and they or their relatives will look after the children. We even do not diagnose whether students have ADHD or not. After I came to study in Australia, I learnt different ways of thinking while doing my teaching placement. In Australia it is important for schools to diagnose children with ADHD so that they can get medication and treatment and teachers can manage their behaviour accordingly. Students who are diagnosed as disabled must have an Educational Adjustment Plan (EAP), and the schools where I did my placement also have a Special Educational Teacher (SET) and Special Educational Students Assistant (SESA), both of whom conduct regular meetings with parents and the pediatrician based on the student's medical report. At the same time, students who are not diagnosed as ADHD can show the same types of disruptive behaviour as ADHD students, and there are rules to deal with them. I want to share this information with people in Timor, especially teachers, to change their ways of thinking and see how important education is to all children in the world.

Journal entry May 4, 2014, Northern Territory:

> To me, to become a teacher is like a hero without merit. Teachers always do their best for their students to support them to achieve their goals and make their dreams come true. Teachers are heroes that will fight for their students. Teachers are parents that look after students during school time. Teachers are friends who know best their students. Maybe this time we will not think about them. But one day, we will value their virtues that they have done to us. Teachers are students' best friends, inspiration, parents and heroes.

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Introduction

I am an international student and I come from East Timor. I got an Australian Development Scholarship (ADS) in 2010. I was born in Timor Leste (Dili, capital city of Timor), a new-born country which is near to Darwin. It is only a one-hour flight from Darwin to Timor. My parents are Celestino Gomes and Carolina Ferreira. I have four brothers and two sisters. They are Jesuina, Ivo, Nelson, Agostino, Carlito and Clara. All of them are married and have kids.

I arrived in Darwin, Australia on 6th June, 2010. English is not my first language, although I can speak five different languages, namely Tetum (Timorese language), Indonesian, Portuguese, Kemak (our dialect) and English.

In this chapter, I would like to share my opinion about strategies to engage ADHD and other students in the mainstream classroom. In particular, I would like to share the differences in teaching disabled students between Timor and Australia. The reason why I want to write this chapter is my strong belief about the same rights for all children. It should not matter if the child is normally developed or has special needs: They all have their right to live, and to get good education. For those students diagnosed with ADHD, it should not mean that they cannot get equal opportunities to education as others. They shall have their right to go to school without any discrimination. This is where a teacher becomes a hero to support them and help them get treated equally in their educational life.

What Was I?

In Timor, we do have students with special needs. But unfortunately, those students do not get the opportunity to go to school. Their parents will ask them to stay at home and do nothing, and they themselves will look after their children at home or they will ask their relatives to look after their children.

I used to think that students with special needs do not have to go to school. In Timor we do not even diagnose students with disabilities like ADHD because for us students with issues in their behaviour are normal and the teacher should be the one in charge to handle those behavioural disorders. Not only are children with ADHD not diagnosed, but also they do not get necessary medication. In Timor, we believe that ADHD does not exist (cf. ADHD and Education n.d.). It is sad to know that children who have disabilities cannot go to school and get access to education because their parents will let them to stay at home. However, there is an organisation named Ra'es Hadomi Timor Oan that provides training for (mainly adult) disabled people to learn how to create things such as blocks, vases and other things that they can make by themselves, and their products can be sold in the market to make a living (APIDS 2006).

What Am I?

After I came to study in Australia, I learnt a lot of different ways of thinking while doing my teaching placement. In Australia, it is important for schools to diagnose children with ADHD so that those children can get medication and treatment and teachers can manage their behaviour in classes accordingly (e.g., Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder 2014). All students who are diagnosed as disabled students must have their Educational Adjustment Plan (EAP) here in Australia, where those children are funded by the government (Department of Education). In addition, in the schools where I did my placement they have a Special Educational Teacher (SET) and Special Educational Students Assistant (SESA). Also, students who are diagnosed as disabled students always have their medical report and the SET and SESA keep the record and update it based on students' academic performance. Both the SET and SESA also conduct regular meetings with parents and the pediatrician based on the students' medical reports.

An Educational Adjustment Plan (EAP) is a program that is designed to assess students with ADHD to set their goals of learning during a term. The EAP program lasts for 6 months, and every 6 months the Special Educational Teacher needs to update all the information, whether the student has shown any improvement in learning during the EAP program or not. If the student did not show any improvement, the SET and classroom teacher will need to have a meeting and discuss different strategies that can be used to engage the ADHD student in his or her learning activities.

However, when students meet the assessment criteria I mentioned above, it does not mean that they are diagnosed as ADHD students. I observed two different students, where one was diagnosed as an ADHD student and the other one was not. Let me name the student who was so diagnosed Student 1. Student 1 constantly left his seat, walked around the classroom and was not on task. Similarly, Student 2 (not an ADHD student) could not sit still on his chair because he found the lesson was not interesting, so he decided to walk around and disturb others from what they were doing. Student 2 had a high reading level in the classroom and he was a very talented student in literacy.

To deal with their behaviours, I went through the school rules about behaviour management, called Safe School NT (cf. DEET 2013). According to these rules, teachers write students' names up on the board, where it lists four different levels: remind, warn, act and buddy class. Students get into 'remind' if they disturb others and are off task, and then if they keep repeating the same behaviour they are in 'warn'. If students repeat their behaviour three times, then they will be in 'act', where teacher will ask them to get their work and activities and sit in the corner for the rest of the session. Students will only get to 'buddy class' when they are still off task and do not do their work even though they have been asked to sit in the corner; then they will be sent to the buddy class, which is a room where students will get a behaviour management sheet to bring with them and fill out and give it to the senior

teacher to sign it. Students will spend about 10 to 15 minutes in the senior teacher's room.

Of This Much I Am Sure

After doing the observation during my placement, of this much I am sure, that students who are not diagnosed as ADHD can show the same types of behaviour as the ADHD students.

According to the Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT 2013), all children have the same right to education. Now, of this much I am sure, that children who are diagnosed as ADHD can go to school under one condition, where they need to get full support both from their classroom teacher and from a special education teacher to facilitate them with everything that they need in order to achieve their goals at school. It is true that it is difficult for ADHD students to concentrate in the classroom. However, that is not a reason to exclude them from school. In order to keep them engaged in the classroom activities that I deliver, I need to know my students and what strategies I can use to facilitate both ADHD and mainstream students in the classroom.

I also remind myself that each student has a different style of learning. Some of them learn best with the hands-on activities, some of them are good on working with worksheets, while others are good with technology. Of this much I am sure: I need to cater all of their needs by differentiating the activities that I deliver. In this situation, the teacher is the person who has the important role of making sure that he or she can give support to all students in the classroom, and who needs to try another strategy if the strategy that he or she has been using is not working. He or she needs to try to consider the best strategies to keep them on task and not disturbing others during their learning activities.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, in Timor we do not have Special Educational Teachers. To me it is sad, because I believe that all students have their right to learn and get a good education in their life to have a brighter future (ACT 2013). I want to write down these words so that when I go back to Timor, I can share the information with all people, especially with other colleagues that work as teachers. I want to change their ways of thinking and I want them to see how important education is to all children in the world. It will be worthwhile if we can see the different levels of criteria for the ADHD students in mainstream schools.

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Chapter 27
Getting Physical

What Are the Influences Affecting Student Participation in Physical Activity and Education?

Anthony Gugliotta

Abstract Sport and physical activity have been part of my family's culture; this shaped the person I grew up to be and the key values (group cooperation, professionalism and punctuality) I choose to display in all aspects of my life. When I began my teaching practice, however, I witnessed the difficulty of catering for all students, discovering that not all liked Physical Education (PE) as much as I did. Those interested in PE select it as their elective straightaway in first semester, leaving others to choose it for second semester, and thus I saw the ratio of students not interested in sports shift dramatically. Through my teaching experiences I learned that a student's attitude towards PE can be influenced by multiple factors, including family, whether the school provides a quality PE program taught by skilled staff, and whether students perceive that teachers enjoy what they are teaching—an idea I tried to implement, often by joining in lessons to help create my intended atmosphere. The community also plays a role, with the availability of parks, ovals, bike paths and beaches providing opportunities for physical activity. While multiple factors thus influence young people's participation in physical activity, the quality of teaching and school resources can foster positive participation in PE, and hopefully this will carry over into a physically active lifestyle.

Journal entry September 9, 2015, Darwin, Northern Territory:

> Back in August, I took my first Year 9 sport class for the term, and it went well as there were no behaviour issues. However, a majority of the students I could tell were not very interested in sports so it was hard to try and create a good active and competitive atmosphere throughout the lesson. I introduced some simple fun games in an attempt to build this mood.

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> One month into my current placement, I am still having trouble with the Year 9s' attitudes and approaches towards my PE lessons. I decided to simplify the lesson even more to try and boost the motivation of the students. Skill acquisition was undertaken through the use of basic primary school like games to make the subject seem less dry to them. They seemed to respond well towards the end of the lesson.

Introduction

I have lived in Darwin my entire life. It is where I have completed all my schooling and made many close friends during my time within different school systems and also within my active lifestyle of organised sport. Although Darwin is small in terms of population compared to other capital cities, there is still a high standard in sporting activity, and a range of different competitive sports throughout the region are very popular. Some of the sporting organisations that I chose to be a part of growing up included Darwin Rugby League, Moil Athletics Club, Darwin Basketball Association and my chosen sport of Australian rules NTFL (Northern Territory Football League). I feel that due to my participation in sport outside of school, physical education was a subject I took pride in excelling at and in a way enjoyed showing off to my peers.

In this paper, I aim to see what answers I could find in terms of the reasoning behind the motivation or lack of motivation of some students towards the subject of physical education and their own physical activity. Is it all about internal factors, such as families, school programs and teacher encouragement, or do wider issues, such as access to facilities and community interest, play a role?

What Was I?

Sport and physical activity have been a large part of my family's culture even before I was born. Being surrounded by this sporting culture growing up has helped create the person I am today. Values such as the importance of co-operation within a team/group, punctuality and professionalism were all introduced to me from a young age as a result of sport. My older brother was a huge role model for me; I idealised all his sporting achievements and was constantly striving to emulate them. Growing up we tried our hand at many different club sports, as mentioned earlier. These included judo, athletics, rugby, basketball and our focal sport of Australian rules football. This meant that when coming into structured lessons of Physical Education at school I already had a good base for the development of cognitive movement and control over my body as well as the ability to display leadership due to my experience and knowledge of being in teams. This led me to quickly establish myself as one of the 'sporty kids' at school, earning the respect of my peers to be sports

captain on multiple occasions at athletics carnivals and representative on school sports gala days. I generally would have classified myself as an interpersonal type of person, who Howard Gardner categorises as ones who enjoy working with others and are natural leaders (Helding 2009).

My motivations for sport at a young age were simple and evolved because of the constant support and encouragement of my family, especially my brother. Together we spent countless afternoons playing and inventing many active games at home or at nearby ovals. However, as I grew a bit older, physical activity was not only something that I was good at but also something that I could use to socialise and make new friendships. Looking back at it, I felt a sense of belonging while surrounded by others who shared the same interests (McDonald 2010). A team can consist of many different personalities, and being exposed to these on regular occasions provided me with the ability to adapt and adjust to other, non-sporting situations, for instance, within school. I really do owe a lot of my 'fitting in' at school to my sport as it allowed me to create a space where I felt safe, surrounding myself with likeminded people. Robert Boost Rom (1998) states, 'students in "safe spaces" are said to do better work.' Simply for me it gave me the confidence to enjoy going to school every day. Being active shaped the person I grew to be and the key values (group cooperation, professionalism and punctuality) I choose to display in all aspects of my life, while it has also provided and is still providing me with close relationships.

What Am I?

I am now a fourth year pre-service teacher who has completed five practicums through three different schools in the Northern Territory and is currently on my sixth and final practicum at a Darwin Middle School. I am still someone who enjoys being active and is presently playing within the Northern Territory Football League (NTFL). Physical Education (PE) is one of my three specialist subjects selected for my degree and is something I feel passionate about teaching. A male PE teacher from my middle school is one of the reasons behind me wanting to become a physical educational teacher. I still remember him as a role model to me and as someone who had an innate ability to make lessons engaging and enjoyable for pretty much everyone in his classes. I read somewhere that an influential male teacher is often the reason males want to join the teaching profession (Gosse and Facchinetti 2011).

My view of physical education changed once I left school and began my teaching practice. As a student you worry solely about how you feel about the subject and it is up to how seriously you want to take it. On the other hand, when you are attempting to teach PE you become immediately concerned about all the students in the class and how you are going to engage them and make your lessons an enjoyable experience for all. My first placement school was an eye opener in that this is where I was able to witness the difficulty of catering for all students, coming to the realisation that not all students liked PE as much as I did.

Within that school, physical education is a compulsory elective for one semester of the year. What usually occurs with this is that those who are truly interested in PE select it as their elective straightaway in first semester, whereby this leaves the leftovers, so to speak, having no choice but to choose it for second semester. It was during this time of my placement that I got to see first hand the ratio of students not interested in sports shift dramatically. This was such a diverse class in terms of interests, cultures and genders. A lot of the students enjoyed other focal interests/subjects while at school, such as art, music, ICT, maths, English and science. Even though many students in this particular class did not choose physical education as their first option, they still benefitted from the experience of group activities and skill development. This was in tandem with education on a range of different health issues, such as making healthy lifestyle choices, body development, first aid and drugs and alcohol. It was great to see an improvement in the students in all these areas as the semester progressed.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Ward et al. (2007) from the USA state that a school should provide opportunities for all students to engage in physical activity. They also bring to light the way in which the school allocates funding as an important element. This is in line with what I have learnt through my experience of quality gymnasiums, sports areas and appropriate equipment all being critical when attempting to motivate youth to participate in physical activity/education. I also found that throughout my classroom management text there were chapters that directly related to aspects of physical education. Ideas such as the importance of quality student-teacher connections are said to be 'essential for developing effective learning environments' (McDonald 2010). In terms of PE these relationships provide the teacher with the confidence to be able to give some control of learning over to their students, such as trusting them to do their own warm up at the start of lessons or undertake umpiring, scoring, time keeping duties etc. This control enables students to feel respected and in return feel motivated to participate and achieve learning outcomes (Buckworth 2007). Buckworth (2007) goes on to say that the sense of accomplishment this gives a student can positively affect their confidence to be a more self-directed individual. He mentions also that people who choose their own goals have a greater chance of success compared to those that are just assigned them by a teacher or coach.

