Teaching Daze
Stories of Self and Others

By
Martina Moroney
B.Ed (Hons)

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
The University of Tasmania
June 2006

Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of the candidate's knowledge and belief no material published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Statement of Authority

Abstract

Teaching Daze: Stories of Self and Others is a doctoral dissertation about beginning teaching by a beginning teacher. Set in Tasmania, in 2000, it is an investigation into one Drama teacher's first year in the profession. This is my story. I was the teacher, and I was the researcher. The research method was autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Gergen & Gergen, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

I conducted this study at a time when beginning teaching was characterised in the literature as a time of survival, or development, or transformation, but policymakers predominantly viewed beginning teaching as a problem needing a solution. I found that an in-depth portrayal of the individual's personal experience of beginning teaching was missing from much of the research literature in this aspect of educational inquiry, especially in the area of secondary Drama teaching.

This dissertation is about 'seeing anew', as I offer a different way of knowing about this issue. I write in layers, quilting my multiple voices (teacher, researcher, woman, daughter, and mother) with the voices of others (research literature, critical readers and other beginning teachers). I argue that beginning teaching is complex; hence representations of it should be too.

Teaching Daze is about unions – the writer and reader, the professional and personal, and the teacher and researcher. It is a story about embracing tensions, as opposed to solving them, and of finding connections between self and others. I allay fears. I confirm suspicions.

Telling my story opened my eyes. I was guilty of holding a 'limiting' definition of 'beginning teaching'. I stereotyped others. I stereotyped myself. I did not see anew; I wanted to fit in and to survive. By subconsciously embracing the notion that beginning teaching is about survival, I limited my ability to learn from my first year. Until I chose to revisit the experience, I had forgotten it. (Re)writing my story offered me, and others, hope.

Teaching Daze is about the need for us to look beyond what others tell us the first year of teaching should be, in order to find what it can be – an individual, personal, and fundamental part of our days as teachers.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Heather Smigiel, Dr. Christine Owen and Dr. Timothy Moss for supervision and guidance.

Thank you to the following for their help and enthusiasm; Ruth Doyle, Karina Churchill, Maureen Innes, Tammy Giblin, Annaliese Caney, Dr. Michael Kelly, Cherie Mountney, Eileen O'Leary, Nicole Parums, Teresa McLeod, Nicola Collins, Lisa Brown, Pauline Doyle, and Dr. Claire Hiller and the Monday Research Group.

Thank you to all the staff and students of White School for their care, support and encouragement of me as a beginning teacher and new member of their community.

Thank you to my critical readers for their enthusiasm and trust, and to my beginning teacher 'friends' who shared their precious time, stories and selves, and in doing so, showed me my 'self'.

Thank you to Dad, Mum and Cameron. I love teaching because you taught me to love learning, and that whatever life throws, we can catch.

Thank you to my grandma, Annie Crerar.

Thank you especially to Tim.

Contents

Part Two – *Teaching Daze: A Quilted Research Tale*

Part Three: After

Prologue

1.   Stitched Together

For the duration of my investigation into beginning teaching two quotations remained above my desk, typed out in big letters, handwritten on yellow-sticky notes around my computer, and scribbled in the front of my writing journal. These quotations were the stalwart features of every first chapter draft I submitted to my supervisors. The words of Ayers (2001) and Featherstone (1993) helped me find clarity in the midst of the messy work of autoethnography. They became central in my understanding of both my research topic and my methodology. It is with these words that I wish to begin my doctoral dissertation on beginning teaching to help you prepare for the 'stitched together' structure of *Teaching Daze: Stories of Self and Others*.

~ [1]

> *A life in teaching is a stitched together affair, a crazy quilt of odd pieces and scrounged materials... To make a life in teaching is largely to find your own way, to follow this or that thread, to work until your fingers ache, your mind feels as if it will unravel, and your eyes give out, and to make mistakes and then rework large pieces* (Ayers, 2001, p.1).

~

> *Beginning teachers stitch a personal education out of the fabric of a year of teaching experience* (Featherstone, 1993, p.17).

~

---

[1] ~ is the 'thread' symbol used as a stylistic convention throughout my dissertation to denote a change in tone, writing style, physical or temporal setting, and/or topic.

2.   Making Final Stitches

I have written about beginning teaching from many physical and temporal locations and in many forms since 2000 when I started teaching Drama at White School (pseudonym) and enrolled in a PhD program. I have learned that autoethnography is about looking in many directions at once (Ellis, 1997). The researcher looks from the present to the past, and then in turn she looks to the future with the hope that things can be different. Autoethnography, I believe, is about hoping that there can be positive change.

I have worked in three different studies (the cream coloured Drama staffroom, a long white University office, and a series of rearranged makeshift studies in my small weatherboard 1940's home in an inner-city suburb). I have written chapters on four computers (school, university, home and my parents'), and created numerous versions of my dissertation using different conceptual metaphors. (The most serious one next to the chosen 'days of the week' structure was an epistolary format in which I wrote to a fictional beginning teacher; thereby illustrating that knowledge about this issue should be shared and collaboratively created. I still like this model and feel that it emphasises that beginning teachers can help each other. This is not what I have done. But it is still another possibility for another interested researcher).

Currently there are three boxes full of files under my bed at home and two squashed shelves against my bedroom wall of texts that I've decided were important enough to actually purchase (Carolyn Ellis' name appears frequently on book spines along with Art Bochner, as well as Lather and Smithies' (1997) multilayered research text on women living with HIV/AIDS, and more obscure texts such as Otto's (1991) novel *How to Make an American Quilt* which I used for inspiration in using a 'quilt' as my conceptual metaphor for conducting my research and more specifically for constructing my dissertation – I haven't even quoted her, but the novel reminded me of the personal histories that quilts embody as an arts artifact).

There are several piles of articles organised according to topic lying around – re-written drafts are next to my bedside drawers, really important articles are on top of the desk that my dad made for me, and miscellaneous papers and recently read articles are strewn on the floor of my bedroom because my son thought it was fun to throw them around. I have been 'making a mess, and spreading it around': a phrase I have borrowed from Gray, Ivonoffski, & Sinding (2002, p.57). This phrase sums up how I remember my research journey. Patches of life spread out everywhere, waiting to be crafted into a quilted whole so as to make sense, to make meaning, for me, and importantly, for others.

Today I am looking at how I have pulled the pieces together and am now making my final stitches. It is Saturday. I am hiding away in my study at White School. This is my current research context – the professional in the personal and vice versa. Winter is early this year. Snow has already fallen on majestic Mt. Wellington. What a perfect opportunity to have distance, to get away from the mess of my bedroom office, to write about what has been the tumultuous journey of simultaneously beginning teaching and conducting this doctoral research. In this space I sit connecting more than words or pages. I am piecing my days back together after years of pulling them apart. They look different now, in this new quilted form.

This research project has been carried out well beyond the time frame of my first year of teaching in 2000. Six years have passed. In that time much has happened in my world – personally and professionally. When I began teaching I was twenty-three. As the years since my first year have passed I have experienced my own engagement party, a wedding to my long-term boyfriend, and the birth of our son. On the sadder side there have been three major deaths - a close family friend, my husband's grandma, and just recently my own grandma. In my first year of teaching my mum, Allison, was told by doctors that she would die within the year, from the undiagnosed health problems that she had been suffering for over 10 years. In October of that year, a young registrar did what he thought was a familiar test, and soon mum was diagnosed with Addison's Disease and told that it was not a terminal condition, but treatable.

In the midst of the personal rollercoaster of life, there have been several years of teaching at White School, where I taught secondary Drama and English for three years, directed my first student production (Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children*) and held the position of Professional Development Coordinator for the high school. In 2003 I had one year as a fulltime doctoral student before taking a period of time away from study for maternity leave and to present a paper at the International Drama in Education Association's 5th World Congress in Ottawa (husband and son came too). Looking beyond my own life, John Howard is still the Prime Minister of Australia and George W. Bush is still president of the United States of America. The Princess of Denmark's new portrait made the front page of our local paper. This is the time of my life and the moment of my PhD journey coming to an end.

This dissertation is organised into three parts. Part One is called 'Before' and introduces the study and outlines my research method. Part Two is called 'Teaching Daze' and is the body of the thesis. Each chapter is named after a day of the week and contains stories, conversations and poetic researcher realisations about my first year of teaching. They are not presented in a linear fashion, but are fractured and layered, representing how my perspectives and understandings have changed and grown as I have gazed around this topic, looking in many directions over the last six years. Part Three is called 'After' and contains the final chapter, where I offer my reflections and recommendations for further research into the beginning teaching experience.

I am surprised. For many days my teaching and researching experience did not make sense. Just like when I began teaching, there were days when I was unsure whether it would get any easier. Doubt and confusion reigned heavily in my stitched together existence of the last six years. But finding my way through, making sense of my 'daze' and 'days', and creating a structure for this learning, has been possible and worth the struggle. It has allowed me to regain my hope that things can be changed for the better. I now think differently about my first year of teaching. I now think differently about the issue of beginning teaching.

I hope you will too.

~

3.   (Before)   5

I began my first year of teaching.
At first, there were only days,
and I was dazed.

Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday

Separate and isolated,
disconnected and fragmented.

Then I started stitching,
and soon there was so much more.

Part One

Before

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1   Beginning Teaching, Beginning Researching

Teaching Daze: Stories of Self and Others is a doctoral dissertation exploring the issue of beginning teaching, specifically examining the experience of the first year of fulltime teaching in a Tasmanian context. It is my story of beginning teaching and my research of this important educational issue.

The research method is autoethnography, which was defined by Ellis & Bochner (2000) as 'an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural' (p.739). As I began teaching, I began researching my experience. This process involved extensive data collection during my first year of teaching, interpretation of the experience as presented in the data, and the crafting of an aesthetic research text.

I conducted this research in order to delve into the question, 'What is it like to begin teaching?' from an individual and personal perspective, and specifically within a Tasmanian context. In reviewing the contemporary research literature on this topic, I found that an in-depth portrayal of the individual's personal experience of beginning teaching was missing, especially in the area of secondary Drama teaching, and certainly within an Australian context.

My research is positioned alongside theoretical arguments advocating the value and importance of the research of teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, 1994; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992; Noddings, 2004), of reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995, 1998; Schon, 1983; Stock, 2001) and of self study in the professional development of beginning teachers (Breidenstein, 2002; Freese,

2006; Loughran, 2004; Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001; McCammon, Norris & Miller, 1998). I believe that such research is important because this type of investigation 'stems from or generates questions that reflect teachers' desires to make sense of their experiences – to adopt a learning stance or openness toward classroom life' (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p.450). My research project was generated out of my desire to make sense of what I was experiencing - my beginning teaching days. I believe passionately that the insider's perspective is crucial if we are to understand lived experience, hence my motivation for commencing two demanding roles, beginning teacher and doctoral student, simultaneously.

Much has been written about the topic of beginning teaching over the last four decades. In the early stages of my investigation I identified three perspectives presented in the research literature on beginning teaching and the first year of teaching. These perspectives were defined as 'beginning teaching as survival', 'beginning teaching as a stage of development' and 'beginning teaching as transformation'. Running through all three perspectives was a negative under-current. I found that beginning teaching tended to be viewed as a problem needing to be solved and that many writers offered what they saw as solutions to the problems of beginning teaching and beginning teachers. Hebert & Worthy (2001) acknowledged this perspective, '…from the literature emerged a number of relative consistencies characterizing the first year of teaching. With few exceptions, it is described in a negative manner, using terms such as frustration, anxiety, isolation and self-doubt' (p.898).

What I did not find was research that moved beyond this problem-based view. This dissertation is intended to illuminate not only what it can be like to begin teaching, but to engage the reader in an exploration of the complexity of this issue, to question assumptions, and to challenge the use of problem-based perspectives in characterizing this issue. My aim was to recreate the issue through a different theoretical lens.

Through collaboration with colleagues, literature reviews, intensive periods of writing (2003, 2005-6), and critical conversations with other beginning teachers, I

have crafted a research text that is intended to be an evocative and emotional (or 'heartfelt', as Ellis (1999) suggested) portrayal of the beginning teaching experience. *Teaching Daze: Stories of Self and Others* is not written from one perspective, but many. It is not written in once voice, but is a blend of my own many voices (teacher, researcher, student, partner, colleague, and daughter) with the voices of others (colleagues, critical readers, other researchers, and my students). It is a polyvocal text, which Barone (2001) explained is intended to 'move readers to interrogate their previously held notions' (p.151).

I have used literary tools to enable me to create this style of research text. The following pages are speckled with stories of my teaching days, fictional conversations, and poetic researcher realisations. The story about my first year of teaching is not one story about *then*, but many stories of *then*, *now* and *maybe*.

Establishing connections is at the heart of autoethnography. This became the first aim of my research. For me, this has meant exploring the spaces between the researcher and the teacher, between the writer and the reader, and between the self and others. My work was about establishing the links, finding relationships, and identifying connections in such gaps. Carolyn Ellis wrote 'good autoethnography works towards a communitas, where we might speak together of our experiences, find commonality of spirit, companionship in our sorrow, balm for our wounds, and solace in reaching out to those in need as well (Ellis, 2002, p.401). This project began as my exploration of my experience. *Teaching Daze: Stories of Self and Others* became a narrative of collaboration that emphasises the importance of making sense of our experiences together. The finished story was not just about me, but about us. Writing this dissertation was the path I chose to find a way through my teaching *daze* and make sense of the tremendous experience of beginning teaching.

Norman Denzin's (1999) ambition for ethnography in the new century underpins my second aim for this research. He wrote that our work should 'express a politics of hope. It should criticize how things are and imagine how they could be different' (p.513). *Teaching Daze* contains my hopes that beginning teachers can become storytellers of their own teaching days.

In this first chapter of my dissertation, I aim to provide the reader with a clear explanation of the research context (1.4), a brief overview of the three perspectives I identified in the literature (1.5), and a rationale as to why I chose autoethnography as the methodology for this inquiry (1.8).

1.2   The First Character in the Story - Beginning to Speak Out

The main character in this research story is me. My name is Marty. It's short for Martina. I have strawberry blonde hair, blue eyes and freckles. I was born in Scotland, and moved to Tasmania with my family when I was six years old. I don't have a Scottish accent anymore, but my Mum and Dad do. My son is two years old. My small, weather-board house currently holds one husband, one son, and two cats. Like many Australians, my husband and I are contemplating renovation. Watching films is my main hobby. At the time of writing this introduction, I am twenty-nine.

Rarely, during my undergraduate teacher training did I have the opportunity to hear first hand from a beginning teacher about what the first year of teaching would be like. Occasionally, I came into contact with an English, Speech and Drama (ESD) graduate and had access to some 'insider knowledge' through him or her, but this did not happen often. Case studies specifically on beginning Drama teaching were presented to us in curriculum tutorials, but I found these texts brief and general. They were also not set in Australia, let alone Tasmania. The answers I longed for seemed to be left to the in-school experience program where dialogue with 'real' teachers occurred (this was my perception at the time). Yet during these short visits to schools, it was unlikely that a beginning teacher would be there and be available, let alone also be comfortable about speaking to a naïve undergraduate. I longed for real faces and real voices of other beginning teachers who were working in my specific context – secondary Drama Education in Tasmania. As a result of this, I was motivated to undertake this doctoral study. My aim was to provide other beginning teachers with what I felt I had missed out on – a look inside the first year of teaching. I have come to understand that in the first year of teaching 'we', not just 'I', struggle in individual, isolated contexts, longing for the voices of others like us.

1.3   A Personal Positioning – My Beginning Teaching Context

In 1999, I was in my final year of a Bachelor of Education at the University of Tasmania, in Launceston.

The university is the fourth oldest in Australia, and was established in 1890. Originally only based in Hobart, the university now has campuses in the north of the state at Launceston, and the north-west, at Burnie. It is the only university in Tasmania. The Faculty of Education has strong and well established working relationships with many of the local schools and the Department of Education. The Faculty of Education promotes itself with the use of the motto 'teachers make a difference: teach them well and they will make waves around the world'[1]. The undergraduate body is composed of students from around Tasmania, from inter-state, and increasingly from overseas. Research within the Faculty of Education, both about and by teachers and teaching, is thriving. When I began this research, there were six other doctoral students working with my supervisor.

As an undergraduate my specialisation was Secondary Education in English and Speech and Drama (ESD). This saw me involved in several faculties concurrently – Education, Arts (English) and the School of Visual and Performing Arts (Drama). My peers were aspiring teachers, philosophers, writers, directors and actors. I had enrolled in this course because I wanted to be a Drama teacher. When I commenced in 1996, we were told by our course coordinator that this was the last year this combined education and secondary specialisation course would be offered. In the following years, students wishing to become secondary Drama teachers would have to enroll in a degree of their chosen specialisation (i.e. a Bachelor of Performing Arts) before returning to the Faculty of Education to complete a two year Bachelor of Teaching. My year group was the last year group to gain a Bachelor of Education (ESD) in the state. Before I started this research and began my first year of teaching, I was already living in a time of change and transformation.

---

[1] This motto was taken from the Faculty of Education's homepage (www.utas.edu.au).

When I graduated in December 1999, teaching in Tasmania did not seem to hold much hope for a young beginning teacher. Jobs were reportedly scarce, and the Education Department (responsible for the recruitment and employment of new teachers for all public schools) came and spoke to us about the rarity of fulltime positions and encouraged us to seek temporary positions outside of our training and specialisation.

Yet, education in Tasmania in the last six years has seen an exciting and explicit move to improve systems and processes through government policy, curriculum innovation (entitled the Essential Learning Framework) and the development of strategies to improve the status of teaching and learning in the community. Moves have also been made to improve student learning outcomes, increase the morale of teachers, and improve the community's perceptions about the value and worth of our schools in the state. Explicit goals were made by the Department of Education in the document *Learning Together*[2] that included the vision that 'Tasmania will have a world-class education, training and information system which matches the best anywhere'.

This recent political focus on education in Tasmania has (positively) led to the development of more support for new teachers. One way the Department of Education is providing extra support for beginning teachers is the introduction of the Beginning Teacher Time Release Program (BeTTR) where teachers in their first year are entitled to two hours time release from teaching duties per week to pursue a variety of professional development services from either school-based or external providers. This new scheme is operated on an individual level, and negotiated between the beginning teacher and his/her principal.

Yet, when I began teaching in 2000, these changes were still a year away. It was also not until the end of my second year of teaching that the requirement for all teachers to be registered by the newly founded Teachers Registration Board came into effect. Beginning teachers are now granted a provisional registration, which

---

[2] I accessed this document online from www.education.tas.gov.au in 2005

is then reviewed at the end of a specified period of time (1-2 years) in consultation with the principal of the school within which they are teaching.

In Tasmania the three main education systems are Public, Independent and Catholic. Each has its own governing body. In the final year of my degree in October, I found out that my application to White School (pseudonym) had been successful, and I had been given a fulltime position for 2000. White School is an Independent school (Independent schools in Australia are also referred to as 'private' schools), which means that it is not governed by the Department of Education but by its own school board. It is a large well established co-educational private school in Hobart, Tasmania, which, at the time of my first year, had a student body of 1200 from Kindergarten through to Year 12. Hobart is Tasmania's capital city, and has a population of approximately 180,000. White School is based on a specific Christian doctrine, from which it derives its educational values, purposes and concerns. The school's views are 'based on fundamental values such as the intrinsic worth of each person, the recognition of 'that of God' in everyone, the desirability of simplicity, and the need to establish peace and justice'[3]. White School in many ways is a unique context in which to begin teaching. It is the only school with this particular religious denomination in Australia. I have minimized the references to the specific denomination because of consideration of ethics and to increase the anonymity of the other characters in the stories I tell. I discuss the ethical concerns for my study in the following chapter.

In my first year of teaching I was a member of the Arts Faculty and specifically the Drama Department. The subjects I taught in my first year were Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 Drama and Year 8 English. There were two other teachers in the Drama Department. One had taught at the school for more than 15 years and the other for 7 years. Drama was a popular optional subject, with most students continuing to choose it beyond Year 7.

---

[3] This description was taken from the school's handbook. I understand the concept 'that of God' to denote the inner goodness and worth of the individual. The belief that everyone has an inner light is a fundamental belief of this religion, and of White School.

As a beginning teacher at White School I was given a reduced teaching load, assigned a mentor from my own department, as well as a supervisor who was responsible for working with me on my first staff annual appraisal of my practice. This appraisal is something all staff members are required to do. On the basis of the success of my first appraisal I was granted permanency by the school at the end of my first year of teaching.

Conducting this research in Tasmania had many advantages. The geographic size of the island enabled me to have close and constant contact between my two working worlds – that of White School, and the Faculty of Education in both Launceston and Hobart. Many of the methods that I used during my interpretation of the data (including interviewing past supervisors of my school experiences, and other beginning teachers) were made possible and practical due to the short distances between these centres.

The university's close relationships with the schools in the state, and the Faculty of Education's promotion of practitioner research, were contributing factors in my decision to undertake doctoral research initially. These connections allowed for the development of research projects that stemmed from the interests of those within the field. In other words, teachers in this state have good access to university structures and resources, and are encouraged to use them for the benefit of themselves, their schools and their students. The closeness of the Tasmanian education community, in all aspects, supported and encouraged me in conducting and completing this research.

1. 4   A Theoretical Positioning - The Research Context

When I began this project there was a substantial amount of published research on the topic of beginning teaching. I found the issue had been extensively researched both in Australia and overseas, by universities, governments and occasionally by beginning teachers themselves. In 2000, research into the first year of teaching was also extensive (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Currently, it is

understood that many aspects of the beginning teaching experience, such as the problems and difficulties faced by new teachers, have been well documented (Schuck, 2003).

For the purpose of contextualizing my own experience of beginning teaching, I read broadly so as to get a general understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives. I read texts that examined 'beginning teaching', but I also found connections with the literature on related topics including 'learning to teach', of which beginning teaching is inextricably linked, and works examining 'first year teaching'. I did not include in my review material that focused on 'pre-service teaching' or teaching experiences such as 'internships'. My focus in this project was explicitly beginning teaching post teacher training. In the literature, the term 'beginning teaching' could refer to the first five years of fulltime teaching. However, the focus of my investigation was this experience during the time frame of the first year of fulltime teaching, hence my reference to works that discuss the issue in either way – beginning teaching or first year teaching.

There have been many longitudinal studies into beginning teaching in the last four decades. In the United States of America, Ryan (1970) wrote *Don't Smile Until Christmas*, in which he detailed what teachers learn in and from their first year of teaching. He made reference then to the fact that much of what occurs during this time, especially the difficulties, does not appear in text books. His view of the experience was a grim one, 'there is pain and pleasure in learning. Confrontation with what we don't know can hurt. Struggling with the unknown can hurt' (Ryan, 1970, p.173). Yet, his insights were not completely discouraging, as he acknowledged much hope for the role and purpose of beginning teachers, stating that he believed beginning teachers could be the site of educational reform, a view echoed years later in the work of Australian qualitative researcher Martinez (1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1998, 2004). She too noted that the issue is not all bad, believing that beginning teachers have much to offer their schools.

In the following decades, more research was produced in the United States of America, including Bullough's (1989) longitudinal case study of a beginning teacher's first year of teaching. His examination of Kerry's experience in a

primary school revealed that there were stages of development that she progressed through during this time, and also that there were common problems that could be identified that all beginners grapple with in the first year. Bullough's detailed case study also illustrated that discussions about beginning teaching must include reference to the development of teacher role and identity, noting that the journey into the profession forced Kerry to explore her sense of self as a teacher. Bullough also acknowledged that hope was an element that needed to be considered, stating 'where there is no progress, there is no hope; and without hope all problems are reduced to one: surviving the year' (p.70).

Much research suggests that there has been no progress since Bullough wrote this case study in 1989. In Australia, it is recognised that 'the role of the teacher is probably more complex than it has even been, requiring an unprecedented range of skills and knowledge' (Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria, 2005). This view is supported by the Education Department of New South Wales in a report that examined the state of education in this country (Ramsay, 2000). It was noted that:

> *No other profession in the nation has been the subject of so much enquiry, nor had so many recommendations made about it in terms of the preparation and education of its members as has teaching, yet made so little progress* (Ramsay, 2000, p.28).

The difficulties for beginning teachers are extensively documented (Schuck, 2003). Beginning teaching is stressful, personally and professionally (Lang, 1999). The first year causes shock (Department of Education, Science and Technology, 2002). Beginning teachers can be under-prepared for the teaching contexts in which they find themselves and have a negative impact, as a result, on the students they work with (Birell, 1995). Struggles include coping with areas where they feel they lack preparation, such as extra-curricular activities, practical teaching skills, administration tasks, reporting, dealing with parents, and understanding department policies (Hobart, Self & Ward, 1994). Researchers specializing in the needs of pre-service and beginning teachers, Loughran, Brown & Doecke (2001), believe 'there is little doubt that beginning to teach is a difficult

and demanding task' (p.8). Many new teachers are simply not 'teacher ready' (Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria, 2005, p.xix).

Problems for beginning teachers appear significant and exist in Australia and overseas. In 1998, the Australian Council of Deans of Education acknowledged that 'very often beginning teachers are placed in difficult, hard-to-staff schools with little if any induction or support' (p.35). A study conducted in Queensland (Tromans, Daws, Limerick & Brannock, 2001) found a growing concern that beginning teachers only have access to temporary positions. This situation impacts on their ability to have a positive experience of entering the profession. McCormack & Thomas (2002) highlighted that such casualisation also leaves beginning teachers in temporary positions unable to access professional development.

The fears that beginning teachers experience are also well documented. Wilson, Ireton & Wood (1997) found that the university students they surveyed were very concerned about the first year of teaching, holding anxiety about where they would end up teaching, their ability to relate to students, parents and colleagues, classroom management, paperwork, testing, and inadequate preparation (p.396). A European study (Marti & Huberman, 1993) identified similar fears, finding that beginning teaching can impact on the teacher in a variety of ways, 'they relive their first steps as teachers with nostalgia or regret, or with nightmarish emotion' (p.195). In Australia, Kiggins & Gibson (2002) found that beginning teachers leave their training feeling anxious about being unprepared for life in the classrooms. They are confused. They are confronted. They struggle to find connections. In other words, they are 'dazed'.

Beginning teachers appear to have much to face, Veenman's (1984, cited in Roehrig, Pressley & Talotta, 2002) list of problems experienced by beginning teachers is a stalwart reference for much of the contemporary research in this area. He outlined the problems as; classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students work, relations with parents, organisation of class work, insufficient materials and supplies, dealing with problems of individual students, heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient

preparation time, relations with colleagues, planning lessons and school days, effective use of different teaching methods, awareness of school policies and rules, determining learning level of students, knowledge of subject matter, burden of clerical work, relations with principals/administrators, inadequate school equipment, dealing with slow learners, dealing with students of different cultures and deprived backgrounds, effective use of text books and curriculum guides, lack of spare time, inadequate guidance and support, and large class sizes (p.3-4).

While Veenman's (1984) study was conducted overseas, Australian research has found similar difficulties. The Australian Council for Educational Research (Batten, Griffin & Ainley, 1991) surveyed beginning teachers from Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and found that beginning teachers had difficulties with catering for the differing learning needs of students, using technology and accessing school resources, planning and managing time and resources. The Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST, 2002) reported recently that 'an unsustainably high proportion of teachers reported significant difficulty', (p.19) including 'stress, self-doubt and disillusionment' and that 'in more extreme cases, this culminates in a severe crisis of morale and questioning of personal efficacy' (p.19).

While the many difficulties and challenges have been documented, research has also theorized the development of teachers that occurs in the first year of teaching. The first year of teaching is understood as a crucial stage in the development of a teacher. Berliner (1988, cited in Kagan, 1992) defined this stage as the 'novice' stage. There have been several significant reviews conducted where the learning and professional development of the beginning teacher is mapped. For example, Kagan (1992) reviewed the professional growth of beginning teachers, reviewing forty naturalistic studies on the issue so as to develop a model of the growth that occurs in the transition from training to teaching. The findings of this review revealed that the first year of teaching is indeed a clear and distinct step in the development of a teacher. Kagan, referring to Berliner's theory of stage development, stated that during the novice stage beginning teachers 'a. acquire knowledge of pupils b. use that knowledge to modify and reconstruct images of self as a teacher; and c. develop standard procedural routines that integrate

classroom and management and instruction' (Kagan, 1992, p.129). This review revealed that this initial experience of teaching is impacted on by such things as past experiences (a view first put forward by Lortie, 1975), and that they enter teaching with pre-conceived ideas about the teachers they hope to be. Slowly, over the year, problem solving skills develop but they are initially vague and non-specific.

Researchers have explored how beginning teaching is intertwined with important parts of learning to teach (Britzman, 1991; Freese, 2006; Loughran, 2004). Some researchers have wondered if teacher training is influential at all when compared to the immensity of beginning teaching, with Zeichner & Tabachnick (1981) questioning if the effects of university teacher education are actually 'washed out' by the reality of teaching. Loughran, Brown & Doecke (2001) explained this phenomenon, stating that innovation is stifled as beginning teachers cope with the demands of teaching by going back to traditional methods. This view is supported by recent research that highlights the danger of beginning teachers uncritically falling back on prior experiences such as their own schooling (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005: Flores & Day, 2006). The socialisation of beginning teachers in their first year of teaching has long been acknowledged as a powerful influence on teaching practice (Lortie, 1975).

In 1998, Wideen et al. (1998) reviewed the literature on the many facets of learning to teach, including explicit examination of studies that had investigated the first year of teaching. They noted the complexity of the issue, stating 'learning to teach is an inherently complex, and messy business' (p.147). It is like an 'upward spiral' (Hollingsworth, 1992).

The initial picture of beginning teaching in the research literature is that the first year can be overwhelming and hard to decipher. Researchers have found that part of the difficulty in understanding this experience is the unique and individual factors that impact on the teacher's perception of the experience and how it is then understood by others. Burroughs-Lange, Downing, Francis & Sellars (1994) found that learning to teach is a unique process that can be shaped by many external factors, both personal and professional. It is also highly context specific;

hence the school where beginning teachers have their first year experiences will impact on their learning (Kuzmic, 1994; Martinez, 1994b; Rust, 1994).

As a result, there is also much written about how beginning teachers need to become active in helping themselves cope during their first year of teaching, and to help them cope with the diversity of contexts in which they find themselves (Loughran, 2004) . Beattie (2000) in Canada believed that it was through learning to generate their own professional knowledge that beginning teachers would develop. She stated that collaboration with other beginning teachers is the key. Learning with and from other beginning teachers could provide opportunity for professional development, as well as breakdown feelings of isolation (Brady & Schuck, 2005; Schuck, 2003).

Burroughs-Lange, Downing, Francis & Sellars (1994) stated that it is metacognition that beginning teachers need in order to learn from their unique experiences. In other words, having the ability to reflect on their practice, and being able to consider and question their own values and attitudes. Marland (1994) also said that beginning teachers need to develop their skills in making their practice explicit as a lack of awareness inhibits growth and development. Evans (1992) referred to this capacity as being able to self-manage. In Australia, Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins' (1998) described the goal as becoming proactive in one's professional learning. Gratch (2000), a teacher researcher in the USA, acknowledged the importance of being active in one's own professional learning, '…in order to be a teacher, I need to continue to be a learner. And to do this means for me, talking about what I do and what my students do' (p.121). Beginning teaching then, can be understood as a unique and confusing experience that can be improved if the beginning teacher takes an active role in solving problems and difficulties.

In recent years, the focus of the research in beginning teaching has turned from describing and outlining the problems of experience, to advocating and recommending ways to improve the experience and establishing benchmarks, basic competencies and guidelines. In Australia in 1996, the National Working Party on Teacher Competency Standards established the *National Competency*

Framework for Beginning Teachers; a set of guidelines intended to inform teacher trainers and education departments nationally. Currently in Australia, state governments are responsible for managing their own education systems. There has been a political turn, as beginning teaching is recognised in policy as a site of educational reform and hence an avenue to improve education systems while ensuring the skills and standards meet expectations of new professionals entering the profession. DEST (2002) acknowledged that the issue was on the political agenda because of concerns about student outcomes and moves to improve the quality of education in Australia.

There is now an extensive body of knowledge about what support systems beginning teachers need in order to have a successful first year of teaching and to ensure that their teaching practice meets basic requirements – in other words to ensure that they are competent (Bleach, 1999; Board of Teacher Registration Queensland, 1991; Boreen & Niday, 2000; Carter & Francis, 2000; Cunningham & Hall, 2000; DEST, 2002; Dowding, 1998; Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1998; Harris, 2001; Olebe, 2001; Peterson, 1990; Roehrig, Pressley & Talotta, 2002; Teasley, 1994; Weiss & Weiss, 1999).

In order to ensure competency and success the literature states that beginning teachers need support in their first year of teaching. Induction programs are central in assisting beginning teachers with their transition into the profession (Sellars, McNally & Rowe, 1998). Induction and mentoring, however, should be separate from appraisal and evaluation processes (Dowding, 1998).

DEST's (2002) recent report, supportively titled *An Ethic of Care: Effective Programmes for Beginning Teachers*, not only described the difficult professional circumstances in which beginning teachers find themselves (such as a lack of systematic support and the tendency for them to be appointed to regional schools) but also made explicit recommendations for the care and nurture of young professionals to ensure that they do not leave the profession. These are recommendations, rather than requirements. The care of beginning teachers in Australia is the responsibility of the state departments and schools within which they teach.

Yet while increased and improved support for beginning teachers is recommended, the reality of what support is actually provided varies. The pathways into teaching are many and varied (Martinez, 2004). In 1991 the Australian Council for Educational Research (Batten, Griffin & Ainley, 1991) found that beginning teachers reported that teaching was stressful and that they were left to cope on their own. More than ten years later, DEST (2002) reported that only 39.7% of those teachers surveyed reported support in their first year. In evaluating the state's induction program on behalf of the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, Sellars, McNally & Rowe (1998) found that 'evidence would indicate that the sheer complexity of fulltime teaching is sufficient to cause the brightest teaching prospects to question their ability to handle the physical and emotional demands of a teaching career' (p.1). Orland-Barak (2002) raised concern about the shock and failure that apparently 'good graduates' experienced in their first year of teaching.

Researchers acknowledge that the first year of teaching is crucial in the life of a teacher because it will impact on their future career (Evans, 1992; Flores & Day, 2006; Freese, 2006). The socialization that occurs during this time can shape the beginning teacher's view of teaching and their practice for the rest of their career (Lortie, 1975; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997). It is a time of great change (Urzua, 1999). A negative experience of beginning teaching is believed to cause new teachers to leave the profession (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005; Dean, 1996). There is now concern about the issue of teacher attrition and how to recruit and retain teachers in the profession (Brady & Schuck, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Williams, 2002).

