Whisperings from the Corridors
Stories of Teachers in Higher Education
Susanne Garvis and Rachael Dwyer (Eds.)
Griffith University, Australia

This book is intended to illuminate the experiences of teachers working in higher education, the tensions they face in working in an increasingly complex professional landscape. Higher teaching loads, increased expectations of research output, and changing social and economic structures that shape the way students view their tertiary education have a profound affect on university teachers’ work.

The pages of this volume are filled with the stories of teachers in universities that allow the reader to look deeply into the complexities of their work. We and the other authors do not pretend that the stories told here are representative of all university teachers, that they are in any way generalisable, but that others may learn from the knowledge that is shared.

Dr Susanne Garvis is an early childhood lecturer in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. Her research interests include early childhood education and care, the arts and narrative research. Susanne has been an Erasmus Mundus IMEC visiting scholar in Norway and Sweden.

Dr Rachael Dwyer is a teacher and researcher at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University and The University of Queensland. She spent a number of years as a music specialist teacher in primary and secondary schools prior to completing her doctoral studies at The University of Queensland. Rachael’s research interests include narrative research, research pedagogy and teacher education.
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SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI
A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6209-162-7 (paperback)

Published by: Sense Publishers,  
P.O. Box 21858,  
3001 AW Rotterdam,  
The Netherlands  
https://www.sensepublishers.com/

Printed on acid-free paper

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This book is intended to illuminate the experiences of teachers working in higher education, the tensions they face working in an increasingly complex professional landscape. Higher teaching loads, increased expectations of research output, and changing social and economic structures that shape the way students view their tertiary education have a profound affect on university teachers’ work.

The pages of this volume are filled with the stories of teachers in universities that allow the reader to look deeply into the complexities of their work. We and the other authors do not pretend that the stories told here are representative of all university teachers, that they are in any way generalisable, but we hope that others may learn from the knowledge that is shared. Our interest is in the particular, in the authentic lived experiences of teachers and the personal practical knowledge (Clandinin and Connolly, 1995) that they possess.

WHY NARRATIVE?

“Narrative inquiry comes out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives.” (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

As story and narrative have served as the inspiration for many of the chapters within this book, it seems a fitting beginning to this chapter to describe the foundations of their use within research, particularly within educational research.

Stories are present within all cultures, as a way of communicating history, understanding experience, and making sense the world. Bruner (1986) describes “narrative knowing” as one of two modes of thinking and meaning-making, in which story and experience play a central role. Polkinghorne (1988) agrees:

Our encounter with reality produces a meaningful and understandable flow of experience. What we experience is a consequence of the action of our
organizing schemes on the components of our involvement with the world. Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite… Narrative displays the significance that events have for one another. (p. 13)

The stories people live and tell are a rich source of knowing and meaning making. Narrative inquiry is an epistemological approach to research through which this knowledge is explored and interrogated.

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story… is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Following Clandinin and Connolly’s definition of narrative inquiry, lived experience is central to the methodology. Personal practical knowledge is how Clandinin (1985) conceptualise the knowledge that teachers gain through experience. This knowledge is procedural (knowing-how rather than knowing-what), personal (in that it is local and embodied) and is derived from a person’s personal and professional history. Personal practical knowledge is not found in textbooks and cannot be adequately developed in teacher education programs. It is devalued when education is viewed as an apprenticeship, as the novice’s lived experience is disregarded in favour of the master’s all-knowing wisdom.

However, narrative inquiry is more than just recording of stories found and heard (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 78–79). The narrative inquirer is more concerned with the doings and happenings of the participants rather than “receiving” fully formed stories from them. Story becomes the medium for sharing the experience with others rather than the data itself.

Much has been written of the stories, both personal and social, that shape and are shaped by, but also conflict with teachers’ personal practical knowledge. Clandinin and Connolly (1996) write of sacred stories, cover stories and secret stories as a way of understanding how the stories of individuals “bump up” against the stories of others, of institutions and of society. In the following section, each of these types of story will be described, with examples from this book used to illustrate how they appear within the lived experience of teachers in higher education.

Sacred Stories

Crites (1971) describes sacred stories as anonymous and communal, the stories that are societally created and have a powerful influence over our values and beliefs. Bruner (1986) suggests that communally developed stories:

…define the range of canonical characters, the settings in which they operate, the actions that are permissible and comprehensible. And thereby they provide,
so to speak, a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, 
thought, and self-determination are permissible (or desirable). (p. 66)

Similar concepts have been discussed by many: what Lyotard calls master narratives, 
doxa in the work of Bourdieu, Foucault’s concept of “regime of truth”, grand narratives, 
canonical narratives in the work of others. Such stories may be adopted and lived out 
uncritically by teachers, or they may conflict with their lived experience.

In Chapter Four, O’Brien tells the story of Louisa who teaches Derrida to under-
graduate students. Louisa’s belief that her students who have difficulty in making sense 
of the dense writing are lazy or not working hard enough, placing the responsibility on 
the students rather than her own pedagogy. For Louisa, this sacred story was accepted 
blindly until it was challenged through her conversations with colleagues.

Similarly, Davey Chesters (Chapter Six) tells her personal journey of transitioning 
from student, to teacher, to teacher educator. The personal inquiry allows the reader 
to understand how initial educational experiences as a student have a lasting impact 
on how teachers view teaching and learning in the field.

Cover Stories

There is often a disjuncture between the sacred stories handed down to teachers 
and the stories that they live. When this occurs, teachers may feel the need to create 
new stories that legitimise their lived experience in spite of the sacred stories. Olson 
and Craig (2005) describe cover stories as being necessary “when incommensurable 
gaps or conflicts between individually and socially constructed narratives emerge” 
(p. 162).