Currently there are a number of policies still in place that concern the notion of compulsory physical activity and education in schools. Schools in the Northern Territory are required to provide at least two hours of physical education in the curriculum each school week for students in the primary and secondary years of schooling (Department of Education 2008). It is also a policy that the students be able to relate their learning of this to the community as well as their individual health (ACARA 2013). However, Morley et al. (2012), in a health promotion journal, have gone even further to state that Australian school aged students should get around 60 minutes of

moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. For some students this standard is easily met in their own time through outside school sport commitments. However, an Australian survey shows that only about half (48 %) met the recommendation of 60 minutes of exercise a day on at least five out of seven days (ABS 2013).

Throughout all the teaching experiences I have had in different schools across the Northern Territory I have come to learn that a student's attitude towards physical activity and education can be influenced by multiple factors.

I know first-hand that internal influences from one's family can have an impact on the way a child views physical activity in their life. This was reinforced throughout my early practicums by talking to students. However, what I came to learn later was the impact a school can have by providing a range of quality physical education programs combined with skilled staff to teach them (Ward et al. 2007). Ward et al. (2007) go on to mention that this can be successful in providing all students with opportunities to engage and participate in lessons. The notion of skilled staff to teach these programs was supported by one of my mentor teachers, who was quoted throughout one of my journal entries as saying 'students pick up on personality and use that to decide whether they like you, or are interested in what you have to say.' He also went on to mention that 'kids are not silly. They can tell if you [the teacher] enjoy what you are teaching'. This idea is also articulated by Marzano and Pickering (2006) in the *Dimensions of learning* manual, where it is stated that attitudes and perceptions are an important factor to consider in regards to student engagement. I have tried to implement this idea throughout my programming. Often there were times on my current placement where I joined in lessons to help create my intended atmosphere. This appeared to be a strategy that worked well, even with my most difficult sport classes (Year 9s).

I also understand that there are external aspects that influence middle school students' views about physical activity. 'Humans do not develop in isolation, but rather in relation to their surroundings, through influences such as family, school, community and society' (McDonald 2010). This statement highlights the fact that the community can play as much of a role in developing a child's opinions as school and family. Availability of parks, ovals, bike paths and beaches provide convenience and choices of physical activity for young people. Davison and Lawson (2006) mention that there is a noteworthy association between the vicinity of parks and playgrounds to the home and the level of children's physical activity. However, not only is the accessibility of these important but also the quality of such infrastructures. Students and teachers at Darwin Middle School often mention the desire for an indoor gymnasium. Reasons I was given for this include weather issues such as heat and rain and the fact that other like schools have one!

I believe that it is important to recognise these factors and that if they are not supported you can be sure that today's youth, especially adolescents, will find sedentary activities such as computer games, social media (Facebook etc.), texting and email as a replacement for interaction (Walsh 2010, p. 215). This has changed drastically compared to when I was growing up (which wasn't really that long ago), when physical activity was a very popular way to interact and socialise with friends and others.

Conclusion

Through informal conversations and my own understandings, while on my final practicum over twelve weeks I have found that there are multiple factors that influence the motivation of young people to participate in physical activity. Both internal and external factors impact students' motivations. However, the quality of teaching and the quality of school resources can result in positive behaviours towards participation in physical education and hopefully carry over into a physically active lifestyle.

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Chapter 28
Soothing the Savage Beast of Distraction

The Benefits of Music for Student Engagement

Alison O'Loughlin

Abstract I had grown up surrounded by music, and reflecting on how children in my practicum class were prone to distraction, I wondered if background music might help quiet their busy young minds and help them focus on the task at hand. By introducing music during periods of silent work, I intended to observe students, compare behaviours before and after its implementation, and discuss the students' feelings about it, as well as discuss this with other teachers. When I tried it in one period, the noise level dropped immediately and the children worked in silence for a while. With more planning I tried this in another class, producing a definite feeling of calm over the classroom as students seemed to engage better with their tasks, with some complimenting me on the music afterwards. The feedback from my students was that 100 % enjoyed the music and 87 % stated that the music helped them work better. Thus the benefits of playing ambient background music during silent lesson time clearly outweighed any negative effects. Most other teachers also stated that they find music helpful in creating a calm atmosphere in their classroom.

Journal entry, 26 August 2015, Munno Para, South Australia:

> Today as I sat quietly in the classroom, I looked around the room at the young students; most of them were busily writing in their own silent bubble of concentration. However dotted around the classroom were those students whose heads bobbed up and down like buoys in the ocean, unable to remain focused on the task of writing; their minds seemed to bubble over with random thoughts of lunch time adventures, after-school sports, or just plain old curiosity about the new spot they noticed on the carpet. My heart went out to these students; as a student myself, albeit a mature age one, I found the silence in the room deafening; how could anyone concentrate with silence on the outside, yet a million thoughts and ideas chattering away on the inside?

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As I was writing this reflection I recalled how I would often use soft, gentle music to sooth my disdain of silence without creating a distraction, and I wondered, 'Could music sooth the savage beast of distraction in class?' Is it possible that by creating background noise, students would find it easier to silence their busy young minds and actually focus on the task at hand?

Introduction

I've often struggled in situations of silence, always feeling the need to fill the void with conversation, which more often than not were just random statements about the weather or latest social media story. It's not that I don't appreciate the moments of blissful quiet at the end of a busy day; as the mother of three boys, these moments are few and far between, which makes them all the more precious. It's the silence that echoes in your ears as you stare aimlessly at a blank computer screen or notebook, searching your mind for words or answers that you know are there, but seem to get lost amongst the unwelcomed random thoughts that pop into your consciousness and draw your attention away from the task at hand.

What Was I?

As a child I grew up surrounded by music. My family holidayed a lot, including a three and a half year caravanning trip around Australia. I was only six by the time our trip came to an end and most of my memories are fuzzy snapshots of places, feelings and vague dreamlike recollections of events. However, the one thing that stands out in my mind is the music. There was always music. In the car while we were driving, my parents would be holding hands and singing as we trundled down the outstretched roads pulling our 24-foot van with our 1972 Ford Fairlane. In caravan parks, my brother, sister and I would spend hours singing away and dancing to a vinyl record as it whirred around the poor old record player that was lugged around Australia with us. And it wasn't only the latest tracks we listened to: Our music collection covered show tunes, movie soundtracks and even little known local bands from the places we visited. It didn't seem to matter what we listened to, the important thing was that there was music, a constant stream of music creating the soundtrack to our lives.

This early childhood experience set the tone for the rest of my life. Music became an aspect in my life that I could rarely do without. I would sing along with my favourite tracks, singing with so much passion and enthusiasm that I could almost imagine myself being the artist. I have a vivid memory from when I was about ten years old, lying in bed listening to the radio (much later than I should have been) when Simon and Garfunkel's 'Bright Eyes' came on. I knew this song from the movie *Watership Down* and leapt out of bed to run and tell my parents that it was on

the radio. Needless to say, they weren't as thrilled as I was and I listened to the rest of the song crying in my bed at the injustice of being scolded. It was a poignant moment for me then, but one I remember fondly now, as it was then I realised how much of an impact music could have. In the words of Abba, 'Thank you for the music… who can live without it, I ask in all honesty what would life be? Without a song or a dance what are we?' (Andersson and Ulvaeus 1977). What are we indeed?

As I progressed through the 'normal' stages of life—school, graduation, children of my own—music became much more than just noise for pleasure. During my first pregnancy and labour, I used music for relaxation and calming my emotions. When I was diagnosed with depression shortly after high school, music became my emotional stabiliser that kept me grounded and focused on the present, a experience which is supported by Greasley's (2013) discussion on the fact that music has been shown to 'control negative behaviours and depression'. I sang my way through broken hearts and wonderful celebrations, and spent more than a thousand nights drifting off to sleep listening to my favourite instrumental piece over and over. I've listened to 8-tracks, records, cassettes, love song dedications on AM radio, compact discs, iPods and even those little plastic cogs that played music in a toy. If it played music, I'd listen to it.

But as deeply personal as my connection to music has been, I know that I'm not alone in the way that music can have such a positive effect. Many studies have revealed the positive effects of music, including results from North et al. (2000) that confirm, 'Music is of central importance in the lives of most young people, fulfilling social and emotional as well as cognitive needs'. This is of no surprise to me: After all, music is one of the positive things that my family still have in common, even during the 'difficult' teenage years that my siblings and I shared together for much longer than I'm sure my parents care to remember. Music is universal, created and shared in every part of the world and not limited to age or language; to quote poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1835, p. 4), 'Music is the universal language of mankind.'

But do we maximise its potential?

This was a question that only began to dawn on me during my university study, and a question that I aimed to answer with my own research during a pre-service placement in a reception class. By introducing music during periods of silent work, I intended to observe students, compare behaviours before and after its implementation, and discuss the students' feelings on it. I was also curious as to other teachers utilising music in their classroom. Was it common practice? Did they find it successful? What genre of music best suited their students?

What Am I?

I have a passion for creativity, tactile learning and music. Especially music, and my collection is as diverse as an iPod on shuffle. I'll listen to anything that evokes an emotion in me, from music that has me singing with joy, to instrumental Celtic

pieces that calm and focus me while working. I use music to calm my little ones at bedtime and music to motivate me into cleaning my house. There is rarely a day that I don't have some form of music filling my life. So it was a short journey to establish my research topic. My pre-service placement saw me teaching a class of enthusiastic six and seven year olds, several with learning, language or sensory issues, some with all three. Engagement during periods of literacy or maths was sporadic for these students and resulted in a constant dialogue of 'Are you on task?', 'What should you be doing?' and 'Back to your work.' There was no single reason for their distraction, and no single answer on how to alleviate it, but with the opportunity to investigate the use of music during their lesson time, there was nothing to be lost either. At the very least the classroom would have a very ambient feel about it for a few weeks. My first personal reflection after the introduction of music into the classroom stated:

> Today during Christian Living I put some music on in the classroom. The noise level dropped immediately and the kids worked in silence for a while. It was lovely to see them so relaxed and engrossed in their work!

During this 'musically enhanced lesson' my mentor teacher commented, 'I'm not sure about the kids, but I feel very relaxed!' After a quick chuckle I established that the music was definitely having a positive effect on some of us.

Of This Much I Am Sure

I spent many hours searching iTunes and my own CD collection for 'appropriate' music that would provide the ideal atmosphere to maximise my students' engagement. When studying kindergarten children, Mattar (2013) found that 'Mozart accompanying the curriculum significantly affected development in social, cognitive and physical domains'; however, I couldn't seem to find music that inspired me, Mozart included. After hours of listening and an elimination process that would rival any Sherlock Holmes mystery, my playlist was ready and I approached my next class with renewed enthusiasm.

Introducing the lesson I was filled with uneasy apprehension: What would happen if the students groaned at my music choice, or worse still, didn't even notice the music was on? After setting the students to task, my mentor teacher announced that I would be playing some nice music while they were working quietly. There was a small ripple of chatter and general restlessness as I set the music playing through the interactive white board. The quality wasn't great, but nonetheless music played and the students started to settle down in silent curiosity at the new genre crackling through the speakers. Had it worked?

Of this much I am sure. There was a definite feeling of calm over the classroom. Heads were down and pencils scribbled awkwardly around on their worksheets. The usual suspects of fidgeter's and day dreamers seemed to engage more on their tasks and less on that pesky spot on the carpet. At the conclusion of the lesson, the young lady that walked past me on the way to recess commented, 'I really liked your music, Mrs O'Loughlin', filling my heart with a sense of accomplishment that I hadn't yet experienced.

Looking into the positive effects of music is widespread and dates back as early as the eighteenth century, with composers such as Rameau who understood the influence of music in evoking emotions within the listener (Papadopoulos 2002). It continues today with several studies (Ferrer 2014; Greasley 2013; Mattar 2013) showing the positive effects of music on children and adults alike. It's impossible to say if there will ever be a definitive answer to the effects music can have. Music can evoke such a myriad of emotions and the countless number of genres touches us all in a unique and personal way. 'Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without' (Confucius).

According to Hanser (as cited in Scheufele 2000) 'classical music also has been used as a tool for relaxation and stress reduction, resulting in self-reported, behavioural, and physiological changes that are related to reduced stress'. While my study has not proven without doubt that music can affect the behaviour and engagement of young children, it did prove that the benefits of playing ambient background music during silent lesson time far outweigh the negative effects of it. When I was discussing this with other teachers, 95 % of them stated that they find music helpful in creating a calm atmosphere in their classroom. The feedback from my students was also extremely encouraging, with 87 % stated that the music helped them work better. When it came to the question of enjoying the music during class, it was a unanimous 100 %. One student states, 'It makes me be calm'.

Conclusion

As a pre-service teaching coming to the end of a long road of study, I am filled with hope, anticipation, fear and excitement. My goal as a teacher is much the same as many others, to make a difference in the lives of my students. Whether this difference takes the form of academic education, inspiration, personal development or perhaps all three, it is a frightening realisation that you have such potential to influence a young life. With this in mind I go forward towards my new career with excitement, enthusiasm and knowing that I take my own individuality, beliefs and passions with me.

> Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything. (Plato)

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Chapter 29
Promoting Engagement for Students Who Are Well Above Average in Reading and Writing

Constantina Spyropoulou

Abstract This paper discusses the importance of implementing strategies that will promote engagement in above average (talented or gifted) students. My purpose is to make learning interesting for students and get them engaged, but I do not want strategies that will separate gifted students from the rest of the class. Instead, it is hoped that gifted students will be able to share their skills and help their peers improve. I accordingly put six strategies into practice: (1) doing investigations on student's topics of interest, (2) using information reports and open ended questions, (3) allowing students to present information to the class, (4) providing extra tasks/activities to further extend knowledge when classroom tasks are completed, (5) exposing students to a wide range of resources, and (6) using hinge questions, as an indication of what to teach next. Each strategy can be used to encourage the whole class to participate in learning and give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge. I discovered that when my students' needs were met, lessons were differentiated and learning personalised. My gifted students became more engaged during reading and writing and more focused on their learning, and at the same time the rest of the class also got the opportunity to extend their skills.

Journal entry, 3 September 2014, Darwin, Northern Territory:

> I walked into the classroom today with a positive attitude. I knew that we have been working very hard as a class and I had a feeling that the results were going to be rewarding. It has only been three weeks since I last assessed the students on their reading and writing and I can still remember the confusion that surrounded me at that time. My top students, who are academically well above others in the classroom, ended up receiving some of the lowest marks. I could not understand how this had happened, as those students had a remarkable academic record for their age. I started wondering if I was doing something wrong and what could this possibly be, until it became apparent to me. These students were lacking engagement. They were finding it boring and thought that no matter what, they would always do well. After this realisation changes were made and the outcomes have been significant.

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Introduction

I am a female, future educator and passionate researcher. I am both Greek and Australian and I speak fluent Greek and English. Being an English as Second Language (ESL) learner was not always easy, but it helped me develop an interest in teaching, as I wanted to bring out the best in all my students. I have a love for my chosen profession and I always strive to extend my knowledge and obtain new skills that will assist me with my role.

In this paper, I will discuss the importance of implementing strategies that will promote engagement in learning for students who are above average (talented or gifted). My purpose here is to make learning interesting for students and get them engaged. However, I do not wish that these strategies will separate gifted students from the rest of the class. Instead, it is hoped that gifted students will be able to share their skills and help their peers improve. The repertoire of strategies developed is aimed at assisting teachers to maintain an effective learning environment for all students. I believe that in order for that to be achieved, it is important to not only consider the needs of average or below average students, but also to put into perspective the needs of students who are above average. Gifted students may often not meet their full potential without some intervention to support their social-emotional needs (Catholic Education Office 2013). I came to experience that myself, with the three gifted students in my classroom. When their social-emotional needs were not met, they withdrew themselves from the learning process and started being disruptive. Supporting this theory, Jane Jarvis (2010) states that many gifted students experience boredom, frustration and underachievement when they do not have access to appropriate learning experiences. This information encouraged me to implement the chosen engagement strategies, as I believed that they were going to provide me with the desired results.

Who Did I Think I Was?

Before entering the teaching profession, I used to believe that gifted students were easily identified. I thought that they were good in all academic areas and were usually classified as 'social butterflies'. I am not sure how I came to that conclusion, but I remember the time I first met a gifted child. It was on my first placement, when my mentor was giving me information about each student. She started talking about this boy who had English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) and was struggling with literacy but was highly gifted in mathematics. At the time I could not comprehend how he could be classified as gifted when he was lacking important literacy skills.

I started observing this child during literacy lessons and I understood from personal experience that it was the language barriers that were causing him difficulties. Being an ESL learner myself allowed me to recognise the signs of his frustration

and confusion that were usually highlighted in his face. However, when time for mathematics came, he was a completely different person. He still needed assistance with reading some of the questions, but he was highly engaged, was answering questions and to my surprise, he was offering help to his classmates. It did not take me long to realise that his attitude towards learning changed, as he was comfortable with the context. Research has shown that students feel more engaged in tasks that they feel competent in completing but that are also challenging (McDonald 2010). At the end of the day when I talked to my mentor I provided her with my observation and my new thoughts on giftedness.

This encounter helped me with planning for my current three gifted students and catering for their learning needs. Jane Jarvis (2010) highlights the need to take into consideration diversity, as that is a major factor for students' engagement in learning. That is something that I wanted to include in my planning, and while doing that I discovered that when my students' needs were met, lessons were differentiated and learning personalised. This created a positive learning environment and provided me with the actions I needed to take in order to provide this.

Who Do I Think I Am?

Winch et al. (2010) stated that effective teachers understand their students' abilities and needs and use them to create a repertoire of strategies that they can use to address those needs. McDonald (2010) also agrees that providing questioning strategies will promote engagement, as it increases higher-level thinking and provides active learning for all students. The Department of Education Victoria highly recommends that gifted students are provided with strategies that allow them to work independently or with peers on areas of interest and with the use of tasks that challenge students according to their abilities (Education and Training 2014).

I believe I am a responsible, innovative and motivated future teacher who always takes into consideration students' needs and wants. I had to quickly learn that catering for all my diverse students' needs meant that my programming was going to be affected. This helped me develop a new set of skills, including flexibility. Being flexible assisted me with meeting the needs of my gifted students, as I had to introduce new strategies that were not part of my original program.

Knowing this supports the actions I have been considering and has encouraged me to put the six strategies below into practice:

- doing investigations on student's interest topics
- using information reports and open ended questions
- allowing students to present information to the class
- providing extra tasks/activities to further extend knowledge when classroom tasks are completed
- exposing students to a wide range of resources
- using hinge questions, as an indication of what to teach next.

Each strategy can be used to encourage the whole class to participate in learning and give students the opportunity to extend their knowledge. These strategies are designed to promote the engagement and inclusion of my students.

Aside from the above sources supporting my choice of those particular strategies are my own past experiences. I had a student who was academically above average than his peers in literacy, but was very unsettled. It soon became obvious that something needed to be done to stop that behaviour and re-engage that child. A few strategies were put into place, but the one that worked really well was providing him with a variety of extra extension activities he could do when he had completed a task. It was part of the classroom routine that when students finished their work early, they had to quietly read a book. This strategy did not work so well, as this child did not like reading books and was trying to delay finishing off. As an alternative, the student was given an opportunity to select another activity and that was enough to get him engaged.

This was a positive outcome, but concerns were also raised. Other students in the classroom were happy with just reading a book and it was also helping them, as they needed the practice. Thus, I started to wonder what I could have done differently, and also whether the strategies listed above were going to benefit all of the students and not a selection of them.

Of This Much I Am Sure

I was very lucky as some of my strategies were very easily incorporated into my teaching, as I linked children's learning with the requirements of the curriculum. However, some students indicated that they strongly disagreed with the effectiveness of the presentation strategy, as they had been bullied by peers when presenting their work. On the other side, teachers I spoke to were very pleased with my strategies and one of them commented that 'presentations will enforce whole class engagement, as students will watch another child present'. Therefore, students should be provided with a choice of either presenting in front of the whole class or a small group of students. Of this much I am sure: I needed to think of what the students were comfortable with.

Of this much I am sure: This experience was very beneficial, as I was able to expand my teaching knowledge. The literature helped me reinforce my ideas and provided me with great recommendations for change. I now believe that the key to engagement of gifted students is differentiation. No matter how good the strategies chosen, they will not be effective if they do not meet the students' needs.

I am pleased with the results achieved, as it is apparent to me that my gifted students are more engaged during reading and writing. They became more focused on their learning, and at the same time the rest of the class got the opportunity to extend their skills. I have received great feedback from my students, and my favourite piece of feedback was that I managed to make coming to school 'easy peasy'. That was a proud moment for me, as I felt accomplished.

Conclusion

Gifted education can be very challenging and it is up to the educator to determine the actions needed to be taken in order to accommodate all students' needs. Writing this paper has allowed me to explore gifted education, and it has helped me with developing new skills that I can use when I become a qualified graduate teacher. The aim of the investigation was to create a repertoire of strategies that can be used as a teaching aid to promote engagement for gifted students. I am confident that this aim was achieved and that those strategies can be used as a starting point with any gifted child. The reason I used the words 'starting point' is because it is important to remember that each student has different needs and the strategies might need to be adjusted or replaced by others. Every child has the right to learn and that should be shown by acknowledging their needs and providing them with the best opportunities for extension.

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Part VII
Parental and Societal Issues

Introduction

Paul Black

In this part the student chapters deal with issues that involve the parents of the students and/or society more generally. Starting with a very personal account that relates bullying behaviour in schools to parental influence, it goes on to a chapter on parental choice of schools, two chapters on issues of homework, and two on issues of being a male teacher in a female-dominated profession.

These issues relate to the fact that schooling does not take place in isolation, but rather is highly affected by social factors ranging from the students' home environments to the views and policies of the local community, the state, the nation, and ultimately the world more generally. Some texts, such as that by Tait (2016) treat such issues relatively abstractly, such as in terms of the relation between education and social class. More relevant to the first four chapters in this part are works that deal more specifically with how particular family situations impact on education, such as Young and Smith (1997), Rich (2000) and Considine and Zappel (2002).

Krista Tucker's chapter (Chap. 30) is particularly poignant because she bravely draws on her own past experience as an admitted bully to look into the reasons some children come to bully others in school. Whereas she identifies family factors as the main cause in her case, more generally the factors leading to bullying and becoming a victim of bullying are more complicated; see Rigby (2013) for a readable review of relevant research, with some attention to family factors.

Jillian Bedworth's chapter (Chap. 31) investigates the reasons why parents decide to send their children to a more distant private institution rather than the local school, and it similarly starts by noting her own decision to do this. Again this is a complex issue in general, with the literature suggesting a number of reasons for such decisions (e.g., Windle 2015a, b). Interestingly, Bedworth found that the key issue identified by many parents other than herself was not something prominent in the general literature, but rather the problem of disruptive behaviour in the local school.

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The next two chapters deal with the vexed issue of homework, on which some authorities (e.g. Kohn 2006) are quite negative while others (e.g. Herrig n.d.) cautiously point to some positive research findings as they suggest how it should best be handled. These two student chapters are also interesting in that their authors generally discussed the issues with teachers in their practicum situations, as other student authors generally did in this volume, but this doesn't mean they entirely believed what they were told. In Chap. 32 Natalie Dobell found that the teachers generally believe in homework, and she herself benefitted from much help at home when she was young, but she nonetheless could not see how it could help children whose families simply provide no support for them to do homework. One might think this a different issue—how to promote the doing of homework as against the value of homework to the extent this is done—but at the same time Natalie points to Finland, where schools seem especially effective even though children begin school two years later than in Australia and then devote less time to study, as reason to believe that 'more' does not always mean 'better'.

In the other chapter (Chap. 33) on homework, Deborah Young discussed the issue not only with teachers but with students and their parents as well. This did not give her clear answers, but instead it gave her an appreciation of the great complexity of the issue, in this case because of the variety of different viewpoints to consider.

The final two chapters in this section deal with issues of being a male in a profession that seems to be dominated by women. In this case the authors are generally reacting to situations they experienced during their practicums, rather than building on earlier experiences as much as some of the other student authors do. Jamie Cordy's chapter (Chap. 34) tends to focus on questions of identity, such as whether teaching can be seen as a manly thing to do, and concerns about possible prejudice, including the possibility of questions being raised about paedophilia. The concerns he raises may remind us that there are much broader gender issues in schools, including the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ) students; see e.g. Curwood and Ullman (2014) for some discussion of this in the Australian context. As for the other chapter (Chap. 35), Lance Albrecht was interested to find that the issues of being a male teacher seemed less in non-government schools, and he tenders some reasons why this might be so.

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Chapter 30
My Only Sense of Control

Impact of Parents on Children's Bullying Behaviors in School

Krista Marie Tucker

Abstract Having come from a broken home, I was verbally abusive to those who surrounded me at school, and I had very few friends to show for this. Now I understand the reason: At home I had no control and felt unsafe, scared and even vulnerable at times. I made sure that I did not have to feel like that at school by becoming a bully: I did not want others to see my weakness, and if they feared me they wouldn't pick on me. The wake up call for me was when one of my teachers developed an intervention program, which enabled me to learn from my past and grow up and become considerate of others. During my practicum in a class with many students from a lower socioeconomic area and often from broken homes, I asked the students about verbal bullying and where students learn this sort of behavior. Many replied without hesitation that they learn it from their parents. They shared some of their stories with me, and because of my own experiences I was able to provide some guidance. From my experiences in life and placements, I have realised that most verbally abusive households result in verbal bullies in school, whether as a way for students to release their frustrations, make themselves feel better or cry for help. Teachers cannot change students' home lives, but they can certainly give them tools to deal with verbal abuse at home and to minimise their bullying behavior at school.

Journal entry, 18th of September 2008, Melbourne, Victoria:

> Tonight was the same as any other nights in my house, my parents were screaming at one another. Why won't they stop screaming? I wish for once they would just get along. I'm used to it, but my little sister wasn't. Was this how everyone's families spoke to each other? Or was it just mine? Maybe this is normal? If so, then I don't want a family of my own.
>
> All I could hear was my dad yelling at my mum and in the background I could hear my little sister crying. I wanted to go and comfort her but last time I got yelled at for leaving my room. I'm so over this. It makes me feel so angry, helpless and stressed. I need a release before I burst. I don't know how much longer I can do this.

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Introduction

I grew up in Broadmeadows, which is a low class suburb in Victoria. It is well known for its low economic status and its high crime rate. I completed all of my schooling at the local primary and secondary school, and as I moved up through my years of schooling I really began to notice a change. Many of my friend's parents were getting divorced, as well as my parents. Due to this, my experience at school also began to change, even though '40% of all children will experience parental divorce before reaching adulthood' (Sandell and Plutzer 2005, p. 134). Numbers were increasing, and divorce taking place all around me; I wasn't alone.

Throughout this piece I will discuss some of the issues children face due to their parents being verbally abusive. The objective of this piece is to determine whether it is the parents who create verbally abusive bullies within the school grounds or not.