This current focus on what could be called 'drop out rates' seems convincing and concerning. Recent statistics report that the first year of teaching appears too difficult and detrimental, and that high numbers of beginning teachers are in fact leaving in these early years of their careers (Roehrig, Pressley & Talotta, 2002). Statistics from the United States of America suggest that after three years 29% of new teachers have left teaching and that after five years this figure will be up to 39% (Ingersoll, 2001). In New Zealand, the early departure of beginning teachers

from teaching is also a concern (Lang, 1999). Currently no such statistics are available for Australia, but the need to establish such figures was one of the recommendations from the DEST (2002) report. Williams (2002), a researcher investigating beginning teaching in New South Wales, Australia, stated that it is this issue of attrition, of teachers giving up and getting out, that is the saddest aspect of this topic currently. She mourned the situation by stating:

> *That so many enthusiastic, energetic and potentially great teachers are lost in their first years seemed to be not only an inefficient and unprofessional situation but incredibly personally disappointing – the lost dreams and desires of a new generation, discarded and forgotten having barely begun.* (Williams, 2002, p. 13)

These studies, from the last four decades, highlight not only the large breadth and shape of research into beginning teaching, but also the longevity of the issue. Recently, research has started to move from describing the experience and identifying the problems, to offering advice and solutions.

I found, however, that little research was being produced by beginning teachers themselves. The views and experiences of beginning teachers were recorded and represented by researchers and policy makers. Beginning teachers were rarely in the researcher role, even though this is where the direction of research into beginning teaching is being encouraged to head (Evans, 1992; Loughran, 2004; Martinez, 1994a). There was little exploration of the personal or emotional life of beginning teachers in their first year. I was also concerned that the portrayal of the issue was overwhelmingly negative and disparaging. Researchers, writing about the beginning teaching experience, frequently characterised the experience in terms of difficulties, problems, and challenge. The emerging qualities of the issue felt dehumanizing.

1.5   Characterising the Issue Further - Beginning Themes (Textures)

The following themes frame the issue of beginning teaching further. The labels I use to describe these beginning themes shed light on the initial perspectives I identified through thematic analysis and interpretation of the contemporary research literature.

These themes (or perspectives) act as further lenses through which to view the theoretical positionings of other researchers in this field, hence allowing me to contextualize my research project further. If I identify myself as a quilter in this work, then these themes are the different textures I found in the fabrics of the issue. These perspectives are *beginning teaching as survival*, *beginning teaching as stage development*, and *beginning teaching as transformation.*

1.5.1   *Beginning Teaching as Survival*

Overwhelmingly, the term that continually appeared in descriptions of the beginning teaching experience was the notion of 'survival' (Kiggins & Gibson, 2002; May, 1995; Teasley, 1994). The first year of teaching just has to be survived. It is a phrase used by researchers about the experience, but also by teachers themselves. Mullen (cited in Kane, 1991) in recalling his first year experience, remembered a more experienced colleague's words of wisdom, 'To survive around here, you've got to be as tough as nails' (p.68). Lang (1999) wrote that survival has long been associated with beginning teaching. Along with the use of term survival are other words such as 'coping', 'struggling', and 'sinking'.

The extensive documentation of the problems and difficulties about beginning teaching suggests that the concept of beginning teaching as survival is a logical response to what appears as a very difficult and even traumatic experience. A metaphor presented by Hamilton (2003) highlights the immense physical as well as emotional impact that the experience can have on the beginning teacher. It captures the 'beginning teaching as survival' perspective aptly:

> *When you are a student teacher it is as if you are driving through a car wash. It is a crazy chaotic environment, even dangerous in some ways, but somehow, with the help of a cooperating teacher and your own neutral place of being "not a student and not a teacher," you drive through safely. Sure, things hit the window and pound against the side of the car, but for the most part, you drive through unscathed. And then there is the first year of teaching, which involves another trip through the car wash. But this time, you walk through. There is no car to protect you* (Hamilton, 2003, p.84).

Recognising that many beginning teachers are reported to have little formal support in their first year, the image of them as 'unprotected' is apt. The first year can be brutal, as Hamilton's (2003) metaphor illustrates. In this light why wouldn't the beginning teacher want his/her first year of teaching to be over quickly?

A scan of many of the titles of past research supports the perception that beginning teaching is a time of survival:

> *Surviving Your First October* (Teasley, 1994)
> *Heaven or Hell?* (Bobbit, 1993)
> *Planning Since Boxing Day* (Kiggins & Gibson, 2002)
> *Winning the Lottery?* (Tromans, Daws, Limerick & Brannock, 2001)
> *Postcards from the Edge* (Martinez, 1994b)
> *Loneliness, Fear and Disrepute* (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995)
> *The Reality of Uncertainty* (McCormack & Thomas, 2002)

'Survival' has been used in reference to the first year of teaching for more than three decades. For example, Ryan's (1970) cynically titled *Don't Smile until Christmas* is still considered relevant today. Recently Roehrig et al. (2002) used this text as a starting point to discuss the current experience of beginning teachers. Gail, a participant in Ryan's research, made the following reflection on her experience of beginning teaching:

But most of all I was glad to be finished – the first year was over, at last!
Good-bye school; good-bye people I liked; good-bye people I disliked;
good-bye without regret (p.79).

Gail's tone captures how a beginning teacher can feel when the first year of teaching is viewed as something that just needs to be survived. She is glad that the year has finished. She is letting it go and intending never to think of it again. Her voice is blunt and brutal. It is about celebrating the fact that the year is over.

There can be levels of survival. Successful beginning teachers can be described as the ones who survive easily, coping with if not mastering problems, or never experiencing such problems in the first place. Obviously, concern over recent high rates of teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Williams, 2002) suggests that young teachers are not surviving the transition from training into the profession.

On the other hand, continuing to teach can be seen as successfully surviving. Hebert & Worthy (2001), refer to those that have 'easy beginnings' and that 'teachers are occasionally located whose first years do not conform to the most often reported "painful beginnings" (p.899). Successful beginning teachers can then become examples of a successful entry into the profession. Lang (1999) noted that some teachers did not experience this state of survival, and felt in control of their beginning teaching issues so that they were never completely overwhelmed by problems. Cameron (2001) found that progress was not simply a matter of onward and upward, but that it was more like one step forward and two steps backward. Maynard & Furlong (1993), however, saw survival as a stage that beginning teachers had to go through.

Beginning teaching as survival is about confusion and inability, about coping with the problems of the context, and about coping with one's lack of skills. Kronowitz's (1996) metaphor captured this, 'I was a cook with all the ingredients and many methods courses under my belt; yet I had not the vaguest idea how to combine the instructional ingredients for best effect' (p.1). Survival is also about surviving disappointments and failed expectations.

There are a variety of responses regarding survival in the form of tips and lists of hints, professional advice and the outlining of best induction practice policies. In the 1960s (Hunt, 1968) advice on how to survive included learning names, learning symptoms of illness, and minding your manners (p.137). In 1978, Kim & Kellough believed that survival rested on avoiding problems. Traps they found were saying too much and talking too fast, and being too generous in marking. Lang (1999) found that there were several ways that a beginning teacher could increase her chances of surviving her first year, including lots of sleep, planning in teams, and ensuring that the beginner is up to date with planning. But recently, Susan, a beginning teacher, wrote to her own lecturers to let them know what she felt she needed but was not receiving in her first year of teaching (Page, Marlowe & Molloy, 2000), 'I needed someone to sit down with me every night after school for the first week and help me plan the next day' (p.229). Survival strategies appear as concrete and practical steps that need to be implemented on personal and professional levels. Surviving the first year of teaching appears to give the beginning teacher an increased confidence and the feeling that something significant has been achieved. In other words, a mile stone has been reached. May (1995) wrote about her first year of teaching remembering the words of an aunt who said that 'teaching is like having somebody walk across your face everyday with cleats on' (p.68). What helped her survive was to not think about the difficulties, but rather to remember the good times, especially of student successes. She wrote:

> *On a report card day a parent told me privately, "I know Drew would never tell you, but he really enjoyed your class. And I want to thank you for making him write so much. He really needed that." Savouring these times like a piece of hard candy is what can carry you through the year. It's what carried me through my first year. That is why, despite the difficulties, I will be going back for more* (May, 1995, p.69).

Beginning teaching as 'survival' does not include discussion of professional learning. Instead terms such as 'coping', 'tricks' and 'tips' are used. This does not include discussion of reflection or teacher development, but rather suggests an experience that happens to the teacher, that needs to be tolerated, and that

hopefully will pass quickly. This perspective limits the beginning teacher's position in terms of their value or ability to contribute to their teaching context, let alone to become a site of educational reform, as theorists have suggested. Surviving is a passive and in many ways limiting way for a beginning teacher to experience their first year of teaching.

1.5.2   Beginning Teaching as a Stage of Development

The second significant perspective that I identified in the literature was when the first year of teaching is described as a 'stage of development'. There is a large body of literature on the theory of learning to teach that investigates this period of transition from training to practice as a time of teacher development and growth, both in positive and negative terms (Kagan, 1992). In Australia, the Board of Teacher Registration Queensland (BTR, 1991) found that:

> *…beginning teachers progressed through a number of developmental stages from initial survival and the establishment of classroom competence to the development of professional proficiency and the capacity for critical analysis and reflective action expected of a mature teacher* (p.5).

The Board later noted (BTR, 1994) that survival is an aspect of being in the novice stage of teacher development (Berliner, 1988), but this description is already broader than the previous perspective discussed, because it describes the beginning teacher's pedagogical awareness rather than the entire first year. Survival is described here as being an aspect of a beginning teacher's outlook, rather than as summing up their entire experience. Beginning teachers can move beyond merely surviving as they are able to find greater complexities in their classroom practice than classroom management and control. They become aware of the educational implications and implicit values and beliefs behind their teaching decisions.

There have been several key studies investigating the stages of teacher development (Fuller, 1969; Berliner, 1988; Watzke, 2003). The novice stage, of

which survival mode is described as an aspect, is where the new teacher is focused on tactile, concrete, and limited concerns, as is evidenced by the list provided by Veenman (1984). Teacher development theory alters the perception of beginning teaching from one of overwhelming difficulty to an experience of necessary complexity and teacher learning and growth. Theorists recognise that beginning teaching is more complicated than merely 'coping' with many problems.

1.5.3   Beginning Teaching as Transformation

The final perspective is that of 'transformation'. This perspective has been identified in the work of those researchers advocating the important role that beginning teachers have in schools and more broadly in the future development of education (Martinez, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1998, 2004).

There are two main elements in this perspective. The first is the view that experiences of beginning teaching can have a transformative impact on the teacher, shaping their beliefs and practice in potentially positive and powerful ways (Wideen et al., 1998). It can develop a sense of self-efficacy and reinforce a teacher's commitment to his/her career choice (Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). When positive experiences occur, the first year of teaching can be the foundation for a long and successful career as a teacher, hence transforming the new teacher from a student to a professional. Certainly, the research on teacher attrition suggests teachers who have what they consider a positive transition from training to teaching are more likely to stay in the profession. Negative experiences, such as a lack of support, force them to leave, as Martinez (2004) stated 'the impact of beginning teachers themselves of unsupported entry into inappropriate initial teaching context is deplorable and evident: they leave!' Brock & Grady (2001) emphasized the importance of the principal's role in supporting beginning teachers. They noted that 'the early months of teaching are critical for the first-year teacher' (p.14). They believe that 'efforts to keep a new teacher growing need to begin as soon as the teacher is hired and should continue' (p.15). The risk is that the beginner will simply focus on whatever works rather than developed any informed and critical teaching approaches.

The second element in this perspective is that the beginning teacher can also have a transformative impact on their context – in other words, they can have a positive and powerful impact on the schools and education systems in which they find themselves (DEST, 2002; Martinez, 1994a; Williams, 2002). While the socialisation of beginning teachers in and into their teaching contexts is identified as an important part of the development of the teacher and their teaching identity, the reverse is also true. Beginning teachers can bring new theories, perspectives, energy and enthusiasm to reinvigorate more experienced teachers and more broadly the education community in which they work.

Beginning teaching as transformation is about recognizing that this issue is about change. This change can be understood in negative or positive ways, but in discussions of transformation it is more commonly the positive that is emphasised. Transformation is portrayed as change for the better. In this view, the experience of beginning teaching can change the beginner, but it also has the broader potential to change teaching and education. The beginning teacher can influence others around him/her such as colleagues, the departments, and the schools in which they work. Some fervently believe that beginning teachers are sites of positive change and are the best hope for educational reform. Using Martinez' (1994b) phrase, beginning teachers have the ability to look with 'unenculturated eyes' at the contexts in which they find themselves (p.123). She described this positioning of beginning teachers:

> *...they are exquisitely positioned as pivots who can at once reflect on the preservice teacher education they have just completed, and look with relatively unenculturated eyes at the institutional contexts they are entering* (p.123).

In this perspective beginning teachers' lack of experience or enculturation into the school context is seen as a positive attribute, rather than a negative one.

1.6   The Negative/The Narrow – Problem-Solving Beginning Teaching

In the years of this study (2000-2006) I believed that the predominant portrayal of the issue of beginning teaching and beginning teachers was a negative one, a view supported by Hebert & Worthy (2001). While discussion of the transformative potential of beginning teaching was recognised there was little evidence or representation of such experiences. Martinez (1994a) also noted that views presented about beginning teachers were based on a 'deficit model'. She raised concern that research was only concerned with what was wrong with beginning teachers and finding ways to fix the problem/s. This perspective, I found, took the person and the personal out of the issue. This research was intended to acknowledge the importance and worth of the individual teacher in the issue.

Also, I was concerned that discussions about beginning teaching were not about 'hope'. In light of researchers recommending that beginning teachers can potentially reform education, discussions were overwhelmingly pessimistic, as the extensive literature on problems and difficulties suggests. Optimism was rare. Recently, the Education & Training Committee (2005) appealed for focus on attracting highly talented and skilled applicants into teaching. The negative portrayal of the experience of entering the profession could be a deterrent.

In this context, as I began my research journey in 2000, I went searching for something different to what I had found.

I went looking for hope.

1.7   Stuck Between: Corcoran's 'Beginning Teacher's Paradox'

As I began to feel the different textures of this issue, tensions arose, as contradictions between survival stories, development theories and transformative aspirations emerged. The literature constructed beginning teachers as a problem needing to be solved. It appeared as a problem-based issue. In all three of the perspectives I identified, the aim was to improve or fix the issue.

As my research progressed an additional aim of the work was to offer the reader a detailed representation of the first year of teaching that would allow me to include tensions and contradictions. I hoped to create something richer and broader than the limited and often negative descriptions that existed. My goal was to explore the survival-mode attributes, developmental stages and transformative qualities of this important experience in the life of a teacher, as I lived and experienced them – simultaneously and full of complexity.

It was the spaces between the perspectives that I became interested in. One particular concept that was useful in conceptualizing and expressing the difficult predicament of beginning teachers was the idea of 'the beginning teacher's paradox' (Corcoran, 1981). Corcoran described the state of shock that a beginning teacher finds him/herself in as one of being caught in a 'paradox' and wrote that 'even though one is a beginner, one is also a teacher. Implicit in the role of a teacher is the notion of being knowledgeable, a notion that contradicts the very essence of being a beginner' (p.20). I found Corcoran's words useful in illustrating the complexity of the experience of beginning teaching. Beginning teaching is an experience of contradictions and conflicts. The notion of existing in a 'paradox' was an appropriate one for my research – stuck between worlds, caught, and conflicted – issues that I was identifying as my research progressed in relation to my topic and my methodology. The phrase resonated with me. Ryan (1970) also recognised this complex positioning:

> *The first-year teacher is caught in crosscurrents of conflict. He finds himself immersed in a new and different role and in a complex social milieu. He interacts with approximately 150 students and teachers each day. In the serious, task-orientated setting of a high school, the potential for conflict is great...as a result, much of the first year is spent struggling with internal and external conflicts* (p.181-2).

The notion of caught 'between' and 'amongst', of knowing and yet not knowing, was one that heavily influenced my thinking and construction of this dissertation. Writing this dissertation was my way of overcoming the view that beginning teaching can only be understood as problematic.

For change and 'hope' to be possible, I believe the beginning teacher's paradox becomes a crucial phenomenon to recognise, and not simplify down or rationalize out of discussions. Tension and confusion should be embraced. *Teaching Daze* was about my desire to show this tension and contradiction. It was also about my desire to not resolve this tension, but rather to embrace it as a characteristic of the experience I was living and investigating.

1.8   Research in Beginning Teaching and Autoethnography

The method of inquiry I used in this research was autoethnography. I believed that this was an appropriate way to fulfill the aims of my research. It allowed me to operate as a teacher researcher. Gergen and Gergen (2002) describe the role as 'using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar' (p.14). I was investigating beginning teaching, and I was the beginning teacher. One of the challenges of this methodology, however, is the challenge to 'show' rather than 'tell' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Ellis (1997) argued that the autoethnographer needs to talk in a different way, not just talk about talking in a different way.

Autoethnography enabled me to explore the individual's personal and emotional experience of beginning teaching. It also allowed me to explore the possibilities for representing the issue differently. In this sense, I believed that autoethnography was an ideal methodology for research in and about teaching and the experiences of teaching. On her own research in teaching, Stock (2001) wrote that:

> *...I was conducting research in a genre that allowed me to collect 'empirical' phenomena about teaching and learning for study, a genre that allowed me to give textual shape to those phenomena, a genre that not only allowed but, in fact, required me to interpret and re-interpret those phenomena, personally and in community, a genre that enabled me to develop effective instructional materials and practices not for the 'artificial' students whom I was asked to imagine in my teacher education classes but for students I was meeting in my classrooms, then and there, here and now.* (p.104)

Research in teaching is important and valuable for teachers, their students, and their schools. Lytle & Cochran-Smith (1992) argued passionately that research conducted by teachers 'is a significant way of knowing about teaching' (p.450). This form of inquiry is a recognised and valued form of qualitative and interpretive educational research, although I also recognise, it is not without critics (Huberman, 1996). I wish to suggest that research in teaching and by teachers is important because it involves systematic and rigorous methods and can offer new insights, build community and empower beginning teachers. With this in mind I reason that my autoethnographic study of beginning teaching is also a contribution to the body of research in teaching.

Autoethnography teaches us about ourselves (Banks & Banks, 2000). Anderson & Herr (1999) argued that 'insider researchers have unique opportunities to document the hidden transcripts of micropolitics and an institutional dimension only partially accessible to researchers' (p.18). In my quest to find different ways of knowing about beginning teaching, this notion of insider knowledge was important. Anderson (2002) noted that 'it is somehow more compelling to read an account by fellow insiders, sharing insights about their own practice, than research done on that practice by an outside' (p.22). This research was about representing the insider's perspective, but also about advocating its importance. Autoethnographic methods are about capturing and honoring 'one's unique voice' (Gergen & Gergen, 2002, p. 14). I sought to represent the beginning teacher's perspective that I identified was missing in previous research.

Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) identified that research in teaching focuses on an 'inside/outside' notion of knowledge rather than an 'outside/in' (p.469) whereby, like autoethnographers, teachers start with their personal experiences and then examine links between their own teaching experiences and with the broader knowledge contexts of the social, cultural and political domains. Wassermann (1999) noted that data gathering in teacher research is concerned with observing the self and comparing this observation with others – a process explicitly linked to Reed-Danahay's (1997) definition of autoethnography as a 'self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (p.9). Hence, there is a clear connection, then, between research in teaching methodology and autoethnography.

A fundamental element of my own investigation, and a significant part of research in teaching, is critical reflection on practice. The work of Brookfield (1995, 1998) has supported me in understanding the importance of critical reflection in not just teaching but in beginning teaching specifically. Brookfield (1995) stated that becoming a critically reflective teacher is a means to survival, because it helps us to see ourselves in our contexts and to identify the power structures in our own and other's constructions of ourselves. It helps us see outside of ourselves, to explore issues through different lenses, and to see that we are not solely responsible for either our failings or broader issues. He stated 'a critically reflective practitioner can stand outside her practice and see what she does from a wider perspective' (p.204). In research in teaching, perspectives should be multiple. It is not just what the teacher thinks. Critical reflection allowed me to move from a purely subjective inquiry, to a broader social investigation into the nature of beginning teaching in my specific context.

Importantly, research about teaching also allows us to strive for excellence in our profession. Ellis & Bochner (2000), in describing autoethnographic method, offered their hopes for the potential for such research practices to transform classrooms and more broadly education:

> *...good teaching involves autoethnography too... over time you try to work your way through the barriers of unfamiliarity, distance, and difference toward a spirit of collaboration, understanding, and openness to experience and participation... I like to think of this as working toward an ethnographic consciousness in the classroom that is personal, intimate, and empathic* (p.760).

By identifying my research as 'research in teaching' as well as an autoethnography, I wish to advocate the generation of knowledge for other beginning teachers by beginning teachers to the academic research community.

~

Growth comes when we think about the experience, examine our feelings, look for patterns, give the patterns meaning… (Teasley, 1994, p.94).

~

1.9   Beginning Teaching – Seeking a Different Definition

~

Beginning teaching – not a problem needing to be solved, but a complex experience needing to be shared.

~

Beginner -
In Australia, they say,

twenty-something

English-speaking

four-year trained

female

(Dempster, Sim, Beere & Logan, 2000)

In the literature, they say

novice

neophyte

inexperienced

'swimmer'

But I say,

fresh,

energised,

unenculturated

pivot (Martinez, 1993, 1994b)

Why believe me?

Beginner -

'One who

begins,

an originator,

founder'

and because Oxford said.

~

Beginning teaching -

Not a

problem!

(needing)

To be!

Solved,

but a complex experience.

(Needing)

To be!

'Shared'.

~

I,
hope.

You,
begin.

To see,
anew,
with me.

The,
complexity

of
hope.

Chapter Two

'Daze' and 'Days': The Research Approach

~

I began my first year of teaching.
At first, there were only days,
and I was dazed…

Then I started stitching,
and soon there was so much more.

~

In this chapter I explore my philosophy behind the choice of methodology. I unpick and tease out the many stages of this project in order to explain the research approach. This doctoral research was conducted over six years and for the purposes of this report has been explained in six stages: data collection, initial analysis, writing of the ten teaching stories, writing as inquiry (outlining the strategies I used such as creating fictionalized conversations of the interviews with other teachers), evoking meaning (methods I used to express rather than dictate meanings made such as the 'poetic researcher realisations' technique), and the final stage of crafting this quilted research text.

~

2.1   Making Choices, Seeking Difference(s)

Toward the end of 1999, just as I was completing the requirements of my honours program for the Faculty of Education, my supervisor gave me an article that she thought would appeal to me. Caught up in mixed emotions from such a rite of passage as graduation, I was uninspired at the thought of having to read more research. The article was by Carolyn Ellis (1997) and was called 'Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Emotionally about our Lives'.

'It's different,' Heather said. 'You'll like it. It's your style.'

I smiled. It was nice to know I had a style.

'She uses *I* frequently, and writes personally about her research, about her life.'

Over the Christmas break, as the sun shone, the article was carefully slipped into the navy coloured hard back journal I'd bought tentatively thinking it might make a good research note book for the following year. I was about to formally begin doctoral studies and submit a research proposal and ethics form, move cities, and begin my first year of teaching. Mum and Dad were having a family barbeque later that month. The weather was warmer and the daylight ran long into the evening.

'Definite barbeque weather,' people would say at various points during these days. Somehow, knowing family members as well as we do, I knew that Mum and Dad were intending to give me, Ryan (my partner through university) and my younger brother some news. Only half a charcoaled sausage had made its way down my throat when Mum, and Dad, put forks and knives down, and looked out, first to each other, and us. Or so I imagined. I just kept staring at my plate.

Over what was supposed to be dinner, I learned that Mum's chronic illness (that had been a debilitating mystery for more than ten years) had come to a point where doctors had decided they could do no more.

Pause.

She wouldn't live more than a year, they said.

The barbeque ended. The evening was somber. Time passed.

I began doctoral research, put in a research proposal and applied for ethics approval, moved into a new home in a new city with Ryan, and began my first year of teaching at White School. Life was full of personal and professional highlights.

One quiet moment, I sat down and read Ellis' article. My decision to use my personal experience as the site of investigation for my research on beginning teaching is based on several practical reasons, as stated in Chapter 1. This article moved me. It had many layers. It was professional and personal. It was academic. It made me think, and feel. Ellis (1997) wrote:

> *I wanted to understand and cope with the intense emotion I felt about the sudden loss of my brother, and the excruciating pain I experienced as Gene deteriorated. I wanted to tell my stories to others because it would be therapeutic for me and evocative for them* (p.126).

Ellis acknowledged that this way of working can be of therapeutic assistance to the intended audience and also the researcher. She wrote about researching her days as she watched her partner Gene slowly die, as well as the sudden death of her brother in a plane crash. In the beginning, choosing autoethnography as the methodological approach had a personal dimension. As time passed the appropriateness of this methodology for researching beginning teaching became increasingly apparent.

Early on, I saw the writer's own experience as worthy of inquiry (Mykhalovskiy, 1997) because it would not only allow me to portray this rich, personal and individual time in a teacher's career, but it would also help me understand the often confusing and confronting experience of my beginning teaching days, which were heavily intertwined with significant personal challenges as well. This methodology was an important choice then because it could offer others, and me, a way forward through the daze of beginning teaching, exploring and valuing the emotional and heartfelt (Ellis, 1999) qualities of the experience.

Beginning teaching is understood as an intense and difficult experience. Teacher development theories recognise that the first year of teaching is necessarily complex and confusing for the beginning teacher (Berliner, 1988; Britzman, 1991; Kagan, 1992; Manuel, 2003). I sought a methodology that would enable me to embrace such complexity in methods of data collection, interpretation and representation of my research. Choosing autoethnography then was guided by the belief that it is an appropriate means of examining the lived experience of beginning teaching.

My personal preference for this way of working was clear from the start. Beginning teaching, for me, was complex and confusing because my personal life was constantly impacting on my teaching days. Family illness, important rites of passage, and dealing with my own pressures, to 'be the best teacher I could', all culminated in a time of intense emotions. My first year of teaching was a tremendous mix of both personal and professional incidents, feelings and events. I sought a methodology that enabled me to make sense of this enormity, inside and outside.

Another factor influencing my choice of methodology was the credence that autoethnography gives to the emotional aspect of lived experience. Beginning teaching is an emotional experience, and autoethnography offered me a way of working that would allow me to embrace feelings in many stages of this project including the personal teaching journal entries where I wrote about how I felt. Autoethnographic approaches require the researcher to write evocatively and to

stir up feelings in the reader. Hence this allowed me to produce a written text that could evoke the strong emotions that I lived in my beginning teaching days. I sought, as Ellis did (Ellis & Bochner, 1996), to 'be a storyteller, someone who used narrative strategies to transport readers into experiences to make them feel as well as think' (p.18). During this research I came to believe that this was what 'heartfelt' autoethnography (Ellis, 1999) was about – not just describing to the reader what happened, but encouraging them to feel the emotions that I felt. In choosing to present this issue differently I strove to encourage the reader to react to my experiences by using specific textual strategies to encourage her to be moved to consider her own feelings about this issue. Seeing 'anew' was not just about the visual, physical, or 'outside' qualities of the experience such as what I did and looked like while I was doing it. I strove to capture the internal, emotional aspects of beginning teaching as well. This is important because, as identified in the introduction, such representations have been missing from previous research into beginning teaching.

Researchers working in the field of autoethnography have used multi-method approaches to data collection and analysis and produced diverse texts on diverse topics. Final reports have been presented as stories, performance texts, and poetry that evoked the researcher's woven exploration of their own lived experiences. Through various voices and textual styles these works examine the death of close relatives, chronic illness and bodily stigmas (Ellis, 1993, 1997, 1998), Crawford, 1996), the complexity of parent and child relationships (Ellis, 2001; Brettell, 1997) exotic dancing (Ronai, 1992, 2002), eating disorders (Kiesinger, 1998; Tillman-Healy, 1996), sexual abuse (Fox, 1996), and life as an academic (Richardson, 2002). The aim of this approach is expressed consistently within the works of these researchers - to see differently, to challenge old ways of knowing, to make sense of lived, personal, emotional experiences. Freese (2006) described this as the need to see with new eyes, to re-examine our teaching experiences in order to re-discover and re-learn. She emphasised her point by referring to a Proust quotation that she had on her office door: 'the journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing them with new eyes' (cited in Freese, 2006, p.100).

Seeing 'anew' is also an attempt to resist prevailing and predominant views. In other words, it is about resisting stereotypes. In this research, the view that I looked at resisting was the narrow portrayal that positioned beginning teaching as either a period of mere survival or a stage of teacher development. I saw myself as defending notions of complexity and richness against contemporary deficit portrayals. I was fighting for hope. Autoethnography is a form of resistance to prior ways of making sense, in that it allows the researcher to identify and critique external portrayals of their experiences and themselves. Reed-Danahay (1997) referred to it as the 'ability to transcend everyday conceptions of self hood and social life' (p.4). Neumann (1996) noted that autoethnography 'matters deeply in the lives of others who find themselves portrayed not of their own making' (p.191). This desire to 'resist' and 'reclaim' appealed to me in light of the research context.

Starting my first year of teaching, I resented feeling like a cliché. I found myself resisting the extensive and limited portrayal that existed, instead striving to be different, better, and hopeful. Regardless of whether I still fell into familiar traps, I at least wanted to do it my way, and to conduct research that would allow me to portray it my way. This work is about letting me and others speak our silences, about finding our voices, and letting us speak in meaningful ways. I wanted to ask questions of answers previously given, rather than simply ask more questions. The investigation focused on what lies 'between', in the cracks and crevasses of previous portrayals.

With devastating news about my mother's health being given before my first year of teaching even began (which was later followed that October with joyful news that her condition was not in fact terminal), I knew that my personal and professional lives would not be easily separated. As I read more about teacher development during the first year of teaching, I learned that professional learning in this initial step in the career is tremendously complex (Britzman, 1991; Eilam & Poyas, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006). Crawford (1996), on the sudden and violent death of his friend, explained his autoethnographic turn in his research, stating that 'previous ways of making meaning became obsolete' (p.158).

As a Drama teacher I also wanted to be creative in my research. As mentioned before, Gergen & Gergen (2002) explained that in autoethnographic research 'one's unique voicing – complete with colloquialisms, reverberations from multiple relationships and emotional expressiveness is honored' (p.14). Autoethnography suited me – it was my style. For a long time, I thought that I knew what the first line of my thesis would be. Hand written in that navy, hardcover journal I had slipped Ellis' article into, it was the short but confrontational sentence that I wanted to use to pull my reader in, to capture attention, and immediately let them know that this would be no ordinary or conventional doctoral dissertation.

When I began teaching, I thought my mum was going to die.

These words were what Ellis had argued for – they were emotional and evocative. In an instant the complex world of my first year of teaching was suggested through this serious and honest sentence. I thought this was a perfect way to begin my autoethnography on beginning teaching.

I had decided.

Until I tried it out on my Dad. His steady gaze and silence unsettled me, as I realised that 'my' personal was 'his' personal too. I realised that there is no such thing as just 'my' story. Autoethnography is not just about me. It is about us. I looked for a different place to begin the story.

The autoethnographer risks much because 'the self-questioning autoethnography demands is extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.738). But making the decision to conduct an autoethnography had implications for others involved, such as my family, colleagues and students that were implicitly a part of my experience of beginning teaching. I learned that the autoethnographer has the right to take her own risks, but she must also consider the risks that others may be forced to take unknowingly by becoming characters in our research confessions. Before

commencing data collection in 2000, full ethics approval was granted by the University of Tasmania's Ethics Committee.

The many choices made throughout this research project, in relation to both the form and content, were made with care and respect for all of those involved. My aim was always to help, to contribute, to improve, for my self and others. I conducted this inquiry with the belief that autoethnography 'provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.738). I hoped to increase understanding about beginning teaching.

~

> *I'm worried. How do I treat those I write about with respect, but also strive for truth about how I feel about them at the moment? To really say my truth? I need to avoid creating 'baddies' and 'goodies', and of narrowly portraying others. This is what I felt had been done to my teaching life. The ethical considerations of autoethnography are much more complex than I first anticipated. It's not just about me.*

(Writing Journal, 2003)

~

2.2 Ethical Considerations and Moral Commitment to the Presence of Others

In conducting this research project important ethical issues were addressed and adhered to. I carefully considered the implications that involvement might have for both voluntary participants, such as my critical readers, and other less explicit participants, such as the students and staff members that necessarily became part of my stories of experience. Tsang (2000, cited Sparkes, 2002) reminded me that 'a story of myself, of my identity necessarily involves and depends upon a story of the other too. So these stories belong to them as well (albeit not in the same way or invoked with the same power' (p. 217). This statement implies the need to carefully consider and respect the presence of others in making decisions about

how data is collected and how final reports are constructed. I address these issues in this section.

The presence of others was important to the ethical considerations and decisions I made about methods of analysis and interpretation. Sparkes (2002) commented that 'even though individuals may largely control the process of recalling and interpreting past events, this process is also a social activity influenced by people with whom the individual interacts' (p.216). This statement influenced both the manner in which I crafted my stories, as well as how I understood that my work was not solely about or even by me. *Teaching Daze*, in many ways, was a collaborative research project, involving and being shaped by the place of others in my personal and professional life, as they became characters and co-investigators in my research journey.

I was committed to establishing and maintaining conversations with participants throughout this project. This included the decision to use critical readers to help open up my initial data (my teaching journal) and then the decision to approach three beginning teachers to read the final stories (see Chapter 10). Ongoing dialogue was important to ensure that I allowed others a say in how they were portrayed. This meant that interview transcripts were given to critical readers. I conducted a follow-up interview to document their response. However, the shape of the final dissertation was ultimately my responsibility, and one that my critical readers, colleagues and school (on behalf of my students) trusted me to construct.

In crafting my final dissertation I was committed to developing my chosen field of research – beginning teaching. This meant that my work was never to be at the expense of anyone's professional reputation. Anonymity was a crucial factor in removing the focus from the lived experience of others. This included the use of pseudonyms, but also the changing of some characters' gender to increase anonymity and focus on their behaviour rather than their identity. I strove to ensure the focus of my work, at all stages, was on my multi-layered experience and interpretations of that experience.