“Cover stories enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever 
the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher 
stories.” (Clandinin and Connolly, 1996, p. 25)

In Chapter Seven, Phoebe’s experience of supervising preservice teaches on field 
experience saw her caught between the sacred story and her own individual story. 
She felt her responsibility was to care for the students, but it was expected that her 
loyalties lie with her employer and the host schools. Phoebe was forced to reconsider 
what it meant to care for her students in this context, and how to balance the interests 
of all of the stakeholders in the transaction.

Secret Stories

Some of teachers’ stories are lived out in classrooms, away from the eyes of others. 
When they are shared, they are told to others who have their own secret spaces and 
secret stories (Clandinin and Connolly, 1996). Spaces where secret stories are shared 
must be safe, free from retribution or potential damage to the teachers’ career.

In the higher education contexts described in this book, many of the environments 
did not represent safe spaces where secret stories could be shared. In Chapter Two,
Garvis, Pendergast and Keogh describe the tensions that erupted due to a program restructure. Staff members because defensive, protective of their areas of expertise because of a need for self-preservation. Sharing of secret stories is carefully selective.

In contrast, the narrative told in Chapter Six is evidence of what happens when space is made for teachers in higher education to share their secret stories. The group of teacher educators met for the purpose of developing a collaborative research project, although the meetings quickly became a necessary forum for sharing secret stories that could not be shared elsewhere. Space also appears in Chapter Three, when Garvis recounts the importance of relational supervision during her PhD encounter, sharing the secrets stories of her experience with her supervisor. Her PhD supervisor also shares her experience, allowing both voices to be heard in the relationship.

The chapters in this volume, without exception, use story (fiction and non-fiction) as a central feature of the writing. More than just telling the stories of the participants and drawing attention to the value of this knowledge has for the field, many of the chapters of this book attempt to engage the reader with a compelling work of literary art. Academic conventions are adhered to where appropriate and set aside where they are not. The authors draw upon the work of many in theorising their use of story: Stefinee Pinnegar, Clifford Geertz, John Dewey, Jean Clandinin (et al), Cheryl Craig, Dixie Keyes, Laurel Richardson, Kathy Charmaz, Donald Polkinghorne, Mikhail Bakhtin, and others.

We would like to think that the days of narrative research being dismissed as “a lovely story, but not real research” are in the past, however, we fear that they are not. Part of the purpose this book serves is to provide a forum for works that are both lovely stories and valuable research.

CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

A common thread throughout the chapters of this book is a challenging of the status quo: both in form, through their use of research method and presentation, and in content, through the actions and practices of the teachers within the stories.

In many universities there are strong traditions, practices and values that have stood the test of time and now appear immovable, the sacred stories of the institution. What all of these teachers are doing in their challenging of the status quo is refusing to accept that the way things are is the way they should be. As described earlier in this chapter, the belief in the value of studying the works of “the great masters”, the belief that students today are lazy or don’t try hard enough, the belief that change is something to be feared, all contribute to the preservation and reproduction of the status quo. These beliefs are embedded with pedagogy and assessment practices at all levels of tertiary education, preserving traditional constructions of power, responsibility and ownership.

Challenging the status quo, through acts that may be seen as “taking on the institution”, requires resilience. Another common thread throughout the book is the resilience shown of the teacher educators when they are faced with challenges. It also highlights the importance of collaboration to strengthen resilience with the collection
WHISPERINGS FROM THE CORRIDORS

of more than one voice in some of the chapters. By listening to different voices about the same area under investigation, a better understanding of the experience can be understood by the author and reader.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The purpose of this book is to give voice to teacher educator stories that are yet to be heard by the greater academic community. These stories of experience are often secret and kept behind closed doors. This book however brings these stories to the forefront, providing a platform for stories to be shared. The strengths of the stories are the deeper understanding shared about the complexity of teacher education. The stories told by the individual illuminate personal thoughts and actions at the same time as the individual makes sense of their relationships with others and their stance in the world (Bruner, 1987).

The methodology and types of stories shared in this book are yet to gain momentum in the traditional culture of referred journal articles. Beliefs of narrative and self-study not being ‘research’ with limited ‘generalisability’, ‘reliability’ and ‘analysis’ exist as traditional sacred stories. While these stories do not match traditional beliefs of research, they provide meaning for teacher educator experience. The stories scratch the surface of the teacher education research domain and provide a trail of meaning.

Gladwell (2000) describes the tipping point as the moment of critical mass, the threshold, or the boiling point. While this book doesn’t have the potential to create a tipping point, it shows glimpses of what could be, and encourages the continued sharing of stories that will challenge the status quo. Through such sharing, a cascade of sustained change can create a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000). Challenging the status quo also allows the grande narrative of teacher education to be sufficiently displaced, with room created for alternative stories beyond cover stories that conform to the status quo. These alternative stories provide an awareness of the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching, making a significant moral and ethical consideration to the development of teachers.

NOTES

1 Following Polkinghorne (1988), these terms are used interchangeably hereafter.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER TWO

SUSANNE GARVIS, DONNA PENDERGAST AND JAYNE KEOGH

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK...
RECOUNTS, RECOLLECTIONS AND FLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD BY TEACHER EDUCATORS

ABSTRACT
This chapter illustrates what can be learned about teacher education through a narrative self-reflection of three academics at various stages in their career (early-career, mid-career and experienced teacher educators). The three teacher educators shared a “shock” through their respective involvement in the reconceptualisation and redevelopment of the Bachelor of Education (Primary) core program at their university. Using Schwab’s (1969) “flights from the field” as an interpretive tool, this event is the trigger used to re-story the personal experience of the academics. Flights from the field allow problems between theory and practice to become known. Each teacher educator experienced Schwab’s “flights” differentially, but shared a “flight with marked perseveration” in their workplace (Schwab, 1970). Looking across the self-studies of the three academics, the final analysis reveals similarities and tensions in teacher education. Examining the tensions highlights gaps in the way that teacher education is “lived and relived” in Australian universities on a daily basis.