What Was I? A Bully's Façade

As mentioned previously**,** I have come from a broken home. However life wasn't always like that: Things have changed for the better. I do have some emotionally damaging scars to show from the battle I have been through. And so do my victims, who have suffered from my only means of release. I was verbally abusive to all those who surrounded me at school, and I had very few friends to show for this. I didn't quite understand why I called kids names and picked on them until now. 'Bullies often have been abused, neglected or exposed to domestic violence at home,' Dr. Seifert said. 'Bullying becomes their self-defense, so they will not be bullied or harmed by others' (Weston 2010). I did not have any control of this at home. I felt unsafe, scared and even vulnerable at times. I made sure that I did not have to feel like this at school. That is why I become the bully. I did not want others to see my weakness, and if they feared me they wouldn't pick on me.

I remember feeling a tremendous amount of pressure from all of my emotions that I had bottled up. My only release was to treat people the way I had witnessed at home. However, I did question the way my parents spoke to one another. Was it appropriate? Is this how you speak to people to get what you want? In one school where I did my practicum one of the teachers told me that:

> Children learn most of their behaviors from their parents because they spend so much time with them. That's why they think it is okay to pick on others. They could have troubles at home, so they pick on others to make themselves feel better.

Looking back, that is exactly why I became a bully. Bullying others made me feel better about myself. I felt empowered and better when others were upset and vulnerable.

As I started to move into the higher year levels of my schooling, I began to notice another change. Being verbally abusive to others was not seen as cool anymore and it had become less common. A study conducted by the Department of Education UK found that '51% of students in Year 5 reported that they had been bullied during the term compared with 28% in Year 8' (Vize n.d., p. 3). This study proves that verbal bullying becomes less common in higher year levels of school. This could be because children's maturity levels begin to rise and they find healthier and alternative ways to deal with their verbally abusive home environments.

What Am I Now?

The life that I knew had completely changed; it was a long time coming, but my parents finally got a divorce. No more listening to them argue every night, no more sleepless nights or being yelled at because they were frustrated at one another. I was sad that I wouldn't be able to see one of my parents every day, but I was free, free from the pressure that was building up inside me every day. I no longer had that dark cloud hanging over my head. I think back to the person that I was, and how I mistreated others because of my issues at home, by:

> calling them names, insulting, ridiculing, and threatening, threats geared toward intimidation through body gestures or eye glances, which are committed nonverbally (e.g., shaking a fist at someone; pinching one's nose to signal an offensive smell in regard to someone; blocking access to a locker) (Olweus 1993)

I now know why I was a bully at school, I didn't physically harm anyone, but words can do just as much damage.

The real wake up call for me was when one of my teachers developed an 'intervention aimed at bullies [with] the intent of developing bullies' ability to realize what the victim role is like through role plays or videos' (Miller 2006, p. 44). I saw students completely break down in front of me and tell me exactly the way that I made them feel, and in that split second I realised they felt the way I was feeling when I was at home. I felt awful. I didn't want anyone to feel like that, because I know how unpleasant it is, no good can come from it.

Because of that intervention I have learnt from my past, I have grown up and become considerate of others. I treat others the way I want to be treated and when I see other people getting picked on I stand up for them. No one deserves to be belittled or teased just so the bully feels better about themselves. It's also about educating bullies on how to deal with their own issues at home so they don't inflict their built up emotion on other students.

Today I am a much better person and because of my experiences I can relate, help and guide my students who are not just bullies but sometime victims of verbal abuse in their own homes. I can do this by giving them the tools to deal with verbal abuse at home head on.

Of This Much I Am Sure

I have asked many students what their idea of verbal bullying is and where they believe a student learns this sort of behavior. Many of the students which I conducted the open discussion with replied without any hesitation, 'their parents: What the bully sees their parents do they think they can do it too. They think it's okay or even funny to call people's names or be verbally abusive.' In other words, monkey see, monkey do. The students also have the same beliefs as I when it comes to verbal bullies.

The classes which I conducted the open discussions with are from a lower economic area; it was quite rural and small. The school had a lot of the students who came from broken homes. They shared some of their stories with me and as a result of experiences in my own past and while on my teaching practice I was able to provide some guidance. Those students who are verbally bullies at school are most likely influenced by either or both of their parents being verbally abusive at home.

> If children see that adults (parent) behave aggressively and use their power at will, to the detriment of weaker individuals, or even do not act when bullying happens to prevent or minimize it, they receive the message that bullying is acceptable. (Vize n.d., p. 4)

As a result I believe a significant number of verbal bullies come from verbally abusive homes.

Once I was a small girl growing up in a world which was seen as perfect. Suddenly as I got older and observed my surroundings more, my world turned upside down when my home became verbally abusive and no longer felt like a safe place. With all my emotions submerging into a never-ending pit of anxiety, frustration, anger and sadness, the only form of release was to take my pain out on others the only way I knew how, by being verbally abusive to those who were smaller than me. When I was brought to awareness of the damage I was causing to others, my life took a new direction, from the bully to a mature woman who has now set out to teach her students ways of dealing with verbal abuse at home other than taking it out on others.

Wanting to teach in Australian schools, I want to make a difference. I want to create a safe environment where all students can be themselves without worrying about being picked on. 'A survey of schools in about 40 countries found that Australian primary schools were among those with the highest reported incidence of bullying in the world' (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2014). I am only one person, but it only takes one person to make a difference. I want to right a wrong from my past and generate a positive change.

Growing up in the world of today students are facing new and difficult issues at home, but as a teacher in school I can create an environment for my students which is safe for all. Verbal abuse at home I cannot completely put a stop to, but I can in my classroom.

Conclusion

Following my own experiences in life and at placement throughout my studies, I have come to realise that not all, but most verbally abusive households result in verbal bullies within the schoolyard. Whether it is a way for the students to release some of their frustration, make themselves feel better or a cry for help, a bully is not born but they are taught by mirroring behaviours in their home environment. Teachers cannot completely change the student's home life but they can certainly give them the tools they need to deal with verbal abuse at home. This, in turn, can give them tools to minimise their bullying behavior at school. To conclude, I strongly agree with my argument that a majority of verbal abusive homes create verbally abusive bullies at schools.

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Chapter 31
What Do Parents Want?

Why Parents Choose a School Requiring Significant Travel

Jillian Bedworth

Abstract Because it became evident that music would play a large role in our daughter's life, we have been sending her to board on a weekly basis at an independent school with a flourishing music program. Now as a teacher concerned with supporting our local school, I came to wonder why so many parents in my community are doing the same: Is it test scores, religious education, facilities, specialist sporting or music education, or something else? I presumed the reason was to provide 'academic advantage', even though numerous articles have dispelled the myth that students who attend private schools perform better. To gain more insight, I queried parents as they waited for their children to return on the afternoon buses from a distant school. Overwhelmingly the reason given by parents for choosing a non-government school was the problem of disruptive behaviour in the local school, with only one parent claiming to have viewed NAPLAN results on the MySchool website. To deal with the disruptive behaviour seems difficult, however, since this generally does not develop in the school itself but in chaotic homes that foster antisocial behaviour. I suspect that primary schools intervene too late, with students only being referred for help or evaluated in adolescence, when their behaviour problems have become impossible to accommodate. Once I enter the workplace I must focus on establishing a working relationship with the school's counsellor or psychologist and lobby for more funds to improve early intervention programs.

Journal entry, 3rd August 2014, the South-East of South Australia:

> It's the crack of dawn, gloomy, chilly and foggy. I'm dragged along behind our spirited beagle in what should, at this time of the morning, be a sleepy country town. Instead, a procession of parents in pyjamas whizz past on their way to the bus stop so their offspring arrive at school in time. Why, I wonder, would any sane parent choose to do this day after day, year after year, when there is a closer alternative?

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Introduction

I am first and foremost a mother and wife. I am also a tutor, student teacher and member of a small, close knit community. I have divided loyalties. My girls travel to attend secondary school in another town when there is one that should meet their needs just five minutes up the road. I have joined the growing ranks of local parents making an active choice to seek education for their teenagers elsewhere, and in doing so I feel I have committed treason.

Will my decision have long term consequences for the community? I fear it may. The football and netball clubs are having difficulty filling teams because students are not able to attend after-school training. Sport provides a valuable social outlet in our small town and there is no doubt gatherings will reduce as membership dwindles. Social isolation is a problem for many in our area, but the footy club is the glue that holds us together. It is not my intention to contribute to the downfall of local sport.

Some say, and I think they have a valid point, that children educated elsewhere lose their ties with the community. Our town has trouble attracting professionals. Who wants to come to the country? In the past we have survived because the occasional podiatrist, accountant, lawyer or occupational therapist has returned to renew friendships after a brief stint away training. Will students who have spent a large period of their youth away from the town return to meet up with primary school buddies? I don't think so. I suspect we have lost these young people forever.

Local teachers have expressed a desire to maintain student enrolments. They fear the continual drift of students to other towns will reduce government funding, school facilities will deteriorate, the range of subjects and specialist teachers will lessen, all of which will exacerbate the downward spiral. As a student teacher who will be looking for employment in government schools in the area, shouldn't I be supporting the local high school? Of course I should. But the need to advocate for my children comes first.

School Choice–What I Thought

I started considering our options regarding our elder daughter's secondary education when she was still quite young. It was evident, even at that time, that music would play a large role in her life and there simply was not the opportunity for her to pursue her musical interests locally. I discovered that a mini bus, provided by an independent school some 180 kilometres away, enabled students to board on a weekly basis. Despite the fact that my husband and I had been educated at government schools, supported them ideologically, and had been very actively involved in the local primary school, we felt we had no choice but to enrol our daughter at a school with a flourishing music program.

In subsequent years demand increased, and it is a large bus that now departs Sunday evenings, returning late Friday afternoon. In addition, two other non-government schools recognised an opportunity in the market and offered transport to enable children to travel three hours a day to attend their schools. Despite the cost and inconvenience, the demand to attend these schools is rising. I asked myself, 'Why?' What factors are parents considering when choosing a particular school? Is it test scores, religious education, facilities, specialist sporting or music education, or something else?

Knowing the majority of the students do not have musical or sporting talents, the families are not particularly religious and are making significant sacrifices to enable their children to attend the schools, I presumed the reason was to provide 'academic advantage'. Publicity surrounding the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results have painted South Australia in a very poor light. We have been identified as the worst performing state in the country. Maybe parents were placing a high priority on NAPLAN scores displayed on the Federal Government's MySchool website.

However, numerous articles in newspapers have dispelled the myth that students who attend private schools perform better. Connelly found that 'there was no statistical difference in the academic achievement of children from similar backgrounds, regardless of which type of school they attended' (as cited in Marriner 2013). Gillespie (2014) asserted that there is no correlation between how much you pay and the quality of education. Surely parents who are actively engaged in the school choice process would be reading this research. If so, why are so many children travelling so far to attend a non-government school?

In a year or so I expect to be working in the public education system. Although I plan to be based at a government primary school, I was curious to discover what was driving the drift to non-government schools. Could I identify factors that could be addressed at the primary school level?

What I Discovered

Over a period of a few days I approached parents waiting for the afternoon buses for answers. The parents I talked with had strong positive opinions about their actions and attitudes and believed it will make a difference to their child's education. This group of parents are involved in their child's learning and spend time in school-related activities, such as assisting with homework and volunteering on camps. Many expressed regret at not being able to participate in school events to the same extent now their children attended school further afield, but they still responded to invitations for involvement whenever possible. The parents claimed that good communication between school and home was maintained despite the distance and believed that communication was more valued in private schools.

Overwhelmingly the reason given by parents for moving to the non-government school sector was disruptive behaviour. Rather than actively seeking qualities in a

private school, they were choosing 'away' from the closer, more convenient option. Parents understood the need for the local high school to cater for all students seeking enrolment, but felt verbal and physical aggression, and the anxiety it caused, was taking a toll on their child's learning. At one time they may have lobbied and applied pressure on the local school to improve its behaviour management policy, but with the alternatives now available it was simpler to exercise school choice.

The educational outcomes desired by the parents show a strong emphasis on obtaining a well-rounded education and the life skills to prepare children for future employment. High academic achievement was considered 'important' but ranked lower than every other possible factor except religious values. Parents placed a high value on their children being challenged, being able to think for themselves, developing leadership skills and having their talents recognised and believed that these outcomes could be achieved at the local school if it were not for troublesome students causing lost teaching time. Every parent wanted their child to be happy, and the impetus towards the non-government schools were, in many cases, driven by the children out of frustration.

The key characteristic considered by parents when rating a school as 'good' was the school's socio-cultural environment. Parents are undoubtedly seeking a school that has similar values to those at home. They base their opinion on the appearance of staff and students, the reputation of student behaviour and the school's website. Social networks also appear to play an important role in obtaining information. Only one parent claimed to have viewed the MySchool website, suggesting, contrary to my assumption, so that NAPLAN results were in fact *not* being used as a measure of school quality.

Finances and proximity were two factors parents weighed heavily when considering schools. Some parents commented that the fees, for two of the schools, were 'very reasonable' and the cost was as low as $6,000 per year, including travel. They felt the growing demand to attend the schools was, in part, due to families realising a private school education was within their reach. However parents acknowledged the long school day tired children and restricted extra-curricular activities and opportunities for after-school employment. They also commented on the need to change their family's daily routine, but would do whatever was necessary to seek the best for their children.

Of This Much I'm Sure

Of this much I'm sure, the parents I talked with strongly believe their actions and attitudes make a difference to their child's education, and good communication between school and communities is valuable. Once I become a primary teacher, I will focus on communication between the schools and communities.

Of this much I am sure, the topic or issue concerning the parents and which was raised over and over again in my discussions with parents was student behaviour. I am convinced that improving behaviour is the single most important factor in

retaining students at the local secondary school level. Indeed it is the only factor which would prompt any significant number of parents to even consider returning to the local school.