In investigating my first year of teaching I was conscious of showing empathy, particularly in relation to the methodological decisions I made. This required me to be explicit and accountable for the presence of others in my work (Banks & Banks, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2002).

I constructed this thesis with the aim of respecting the lives of others. This related to both the process of collecting and interpreting data, but also impacted on how and why I chose to portray others in the writing stages of this project, and ultimately, how they were portrayed in the final dissertation. Denzin (2000) emphasised that the practice of writing is never an innocent act. The use of a writing journal to record how and why I made particular textual decisions, as well as recording my feelings during the lengthy writing stages, was my method of providing myself with a form of self data - to allow me to reflexively acknowledge and highlight my biases what I chose to include and what I chose to leave out, as well as why I shaped stories and the final dissertation in the way that I did. These decisions are outlined in later sections.

Reflexivity in *Teaching Daze* is evidenced by the layered structure of the chapters in Part Two. The chapters ('Sunday' through 'Saturday') contain three different types of texts – stories, fictional conversations and poetic realisations. These are described and explained later in this chapter. However, at this point I wish to emphasis that my use of layering was intended to present a rich and reflexive portrayal of my growing understandings of my first year of teaching. The chapters were shaped to demonstrate that self-knowledge is partial, situated and transient. Banks and Banks (1998) reminded me that 'there's no such thing as ahistorical or nonpolitical texts, and the role, perceptions, and experiences of the author must be assessed along with the claims of a text' (p.14). Hence, my inclusion of a personal portrait early in the dissertation (see 1.3 'A Personal Positioning'), so as to give the reader a sense of the narrator as the main character in the telling of this tale – her social, cultural and personal background, my biases and predispositions.

I recognised that while I had the daunting task of investigating my own lived experience, this necessarily implicated the lived experience of others, and perhaps

even more dauntingly, their lived experience as it existed in my perceptions and interpretations. This is because 'no text is free of self-conscious constructions' (Banks & Banks, 1998, p.13). This was an important responsibility, and one that I accepted accountability for, in terms of being obliged to be able to give explicit explanations. The ethical merit of autoethnography is often at the forefront of judgement criteria for such research. Bochner (2000) stated that he holds the 'author to a demanding standard of ethical-self-consciousness. I want the writer to show concern for how other people are part of the teller's story' (p.271). I employed specific strategies to address issues of moral and ethical consideration. These included my explicit goal to be open and direct with the main characters of my stories. My school community was aware of my doctoral research, the topic and methodology.

I consciously and explicitly practised what I saw as my commitment to ensuring that no one was harmed through this research process, whether emotionally or professionally damaged by narrow or unnecessary/unfounded criticism. In responding to claims that autoethnographic research is 'self-indulgent' Sparkes (2002) offered alternate concepts such as 'self-respectful', 'self-sacrificing' and 'self-luminous' (p.213). Such rephrasing shifts the focus of the work from being overly focused on the researcher's methods and writing to the needs of all involved. He defines 'self-sacrificing' in autoethnography as 'forgoing one's own good for the sake of others' (p.213). I undertook this research striving for hope, for the wider community that I was investigating (beginning teachers), for those who participated generously by giving up their time and sharing their enthusiasm for my work, and for my self. I believe that the claim of 'self-indulgence' implies a lack of consideration for others at the luxury of the self. I saw my research project as a means of contributing to my profession that I cared about and as a rich source of professional development.

This did not mean that I avoided confronting difficult or unpleasant scenarios and situations. Reflection, multiple perspectives, ongoing critical conversations, use of pseudonyms and assurance of anonymity, and advise from my supervisors, were strategies that I used to ensure that the lives of others were treated respectfully,

but also with the essence of truth about how this interaction affected me. The use of arts-influenced methods of inquiry, such as fictional writing strategies like storytelling, poetic representation, and constructed fictional conversations, allowed me to move beyond specific identities, and focus on the specific issue being explored. Morrison (1998, cited Sparkes, 2002) noted that 'confessionalism has to know when to hold back… It takes art. Without art, confessionalism is masterbation. Only with art does it become empathy' (p.215). The artistic qualities of this dissertation, then, gave me the forum in which to explore lived experience with consideration for the needs of others necessarily involved.

Over the six years of this research I employed specific methods to address ethical issues, and to insure the informed and willing involvement of others. An information sheet [Appendix 1] was distributed to my school, the school community, and those particularly close to the work such as staff members within my department. I was therefore trusted and given ethical permission to portray others, as Ellis (2000) highlighted is a crucial factor in the moral quality of autoethnographic research.

The 'woven' nature of this work meant that others were pulled into the text as topics of discussion, critical readers of data or the crafted teaching stories, or personally as people who offered comment on my teaching days such as my family and friends. Many of them participated knowingly and gave informed consent [Appendix 2] but, as stated, some participated unknowingly as minor characters or asides, hence anonymity was an important aspect to ensure their privacy. Thus my experience mirrored the work of qualitative researchers such as Flemons & Green (2002) who wrote that 'you try to write yourself into a space that we live in, and this space has other people in it, other people reacting to us. And so it does become a very social process' (p.168).

The focus of the research was explicitly my own experience of beginning teaching. I was the 'subject' of the inquiry, and hence the principal of White School approved the research project on this basis. This focus shaped data collection, analysis and representation.

I ensured the anonymity of the 'others' in this work through the use of pseudonyms and the appropriate handling of the raw data such as my teaching journal and interview transcripts. In the year following my first year of teaching, all names in my teaching journal (which was electronically maintained) were changed to pseudonyms. My research supervisors are named, however, because they are formally and publicly co-researchers in this story. Likewise, many participants became involved because of the woven personal stories that have become intertwined in this work. To those who know me, the voices of my family members will be clear.

Materials, such as interview tapes and printed transcripts, were securely stored in lockable filing cabinets at the university. The interviews that were conducted during stage 2 of this project were fully transcribed and each interviewee was given a pseudonym. The student and staff characters in the teaching stories created in stage 3 were also given pseudonyms, as were the beginning teachers interviewed for the closing chapters in the final stages. To increase the level of anonymity, where appropriate, the sex of some characters was changed to ensure that the focus was on the issue being discussed and the behaviour being explored, rather than any detective-like need to work out 'who it really was'. In this work I understood that I was responsible for guaranteeing that any risk taken in conducting this research and participating in the inquiry was solely mine. I strove to minimize negative repercussions for others involved.

Another factor that restricts the likelihood of identifying particular real life characters is the length of time between when data was collected and the completion of the dissertation. Time is an important element in creating a distant and protected space for the sharing of this work. The students have long since left the school and would no longer be as recognisable in the current context of the White School community. This applies to many of the staff members as well. The constant movement of bodies through school days allows for a blending of faces so that particular personalities are protected from being unnecessarily identified.

Once again, the main character in *Teaching Days* was always me and my experiences. I take full responsibility for the creation of this work and the inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and underpinning beliefs implied in this textual construction, recognising, as Richardson (2000) did that 'ethnography is always situated in human activity, bearing both the strengths and limitations of human perceptions and feelings' (p.254). The perceptions, realisations, and ultimate recommendations are mine.

This research project, although described as a quilted project, can be described as happening over a number of linear stages. I have   labelled these: Stage 1 – data collection (2000); Stage 2 – data analysis (2001-2002); Stage 3 – writing as re-creation (2003); Stage 4 – writing as inquiry (2003); Stage 5 – evoking meaning (2004); Stage 6 – constructing a quilted research text (2004-2006). I elaborate on what happened and why during these stages in the following sections.

2.3 *Stage 1:* Data Collection (2000)

Data collection began in 2000. This was the first significant stage of this research project, which began after initial background reading was completed, the research proposal approved by the University and the Faculty of Education, and ethical clearance given.

The main data source was my teaching journal. This was how I generated my 'field notes' that were written in and out of the context I was investigating (Jenks, 2002). The journal was electronically recorded and was maintained regularly (mostly daily). During the year I wrote on two computers, my own personal computer at home, and the school assigned laptop that I used mainly at school, but which could also come home when necessary or desirable. I switched to my school computer half way through the year as I found that writing within the school context enabled me to write more effectively. Ideas and feelings were fresh. This strategy, however, did make my teaching days longer, and was difficult to maintain particularly on the days I felt like I was 'sinking'.

Journal writing is recognised as an effective way of promoting professional and developmental critical reflection. It is a means of becoming a reflective practitioner (Brookfield, 1995, 1998). Clandinin & Connelly (1994) commented that journals can capture knowledge of teaching, 'in their journals they weave together their accounts of the private and the professional, capturing fragments of experience in attempts to sort themselves out' (p.421). Therefore maintaining a daily teaching journal allowed me to capture the interwoven elements of the personal and the professional.

Journaling was an appropriate means of collecting data in the field of beginning teaching, as reflection by beginning teachers is a recognised means of accessing beginning teacher knowledge (Beattie, 1997; Brown, Doecke, & Loughran, 1997; Craig, 1997; Danielewicz, 2001; Doecke, Brown, & Loughran 2000). It is recognised in qualitative research methodologies as a valuable means of data generation. Conle (2000) wrote, 'although I did not know it at the time, by proceeding in this way, I began to generate data… we tend to write about a few issues over and over again, always in a different context' (p.184). I made entries in my journal frequently, hoping that issues would become apparent later, and I tried not to judge the contents as I went along. Reflection was a familiar part of my undergraduate teacher training, and I found maintaining this teaching journal in my first year of teaching to be a routine and familiar task. I tried not to censor or restrict my entries to any particular formula or topic, but rather let the focus of my writing be based on what I was feeling in that physical and temporal context. Where was I? What was on my mind? What was I concerned about? What made me smile at that point in time?

I was immersed in the experience I was researching. I was experiencing the experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994), which meant that what was written about was heavily based on what happened to me on that particular day. The topics that I wrote about were not predetermined, but came from the experience itself and the particular events that had captured my attention and sparked my interest. Sullivan (2000, p.211) stated that it is through such sustained attention that qualitative researchers in educational research learn about phenomena. Tension was an important element in the process of writing my teaching journal.

Dewey (1934) recognised that tension is a key element in stimulating reflection on experience. When we are concerned, confused, or uncertain about something, this encourages us to wonder about what has happened further. Conle (2000) saw such tension as an important preface for data generation. Hence, what I wrote about was frequently based on what I was worried about.

Immersion was an important part of my research method. Throughout this project I was immersed in writing about my teaching days and the topic of beginning teaching. Wolcott (1990) argued that writing early, frequently and accurately strengthens qualitative research. Journal writing was a constant feature of this research project, as I maintained teaching and writing journals. Entries in my teaching journal were written at the end of the day, and were approximately half a page long, which motivated me to write regularly and frequently as I wasn't demanding more of myself at the end of a full day teaching.

In writing my teaching journal I was conscious of writing richly and vividly. Geertz's (1973, cited Jenks 2002, p.172) concept of 'thick description' guided my written expression in this journal as I sought to write with rich detail, paying attention to the emotional as well as the descriptive. I wrote my journal knowing that I was aiming to write a vivid and complex portrayal later, hence I wanted rich anecdotal material on which to draw. I made reference to methods (teaching/researching), beliefs, theories, and feelings (Richardson, 1994). The emotionality of this work was evident in my entries, as I often began with explaining how I was feeling at the end of my day. Dunlop (1999) explained her writing choices. She wrote about what 'moved' her (p.15). I let what moved me during my teaching days become the focus of my journal entries.

In order to capture a broad and vivid picture of my experience I strove to collect multiple forms of data. I collected artifacts that were visual, sentimental, but that were authentically generated through the natural course of teaching. I waited for them to compile themselves on my desk, rather than actively seeking them out. These items were later used to help with emotional recall as I reflected on and rewrote the first year of teaching. These artifacts were generated naturally from living this experience, and were taken with me into my university context in 2003, when I strove to work in a context 'outside' of the experience.

Other data collected included: student feedback on my practice that were collected as part of my annual reflection on practice (ARP) that White School requires of all staff; written reflections by colleagues (also as part of my ARP); what I call 'notice board mementoes' such as photos, thank-you cards, cut out motivational quotations and cartoons from newspapers, my colourful hand coloured timetable, chocolate cake recipes and christmas cards from students.

Two unplanned sources of data that became valuable in later stages included the teaching diary that I used for daily and weekly planning and the tremendous volume of email that I sent and received during 2000. The email correspondence was one of the key data sources that vividly revealed to me the inextricably fused worlds of the professional and personal in beginning teaching. I realised that within minutes I had sent messages to my principal and mother, written from the same context, but with very different voices and concerns.

All these items helped me create a 'memory box' of data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.420) that would enable me to vividly recall my first year at various points in this project. Clandinin & Connelly (1994) explain that throughout life we often collect a variety of materials which stand to represent our lives, such as photos or more personal items such as old ticket stubs. These items acted as props which aided me in the process of emotional recall (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) which I used in Stage 3 to write stories of my beginning teaching experience. This technique is explained in a following section.

<p align="center">~</p>

Separate

           and

                isolated,

                disconnected

           and

fragmented.

~

2.4   *Stage 2*: Data Analysis (2001-2002)

Then I started stitching,

and

soon

there

was…

~

2.4.1   *Finding Fresh Eyes*

Having collected multiple data in my first year of teaching, the next step was to find a way to 'open up' the experience. Autoethnographic strategies can include seeking input and feedback from others who are outside the experience being researched (Bochner & Rushing, 2002). This gives the researcher another perspective on her experience outside of her own reflections and musings. In my research the reflections of others on my experiences were important in relation to both the reading of raw data (my teaching journal) and then on the beginning teaching stories that I crafted. These teacher/readers became my co-researchers and critical friends. Stake (1995) noted that 'researchers can't do all the seeing and thinking for themselves. They need to collaborate, to use others' eyes and brains in identifying issues' (p.411). At the end of my first year of teaching I felt too close to the experience. The next stage in the research process was to develop critical friends and begin important conversations.

I sought outsider perspectives who could be my 'fresh eyes' and help me to achieve some critical distance from the closeness I felt to what I had lived. I sought different perspectives. This stage was a crucial means of making this

research more than one perspective of the self. In other words, it was about moving beyond my own perceptions of my experiences. I took the self out into the social world. Seeking others' impressions of the data was the beginning of analysis and interpretation of the data.

In 2001, I invited three fellow Drama teachers, Eleanor, William and Angela, to act as 'critical readers' of my teaching journal. I had met each of them previously during my teacher training. The final document was a weighty 80-paged document, so this was not a small request for fulltime teachers. All three enthusiastically agreed to participate.

Each teacher was sent a copy of the word-processed teaching journal, with a covering letter that invited them to annotate the text by highlighting aspects that stood out to them, resonated with their own experience, and those that they were curious about. The raw data had only been loosely edited – I changed real names to pseudonyms and adjusted sentence structure to ensure the text made sense. I did not add, elaborate or delete any parts of my entries. I asked them to consider 'what stands out?', 'what confuses you?' and 'what attracts your attention?' This strategy was also intended to aid the interviewing process by providing all of us with a tangible point of reference - to stimulate conversation.

I did this because critical conversation between teachers is understood to be another valuable way for teachers to create professional knowledge about teaching (Beattie, 2000). McCammon, Norris & Miller (1998) noted that hearing others' teaching stories can make teachers think of their own (p.33). As a beginning teacher I understood that the stories that teachers shared formally and informally were valuable ways of learning about teaching. Certainly as an undergraduate I valued talking to other teachers during school experiences. Such stories are the professional knowledge landscape of teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). The stories that Eleanor, William, Angela and I shared, about teaching and about my journal, became an important aspect of this research. They enabled me to make connections between myself and others. Hence at this stage, my research moved

beyond simply telling my own stories about what happened to me. We were sharing our stories, not just telling them (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995).

Individual, one hour interviews were conducted in 2001. These interviews were conducted as 'conversations' (Eisner & Powell, 2002) because I sought an interaction that was collaborative and gave weight to their perspectives and responses. I wanted to let their voices be heard, as I did mine and other beginning teachers. By having conversations, I was moving beyond my own experience and individual voice, and hoping to develop a 'communitas of spirit' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This stage enabled me to let others speak their silences (Denzin, 1999). To develop this conversation it was important not to dictate their response by using a pre-planned question schedule or focus solely on my own experiences. Eisner & Powell (2002) explained the notion of conversation as opposed to interview:

> *We say conversations rather than interviews because we tried to keep our discussions of their work as experience as conversational as possible. This meant that while we did not have a schedule of questions to follow in a predetermined sequence – we wanted these conversations to have a natural or organic quality – there were a number of questions we wanted to ask* (p.137).

Kiesinger (1998) defined such collaboration between interviewer and interviewee as 'interactive interviewing' which is:

> *...a set of interview practices and communicative behaviours in which the line between the subject and researcher is deliberately blurred. This blurring occurs due to the researcher's willingness to participate fully in the conversation with her subject/conversational partner, to allow her own life and story to be probed and challenged* (p.128-129).

In my research, I adapted Kiesinger's approach. I was the subject, as well as the researcher, so there was already a distinct and deliberate blurring of my roles. In a sense I was also the interviewee, as well as the interviewer, as my critical readers

asked me questions about my experiences as they read them in my teaching journal. Certainly, my intention was to probe and challenge my own life story of beginning teaching, but also to encourage them to do the same – of my story, and their own. Each interview began with my request for the teacher to give me their initial impression to the journal. The conversation proceeded organically, and as I had let daily experiences shape what I wrote in my teaching journal, I practiced the same openness in these conversations. Having the hard copy journal to refer to during the interview also encouraged the teacher to go back to the actual text and make reference to specific moments they had highlighted.

What occurred during these interviews was a 'narrative interlapping' (Norris, McCammon, & Miller, 2000, p.108). Each teacher referred to my experience (as represented in the form of teaching journal) and then made connections to their own experience of beginning teaching. They found similarities, and they found differences. The research focus then broadened as their stories interwove with mine. This allowed the 'patterning' of the research to begin, as my experiences started to resonate in multiple ways with the lives of others.

Each interview was fully transcribed and returned to the teachers for member checking and additional comments. As I had many opportunities through this research to edit and 're-story' my stories, this step (of sending their stories back to them) gave them the same right of reply. Follow-up interviews were conducted in 2002. This allowed them to voice their reactions to the first interview, and for me to clarify or probe issues further. Once again, these transcripts were sent to the teachers for member checking.

The involvement of these three critical readers enabled me to create an interpretive community (Lincoln, 1997) and fulfill my goal of using the self to promote understanding of the 'other' and 'others. Autoethnography, I learned, is about the promotion of empathy.

2.4.2   *Finding the Threads*

The process of analysis and interpretation in this project was on-going, and very much woven through the continuation of teaching and researching days in 2001 and 2002 as I continued to work fulltime and study. It was also personal because autoethnography acknowledges that 'your own self-interest, your history and biography, and all that you bring to the project from your own experience plays a crucial role in the analysis and interpretations you make' (Bochner & Rushing, 2002, p.155). Analysis and interpretative strategies can be diverse, creative and multi-faceted in autoethnographic research.

I use the terms 'analysis' and 'interpretation' to denote different aspects of my critical thinking during this project. For me, analysis involved identifying emergent themes or 'patterns' and then giving names to these different textures. Flannery (2001), when expanding on the concept of quilting as an apt metaphor for qualitative research methods, noted that 'touch' is another way of understanding what the qualitative researcher does when working with raw data. Flannery (2001) explained that 'touch is important in quilting: the feel of the fabric, of the needle piercing the layers of material, of the texture of a quilted surface' (p.63). For me, analysis was about sorting out the fabric of my research. I followed Lather's (1997) method of 'splitting texts', which involves taking data apart and identifying different fragments (p.251). This meant literally dividing up the teaching journal into sections, collating the similarities and noting the differences.

Interpretation occurred as data were reshaped into the multiple research texts that comprise the following sections – ten 'teaching stories', five fictional 'conversations' between teachers, and then what I have called 'poetic research realisations'. For example, interpretation involved the transformation of the collated similar data into the teaching stories.

The interviews I conducted with Eleanor, William and Angela were used to help me analyse the teaching journal, by highlighting particular themes and issues that

stood out to them which were similar or different to what I had identified as the predominant themes in the research literature on beginning teaching. For example, all three teachers commented on the support that White School offered me as a beginning teacher. Support became an issue that I explored in the story 'Swimming, Not Sinking', which is in the chapter *Thursday*. I found it hard to acknowledge feeling tired and run-down at the end of my first year, but these critical conversations enabled me to broaden my perspective. Therefore they impacted on how I represented the issues of teaching context and support structures in later chapters.

Analysis of data was constant and comparative. In the same way as Kuzmic (1994) described I went through processes which involved:

> *…simultaneous comparison of emerging conceptual categories with data from interviews and observations. Thus, as data are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories… Throughout the study this process allowed for the generation, refinement, and clarification of conceptual categories to emerge from the data itself* (Kuzmic, 1994, p.18).

During 2001 I experienced a narrowing of my field of reference and a refining of my research focus. Patterns emerged through an analysis of the data, and became explicit by immersed reflection on the journal, interview transcripts and the literature. The beginning teaching journey, for me and others, seemed to have a shape not unlike the days of the week. A week has many beginnings, middles, and endings - ordered and ongoing, yet also multiple and intricate.

In 2002/2003 I began sorting the data based on the categories that had become apparent using inductive analysis. These categories were the familiar characters, images, and phrases that I found in the multiple data as I had spread the raw data around me. Janesick (2000) defined inductive analysis:

> *The qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes and patterns come from the data. The categories that emerge from field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection* (p.389).

The categories emerged in the pieces of paper I spread around me as I made my researcher mess; my initial reactions, the things I marveled at, the people, places, situations that caused me anxiety, the students I mused over, the tricks that worked for me, the days I felt I wasn't coping, the moments of realisation where I felt that I had learned something about teaching, about myself, and about my self as a teacher. I formalized these themes and gave them names, thereby having distinct concepts that I identified in first the teaching journal, and then the interviews with my critical readers. The names given were 1) *motivation* for entering teaching 2) *initial response* to the reality of teaching 3) *first experiences* of fulltime teaching 4) my *context* and its particularities 5) *students* I remembered, wondered, focused on 6) *problems* and challenges 7) *coping* strategies I learned and developed 8) *workplace* issues and teacher socialization 9) *teacher identity* and my sense of becoming a professional 10) *professional learning* and my metacognition − my realisations. I was able to return to the literature, and formalise my connections there, highlighting the words of other researchers in the way I had highlighted my own. These categories became my themes of my quilted research.

The conversations with my critical readers were an important form of comparative analysis as they enabled me to frame my experiences in the teaching journal in relation to the experiences of the three other teachers. For example, Eleanor began teaching in 2000, as I did. We had very different teaching contexts. She began in a small, parent-controlled Christian school and was the only Drama teacher in the school. I was at a large school governed by a board, and was the third of three Drama teachers. As already noted, sharing stories of teaching can create narrative-interlapping (Norris, McCammon, & Miller, 2000). While reading my teaching journal encouraged my critical readers to share their own beginning teaching stories, listening to their stories in these interviews made me once again reflect on

my first year and remember the stories I had recorded. Yet this time, I was re-telling my stories from a different time period (one or two years later) and with a richer perspective that now included the perspectives of my critical readers. The process of storytelling became cyclical - from my story, to theirs, and back to mine.

This stage created a sense of a research team, where critical readers were able to assist me to reexamine my first year of teaching, and to see the experiences with the fresh perspective which was required for analysis and interpretation. Critical friends can be important in giving researchers a 'reality check' (Schuck & Segal, 2002). Their feedback and insights helped me see my first year of teaching anew. They pointed out things that I had noticed, but also highlighted other issues that I had not considered. The process of analysing and interpreting the data began as a team approach.

~

Then I started,
 and
~stitched~
' daze' to 'days'.

~

2.5   *Stage 3*: Writing as Re-Creation (2003)

> *One of the most useful of human abilities is the ability to learn from the experience of others… We listen to storytellers and learn about how things were, and we use what we have been told to make decisions about what will be* (Eisner, 1991, p.202).

As suggested by Eisner (1991), stories that teachers tell about their teaching experiences are valuable sources of information about the experience of teaching.

They illuminate what happens in classrooms, and they reveal how these happenings impact on the teacher. The next stage of my research journey involved the development of the ten teaching stories, but also included the need to develop them within the other story that was happening – the research story. I needed to find the means of recreating my first year of teaching within the broader context of my research project. This necessitated finding the way to frame the stories within the theoretical and methodological context in which I was working.

The story writing stage can be further understood as falling into two steps. The first involved the decision to select a conceptual metaphor (days of the week) for the structure of my dissertation. The days of the week framework allowed me to narrow my focus, realising that I would only be able to tell a certain number of stories in the space of a dissertation format. Apart from how I saw this metaphor as appropriate for evoking the qualities of the beginning teaching experience, it also enabled me to select topics for my stories according to what day of the week I was writing. For example, I initially used broad and general themes. For example, I aimed to write stories for *Sunday* which focused on issues of pre-beginning teaching days and issues such as why I became a teacher in the first place. *Sunday* stories were to be about getting ready to start teaching. For *Monday*, I aimed to write stories about the shock of beginning teaching, of the blur of first moments, and the confusion of actually being inside the experience. The stories that I was after for later in the week were ones that addressed more complex issues such as student relationships and professional identity. As teacher development theory suggested, such awareness comes later in the first year of teaching, hence I wanted to focus on such themes later in my beginning teaching storytelling. I intended for the week's beginning teaching stories to roughly follow the shape of a beginning teacher's first year of teaching – shock, growing awareness, identity realisation, to learning and transformation. This was how I saw the *Sunday* to *Saturday* journey, and how I initially selected stories thematically. The large scope of this framing metaphor enabled me to select ten themes. I categorised the journal by colour coding phrases, incidents, feelings that resonated with the chosen theme and, as stated, did likewise with interview transcripts and literature.

My stories about beginning teaching needed to be critically constructed, informed by theory, and consciously shaped so as to illuminate the theme being explored. As Doecke, Brown & Loughran (2000) state 'stories do not simply happen; they must be told' (p.344). Hence, I understood that how I chose to construct the stories, such as where I chose to begin and end my tale, would reveal to the reader what I thought was important about my particular theme. Narrative created shape for my lived experience – a form to my remembering and reliving of my first year of teaching. The construction of teaching stories allowed me to transform 'a mere succession of actions and events' into a meaningful whole because 'stories are concerned with human attempts to progress to a solution, classification, or unraveling of an incomplete situation' (Polkinghorne, 1997, p.13).

I viewed the stories as the creation of a 'professional knowledge landscape'. Connelly & Clandinin (1999) explain this concept further, 'these stories, these narratives of experience, are both personal – reflecting a person's life history – and social – reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live' (p.2). I chose storytelling, then, as the way to capture the richness of beginning teaching and the complexity of a time where the personal and professional were so entwined.

Many autoethnographers use artistic means of expressing their research, and an appropriate connection between the two related methodologies developed in my work. Arts-based educational research 'is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry with its writing' (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p.73). I viewed my research as 'arts influenced' because the qualities of arts-based research informed my construction of my teaching stories as part of this research. I utlised what Sullivan (2000) terms 'aesthetic vision' in many stages throughout this research, including analysis and representation. It was an underpinning quality of the work, throughout the journey. Sullivan defined aesthetic vision in qualitative research:

> *Aesthetic vision engages a sensitivity to suggestion, to pattern, to that*
> *which is beneath the surface as well as to the surface itself. It requires a*

fine attention to detail and form: the perception of relations (tensions and harmonies; the perception of nuance (colors and meaning); and the perception of change (shifts and subtle motions) (p.220-221).

Storytelling conventions were what I used to realise my aesthetic vision. The main devices I used in constructing the teaching stories were the formation of plot within each story, and the use of layering strategies to create dramatic tension. Plot is a narrative device that 'confers order, sequence, and meaning of a collection of otherwise isolated events' (Kirkman, 1999, p.2). The construction of each story's plot was heavily influenced by the form and context of the stories – they were primarily written as research texts intended to unsettle previously told stories. Vignettes were selected from data, and then written with more detail as I sought to create a rich picture for the reader, paying attention to not only what happened, but also where I was, and how I felt, therefore appealing to a variety of the reader's senses. I used emotional recall to portray incidents richly. I did this by adding extra details from memory. Such details that were not explicitly recorded in my journal, but were recalled by use of the memory box data.

Using the 'days' metaphor and the identified themes, I chose specific moments from my teaching journal and then shaped them into stories that were appropriate to the day of the week in which they would be included. Selection of moments was also based on adherence to the conventions of narrative and narrative structuring devices such as plot (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1997). I sought dilemmas, tension, and conflict in my journal, elaborated on these and then structured them to create a sense of identification, exploration and then a sense of resolution, rather than completion.

Craig (1997) used 'telling stories' methods of inquiry in her research to access beginning teacher knowledge. Craig (1997) described the process of generating research texts from data as an interpretive process (p.62). I took an incident (that had emerged as significant) and retold it in story form. This required me to work out what was a key moment of tension or conflict and find a way to establish the context for the reader, provide a sense of the issue beginning, moving through the

tension, and then finding the appropriate point at which to close, not resolve, the story. This required the use of storytelling elements such as suspense and climax. It also allowed me to once again, narrow and refine my understandings of my data, forcing me to further analyse and then interpret what I had realised and was trying to communicate. For example, in *Wednesday* I structured the story according to three students that appeared frequently in my journal. I rewrote these situations and then used conventions of plot to introduce tension and conflict and then build the issue to a climactic moment. 'And then there are the students' was intended to be an exploration of my bias, preconceived ideas, mistakes and successes with students during my first year of teaching. This story was written for *Wednesday* because, as stated earlier in this dissertation, research highlights that early in the experience of the first year of teaching, beginning teachers are heavily focused on themselves.

Each story then was started by selecting a particular moment in the teaching journal and then 'broadening, burrowing, and restorying' (Craig, 1997, p.62) data in order to craft a teaching story and subsequently the research text. This writing strategy involved 'broadening, to set the backdrop for the stories; burrowing, to unpack experiences; and restorying, to concentrate on revisited events relative to… shifting knowledge shifted over time' (Craig, 1997, p.62). I acknowledge the stories as constructions, partial, and incomplete. They are only glimpses of my teaching days.

The stories do not have a clear beginning, middle, and end and do not provide the reader with a tidy resolution in the end. Doecke, Brown & Loughran (2000) warn against such formulaic storytelling of beginning teaching. Fragmentation of the story, through problematic and non-linear telling, means that 'they convey an impression of struggle to affirm a professional identity – an identity which is all the more interesting because it has been won through struggle (p.345). Like a quilt, I selected patches (moments) based on their particular fabric, colour and texture (themes). The teaching stories in *Teaching Daze* are layered narratives that explore the chosen theme by building tension, highlighting conflict and

contradiction, and working towards a sense of resolve rather than resolution. The stories are layered and complicated, but not unstructured.

The first layering convention used in the construction of the stories was the use of the symbol ~. This symbol denoted a change in time, place and topic, and allowed me to juxtapose different moments. Further layering occurred later in the crafting of each chapter, and the development of the fictional conversations and poetic researcher realisations, which will be outlined in following sections. This initial disruption to the flow of the story was intended to increase the complexity of the story. It was also the first step I took to create spaces for the reader to be invited into the interpretive process of this investigation. I did this because I wanted to create a distinct space, a pause in the narrative, where the reader is actively invited to wonder and to possibly fill in the gap with their own story. Richardson (1993) explained the use of space, or absence, in social science inquiry, stating that 'space is left for others to speak, for tension and differences to be acknowledges, celebrated, rather than buried alive' (p.706). Layering enabled me to create a complex text, to dramatically juxtapose, and also to leave spaces that illustrated the cracks in this issue.

As I invited my critical readers into this work by asking for their impressions first, I also aimed to invite the reader into the text, by acknowledging their responsibility in interpreting the issue actively through the act of reading. Barone (2001) argued that the reader should be actively involved, and that such gaps as I am suggesting, acknowledge and encourage this reading process:

> *These empty spaces in the text require that the reader actively participate in the (re) construction of the textual world, thereby further subverting authorial privilege and suggesting that interpretive power must be shared…* (Barone, 2001, p.163)

Each story contains multiple, fragmented, moments of my teaching days. The moments, as stated, were derived directly from the teaching journal, and were 'broadened' through my analysis. In actually re-writing the moments, I used

'emotional recall' as a means to vividly recall that particular time and place (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) I relied on the tools of the storyteller (mood, atmosphere, image, metaphor, tension, character) to transform the raw data into a story.

Richardson (1994) explained how such techniques may be used to create a narrative in experimental research writing:

> *Using dramatic recall, strong metaphors, images, character, unusual phrasing, puns, subtext, and allusions, the writer constructs a sequence of events, a 'plot', holding back on interpretation, asking the reader to "relive" the events emotionally* (Richardson, 1994, p.521).

As a Drama teacher, I connected this process with the idea that I was putting myself in someone else's shoes, as actors do, as well as the process of creating a vicarious experience for the reader. In this case, however, the 'someone else' was the 'me' of 2000. By recreating my experience in narrative form, I was attempting to put myself in my own shoes. When writing these stories in 2003, I relived my first year of teaching by reliving that time by rereading my journal and remembering the experiences through my memory box. I immersed myself whole-heartedly in the thoughts and feelings of the main character – me – during 2000.

The stories are presented in the present tense. This was intended to promote immediacy of the experience, and to allow the reader to feel closer to the experience in relation to time. Tierney (1997) described the use of present tense as an effective means of making the experience seem more immediate. He wrote 'the story has already happened. But we join in a sense of disbelief because we want to be told how the story ends' (p.29). Present tense was used to create a sense that the action and events depicted were immediate, even intimate. It was used to quickly engage the reader and to create a sense of intrigue.

The language used in these stories is colloquial. I have attempted to use my teaching voice authentically. Many of the moments portrayed have close

similarities to the experiences described in the teaching journal, maintaining a sense of the 'me' as I spoke then in 2000 as a beginning teacher.

The result of the process was the generation of ten stories, one for each of the ten themes. The titles of the stories illuminate the shape of the first year of teaching, and identify my chosen themes: "The moment I decided not to be a teacher" in *Sunday*; "It's all a blur" in *Monday*; "Where am I?" and "The first of many firsts" in *Tuesday*; "And then there are the students" in *Wednesday*; "Not another day" and "Swimming, not sinking" in *Thursday*; "Personalities and politics" in *Friday*; and "It's okay to be me!" in *Saturday*.