INTRODUCTION
Education has been labelled the most resistant profession in terms of its ability to take on change and look forward to the future (Lortie, 1975). As Hodge (1993, p. 148) explains:

Teachers are caught in a temporal paradox. They belong to a notoriously conservative profession whose job is to prepare the next generation for the world of the future. Their source of expertise is knowledge of and from the past, but they need to be futurologists as well.

In 2010 the three of us came together to explore our own institution’s teacher education programs. We were all at various stages in our career (early career academic,
mid-career academic and experienced academic) and had previously known one another through a different university. During the first year of working together in this new environment we experienced an “enormous shock” with a review of the Bachelor of Education Primary (undergraduate four year degree). The “shock” occurred after an initial meeting for the Bachelor of Education program. The team of teacher educators appeared scared of the review and the subsequent new program. While some of our colleagues were supportive of change and bring the program up to date with the teaching context, others were worried they would lose their own footing and territory in the program. The experience made us realise that not all teacher educators share the same experiences and perspectives.

We were left with a distinct experience of Schwab’s (1969) “flights from the field”. These are a series of “flights” teacher educators can take as they reflect on the alignment between theory and practice. This incident with the Bachelor of Education triggered our reflections about our current role as teacher educators, the past we had come from and the future we had to navigate. Using Schawb’s “flights from the field” as an interpretive tool, we also began to examine other experiences relating to the ever-changing landscape and where our similarities and difference lie. In response to this experience, we decided to engage in individual self-studies to explore our own experiences and perspectives. By sharing these as a group we would be able to see how our views aligned.

This chapter explores the ways in which our experiences and perspectives aligned. Events in each of our careers are explored through the re-storying of personal experience. By linking specific events to Schwab’s deliberations of “the practical”, the similarities and differences in our experiences of teacher education are illuminated. Looking across the three self-studies, the final analysis reveals significant tensions in teacher education. Examining the tensions highlights gaps in the way that teacher education is “lived and relived” in universities on a daily basis. We have chosen to reflect on our experiences to explore the current crisis in teacher education associated with the spread of technical rationalism (Schon, 1983). These self-studies, acknowledge the existence of professional teacher educator knowledge that is interwoven with teacher identity.

In writing this chapter, we all came to the agreement that even though curriculum and teaching have been independent (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992, Craig and Ross, 2008), the notion can be linked through the adoption of teachers as curriculum makers (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). We therefore consider the importance of theoretical understandings of the teacher and the way the teacher is connected to the curriculum. As teacher educators we are also connected to the curriculum.

The idea of a teacher as a curriculum maker points to the curriculum as a complex phenomenon that is shaped by the teacher and the relationships the teacher shares with students. This is further heightened by the realisation that “[W]hat teachers
reflect on, build theories about, view as significant, negotiate meanings for, and act upon all necessarily inform their curricular exchanges with students” (Craig, 2003, p. 181). The concept of curriculum can therefore be considered a metaphor for life (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988), with its complexity and diversity.

Interestingly, curriculum in a university can take on many meanings based on the conceptualisation of how knowledge and action interact. Kessler and Swadener (1992, p. 94) present curriculum within three possible dimensions: transmission; transaction and transformation. They define these as:

• Curriculum as transmission: knowledge is clearly defined, prescribed and measured
• Curriculum as transaction: has both “means and ends” as a focus, where knowledge is seen as constructed and reconstructed by those participating in the teaching-learning act.
• Curriculum as transformation: knowledge is constructed by a process of inquiry and moving into the realm of facilitating personal and social change.
• In many universities today, constructive alignment is the goal in many courses. Constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2007) is based on the twin principles of constructivism in learning and alignment in the design of teaching and assessment. It is constructive because “it is based on the constructivist theory that learners use their own activity to construct their own knowledge” (Biggs and Tang, 2007, p. 52). The “alignment” reflects the link between teaching and assessment. Teacher educators choose how they can create constructive alignment in their courses.

INTERWOVEN IDENTITIES OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1999), for a teacher, knowledge is entwined with identity. For a teacher educator, identity is interwoven with the lives and knowledge of teachers, children and youth (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009). From this conceptualisation, we can consider teachers’ personal practical knowledge; that is, the experiential, moral, emotional, embodied knowledge teachers hold and express in their classroom practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Understanding teachers’ knowledge allows us to develop a narrative understanding about the context in which teachers live and work.

Those living as teacher educators live on a continual shifting social landscape. The shifting landscapes continually shape teacher knowledge and teachers’ identities as they live out their stories. Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009, p. 142) explain the complexity of teachers shifting landscapes, noting, “we simultaneously consider our shifting landscapes as teacher educators and the kinds of spaces we might collaboratively shape with teachers as they attempt to sustain their stories to live by as they work in schools”. From this realisation, Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009) suggest that such storied spaces also hold the potential for sustaining the identity of teacher educators.
As teacher educators we are aware of the larger society plot lines that ripple through schools and universities, influencing the contexts and people (Geertz, 1995). As Geertz (1995, p. 4) notes, “change apparently, is not a parade that can be watched as it passes”. In this metaphor statement, Geertz’s image of a parade was that of an entire community participating, entering and leaving at different places and times. Sometimes the parade would be spontaneous and at other times it would be planned. Geertz (1995, p. 1) further explains that “one could contrast then and now, before and after, describe what life used to be like, what it has since become”. Change prompts continual reflection and self-study. From this reflection we can further see the interwoven identities of teacher educators on a continually shifting social and educational landscape.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this project we employ a self-study approach, drawing on our personal experiences as teacher educators. Our experiences ultimately serve as both method and form. It is through the reconstruction of meaning, reflection and deliberation that growth can occur (Dewey, 1934; 1938). Similar techniques of drawing on personal experience have been made in history (Reddy, 1979, Lakoff, 1996), linguistics (Crites, 1979; Crossan, 1988), philosophy (Scheffler, 1997), psychology (Bruner, 2002, Coles, 1989) and teacher education (Craig, 2009). The self-study approach adopted in this study involves the use of Schwab’s conceptualisation of “flights from the field” to help interpret the sense of practical about our reflections. This approach also allows us to burrow and broaden our understandings and characterisations of the curriculum in teacher education as we create storying and restorying possibilities (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Building on the work of Craig (2009), this study will continue the “personal knowing of a small-scale renaissance in the field of education (2009, p. 607). Like Craig (2009, p. 607) this study makes “teacher educator knowledge publicly accessible and open to analysis”.