One parent made the comment 'Little kids - little problems, big kids - big problems' when questioned about student behaviour. This comment led me to thinking about the children at local primary school. No doubt the disruptive, noncompliant student in year three was likely to be the student wreaking havoc in year ten. As a primary school teacher, I will have an obligation to address the problem behaviours of students who will, in a few years, be attending the high school.

But what can I do? School is not the source of children's behaviour problems. Children from chaotic homes are attending primary school with antisocial behaviours already evident. Whilst I have some basic classroom management skills, I do not feel equipped to diagnose which students have issues stemming from environmental factors, those that suffer from oppositional defiant disorder or those that may have a more serious conduct disorder.

Once I have entered the workplace I must focus on establishing a working relationship with the school's counsellor or psychologist and lobby for more funds to improve early intervention programs. Further investigation is necessary, but I suspect that primary schools intervene too late, with students only being referred for help or evaluated when their behaviour problems have become so bad, during adolescence, that they have become impossible to accommodate.

It will not be easy and will take time, but I hope that I may one day make some progress addressing the problem behaviours of young children. Only then is it likely that the students feeding into the high school will have the strategies to modify their behaviour. I look forward to the town's teenagers one day being able to remain here, experience successful learning and go on to contribute to their local community.

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Chapter 32
How Beneficial Is Homework for Students in Primary School?

Do Primary School Students Need to Do Homework?

Natalie Dobell

Abstract As I grew up I developed a positive view on the value of homework, thanks to regular support from my nanna, a retired primary school teacher, and from having cystic fibrosis, which made homework vital for me when I had to spend time in hospital. While I hated the homework, the transition back to class would have been difficult without it, and I am grateful that the teachers put in extra effort to keep me from falling behind. In my current practicum I had thus thought that homework would be beneficial, as a majority of this class were below average in reading and spelling. However, while my mentor teacher sometimes tried to assign homework, it was always completed by just the same few students and never by the others. When I investigated the issue further by asking many teachers about it, the majority thought that homework benefitted students' reading, some stating that homework worksheets were particularly useful for upper primary students. Even so, from my practicum experiences, reading many articles, and discussions with teachers, parents and students, I have come to the conclusion that homework is not beneficial for all primary school students. There are many factors to consider, such as the socio-economic levels of the class, the students' academic abilities, and whether the students will require assistance and if that is available to them.

Journal entry, 31 July 2014, Karama, Northern Territory:

> I noticed that a lot of students from my practicum class came from a broken family. Out of curiosity, I asked Megan [not her real name], my mentor teacher, if homework in this class would be beneficial. Surprisingly, her response was that these students did not get homework because it was never brought back to school or even attempted at home. Later that night, I read through the students' reading spelling tests to get a feel of where all the students are to help me plan my lessons and my learner considerations, and found that most students did not come from a home where learning was encouraged at home or even out of

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school. It was not surprising that the reading level of the majority of this class were well below a normal year 3 to 4 class, not to mention their spelling and writing skills.

Introduction

I grew up in Katherine, Northern Territory, 300 kilometres south of Darwin, and completed all of my schooling there. With Katherine only having a small population, there was not much that could be gotten away with. Like any small country town, a lot of long-term teachers were likely to know their students' families like mine. There was at least one parent on a school council that was up to date on all the school policies and of course had their input into local schools.

There were not many day care options around a country town like Katherine, so a lot of my after-school activities were based at my nanna's house. As my nanna is a retired primary school teacher, these activities were generally learning based. If I wasn't practising my reading or writing, I was being taught playing piano. Since my nanna and my parents lived on an acreage, I had a lot of opportunities to play outside. Well, after all my learning was done.

This was my life every afternoon throughout my primary school time, so doing my homework was like a routine and I treated it as a breeze and never considered it a burden. Society is changing. In the last 15 years or so, giving homework to primary school students has become a widely recognised practice, even though there was still a debate whether young children should have to do homework. Some schools tend to assign much more than others, but this doesn't always guarantee higher achievement, especially in primary school. Baker (n.d.) also argued that beyond a certain point, homework not only became overwhelming, but it squeezed out other valuable activities, such as play, sports, music lessons, hobbies and relaxation. More is not always better?!

Homework and Myself as a School Student

As said above, my nanna was a retired primary school teacher, and she was my primary carer after school, as my parents worked a lot at that time. It was sort of in her nature to educate me in our afternoon get-togethers. I, owing to these afternoons, became a bright young girl who loves everything about school. Before starting transition, I had already known twos and five times tables, was able to read short books and write my name and recognise words. Moreover, in transition I was moved up a year level because of my reading and writing skills. I was able to read Aussie Bites books in the first term of starting school.

Even now, I still think my then achievement was due to my nanna's working with me every afternoon after school. These afternoons helped me further my knowledge with lots of encouragement. Moreover, she made learning fun for me. I have since

always enjoyed school, and I used to want to be a writer. My favourite subject at school was maths and one of my favourite hobbies was reading books. I valued these little things my nanna did for me, and I viewed these activities as homework. Therefore, I always feel homework is very beneficial because I know that I would not be who I am today without those afternoons.

I was not a very healthy child, having been born with the life-long illness of cystic fibrosis. Therefore homework was not just something fun, but it was so necessary for me to not fall behind in my class because I had to spend time in hospitals. My nanna would sit with me every day while my mum and dad were at work, and she also helped me work through the booklets my teachers used to put together for me. My nanna used to add things for me to learn as well. Without these booklets of homework made for me, I would return back to school with a minimum of two weeks being away, and would not know what we were doing in class. I would not know the spelling words of the weeks, or the start of any topics or projects. I would be completely lost in maths, as topics generally lasted only a few weeks to ensure we were covering the curriculum (something I now understand from being a student teacher).

Having mentioned it, I would admit to hating the homework I received, as all I wanted to do in hospital was play the video games in the children's ward and watch Disney movies. But I now realise how difficult the transition back to class without being kept up to date would have been and probably would have caused me to lose motivation for learning, as I would most likely have the 'I cannot do it' attitude. I have a lot of gratitude for the teachers that used to put in that extra effort just for me to not fall behind.

From all of these components in my life, my nanna teaching me and the homework I would receive in hospital, I believe they shaped me into the scholarly person I am today.

Homework and Myself as a Pre-service Teacher

I am a pre-service teacher and will be a teacher very soon. I have been doing teaching practicum in different schools in the Northern Territory. I had always been thinking that homework was beneficial for students, in particular, students with special needs.

That was why, when I walked into my current practicum classroom, I thought that homework would have been beneficial, as a good majority of this class were below average in reading and spelling. From my point of view, even just by practising reading and their spelling words, the students would have made a huge difference. However, as I got to know the class, understand the students' stories and talk to my mentor teacher, it seemed that homework was not the best idea.

In this class, a lot of the students came from broken families, and while Megan, my mentor teacher, did try to send home homework on a few occasions, it was very rarely brought back by the students. When it was brought back, it was always the

same few students. As a result, Megan just handed out homework to the same students to help them learn.

For example, at one point of my practicum at this school, one of the students (who wanted to learn) was going away on a long holiday and my mentor teacher asked me to put together a booklet for her. I assembled a few work sheets as well as some spelling words for the time she would be away. I also developed some activities to help her with those words. Moreover, I had chosen basic maths sheets with some comprehension sheets that were related to the topics I would be covering while she was away. At the back of the package, I put together some fun activities, such as colouring in and word searches. When the student returned from holiday, I could see she had benefited from the package and did not feel left behind.

Although many students in this particular class would not benefit very much from homework, they had definitely improved their reading levels. Unfortunately sending home homework with those students was impractical, as a lot of the homes they came from did not encourage them to do homework after school. There never was much structure with the students' learning and even their life situations. For example, they would come in late, out of uniform and had no lunch or not a proper lunch prepared. Their family situations made it very difficult to accommodate for the students' needs. I wonder whether only doing some homework would actually be beneficial to make them successful.

As I said above, when I was a school student, I always did homework after school because my nanna used to look after me and that was what we did during her care. Now I'm not sure whether it was the actual homework that got me learning and helped me progress through school.

Of This Much I Am Sure

I had asked many teachers whether they thought that homework benefitted students' reading, and the majority said they strongly agreed. Some of the teachers even further stated that homework worksheets were particularly beneficial for upper primary students.

Similarly, I used to think homework was beneficial to all students, as I know that I would not be where I am today without it. However, after my practicums in different schools, I now believe that homework is not beneficial for every student. There are many factors to consider when discussing the necessity of homework, such as the socioeconomic levels of the class, the students' academic abilities, and whether the students will require assistance and if that is available to them.

According to the OECD's (2009) 'Education at a glance 2009', Australian 7 to 8 year olds spend an average of 954 hours in the classroom annually, among the highest of the OECD countries. This excludes time spent on homework. In some other OECD countries, notably Finland, a child usually starts schooling closer to age 7, when it is deemed developmentally appropriate. This is 2 years later than Australian children. Yet Finland is regarded as having the most successful education system in

the world, based on OECD and World Economic Forum indicators (MacGibbon 2009), even though the same age group in Finland only spend on average 608 hours. This shows that more is not always better, and that the time of classroom learning should be taken advantage of. Students should not have to spend many hours after school completing more learning. Some simple spelling words activities or some reading should be beneficial for the students in upper primary, where the load should get a little bigger.

Conclusion

Following my experiences I had in my practicums, reading many articles, and discussions I had with fellow student teachers, mentor teachers, parents and students, I have come to a conclusion that homework is not beneficial for *all* primary school students. While continued learning after school would be helpful, it is not a definite path for success.

Each school is different in their school policies and socioeconomic levels. One teacher I talked with said, 'It has only been [beneficial] in a private school where I handed out homework and I believe the children did benefit. Have not used [it] in public system.' Some schools have a policy that homework is compulsory while others are not that strict. I think that every school should have a continuum that is followed from transition through to year 6. Parents should sign an agreement with the school and their children's teachers to agree and support the level of homework being sent home, so that the homework can be encouraged and supported at home.

I do think that home readers should be encouraged every week for junior primary students, with occasional spelling words and basic activities to practise. Reading after school and practising times tables would not be completely ruled out as non-beneficial. This will help the students to develop their time management skills early, as they will get used to completing work in their own time. Middle primary year levels should start getting weekly spelling words and times tables, a home reader and occasional work that is not completed during school hours on the student's accord. Lastly, upper primary students would benefit with basic projects and homework worksheets to further their skills and prepare them for middle school.

> I say to all of my teachers, only set homework if there's a point to it. Don't set it for the sake of it. (Paton 2014)

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Chapter 33
Understanding the Quality of Effective Homework

Deborah Young

Abstract This chapter discusses the benefits of homework and explores its contradictions and paradoxes from my experiences as a parent and a teacher. While most schools seem to have a commitment to homework in the abstract, homework is exceptionally trying for many children. As a teacher I believe in the need for homework, but I wonder if it is really effective. Most parents and students I spoke with believe that junior primary students should receive homework to help consolidate classroom learning and build good habits for future years. Many families I talked with assist their child with homework, with a set time and a prepared environment for its completion. At the same time, as a teacher I think that homework can contribute to student boredom if it does not engage the student in meaningful learning, reduce their engagement in other activities important for developing life skills, and contribute to social inequities as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to complete homework. It is not just a matter for teachers, since it is counterproductive to treat students as passive consumers of homework, and parents can be influential by creating positive conditions for children to complete homework tasks. Successful use of homework thus appears to depend on teacher preparation and setting 'real life' tasks, the motivation of students and the level of parental support available.

Journal entry, Monday 27 May 2013, Alice Springs:

> I was informed last Friday the 24th May 2013, that I was to prepare the homework sheet for both grade three classes, for the following Monday. I have never done a homework sheet before and I am not sure in myself whether it is beneficial for the students at this grade, or any grade in fact. Recent media reports including 'The war on homework' (Rindlefleish and Alexander 2004) published in *The Sunday Mail* (Queensland) have been prompted by increased parental concerns about the amount of homework expected outside of school time. Having been to school myself many decades ago, I think how much primary school homework has changed from then to when my teenage children had homework in primary school compared to my youngest son who is in year four. Is homework effective to children?

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> I have been advised to use school work that the children have been doing over the previous week, along with spelling words and their readers. How much is too much? After spending most of the day in school, students are given additional homework to be completed at home. It's worth asking not only whether there are good reasons to support the practise of assigning homework, but why it's so often taken for granted even by vast numbers of teachers and parents who are troubled by its impact on children.

The mystery deepens on the widespread assumptions about the benefits of homework: Higher achievement and the promotion of such virtues as self-discipline and responsibility are not substantiated by the available evidence.

Introduction

I am a woman, a wife, a mother and an academic. I am British and have both English and Australian citizenship; I speak English and live in Australia, and I came to live in Alice Springs and decided to do a teaching degree.

In this chapter, I will discuss the benefits of homework as academic, educator, and parent, and will explore the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in it. This reflection of the homework is based on my personal and public journey and to illustrate points of digression between my own experiences of being a mother of children and a teacher, knowing which side affects us all.

Who Did I Think I Was?

As I sit and try how to start this assignment and how to ask the questions, I have thought of two major ideas that will help me to gain an in-depth knowing of the homework rigmarole that teachers have to give their students. I have returned to this question because as a teacher, I somehow believed that the disappointment I felt for my children doing homework and for me as a primary student not having to do homework is the resentment I felt for them. The scenario, however, bears no relation to what happens in most schools. Rather, the point of departure seems to be, 'We've decided ahead of time that children will have to do something every night (or several times a week). Later on, we'll figure out what to make them do.' This commitment to the idea of homework in the abstract is accepted by the overwhelming majority of schools, public and private, elementary and secondary.

It's hard to deny that an awful lot of homework is exceptionally trying for an awful lot of children. Some are better able than others to handle the pressure of keeping up with a continuous flow of work, getting it all done on time, and turning out products that will meet with approval. But in general, as one parent put it, homework simultaneously 'overwhelms struggling kids and removes joy for high achievers.' Even reading for pleasure loses its appeal when children are told how much, or for how long, they must do it. As a mother before I became a student teacher, I used

to watch and help my own children do their homework and had to handle the pressure of keeping up with the flow of the homework and getting it done on time.