~

2.6   *Stage 4:* Writing as Inquiry (2003)

In 2003 I crafted a series of fictional conversations based on the interviews with my critical readers. They are fictional in the sense that the series of individual interviews have been combined to appear as if the four of us met together. After crafting the series of teaching stories that were intended to take the reader vicariously into the experience of my first year of teaching, I began experimenting with my the data in order to continue my inquiry and make further connections between my own experiences and the experiences of others. This process of experimentation is similar to the work by Lather (1997), who found that 'splitting the text into fragments yielded some learnings' (p.281) in her own experimentation with creating layered research texts.

Writing was a method of inquiry. Richardson (1994) explained, 'writing is also a way of knowing – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it' (p.516). In my research this stage involved the crafting of a series of five fictional conversations derived from the interview transcripts with the three other teachers. Each hour long conversation had generated substantial text from which to derive extended comments and ponderings from these teachers, as well as myself.

These fictional conversations were constructed by re-using the themes that I had identified and named earlier in the stage of analysis and interpretation. In some way, I was revisiting an earlier stage of the project, reflecting on the parts of the conversations that had led me to my journal and then on to creating the teaching stories. I wanted to acknowledge these critical readers important role in creating knowledge about my topic. Conscious of a limited space in which to write (considering my desire to include all ten stories), I limited myself to one conversation per chapter. This required me to be more general in labeling the theme of the conversation. In the chapters with two stories, I drew on the quotations that had influenced the two stories. Again, in *Thursday* there are two stories – 'Not another day' and 'Swimming, not sinking'. This chapter is intended to explore the difficulties I experienced, and then the support strategies I experienced in the first year of teaching. In constructing the conversation with Eleanor, William and Angela, I selected quotations that explored both of these points. Discussion of such things was often linked, for example the highs and the lows, hence the reason that both themes are dealt with within one chapter.

Writing the conversations was an exploratory process, as once again, I immersed myself in the texts without a clear sense of what would eventuate. I wrote to discover, to find out. It was not representative, but a continuation of recreation. Tanaka (1997) explained the technique of fictionalizing data, stating 'to sit at a desk and to really be engaged in the process requires I do not know where the writing is taking me' (p.319).

My intention was to create 'fictionalized' conversations that gave the reader the impression that all four of us sat down together in a same room and shared our experiences – the room is representative of my head as the conversations reverberated in my thinking processes during the construction of the teaching stories. They were a 'patterning' of experience, 'abstracted from but connected to the "data" that inspired it' (Ellis & Flemons, 2002, p.347).

These critical conversations then became the discussion of my stories, as the voices of my colleagues and I explored the issues presented in the teaching

stories. My dissertation structure therefore had two layers, the first being the teaching stories presented in the present tense from the perspective of 2000, and the second being the critical conversations of Eleanor, William, Angela and myself in 2001/2002.

Fiction has an important and credible role in qualitative research (Kilbourn, 1999) and is recognised for its power to promote possibilities and create imaginings. Dunlop (1999) explained:

> *I maintain that we do not live in only one reality but in many realities. We have no single world but are continually in the process of creating new worlds from old ones or imagined ones. Fictions are not the unreal side of reality or the opposite of reality: they are conditions that enable the production of possible worlds* (p.3).

Fictionalising techniques have been used by qualitative researchers to generate news ways of seeing (Dunlop, 1999; Ellis & Flemons, 2002; Tanaka, 1997). The creation of these fictionalized conversations and layering techniques served the aim of wishing to create new ways of seeing this issue by inviting the reader to be actively involved in interpretive processes.

~

2.7   *Stage 5:* Evoking Meaning (2004)

Evocation is an important element of autoethnographic research. It is the manner in which the text allows the reader to step into the writer's experience, being able to imagine them in the world created by the text. Again, I draw connection here to arts-based research, as the function of art is to be evocative. Barone & Eisner (1997, p.73) pointed out that 'good art possesses a capacity to pull the person who experiences it into an alternative reality'.

In 2004 I continued using writing as a means of inquiry. I started crafting what I called 'poetic researcher realisations'. Poetry and poetic strategies have been used by qualitative researchers seeking alternate methods of representing experience and making meaning (Fox, 1996; Kiesinger, 1998; Richardson, 1993). I saw poetic strategies as another way to write my research evocatively and to discover and not explain, to describe and not predict (Renner, 2001). Poetry allowed me to use artistic writing conventions that could be complex, suggestive and most importantly, which could encourage the reader to look at life differently. Richardson (1993) argued:

> *Poetic representation reveals the process of self-construction, deferrals and transformation, the reflexive basis of self-knowledge, the inconsistencies and contradictions of a life spoken as a meaningful whole* (p.704).

I used poetic representation in my research because I believe poetry encourages the reader to see anew, which is why I used it as a variegated thread through my quilt – my dissertation.

The final section of each chapter then became what I defined 'poetic researcher realisations'. The poems are evocative representations of the understandings I have gained about beginning teaching and my experience of beginning teaching through the process of this research project. They continue the fragmentation and layering of my research text, but are more heavily interpretative and intended to evoke not only the experience of my first year of teaching for the reader, but the meanings I have made during this research. In a traditional research thesis, these serve the function of reporting my findings. This artistic method again allowed me to suggest a new way of seeing. Grumet (1988) believed that 'it is the function of art to reorganise experience so it is perceived freshly' (p.81). This explains my use of this way of writing.

I used several poetic conventions in this research. Firstly, I experimented with page layout and frequently wrote down the page, splitting sentences out, down,

and between, so as to create different meaning and encourage a different reading of the issue or point being made. Partiality was also used as words were limited, carefully selected and left to stand on their own for emphasis and effect rather than elaborated or fully explained. In the final stage of interpretation and finding a way to express my final research understandings, I experimented with the manner in which I included literature in the dissertation. The poetic researcher realisations are a blend of my reflections on what I have learned with the research theory - the learning of self and others. I did this with the belief that good autoethnography should be provocative and weave story and theory (Spry, 2001). I saw poetic conventions are the way to fulfill the aim of presenting beginning teaching differently. This was why I re-shaped the layout, including specific quotations from previous research, which I also split, arranging words down the page and sometimes personifying the author of them. The use of poetry in this research was evocative and provocative.

It allowed me to blend my voice and theory artistically.

<div align="center">~</div>

> *Whatever your interpretation, it is my hope that this text helps us envision – even if only for a moment – a place beyond…*
>
> <div align="right">(Tillmann-Healy, 2002, p.341)</div>

<div align="center">~</div>

2.8   *Final Stages*: **Constructing a Quilted Research Text (2004-2005)**

> *But after deconstruction of the self there must follow reconstruction; a sense of continuity and a degree of trust between various selves must be woven like a thread throughout the story of who one is.* (Barone, 2001, p. 166)

Teaching Daze offers multiple perspectives by using multiple texturing devices and authorial voices. Miller (1998) argued that such 'multivocality is necessary where there is balance between voices, and not suppression' (p.68).

The multi-form of *Teaching Daze* is important because it supports my position that beginning teaching is complex and hence representations of it should be as well. Kilbourn (1999) acknowledged that while prose is linear, the activities of our lives are layered, hence my decision to layer the text throughout in order to evoke my beginning teaching life.

The three sections of the dissertation were designed to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral dissertation.

Part One (*Before Teaching Daze)* is the theoretical background of this research, and while slightly layered in voice and tense, it is predominately explanatory.

It is in Part Two (*Teaching Daze*) that the most experimental research texts are comprised. The three layers of each chapter are to encourage the reader to see each issue more broadly. *Teaching Daze* is not a comfort text (Lather, 1997, p.252) and is intended to encourage the reader to be involved, to join the discussion. Layering and fragmenting were my means of doing this. The three layers of each chapter (Sunday to Saturday) not only create a complex picture of beginning teaching and an examination of the many issues relevant to this topic, they also evoke the complex process of my research and the journey of making meaning about my first year of teaching over the last six years. The first layer of each chapter is the teaching stories told in the present tense. These stories can be considered as the findings of my research. The second layer is the critical conversations. These conversations can be seen as the discussion sections. The final layer of each chapter is the poetic research realisations, and as stated, these can be seen as the results of this research project.

Part Three (*After Teaching Daze*) is where I close this research project, attempting to sew final stitches, and pulling the quilted dissertation together, making final reflections of the work and recommendations for future research.

Understanding my role in this research as a 'quilter' has been central in guiding my research design and approach. It was an appropriate and practical conceptual metaphor. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) explained that 'the quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience' (p.5).

The construction of *Teaching Days: Stories of Self and Others* has very much been a 'stitched together' experience. I have created a three dimensional quilt where a variety of rich and complex fabrics have been carefully sewn together. I created 'order out of a multiplicity of pieces' (Flannery, 2001, p.631).

~

2.9 Evaluating Difference Differently

> *Ernest: The great big word here is universality –*
> *Laurel: Which I don't*
> *Ernest: Relevance, then…*
>
> (Richardson & Lockridge, 1998, p. 334)[1]

~

The desire for difference in a doctoral dissertation impacts on the aspect of evaluating its form and content. Such consideration requires changing the terms of reference. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) argued that in qualitative research 'terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity' (p.21). In evaluating *Teaching Daze* the terms of reference I ask the reader to bear in mind are evocation and relevance, self-consciousness, and freshness.

---

[1] This quotation is a great example of the 'show' rather than 'tell' approach in seeking to do what Ellis (1997) described as finding ways to talk differently about talking differently.

'Evocation' and 'relevance' are important qualities to consider because they are the means by which the choice of textual strategies can be assessed – does the research bring the research journey to life? Does it allow the reader to connect the experiences represented with his/her own experiences? Is the text of value to the reader and the stakeholders in this issue such as other beginning teachers, schools, teacher educators and policy makers? 'Self-consciousness' is important in reassuring the reader that the research process has be rigorous and reflective (Kilbourn, 1999; Sparkes, 2002), and that the researcher has made decisions with consideration and purpose. My use of the term 'freshness' is intended to allow the reader to reflect on the degree to which I have achieved what I set out to do – to investigate and represent beginning teaching differently and to see the issue 'anew'.

There are guidelines for evaluating autoethnographic research, arts-based and experimental research texts (Richardson, 1994; Richardson & Lockridge, 1998; Sparkes, 2000, 2002). Richardson (1994) explained that new ways of seeing evaluation in such research methods are important:

> *…not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous (*p.522).

The multiple methods used throughout this project aided me in developing a rich and complex report of this issue. I was therefore able to examine and portray beginning teaching from many angles.

I ask the reader to consider the extent to which I have achieved the stated aims outlined at the beginning of *Teaching Daze* – to present beginning teaching differently and to develop a new way of understanding this issue that evokes the complexity of this experience from the perspective of a beginning teacher. I believe I have achieved these goals. I have produced a layered text that blends

many voices, including my own many and developing voices but also mixes the many 'other' voices who were important and shaping factors in my perceptions of beginning teaching. The textual strategies I employed (storytelling, fictional conversations, poetic representations) were woven into a quilted whole. The quilt metaphor, while not new in discussions of qualitative research methods, allows for the juxta-positioning of tensions, contradictions, and opposing view points, all of which I traveled through in piecing together this dissertation.

While I strove to see beginning teaching 'anew' well-worn and familiar clichés arose. My sense of needing to simply survive, of struggling to keep my head above water, and of getting the overwhelming sinking feeling, and only being able to see my failures and inadequacies, rather than my successes, were confronted. All of these issues were given their place, and were able to have their place, in my final dissertation because of my use of layering. While I searched for hope, I needed to acknowledge that I also lost hope for periods of time. Dealing with my disappointment at my conformity to what I saw as beginning teaching stereotypes was part of my journey of coming to terms with, analysing, and then rewriting my beginning teaching experience. Gottschalk (1998) stated that this is the power of such research methods, including the use of fictional devises, 'some of the voices confirm my perceptions, others deny them, many guide the questions I attend to and try to answer, and others make me rethink what I am understanding' (p.220).

Grumet (1988, p.81) argued that an important goal for those of us seeking to understand the lives of teachers and our teaching days is to write in a way that generates a means for the issue to be perceived freshly. I achieved this aim by utilizing a multitude of methods in data collection and analysis, and then finally in the quilted approach used in the crafting on the final research text. *Teaching Daze* does promote a different reading of beginning teaching through arts-influenced and creative writing methods. The use of artistic devices was not intended as an easy option. Krizek (1998) noted:

> *Creative writing cannot be employed as a methodological shortcut. Only the*
> *meticulous application of the methods of fieldwork, including the analysis of*

*the fruits of that fieldwork – notes, transcribed interviews, audiotapes, etc., can direct with any fidelity the recording of the contexts, characters, and dialogic content of the cultural setting present in the repor*t *(p.107).*

My research methods were rigorous and longitudinal. I kept field notes for a year, and spent several years analysing and interpreting this data. I conducted hour-long interviews with critical readers of my teaching journal, and fully transcribed each interview for them to respond to. My stories and the final dissertation were constructed from extensive and detailed data, blended with an extensive and varied review of the relevant research literature.

In autoethnography, evaluation criteria are addressed in terms of 'verisimilitude', which Ellis & Bochner (2000) explained is the degree to which the research 'evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible' (p.751). The success of *Teaching Daze* as an evocative research text lies in the specific textual strategies that were employed to engage the reader, specifically in the use of creative and arts-influenced research writing. Banks and Banks (1998) pointed commented that what 'fiction can do that no other sort of expression does is evoke the emotion of felt experience and portray the values, pathos, grandeur, and spirituality of the human condition' (p.17). Hence, I crafted stories of my self and others, in relation to beginning teaching, with the aim of making connections. These connections were intended to be immediate, between my close circle of readers and myself, but then more broadly between the stakeholders and theorists in the broader community of researchers investigating beginning teaching. I believe I achieved the latter connection through my developed poetic researcher realisations, which are a blend of contemporary theorists points of view, and my own developed understandings and artistic expression.

The narrative echoing that occurred throughout this project (where critical readers and beginning teachers were quick to recount their own experiences based on their reading of my teaching journal and teaching stories) demonstrates that the text does succeed at being lifelike and believeable, and that it successfully encouraged

others to make connections and reflect on their own experiences. It was also clearly relevant to them as teachers and beginning teachers.

Kilbourn (1999) pointed out that research texts that use fictional elements (such as artistic strategies and poetic representation) must demonstrate a self-conscious method. This is what develops the reader's trust and belief in the 'truth' of the fiction. The use of examples from my various journals throughout this project demonstrates the continual self-conscious method of this research. I reflected on my topic and my method of inquiry constantly throughout the process. The inclusion of such reflections throughout this work allows the reader to see my self-questioning, and to recognise that while *Teaching Daze* is a different doctoral dissertation, the innovation has been with purpose. Part One clearly explains the experimental writing strategies, so that the reader is informed of what and why particular research methods have been used.

Autoethnography must be about others, as well as the self. It cannot be self-indulgent (Sparkes, 2000). This is the core value that impacts on evaluation of my research. Is the research of value to others? Does it make connection to others? Does it contribute to creating a spirit of community? Ellis (1993, p.725) explained that 'the 'truth' of this story then lies in the way it is told and the possibility that there are others in the world who resonate with this experience' (p.725). While my many voices swirl in this work, and while I am the main character in the story, I am not alone. *Teaching Daze* is a community of voices and characters, as the presence of others in my teaching days is illuminated by the conversations that occurred as a central feature of my research approach.

~

> *The narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathically into worlds of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered.* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.748).

~

It is the function of art to…

reorganize…

experience…

~

So?

~

Sew!

~

So
it is!
Perceived!
Freshly!
(Grumet, 1988, p. 81)

~

By the end of a story – or other kind of arts-based education inquiry text – its format and content will serve to create a new vision of certain educational phenomena. When readers re-create that vision, they may find that new meanings are constructed, and old values and outlooks are challenged, even negated.

(Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 78)

2.9.1   Space for the New 'Me'

'You are a beginning teacher.'

And I wonder, 'am I?'

'Be confident,' lecturers tell us.

'Be competent,' the lists of standards demand.

'Be afraid,' old hands whisper in staffrooms.

I am told.

'You are an autoethnographer.'

And I wonder, 'am I?'

'Be evocative,' Ellis says (1997).

'Be self-conscious,' Kilbourn suggests (1999).

'*But not self-indulgent'* Sparkes adds (2000).

'But definitely hopeful' Denzin (1999) encourages.

I am told.

'I am a teaching autoethnographer,' (Moroney, 2000)[2],

I decide, and get ready to

'out myself,'

(Flemons & Green,

2002, p.93)

and to

'experience the experience'

 (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

I am listening,

---

[2] This reference was picked up by critical readers as not being included in the reference list. It is not a real reference, but rather what I see as a creative link to 'me' in 2000. It is intended to evoke the sense that in 2000, when I began teaching and researching, I became the author of my own story.

and learning, quietly,

(but)

publicly.

Seeking,

'between',

and a space

to

feel.

Part Two

Teaching Daze: A Quilted Research Tale

Chapter Three

Sunday [1]

~

Sunday is a day of juxtapositions. It is positioned at the end of a week gone past, but also looms over the week still to come. Sunday, is a day that lies 'between'. It sits neatly 'before' and 'after'. Sunday is a day of tensions, as the desire to rest is hindered by the need to prepare. It is a day of recuperation. It is a day of organization. It is a day on which the past, the present, and the future can intermingle through reflection and contemplation. It is therefore also a day of possibility and hope. My beginning teaching story did not have one neat, simple, definitive start. Hence Sunday is the day I choose to start the complex tale of my beginning teaching days.

~

On most Sunday mornings, the closure of a cycle, has been, once again, achieved, and preparations for the next one can be momentarily deferred. A Sunday morning, therefore, should never be needlessly disturbed. It is a time for congenial gatherings of family and friends, not a time for contentious challenges to comfortable beliefs. Or maybe you try, as I often do when I am home next to my stereo, to reserve your Sunday mornings for engaging in a musical king of concelebrations, for listening to the harmonies of a fugue. Alas, how I would have enjoyed leading you into one today! (Barone, 1990, p.305).

---

[1] This chapter contains the story *The moment I decided not to become a teacher*. This is followed by *Conversation One: Beginning Conversations.* The chapter concludes with the stanza of the poem 'Teaching Daze' entitled 'Sunday'.

~   85

I began my first year of teaching.

Not on one day in particular,

but many,

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

I have luggage,

my school days,

my apprenticeship (Lortie, 1975),

my costumes and props,

and my wonderings.

'Why am I here?'

And I begin to realise,

I have company in contemplation.

'Understanding teaching pathways is central,

to making sense of teaching days' I interpret,

(Alexander, Chant & Cox, 1994;

Dempster et.al, 2000;

Lortie, 1975;

Wideen et.al, 1998;

 Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

~

3.1 *The Moment I Decided Not to Be a Teacher*

> *I resent sounding like a cliché.*
>
> (Teaching Journal, February 2000)

~

Sarah's lounge room is white-walled and welcoming. It is not overly cluttered with nick nacks and trinkets, but has a sense of warmth from the wood paneling around the kitchen. The wooden table where I'm seated is partly in the kitchen and partly in the lounge room, as the open-plan style allows her to finish checking if the chicken kebabs are cooked through, chat to me about White School and the Drama curriculum, and make sure that my glass of red wine has not been emptied yet. Sarah is a big fan of red wine. It's a couple of nights before the students are due to start. It's a few sleeps before I have my first day as a real teacher. It's a few more sessions of poring over unit outlines and my old lecture notes to see if I can get my head around what I am actually going to teach all the students for all of the days and all of the lessons this year. As I sit listening to her talk enthusiastically about the large number of students in Year 8 that select Drama as one of their options subjects, I am torn between admitting I have no idea what students in Year 8 Drama actually do and worrying that I should get off my backside and help her prepare dinner.

Sarah has been assigned my mentor for the year. I first met her at the new staff members' orientation day. Her big smile, and open manner made me relax at her official appointment. And now I am here in her house. She's my first new friend in Hobart, and this is my first outing to the other side of the river. My family live in the north of the state, and I completed all my teacher training up there as well. Hobart is familiar generally, but not specifically. I had to get the road map out to

make my way to Sarah's little weather-board house. The city is twice the size of Launceston where I trained. Or at least it feels that way.

This year everything is new. New job, new house, new people, and even a new car! So much at once! Too much at once? And now here I am trying to get my head into Year 8 Drama curriculum. My eyes jump to the pile of plastic folders on Sarah's orange and red patched couch. It's a big pile. The spines read 'Year 7' and 'Year 10'. I hope I get my own copies of those to take home with me. Does she expect us to go through all of them tonight?

The conversation is one sided at the moment, as I sit and listen. I'm not behaving like myself, and I worry that I am coming across shy and quiet – two qualities that I don't usually associate with drama teachers, or even with 'Marty'. I don't want to give her the wrong impression or think that the school has hired the wrong teacher for the job.

'Why did you decide to become a teacher?' I ask, in between sentences and sips. Sarah minimizes the pause with 'um', tops up my glass of wine, and then joins me at the dinner table.

'I'd always loved Drama' she says. 'Actually, yes, it was in Drama, in Year 12 that I decided to become a teacher. I remember talking to my own Drama teacher about university and courses, and pretty much at that point I knew in my head that I wanted to do what she did. I wanted to be a Drama teacher. I guess that was my moment.' She sits back in her seat, seemingly content in her answer.

Once again I feel like I have another secret that I should keep from her. I never took Drama in Year 12, or Year 11 for that matter. And here I am a Drama teacher. It came down to a choice between taking more English subjects like Writers' Workshop and working with teachers that I knew and liked, or taking a subject with teachers I didn't have as much faith in. I did three English subjects instead. She turns the question back to me.

'Why did you decide to become a teacher? Did you always know?'

My 'um' is not a pause. It's a bluff, as I prepare to make up a moment when I suddenly decided that I wanted to become a teacher. The truth is that I don't have a moment when I suddenly knew that teaching was what I wanted to do, and

should do. I don't have a nice story about one particular teacher from my own schooling that inspired me into the profession. Teaching, when I was at school, was a cop out. Something that you did if you couldn't really do what it was that you wanted to. In this sense, I saw Drama teachers as failed actors and English teachers as failed authors. Brutal, but true for me at that point.

'Well, when I was an exchange student in Finland,' I say, beginning the familiar story that I told my university peers when we were sharing 'why did you' stories. But I wonder if this really is why I became a teacher, why I enrolled for a Bachelor of Education at the University of Tasmania, why I chose Drama and English as my major, why I chose secondary over primary education.

As I recount the tale of my Finnish neighbour who taught English at the local kindergartens, I'm actually thinking about the times when I consciously swore to myself that I would never be a teacher. I didn't decide to become a teacher. I decided not to become a teacher.

<div align="center">~</div>

I am 17 years old and in Year 12, my final year at Maxwell College. It is time to decide 'what I want to be when I grow up', and to apply for university. The temptation to put 'teaching' down is growing, but I am fighting it pretty hard. I don't want to teach. That would be a 'cop out'.

Maxwell College is a large, city college, with a diverse student population. I have really enjoyed the change from high school to college, and don't mind the added hassle of having to decide what I'm going to wear everyday. Having no uniform makes me feel more like an individual, though most days I feel like a 'dag' because I don't have many brand name labeled tops and I don't have a pair of Levi jeans. Maxwell College is great in that it offers subjects that you can't do at other schools. The largeness of the student population also means that there are boys I have not seen before, and many that I want to see lots of. The romantic heartache of college life is a big factor in my outlook at the moment, and sneaks

into the corners of my folders of in my favourite subjects, English and Writing where I draw little hearts with names in them.

I love these English subjects. I pour myself over pages of novels, plays, over my own drafts of short stories and bizarre monologues. I join the school newspaper, and spend my lunchtime in the study we are assigned, writing film reviews for my column entitled 'In the back row with Marty' and typing up my drafts to hand in. I am living what I think is the life of an amateur writer, constantly jotting down my thoughts, ideas for characters, situations to describe.

The teachers here are cool. We get to call them by their first name, which was a bit odd in Year 11, but is second nature now. When you do hear the occasional 'Mr' or 'Mrs', it sounds really strange – like they're talking about someone else. Using first names makes them seem like real people. It makes it seem like we're all equals and working on the same level. I respect many of them, especially my writer's workshop teacher. He's really encouraging, and seems to believe that I'll do really well in this subject. With writing, there's not the pressure to have to know what you want to do after college finishes. Not like other subjects. I can do anything with writing, and I don't just have to be a journalist. But I'm just not sure what I want to do. In high school I wanted to be an actor. Now, I don't know. I still remember my history teacher barking 'Only ten percent of actors ever get any real work'. At least I know I don't want to be a teacher.

I have the old cliché in my head, which, amusingly, a teacher taught me.

Those who can, do.

Those who can't, teach.

Those who can't teach, teach teachers.

My Dance teacher Prue is inspiring. Young, energetic, in some ways more of a dancer than a teacher, she continues to work as both teacher and choreographer for a local dance troupe. Yet, why do so many other teachers openly reminisce about what they could have done or would have done instead of teaching. Many

of the stories that they share about their own student lives, make me think that they failed in their chosen field. Is this a wrong, harsh, critical perception? Yes, but I am 16.

Both my English teachers share their passion for writing and reading.

'But then why?' I think, drinking my apricot juice at recess, 'aren't they authors themselves?'

They have become my guide for what I don't want to become. I say to Dad, who has said similar things himself, 'I don't want to spend 12 years at school, and then come back for a career's worth more'. He seems not so fussed about this declaration, wondering if I'll be a wanderer. The one thing I'm sure about is that I do want to go to University, and that maybe I'll play it safe and do a generalist degree, like Arts, but I'm definitely not going to do Education.

No. I believe that becoming a teacher would be about going backwards in life.

~

University has flown. It's my final year of my Bachelor of Education. I've been here for four years, but it's been six years since Maxwell College, because of two deviations from my career path, first to Canberra and secondly to Finland. Now here I am in a large, sectioned off, outdated lecture theatre at the University of Tasmania. Literally, I've been around the world to end up completing a degree in the small, suburban city I thought I was supposed to run away from.

A spokesperson from the Department of Education has come to address us all. I think it's one of the first lectures this year when there is a full house. The issue, of course, is employment – a major concern for us. The lecture theatre is full. No sleeping in today.

The middle-aged guy is trying to appear professional but casual. He's wearing a shirt and tie for credibility, but also a pair of neat but worn-in blue denim jeans to fit in with us. He's caught between worlds.

Silently, after a few moments of making eye contact with a select few, he writes a figure on the board.

$40,000.

We stare. There is actually silence in the auditorium. Then suddenly, pens and papers shuffle. People are writing this figure down. It is our holy grail. The thing we are all striving for. Money! Opportunity for change looms. My mind flashes 'I could buy anything, new clothes, new shoes, a new car, and I could move into a better house, I could go for a holiday, I could have freedom! Yet money isn't the main reason we scribble, or why we listen so intently to his standard introduction to the Department of Education's various districts, schools and employment procedures. If we are lucky to be one of the chosen few to receive a pay packet in the coming year (if I am lucky), it isn't just about getting paid. We could actually be 'real' teachers. All our effort and hard work would actually mean something.

So much of my training to be a teacher is about pretending and imagining. Tutors can be heard saying 'imagine that you're doing this with your class, after having worked with them for a whole term' and 'Pretend that your healthy working environment has already been established, then what would you do?'

Everyone exclaims how much he or she learned during their time on prac in schools. It is seen as a time in the real world, where real teachers live, and where the real learning occurs. And here we are after our internship, with no more in-school experience to learn from and on the cusp of our career. The Department representative has our beady-eyed attention.

'Now, you need to be prepared to teach outside of your specialisation' he states bluntly.

Had I heard him correctly? He continues, not aware of my silent splutter of shock.

'You cannot assume that you will get either your chosen year group or your subject area. Likewise, you should not presume to think that you could select which area of the state or district you can teach in. Those who are prepared to travel more than two hundred kilometres from home are more likely to be appointed a position.'

Some shift in their seats, but no one is about to argue.

In my head I hear myself say 'I am not going to the faraway West Coast', but in reality I am simply one of the seat shifters. He continues to outline the job prospects for the following year. Basically, I interpret that the job front is highly competitive, and for a drama teacher, possibly even doomed.

I gulp and venture a question. 'Are there any secondary drama positions in the state?' Redness hints in my cheeks, as I loath drawing attention to myself. I am a drama teacher, but one who only likes appropriate attention.

He smiles. I misunderstand this smile as reassurance. Then he declares,

'Not likely! As I said, you'll need to be prepared to teach other subjects. I'm sure you could teach in other curriculum areas. Have you considered Middle School?'

And that's that.

The following week I apply to continue my studies, and enrol in a PhD. After loving Drama as a student at high school, after choosing to specialize in Drama curriculum, after spending four years thinking of myself as a Drama teacher in training, and after completing my Honours Dissertation in Drama – there is no way I am going to accept just any position simply to get paid. I'd waitress before I'd teach outside of my field.

I am determined that if I can't teach drama then I won't teach at all. I am lucky. I am in the position where family, partner, and possible scholarship opportunities

give me this luxury. Others need the money desperately, and will no doubt fight tooth and nail over each other for any position.

I fill out the forms, waiting for my final results, and take an inter-state holiday to relax and reward myself.

~

Just because I'm not willing to settle for any 'left-over' teaching position, doesn't mean that I still wouldn't like a job. The idea of another three years at university is not overly appealing, and the money won't be nearly as good as even a first year teacher's salary.

There seems to be hope. I've had my first interview at a private school, a few weeks after the Education Department representative came spreading his twisted good news.

The interview process was very nerve racking. I've been to informal hiring meetings before, but nothing like this where, weighed down with leather bound folio and high heels, I've sat before a panel of professionals and explained my qualifications to teach Drama, what I believe Drama goals for the middle years should be, and why I've decided to become a teacher in the first place. Everyone wants to know the answer to this question.

Job interviews are nerve-wracking when you've only had a few in your life. The first job I got was through a school friend, as was the second. That's the nature of living in a small sized city, even a small sized state. And the jobs I've had have all had three things in common – customer service, cash handling and waiting on tables. Interviewing for my first teaching position, however, is different. This isn't about a job. It's about starting a career. I am *becoming* a teacher. I will *become* a teacher. I didn't become a waitress.

The change from student teacher to potential employee has been seeping into our final semester at University. Competition amongst my fellow pre-service teachers is pretty high. Off-hand comments are made during breaks in our tutorials.

'So, I hear you've got point seven of a teaching load at Bayside…' one would say, puffing on a cigarette.

'Yeah,' drag, 'and it's going to be hell completing my assignments around these', exhale.

'How's Philip feel about that?' Philip is our course coordinator.

'I supposed he's used to it.'

'You'd think he'd want us to get a job.'

Last year, during my third school experience practical, I was offered three weeks of relief teaching, but turned it down (was I mad?) to focus on my studies. On my internship this year, kind Mrs. Macdonald had said, 'if there were a position available I'd give it to you'. So, my ego is feeling pretty boosted, and I almost belief that if I really set my mind to it, I will be able to get a job. The trick is to get the job I want.

The hardest thing about this last semester is resisting the temptation to throw yourself at a school, busting a gut to prove that you are the best, most dedicated teacher they'd ever seen. Especially when you are supposed to be writing your honours thesis! So much time can be spent scanning the paper, rewriting your CV, phoning schools, and waiting for a call from the relief teaching lady, who could phone you at 10 minutes to 8, for you to be on the other side of town ready to take Grade 10 Drama. (I only do this once, and the growling from the PE teacher about the shower scene we filmed in his gym, which did involve a knife covered with tomato sauce, is enough to put me off it).

Accidentally, I've found out about a position that could be opening up in Hobart, and a private school I've never heard of called White School. We didn't have Heather for Drama this week. She's attending a conference interstate. But her fill-in was great. Even though there are only six of us in our class the lesson was really active and engaging. While the lady was introducing herself, she mentioned

that we've all probably got work lined up for next year (so positive) but that we should look in to a school called 'White School' where the teacher will be on maternity leave next year, so she was certain there would be a Drama position available. A Drama position!!!! Immediately after this lesson, I am on the phone. Literally straight after this lesson I rush to the phone box on campus, dial the phone number info line, find the number to the school, and am speaking with the principal's secretary in less than four minutes from the time the lesson ended.

The lady is so nice. She can't believe I want to drive all the way down to Hobart just to drop off my CV.
'You can post it down if you like. I'd hate to think of you coming down all this way just to drop off a letter.'
I lie.
'Oh no, I'll be in Hobart anyway.'
'Well, by all means drop by. It's a little tricky to find our main office, but if you can get to…'

~

But before I get to drive down to this school to drop off my CV, I attend my first teaching interview at a local Catholic school. I'm not Catholic. I was interviewed by one of my old teachers from Maxwell College. I didn't do Drama at Maxwell College. I don't get the job.

But the second interview is the one I want to tell the story about. Not just because I get this job… Okay… because I get this job! Or should I say position.

The day starts well. The sun is shining. And I've overcome my first crisis. Having travelled down without my interview 'power suit', I had to call on my best mate Kelly to help me out. The blue crepe suit doesn't quite fit, but it is better than a t'shirt and sneakers.

Obviously I am nervous. Very nervous!

I am nervous because I really want this position. It has been advertised as part-time, but I don't care. It is a drama position. And I definitely want to be a drama teacher.

The office lady is as lovely as she was on the phone when I called two months ago. More than lovely! She is kind, and oozes compassion for me, as I tentatively step up two sets of stairs to what I don't know is the principal's office. There are flowers on an old, wooden table next to the 'waiting' chairs. I may have commented on them. 'Oh, aren't they lovely?' (The flowers and the waiting area I notice on many occasions in the following years as I walk past other 'waiters' outside this office). Who would have thought that I'd actually be at White School being interviewed for a Drama teaching position. I am asked into the office, and join three real teachers and the Principal. Instantly, I judge them by what they wear, and the expressions they have on their faces. They no doubt do the same to me. I wonder if they notice that my suit is too big. And crepe.

'I like you, I hate you, I'm not sure I can trust you' instantly goes through my mind as I scan the faces. A little dramatic, perhaps, but as I relive being there, it feels like a movie with grand music in the background. Their questions are specific, diverse, but not very memorable.

 I've studied the school pamphlet inside out.

> *As a learning community, we are concerned for the academic, cultural, physical, social and spiritual developments of each person in our care. We seek to help our students develop into men and women who will think clearly, act with integrity, make decisions for themselves, be sensitive to the needs of others, be strong in service and hold a global perspective.*

Gulp.

But they're not concerned so much about what I know about them, as they want to know about me.

'What do you think Year 8's should learn in Drama?'
'What production skills do you have?'
'What do you think your subject can offer to the curriculum'?