Context, process and relationship feature heavily in this self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998, p. 236) suggest self study “is the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’”. In this study the three of us (early career, mid career and experienced academic) reflect on the experiences we have had as teacher educators exploring the autobiographical, historical, cultural and political. The three different stories sometimes bump up against each other and the official stories about teacher education. The stories are told, re-told, lived and re-lived in the changing field within and outside of education. Our narrative experiences continually story and re-story important events in the lives of us as teacher educators.

The Practical and Flights from the Field

Schwab (1969) informs the method used in this self-study inquiry. For Schwab (1970), all educational situations can be understood in terms of four interacting
commonplaces: subject matter, learner, milieu and teacher. He had a particular interest on the interplay between these four commonplaces and criticised educators’ reliance on “science” and “research” to solve practical dilemmas (1973). Rather, he believed that when we are thinking about the curriculum we should employ more eclectic approaches.

Schwab (1969) highlighted problems between the theory-practice divide in his notions of “flights from the field”. He noted that the practical and theoretical differ in relation to methodological approach sources of problems, subject matter and outcomes. He stated (1970, p. 2) that theoretical outcomes lead to knowledge claims that are “durable and extensive”. They are sourced from problems of theory where what is known also outlines what is not known. Alternatively, problems about practice come from a difference source. They are “indefinitely susceptible to circumstances and ... highly liable to unexpected change” (p. 3). Further, while theoretical inquiries work through “control by a principal” (p. 4), practical inquiry has no guide. Problems of practice “begin to emerge only as we examine the situation which seems to be wrong and begin to look, necessarily at random, for what is the matter” (p. 4). In this self-study, the experience of the proposed Bachelor of Education restructure prompted all of us to ponder the practical and to connect with our feelings of unsettlement in this climate of uncertainty. The restructuring was a practical problem, not a theoretical one. Schwab believed that such problems were slippery to grasp because they “intrinsically involve states of character and the possibly of character change” (p. 3).

According to Schwab (1970, p. 15) the field of curriculum is “marked by rhythms which involve...crises”. The field became marked by the concept of flights that detract from the production of knowledge and reprehensible”. Flights are “not all or equally reprehensible” (1969, p. 4). Rather, they can be positive and/or negative and can take many paths.

Schwab (1970) identified six flights from the field. These included:

1. General flight from the field (“A translocation of its problems and the solving of them from the nominal practitioners of the field to other men” (p. 17))
2. Flight upward (“from theory to metatheory and from metatheory to meta-metatheory” (p. 17))
3. Flight downward (“an attempt by practitioners to return to the subject matter in a state of innocence, shorn not only of principles but of all principles, in an effort to take a new, pristine, and unmediated look at the subject matter” (p. 17))
4. Flight to the sidelines (“to the role of observer, commentator, historian, and critic of the contributions of others” (p. 17)).
5. Flight with marked perseveration (“a repetition of old and familiar knowledge in new languages which add little or nothing to the old meanings embodied” (p. 17)).
6. Flight (debate that is “eristic and contentious...[with] warfare of words among contending exponents of [for example], different theories of personality” (p. 18)).
The use of Schwab’s “flights from the field” makes visible experiences of teacher education on the daily changing landscape. What become publicly known and open to analysis are our qualifications and our experience of difficulties between theory and practice that is severed by stakeholders. Our approach to re-aligning theory and practice for teacher education also becomes known.

Data was collected over the space of three months by writing reflective prose around three questions as we experienced events in 2010. The initial decision to engage in self-study occurred after a “shock experience” at a restructure meeting in which staff raised numerous concerns about a new Bachelor of Education program. During this time the landscape of teacher education at the university became renegotiated between teacher educators. The three teacher educators in this study decided to conduct a self-study based on three guiding questions to explore this new territory and what it meant.

The three questions were:

1. Careers as Teacher Educators: Where have you come from as a teacher educator?
2. Up Close and Personal: Reflections on the context - What have you noticed in our current context about the disjuncture between theory and practice in teacher education courses?
3. Re-living Teacher Education - What changes have happened (if any) to help align theory and practice? What do you think will happen to teacher education in the future? Could self-study help teacher educators to reconsider solutions to problems?

We would meet regularly to discuss their experiences to help support one another in the changing context and to discuss their self-study. At the end of the reflective writing process, our self-studies were compared to search for similar understanding of meaning in teacher education. By laying the self-studies side-by-side, similarities, differences and tensions became visible.

We will now introduce our narrative of experiences as it unravels over time, providing attention to us coming to know the context in which we work and the landscape of teacher education. We draw on Craig’s (2009, p. 620) analogy that “Schwab played a ‘canary in a coal mine’ role” in this inquiry”. Similar to Craig’s (2009), this study illuminated our lives on paper of where we had come and helped us reflect on the importance of curriculum understanding in teacher education.