What's bad for parents is generally worse for kids. 'School for my son is work,' one mother once told me, 'and by the end of a seven-hour work day, he's exhausted. But like a worker on a double shift, he has to keep going' once he gets home. Exhaustion is just part of the problem, though.

How Do I Think I Am?

Years later, as a student teacher in university, I feel torn between the parent and the teacher in which way to go with this. As a teacher, I somehow believe the need for homework to be given out to the students, but as the parent says above, 'by the end of a seven-hour work day, the students are exhausted but have to keep on going and doing the homework'. Then, as students they have the disappointment and resentment I felt and feel for my own children in the classroom. Once again, is homework effective?

I have looked beyond the classroom expectations of homework and into the lives of children and their families to identify the challenges faced in the completion of homework. I found that most parents and students believe that junior primary students should receive homework, stating that the process helps consolidate classroom learning and builds good habits for future years. Many families I had talked with also indicated that they make time to assist their child with their homework. Most families have a set routine time for homework and prepare an environment for its completion.

In my role of a prac student teacher, being told to do a homework sheet during my third placement was very daunting to me and for the students. The students have less opportunity for the kind of learning that doesn't involve traditional skills. I personally think as a teacher that homework can contribute to boredom with school if it does not engage the student in meaningful learning, because all activities remain interesting for only so long. Homework may reduce student's engagement in leisure activities that can also be important in the development of life skills (Cooper 2001). Also, as a teacher, trying to keep students in school is a big factor, and giving children homework may contribute to existing social inequities as it appears that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to complete homework. This may result from after-school employment or an absence of a quiet, well-lit location for undertaking homework (Cooper and Valentine 2001). There is resistance, anger, confusion, and chaos with the homework within all schools and for all teachers, whether they believe in homework or not, so the question invites and enables movement, problem solving, critical thinking and self-determination. However, for me, moving from a student teacher to an upcoming graduate teacher, the answers provided by research in the outer world and the insights of the government are tenuous. I will have to rethink what I thought I knew and rethink who I am

as a teacher so that students within my class can succeed with or without homework.

Of This Much I Am Sure

In this journey, I had to start from my self-doubt of what I did not know from my own schooling to what I identified through my own children's schooling, to being a teacher and researcher. I am not an academic writer, so putting all this together gave me knowledge that opened my mind. So, of this much I am sure: What I have written is what I know of and believe in.

My work is a salvage operation of sorts. It means understanding the circumstances behind all teachers' and parents' and students' reasons and examining what has been uncovered by different research methods on student achievement through breaking down all areas seeking the keys to best practice philosophies through reviews and research. The 'Homework literature review' compiled for the Department of Education and the Arts (2004) provides school administrations and teachers with a comprehensive review of research literature from around the world and makes recommendations to assist teachers in setting quality, effective homework.

Of this much I am sure, that teachers should look beyond the classroom expectations of homework and into the lives of children and their families in carrying out prescribed homework. To me this meant understanding the values held by families and students and identifying the challenges faced in the completion of homework. Though the difficulty lies between, you either have to be the parent or teacher when you review homework. Family involvement in monitoring and supporting homework (particularly family discussions about schoolwork, courses, grades, and the future) has positive effects on students (Lee 1994).

I stand back and look at my experiences as a student, parent, and teacher of how to bring homework into the lives of the students within my classroom. There are no straight lines of knowing if you are right or wrong, if the school is benefitting from the school or if it is something I have to do that the government of education says I have to do. What others see as mundane, I see as helping the students succeed in their education. I know there is not a right or wrong way of how to address homework, and there are potential benefits to be gained from engaging parents and students in the development of school homework policies. Such collaboration provides opportunities to respond to the perspectives, contributions and experiences of the school community; I take this way of being and seeing into account when I write. Of this much I am sure.

Conclusion

Writing this chapter is a process that requires a revisiting of sites to feel free to ask questions that I have been forced to repress, questions that may point us toward new paths. It is a way to learn personally and collectively from my own experiences to transform and process needs to be documented as evidence.

It's not just for teachers to make significant contributions to designing school homework, it's also down to the students, and they can assist in fostering independent and responsible character traits. Smith (2000) asserts that it is counterproductive to treat students as passive consumers of homework, and to do so narrows their potential. Parents can influence the homework environment by creating positive conditions for learning and encouraging children to complete homework tasks. A successful outcome for homework appears to be contingent on teacher preparation and the setting of 'real life' tasks, the motivation of students and the level of parental support available.

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Chapter 34
Tarred with the Same Brush

Barriers Facing the Prospective Male Primary Teacher

Jamie Robert Cordy

Abstract This chapter discusses issues faced by male primary teachers through using a conversational approach to ascertain the opinions of male and female primary teachers and associated administration members. In my own schooling I was influenced by a male teacher who was approachable, kind, and firm but fair at a time when male primary teachers were of good standing in the community. As I grew older they seemed to be portrayed more negatively by the media and government and the notion of male teachers as prospective paedophiles become a common theme. Discussing such issues with teachers, I found employability and the level of wages did not seem an issue, although they may be a factor for some, with the thought of spending countless years as a relief teacher or on term contracts hardly being appealing. Another issue is the isolation some male teachers feel in a female dominated environment, with both students and the community questioning the motives for their career choice, wondering if they are potential sex-offenders or less than real men. Even so, this discussion is not meant to deter potential male teachers, but rather to help open the debate and initiate self-reflection, hence promoting the impetus for change in our community, media and student attitudes surrounding men in primary education. Whilst many men may see these issues as insurmountable, others will see them as just another obstacle to negotiate.

Journal entry, 21 August 2014, Victor Harbor, South Australia:

> A scream pierced the classroom chatter, 'Jamie, Ann, come quickly. Help!' I dropped my work and rushed to the side door. A year 5 student was convulsing on the cold filthy walkway. She was lying on her back with foam spluttering from her mouth, the teacher standing over her looked on in disbelief. I knelt down applying first aid, quickly manoeuvring her into the recovery position. It wasn't long before the bystanders swelled in numbers; they were a mixture of staff and students. I placed my hand on the student's shoulder to stop her rolling on her face; she was delirious. Later I recalled the scene to my wife, and her first

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thought was of concern for the student. I watched her expression turn to horror. ‘Jamie you didn’t touch her? Oh tell me you didn’t touch her?’

Introduction

I have arrived at this point in my life via the road less travelled by most. I am the son of a Scottish immigrant mother and third generation Australian father born in Adelaide and moving interstate at a young age. The following years spent in Perth built the foundation of the man who I have become today. My life experiences of husband, father, business owner, builder and winemaker have led me to this point in my life as I charter unfamiliar territory looking towards a new future as a male primary teacher.

In this chapter I will discuss issues that most male primary teachers face through ascertaining the opinions of male and female primary teachers and associated administration members, such as the principal and deputy, using a general conversational process. The goal of this approach was to find the common themes that may impact the potential male primary teacher. I have made this a personal quest not only to help other male teachers but to reconfigure my own identity as a man and future primary teacher.

What Was I? Real Men Don’t Eat Quiche

As a child growing up in Perth during the late 70s, I was without immediate family, so family friends became an integral part of my extended family. I had many new ‘uncles’ and ‘aunties’, who were a mixture of my parents’ work colleagues and friends. With my father working in the mining industry, I had many ‘real men’ as role models. I would watch and admire them during get-togethers and I particularly enjoyed listening to them recount stories of their exploits. Only when I was older I came to understand these recounts were not always accurately told, but at the time only served to reinforce their manliness. Blokes were tough, they didn’t cry and they definitely didn’t eat quiche. It was the predominant theme reinforced in my mind growing up. Don’t get me wrong, these men did have a softer side; they were caring, but would display this with a slap on the back or pat on the head. They didn’t dare ask for a hug; instead ‘chin up, boy, you’ll be right.’

My primary schooling was not dissimilar to my social upbringing. I was fortunate to be at school in a time where male teachers seemed to be plentiful. In my school alone I can recall six male teachers, but not all, mind you, were what I deem to be inspirational. One male teacher was even downright sadistic, having students line-up and handing out the cane like a free lucky dip at the Royal Show. This teacher in particular skewed my view of male teachers: They were to be respected through fear and not to be trifled with.

However there was another one.

Mr Brown, my year 3/4 teacher, still is a role model and the reason behind me becoming a primary teacher some twenty odd years later. The mental picture of him that I have filed away is as crispy as ever. Sherman found that male teachers often cited former teachers as influencing their decision to teach (cited in Gosse and Facchinetti 2011). Even though I had a lot male influences in my life, I still considered myself a sensitive child that felt understood by Mr Brown; he was approachable, kind, firm but fair, and didn't allow for any nonsense. Throughout this I believed male primary teachers had good standing in the community and were part the norm, not the exception, with no hint of the coming erroneous linked homophobia suspicions (Gosse and Facchinetti 2011) and gender imbalance that male primary teachers of today face. Even the real men in my life supported blokes teaching the next generation of boys to be men, and this is how I saw primary teachers. It was not until high school and becoming a father that I started to recognise some of the issues male primary school teachers would face.

As I grew older, I believed the community regard for teachers slowly changed. I thought they were portrayed negatively by the media and governments of the 1990s due to strike actions and unionisation (AEU) as teachers looked for reinstatement of employment conditions and claims to obtain federal awards (Spaull 2008). It was at this time when I first recalled that one student referred to one male teacher as a prospective paedophile and creepy guy. I had not ever connected those dots before in relation to male teachers being paedophiles, but in the years to come it was a common theme I was to hear over and over again, especially from young men with children.

What Am I Now?

My world was rocked: There is no job security, and you will be ostracised because you are male. People will point, stare and accuse you for things that are far from the furthest reaches of your mind. People will judge you and make inferences; students will try to set you up, put you in incriminating positions. The media and government will one minute laude you as the magic bullet and next expose your sunburnt flesh to the sun for political gain. Where is the middle ground, what ever happened to community attitudes? The dignified, honest, trustworthy, strict but fair, caring role model: the male primary school teacher.

I did not fully appreciate the struggles some men faced and that 'male teachers seem to be unsure of how they are and indeed of how they should be within the school context' (Warwick et al. 2012), be it in the staff room or community expectations. I have always been secure in my masculinity and some would say display a strong sense of self and values which I now appreciate as being necessary for male trainees to 'survive' in female-dominated environments, supporting the view that 'primary schools need good teachers of both sexes who have a strong image of self as a teacher' (Warwick et al. 2012). My belief surrounding a strong personality and

values makes the idea of wage comparability to other professions, as discussed by one teacher, as not a motivating factor in becoming a teacher for me. I used to believe that teachers were paid quite well, and after discussing teacher salaries I still agree with all but one of the teachers I spoke with that wages are not a barrier or motivating factor. However, as pointed out to me, if you compare the cost of the teaching degree to say a trade qualification with associated prospective employment, as alluded to by one teacher, it may be factor for some.

Another area surrounding the wage debate is employment opportunities. To my surprise I found employment opportunities not to register on any of the teacher's radar except for the two contract teachers. It was the commonly held belief that employment opportunities would not be an obstacle to men becoming a primary teacher. I emphatically disagree. The thought of spending countless years as a relief teacher or on term contracts is not appealing, and to obtain the Golden Ticket of permanency by being sent to the furthest reaches of the earth to obtain it is undesirable. With all the media hype surrounding the lack of male primary teachers combined with the upcoming proposed teacher shortage due to baby boomers retiring, I thought there would be more certainty surrounding job security. I believe this to be a reason behind sensational headlines like 'Half of new state school teachers believe they will leave the public system within a decade, a survey shows' (Hosking 2014). The media also has played a role in the image of the male teacher, with all the teachers I talked to agreeing that the media has at times misrepresented men in the profession, 'much of which is attributed to increased media coverage and public awareness of abuse in schools' (Petersen 2014), which in turn I believe may have added to gender imbalance.

Of This Much I Am Sure

To fulfil my dream of becoming a primary school teacher, I understand I have to renegotiate my long held beliefs and views regarding males in the profession and to reconfigure my misconceptions through research, discussions with further reading and reconnection with my place within society and self. What did it all really mean to me? Was I scarred by the outcomes? Could I overcome any doubts and misinterpretations?

Of this much I'm sure. Job security in teaching is slowly becoming an urban myth. The promises of full time jobs in the primary education sector in reality are not as readily available as the media, government and education authorities lead me to believe, even if you are a male. I did not foresee the wait of up to 10 years to get permanency, as a male colleague explained to me, and how hard it is to get contracted work is backed by Western Australia State School Teachers Union president Pat Byrne: 'There is not a great deal of security for non-permanent staff' (Ducey 2014). Thinking about my future job situation tends to make feel even more isolated.

Isolation, I discovered, is also felt by males in the profession, from staff meetings to staff room lunch breaks. With some of the male staff feeling ignored or shunned from group discussion, as 'Males who work in a female dominated environment such as a primary school are constantly constructing and negotiating their masculine identities' (Lovett 2014), they are not sure which group they belong to, often trying to find other males for support, with Lahelma arguing that there is a 'need for male teachers to raise the status of the profession or to improve the atmosphere in staff rooms' (cited in Warwick et al. 2012). This call for males in the staffroom was supported by both female teachers I spoke with. I did find myself through my teaching practicum scanning the staff room for male teachers and staff to talk to and often would resign myself to writing journal entries back in the classroom with my mentor teacher. However, it was not from a lack of trying; I think it was more due to the regularity of the associated staffroom norms. I have always enjoyed the company of strong women, as I find them positive, intelligent and interesting to talk with; I am neither intimidated nor afraid to ask for their advice. In fact it was my Aunty Helen who was and is an inspiration to me in beginning of this journey to become a teacher, as she herself was a mature age law student at a time when women had different expectations placed on them by society.