I don't answer that well. I am eager, although this doesn't really shine through either, as I have a bad cold.

The interview ends, and one of the panel members shows me the drama facilities. 'This is our new theatre, and this is our drama classroom' she says. I feel like an inspector. Am I being offered the power to turn down the position if I'm not happy with the facilities? They are the best facilities I've ever seen. Walking along the clean, pink, carpeted corridor I am impressed with the size of the lockers. 'Only two horizontal rows? We had four. Grade 7 was hard' I think.

And then I see another teacher clearly in a rush, wearing a bright red jacket, running away from us down the stairs. 'That's Sarah' my guide explains. All she says at this first meeting is 'Hi'.

In the car park my boyfriend Ryan asks me how it went, not really knowing from my blank facial expression. I think that I didn't get the job. I have no friends to put in a good word for me this time. We have also parked in a staff member's car spot. Not a good sign.

~

It's the middle of November and I have to present my honours research to the faculty. Of course I am not doing a Power Point presentation. I am a Drama teacher – my talk is interactive, and I use cue cards, props and guests on stage. Maybe that's why I'm the last presentation for the day. I hope the audience will

still be awake. Poor Mum, Dad and Ryan having to sit in the lecture theatre for four hours.

After my act, Ryan comes up to me after sitting through twelve lots of 20-minute Power Point presentations, and one wacky drama display.

'You got a phone call from White School' he says quietly.

'What?' I say loudly. 'You're joking'.

'No, you have to call them back tonight. The lady said before 9pm, as she was picking up her husband from the airport'.

'What lady? Was it the principal? But he's a bloke. Where am I supposed to phone them back? But we're going out for tea tonight? And I can't move cities for a part time job. We're supposed to be moving to Western Australia. Maybe they've phoned to tell me I didn't get it. What should I do? I'm all prepared to do my PhD now. But it's Drama. Shit.'

~

I've got a job!

I am proud of my letter of appointment, and sometimes wonder if it should be framed. I even like the paper it is printed on, with the school's logo embossed letterhead. The paper is thick and textured, and in an envelope to match.

> *November, 1999*
>
> *Dear Martina,*

My grown-up name!

> *We are pleased to confirm our offer to you of a full-time position of Teacher in Drama and English…*

They are pleased.

I am shocked. It's a full-time position. They only advertised for part-time.
They are actually offering me a position. I'm going to be a real teacher.

> *The level of your salary is subject to the successful completion of your*
> *B.Ed (Hons) degree…*

Wow. Money! I could buy a new car.

> *As a newly qualified teacher you will be required to take part in an*
> *induction program which will cover the first two years of your*
> *employment. Your appointment will be probationary until this induction*
> *procedure is completed successfully. We enclose a 1999 copy of the*
> *Information Book for Staff so that you are aware of the need to participate*
> *fully in all aspects of your role as a teacher. We draw particular attention*
> *to the requirement that all staff participate in co-curricular activities*
> *including evening and weekend commitments. We look forward to your*
> *involvement in this program. As a new member of staff you will be invited*
> *to attend an orientation program on…*

I don't read this paragraph properly the first time, but after the fifth read through I
am aware of the coming induction requirements. Sounds Okay!

> *We look forward to receiving your written acceptance of this position.*

Sorry I am unable to accept…yeah, right!

There is no option of turning this offer down. This is it - the beginning of my
career. To be a real teacher I had to move to Hobart, away from my family and
friends. Would Ryan come too? He had an interview in Perth, Western Australia,
and was pretty excited about the beginning of his new life as well. There were
many factors to consider. Did I want to move? Should I ask Ryan to move with
me? The more frightening question, after completing four long, exciting years at
university – will I succeed as a teacher?

I am so excited. Nervous, but excited. And to think that I didn't really want to become a teacher!

~

Perhaps the true first of the 'first' stories really should be the first time when I did decide to become a teacher, even though I facetiously write about my pig-headedness in declaring that I would never teach.

But when did I first decide to become a teacher? Is this the place where my teaching story really starts, with this beginning – a conscious moment of decision-making? As explained in the previous story, I don't recall a conscious moment when I actually said, either out loud or silently to myself,

'I want to be a teacher.'

There were lots of moments when I decided not to be a teacher, and I did say this out loud, and often, as if daring the world to make me follow this path against my conscious mind.

Before I became a university student, however, I was an avid student, who thoroughly enjoyed school.

My schooling first begins in Scotland. Our house is attached to another house (as many of them are in Scotland - I think it's called semi-detached). My garden, when not covered with snow, has a fairy garden in it, which was made by my Dad especially for me (a fairy garden is a ring of stones that surrounds a green grassy patch, and may or may not be raised – I think mine was. It was certainly in the focal point of the garden). I can walk to school, and often do. I have a bouncy ball that I can bounce around the estate. One Saturday I gasp in shock as the ball bounces along without me and into the middle of the road. A car screeches loudly to avoid smacking in to it. School is the place where two significant events in my childhood occur. I have my first day that I literally can't remember (I fell off the school wall one recess, and was knocked unconscious, only to awake later in the principal's office). It is also the place where I first develop my fear of sharks. One night after school became a mock 'cinema' night, where for a measly fee that any kind parent would supply, students could watch recently released films. I have no

idea who I am with, whether I am with a friend or not (Mum swears she had no idea) but to my shock and excitement the films showing are *War of the Worlds* and the blockbuster of the time *Jaws*. I am five. Up until this night I had imagined that Jaws was the name of a vicious miniature-type dog with a big jaw and big teeth. This night is when I first discover what a shark is. I soon forget my fear of sharks after we move to Australia, for a better financial future and a bigger house, and have many fun days splashing in the waves of Seven Mile Beach and Green's Beach with my younger brother, my Mum and my Dad. Of course I get sun burnt lots, and soon learn the importance of 'slip, slop, and slap' (an Australian sun protection advertising campaign slogan, that in an unprecedented heat wave in Scotland in 1995 is sung as 'slap, slip, slop').

I start school as the funny girl with the funny accent. I am not funny 'ha ha' but funny 'strange'. I hate my first school in Hobart, having to start in the middle of the year, and am thrilled when Dad gets a job that means we have to move to the top of the state. A fresh start, at the beginning of the year, is wonderful, and so begins my enjoyable time in Tasmanian state schools – the local primary school, and then the local high school. I still get to walk to school. But I don't see any scary movies. I do well, and get good marks. I am a 'spock', and receive a citizen award at the end of Year 6. Sad to leave my friends of primary school, I begin high school near our new house in an upper suburb. While being smart and enjoying school is definitely not cool, I manage to maintain my enjoyment of subjects such as Drama, English and Social Science. These subjects are my main strengths throughout high school (as is Maths, which soon fades into oblivion after a difficult and unsuccessful Year 10). I am not sporty, in fact, Mum recalls my Year 6 teacher expressing concern about my lack of co-ordination, and this assessment will ruin my view of myself as a competent active person. I play netball, where I do well in the area of goal shooting, but I much prefer performing, and see Theatre Sports as my obligatory physical activity.

In college I continue to specialize in my favourite subjects, to the point where I assume that I will go to university to become a writer. I strive to gain acceptance to a mainland university, so that I can leave home for the big smoke like Dad did when he left Aberfeldy to go to Glasgow University. Yet, when this dream comes

to fruition, I am left hollow and unsatisfied, confused by how little I enjoy studying grammar and the 'Information Super Highway'.

School has not helped me decide what I want to be when I grow up. The writer idea is not the first career that I decide on, and soon pass off. When I am 10 I am going to be a vet. When I am 13 – I am going to be an architect. But school, my mum's employment at the state bank, and my marks enable me to gain an AFS scholarship. Italy calls me from the pages of the travel magazines that I drool over, as I freeze my fingers off in Canberra. I can't wait to get home to Tasmania and find out where I am going to be for a whole 12 months. I read E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View,* and imagine myself touring the old architecture of Florence. I can drink coffee and red wine every day. Dad greets me at the door, breaking my sprint into the lounge room, to where the yellow package lies on the kitchen table. 'Now, don't panic,' he says 'I've looked Finland up on the map, and we'll find out more about it before you leave. If you really don't want to go there, perhaps we can…'

'Where the fuck is Finland?' [2]

I am soon over my concern, and am happy to go somewhere so far away, where they still speak English and have McDonalds. And after all, my host family appears really nice and welcoming, which is probably the most important thing. And if it weren't for Finland, I probably wouldn't be a teacher.

~

Jenna hugs me and hands me a package of brown, home decorated wrapping paper, bound with un-dyed raffia. This is my going away present. It's not from her or her family, but from the students in her English class, the one that I have told her is my favourite. It's made up of ten students - ten short, five-year old Finns. We spend an hour with them every Friday, playing cards games such as snap, singing songs such as 'London Bridge is falling down', and colouring in pictures

---

[2] Sorry about the expletive. At 17, this was my reaction.

that are based on the week's theme, such as 'under the sea'. I don't have to speak Finnish much with them, because Jenna's approach is an immersion style. We walk in to the room and say,

'Good morning.'

The brave ones respond 'Good morning,' emphasizing the 'd' sound of good, as they try to speak very proper English. The tired and lazy ones (of which there is only one, but he's a cutie) forget and simply say 'paiva', which is like good morning, without the good. I have been wagging my obligatory high school attendance for several months now, on the premise that I am completing an alternative exchange program by working with Jenna at the various kindergartens around the city. We take the same English lesson many times throughout the week, just at a different venue. This is my first teaching experience and probably the experience that made me decide to become a teacher. I loved working with these kids. I, perhaps selfishly, realised that I learned as much from them as they may have learned from me.

I anticipate chocolates, the Panda brand that are filled with assortments of flavors that taste just as nice as Cadbury's, but the squishiness of the package suggests otherwise. The parcel contains a green t-shirt. On the t-shirt are ten small pictures, printed in a foamy type of print.

'These are copies of pictures that the students drew. So you have something from each one of them to take away with you.'

This was a very rewarding moment. I knew I had made the right decision to transfer from Canberra University, back down to Tassie to study Education. Things were beginning to feel right on my career path.

'I think when I grow up I'm going to be a teacher,' I say to Jenna. She laughs, perhaps knowing that I am already one.

~

Sarah's chicken kebabs were delicious. I calculate that I've been at her house long enough for the second glass of red wine to be out of my system, so it's okay for me to drive home now.

Sarah has given me the pile of folders to take home. As I walk out her front door and toward my new car with its new car loan, I feel reassured by the weight of the material I am carrying.

'I'm really looking forward to working with you this year Marty,' she says.

'Yeah, same to you,' I reply.

She comes around to the driver side and I wind down my window.

'And don't worry if you get really tired, or need to ask for help, or whatever. That's what I'm here for. To help! See you tomorrow.'

Heading home in the fading late sunset of daylight savings, I ponder her last comments. I'm actually going to be working *with* someone. I've got real responsibility now. This is it. I'm here for the whole year. No early departure date. No safety of university land. No back up supervising teacher in my classroom. No excuses. I'm no longer learning. I'm supposed to now know what to do. I decide that 'I'm going to be the best first year Drama teacher she's ever seen'. This is my personal resolve for the year.

~

3.2   *Conversation One – Beginning Conversations*[3]

Researcher Introduction:

I knew the three teachers before I started teaching. Eleanor shared my uni days, and both Angela and William supervised me during school pracs. Eleanor, who is only a few months younger than me, finds the experience of sharing our first year tales therapeutic. William seems to make realisations about his choice to change from a public to a private school. He doesn't understand how a journal can be a

---

[3] The following section is presented in a transcription format (script). It is a thematic collage based on six interview transcripts, two with each critical reader conducted over a two year period from 2001, as explained in Chapter Two.

PhD. Angela is so daunted by the experience of reading my journal that she struggles to separate her own experiences from my own, saying several times that she cannot remember what happened to her and what happened to me.

Marty: When I think about where to start my story about beginning teaching, I always come back to why I wanted to be a teacher in the first place, the big 'why am I here'. I tend to only remember the opposite, deciding not to be a teacher! How did you end up as a teacher?

Eleanor [*laughs*]:
                 I don't know, partly because I used to go off teaching with Mum when she used to do relief teaching, and I was sick. Sometimes I just used to end up teaching with her at different schools and I really, really loved it. And I knew I wanted to do something related to Drama. When I got to college, and I told my college drama teacher that, he said 'whatever you do don't become a drama teacher' and tried to do everything to convince me not to become a Drama teacher which pushed me straight down that path of becoming a Drama teacher.

Marty: Why do you think he told you not to do Drama teaching?

Eleanor: Because he'd had such horrible dealings in high school, as a Drama teacher, with people seeing Drama as a Mickey Mouse subject, and having no credos, and being asked to do the extra mile all the time, and all that sort of stuff, and he just didn't think that it's a rewarding thing to do, until you get into a college system, where it's got credit applied to it. So he said 'you're going to go through a lot of really hard times before you get to times that you can enjoy it'. And I didn't think I was going to make it into university. My point score wasn't high enough. I missed out by a point. But they let me in anyway.

Marty: Why did you become a teacher William? Because when we last spoke you mentioned your mum quite a lot, your family, your mum being a teacher and going to Esprit High school…

William: Well, I'll be honest…

Marty [*interrupting*]:
                 …and you're married to a teacher.

William: That's right. I went into teaching because one, I got an educational scholarship which paid my way through university. Then I had to obviously pay that back to the Ed Department, and there was a moral obligation as well, to give back that which I had been given. So in a sense I fell into teaching, and yes my mother was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, but yet, she was the first to say, please don't become a teacher, because you'll find that after a certain point in your life, that it might be a little too draining, a little too hard, and like all jobs you get in a rut. So I fell into it, and then I became more secure, because of who I was. And I felt that it was an easy occupation, and I'll be honest, marrying a teacher, having the holidays that a teacher had, it's awful to say, I sort of fell in to this comfort zone, of not really stretching myself, or pushing myself, but yet, at the same time, being valued as a teacher.

Marty: Why did you move from a public to a private school?

William: After four years I found that the system in the Education Department was starting to lose the plot a little. I'm not a conservative by nature but I am when it comes to teaching and ah, I feel as though I'm a bit of a stickler for standards. I felt like things were starting to fall apart. Morale was getting, um you know, and this was back in 1984. It may be construed as a criticism, but it was just an objective statement that I was enjoying English, I was enjoying History, why don't they enjoy it, and they weren't. And I had to readjust my whole thinking, and at the end of the day, I felt 'nah, I need somewhere else' if you like, and I wasn't expecting the private school system to be that wonderful world of um, academic pursuit. It's not! It was just an opportunity to get out of the department that I felt wasn't going in the right way,

Marty: I can relate to your comment about wanting to teach your subject, you love history, wanting to work with people who love history, because I think that's why I made the decision, because I love Drama… Angela, what about you? Do you have any teachers in your family?

Angela: I'm the first of six to finish university, so there's your answer there.

Marty: Um, it's just interesting, because I was trying really hard not to teach, cause everyone said I should be a teacher…

Angela: Oh, Okay!

Marty: … like I'd make a good teacher, only through college I thought you only taught if you couldn't do what you actually wanted to do.

Angela: Yeah, what do they say? Those who can *do* and those who can't *teach*, and those who can't teach, *teach teachers*…

Marty: I actually had a lot of people at college that I thought were teaching, not because they wanted to teach, but because they couldn't do their subject, a lot of repressed people who, seemed to want to make their way in their field but couldn't do it, so were teaching us, like I had that kind of… [*thinking of right word*] and I suppose it's sad when that attitude in a teacher comes through, but I had teachers like that at college, and I didn't want to necessarily end up like them, that's what I thought…

Angela: I would agree with that.

Marty: When I was an exchange student in Finland, I learned that I liked teaching. I was always getting up and doing the traditional 'Hi I'm from Australia, and this is where I live' speech. I tried to make my talk interesting and exciting so I used to draw sharks, snakes and spiders on my map and then I'd say 'these live everywhere, and they can kill you', which made everyone laugh. I remember one really nice teacher in my Finnish school who said 'you'd make a great teacher'.

Angela: I didn't have a strong connection with any teacher, except one in primary school.

Marty: What did you like about them?

Angela: It's funny, the old story, what I liked about him wasn't in the classroom. I remember once I'd left my bag on the bus, and we were like in a housing commission home, and he actually drove me to the depot to pick my bag up. There's no way I can think of that I would have been able to get it. Then in Grade 5, he had a guitar and let me take it home in the holidays, I hardly owned anything of value, and to have this thing and be trusted with it, little things like that. I guess he just made me feel worthwhile.

Marty: Do you think that's why you care so much about the worth of your students as people?

Angela: I care about the worth of everybody, and not just in the classroom. People are judged so easily, and summed up so quickly, and dismissed, and I think care in and out of the classroom…

Marty: We'll stop there for now. Thank you all for writing notes on my journal. Angela, I can see you've found my typos for me, which is great.

Angela: The typos. I'm sorry …

Marty: So many hours of typing - that is what happens.

Angela: I felt for you, don't worry. I knew it would be so much work.

~

3.   *Sunday*

(The end and the beginning)

The end
of university,
and the beginning
 of teaching.

'I could be a teacher,' I muse publicly.
'Good students want to be teachers,'
Alexander, Chant, & Cox, (1994) concur.

but
inside
I
did
not.

'I resent sounding like a cliché!'
I speak.
'I will NOT teach'.
I shout.

The moment I decided not to be a teacher.

And then I do!

Full of…

hope?

 'Be prepared to be tired' they nod,

'and cry'.

'There is no doubt beginning teaching is hard'

(Doecke, Brown, Loughran, 2000).

I read,

and read,

and read.

'I wanted it badly' Eleanor echoes.

'I fell into teaching' William echoes.

'I cared deeply' Angela echoes.

I did not.

I did not.

I did not.

I chose,

'Simply'

to begin.

And to see,

if I could,

teach.

'I'll show you!' I start my own echo.

'Are you ready?'

Chapter Four

Monday [1]

~

On Monday the new experiences come thick and fast. This is a day of intensity. No longer safe in the distance of speculation on Sunday, I am suddenly inside the working week, no longer planning, but doing. Action and activities have taken over. The day is a blurring of newness. There is much to be done. Monday is daunting. Ready or not, it has begun. The rest of the week appears as a long winding and unpredictable challenge that won't allow me to see the end of the path. I do not know where I am going. Monday, is a different beginning, and I struggle to decipher events as they shoot out at me, rapidly and frantically, as I try to grasp just what is happening. I can't focus beyond the here, the now. There is no future at the moment. There is only this second, perhaps this minute. I haven't woken up yet.

~

Research on teacher development identifies the first years of teaching as particularly problematic as teachers enter an initial stage of teacher development. The primary problem cited by beginning teachers is classroom control. Teachers have difficulty focusing beyond… (Watzke, 2003, p.210).

---

[1] This chapter contains the story *It's All a Blur.* This is followed by *Conversation Two: First Impressions.* The chapter concludes with the stanza 'Monday' from the poem *Teaching Daze.*

~

4.1   *It's All a Blur*

> *Images from the day flash past my eyes. Faces, things to remember, dotted on post-it pads. And then it fades. I stare blankly out my window, literally thinking of nothing.*
>
> (Teaching Journal, March, 2000)

~

It's the end of March. I've been teaching for almost two months now. Sarah and I are sitting in our office, the space we sometimes refer to as 'the closet'. The room is quite small, but its shrinking size is exaggerated because of the amount of objects that we have in here with us. We are surrounded by shelves full of books, CDs and videos, two filing cabinets covered with phone books and bits of scrap paper, a series of hatboxes, several fencing swords, a large fabric fish, and a large variety of odds and sods. The room is clearly a Drama teacher's study. It could be in disguise as a costume and props room. Old coats hang from the back of the door, and a pile of donated clothes still sits in the corner. We each have a desk, both of which are covered with stationery holders of different sorts.

When I first entered this room I had no idea how to organise my things. I had no idea what these 'things' would be, but I imagined lots of paper, photocopied and handwritten. I was soon proved right. Now I have trouble coping with where to put what and when. One of the first duties Sarah fulfilled, as my newly appointed mentor, was to drag me down to the book room (I didn't kick and scream) to meet

the lovely book room lady. We returned with binder folders, display folders, blank exercise books, pens and white board markers. I felt organised for a while.

The two of us are often in this room together. We have become friends. Officially Sarah has the title of 'mentor', a role that she takes seriously, and does well. So we are now sitting in our office box during one of our shared free lessons to have a planned mentor-mentee meeting. This meeting has been arranged for us to discuss my progress and how I've found my first year so far. I'm not anxious about this meeting, it's not a test, and I feel comfortable in sharing my thoughts with Sarah. I do this often (too often) informally between classes and after school – actually, I may hold her back after school 'chewing her ear off'. She has a friendly face, long blonde hair and she often smiles. Sarah wears smart, stylish clothes. I secretly think I make her laugh, but she makes me laugh too. A few conversations have led me to believe that we have things in common. But at the time of this conversation, this was not clear.

We turn our ergonomic swivel chairs around to face each other. The 'interview' is about to begin. Today has become my reflection day, as I spent Period 1 observing Sarah work with her Year 10s. She is keen for me to do this, and the school promotes observation of each other's practice, particularly as part of the staff evaluation process (a formal review of how you're going, but that will not happen for me until next year). I have just had Year 7s before recess, and noted in my diary that not many of them handed in their journals. I wonder if I am being firm enough with them. Maybe they're not taking me seriously. What is a reasonable response to this situation? I should raise this with her.

'This is just a reflection, Marty' she begins. 'Not an assessment or anything like that! We can just look at things generally, like what's gone well, what's been difficult, what goals you have for the rest of the year, things like that. I'll take notes, if that's okay, and will write them up so you can check them before I pass them onto Marge'.

'No worries' I respond.

'So, how has your year gone so far?' she begins.

~

Talking to people close to me is important in my first year of teaching. Throughout the year I talk about my experiences to many people. To my Mum, I talk about the difficulties. To Sarah, I talk about what I think are my achievements. To my principal, the quiet and attentive Michael, I talk about what I have learned, and what my goals are for the coming year. To other new teachers, and colleagues, I talk about the potential of Drama to empower students, and the reality of Drama in the classroom. Oh, and of course, behaviour management. To my students, the few that are bold enough to ask why I am a teacher, I talk about how much I enjoy teaching. To all of them, at some point, I mention how tired I am.

But this year is not a clear series of events, all running like a video from Scene 1 at the beginning of the year to the final scene in December. This year is a blur. A blur of feelings, faces, and moments, that don't appear in any order, but float around, waiting to be thought of, depending on how I am feeling at the time. There are many faces that I picture when thinking about my first year. Students, colleagues, parents, my school principal, and even my own family, particularly my Mum, play a role in my first year. But there are also the other images, less specific, that appear: our two bedroom 1940s brick house we rented for the year; my office and the contents of my notice board; my purple teaching mug; and the leather jacket I bought in the middle of the year – and wore for the rest of the year (it became my teaching jacket).

I am keeping many mementoes from this year, particularly objects that bring back fond memories. My notice board is overflowing with my personal touch. I guess I'm marking my territory. The first thing I put on it was a poster of Bertrand Tavernier's film *It all starts today* – a film about a struggling teacher in France who is coping with the demands of his profession and feeling disillusioned about whether or not he is having an impact. I have my teacher's diary, with my multi-coloured timetable in it. I have cards students have given me.

> *To Marty,*
>
> *Have an excellent Christmas and New Year. I think u r a totally cool tutor (even if u separate me and Jules, write down absent names in assembly, get me to put my hair up etc…*
> *U Rock!*

This one makes me smile. My email inbox already contains many messages. Fellow staff members trash emails daily, weekly, monthly, or the whole lot at the end of the year when their computers are collected for servicing. I think that's a shame, but also something that could cause potential problems, as I've needed to search for past messages relating to students, meetings, or other school issues. The personal ones are great for sentimental reasons. My favourites messages are from my Mum.

> *Just a quick note to say hope you both have a lovely relaxing weekend.* (18th May)

Mum's voice springs up and out of the laptop on my desk, a friendly, personal voice, often just when I need it – reality coming into what can turn into the monotony of my workday.

> *Hi Darling, Sorry to miss a yack with you last night. Dad and I were just thinking about you and how you'd sounded full of the cold.* (22nd May)

She worries when she doesn't hear from me. We are pretty regular email chatters – is this unprofessional, I wonder?

> *Hi Ladykins, where are you? Are you crook? It was only this am that I realized you might not have been at school yesterday. Hope you're feeling OK now, its pretty hellish not feeling well and having things that one has to do. Hope to hear from you soon. All's cruising along at this end…*
> (21st November)

She says all the right things, and gives me the TLC when I need it.

I'm not sure if I am using my teaching diary correctly. Surprisingly, there is little content from the first few months. The list of term dates is stuck in the first page; the holidays are highlighted. The diary is a proper teacher's diary, with sections for a professional development record, official correspondence, interviews, staff meetings, and even 8 pages for a curriculum overview. Each day then has its own page, divided uniformly into periods. The lack of planning in the diary, I decide, is the result of extensive planning in the year group folders, at least half a page of individual activities written out for each lesson.

This is the only year I will use this style of diary, as I have decided to resort to a smaller one for recording outside classroom details, still keeping the planning in separate folders. How could I know what 'system' of recording and planning would work for me?

~

Even before I had my first day at school I have nightmares. I had the 'naked' dream. I also had the 'naked' dream when I had my first school day as a student, for primary and high school. I wonder what this says about me? Freud? Translated into language it could read like:

I can't sleep.

And yet I dream.

Of course I am naked.

It's the first day of school

I forgot to get dressed.

I am carrying my school bag.

Nobody notices my lack of clothes.

But I know I am a freak.

But for my first day I do remember what to wear. In fact, I have had my teacher costume planned for a week, at least for the first day. Not all black, because, well, it is summer, but also too conservative, so only black trousers. I worry about how far I am going to be able to stretch my wardrobe. Two school photos are taken on my first day, one of me with fellow staff members, all slotted into height-based rows, and then there's me with my tutor group – with *my* tutor group. I'm wearing my 'power' jacket, grey/blue, slightly different, so as not to be boring in black, or to stand out too much in red. I have my strawberry blonde hair (I've never understood this adjective) tied at the back, and smoothly parted in the middle. I want to look professional. My professionalism, however, doesn't shine through in my stance. I now cringe at myself, informally squatting in the front row of Year 7 students, one leg slightly forward, and a cheesy grin on my face. I wonder what the parents think when their child will introduce them to their new tutor by way of this photo.

So, dressed, as I think, to kill, I am ready to let the teaching career begin. The first day continues with a lot of administration for staff and students. The entire morning is spent sorting through timetables, school policies and assigning lockers – of course the older students are given the upper lockers. This is an easy decision I have to make. I spend probably an hour talking to my tutor group about issues they clearly know more about than me. I read the school's 'Purposes and Concern' statement (I speak with conviction and sincerity, merely reciting what

the principal had said to the new staff on the orientation day), continually looking up to see if Alison, Josie, Stuart, Roger, Malcolm, and the others whose names I am yet to nail down, are looking at me. This is our entire morning. Before lunch we gather in the large, metallic coloured gym, sitting in tutor group rows on fluffy bluish carpet for a high school assembly. This is a great chance for a breather.

~

Talking with Sarah makes me reflect on all the big changes this year, personally and professionally. There's our new home. We've rented a two bedroom 1940's house because it is in vicinity to the school, not because we love it or because it would be our home. Ryan likes it.

'It's a house, not joined to anything else and with our own garden' he says. I think it is old, but it is cheap. And safe for our cat! So this year, everything is new. Our home, our jobs, and what we do on our weekends.

~

When Christmas time arrives, my family tends to reflect on the year gone by. One of the toasts that is made is,

'to Marty, who's survived her first year'.

> *Still not dealing with the bomb site known as my office – Monday – but I've given myself a deadline – not coming back in January for any reason! Need… space… to breathe… think… live… sleep… calm… read… eat… sit in sun… slow… down…* (Teaching Journal, p.67)

Endings are funny things. In the end I am so glad to finish. I don't see anyone beyond myself. No thought for the Year 10s who are moving on to college, no

talk of the gifts that my tutor group brings me. All I can think about is the holidays.

There is a knock at my staff room door. 'Hope they didn't hear my squeal of joy that it's over,' I say to Sarah who is eating one of the many chocolates her tutor group has given her.

'Marty?'

'Yeah, come in.'

'I just wanted to say thanks for being a great tutor,' Melissa says, handing over a card.

'Thanks and have a great break before all your hard work starts next year,' I reply.

Julian, having made it through to the end of the year, pokes his head in.

'Have a great break Marty,' he says, then they both giggle about something else, and prance away to celebrate the end of Year 10.

Later, I wonder if I sounded sincere in my response. Year 10 leavers' dinners I think, cynically, could be viewed as the teachers' chance to make sure the Year 10s leave. I say this out loud to someone, but then I feel sad, selfish, and wonder why my thoughts about my first year are all about me.

> *Hi Darling,*
>
> *Nearly all done! Wow you are to be congratulated; your 1st year teaching is finished. We are so proud of you, you have worked so hard and achieved so much I do hope you are proud of yourself as well.*

Sadly, I don't remember being proud this year.

~

Sarah hands me the printed version of our reflection meeting, the title of the document being 'Meeting with Marty Crerar[2] 24th March 2000'. I'm excited, and scan over the sentences quickly, looking for the positive statements, hoping that

---

[2] In my first year of teaching I was known as Martina Crerar. In 2002 I married and changed my surname to Moroney.

the principal and whoever else reads this will be impressed by how I'm progressing. There's nothing in there about worrying that I don't have enough clothes, representing myself to students as a 'footie head', or any mention of my Mum. In Sarah's voice the document presents the things that I feel have gone well.

> *With regard to what to teach she feels reasonably on top of the content aspect of her classes. The folders of Year Group Courses Information are working well for her and although she feels that the bigger picture is still fuzzy, the near future is under control! She also feels reassured that her own teaching knowledge is there and has come to the fore as needed.*

I certainly planned extensively, writing out instructions for myself, more than what the content would be.

> *Tutor group – feels that after a busy start they have settled down and she has gotten to know them better. She has felt very supported by her head of house, and feels that she can ask for assistance or advice whenever needed. Mostly she has felt able to deal with tutor issues, but has appreciated the support from Marge over more difficult issues, she liked the 'we' aspect of dealing with students and parents, rather than feeling it is just her.*
>
> *Marty feels she has found where most things are in the school and has felt comfortable asking for information from colleagues. She does want people to be able to put a face to a name, especially when emailing staff she may have only met briefly. She is happy to do things that raise her profile amongst staff and students, such as the talk on her exchange to Finland, which she presented for Year 10 Gathering. Marty feels comfortable in the staff room and approaching other members of staff about students etc.*

I described my difficulties or things that had been unexpected. I don't mention how often I have been traveling the 2 hours home each weekend to see family and friends. This place isn't my home yet. Even the cat travels each Friday night, straight after the Friday night meeting. Yet other familiar concerns are raised:

Homework: getting the work from students on the due date and how to reinforce her expectations and then follow up in a fair and consistent way. Marking has been very time consuming and difficult for her to judge the standards.

Assessment: when to get assessment of practical work done, finding only a few moments in class to write notes about students, but not enough time to finalise assessment. Needing to transfer marks to assessment folder as soon as possible after the lesson.

Administration: finding it difficult to deal with all the paperwork. Knowing it needs dealing with promptly, but needing sometimes to find out more and this becomes time consuming. Aware of brain space needed to deal with administrative tasks and this can take away from her class preparation time.

The document concludes with my action – the part of the discussion where I turn myself into an 'active reflective practitioner', using my reflections to impact on my future practices, and hopefully to improve and develop. 'See,' I think to myself, 'I did learn something at uni,' as theoretical terms come back easily to me. They just don't sound quite right when I use them in conversations with other teachers. So in speaking to Sarah about what we're doing, I just say that we're doing some reflection and goal setting. 'I will get these Year 7s to hand in their homework' I vow. Sarah's advice and wisdom is blended with my own ideas in this section.

Homework – write less, particularly for the younger year groups who have only written short entries. Not to feel that less writing is less caring, but to be succinct and specific about one or two aspects of the journal and keep common errors to tell the whole class.

Assessment – moderate with Marge and Sarah with practical work. Observe Marge and Sarah in the classroom. Have some observations of my teaching done by Marge and Sarah of all year groups.

Administration – getting easier, keep finding out more.

Sarah had the idea of setting goals for each year group, things that I feel I can achieve within the next month.

Complete progress checks

Swat up on Greek and Shakespeare notes and preparation

Year 7 – learn all the names and get to 'know' students better

Year 8 – encourage more polished work

Year 9 – more toward individual skills development

Year 10 – finish work in time for Shakespeare unit

Maintain life in cruise control!

I reread the last goal. Maintain life. I think about writing this on a piece of paper and pinning it to the notice board, with the other motivators I have on there, such as my card with a recipe for rich chocolate cake on it (that I never made), the photo of my students I worked with in Finland, and the 'Thank you' note I received from William at the end of my internship that reads 'Thanks for all that

you've done at Masters College. You'll make a great teacher! William'. I look at the beginning of my goals.

'Progress Checks' I mumble.

'Sorry, what?' Sarah says looking up.

'Just thinking about the jobs ahead. Only 168 progress checks to do.'

'Wait until report writing starts' she smiles, reminding me in a friendly manner that I have a long way to go, and that many others have done this before me. I sign the form, and wonder which pile of papers to put it in.

~

4.2   Conversation Two – First Impressions

Researcher Introduction:

Our conversation circles around first impressions. As we talk about what they think of my first year, flashes of their experiences of starting teaching soon echo.

Marty: What was your first impression? The first thing that came into your head after you had read the whole journal? Eleanor?

Eleanor: Just how similar it had been for both of us, that we had the same little girlie excited nervousness, but then again how completely different it was because of the total differences in our school structures. It was like we had the same anticipation and the same emotions linked with different experiences but then completely different backgrounds.

Marty: The impression you got from my school was that I had a lot more freedom?

Eleanor: Yeah, more freedom than I had… still confined but more freedom within your class to do what you chose to do and more scope to deal with different issues. Because my school is a parent controlled Christian school which means that I can't deal with any issue, drugs, violence, sex, rape unless it's giving God's view on those issues.

Marty: William, what was your initial reaction to the journal?