In the first section we create a long view of teacher education, reflecting on where we have come from as teacher educators. Voice one is the early career academic, voice two is the mid career researcher and voice three is the experienced academic. In this section we engage in a general flight from the field (1) and also a flight upward (2). In the next section we move to reflecting on being “up close and personal” with teacher education by exploring the current contexts we experience in teacher education. During this section we take a reflective flight downwards (3), to the sidelines (4) and with perseveration (5). In our final section of reflection we re-live teacher education by engaging in the sixth
LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK...

flight. During this time we begin to examine ways forward in the continually changing landscape of teacher education. Each section is addressed below and introduced with the prompting questions.

CAREERS AS TEACHER EDUCATORS - WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM AS A TEACHER EDUCATOR?

Voice 1-Early Career

Born and raised in rural Queensland, I was sent to boarding school to continue my education. Here I experienced what I considered exemplary teachers. While I did not want to study education at university, I was provided with numerous models of teaching excellence.

I “fell into” studying an education degree. In my first year I was enrolled in an economics and law degree. One year on, I found so many flaws in the legal system that I had lost faith in social justice and equity. In my second year of university, still on my social justice horse, I enrolled in a music and education degree. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young children.

During my time at university I had many jobs that allowed me to work with young children. I was a nanny, early childhood music teacher, child-care worker and tutor. All of these experiences acted as validation for why I wanted to work and help young children learn.

After graduating I worked as a music teacher in a local primary school in Brisbane. At the time, it was made clear to me that I was not hired on my success in university or my honours in music. Rather I was a new graduate who was part of the $50,000 change over group to encourage older teachers to retire. When older teachers decided to retire, they were given $50,000 tax free. Part of this ruling was to fill the position with a new graduate.

After five years of teaching, I enrolled in a distance education master’s degree in early childhood education. When this was complete, I realised my learning journey had not finished: I decided to enrol in a PhD. During this time I approached my school principal to ask for extra time to study while working. His response was not encouraging. I was given the ultimatum to either work full time or resign. I chose to resign. I realised at this school I would have many difficulties trying to align my practice and theory.

While completing my PhD I also worked as a lecturer and tutor at two different institutions. During this time I became a member of a polarised faculty, where education was seen as a “poor” cousin of some of the bigger schools in the faculty such as psychology.

Within the faculty, practice and theory were severed from one another. Theory was something that was spoken about in lectures. Practice was something that occurred in isolation when students were sent out on wider professional experience. Students would often talk about the mis-match that occurred between what they learnt about and what they saw.
Voice 2-Mid Career

Change is a descriptor that best describes my educational career. As a “navy brat” I regularly moved school as my father was transferred both around the UK, and (when I was 13) to New Zealand. I attended a variety of schools – state and private, large and small, suburban, city and rural, co-educational and single sex (girls’) schools, and day and boarding schools. At age 5 I was described as a “slow learner”, having to endure “special” reading classes during recess while my friends played on the monkey bars outside (no wonder Louisa and John were not of any real interest!). Enid Blyton inspired me to become literate, and by the time I was 12 I had been labelled “academically able”, being fast-tracked through classes, completing grade 10 before my fifteenth birthday, and forced to complete a senior year in school after most of my peers left to take up jobs as nurses or hairdressers (much to my frustration at the time). Gradually, I took up a very rebellious student persona in order to find a niche amongst the regularly changing groups of peers, questioning authority and continuously getting into trouble, wagging school, and spending copious amounts of time outside the Deputy Principal’s office. Apart from the few teachers who inspired me to learn (in particular my senior History teacher who just so happened to be the DP outside whose office I had spent so much time!) I viewed teachers as generally narrow, rule-bound and an annoyance!

After a very chequered school career, I commenced study for a BA in New Zealand, opting to major in Psychology. Aged 17, my father was once again transferred back to UK. I refused to accompany my family at that time, so left home, set myself up in a shared accommodation and became largely self sufficient. After crashing and burning in my second year, I completed a BA with a major in Education and minors in Sociology and Psychology (the latter discipline having been mathematically challenging!) with absolutely no intention of becoming a teacher! I left New Zealand to return to the UK with the hope of undertaking an honours research program. At that time it was not possible to enter university in the UK before the age of 18. Having completed my undergraduate degree before my 20th birthday proved to be a hindrance to my academic career path, the UK universities being suspicious of the calibre of my first degree program undertaken in one of the colonies (!), so I had to re-think my future. Having tried advertising (too many statistics), child care (a clash with the supervisors’ wife ending that career path), clerical work (shorthand was not easy to learn!), and a spell spent living an alternative lifestyle on the Cornish Coast, I decided that I would give teaching a go (great holidays!), so commenced a postgraduate teacher education program, majoring in social work and minoring in the teaching of Social Studies. Again, my lecturers did not inspire me. However, my dramatic first practicum experience in a very challenging secondary modern school in dockland Liverpool, which I only just survived (having had to teach sex education, amongst other subjects, to two groups of what were known as “4th year leavers” – what a culture shock!) proved to be terrifying but unbelievably exhilarating! I had finally found my niche, and, since then, have never regretted becoming a teacher.
Looking Forward, Looking Back...

My teaching career has also been signified by frequent changes - I have taught in state and private schools, in secondary, middle and primary schools, in regular and special schools, units and classes, both in the UK and in Australia. I tended to “warm” to the students whom most secondary teachers viewed as “challenging”, working in various roles, not only as a mainstream English and SOSE teacher, but also as a learning support teacher, as a special education teacher, and as a behaviour management teacher. Having spent most of my time in schools located in areas of social disadvantage, I felt like a fish out of water teaching in a private school. However it was during this time that I was sponsored to enrol (externally) in a Master of Education. This enabled me to commence my career as a teacher educator, working as a sessional academic whilst completing both my MEd and my PhD. Simultaneously, I continued working part time as a school-based teacher for four years after having been awarded my doctorate. During this period I gradually came to the conclusion that it was time to break with schools, and was appointed a lecturing position.