Anyhow, back in the classroom writing my journal reflections, my thoughts would often return to a conversation I had with a young male teacher. His story began as a normal 'temporary relief' teaching day. He had been a teacher for around 8 years and had experience as a full-year contracted teacher, but never the elusive permanency. He was to take a year 4 class, which from the first bell took a turn for the worse. One student asked if he was gay in derogatory manner, with another accusing him of slapping her to another teacher during recess. After recess the class's behaviour was so appalling he refused to enter the class because his radar was going off. What he meant by radar is his awareness of being in a compromising situation and knowing what to do. After further investigation the student recanted her statement and the principal agreed to sit in on the class for the remainder of the day before he would re-enter and teach the class. This perception is backed by Gosse and Facchinetti (2011) reporting a study where 'Young, junior-aged students think (and accuse) male teachers for "looking at them" the wrong way.' The student perceptions match community attitudes towards male primary teachers, with some stating that 'male teachers seem to be particularly susceptible to suspicion about their motives for teaching, and to questioning of their career choice', with such other views as 'I think that the public views male elementary teachers as perhaps potential sex-offenders and/or somehow less than a real man' (Gosse and Facchinetti 2011). We talked more about certain situations and how best to deal with them.

That's when he mentioned that he wished there were more male mentors for teachers entering the profession, and if he had known what it could be like before he chose this profession he would have chosen an alternative career path. This behaviour of accusations is an area that greatly concerns me. I have always prided myself of having attuned radar and not placing myself in a compromising position, but I do now acknowledge it sometimes is not within your power to totally stop it from happening. You can only be aware and keep fine tuning your radar. One strategy that

was discussed to combat having male teachers placed in compromising positions was to choose student classes carefully based on the previous student's teacher's opinions as to the best suit or fit of teacher for the students.

How have students' beliefs surrounding the male teacher changed so dramatically? The conversations have confirmed my beliefs that the media had played a large role in the changing of community and student perceptions of the male primary teacher. My perceptions of the media have been reaffirmed throughout the interviews, as the media at times have portrayed the male primary teacher as some sort of potential threat to students. The media I believe is so accustomed to sensationalising stories to cut through the noise of media saturation; it is one outlet trying to out-sensationalise another. Headlines are dramatic; news stories are full of drama and shock value. This need has had a negative impact on perspective male teachers, demonstrating how 'the media has had a marked effect on males' attitudes towards physical contact with children.' 'Newspaper articles such as "Sex abuse fears put men off teaching"... have doubtless damaged the image of teaching as an attractive career proposition for males' (Cushman 2005, p. 84). This negative image also affects current male teachers, with Smith (2004) exploring 'the experience of male primary school teachers in Australia and [finding] that attitudes expressed in the media about male primary school teachers have an enormous impact on their experience' (Cushman 2005, p. 84).

Further research, like that by Skelton (cited in Cushman 2005), backs my previous thinking on how the media has negatively influenced community and students attitudes towards male primary teachers. He found that:

> despite the fact that actual accusation and conviction rates are very low, the extensive media exposure given to the small number of cases where teachers have abused children has created a heightened awareness of this issue not just amongst male teachers but also amongst parents and children. (Cushman 2005, p. 85)

It is no wonder males like myself have real fears of accusations, as it only takes one accusation to potentially ruin a career.

Conclusion

Much of the discussion surrounding issues faced by male primary teachers is not meant to serve as a deterrent for teachers. It is thought that examining the beliefs and ideas of the men and women who are at the coal face of the teaching profession will serve to open the debate and initiate self-reflection by the readers, hence leading the impetus for change in our community, media and student attitudes and beliefs surrounding men in primary education. The renegotiated and firmly held beliefs surrounding teaching issues for men will only enhance one's self-reflective practices and develop conscious future practitioners. For many men, the issues mentioned here will be insurmountable, where others will see them as just another obstacle to negotiate in the pursuit of becoming the next Mr Brown.

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Chapter 35
Classroom Teacher Gender Bias Within the Non-government Education Sector

Lance Albrecht

Abstract This self-reflection considers gender bias within the classroom and why there is less gender bias in the private sector compared to public sector schools. In Australia the generalisation is that teaching is a woman's job and one of low social standing, with possible stereotyping of male teachers in relation to child protection issues. I decided to become a secondary teacher because there is far less perception of male teachers in secondary schooling in relation to child protection issues, and I felt I could make a valuable contribution to society if good practice was adhered to. During my studies I was a minority, one of a small percentage of males taking particular subjects. Fortunately I was able to organise my own placements, which allowed for a variety of experiences in both public and private sector schools. My experience enabled me to see how gender bias plays a role in why men choose other professions, and why public schools are struggling to retain male teachers but private schools are more desirable. There are numerous differences between the public and private sectors in relation to gender bias, including the private sector's ability to address remuneration, career opportunities, resources, support and enhanced social status.

Journal Entry, 5th September 2014, Melbourne, Vic, Australia:

> At times I wonder about the expectations I have been placing on myself; I am not enjoying the extra stress or sleepless nights. Has this arisen from the comments I have received on the order of 'You'll get a job, you're a man'? I am not exactly sure how many times I have heard this now from teachers whilst completing my placements. I feel like I need to do extra, to prove myself on my ability, and not my gender.

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Introduction

I am a mature age student with a wife and children. Fortunately for my family and me we live in Australia, the lucky country, untouched by wars or poverty and full of opportunity. I come from a middle class Anglo family and have always lived in Australia, but I did have the opportunity to travel broadly in my younger days. This earlier travelling I believe has helped me to develop personally and to put my life into perspective.

During my secondary schooling I was often bored and distracted, which led to my lower grades. This lack of school success early on steered me towards a trade, following in my father's and grandfather's footsteps. This career lasted for 15 years until the boredom and questions started: 'Is this it?' I finally came to the conclusion that I needed a new challenge and a career that was fulfilling and worthwhile. I was not going to die wondering!

In this self-reflection I will be reflecting on gender bias within the classroom and why there is less gender bias within the private sector compared to public sector schools. My journey will examine the change in my perspective from where I was to where I am now. This is in relation to my recent experiences, observations and learnings during my pre-service teacher education. The journey has included some amazing experiences, including the fulfilment of a goal in getting a degree, experiencing 'gender bias' first hand as a member of a minority in both pre-service teacher training at university and in student teacher placement within schools, and finally the excitement and purposeful challenge of becoming a teacher.

Where I Was

Having spent the past 15 years building a career, it had become quite obvious that I was bored and unsatisfied. It was time for change. So the self-reflection started in trying to work out what my current career was missing. After much thought and discussion with my family it was clear that I was looking for a career that would be both challenging and rewarding and that would make a difference (cf. Knight and Moore 2012, p. 65). Then the penny dropped: teaching! Ironic, really, as I was an early school leaver, without fond memories of my own schooling.

The process in researching what was required to become a teacher was challenging and brought to my attention some social perceptions of a career in teaching as a man. Firstly, in Australia the generalisation is that teaching is seen as a woman's job (ABS 2010; Drudy 2008). Oddly enough, looking back to all the recent parent-teacher interviews I had been to over the last few years, nearly all the teachers had been women. However, it wasn't until I mentioned my plans of becoming a teacher in conversations with friends and family that this perception was made apparent. Second to the generalisation of teaching being a women's role was the social perception that teaching is a job of low social standing in Australia (Buckingham

2002). Even so, literature does support teaching to be a respectful profession for both males and females (Rabelo 2013).

Whilst considering all my options for a career change, and remembering back to when I was growing up, I recalled rumour and speculation regarding a local boarding school and the inappropriate nature of relationships between teacher and students. My own secondary school even had rumours of senior students socialising with staff in the staffroom. So I had to consider how I felt about the possible stereotyping of male teachers in relation to child protection issues (Buckingham 2002, p. 156). I had to be certain I was making an informed decision, a decision I was comfortable with. This took some time and numerous conversations with some male teachers I know. My choice of becoming a secondary teacher also helped me make the decision as there is far less perception of male teachers in secondary schooling in relation to child protection issues, so with the comfort that the opportunity to make a difference and valuable contribution to society was available if good practice was adhered to far outweighed the child protection stereotype.

Where I Am Now

I am now coming to the close of the pre-service teacher chapter in my life, wrapping up my final studies, teaching rounds and finalising my Bachelor of Teaching and Learning. With university study coming to a close I am now looking at the next phase, moving from pre-service teacher to provisionally registered teacher. It has become apparent through both observation and literature that this provisional stage has its own pitfalls, with a high attrition rate (Knight and Moore 2012). The issue of low and falling enrolments in pre-service teacher education is widely recognised by education institutions and the Government alike (ABS 2010; Buckingham 2002). With this in mind I move forward cautiously, under no illusion that it will be easy, whilst actively searching for a graduate position in a school where I will be well supported.

During my studies as an external student, my contact with both university staff and peers was through an online environment. Very early on I noticed that in most subjects I was a minority, one of a small percentage of males, if not the only male taking the particular subject (cf. Drudy 2008; Knight and Moore 2012). This at first made me hesitant in engaging with other students as I felt out of place, or an outsider. I recall quite clearly feeling disappointed when my contributions to the discussion boards did not receive any comments, and I wondered if the other students found it difficult engaging a male student in an obviously female dominated environment (Lovett 2014). This was really only addressed about half way through my degree studies when collaborative assessment tasks were used.

During my practical placements I also continually observed that I was a minority as a male pre-service teacher (in accord with ABS 2010; Buckingham 2002). Fortunately, as an external student I was organising my own placements, which allowed for a variety of experiences in both public and private sector schools.

Further to being a minority, I found I had experienced personally the effect of gender bias amongst some classroom teachers as I heard the comment, 'You'll get a job; you're a man.' This comment is supported by the perception of some teachers that 'sex outweighs ability when it comes to employment as a teacher', as one of the teachers told me. I found this sort of comment and sentiment confronting, as I had always assumed successful employment would be, and is, based on ability rather than gender. These comments were heard in both public and private sector schools, from both male and female staff, so it seems to be a broadly accepted generalisation.

The diversity in my pre-service teacher placements had a balance between public and private sector secondary schools. This has provided insight into how resources and attitudes towards pre-service teachers can make an enormous difference to pre-service teacher experience. From my practice I found considerable more support from within the private sector by my assigned mentor teachers (cf. Lovett 2014; Knight and Moore 2012). There was diversity in all my placement schools through the gender of the mentor being evenly divided between male and female teaching staff. From my understanding, gender did not play a part in how much support I received, but it came down to what appeared to be attitude to the extra workload of mentoring a pre-service teacher. A notable difference was how the finishing times differed between private and public sector teachers. The private sector mentoring staff made time to talk and discuss after the students had left for the day, whilst in public schools the teachers left immediately after the students, making reflection and feedback rushed.

Of This Much I Am Sure

Now as my journey is coming to a close as a student and I move onto the next phase as a provisionally registered teacher, I can see now how gender bias plays a role in why men choose other professions, and why public schools are struggling to retain male teachers but private schools are more desirable. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that over the period of 16 years between 1993 and 2009, male classroom teachers' numbers declined by 27.8% in the public sector. In stark contrast, the private sector has seen the opposite, with Catholic and independent school increasing male teaching staff (ABS 2010). There are numerous reasons why there is this difference between the public and private sectors in relation to gender bias, including the private sector's ability to address remuneration, career opportunities, resources, support and enhanced social status.

I have found from experience that gender bias within teaching is noticeable from both observation and the academic literature. As a man coming from a technical trade background, where the workforce was dominated by men, to uproot my life and career and immerse myself as a pre-service teacher, at times an environment heavily gender biased in the opposite direction, was different. It is a common concern stopping men from entering teaching, as they are not prepared to work in an

environment dominated by women (Lovett 2014). Further to this, another common perception is that the private sector can be a bit of a boys' club, as I heard from one of the school's teachers. Combined with the data supporting less bias within the private sector, and men's concerns regarding a female dominated environment, it is likely that men would be more comfortable working in the private sector.

Remuneration is also a significant factor in why teachers are attracted to private sector teaching roles, as the private sector has the scope and resources to pay a premium for the right staff (ABS 2010; Buckingham 2002). This makes the private sector a better prospect, because as a male I identify with the role as provider responsible for our family unit. The greater remuneration offered by the private sector also will reduce the likelihood of losing male staff to more lucrative employment in other professions.

There is a common perception that extra career opportunities are another of the major advantages to classroom teachers in private sector employment (ABS 2010; Buckingham 2002). These opportunities range from a greater variety of curriculum on offer to extra curricular opportunities in the sporting and outdoor education fields. From my own pre-service experiences I have really enjoyed the opportunity to participate in numerous outdoor education camps, from skiing to rock climbing, which are typically way beyond the reach of public sector schools.

Public perception of private school employment, which carries an enhanced social status, is appealing to teachers, which relates to how I identify with my role as a man and my responsibilities. This is in spite of the fact that some of my dialogue with teachers suggests that the perception of greater social status is unwarranted. Finally, reflecting on possibly the most complex aspect of the matter, relating to the stereotyping of male teachers in relation to childhood protection issue, this is probably where the private sector is more attractive from a personal safety perspective by offering the greatest support and protection for teaching staff (Buckingham 2002).

Conclusion

Reflecting on my pre-service teacher experience, from where I was before to where I am now, I have come to realise that there are numerous factors that contribute towards gender bias towards male teachers within the non-government sector. Through both observation and literature that support the common concerns male teachers have in becoming a teacher, it seems that private sector schools have the resources to reduce gender bias by addressing the common issues of remuneration, career opportunities, support and enhanced social status.

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Part VIII
Windup

Chapter 36
Conclusion and What's Next?