William: It took me back, 20 years Marty. Where did it all go? And the similarities and dissimilarities are quite striking, in the sense that you really didn't feel like a teacher, you were completely at a loss to sort of find your niche, fit into the culture, hear the cynicism, and you coming fresh in thinking that perhaps, well, 'I'm here'. I was lucky, in one way, I came to Esprit High School, which was the school my mother taught at, so I was known, I had an entry card in, and in many ways I knew quite a few of the staff – you know, had social contacts, so I can't relate completely to this journal…

Marty: Angela, you commented when you read the journal that you had a strong first impression…

Angela: I just really related to it and wish I'd done the same thing [*referring to keeping a journal*] so that I could look back and relive all those memories or just learn from those mistakes.

Marty: Really?

Angela: Because after not teaching for 3 years and coming back to it I felt myself back in the position of being a first year teacher. It was just really rewarding to know that someone else felt human and had the highs and lows; it just validated my position for me, what I do… I felt like I was inside you… Experiencing every bit. It felt really weird.

William: I can pick up on the feelings that you had and some of the things that you had to experience in a private school. So my first response? Honest, real, frank, genuine! A bit out there at times but at the same time that is what you wanted it to be. You weren't holding back much.

Marty: Out there? What do you mean?

William: Out there in the sense that, you know, well, some of the innermost… You weren't putting yourself completely on the sleeve and I didn't feel it being too immature, I must say that I didn't feel it to be immature.

Marty: I think I coped. Did you cope with your year Eleanor? Was it as overwhelming for you?

Eleanor: Your story and my story have similarities, but they're completely different.

Marty: The first thing you pointed out Eleanor was the similarities, you said 'the excitedness, the girlie, energy, enthusiasm'. What do you mean by that?

Eleanor: Like 'when I turned up to school and I had a pigeon hole' or 'when I turned up and there was a teachers' chronicle in my pigeon hole' or 'I walked over and I had my office or my chair, my desk, my calendar'. All the little things that you don't get to have as your own at university when you are going through your pracs and everything. You might have a desk that is borrowed off someone else for a couple of weeks when you are there at school, but nothing more. 'My own pigeon hole with my own name on it' and 'my own place to hang my mug' and all that sort of stuff, they were the kind of 'I am a real teacher' type things that hit within the first couple of weeks and then not being able to share that with any other teacher cause you feel a little bit shy about it. The nervous excitement about the anticipation about it all!

Marty: What was it like for you Angela, to be in my head?

Angela: Weird because… it felt like me. I felt like I had these kids in my room, like I know them. Do you say you were an introvert?

Marty: Did I? No, I…

Angela: Somewhere I think you said something about…

Marty: No. I normally classify myself as an extravert.

Angela: Okay, because I thought you're an introvert whose adapted, who's learnt the art of being an extravert, but then again am I projecting me onto you? Because that's how I classify myself. I think it's hard; I get confused between what happened to you and what happened to me.

Marty: Were there similarities in our experiences?

Angela: They're everywhere. The first thing about being nervous, such as my first day I remember shaking with a Grade 7 class. Things like, taking notes, I notice I take notes madly; all the other staff are either half-glazed or one was asleep. Self criticism. Some of the frustrations and issues of duty! All that self-questioning and, you know, that nasty little voice that tells you, you should have done this, and you should have done that. Colouring your timetable, it's in my bag, and I can show you.

Marty: I remember!

Angela: I think, every page reminds me of me, it was SCARY! The naiveté… when you were positive, and your dealing with cynicism.

Marty: Naiveté, interesting word!

Angela: Yeah.

Marty: In what way?

Angela: You know, that sort of idealist… 'This is going to be wonderful,' and 'I'm going to educate young minds,' and 'you're going to achieve so much'. You sort of get whammed in the face with the realities and you have to learn, to kind of adapt but definitely not get negative and have expectations about this thing, about feeling fake.

William: Yes, the similarities between me and you were at times – the insecurities, the sense that you didn't really want, you know, you felt as though you had to fill up a lesson and you couldn't… time management, the whole thing, it is all like a prac that you are being paid for.

Marty: And if you mucked up you had to wear the consequences because you had to!

William: Absolutely!

Marty: And if you didn't like a kid, too bad, they've got you, and if they didn't like you, too bad.

William: Yeah, and I've had a few experiences that you've had.

Marty: Like what?

William: Oh, some teachers perhaps looking at you as some sort of idealist, You know, a lot of the stuff was, reminding me of how I felt at times but again, differently. You're Marty. I'm William. So there were obviously things that I felt more comfortable with at the time, when you felt more uncomfortable. I didn't fall sick until my third year.

~

4.3　*Monday*

'It all starts today' the front of my teaching diary shouts;

the cut-out movie advert,

carefully selected, tool of inspiration.

'It should all start today.'

But I can't find my name,

　　　pigeon hole,

　　　coffee cup,

　　　toilet,

　　　or

　　　classroom.

'I am qualified to do this!'

'I am *not* experienced to do this!'

Trapped,

'in the beginning teachers' paradox' (Corcoran, 1981).

Shocked,

'by reality' (Department of Education, Science and Technology, 2002)

As I am supposed

to be?

It's all a blur.

I can't see

I can't imagine.

I can only do my best.

'It should be a blur!' (Britzman, 1991),

and more excuses follow.

'There is little doubt that beginning teaching is a difficult and demanding task,'

(Loughran,

Brown

& Doecke,

2001, p.8),

I *feel*

little

and

I *feel*

alone

(Boreen & Niday, 2000; Gratch, 2000).

Telling me,

'it will be hard' (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998; Ballantyne, Thompson, & Taylor, 1994)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Telling me,

'it will be frightening' (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995; Gratch, 1998; Marti & Huberman, 1993; Wilson, Ireton & Wood, 1997)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Telling me,

'it's supposed to be stressful' (Batten, Griffin & Ainley, 1991; Lang, 1999)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Telling me,

'there will be many problems' (Birell, 1995; Kiggins & Gibson, 2002)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Unknowing,

the hype,

the clichés,

is the only way to avoid drowning

under the 'sea of advice' (Martinez, 1998).

I turn away,

Discontented and disillusioned,

whispering, by myself,

'Is this really the beginning?'

I am angry,

now.

Confused and bewildered,

'similar, but different' the echo calls.

So, I begin again,

differently, asking

'Who am I, here?'

Chapter Five

Tuesday [1]

~

Tuesday arrives swiftly. A small step has been taken, as the first working day has been survived. The first day down! The first of many firsts! On Tuesdays there is still much to be done, but some tasks have been crossed off the list. Everything is still new, each day a mixed bag of surprises, but the world is no longer a blur. I can start to see where I am, and what makes it special, unique, difficult. This is the day that some grounded decisions can be made. Now I have some previous experience on which to base new judgments, even if only one day. Progress has been made. Things are no longer completely unfamiliar. Tuesday is a step towards awareness. I am moving along the teacher conveyor belt, slowly, but hopefully, being shaped into the teacher I will become. I am no longer brand-spanking new, but still gleaming. I can look around, and see the many first experiences, different and frequent. Now I can start to explore 'where am I?'

~

The first year of teaching is often filled with high expectations and extreme difficulties. The conditions under which new teachers carry out the first year determine the effectiveness, attitudes, and behaviors that the teachers will develop and sustain for an entire career. (Brock & Grady, 2001, p.6)

~

---

[1] The first layer of this chapter contains two stories entitled *The First of Many Firsts* and *Where Am I?* These stories are followed by *Conversation Three: First Days at Our Schools.* The chapter concludes with the stanza 'Tuesday' from the poem 'Teaching Daze'.

5.1.1 *The First of Many Firsts*

> *Had my first ground duty today. Felt like a patrol sergeant, unclear if I was in the right area, let alone following the right procedure. Marching around, giving hollow, and uncertain instructions to students 'on our way outside are we?' followed by my attempt at being personal 'it's such a beautiful day outside anyway'.* (Teaching Journal, p.7).

~

I hate first days. There is so much that is unknown. Where do I go? Who will be there? Will I get lost? Will I say the wrong thing? How long will it go for? Will I have anyone to talk to? My memories of my first day at high school are filled with turmoil. My stomach churns as I remember my anxiety, as I set off to catch the bus to school – I assumed I could catch it from outside my house. There I stood, in my skirt that hung below my knees (Mum promised I would grow into it), with my shoes that were too shiny. To my horror the bus zoomed straight past me. I'd even done the daggy thing of sticking my arm out to attract the bus driver's attention. Freaking out, I ran back into my house on the verge of tears. Mum soon shooed me out the door, to see if the bus would stop as it came back along the street. It did stop. But my first day was not officially over yet. I had to find my classes, people I could talk to, and most importantly where the toilets were. After my first day of high school, and after actually managing to catch the bus home, I swore I would never go back. First days can be very traumatic.

~

In my first year of teaching everything is new. Everything is new all the time. Everything.

Every day there is something new, something that I have never done before. The first lesson is only the first of many firsts. Perhaps the hardest thing of all is that every single lesson after my official first lesson is still a 'first' lesson in its own right, as I have never covered the content before. I have to relearn all my subjects, each night, before each lesson.

There is the first orientation day, where I drink tea and munch cheese and crackers with the principal, the welcoming committee of staff, and the other new people; the first moment I walk into the staff car park as a staff member, looking up at the beautiful architecture and thinking 'I belong here', and then struggling to find where the blasted toilets are; the first lesson, when I have students sitting in a circle and talk at them for over 20 minutes; the first staff meeting, where I take notes (this is also the last meeting I do this); the first report writing, the first time a student cries in class (this has only happened once more since my first year – at least, so far), and the first time I send a student out of my classroom…

~

Today is my 'official' first day at my new school – it is orientation day! A bunch of other 'first dayers' are milling around the meeting hall. It is a large room, which has million dollar views of the city, although the room doesn't suggest such wealth. Sun streams in the rectangular high windows, but the heat of the day is not sweltering in here like it is outside. I realise that the light blue, Hawaiian shirt that I am wearing is slightly see-through. Bugger! Not a good first impression.

Hopefully no one will notice. I adjust my posture so as not to emphasise the white straps of my bra. 'Simplicity' is the key word to describe this room, and the atmosphere. The carpet is quite old, highlighted by its colour scheme rather than its quality. The borders of the room are lined with plastic and metal chairs, and several folding tables lean against some of these banks of chairs. The table that is set up is in front of an old-fashioned window-like opening that connects the meeting room with a small kitchen. An urn bubbles away and rows of quaint cups and saucers await coffee or tea.

There are four other new staff members commencing employment this year. I get to know them slightly as we progress through the various 'get to know the school' activities, which include the compulsory tour of the school (yes, there are the toilets, will I be able to find them again?), a speedy (and perhaps life threatening) rally style bus ride down to the school's hockey grounds, morning tea in the archives room learning about the history of the school, and a session of sharing stories with the principal in this meeting room, before the official welcoming festivities begin. Here I meet the other 'newbies' - a quiet, but kindly Home Economics teacher, who has moved back from Sydney and would like to buy a house in Tasmania soon; a cheerful and short Science teacher, who has given up long service leave in the Education Department to gain a position at White School; another short person, this time a musician who's great with computers, and a blonde haired, young and athletic trainee who'll be working in the area of outdoor Ed. Oh, and of course me, the new Drama teacher. I tell the story of deciding to become a teacher when I was an exchange student in Finland. It is well received; similar, but different to everyone else's story.

The tea, coffee and platters are great things to focus on when you find yourself alone with no one to talk to. We're not sitting on the chairs that are stacked around the room, but are doing the 'mingling thing'. You can look at the cheese as it sits on your cracker, and spend time trying to avoid making your spoon clink against the side of your teacup as you stir in another teaspoon of sugar. It's hard to mingle with people you don't know. The newbies are not being permitted to hang out in a bunch and protect themselves, and insulate themselves. People, who have been assigned as official mentors, pounce on their mentees and ask questions such as,

'How are you adjusting to being in Hobart?'

'Have you settled into your new place?'

'Have you tried the restaurants in North Hobart yet?'

'It's lovely here at school before the students come back. So quiet!'

'Have you had any experience with hockey?'

I am saved from such questions by Sarah, who has already had me over for tea. Hence, I am out of conversation topics to discuss with her, and struggle to know what to chat about. I try to come up with intelligent questions based on the folders she has given me to look through.

'So, you do Shakespeare in Year 10, what plays do you cover?'

'I notice Year 8's do poetry. How do they enjoy this?'

'What Medieval plays do you look at?'

'How often do Year 7's write journals?'

And then I meet Emma. Emma is a warm, open soul, who seems to be approaching anyone who looks a little lost. That's definitely me, as Sarah is talking to Marge about bigger school matters. I realise that it's not just a time for newbies to chat, but a time for all staff members to catch up, possibly share stories of their holidays, but definitely to talk about what work needed to be done this term. I am staring near a window, trying to reassure the group that I am not lonely, but simply alone, by looking out the window. Emma, comes over, and oozing her natural warmth, she simply says 'hi, how are things going? I'm Emma.'

I like her immediately. As I haven't chatted to her before it means that we can discuss all the typical topics, such as moving to Hobart, restaurants, and even partners. These issues are addressed, and crossed off the casual conversation list. But I feel comfortable, and after the small talk I am confessing my real feelings to her.

'I hate being new,' I throw out there.

'We're all new at something, sometime,' she replies, 'you won't be new for long'. Of course she's right, but I am glad when this day ends, and I have officially survived my first day.

~

The walk to school on the first day feels like a pilgrimage. Although I am leaving well before the morning bell, wanting to be early, and get to my desk to get organized, I am soon joined by fellow 'newbies', young students in sparkling new uniforms, walking with a fellow newbie, or tentatively negotiating little steps on

their own. I begin to feel like a teacher the moment I step onto the school property. 'I work here,' I think. I'm not important enough to have my own car park, but justify this by thinking that I don't need one anyway seeing as I live so close. I feel proud that this magnificent building is where I work. I actually work here. I am actually a teacher. This first walk into the car park is soon followed by several other firsts.

The first time I check my pigeonhole and find a note in it. The first time I open my new teachers' diary and look over my lesson outlines (which I have of course written out in detail in each of the curriculum folders).The first time I fill my purple spotted teachers' cup with cheap, instant coffee, to slurp on through my first staff brief. The first time I go to my desk as a teacher on my first fulltime teaching day. The first time I start up my computer (yes 'my' personal laptop) and check my work email for 'marty@whiteschool.tas.edu.au'. Each of these firsts makes me feel very important and confident. I feel much better than I did when I started high school.

~

I have the first period off. I spend the entire period planning my second period, going over and over my lesson plan, rewriting things, making more notes, and then rewriting the list out to simplify it. Notes include,

> *Introduce myself*
> *Introduce course*
> *Homework*
> *Expectations*
> *My expectations*
> *Name Game*

The order of these tasks constantly changes and I soon need to rewrite the list because I cannot see it for the arrows, scribbles and extra directions to myself that I have added in red pen. Time check! The bell is five minutes away. I might just start walking now, to beat the crowd, and to make sure the classroom is organized.

'Here we go,' I tell my notice board.

I remember doing lots of talking in these initial lessons. Every lesson I have students sitting in a circle. Why? So I can see every one's face, and the students can see me. It's how I remember my own Drama classes as a student. We all sit on the floor, with legs crossed in front. Sometimes a few people have their legs to the side, and are leaning on their hands. This is a non-threatening start. It's not 25 eyes just staring at me, but feels more like a group, perhaps even a team. I start with a moment of silence, as I had been informed, is the school tradition/culture/ritual. So here we sit. The Year 7's sit in a circle. They're all staring at me, and each other. But I'm ready. And I've prepared my speech.
'Welcome to Year 7 Drama. I'm Martina Crerar. And I go for the best football team – the North Melbourne Kangaroos.'

There is an immediate reaction, just as I'd hoped for. The tension that I feel is suddenly eased, as a few thumbs go up, and a few faces screw up with disgust. What does Aussie Rules Football have to do with Drama, I can hear you puzzling. I don't know. It has nothing really, but the beginning of the year is not about Drama. It's about getting to know each other. How can I possibly teach these 25 strangers if they have no idea who I am, or if I have no idea who they are? At least now we have a starting point, something on which to relate to. (Three years later I think if you'd ask students now what they know about me, it would definitely be that I support the Kangaroos, but also maybe that I love the Academy Awards, which is another time of year, apart from September, when my interests were distracted to things outside the classroom.)

The first lesson comes to an end. It is actually over. I am no longer a beginner. I have taken my first lesson as a real teacher. But as I head to the staff room at recess, a badge of experience, even if it is only a second's worth, gleams on my black jacket. The cheap instant coffee in my purple, spotted mug almost tastes like a cappuccino.

~

And then it happens. I send a naughty student out of my classroom. I have failed to cater for the needs of my individual students, and am forced to the 'last straw'. It's the first time I have had to use this behaviour management strategy. At least I made it to Term Two.

'Matthew,' my voice strains slightly, 'come here please.' At least I remember to say 'please'. Polite etiquette has not failed me, but I can feel myself going slightly red. Everyone in the class is definitely looking at me.

'Matthew,' I state, firmly, 'Go down the office with this note'. Suddenly I have taken my eyes off him, and am flipping through the pages of my teachers' diary. I know I put the appropriate forms here somewhere. I haven't used them before, so I may well have thrown them in the bin, in one of my administration hazes. Panicking, I flip faster, keen to keep any composure I have left. All my acting skills come into play, and I talk myself through the experience by using my inner monologue.

'Don't panic, Marty, they are here. You have not thrown them out. Check the back page… not there, that's Okay. Check the front sleeve… not there, well, they must be tucked into the plastic cover… yes, there they are. Now, just get a pen that works, and write out why you are sending him out of the classroom. What's that box? 'Do you wish the student to return to your classroom?' What does that mean? Why would I send him out, if then I wanted him back? Why didn't I look at this form in more detail before this moment happened?'

I hand him the slip, trying to be casual, and turn back to the rest of the Year 10 class. I don't watch him leave, as one of my own behaviour management strategies that I often use is to assume that students will comply with my wishes. Assuming the worst, that they will do the naughty thing, only antagonizes. Most times this strategy works.

The Drama theatre is filled with smoke. Matthew has managed to sneakily lift up one of the dip traps on the stage, find the cord of the smoke machine (that was coiled safely away in the smoke machine box that I thought was packed safely away behind the black curtain), plug it in, switch it on, and push the 'go' button. Subsequently, in the middle of a read through of a handout, people start coughing.

(A mythical reaction, as the smoke juice is proven not to cause coughing. People just think when they see smoke that they need to cough.) I look up and see the theatre and my students disappearing into a cloud of theatrical smoke. I react swiftly, perhaps with the seriousness of it actually being real smoke. I don't blink, and send Matthew down to the school office, to speak to one of the school heads. 'That is definitely enough to have someone kicked out of class' I reassure myself. Matthew's crime is obvious and uncontested. He doesn't argue, and sadly seems resigned to being sent out. Not before he has enjoyed a chuckle with his mate next to him, someone who always laughs at his jokes, but never joins in.

After he is gone, we continue reading the worksheet. My mind wanders over and over the incident, and whether I am justified in my actions. Later that day, I will tell the story over and over, seeking collegial support for my decision. Secretly, I need reassurance that sending someone out of my room isn't a sign of weakness in my teaching practice.

~

The first time I have to speak to a parent is on the telephone. We are instructed by our head of house that we should call all the parents of our Year 7s – to say hello, introduce ourselves, and to check to make sure that our new tackers are settling in okay, from a home perspective. This sounds straight forward, as I read over the script that I have written for myself, before I lift the handset of the phone.
'Hi, this is Marty Crerar from White School. Would Jane Bentley be there please?'

Sarah, has suggested that I also add 'it's not urgent' so that the person on the other end of the phone doesn't freak out and think that something terrible has happened – why else would the school phone?

The phone call is a safe place to start. No one can see me. They don't know what I look like. They won't judge my qualifications based on what I am wearing or how old I look. Only four calls to make. No problems.

A week passes. I have not made the calls yet. I am arguing with myself, justifying my procrastination with the comment 'they'll probably be at work' or 'after school is a better time'.

The new Science teacher (the one who gave up long service leave) tells me that she has finished all the calls. She admits it takes several times to catch people, but she that has ended up making all the calls from home, after tea time, so that she knows she can catch people. Is this appropriate, I think? Surely it is a work issue. Do I really have to make work calls from home?

Four o'clock comes around. This is 'D' day.

'Hi, yes, um, this is Marty Crerar, would Ms Bentley be there?'

Drat. I've forgotten to mention I'm from the White School and that it's not urgent. Jane Bentley comes to the phone.

'Hi Jane,' I say, not hesitating about my informality in calling her by her first name, 'it's Marty Crerar here, from White School…'

'Yes…' she says, giving me no indication that she knows who I am.

'It's nothing urgent…' Still no feedback! 'I am just phoning to introduce myself as Katie's tutor, and to see how she's settled into her first week of high school.'

'Ah, yes.' Now she gives me a little bit of support. 'Everything seems to be fine.'

And that's it. That's all Jane Bentley has to say about her daughter's first week at high school. It can't be this easy? Surely, I need to say more.

'Certainly, from my perspective, she seems happy at the end of the day, and is open in chatting to me about how things have gone.'

'Yes, that's good.'

'Well, okay, this was just a quick call to say hello, and to let you know that if you have any concerns I am your first port of call, um, the person you can contact if you have any questions about how Katie's going, or if you would like to find out anything… um.'

'What was your name again?'

'Marty Crerar!'

'Thanks for the call Marci,' she says and closes the conversation by hanging up. I place the receiver down and put a big tick next to Katie's name on my tutor group list.

One down and three to go!

The other calls follow a similar plot, with one kind dad also adding that his son really likes me. This one is my favourite phone call.

But then I phone Deirdre, the mother of Leila. I throw her my usual introduction, but am then surprised by her response.

'Well, no. She hasn't enjoyed her first week, and I'm very concerned about what the school is doing to help her.'

I am surprised, because on the surface, I have labeled Leila as a cheerful, giggling, and generally happy Year 7 student. I've made this assumption based on seven days of seeing her, so I am completely willing to admit that I may have come to the wrong conclusion. She has latched on to the other Year 7 girl in our tutor group, and I swear they've laughed *at* me everyday. Not *with* me, note! I am confused as Deirdre continues to describe a student that I don't feel I know.

'She's complained about the music teacher, who hasn't helped her get her cello instructor organized. And, I haven't received any information from the school regarding bus times, or contact numbers, or anything. This is costing us a lot of money to get her there, and she wouldn't be going if she hadn't managed to get a scholarship.'

The script of my lines that I have on my desk does not have any responses for what Deirdre is telling me.

This is the first time I feel unqualified to deal with someone. My fears about dealing with parents are confirmed. This is a tricky situation. I think there is more going on here than Deirdre is telling me, but that's just a hunch, not anything based on any training I've had. I have given Leila all the information that I have. The school newsletter was placed in her hot little hands that Friday. It goes home every Friday filled with sports dates, term dates, upcoming events, and juicy staff news, including a nice blurb about the new staff members – including me!

'I can send you out another copy of the newsletter if you like,'

'That would be great, but I suppose the information in it is already irrelevant? For example, when are the first parent/teacher meetings coming up?'

'They're next week,'

'See, that's what I mean, now I have to organize a baby sitter, and if you hadn't phoned me I wouldn't have found out about them.'

'I can talk to her about taking school notices home, and make sure that she realises that it is her responsibility.'

'Yes, well, we'll have to wait and see. So I'll get to meet you next week?'

'Yes, there'll be a form sent home this week…'

~

My first experience of report writing is… traumatic, I think because I don't help myself by preparing for the worst. I assume that, as a graduate with first-class honours, and having completed a 120-page honours dissertation, I will be able to write a few sentences on every student I teach. I am right, in that I do manage to write a few sentences for all 157 of them, but I am deceived by the amount of time that it takes me. I am also naïve about the process of having reports checked, or in this case 'approved' by the various staff members assigned the role of peer checking and proofreading. 'Yes,' I think, 'I did read the 'Reports 2000' booklet, which outlines White School's style conventions, such as using capitals for Term Two, and not using contractions such as 'it's'. I also have to use a past tense, or is that present tense, and as a result, my reports are/were an interesting blend of both. This knowledge does not help me 'pass' my first report-writing period, and I feel burdened by the little comments made by my supervisor and Head of Faculty.

'This needs to be that.'

'You need to find a new word for dazzles.'

'This sentence does not make sense.'

'Have you actually spellchecked these?'

The next time report writing comes around I might as well be back at the beginning of the year. I learn nothing, apart from how bad I am at writing reports. I have so many errors in my first batch of reports in Semester One that I feel like I have been identified as a teacher with special report writing needs. Selecting the right phrases is difficult. Being original is difficult. Being both positive and constructively critical can also be difficult. And then making sure that all 157 of

them are 'correct' according to syntax, semantics, grammar, educational theory, personal style (very low on the scale, no Marty words like 'dazzle' are allowed) and finally the White School approved conventions – all the while continuing to plan, mark, and teach fulltime - all I can say is that my first experience of writing reports is simply mad. No wonder I got gastro!

~

My first year of teaching will not be my last, yet in the first month it feels like it will never end, and I will be a new person forever. I don't know what the correct uniform is, according to the uniform policy, without looking it up. I don't know how to pronounce awkward names properly when reading out the student information bulletin each morning, and don't appreciate the sniggers I get when I knowingly mispronounce names. I don't know where rooms are, and still need to ask for directions when given supervision lessons. I don't know all my students' names, and still need to do sneaky things like, call for volunteers to share based on the class list, or look at a student's diary to find out their name before I refer to them or their work. And I don't know what my expectations are, and whether or not I, or the school, will allow students to work outside of the drama classroom unsupervised.

I am an 'L' plater, meaning that I have my learner's license, and I am driving around this school with a gigantic 'L' plastered on my forehead. The students know that I know little about White School, and some of them take advantage of this, but saying they are allowed to have their hair down, or wear two rings, two sets of earrings and three necklaces. And of course 'gold nail polish is okay, it's just bright colours like blue that are not' one sparkly eyed Year 9 convinces me. The first year, like the first of anything though, does end. I soon forget to admire the old-fashioned architecture, and the novelty of school bus rides wears off. My first lesson comes to an end, and I think 'I'll do that differently next time'. I continue to dread duty, but get into the swing of things, soon finding that you can do other things on duty, such as cleaning up classrooms that stop you feeling like a sergeant. After my first staff meeting, I stop taking notes. After my first batch of

reports, I start making notes. I soon realise that I definitely need to clear the decks in regards to marking, and to plan assessment tasks carefully before this hectic period comes around again. After my first parent/teacher meeting I smile that I decided on the 'power suit' to wear – it doesn't make me look older, but I hope it makes me look smarter, and perhaps 'qualified'.

Sooner than later the first year turns into a second year, and the 'L' plate can graduate to a 'P' plate (although still not fully licensed, I moved on from being a learner to being provisional). In my first year Sarah would often say,
'Don't worry you've only been here for a minute,' meaning that I should try hard not to worry too much about my mistakes, after all this is only my first year. So in my second year I joke,
'I should know what to do now! I have been here for two minutes.'

~

Do not therefore be too disappointed or take it as a personal slight if an application to one of the more well-favoured coastal sunny spots does not even result in an interview. By all means try – but be prepared. (Bennett & Martin, 1980, p.1-2).

~

5.2.2 *Where Am I?*

> *I am in a school that takes so much time to explain, inform and open up opportunities for discussion. There is a lot of history to this school, and I feel like I've been given a part in its drama. Listening to the other teachers talk at orientation day about what happened here during the last year, the last decade and the last hundred years is very exciting.*
>
> Teaching Journal (p.1)

~

I dream of this school long before I even see what it looks like. In my dream I am dressed smartly, in a tailored pant suit (usually black) and look and feel in control and calm. Everything around me is organized and clean. The walls, desks, and chairs are graffiti free. The hallways are litter free. The air is fresh, and noise free, as staff and students talk politely and civilly to each other, in friendly tones. I feel comfortable here, and believe with arrogance, that I am in an excellent school.

I am a teacher in a top private school. When speaking to other Education graduates, I secretly and egotistically hold onto this dream, and feel like the luckiest person in the world. I am in the perfect school.

~

The first morning of school is a staff day, otherwise known as a student-free day (which I've always thought is a weird concept for a school that is really there for the students). The day begins with what's called a staff 'gathering'. A gathering is a formal meeting, where participants come together to sit in silence, reflect. In other words they gather together to worship. It is like a church service, but without a formal structure or hymns. The principal has 'warned' me about my first gathering, saying that it is not uncommon for people to sit in silence for more than half an hour. When compelled, he explains, members can stand and speak.
'A popcorn meeting,' he laughs, remembers fondly, 'is when so many people are compelled that they are popping up all over the place'. This makes no sense to me at all.

This particular religion believe that this process of speaking out of the silence, and I assume being brave enough to suddenly stand and speak in front of a large group of people, relates to being compelled by the spirit of God. This is my immature knowledge of what happens before my first meeting. However, I am unprepared for my first meeting when I walk into the wood paneled, maroon carpeted room. There are comfortable chairs, with cushions, and there are wooden benches. I choose a seat with a view of the mountain, as a staff member recommends in a whisper as I walk in.

Sitting in silence for half an hour is very refreshing, and heightens my awareness of myself – my breathing, my vision for the day, the week, and the coming term. Michael explained in our first staff day that there are different types of believers, and thoughts of men and women wearing lots of grey clothing fill my mind. In our one hour professional development session we learned that some groups believe in pacifism, others in the Bible, and others appreciate the wisdom from all religious doctrines. This is, at least, my understanding of what he was explaining, but having never been exposed to it before, I have no idea about what to expect. I am trying to see if there is any conflict between the school doctrine and my own beliefs, perhaps searching for conflict between the school and myself. The fear that all cannot be this perfect and grand circles me. Overly paranoid, self-critical I suppose, but after all the horror stories about starting teaching that lecturers, education department reps, knowledgeable already-teachers, and text books have said, 'The first year of teaching is a time of survival'.

~

I've been teaching at White School for several weeks now. I realise more and more that I am very lucky to be at this school. Sarah says that I have the second best job in the world, after her of course. We are teaching our favourite subjects, in a place that values our subject, and where the students enjoy it. Our numbers in Drama are high, which is why we have two full-time and one part-time Drama teachers. I do feel lucky, and appreciative. Staff members say,

'Why would you want to teach anywhere else?'

I silently reply,

'Well, you wouldn't'.

But I worry that I have nothing to base this comment on. I took this job because I was thrilled to get a position at a school with such an excellent reputation. But I was also just thrilled to get a job at all. And yet, one thought overwhelms me sometimes.

'Do I deserve to be here?'

I've actually said out loud to other staff members 'I haven't done my time yet', meaning that I haven't done a hard slog in a public high school for 10 years, where the working conditions, particularly the students, cause constant difficulties and confrontations. This is my first school, my first fulltime teaching job, and I am here, at White School. What does that mean? Will I be as good a teacher if I haven't seen what the other side of the fence looks like? Will I have realistic expectations of students, or their work, or their behaviour? Do I really know how lucky I am? Is everything really perfect?

~

My first real lesson for the year is a Year 8 Drama lesson. I have written out my notes twice. The Year 8 Drama folder that the part-time teacher before me left has now been remodeled. The first four pages, titled 'Introduction to Year 8 Drama', have been retyped lesson by lesson. I chuckle at the detail that I've included, and think that anyone looking at this folder would instantly know that it belonged to a new teacher.

'Introduce myself' is number one, and highlighted in bold. As if I'd forget to introduce myself, but one can never be too careful.

With biro I scribble an item before this introduction.

'Silence.'

Why do I do this? I add this the morning before I walk into the Drama classroom. It's not a big decision. Surely all teachers start their lesson with silence. The White School staff book states that teachers should uphold the Quaker values, and from what I understand any meeting or gathering of people should start in this manner. It seems easy enough. The catch phrase that leaders in these meetings seem to use is,

'Let's begin with a moment's silence.'

And then everyone is silent. (I marvel now, when writing this story, why I did not question whether or not students would be silent. Surely I would not be able to do this anywhere else – ask a group of 25 students to be quiet, and have it happen instantly? Never!)

The teaching day is beginning and I don't have time to question this subconscious decision that I've made.

The students are chattering in groups, placing their books and pencil cases on top of the wooden bench/bins that run the length of the drama classroom. They lounge about, waiting. I am sitting on the carpeted area. (Drama teachers always sit on the floor.) My eyes are scanning the blue folder of notes that sits on the carpet in front of me. The pen in my hand twirls around my fingers, as if by magic. I am very nervous about what they will think. Will they know I'm new? Will they hate me? Will they listen to me?

'If we could all sit in a circle please.'

That was me. And I think that was a teacher's voice. Some late students straggle in.

'Come and join us on the carpet, please. Quickly!'

Instructions are flying out of my mouth. I'm using phrases without thinking. Then, before I have time to really look at each of the students, to see who the members of my first class are, I say the following words.

'Let's begin with a moment's silence.'

No one closes their eyes. Some fold their little hands in their laps, boys and girls. One pair looks at each other quizzically. But no one freaks out, laughs, or says 'no bloody way' either. I've just started my first lesson in the Quaker tradition.

I am keen to begin my teaching in a Quaker school using the principals of Quakerism. I think I am lucky to be in a Quaker school – a place in which I can literally, with all the backing of the school's philosophy, instigate silence at the beginning of my lessons. I am also keen to make a good impression and to be seen to be doing the right thing. I assume all teachers start each of their lessons with silence. Later I find out that they don't, and soon my passion for starting lessons in the Quaker tradition fades.

~

One term down, but almost half a year has gone. It's June. How time flies. Today was 'staff' day, a nice slow introduction to being a teacher again. I fully intended

to spend ages reflecting on my first term, planning for the next term, and getting thoroughly organized. I have not done any of this. In my holidays I wanted to rebel from anything to do with work. I did go into school three times in the first week of the holidays, but then decided that if I didn't stay away then I would never have been away, and would subsequently start Term Two feeling like I had not had a break at all. But Marge said something interesting to me when we had lunch last week.

'I love coming back here, at any time, even in the holidays,' she said. 'It feels like home.'

Is this atmosphere typical of just this school or all schools? I have nothing really to compare this school with, apart from my short school pracs during my degree. Am I privileged? Is this place like nowhere else?

During our professional development we have some participants from other schools. We are examining the theme of school environment, specifically school culture. My questions that I've been asking about the uniqueness of White school are raised. What are the similarities to other schools? There were comments on both sides.

'Yes it is similar.'

'Kids are kids.'

'No it's not similar.'

'Behaviour management isn't overwhelming.'

I feel slightly out of place in this discussion. But not as much as I did last term! At morning tea I know more faces and names. Staff members were asking me how my holiday had been. Many share their stories of travels overseas. Many have been overseas in the three-week break.