Prior to undertaking work as a research higher degree student, my classroom practice had been largely based on intuition and naïve theory. Problems of practice arose “in happenings and goings-on” (Craig, 2009, p. 609) as I discovered problems, identified possible causes, implemented changes and evaluated results in an on-going and generally seamless and atheoretical manner. However, as a research higher degree student, and as a teacher educator, I have the privilege and opportunity of reading up on current research and literature and of becoming further immersed in theory. As such my professional knowledge and practices are in a continual state of flux and change, with boundless opportunities for further intellectual work.

Voice 3—Experienced

I grew up in regional Queensland where teachers who were transferred into the town for their country service stayed the three years they were required and then left due to the isolation of the lifestyle. Teachers played an important role in the remote community. They brought new ideas and many contributed to the capital of the community in a range of important ways. Teachers were respected and valued. It comes as no surprise that as a student in school, surrounded by these role models, it was my goal to become a teacher. As first-in-family to attend university and coming from a tradition of blue collar workers, this was regarded as being a highly ambitious aspirational goal. However I was highly motivated and committed as a school student and was well supported by my parents who both believed that a good education was the key to a happy and successful future. This level of commitment continued during my undergraduate years as a teacher education student. While at university I set my new aspirational goal – I wanted to be a teacher educator. Once again, I had been positively impacted by exceptional role models at university. I worked as a teacher in a number of schools and it was here that I commenced what I believe to be a process of remaking myself as a teacher. I was intrigued by
the opportunity to join a new initiative – a senior college. The teaching positions were advertised. I applied and was successful. I commenced at the college, working with senior subjects and TAFE accredited courses. One day I received a phone call inviting me to take up a secondment at the local university as a lecturer in teacher education. I was delighted and commenced immediately. After the initial twelve-month period the opportunity for further contracts was offered. I decided to resign from school teaching to become a tertiary educator. My journey as a teacher educator has featured institutional changes, specialisation changes, and always the willingness to take on challenges when invited. Higher education at masters and doctoral level have featured. It has been punctuated by flights upward, flights downward, and definitely flights to the sidelines. I have refused to comply with situations where theory and practice have not been aligned, working hard to address these shortfalls. I have shifted from novice and mentee, to expert and mentor as the changes have impacted on my professionalism and opened opportunities for promotion and self-development.

“UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL” : REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEXT

Voice 1 - Early Career

I was hired in 2010 as a full time lecturer. Prior to me accepting the position, I had spoken with a highly successful academic from another institution. The academic asked me to really consider a postdoctoral position over a lecturer position where I was expected to teach and research. The academic said I had enough time in the future to deal with painful students. I should concentrate on enjoying myself in research while I could. My eyes opened widely. But I enjoyed teaching future teachers. The encounter awakened me to the “scared story” (Crites, 1971) that underpins Australian universities in general. While teaching is important, research has greater stakes. I realised the forced disjuncture between theory and practice. How could I create a role where I wanted to have a productive theory-practice relationship? I started to reflect further on the conversation. Were other academics living and telling, re-living and re-telling these occurrences in their professional lives in their knowing-in-action (Schon, 1983)?

There are many forces that fuel these flights. They sit at the boundaries of our work as teacher educators as we try to align theory with practice. We have become what Shulman has observed, consumers and not critics’ of education (quoted in Brandt, 1992, p. 19). Similar to Craig (2009), I began to reflect on what Schwab (1983) has indicated faculty members start to do when they lose sight. We neglected to:

attend to...evils and vicissitudes of...government and society...to convince [people] that these troubles exist, show the threats they pose, and suggest way in which alteration of school practice might help ameliorate the conditions discussed (1983, p. 263)
Voice 2 - Mid Career

Having worked for nearly thirteen years at one particular university, both as a sessional staff member and as a lecturer on tenure track, a structural change at this institution resulted in my feeling frustrated and powerless – it was time for another change! My need to move and my resultant shift to a new university can be viewed as example both of Schwab’s (1970) “flight from the field” and “flight upward”. For me, the move to my present institution was a “flight downward”, in that I attempted to “return to the subject matter in a state of innocence, shorn not only of current principles but of all principles” and tried to take “a new pristine, and unmediated look” (Schwab, 1970, p. 17) at the organizational requirements of this new workplace. I commenced work, struggling to fulfill the largely unknown expectations regarding my role in this new institution. As a newcomer, I flew to the sidelines (Schwab’s fourth flight), quietly observing, and later commenting on and critiquing the practices I viewed from this institutional position. Some of the differences from my previous experiences as an academic were not unexpected – the effects of critical mass related to the increased numbers of students, the large body of international students, the more feminist and feminised administrative hierarchy, and so on. Some were exhilarating such as, for example, the getting to know a new group of academic colleagues with a wide range of views, the regular morning teas and writing retreats. However, other aspects frustrated me. For instance, I soon discovered that I needed to have a good grasp of policy guidelines and directives in order to address the bureaucratic requirements associated with the increased size of this school of education, and discovered that these are not always easily locatable or accessible. I felt a certain lack of autonomy in that I no longer had direct access to information about students, and felt disempowered in suggesting changes to course outlines, learning approaches and assessment items (due to the need for cross campus consistency). I developed worries about what I didn’t know, or, indeed, about what didn’t know that I didn’t know! Becoming fully aware of and immersed in the new organizational and structural requirements of this new workplace has been, and continues to be, a challenging and lengthy process!