Paul Black, Gretchen Geng, and Pamela Smith

Abstract This chapter begins by reconsidering the 31 student contributions in Chaps. 5 to 35. They are interesting for three reasons, namely for what they chose to write about, what they chose to say about these things, and how they reached their conclusions. Here we are less interested in the merits of these conclusions, that is, how well informed and insightful they seem to be. They are not written by established specialists in the areas they deal with, but instead by novice teachers at the beginning of their paths towards mastering the intricacies of teaching and learning in school settings. After looking further into what these novice teachers are saying about the issues and how they draw their conclusions, we will then offer suggestions as to how the study represented by these papers help position these teachers for future learning and development in the course of their careers. In this regard one might hope there would be ways to further strengthen teachers' abilities to research their own classrooms to provide a solid basis for critical reflections, but it seems clear that this cannot be guaranteed, so that the foundations for reflective teaching laid during pre-service education are particularly important.

To wind up this volume, this chapter reconsiders the preceding 31 student contributions in terms of how their authors approached them, and it then goes on to consider the possible roles of these papers and further study of approaches to classroom research in the developing careers of both these writers and their readers.

The Student Papers in Retrospect

The 31 student papers are interesting for a number of reasons. They are designed to marry practical experience, certainly from the practicum but often also from other aspects of students' lives, with evidence from scholarly literature. Because of their basis in experience, collectively they provide some idea of what it is like to undertake a teaching practicum, not so much the daily nuts and bolts, but rather in terms of how the experience can raise particular educational issues and help one think about them. This should be very interesting to other education students who are

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engaged or about to engage in the practicum, and it should also be interesting to lecturers in education, to help them better understand the backgrounds and ways of thinking of their students.

The students were encouraged to write these papers as very personal accounts, in accord with Fry's suggestion (in Chap. 3) that schools 'can be viewed as essentially a reflection of the participants who work and occupy their spaces and generate the socialisation dynamics in which... exchanges occur.' As personal accounts, these chapters tend to be informal, and even colloquial, written to speak to people in general, such as other pre-service teachers, rather than in an academic style that other pre-service teachers may find alienating, as mentioned in Chap. 1 (and in Keyes 2000). As Scott puts it in Chap. 17, 'My knowledge of the world is shaped and given meaning through my life experience, both academic and non-academic', while Young says simply (in Chap. 34), 'I am not an academic writer.' Accordingly readers may notice such aspects of wording as how the students often use the verb *indicate* (29 times in these chapters) where older academics might prefer *state*, and some older readers may puzzle over such expressions as *grey leads* (i.e. pencils) and *bed hair*. Some of the student writers may not maintain the distinction between *praise* and *encouragement* that is taught in our teacher education program.

Another artefact of the personal nature of these chapters is how the authors often begin by identifying themselves. One of the most common ways was for authors to note where grew up or were living when they wrote the paper; this was noted by 14, including three from overseas (Czechoslovakia, England, and Timor). Six others mentioned their nationality (Australian) or ethnicity or ancestry, the latter including Anglo, British, Greek, Irish and Scottish. The culturally most divergent writer is Gomes do Rosário (in Chap. 26), who draws heavily on her East Timorese background in her consideration of the issues concerning ADHD students. Our sample otherwise contains no specifically Asian voices, and none who explicitly identify as Indigenous Australians, although some chapters (especially Chaps. 7 and 19) do consider issues of Indigenous education.

Another common identification was in terms of kinship, with 11 identifying as parents, nine as spouses, and seven mentioning other relationships, such as daughter or son. Eleven of the writers identified themselves as students, while seven identified as (future) teachers, educators or academics. Five of the 26 female writers specifically noted that they were women, while none of the six male authors bothered to mention their gender, although this was rather obvious for the two who wrote about the issues of male teachers. Only four of the writers did not identify themselves in any of those ways.

To some extent such identifications reflect how the student writers did not feel that they had to compartmentalise (or fragment) reality in ways typical of academic writing, as also shown by their willingness to mention such mundane matters as changing nappies (in Chap. 5), shopping for 'frost coloured lipstick, blue eye shadow and foundation to wear' (Chap. 9), being a 'chocoholic photographer' (Chap. 19), or even to write at some length about their personal relationships (Chap. 22).

Sometimes, however, the way students identify is also brought to bear on the issues at hand, by viewing them not only from the perspective of a student teachers,

but also in terms of their experiences as parents (Chaps. 9, 31 and 33) or even as a sibling (Chaps. 13 and 27), not to mention their own earlier experiences as a student themselves (Chaps. 14, 21, 27, 30 and 32). Sometimes they relate the issues to their own childhood experiences more generally, as in the case of O'Loughlin's exploration of the role background music might play in classrooms (Chap. 28), Mead's (Chap. 16) and Scott's (Chap. 17) assessment of the value of play in early childhood education, and Cam Foulis' (Chap. 21) poignant consideration of issues of exclusion and inclusion of students with disabilities. Another particularly poignant chapter is that by Tucker (Chap. 30), which bravely draws on her own past experience as an admitted bully to look into the reasons some children come to bully others in school. Personal background is also especially prominent in Woolley's (Chap. 24) consideration of the value of positive reinforcement of good behaviour as against penalising bad behaviour, as well as Sandery's (Chap. 22) reflections on respecting children's voice.

That the accounts are heavily personal does not mean that the students fully rely on their past experiences. For example, Booth's (Chap. 25) prior experiences made her quite dubious of the value of 'planned ignoring' for handling problem behaviour, but after looking into the matter carefully she dismissed 'the naive ideals of a pre-service teacher' to arrive at almost the opposite view, if now well balanced with qualifications. Gugliotta (Chap. 27) grew up in a culture of sports and physical activities, but when he began his practice teaching he had to come to grips with the realisation that many student did not share his interest. As teachers, a big step in our development is coming to appreciate that our students often work quite differently from the way we do, so that we can't simply assume that what works for us will work for them.

The majority of papers go beyond the personal to synthesise what they observe with views of their mentor teachers and scholarly literature, as with Cardillo's (Chap. 20) consideration of the value and uses of visual aids and Spyropoulou's (Chap. 29) investigation of more gifted students, their problems, and how to motivate them. Some students pursued the issues more deeply in their classrooms. Not only did O'Loughlin (Chap. 28) experiment with background music in her classroom, for example, but McNicol (Chap. 5) developed her own system of coloured 'hats' to encourage children to master sight words, while Lidbetter (Chap. 6) was equally enthusiastic about the results of a support group for learning sight words that she ran.

Several students tried to systematically research issues with their classes. In a relatively mature academic paper, Zanki (Chap. 7) explored how small group work can improve the literacy of less advanced students, actually measuring the gains in literacy made by the students. The research approach was not flawless, for lack of a control group for comparison, but it was a significant step in the right direction, and she even consulted the research literature of decide that an optimum size for group work was three to four students. Caire (Chap. 8), on the other hand, did try to use a control group in exploring the difference between giving students an assigned text or a free choice in what to read. While he learned some useful things from this, one of them was on the potential weaknesses of research, and on the importance of

having a fully comprehensive research plan. Readers with some appreciation of research techniques will realise that a crucial issue is how he measured reading comprehension with students reading different books, a matter he does not explain. Castle (Chap. 12) also attempted to systematically research the impact of computer use on student writing, although she was also self-critical enough to appreciate the limitations of her results.

While the students generally discussed the issues with teachers in their practicum situations, this doesn't mean they always believed what they were told. The two papers on homework are interesting in this regard. Dobell (Chap. 34) found that the teachers generally believe in homework, and she herself benefitted from much help at home when she was young, but she could not see how this could help children whose families simply provide no support for them to do homework. Young (Chap. 33) discussed the issue not only with teachers but with students and their parents as well. This did not give her clear answers, but instead it gave her an appreciation of the great complexity of such issues.

The students were asked to go beyond their own experiences and those of teachers in their practicum schools by examining relevant scholarly literature. The constraints of this brief project were not particularly conducive to a critical review of relevant literature, however, and one may wonder to what extent the students may have just identified literature that agreed with the position they decided to take. Even so, generally the students at least had to confirm that their positions had some support from the literature.

The issues taken up by the students are sometimes broad and complex, and these short papers written at the beginnings of their careers may not always do justice to them. Even so, we hope you appreciate the sincerity of these newly qualified teachers 'to make a difference in the lives of [their] students', as O'Loughlin puts it in Chap. 28. They have been learning such things as how 'each class and indeed each student is different' (Castle, in 12), how there may be a significant imbalance between the school environment and their own common sense experiences (Sandery, in 22), and 'how hard it can be to motivate all students and [yet] to be fair in everyone's eyes' (Woolley, in 24).

Scott (in Chap. 17) essentially acknowledges the importance of teacher reflection in saying that 'To not continually challenge my ideas, thoughts and reasoning will result in complacency and an inability to articulate and advocate for personal practice and philosophy.' She and Dangerfield (in 18) also acknowledge the need to be accountable, or as Dangerfield puts it, to 'meet all the expectations of students, parents, leadership and the Department of Education and Child Development of South Australia.'

Fostering Reflective Teachers

The 31 student papers were written in response to university requirements designed to encourage them to reflect on aspects of their practicum experiences and to identify particular issues to look into more deeply. The aim was to help produce reflective teachers, not academic researchers, and as a project within a pre-service education program, we believe that it succeeded in helping the students develop significant reflection on their practicum teaching situations and the issues involved. To be sure, the 31 papers presented here are among the better ones submitted by scores of students over several semesters. Even so, they are not really very different in nature from what other students wrote, if perhaps often better prepared and sometimes more interesting than others for one reason or another. Even those selected for this volume can hardly represent the thinking or mature and well experienced teachers; they merely represent the beginnings of a journey into teaching, during which experience will hopefully both broaden and deepen their developing understandings—which, as any academic should appreciate, can continue to develop throughout our lives and careers.

While this is hopeful, one may wonder if more can be done. In particular, might one hope to instil deeper understandings of the nature and practicalities of research that teachers can use to more reliably inform their practice? While there is widespread agreement on the value of teachers learning to research their own classroom practices (e.g., Gray and Campbell-Evans 2002; BERA 2014), it seems difficult to do this well within the 'crowded curriculum' of pre-service teacher education courses.

Examples in the literature of pre-service programs especially strong in research are usually specially designed, rather than within an established curriculum. One example is an action research project by Stevens and Kitchen (2005), who helped 32 pre-service teachers undertake their own individual action research projects over several practicums during a 9-month period, with considerable success in some two-thirds of the cases. Another was a study by Lundeberg et al. (2003), who helped ten pre-service teachers engage in action research on technology over a 2-year period. A study by Lattimer (2012) is particularly interesting because he was able to compare a group of pre-service teachers who undertook action research with a group at the same institution who did not. He found that the non-research aspects of the teaching program were about equally successful with both groups in instilling knowledge and skills, but that there were affective benefits for those who had undertaken action research with respect to becoming a professional in the field, reporting themselves as being 'more focused on their students, more in control of their practice, and more confident in their voice' (p. 19).

If opportunities for pre-service students to develop research skills tends to be limited, one might hope they might have more opportunities later in their professional life. Unfortunately, as Hine (2013) notes, such opportunities are also limited after the graduates enter the workforce. They tend to require special effort and provision, such as in the Innovative Links program that funded Australian teachers to

undertake action research projects with support from university academics from 1993 to 1996 (see e.g., Sachs 1997; Currie 1999).

Hine's (2013) solution is a common one, namely to educate teachers on research methodology, such as action research in his particular case, within such higher degree programs as a Master of Education. Such programs hopefully help teachers become better able to evaluate research reports that might inform their practice, but to the extent learning is best done by doing, regrettably these programs tend to be blunted by the practical difficulties of having students in a coursework masters program undertake their own research. One problem is that preparing a solid research proposal and obtaining the needed ethics clearance can take a whole semester, although Hine's (2013) program at the University of Notre Dame Australia seems to avoid this problem by starting with an intensive three-day session to enable them to propose some sort of project (p. 158). Another problem is that full-time masters students, as most international students must be, may not have their own classrooms in which to carry out the research. A solution we use at Charles Darwin University is for students to prepare a project proposal as a project within a foundational unit of study on research methodology, and then undertake actual research as a project over the following semester or (more commonly) two, but this has not been a popular option among our students.

Accordingly it seems that the practicum experience of pre-service teachers is a key opportunity for promoting the development of reflective pre-service teachers, as limited and problematic as this opportunity may be.

Conclusion

The importance of being a reflective teacher is that a good teacher is basically one that keeps learning to do better—as Dangerfield puts it in Chap. 15, 'to maintain this continuous process of educating myself'. This process begins in initial teacher education, including the practicums, where (as Buckworth says in Chap. 2) student teachers can experience unease, uncertainties, and a loss of belonging. Hopefully much of this is overcome through the pre-service experience, and yet many of us can identify with Fry (in Chap. 3) in 'entering the profession with a lot of concern about how many deficiencies I had as a teacher'. Or indeed, this concern can even sneak up on us some years later, as we realise that what we thought was our excellent practice wasn't really all that good. Such a realisation is actually a positive thing, if we view it as an impetus and opportunity to improve; it is much better than imagining that everything is fine when it is not. There is a difference between the teacher who has kept improving her or his practice over 20 years in the profession and one who has essentially experienced much the same year twenty times over.

Even teachers who are especially talented from the start can't really rest on their laurels. They have to keep up with changes in educational technology (e.g., interactive whiteboards), educational policy (e.g., the new Australian curriculum), educational theories and programs (e.g., Accelerated Literacy, for a time in the Northern

Territory), and student demographics (e.g., due to changes in patterns of migration). For such things periodic professional development sessions are valuable and often provided, but ideally teachers should not merely be passive consumers of new ideas, but rather intelligent and discerning consumers. For all such things, the solution is more or less Fry's (in Chap. 3) of 'asking questions, trying to learn new techniques, strategies and approaches to working with students, families and colleagues', but undoubtedly there are better and worse ways of going about this. In any case, we hope that our pre-service teachers' reflections on issues that became apparent during their practicums is a significant step in the right direction.

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