'Wow,' I think.

We have a lot to talk about out. It feels nice to be back. Maybe it is starting to feel like home.

~

Where do I belong? I am the third of three drama teachers. What does that make me? My head of faculty, in my annual appraisal, says that I 'know my place'. This strikes me as odd, and I run it by Sarah.

'What does she mean, that I know my place' I ask her sending my query over the quick metre distance to her desk. I often run stuff by her. Our small, cosy office is conducive to informal, frequent chit chat. Like a cozy sitting room, but not as sunny.

'I'm not sure,' she says, slightly dismissing my wonder, but then seeing my puzzlement she looks up. 'It's a bit odd.'

I think to myself, 'Is it a put down?'

What does that mean? I feel like I am at the bottom of a ladder, that I should not speak out of turn, and that when I am asked a question I should politely answer 'I agree' or 'I don't know' I am clearly at the bottom of a pile. I was prepared to be new, but not to feel lowly. Is this where I belong?

~

5.3   *Conversation Three: First Days at Our Different Schools*

> *...a beginning teacher in such a privileged position, at a fantastic school.*
> (William, Critical Reader, 2001)

Researcher Introduction: *We all started in completely different places, and I want to know more about Eleanor's parent-controlled Christian school, William's move from the public to the private systems, and Angela's time at a large Hobart public school.*

Marty: Do you think, from knowing me through my first year, and knowing me now, that my beginning teaching experience was what I expected?

Eleanor: No. I don't. I've seen changes. We used to always say that I was practical and you were analytical and I don't think in any way shape or form that you're analytical in the classroom from reading your notes, and I think you underestimate your practical skills within the classroom.

Marty: At first the noise surprised me. I don't think I expected to be surrounded by noise all day, because universities are generally quiet places, one person is talking and you are listening. What do you think I experienced? How would you describe it?

Eleanor: A bitter sweet bundle of turbulence [*both laugh*] all the excitement of the first day and the first of everything, the first pigeon hole, the first teachers' chronicle. Your first desk and your first class with each student and the excitement. But also carrying that through the excitement and the anticipation, through the whole year of trying to hold onto the newness of it all but pushing that aside and trying to deny the fact that you're inexperienced so you can be seen as qualified and as experienced, as knowledgeable, in order to take on bigger challenges.

Marty: It's funny. The things that overwhelm my first entries in my journal were about concrete, physical things. The uniform that you get to wear when you become a teacher! I had what I wore the first day sorted out the week before the kids started. The mug I got for Christmas became my 'teaching mug'. It was purple. Why are these things important? Why do we care so much about them?

Eleanor: Because we have been in limbo of being a student teacher, and then a prac teacher, and then an intern. I felt validated as a real teacher. I was still seen as a temporary teacher, as a relief teacher, as a short term thing but you know by getting your own pigeon hole with your own name on it and a desk and everything… there was a sort of permanency, that you were going to be there and that you were going to have a long-term impact and that it wasn't just a seven-week thing.

William: I understand that. You wrote in your journal 'this is no longer prac teaching' and 'I am accountable, responsible'. And 'I still don't know everyone's name'. I mean there was something there that resonated with me because we were there and everyone's been there.

Marty: I was really shocked by going from a lifestyle in which I probably did as much but on a much more flexible scale, so while I did my Honours research I worked. Back then, if I had a bad day I didn't

have to do anything. Now, there's no escaping it. The days just keep coming, everything is new.

William: I know.

Marty: No choice, have to do it! Have to be there!

William: It's such a different reality.

Eleanor: But you do learn from the experiences. I think you learned about the progression of teaching, in the first year they say that everything goes out the window, except for behaviour management and I think being blessed with a school that hasn't got a severe behaviour management you were able to progress further than that.

Marty: What about you Angela, did you have any expectations before you started?

Angela: I was probably a bit more realistic, I wouldn't say cynical, but my expectations were, not this ideal land, but the realities… One day the vice principal walked into the class and just blasted me about not handing in my attendance in front of the kids.

Marty: That was in your first year?

Angela: Yes. It wasn't early in the year, but it was, and it was embarrassing, and I owned that for a long time.

Eleanor: That's like my very first day of school for the year, I turned up to my homeroom, and I'm waiting, and I'm waiting. And then the assistant principal comes past and goes 'What are you doing? Everybody is in assembly. You're meant to be in assembly'. And I said 'Well, no one told me' and he goes 'These are the things you're meant to figure out'. And you know it kind of like… gee, thanks! And then I said 'So how often do you have assembly?' and he goes 'every Monday morning' and so, it's those unwritten things we're expected to know right from the word go.

William: The first year sets you up, and I feel that there isn't enough on the ground, practical assistance and advice given in the academic preparation. I was sort of a savvy, you know, a Dip-Ed student who knew so much about the teaching game because of my family background, so I sort of knew more, not all the crap, but the necessity to move on. To find that in the 50 minutes you can't do everything that you have planned to set out to do, I think perhaps because I had a little more of a foot in the door here.

Marty: That leads us into where we started teaching. Eleanor, you're teaching somewhere quite different now. How different is where you are now, compared to where you were when you first started

teaching. Was there anything where you thought 'I wouldn't have been able to do that at my school'?

Eleanor: Just the freedom that you had with your planning. The other thing I noticed about your school, because you have a team of Drama teachers, there was a far clearer progression from Grade 7 through. Whereas I am the only drama teacher, all the progression has come from how I think, what I think Grade 7s should know and then the Grade 8's and so on.

Marty: How would you describe the situation I had? With me, like three Drama teachers and in fact sharing the staff room with one who I basically taught with in the next classroom for most of the week.

Eleanor: You seemed to have an enjoyment of having someone there to bounce ideas off, but you also felt stifled because everything was kind of like the school had been established years ago, the Drama curriculum had been established for years and everything, and you were involved in the cycle of it. You had the freedom to make choices for your actual class and everything but it kind of felt there was a big pecking order in the school. I had the same pecking order, like Principal, Vice Principal and me so I was highly accountable to those two, but it wasn't the same pecking order within my own department area.

Marty: Yeah.

Eleanor: But you coped with that. I would be a bundle of misery and woe and everything and you seemed to be 'Oh yeah! Everything is fine and I'm happy at this school' and I'm like arrrhh [*we both laugh*] 'I want your school, I want, I want to get out'.

Marty: Was there anything different about White School that stood out?

Eleanor: In comparison to my school? I really liked the emphasis that you had on quietness and from the school's religion. It was like a middle ground between a public and a private school.

Angela: You've got this whole religious thing, I mean, I didn't have any of that, I didn't have to question every little thing I took into my classroom. I had the freedom, creating to a degree my own outlines, and following them. Always checking with my colleague for feedback and making sure I was within parameters, but I had a lot of security.

Marty: Did the use of silence stand out in the journal?

Eleanor: Just before Easter we had a new teacher come into our school that started talking about the importance of silence in the classroom, and so on, as in assembly and that is what the school is trying to

institute now after 25 years and it is a very difficult thing for them to try and institute.

Marty: They should come and have a look at White School.

Eleanor: Yeah.

Marty: I still really appreciate it because it's an official thing. It's part of the… philosophy of the school both theoretically and practically. Parents know about it. It happens every meeting there is a silence at the beginning of a meeting and so you don't have that battle to try and instigate it.

Eleanor: I think that, from reading your notes, your school is far more encouraging of you to contact the student's parents.

William: You obviously spend a lot of time, you know, getting back to parents in many, many ways and taking on board students who had to have, not special needs, but were more demanding and I thought that was amazing for a first year teacher to have that confidence.

Marty: I don't know if that is just me, but the program at the school…

William: Oh, right, yes.

Marty: It's a very big part of what we do, it's written out.

William: So essentially it's part of…

Marty: I mean literally we have our own computers on our desks… communication is instant [*snaps fingers*] you know, because we can email… I can email my colleague who is sitting at the desk next to me because we don't have anytime off together and rather than scribbling a note and sticking it on her desk, you know.

William: I could see that!

Marty: Angela, what do you think about where I was for my first year teaching?

Angela: I think you were in a good place, because I think your values were in the right place, and you weren't put off by others' negativity or restrictive ways. You were yourself, and that led… the type of teacher you must have been.

Marty: I often wonder had I gone somewhere different, where there weren't any other Drama teachers, would I have been as hard on myself or would I have just said 'Well, no one else is going to do it, I'm calling the shots, I'm going to do it!'.

Eleanor:　　With my first year of teaching I had absolutely no resources left by the previous teacher, which meant that anything I had got from university was basically it. So I started teaching units and it wasn't until half way through the year that I kind of thought I should have started this a different unit way, like, I should have done script before I did improvisation so that they had a chance to do characterization.

Marty:　　I wonder if there's a difference to being in a private school rather than a public one. Why did you move from a public to a private school William?

William:　　It was just an opportunity to maybe get out of the Ed Department. It was a big step Marty, a lot of my friends who were sort of politically to the left, some people thought I made a class decision, and that I was jumping some huge fence, where I was leaving my colleagues behind. And I felt like a traitor for that year.

Angela:　　I felt much more supported than you did, from the impression I got from here.

Marty:　　Really?

Angela:　　Yeah, I mean I had a lot; I was fortunate because I'd done a prac at Bellevue and then I went there.

Marty:　　What's one of your favourite memories from that first year? Angela?

Angela:　　Oh, the best thing was my Grade 10 Drama class because even though they weren't little angels, I just had the old feeling of 'this is my class'. I think I just identified more with them than the juniors at that point, and some things we did really well.

~

3.　Tuesday

The first time I wear my new suit

The first time I get called 'Miss'

The first time I write a report

(The *last* time, I wish).

I can't wait for the second time.

'Before you begin your first year,

promise to teach a second,' Ryan (1970) tenderly encourages.

There are too many 'firsts'

Looking around,

I feel lost,

confused,

dazed,

feeling, somewhere that I'm not sure I'm supposed to be.

'Where am I?'

'Context is everything.' (Birell, 1995; Teasley, 1994; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997)

'You could end up anywhere.' (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998)

But where am I?

No longer alone,

Eleanor,

William,

Angela.

Not just between,

amongst.

I am

here,

with you.

No longer,

the first.

Chapter Six

Wednesday [1]

~

Wednesday is the central day of the week. The week is more than half way through. There is a sense of achievement in the days that have passed. Wednesday is the summit of the week, and at its end, the rest of the week appears as a down hill slide. On Wednesday it is possible to look around, to see what has been done and what still needs to be done. When Wednesday arrives, I have made it to the top of the mountain. I breathe in, and look around, and suddenly see where I am, and who is with me. There are other climbers too. Suddenly, there are the students. On Wednesday, I see, I am not alone.

~

Thirty-one children. Thirty-one futures, our futures. It's an almost psychotic feeling, believing that part of their lives belongs to me. Everything they become, I also become. And everything about me, they helped to create. (Codell, 1999, p.194).

~

---

[1] This chapter contains the story *And Then There are the Students.* This is followed by *Conversation Four: Our Teachers*. The chapter concludes with the stanza 'Wednesday' from the poem *Teaching Daze*.

6.1   *And Then There are the students*

> *Alison is a Grade 9 student in my tutor group. I knew about her for almost four full days before I met her. I read her file from her previous tutor, though I can't say I remember much about it, not having a face or personality to place with her name.*
>
> Teaching Journal (p.11)

~

It is August. I seem to have 'teaching beliefs' now. I do believe that teaching is about the students, although I am so worried about everything that is happening to me that I frequently forget. I have many fond memories of the different characters I have met during my stints as a student teacher. I have a photo of the toothy grins of the six advanced English students I worked with in my third year. We wrote lots of stories, had lots of discussions about Robyn Klein's novel *Came Back to Show You I Can Fly*, and challenged each other's opinions, such as 'it's such a girl book'. Then there's the ten Year 11 and 12 Drama students I worked with on my internship, nervously directing them in their melodramatic children's theatre performance. Nerves overwhelmed me the day we had fifty Grade 3s sitting in the classroom with my finger on the lighting board, and Alana all ready to bounce on stage as the charismatic and colourfully costumed main character Bill. The Friday night of that week I ran into Alana in a pub– that was a shock for her and me as we both tried to work out what was and was not appropriate to say to each other in this smoke and beer infested environment. Neither of us mentioned it at school the next week.

Such fond memories, leaving out the pub meeting, affirm for me why I became a teacher, and the pleasure that working with students brings me. I think that's why I have so many little student mementos stuck on my office notice board – as a reminder of why I'm here.

It is, however, easy to forget that teaching is about the students amongst all the issues that need to be addressed in the teaching day. Amongst lesson planning (what have they done already?), filling in forms (which form do I need to fill in for an accident?), checking uniforms and diaries (how should you wear your shirt? how should you wear your hair?), writing reports (how do I nicely say 'needs to stop being rude to classmates'?), walking around on duty (where should you be?), and answering phone calls from parents, other staff members, students themselves ('yep, yep, uhuh… yep'), followed by emails from students, other staff members and multiple sides of families ('no problems'). Yet there would be no point to a school without students, though the more cynical teachers frighteningly joke that 'if only we didn't have students, we could get a lot more work done'. Sadly, I have felt this way too, such as just wanting to finish marking a journal rather than responding to the worried looking parent or student tapping on my door.

Alison, Yoko and Matthew are three of my students whom I constantly worry about. Alison has blonde hair, is in my tutor group, and is in Year 9. Yoko has black hair, is in my Year 10 Drama class and is an exchange student from Japan. Matthew has brown hair, is in my Year 10 Drama class, and is the first student in my first year of teaching that I asked to leave my classroom.

~

Pastoral care at White School is in the form of daily meetings with a tutor group, first in the morning for registration and reading of the student bulletin, and then at the end of the day, again for registration. There are students from Year 7 to Year 10 in my group. My tutor group is an unexpected responsibility and joy. I feel very under prepared for this task, having never being the sole teacher working with a tutor group during a practicum, let alone been responsible for the entire well being of these students at school for a whole year and more. I wonder about these tutor students before I meet them, imagining the faces, personalities, and no doubt behavioural problems. One will be great, no, several will be great, with good marks, no uniform problems, and I'll only have to say good stuff about them. Then there'll be the tough crowd, the student or two who often spends time

out of class, not completing homework, who will take any opportunity to challenge me and what I say.

Alison is taller than me, but only just. She is one the tallest students in the tutor group, and I am sure she will soon be the tallest. In the photo she stands at the end of the back row, her head slightly tilted, and a look of absence on her face, as if she's imagining she's somewhere else. Her hair is normal, her eyes are normal, and her smile is normal. It is just her ears that got pointed out to me, by her support teacher, that are anything but normal. Alison is one of the senior students being in Year 9, so I automatically bestow more responsibility on her and the other Year 9 and 10 students. This means that I rely on them to help the younger students out with where to go and what to do (and to help me out too as they have more knowledge about the school than I do). Alison's support teacher comes to see me the several days before the students come back, and explains with gusto the special needs that Alison has, and what I will have problems with and what avoidance behaviours I should be prepared for. She flips through the pages about Alison that the previous tutor has prepared in a green folder, her brow furrowed with thought, commenting on the good and the bad notes. As a result of this meeting I feel like I know Alison before I've even met her. 'Is this a good thing?' I wonder. What would I have thought of Alison, had I not had this prior meeting with Helen? Helen is a personable soul, warm and sincere. She eagerly makes eye contact with those she speaks. Her curly, multi-dyed hair sits comfortably settled around her face. She leans forward towards me as she speaks, so much so that I lean back, as she relays the story of Alison's parents' break-up. I have extreme images of this break-up that occurred late last year, but I try not to over dramatise them in my mind. Of course my imagining includes shouting, things being thrown, and a poor innocent child being lost between two adults that should know better. Perhaps this is my so-called normal two-parent, middle class upbringing showing through. The reality of this break-up, whatever it is, means that Alison spends one week with Mum and the other with Dad. I reread her pages in the green folder, which is slightly splitting from wear and tear that is now my lifeline to last year. I don't remember much about this story when I actually meet Alison for the first time, not having a face or personality to place with her name.

Alison could be labelled as deaf. She doesn't look it. She has a broad smile that makes her eyes glint, and she oozes openness in her body language. Any sign of a hearing impairment, such as a hearing aid, is concealed under her long, straight hair. Shouldn't she have her hair tied back, I think, and then soon intentionally forget. I worry about meeting her, my deaf student, my student with special needs, before our first day and think about how to be politically correct when thinking, speaking, and making notes about her. She has a rapidly increasing hearing loss, so much so that she has lost all the hearing in one ear and retains 50% or less in the other. I am concerned about fulfilling my role as her tutor. What do I need to do? Who do I need to talk to? What does a deaf student need me to do? The only training I've had on dealing with the special needs of students is a part of one unit in third year – I think. What on earth am I going to offer this student when I don't even know how I would teach her in my classroom (and I feel lucky that I don't have to in my first year because of this anxiety about my ability)?

None of my fears matter on the first day, even though I shake as I unlock the theatre door, consciously not turning around to look at all the strange faces gathering behind me to walk into their new tutor room – they were in the art room last year, but now 'make do' with the new theatre as their tutor room (they're actually lucky). I don't mind at all. Apart from a lack of notice boards and desks, I already feel at home in the dramatic space, and am confident the students will be able to lounge around on the stage and seating banks for their study period on Wednesdays. I had no need to be anxious about meeting Alison. Her personality shines through all my apprehension. I can almost always get a smile out of her when I look her in the eye. I am moved by the way she pats me several times on the arm, to reassures me, as if sensing my apprehension about her, and even broader about my first day as a real teacher. Alison would reveal her intuition about my feelings frequently throughout the next three years. Remembering my first few weeks as a beginning teacher is about remembering Alison, probably because of my constant fear of not doing the right thing by her.

Regardless of my inability Alison is supportive from the start.

> *I had a fantastic moment with one of my tutor group students, Alison, who is almost fully deaf, but uses a hearing aid, rather than signing. I feel a connection to her, not because I was given a lot of pre-meeting information from her teachers, but because of her – she is a fantastic character, open, bold, and brave. I admire her courage. She has taken to me, and is supportive of me as a new teacher, even touching me on the arm, when I was questioning a locker problem with a Grade 7. She told me not to worry! Fancy that! I do love teaching.*
>
> (Teaching Journal, 15th February)

I feel the need to speak to Helen frequently in the first few months of the year, although she is proactive in seeking me out as well. She organises a meeting with Alison's teachers and me, to discuss her situation, specifically her increasing depression and difficulties with her peers group, as well as her new FM hearing system that she really needs but is increasingly disliking. I am intrigued by the idea of an FM, a small microphone that anyone can simply clip on to their jumper which then transmits straight to Alison's hearing aid and thereby cutting out some of the background noise - something I never knew existed, and I marvel at the cleverness of technology. And yet I still worry about how to 'appropriately' implement the use of the FM when I am working with her. When do I ask her for it? What happens if we're having a group discussion? Do we pass the mic around the room like a larger microphone? How will that affect the flow of the conversation? I catch myself holding back, and even avoiding asking for the FM, using the excuse that she should offer it to me, and I instead revert to simply slowing down my speech. I am not as brave as her, because I simply use the strategy of facing her so she could see me speak, rather than asking to wear the (pretty tetchy and small, but socially intrusive) mini speaker on my jumper. The microphone can function like a remote control to her FM, cutting out background noise so that she hears only what is close to the mic. Helen's main concern is Alison's increasing depression, which she believes and adamantly states is based

on her peer group's inability to operate in a way that ensures Alison can hear most things 100% of the time. I think she can hear a lot, but maybe, as Helen keeps telling me, that is half the problem. Are assumptions as bad as labels?

I mention to Helen that Alison has been late most days that week, and Helen suspects that this might be related to this being 'Dad's week', when she lives with her father. However, as our conversation continues through the various issues Helen makes a point that interests me, and which makes me realise how timid I feel in this situation (I'm even scared to describe her hearing impairment for fear that I'm being discriminatory). Helen says that her hearing loss, being deaf, has nothing to do with being late, and that I should treat her like everyone in the classroom and enforce the school policies. 'I do' treat her like I treat everyone else, I think. 'I treat her as Alison, like I treat Ben as Ben, or Sinead as Sinead!' I passionately believe in circumstance, individuality and self-worth. Maybe this is one of my teaching flaws, that I'm not hard enough. Maybe I am too empathetic. But maybe I should treat her as special, after all, isn't she coping with more than any of the other students? How would I want to be treated?

I spend time chatting with Alison during our long tutor period as well as regularly at the end of the day, as she plonks herself down on the bench next to me as I sign the tutor attendance – in a *green* folder (ah, that colour again). She shares moments of her life, compliments me on my top, which is covered with bright images of different women's faces, and tells me about how everyone at the school hates her year group. She is open about her frustration at staying with her dad and that he is so disorganized. How can I nag her about being late for morning tutor? What does it matter? Surely my understanding her situation (or sympathizing) matters more to her? Surely she is trying to do everything to maintain a routine in a situation where her 'out of school' routine is being turned up side down.

Generally I don't think I am tough enough, but I'm not sure that I care. I remember the principal referring to a Quaker text on Education, where the author stressed the value of getting to know students before any content teaching begins. I'll use this as my excuse for the moment. But I still don't want to use her FM!

~

The 'Alison situation', as I refer to it when debriefing with Sarah in our office box, continues. She is often absent from morning tutor group when the first attendance for the day is taken, so I track Helen down at recess (literally bumping into her). The conclusion from this bumping-into is, once again, to treat Alison like anyone else. I rationalise, with Helen's help, that lateness is not connected with her impairment. I'll handle it in the same vein that I handle the other latecomer Brad. But what I do is to simply wave at her when she turns up at tutor group in the afternoon, once again plonking affectionately down next to me. This forces a smile from me, and I don't want to question her for being late, but feel the tutor role bearing down on me. 'Oh, yeah' she says casually, looking at her blue painted nails and bracelets that she shouldn't be wearing, remembering. She blames Dad, and I can't help but feel there is a hassle at home, but that it's not serious, just the case of a new routine. She reassures me again, that she'll be on time tomorrow. I decide to decide not to care. Yet, I am not sure if this is the decision that I should make, and worry about it again the next morning.

One Wednesday we have a meeting with Helen during long tutor period. I cringe as I realise I have neglected to remind her about the meeting when I saw her that morning, and I curse myself for being continually overwhelmed by the administration aspect of this teaching job. I easily get stressed by the amount of paper I have to distribute, sign or read out, and as a result am increasingly stressed during morning and afternoon tutor group. This is no excuse, and at recess I realise that I should have warned her sooner, as it may look like an ambush. The issue we have arranged to discuss with Alison is her attendance at assembly. Previously she has not attended because she cannot hear anything, and it is therefore a waste of time. I wonder about this perception, but accept rather than question the assumption that it's a waste of time. I do catch myself thinking 'couldn't everyone see it as a waste of time' but don't let this slip.

Last year Helen and Alison used assembly time to discuss issues and to work out coping strategies for her. They would meet in the library to spend the hour

chatting about problems and issues. But Alison told me that lately she's been going there by herself to do 'whatever' she feels like. I have no idea what 'whatever' means, but realise that I should quickly find out.

At the beginning of tutor period, as students are finding their position in the theatre to 'lounge', I mention a few things to certain students such as 'Julian caught up with your Mum, I'm meeting with her tomorrow' and 'Brad, you're getting a new lock tonight. I need the spare key tomorrow'. The chatty Year 10s find two spare desks that have been left in the theatre from a previous lesson, and quickly conspire to set up a so-called workstation, which I know they will use to hide non-school related conversations and diary scribbling. I don't care about this today, and I'm worried about what is going to happen when Helen and I try to convince Alison about the need for her to attend assembly.

'Alison, Helen is coming to speak to us today.'

Alison's response is by far the loudest and the most negative. She had just found a position on one of the steps of the seating bank, and had her graffiti-covered diary spread open on her lap. A few heads rise to investigate the outburst, but no one really cares. A few disc players come quietly out of school bags, and headphones are sneakily slipped into ears.
'What? Oh, no!' she exclaims.
 I try to play it down.
'No, it's just in regards to the assembly situation.' I had in fact spoken to her last week and mentioned that we would be getting together with Helen to talk about this, so maybe I am being too hard on myself about the ambush.
She works away on her diary, and I pretend to be interested in other students' study, constantly looking toward the grey door to see it open. The door's sudden movement draws everyone's focus. I realise I've inherited a quiet tutor group, as the noise of the door creaking open is the only sound the room has heard apart from my footsteps on the polished floorboards, and the shuffling of papers, pens, and the whir of laptops.

Helen walks over to me. Alison puts her head down. I go to call out, but realise that she is avoiding eye contact, and is choosing not to hear me. I go over and force eye contact, touching her gently on the shoulder, and making sure that she is looking at me, and we move to three chairs at the side of the room.

Halfway through the conversation (a forceful conversation where I said little), that easily runs over 20 minutes, I realise too late that during tutor group is perhaps not the best place to have such a discussion as this. Alison is agitated. She is twirling her hair around her fingers and her eyes dart from the floor to other students. She is anxious they are listening. I am anxious they are listening. But all heads are still down. Alison becomes quite angry. She pleads, defies, and gives up to the point of resolving to be indifferent. At the heart of the issue is our idea of attaching her new FM to the microphone during assembly so that she can hear, and participate in the whole school community. From her perspective it is an issue of complete and utter embarrassment. She begins with describing problems with the new FM, that it has an echo. Alison then moves on to describing her embarrassment and everyone knowing, to which Helen replies 'everyone already knows, you're the only one who cares'. Alison also mentions bullying. And Helen responds in a way, which lets me know this is an issue they've already talked about, and which is separate to the issue of attending assembly. I feel sorry for Alison, and worry again, about the meeting that I have set up. I know I could have dealt with this in a different way. I am surprised at the firmness with which Helen handles herself during the conversation. Her words are direct, strong, and perhaps harsh. She is the professional though, and I admire the ease with which she responds to Alison's pleading. I actually feel extreme empathy during the conversation, so much so that I reach out and squeeze Alison's shoes that were close to my knee, in an attempt to calm her, and make some kind of sympathetic gesture. Helen enforces her philosophy that Alison's hearing loss does not mean that she should be treated differently, and is certainly not a reason not to attend assembly. When the 'but it's boring' comes out, Helen uses that to emphasize her point that most students think that.

After the conversation ends, and Alison returns to her spot on the step, head buried in her diary, Helen and I go outside to chat. I wonder why we get to go

outside to have our conversation. A trial period has been arranged for Alison to attend assemblies, starting from this week, as well as an alternate strategy that involves me taking notes for her to follow. Helen mentions that using a note taker is a strategy that Alison will have to get used to if she intends to go to university. She is very confident in her decision, and leaves me semi-reassured that we have done the right thing. Alison isn't happy, however, and lets me know by leaving the tutor period without looking at me. I try to touch base with her at the end of the day, but she denies me her bouncy, casual chat, and leaves without speaking to me.

Weeks pass. We are both distracted by the other necessities of school. She is an excellent student, and studies hard. I am a poor report writer, and spend a lot of time rewriting my reports (thankfully on computer). The day of the school swimming carnival arrives. The in-door swimming centre is hot, humid, and loud as can be, organised, patriotic, and interesting. I spend the entire time with my school house group whose colour is green (although I have nothing green on, as it is the colour I hate to wear). What is interesting about this event is that it is very different from their last one, and from any carnival I've been to. Only competitors are allowed to go. I look official, but I am really only a support person, following the races, crossing them off, answering questions, and then doing the compulsory 'no one's leaving until we've cleaned up our area'. Alison needs a large amount of assistance getting organised for her event, because of her hearing impairment. She comes to me to get out of an event, and I direct her to our head of house. Back she comes with a question about which lane to be in, as she needs to be in lane1 so she can see the starter light. Her name is also missing from the list. I ask Marge, and Marge asks me to take her down to the other end of the pool. I then become a guide, and in the midst of everything I feel like I am playing an important role for Alison. I tell her when her race is ready, follow her progress as she enthusiastically swims to the end, and then tell the recorders what her name is, as she had to take her hearing aid out to swim. I keep my role subtle, and simple. But inside I feel touched how Alison trusts me to help her. Niggling issues and differing opinions seem forgotten, or are simply redefined as 'unimportant'. She comes last in both races, and seems disappointed, but doesn't lose any of her enthusiasm. I realise that Alison is my teacher. I am learning about strength.

Time passes. We have started to figure out how each other works. After my forceful encouragement for her to participate in the assembly, and our compromise to spend assembly time in the mezzanine floor that looks down on to the gym, I take notes for Alison with no hassles, and even find the time with her rewarding. At first it is challenging, trying to edit what I think is unnecessary information, and developing new ways of abbreviating words. I make up strategies as I go along, like underlining a point that had been made twice. She moves to write a letter, and I nudge her to pay attention. Just because the topic being discussed by the principal does not relate to her is no excuse – I think.

She laughs at me when it is announced that our house won the swimming carnival – and hidden from the assembly body on our mezzanine level, we jump up and down. When I am writing the all-important results down I try to recreate the suspense that they are building with using pause in their voice – I tap my pen impatiently. I love and value this experience with Alison, as it has taught me to think of the assembly experience from a different point of view.

~

I don't remember Yoko for being Japanese, although this fact was the first thing that really brought her to my attention, as I pondered 'How am I going to cater for a Japanese exchange student in Drama? and 'Hey, we are doing Shakespeare and I don't know if *I* understand all the lines! How is she supposed to cope?' I remember Yoko for being the first student to cry in my class. Not acting-crying. Real, gut-wrenching tears of pain! She didn't just cry. She absolutely wailed, collapsing in a spot light on stage. Her tears and sniffling were the only sounds that echoed around the large dimly lit theatre. What was I supposed to do?

~

The Year 10 Drama course is one of my biggest challenges this year, with topics such as Shakespeare, Brecht, and Absurdism to cover. I am continually confronted by a lot of material that I have to relearn every week before I get to class, as well as planning the activities and marking their homework. These topics take up much of my teacher focus. To be honest, I don't think much about who is in my class, but rather what I am going to be saying today. I don't want to look like an idiot and say the wrong thing, or not be able to answer a student's question.

'I'm sorry. I don't really know. I'll have to look that up.'

If this were to happen, I bet my face would go bright, blotchy red, as it always does when I get embarrassed.

The semester passes quickly. So far I have not spent a great deal of time arranging special tasks for Yoko. The most I have done is to think carefully about who she can work with, assigning her to groups where I think particular students will look out for her and spend time helping her with her language problems. However, today is Shakespeare day. The other two Year 10 classes have already started this topic, and I am acutely aware that we must follow the schedule that is handwritten out week by week in the front of my Year 10 Unit 2 folder. I mentioned to her last week that I would try and find an easy part for her to play, but when today arrived I was overwhelmed by simply trying to sort everyone else into parts. The unit requires students to rehearse and perform a short extract from one of Shakespeare's plays in groups of two or three (I've chosen *Romeo and Juliet* because it is the one I remember the most from uni, and I can always use the Baz Luhrman film somewhere to fill in time). I have ideas about trying to get each small group to do a different section, so we can cover quite a bit of the play. Yet, I've already got three groups of three working on the Juliet, Nurse, and Lady Capulet scene.

I'm so fixated on the piles of scrap paper marking pages of my script and photocopied extracts that I realise I have completely forgotten about my Japanese student's individual learning needs. I am simply 'flying by the seat of my pants', waltzing into the classroom with the scripts all stapled, and cast and in order. All this week I have been behind, which has not helped me attend to this task with as much focus as I should have. I don't think the parent teacher interviews helped,

but almost every year group has started a new unit and this means that I have more planning and organization to do for these new units. Another factor that is distracting me is Grade 8 camp. I am a little apprehensive about my qualifications to go tenting for four days, with students to supervise, but also it means that I have to have any assessment finished before I go away, and also planning what each class (no Year 8s thankfully) will do when I'm away. Phew, I begin to feel the sinking feeling this week!

But excuses aside, I think I feel guilty for not working out an easier task for my Japanese exchange student. Yoko is going to be the nurse in the third version of the scene with Juliet and Lady Capulet. She doesn't have many lines, and I can help her with the movement of the scene. I have been very impressed with her coping skills in class, and in many ways she is a more mature, self-motivated learner than many of the other students in this class. This is no excuse for my forgetfulness, but as yet I haven't made too many separate arrangements. Today I feel like she is coping with me and my teaching inexperience, as well as everything else. As half the class keep coming up to me, she waits her turn. The students come up, with tentative eyes, collecting their scripts and walking away. I have picked the shortest piece for Yoko, quickly remembering that she has seen *Much Ado About Nothing* that was performed this summer in City Park. She obligingly takes it away when her name is called, and is polite in saying hello to the two students she will be working with. Fifteen minutes or so later she returns, looking daunted. I query 'too hard?' and yes, she doesn't understand the language, but also she says that she doesn't like the character. I was amazed, as I had caught myself judging the situation too early. She asks for another character, and I suggest the feisty character Juliet, explaining what the scene could look like. Others have already taken this scene so I reassure her that I will get her a copy by the end of the day (I do this as soon as the lesson ends, trying to make up for forgetting her before the lesson). She asks to keep the other scene, and says that she will work on both. She seems surer about this, and I just have to reassure her that I will spend a lot of time with her next lesson. Unfortunately, after carrying my piles of now out-of-order scripts back to my office box and dropping some as I struggle to lock the theatre I forgot. The next lesson I'm at a conference and will only have one and a half lessons in order to squeeze in performances before I

leave for camp – cowabunga! I really need to spend more time planning, and organising, and not get too comfy before everything is done for the next day! When am I going to be able to help Yoko?

Yoko has made an amazing recovery since my casual introduction to this unit for her. She approaches me again, as all the others are doing, and asks me about one line – the last one of her short speech. Wow, I am amazed. She has worked with her host sister, and translated a lot of the words using her mini Japanese/English dictionary. She knows the pronunciation off by heart, and is now working on the meaning. She understands the basic meaning but is confused by one line. She has already shown it to her partner. I tell her that I think she is working very well. Unfortunately Yoko is away on Friday, and I miss the chance to help her more. We're not doing very well catching up. I also tell her that she is coping with a lot, and is keeping up with students, who have much less to do than her.

Performance day arrives. The focus of the group is very high because a performance lesson is also known as an assessment lesson. The students are seated in the bleachers, and the theatre is now set for acting – lights are on dim, props lie in the wings, non-performing students sit as audience members. The beginning of the lesson has a messy start, as students run around trying to find missing props and misplaced scripts and costumes. I peek at my watch and panic as I realise 20 minutes of our 55-minute lesson have already passed and we have 6 groups to see today, one of which is Yoko's group. I don't care about costumes, I care about lighting, another thing I didn't feel 100% confident with after university. At least the set up here is pretty easy, and the dimmer board is teacher and student friendly. I need to write notes on each performance, so Andrew is in the lighting box with his hand poised to bring up with lights on stage as soon as the audience is quiet.