Voice 3 - Experienced

In my role as a faculty leader, my experience of theory and practice has reduced in intensity as I move away from being a lecturer working with students, towards theory and practice in the sense of setting the tone and overall direction of the teacher education experience of academics and students. My goal is to provide the best possible conditions for optimising the alignment of theory and practice. But this is not always easy. With program changes, staffing changes, budgetary constraints and other forces, there is often a level of compromise. Critical mass plays a key role. The legacy of programs that have been developed several years ago, mostly prior to the
enormous changes currently impacting on teacher education and have subsequently
been modified on the run, is a considerable challenge and one which causes me to
engage in flights to the sidelines where a good dose of self reflection serves as a
tonic for renewal.

RE-LIVING TEACHER EDUCATION

Voice 1- Early Career

I was asked to help with the writing of some of the new courses in the Bachelor of
Education Primary. During this experience I was engaged in thinking about many
“flights” at work in the university. In my first meeting when the program was being
discussed, some teacher educators became very cranky. These educators wanted
more of the areas that they taught in the program to the detriment of other subjects.
Instead of working together as a team and taking a holistic view of the potential
program the writers of the courses began to turn on one another. The writers were
only interested in their specific subject and would not engage with the concept of
working together with other teacher educators to produce quality primary school
teachers.

The disconnection between theory and practice continued. The view that what
had worked in the past would work in the future became highly evident in my writing
team. The group decided to simply reword other content from others’ courses and
use past assessment items. It was hard to be a lone voice to face the traditional
views. As an early career academic it was difficult to raise my concerns about the
potential problems from simply repeating what has been done.

In developing the program, many assumptions had been made about the perceived
context that the pre-service teachers were walking into. With this particular issue,
general flights were made to the universities higher education administration,
assessment experts and external registration bodies. At the core was the thinking
that a flight to others would solve the problem in the creation of the new program.
However, these general flights created predictable differences of opinion concerning
reachable solutions. As a new academic I began to notice the tensions between all
the parties that were involved. Why was it not possible for everyone to have a shared
vision for the new Bachelor of Education program?

It seems that a minority of members of the faculty were no longer
content with flights to the sidelines. As part of the task force, the driving group
explored the strengths and weaknesses of the current and future program. As a new
member of the faculty however, I was happy to sit on the sidelines and observe!
My colleagues criticised that the practice of teaching was disconnected from the
study of curriculum. They had taken many flights in the running of the program
and wanted an understanding that would unify the program and address legitimate
concerns about teacher education programmes being cut-off from the work of
teachers in schools. While the small task force had a vision to keep going, how
LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK...

could they extend this vision so all members of the faculty would stop fighting over their “turf” and start flying alongside. With time perhaps this vision will be fluid and enter the beliefs of the negative staff members and those stuck in cycles of perseveration.

Since I have never experienced rewriting a program I cannot draw upon previous experience. Rather to me as “the new kid on the block” the new Bachelor of Education brings hope for teacher education in regard to discussions about consistency and shared visions. At our current institution, the same course is lived out over three different campuses. While the overall game has also been consistency, this concept often takes a back seat because of diverse personalities and limited shared goals and outcomes for students. Through this program review, positive and negative experiences contribute to learning in the short and long term for all.

As a new early career researcher, this experience has also spurred on my interest to continue teacher education in my research agenda. I have deliberately decided to take up work exploring teacher self-efficacy in a longitudinal study with two other colleagues. I am hoping that this work will continue to inform teacher education programs, providing hope to future program development, rather than teaching education programs being associated with hopelessness. By re-storying personal and shared narrative, I subscribe to Craig’s (2009) notion that we can create a renaissance in teacher education in the making, although realisation of change may take years to be witnessed. By allowing teacher educators agency in their own transformation in dealing with practical problems, the ever-changing social landscape can be attended to.

Voice 2- Mid Career

One of the key institutional tasks undertaken in my new university was that of developing a new cross campus Bachelor of Education degree program. I viewed this as an exciting undertaking, envisaging possibilities of innovation and creative practices to improve and update current teacher education. I hoped that it would be possible to put into place educational reforms so, instead of largely addressing twentieth century needs, that the new program would be able to be moulded to meet with the changing requirements and necessities of the new millennium in a flight upward towards new opportunities for improved practice. We chatted casually amongst ourselves, we attended planning meetings with colleagues who were equally enthused, and drew up suggestions for aligning theory and practice in new ways within this new program. We were hopeful of being able to move away from the conservative, traditional and largely curriculum-driven program practices, engaging in fanciful flights of the imagination when we considered the limitless range of possibilities that might be implemented into this new program. However, tensions associated with “old school” versus “new school” thinking began to emerge, and the realities of the structural arrangement and staffing possibilities of the larger institution began to emerge, impacting on our boundless imaginations.
Tensions arose between staff in relation to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Rather than looking at possibilities for new alignments of subjects and curriculum content, it was difficult to convince some staff members that their current areas of expertise and control of courses would not be subsumed or disappear from the new program. For some it seemed that resistance to the possibilities of the new was the easier option. Boundaries were drawn, some staff fiercely defending their territories with responses that drew on resistant discourses such as that of the “we’ve tried that before and it doesn’t work” response as a discursive strategy to oppose change, limiting possibilities of implementing creative new practices into the program. The administrative realities of current institutional staffing structures and organisations, issues of time and space availabilities, and bureaucratic structural arrangements resulted in some misunderstandings and blockages, further exacerbated by policies of the need such as, for example, the need for cross campus consistency and continuity. Furthermore, teacher education is subject to an accreditation process by an outside state organisation, some members of which seemed unable to fully comprehend or take on board suggestions for creative change. The body provided increasingly detailed directives regarding their requirements for accreditation, further hindering progress towards innovative educational reform. As such, innovative change became subsumed within Schwab’s fifth flight, involving marked perseveration in that there has been “a repetition of old and familiar meanings embodied in the older and more familiar language” (2007, p. 18). What a disappointing end result to what might have been an imaginative educational reform and movement from the traditional to the new!

Voice 3- Experienced

Six months after commencing in my current role I was invited to take on the leadership of the development of a cross-campus primary education degree. Having completed the same task at my previous university just the year before, I was aware of the enormity of the task with an already full workload. In this case, with an existing program in place, and cross campus challenges, the opportunity to align theory and practice was both exhilarating and daunting.

The establishment of a team of enthusiastic colleagues who were equally committed to engage with the massive teacher reform agendas impacting on programs, along with these university specific features, has proven to be the key to the process. With a greenfield/bluesky philosophy underpinning the program development, the importance of the program development and the innovation of the development process are appreciated across the faculty. Drawing on the opportunity for a flight upwards, flight downwards and flights to the sidelines, this is a journey that has enriched and opened my mind to new possibilities. The process commenced with a core of staff that either self nominated or were invited as an integral contributor because of their role and/or their specialist knowledge. Full and half day meetings were conducted regularly over twelve months, chaired by myself. In these
meetings, there was time to think and rethink the external and internal influences, the relationship between theory and practice, and the possibles and impossibles. Importantly, the many demands being placed on pre-service teacher education by the registering organisation were explored and the program that evolved had carefully considered each issue. This group developed unity by working through each opportunity/challenge in turn. We became committed to the program and understood where and why compromises and negotiations were made. A series of drafts and several rounds of consultations with the wider faculty and industry advisory groups occurred, enabling the finer details of the new program to be communicated and further development to continue. A turning point in the process occurred when staff from one subject area that had “lost” subjects compared to the existing program, and who repeatedly failed to engage and negotiate in the process, approached a senior manager of the university complaining of their perceived marginalisation in the new program. We were directed to amend the program. This destabilisation of the process put into jeopardy the collaborations that had been established, the theory that had been carefully considered, the relationships that had been formed. This also opened the doors to challenges by others. Importantly, these were flights characterised by marked perseveration, or repetition of the old and familiar. And they had the potential to destabilise the entire process.

DISCUSSION

Schwab’s “flights” provided opportunities for us to illuminate significances within these experiences. When each experience becomes known and placed side by side, we are able to see the similarities, differences and tensions that emerge. In joint reflection, Schwab’s “flights” provided a useful framework for reflecting on teacher education.

Similarities and Differences

The three teacher educators featured in this story are similar in many ways. In terms of their career story, as early career, mid career and experienced teacher educators, they have each come to teacher education with hope and passion. Each has pointed to being inspired as a child by a teacher or a number of teachers. Each has reflected on their ongoing higher education study, and how this has connected with their careers and their professional roles. Each has also related the importance of change in their careers, and of willingness to engage in opportunities as they arise. Change features prominently in the teacher education landscape, so it is not surprising that all three participants speak of change as part of their career experience.

With respect to their current context, all three teacher educators shared their experience of working in a field that is dominated by competing demands, high expectations, and challenges related to achieving consistency and uniformity. These
features often lead to conflicts between theory and practice, and the restorative need to engage in flight to the sidelines in order to observe what is happening in the field.

In terms of reliving teacher education, the “shock” they selected for analysis was the development of a new Bachelor of Education (Primary) program. While each had very different roles in the process, each witnessed a flight with marked perseveration that followed a lengthy period of positive negotiation and collaboration. The initial process featured flights downward, flights upward and flights to the sidelines, as part of the development process. These were positive experiences. Yet, when a flight with marked perseveration occurred (one group seeking higher authority without participating in the process), a deep impact was felt by all of us, leading us to question the possibility for the new program to retain its authenticity and innovation without colleagues engaging with and committing to the process, and the support of the institution.

The three participants are also different; yet, their differences seem to be connected to their stage of career and role in the process rather than to their individual stories. Certainly their experience of the “shock” is very similar indeed.

**Tensions**

Despite our differences, for the most part relating to their respective stages of career and roles in the process, our stories are connected by the largely similar tensions that they reported feeling during the “shock” experience of the program review. Largely sharing theoretical notions of the importance of the role of teachers in society, and driven by an interest in continual improvement and the need to develop innovative ways to inspire future teachers who would be working within a dynamic global and highly technologised world, the tensions we experienced arose relating to the implementation of theory into practice.

We were initially excited about the possibilities for imaginative and innovative ways of “doing” teacher education as an associated component of the program review process, but the reality of this process resulted in feelings frustration mostly relating to the confines and constraints of the current institutional arrangements within which we found ourselves. Despite an initial flight upward from theory to metatheory and from metatheory to meta-metatheory (cf. Schwab, 1970, p. 17), and attempts to implement a flight downward “in an effort to take a new, pristine, and unmediated look at the subject matter (p. 17), we were, at times and to different degrees, forced to take a flight to the sidelines, taking on the roles of “observer, historian, and critic of the contributions of others” (p. 17). When we encountered the resistance of some whose reactions were signified by a flight marked with perseveration as some colleagues endeavoured to repeat “old and familiar knowledge in new languages which add[ed] little or nothing to the old meanings” (p. 17). However, we continued to move beyond replicating existing models in the new program. We collectively did not want to replicate existing knowledge.
LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK...

CONCLUSION

Despite their commonly experienced and partially shared frustrations and tensions, we were also stimulated with the ways in which this “shock” enabled us to debate with other stakeholders in teacher education. In keeping with Schwab’s (1970) sixth flight, regarding possibilities for the new Bachelor of Education Program came to the fore during this review process. The process exemplifies how teacher education continues to be a work in progress. Teacher educators are influenced in different ways and to different degrees within the ever-changing socio-political climate in which they work. Teacher educators have to come to workable compromises relating to their individually experienced tensions between practice and theory within and through their work in the field of teacher education.

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