Yoko's group is the third group to perform, but they are also the last, as two events ensure that we don't see any more performances today. The second event is, of course, the bell that loudly and annoyingly sounds the end of the period. The first event is an accident on stage.

Andrew fluidly brings the light up, and the students begin to act. They are quite good, and I scribble words like 'confident', 'clear' and 'excellent focus' down on my note pad. I'll need to rewrite these notes later, because they're all over the place, as I try to write in semi-darkness. Yoko enters. She is clearly in role as the nurse, she gazes ahead into the light, and has what I write down as 'presence' on stage. I am captivated by her credibility, and think that she is one of the best actors in the class, regardless of her difficulty with the language. I wonder if I can choose to not assess her on one of the criterion that looks at pronunciation, diction and articulation. Her tone clearly reveals that she understands the words. What does it matter if the 't's and 'd's aren't quite right?

My eyes are not on the stage when she falls, missing the couch that she intends to sit on. But the loud and definite thump as her tailbone crashes into the stage soon brings my attention back. The moment is immediately awkward, as 23 pairs of eyes look at Yoko, and then quickly to me. What should I do? What will Yoko do? What should anyone do? Once again, the theatre's floorboards emphasise the silence of the hollow space. Yoko's tears come quickly, from emotion, although I also fear that she might have actually injured herself in the fall. The crash is very loud. The bell comes before I decide to do anything, but no one is in a rush to go anywhere. Yoko's fellow cast members soon put their arms around her, and have her sitting on the couch. I call 'house lights' to Matthew in the lighting box, and attempt to remove focus from the stage, by standing and quickly concluding the lesson.

'Thanks for your support and work today Year 10, um, if you can all just put everything away quickly and get to your next lesson, and I'll see you tomorrow…' and then in a softer voice, clearly not intended for the whole group 'Yoko are you OK?' I sit with her alone for a minute longer, and Rachel brings some tissues. Yoko is overwhelmingly embarrassed, as I am, by the helplessness I feel in this situation. 'It's my responsibility to protect her' I think, 'but what could I do?' My arm is around her, and I do not wonder what I would do if this was a male student or if I was a male teacher.

Unfortunately the school day continues to move, and the next class is coming in quickly. Yoko has calmed down, and is anxious not to be late for her next class. I am anxious to find Sarah and tell her what happened and how bad I feel for Yoko. I should probably email her tutor as well, to let him know what happened. Will she come back? Have I ruined her exchange? Why did this have to happen?

~

As I think about Yoko and her tears, I think about Matthew and the tears he almost caused me. Matthew is in the same Year 10 drama class as Yoko, but they have little to do with each other. Yoko works hard. Matthew works hard at not staying on task. I also never put them in a group together.

~

At the beginning of Semester 2 I anticipate that Matthew will definitely improve his marks. He has been in my class last semester, has listened carefully in class, and although he is normally hanging out with the 'mischief makers' he never instigates any avoidance behaviour such as rabbiting through the toy cupboard where we keep the wooden guns. This is not the Matthew that comes to Drama in Semester 2. He calls out, argues, can't sit still, is unhappy with any task we do, won't stop pulling things out of anywhere, moves anything that isn't nailed down, never completes work on time, and will take any opportunity in front of an audience to make people laugh – more often than not inappropriate, stereotypical characters or comments. I am at a loss as how to handle him, so write to his tutor.

'It is as if a different student has come to Drama.'

She quietly apologises that I have had to see this side of Matthew. Other teachers, she mentions tiredly, have already seen this side of Matthew many times before. I have been spared this in Semester 1. Is this supposed to make me feel lucky? What am I to do now? What would happen if I were a male teacher?

Matthew and I often have conflicts. I try hard not to constantly refer to him, but still say,

'Matthew, sit down.'

'Matthew, put that down.'

'Matthew, where should you be?'

'Matthew, please wait your turn to speak.'

I try hard to balance my feedback to him.

'Thank you for your performance Matthew.'

'An important point Matthew.'

At least, I thought I tried to balance my comments.

We are heading towards the time of year when staff appraisals are starting to happen. The school operates on a continual cycle of staff reflection and evaluation. This process is formally connected to our employment, and is conducted through self, peer and supervisory assessments of our practice as teachers. General appraisals are completed annually, and include problems, issues, contributions and achievements, as well as goal setting for the coming year. Once every four years a more formal staff evaluation takes place. Each staff member is assigned a supervisor who is responsible, in collaboration, to complete an evaluation of our teaching practice and contribution to the school. This year, as a beginning teacher, I only have to complete an appraisal, as at the end of next year (after two years of teaching) I will (hopefully) be granted a permanent position on the basis of my formal evaluation results. As part of my appraisal for this year I am expected to offer students (also referred to in the handbook as clients) the chance to comment on my teaching. Having experienced difficulty working with my 'mixed' bag of Year 10s, I decide they are an important class to survey. The proforma for the survey is given in the staff handbook. It is in a friendly 'tick a box' format, with a couple of short answer questions at the end. I add some comic pictures to mine, and a big 'Thank you'. I definitely want to get good results, and recognise that my ego is quite fragile.

The results are in. The students have filled out the survey in a nearby classroom. We've been kicked out (nicely) of our theatre, for another class to perform, and have utilised the lesson and the chance to sit down at a table, to complete an in-class essay. Was this the best lesson to get them to complete a survey on what they thought about my teaching? Too late!

I slam the office door. It rattles, and my swivel chair creaks as I slump into it, laden as always with bits and piece of paper, folders and white board markers. I push everything to the side of my desk, except for the surveys. They are anonymous, but (unfairly perhaps) I recognise some handwriting. I go straight for the positive things first. Under the heading 'The thing my teacher does best is…' are the comments:

Makes the lessons fun by giving us different things to do and also joining in and having a sense of humour.

Marty encourages us to learn to our fullest. She is so energetic and passionate about what she is doing, and energises us all, makes us want to learn.

She's always cheerful and treats us like equals. She's pretty much on our level too.

She relates to us like a person rather than a teacher.

Marty understands our workloads from other subjects and doesn't put too much pressure on us.

I dunno.

Gives everyone an opportunity to express themselves and does not get frustrated easily.

I am pleased, and smile to the empty office. I feel pride, but don't want to gloat to Sarah. Mum will be pleased though, so I might email her. I keep reading, now

looking for the negative comments that I am supposed to see as constructive criticisms. Under the heading 'The thing my teacher does worst is…' are the comments:

Being a little over concerned.

Marty has a difficult class to deal with, and sometimes can't control us.

Sometimes people in the class are out to flaunt themselves and she doesn't always manage to stop this.

Nothing.

Sometimes she is over concerned with some students.

Forces people to go on stage – only sometimes – when they don't feel comfortable enough. Also asks people to contribute to discussions when they don't have anything to say.

Dunno.

Marks hard.

Gives out too many sheets.

'Yep fair enough', I think for most of these comments, although being a concerned is a good thing, isn't it? I'm struck by one of these comments in particular.

Treats me like a dumb ass.

What? I read it again.

> *Treats me like a dumb ass. I like Sarah more.*

I put my head down on the desk, resting my forehead on the surveys. I forget all the nice comments that I found first, and sit in shock and disappointment. Anyone walking in now may see a hunched, crumpled failure. That's how I see myself. What have I done wrong? How could I possibly make anyone feel like a 'dumb ass'? This is the worst thing any teacher can do to a student. And enthusiastic, keen, passionate 'me' has already done it in my first year!

I interrogate the paper, searching the printed letters written in green pen. Under the heading 'Teacher's name' something has been scribbled out, and my name printed next to it. Squinting, and turning the paper over, I detect what is written under the scribble.
'Matthew.'
Matthew believes I treat him like a dumb ass.

I spend the rest of my free period in this office box, staring at the notice board hanging above my desk. I'm not really looking at it, but am lost in a world of memories, continually reliving my interactions with Matthew. Do I really treat him like a dumb ass?

I am scared the answer is yes.

~

6.2   *Conversation Four: Our Teachers*

Researcher Introduction: *The juiciest stories are the ones we are sharing about the students we have encountered. We recall with enthusiasm our interactions and relationships with students. Characters emerge in our stories about teaching, and they become examples of the things that worried and baffled us, as well as the*

things that we enjoyed and remembered fondly. Where would schools be without students, we jokingly debate. I wonder which of the four of us the students would like the most, and then quickly criticise myself for such a competitive spirit. I begin the conversation with a confession.

Marty: One of the things that I think was the most daunting about the experience of starting teaching was anticipating what the student would be like, and how they would respond to me. At uni, we're always so worried about 'behaviour management' and how we're going to 'control' the students. In my journal several key characters appear, as I constantly worry about my dealings with them.

Eleanor: There were different students throughout the journal that you felt that you could gel with or that you could talk to or that you could… build up a relationship with in your classroom, a rapport…

Marty: My interactions with certain students did stand out in my journal?

Eleanor: Probably the enjoyment of having relationships with the students. I knew from prac that you could build a relationship and you could have aggression with a student but you knew it was going to end. I really enjoyed building a relationship that was a long-term relationship with my students knowing that I was going to see it through for 12 months. You could say to the students 'I am going to be here for the rest of year so we are going to have to work together for a whole year. Those were the similarities there, the enjoyment of having a relationship with a student that was more permanent.

Marty: Angela, what do you think stands out? Any similarities?

Angela: The kids, and the girl with the hearing impairment.

Marty: Yes.

Angela: That frustration with her, where she had to be close to the teacher, the little things like 'finding my feet' and working out how to make her one of the group, failing her, or treating her differently, I think you mentioned that treating her differently. She got a bit uppity or defensive. I'm always very conscious of it, so that sort of came home to me.

Marty: It was confronting to get my list of tutor kids and then for someone to come up and say 'Oh, you've got this student, she's severely… hearing is impaired and she's had these problems, she's still having these problems, apart from the fact that I was petrified of just being

responsible for kids generally, I had this whole other element I hadn't even contemplated.

Angela: My impression was how important it was to you to establish those relationships… positive working relationships with kids… And the frustration, when you want something amazing to happen and then you get these crap responses and you're like 'Oh my god I want to inspire and be wonderful and now I have to come down to this level and now I have to discipline and now I have to work out how to cope with this and that…

Marty: Catering for individual student needs can be overwhelming.

Eleanor: But I think also that as you are more comfortable in yourself and in your relationship with your students and there's more of a bond between you and your students that helps because when you were at the beginning of the year and you had any contact with parents there was a distance, but at the end of the year when you have had a whole year with your student and there is contact with the parents there is a lot more… background between you and the student you can pass on to the parent, with a clearer mind, your views, and that comes through.

William: There are some lovely things in here… 'In order to teach students you have to deal with the whole people' [*chuckling, reading again*] The whole people… Yes, [*following the text with his finger*] 'Just as I think it is effective if they get to know the whole you' and I thought 'God, I don't think you want to tell them, get to be that chummy', because you said once, 'I feel really close to my kids'… my kids… 'I feel perhaps too close'… that sense that you are going over the boundary. It can be closeness but it also is a professional distance.

Marty: Yeah, you can give too much, be too concerned, as some students told me.

William: I've seen one girl [*meaning another teacher*] here at our school where she feels really, really close to her children and she is embracing them and they are relating to her and I just made the comment 'Just be careful, just be careful not to, not to walk over the line there'. I'm not talking about anything sort of horrible or anything, I'm talking about just the connection between you as the teacher and the pupils because, you know, the teachers that used to have them back for coffee and everything.

Marty: No, I think there needs to be boundaries. You need to have some distance with the students. You need to hold something back. Even though as a Drama teacher you get to know your students on a different level… perhaps. Would you agree?

William: Yes, I mean, who are you? Are you sort of wanting to close the door when you walk out and become your own person or are you just completely consumed by school?

Marty: Hmm.

William: Absorbed by the culture to a point where you have no identity beyond the school and they don't know what to do with the holidays and that is nothing to do with this…

Marty: No, that's fine…

Eleanor: I think my musical was one where the students had a lot of say in what they did. The students completely choreographed all of the dances, we didn't have anybody come in and teach and they completely worked out what costumes they were going to do and all that sort of stuff. That was the first year that they had ever done that at the school and so it was a lot more of their musical and so I was really grateful that I had the opportunity to, to do that with the students.

Marty: To get to know them…

Angela: It's funny. There's hardly any mention of the content in the classroom, so that seems to be the last thing on your list… But, that's not to say you're not doing a brilliant job but that those things are important… but it's the feelings and the emotions and the sanity and the functioning on a day to day basis and the realities… that's what hit me… you really focus on your concerns for particular students, rather than say, whole class issues, or concerns about units of work.

Marty: Students' perceptions of me, I think really influenced how I felt, and the confidence I had in my teaching…

Eleanor: Yeah, my Grade 10's said they had one big criticism of me, and I said 'What's that' and they said 'you're not hard enough on us when we're performing. You never say 'that was crap', unless it was really bad. Like in rehearsal and in performance, you don't say 'nah that's not working'. Well, half the time I don't want to destroy the kids' self esteem, and half the time I ask them to get up and perform it the way they think it should be performed rather than telling them how to perform it. It's something I'm big on, but it's something you that you have to be able to do being a teacher, because if you don't have a relationship with a student, they're not going to come to you when they don't understand, they're not going to come to you when they need help, and they're to going to feel comfortable if they don't feel that they can do the work in, in

finding out those answers, either from you, or from other students. So relationships with other students are a big thing.

Marty: What if you can't develop a relationship, can't relate to them, or get through to them?

William: I still remember how important it is to pitch things at the right level to students. I was at fault at times, where I was just on a different level to the students and I had to take some time to get to that level ground where I was meeting them in the middle. And I don't think I ever did sometimes, because I was always, perhaps, thinking I was… I was talking to blokes and girls who were just going to work at the supermarket and hooning around town. It's an awful thing to say, but there was that socio-economic factor that got me thinking about where I was too… [*rethinking*] if that's elitism well, so be it.

Marty: Are there any tricks of the trade for dealing with students?

Angela: Your thing about names that made me laugh. I learn names in the first lesson.

Marty: Phew!

Angela: Cause to me, name is everything. Power! Not power in a negative sense, control, power game, not that, power "Michael" focus immediately, cause you know his name. Better than "Excuse me, what's your name, boy with the hat"…

Marty: I love walking down the corridor, and seeing a kid who's doing the wrong thing, who I do not teach, and knowing his name.

Angela: I've got a story about that. When I came back to Bellevue this year I took over Karen's tutor group. So I got last year's school magazine and memorized all the kids' names in the class. The first day I walked into the classroom and I said 'Hello Austin, Taj, Bronwyn….' And these kids were like 'How does she know my name?'. Because names give immediate relationship and rapport. And at that stage I was only part-time, so I only saw them 3 days a week. Months and months later I was talking to the principal and I said 'Do you know what I'd done to those kids?' because it was hilarious, their reactions and the bond was there with them immediately, and he said 'I know'. And I said 'What? How do you know?' I mean, I wasn't doing it to brag, I was doing it because so it was so funny. And he said 'Oh, one of the parents told me'. And I said 'How did they know?' And I guess one of the kids had told their parents, the parent had spoken to the principal and he knew that about me before I told him.

Marty: I think I copped it for being new, I don't think they really understood what a beginning teacher meant, I don't think they necessarily meant that I didn't know what I was doing because I think I felt, I felt fairly confident in the content and that I was bedazzled several times…

Angela: They colour in most of the picture for you. To me a lot of the discipline is a lot of bluff and a lot of acting. I mean, I've had kids, I haven't had to do anything, they're doing something wrong and I walk in and I don't know what to do, but I don't actually consciously do anything and they go "Oh, oh, I was gonna put it back, yeah, sorry". And I haven't actually said anything. They just fill in the whole picture.

Marty: Well, it's taken me a while to build up my repertoire of things I use, and I experimented a bit, but it's never been something that's worried me and it certainly doesn't worry me now because most Grade 9 boys who are going to stand over me, I've sussed out my tricks, I do things like go [*Mimes whipping out an imaginary piece of paper and pen, taken notes in thin air*] 'What, you haven't got a piece of paper, what are you doing' and I say 'Just taking notes' and they're like 'But, But'.

Angela: Yeah… and just the frustrations with the kids, for example, that just don't really give a stuff, and, some kids it doesn't matter how much you go the extra mile, you're not going to get them there, and I know you mentioned at some point you owned their failures, cause you said something like 'what will happen to this person when they leave here, what will they achieve?', a girl, years ago I taught, probably thought the same thing as you, and so she had a year or two floating, and then she went to uni, and now she's studying law, now this is a girl, bottom sort of, if you had three courses she'd been in the middle and she'd only just achieve. So kids can surprise you, and you only see certain aspects of the kids too. Like okay, you know, within the high school environment she wasn't functioning but that doesn't mean she won't function in life. In fact I think quite the opposite. These high fliers, these overachieving kids, if they've never experienced failure what are they going to do when they get out into the real world?…because it's so true, failure teaches you, and if you don't accept failure in yourself, how are you ever going to learn to accept it in others….

Marty: I tell kids when a performance just didn't come together, and that's probably the worst thing we've made as a class all year that we probably learnt more from that than the show that just came together, that just clicked.

Angela: The principal said, some percentage from some document he got, that kids, and I'm completely inaccurate here I'm sure, something like here, 90% of a kid's day is negative feedback, and I look at

what I tell kids, and say to kids, and how 90% of my role is like a pseudo counselor, I can't think of a time I've ever really criticised a kid. Even when they haven't done a particularly good job I've found the positives, and I often find myself the one having to reassure them, they're the ones putting themselves down, bagging themselves and criticizing themselves and even if it hasn't been great quality. It's interesting that I'm the one that has to say, hang on, but yeah, you did it. Even if nothing else, a boy this week got up to do a presentation three times, and in the end gave up and sat down, I still spent 3 or 4 minutes giving him feedback about the positive aspects of what he'd done. So I don't know, this thing about how their lives are so full of negativity, cause personally, I'm not contributing to that.

Marty: Kids probably do get a lot of negative feedback, and I keep reminding myself "gees these kids are good". They want to learn, they're trying hard, they're enthusiastic, they're giving everything a go.

Angela: Me too, always!

Marty: Yeah, and I think we're lucky in Drama, we can do that, have that rapport…

Angela: Even the kids that are failing, they still know I think they're good people…

Marty: I think, the focus on assessment and awards really takes the focus off the child, and more on what they can do. To me, the focus is always the child regardless of…

William: We all get frustrated with that. Every year I feel under pressure. It's a crunch, these As and Bs.

Angela: I think education fails kids in so many ways, really, so many outdated modes. It's just, not keeping up with kids. The homelessness issues, these kids that go on part-time timetables well there's something, some people say 'What a load of bollocks, you're pampering them, in my day we did it this way', but the thing is it's a different world, and their realities are so far removed, and I hate to say this too, but, and I don't know this for a fact, but so many teachers, from what I see, seem to come from secure, middle class, well-to-do backgrounds, they just don't know what it's like, for example, to be too scared to go home so you sleep in an empty house, ah, I've done that, so it's like, where's the support for these kids? It's irrelevant isn't it! So hard to be the teacher and be the person, to be honest, to be the two…

Marty: I think first I'm a person and then I'm a teacher. My relationships with students are important to me…

Angela: Yes. I had an experience with two grade 10 boys, big lads, because I'm short, and they were bristling with the [*snorts*] and I just went, which is probably ridiculous except I knew them…

Marty: Yep.

Angela: Short little female, one hand either side, and then, just looked at them both, eye balled them, took one aside, and said 'come with me'. Left the other one there, thinking, well, they'll get their chance, in a minute, and for, I would say probably three seconds I was thinking 'oh my god'.

Marty: Thinking 'it's really going to happen'.

Angela: I think I just said 'come with me' and we just walked and talked, and he eventually calmed down, I didn't necessarily find out what it was about, and to be perfectly honest can't even remember what came of that. If I hadn't known them I think I would have probably sent a kid up to the staff room to get a male teacher or AP or something. But because I had a good relationship, I felt I could handle it. This maybe sounds naïve, but I couldn't imagine they'd turn their anger on me.

<div align="center">~</div>

6.3   *Wednesday*

Looking back, **looking** forward,

'I'm almost there'
escapes my chewed, cracked lips.

Two days
d
o
w
n,

Two **to go**,

not counting today.

'There you go again' Carolyn Ellis (1997) worries,

making me think,

'It's all about me,'

'Marty-indulgence!' Spry (2001) tuts.

My day.

My week.

My story.

'But what about the students?'

Birell (1995) worries,

'She'll damage those students if she doesn't recognise her own prejudices'

his cross voice cries in my imagination.

I let them down.

I made them cry.

I made them feel like a 'dumb ass'.

I, I, I,

'But what about the students?'

Allison

Yoko

and Matthew

and Barone's (2001) interconnectedness,

and I remember,

'*It is all about the students.*'

Esme reminds me (Codell, 1999),

'they teach us'.

Tom inspires (Barone 2001),

'remember Marty, they touch eternity'.

So I re-look,

so I can re-learn,

(*inside*

and out)

realising,

'I am not really alone'.

Chapter Seven

Thursday [1]

~

By Thursday, much time has passed. There have been highs, and there have been lows. Ups and downs, growth and failure. The lows are exhausting. There is so much still to do. Will this week ever end? There is still no space to think clearly. Tiredness sets in. Now into the second half of the week, the physical toll becomes overwhelming. The weekend seems to be still too far away. But with the lows, comes recognition that some things are not as hard as they once were. Teaching is complicated, and that is clear. Teaching requires much. But there are now newer people, those who have only just arrived. I have some, only a few, tips to share with newer teachers. The tricks of the trade that help, even if only a little.

~

> *There are periods of fast growth and development, periods of stagnation and sometimes periods of regression for the beginner in their learning about teaching.* (Cameron, 2001, p.4).

> *Teaching is instructing, advising, counseling, organising, assessing, guiding, goading, showing, managing, modeling, coaching, disciplining, prodding, preaching, persuading, proselytizing, listening, interacting, nursing, and inspiring. Teachers must be experts, generalists, psychologists and cops, rabbis and priests, judges and gurus. And that's not all.* (Ayers, 2001, p.4)

---

[1] The first layer of this chapter contains two stories entitled *Not Another Day* and *Sinking, Not Swimming.* These stories are followed by *Conversation Five: Getting Through.* The chapter concludes with the stanza 'Thursday' from the poem 'Teaching Daze'.

~

7.1.1   *Not Another Day*

> *I either have chronic Mondayitis or the honeymoon is over.*
>
> (Teaching Journal, p.10)

~

So I start fulltime teaching. Day one is a dream. The students are wonderful. Lessons are wonderful. Everything is wonderful. I go home at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, dump my backpack just inside the door, throw off my black polished Doc Martins, strip off my jumper and trousers, pull back the doona cover from my bed, slide in, and throw the yellow covers over my head. The support of the mattress, pillow, and snuggle of the doona are heaven, and I close my eyes. Time stops.

Ryan phones for a lift home. I don't know it's him, or even recognise that the phone is ringing, but resent being woken from my silent abyss. I bumble quickly out of bed, trying to avoid flashing my undies to the outside world, and lunge for the phone before the answering machine beats me (I swear it thinks we have a competition).

'What were you doing?' Ryan asks from his hazy work thoughts.

'Um, just having a snooze' I reply.

'In the afternoon?'

'Yeah, I'm just so tired.'

'Aren't we all?' he adds, and I know he's right. Lots of people work and get tired, but I don't know if I can convey just how much I needed that doona over my head when I walked through the door.

'What's for tea?'

'Um, when do you want a lift?'

'Have you fed the cat?'

'Do you want me to pick you up now?'

Neither of us answers each other's questions, and this soon becomes a pattern in the evenings, as we both develop our working life roles and routines, and try and work out where domestic chores fit into the fulltime working week.

~

Morning again. The sun is up already, and I feel completely unprepared for the new day. Tiredness strikes me like a brick, and my 10 hours in bed has done nothing to refresh me. My eyes are puffy like they've been attacked by mosquitoes, and my shoulders are slouched with the weight of the books that I haven't marked. I am in shock that I will be getting up at the same time everyday for most of the year. What I think I am going to find really hard will be the responsibility of getting somewhere on time. It's already 7:27am, and we're supposed to be walking today. If I drive, maybe I can snooze for another 9 minutes.

Smack, goes my hand on the buzzer. Up comes the doona.

Seemingly instantly the buzzer is on again, and I throw my feet over the side of the bed. My torso has not followed, and I have to push myself up with my hands.

'Another day' I think as I shuffle through to the bathroom.

'At least you don't have to shave everyday' Ryan calls.

I'm dramatizing the countdown of the days.

'Day one, dum, de, dum! Day two, dum, de, dum!' staring at the North Melbourne Kangaroo's calendar on the wall. I visually cross off the days of March that have already passed, and count how many are left. When is Easter coming? I plead with the handsome footie player who's flexing for the camera.

'Never' I imagine he sneers.

~

Teaching while tired sucks! I couldn't shake the energy into my routine today until the very last two periods when I had my two Year 8 Drama classes back to back. My day begins with a free period, which is normally a good thing as it gives me room to deal with any outstanding issues from the day before. It's a good photocopying opportunity. I have Year 9 Drama in the second period and either they don't mix, or I can't match what I have planned with what they are interested in doing. Maybe I don't understand what I am doing. We're working on improvisation. Students are in pairs with a script to rehearse that is simply called 'He/She' because there is minimal information in the scripts – no character names, no context, just simply lines like:

> *she   it's the same thing*
> *he   no, it's not*
> *she   yes it is*
> *he   let's not go through all that again*
> *she   right*

Unfortunately the warm-up turns into half the lesson, and this is not what I have intended at all. How did this happen? I find myself wondering half way through. Am I prepared for Monday? I am sure I checked my lesson plans on Friday afternoon before I left for our special Friday meeting (the one with champagne)? In reflection, I guess I am not. I fully acknowledged that I am suffering from tiredness, and sadness at how swiftly a weekend goes.

After this dreadful lesson comes to an end I verbalize these self criticisms to Sarah before she zooms off to teach Year 10. Why have I neglected to foresee that the kids might suffer from Mondayitis too? In many ways I think I am being naïve.
I am generally feeling down at school at the moment. It's information and contact with kids overload. I find myself sitting in my office, staring blankly at my notice board – not really thinking about lessons, or units. Just vague, zoning out.

Thinking back a bit, I really enjoyed Friday drinks after school. Oddly, I realise there was not a male to be seen there, and I wonder if this is because they don't need to collapse in the chair and guzzle bubbly wine like I do, or that they're off to their own pub to drink beer. The female teachers reassured me that they do

appear sometimes, though I think we might need to increase the beer instead of the champagne to entice them. We talked about stuff other than schoolwork. We talked about us, and this makes me feel real, like I really have a place, making contact with real people. The school has an overt, structured, and rigid routine, where it is easy to go through the motions and not feel in control.

I've decided. I'm not going to Year 7 camp after school this week. I don't care. Is this because I'm tired, or have I already lost motivation? My personal opinion at the moment - just tired! But I am organising games for the Year 7s at lunch, and volunteering to go on Year 8 camp at Easter, so I can't be that tired, can I?

~

I'm still counting days of the week. Wednesday has affectionately been deemed 'hump day'. The idea is that the week is like a mountain, which starts slowly with Monday, and gradually makes it up to the Wednesday peek, before sliding hopefully swiftly and briskly into Friday. Unfortunately, it is Saturday and Sunday that seems to go the quickest, especially when there's a Sunday rehearsal, and then Monday is really like the second day of the week where I arrive in the morning wondering if I've ever really been away.

~

It's really hard to teach when you don't feel 100%.

This afternoon I've felt flat, dreading the slow aching potential cold. I actually feel anxious about the thought of being sick tomorrow. The general expression that I've heard older and wiser staff members utter is 'it's easier to be sick at school than sick at home'. This expression refers to the amount of planning that you have to organise in order to have a day at home sick. I remember Ebony saying that she didn't understand why you had to provide work for relief teachers considering they get paid more than you and their lessons are basically a 'write-off' anyway, so isn't it better that they take their own lesson than muddle through

someone else's? Well, I've had a little relief experience in the public and private systems (a few days here and there) and basically the private system seems to work much better from the point of view of the supervising teacher coming in to help out. You get the class list and clearly set out work for them to do. However, now on the other side of the fence, I feel miserable at the thought of having to drag myself out of bed, feeling like death, and planning anywhere between two and four lessons before 7:30am in the morning. I don't like that idea. Thankfully I'm feeling better, but the thought of such a situation makes me sick.

~

I arrive home worn out and down because my last two lessons, my back-to-back Year 8s, were not the fun they normally are. The last few weeks I have loved these consecutive classes. The two classes, though very different, have both mixed very well, and all the kids seem to respond swiftly to my behaviour management strategies. Today's lesson was very teacher-centred with teacher-in-role three times during the lesson. The kids got the chance to work with a partner for a short time, but then they came back and shared their discoveries in role as a group. As this was their first time working in this way I was very tough on appropriate responses. Some were silly (which is a normal response to a new Drama strategy) but I had to listen very closely and think quickly to respond in role using such statements as 'you must have interviewed the wrong person' or 'I think you've come to the wrong meeting'. I would have been tired from this lesson even if I had been feeling 100%. The kids were good, and I let them know that I didn't have as much energy as I needed to.

Also, my voice is croaky and sore. But even though I acknowledged how I was feeling, I still had a role to fulfill and had to push myself. I realise how much of yourself you put out there when you're teaching, and especially in Drama. The second lesson I made a mistake and started with the wrong role-play. I stopped, and said 'oh, that's the wrong one', and apologised (silently cursing myself at the same time for making such an absent-minded mistake). They reacted very well, and said that I should just have stopped and restarted. We changed, but I still

didn't have as much energy as the first time. It's easier to do more structured work twice, than this kind of role-play. I kept getting a sense of de ja vu. Now it's all over and I am home. I am glad that I didn't spend much time in my staffroom reflecting. I still ache, and try to make myself feel better by putting on warm, fluffy clothes and woollen ugg boots.

~

The friendly, but unwanted insider knowledge is back, this time in the form of a young male Maths/Science teacher. He's only been teaching for three years, also at a private school. When he found out that my teaching load is 15 hours of classes a week he commented,

'Gees, they're looking after you!'

I feel a little taken aback by this comment. Since I began teaching I constantly feel the need to defend my existence as a first year teacher. When they tell me to be prepared to be tired, I take that as a challenge and tell myself off for the slightest whinge. It's only Ryan who gets to see me in my ugg boots, track pants and daggy t-shirt, huddled in front of the heater looking like I've been run over by a truck. He mentioned affectionately today that I'm a 'lazy bum' ending up in bed so quickly.

'I feel safe and hidden here' I replied.

And I do. I change out of my costume and get to leave the 'professional' world behind in a very tactile sense, covered by soft material, lying on a soft surface, with only one sound rather than a hundred. I won't admit this to anyone, because I want to be seen as succeeding. I want to be seen as qualified. I want to be seen as coping.

~

I've missed the last two weeks of school because I've had gastro and spent my days stuck in the toilet. I've still been working at home though, on my laptop, finishing off one hundred and fifty nine reports. How on earth do teachers write reports by hand? The hardest reports are the Year 7s, because I have sixty students

that I've taught for one hour a week, for the last fifteen weeks. Honestly, I struggle in the lesson to remember everyone's name, let alone write an individual, personal and motivating comment about him or her. Everyone has told me that this is normal. The easiest to write were those for my Year 10s, who I see for three hours a week. I am confident in what I have written about them. Anyway, as I try to gather my strength back and shake this deflated feeling, I realise I still have my tutor group kids to write about. I've been living reports for four weeks.

~

Here I am again. Alone, sitting at my desk, hunched over, forehead resting on the laminated chipboard, eyes staring at my empty hands. I'm not crying. I'm not really thinking about anything. I've just arrived at school, and the noises outside in the courtyard are just starting to get louder. The rowers have their morning showers in the gym after training. The occasional swear word flies out harshly from the open window of the grey concrete change rooms, which are very close to our school block. I'm too tired to laugh. Sick, tired and run down! Do I sound like a cliché? I feel like one. I resent feeling like this because of all the stories I hear. They make me feel like I have no choice in the matter, and I'm simply playing a part in a play called 'My first year teaching' which was already written by a strict director who gives me no freedom, well, a bit of the dramatics, but I am a drama teacher.

I had yesterday off, and apart from feeling really tired and 'stuffy' in the head, I felt guilty for not being at school. I don't know if this is just teachers, but I had to plan my day off, which may have lead to the guilt. When you're sick you have to tell Pat before 7:30am and give her an idea of what your classes are doing. Well, I pretty much knew that I wouldn't be there on Tuesday, and I felt terrible, but had to (is there such a thing) battle through a 2-hour rehearsal with the crew for the Year 10 production. So I saw Pat at 4pm to tell her, and she seemed glad of the early notice. And then I stayed after rehearsals to plan my lessons, writing them out for the supervisor of my classes for the next day – no wonder I think about becoming a waitress again. Is it because we're professional that we live our work

day and night? I know this isn't a job, well maybe for some people it is, but not for me. I don't know how people can do this for 15 years!

The door behind me creaks, and I slowly lift my head and turn around. It's Em, popping in just to see if everything is Okay.

'I was just walking past, and I thought I'd check.'

'Thanks Em, I'm alright, just really tired.'

'Just looking at you brings my first year back. I remember one Friday night, standing outside my office, after a meeting that ran late. I was unable to get in to get my marking to take home, because the whole school was locked at 4:30 and we weren't given our own keys. I just burst into tears. I had so much work to do. So there I was, just standing outside my office, in broad daylight, bawling.'

This is the first story that actually makes me feel better. I realise I am not a cliché. Maybe the honeymoon is over, but that's probably a good thing. The important thing, however, is that today I believe I am normal.

~

The last day of the year is not wonderful. The students are not wonderful. The lessons are not wonderful. Everything is not wonderful.

During the final lesson I play a video. The kids are high on lots of sugar from parties in their other lessons– I am tough and say no. A few whinges, but no sympathy from me.

I'm too tired to care.

~

> *Before I stepped into my first classroom as a teacher, I thought teaching was mainly instruction, partly performing, certainly being in the front and at the center of classroom life. Later, with much chaos and some pain, I learned that this is the least of it – teaching includes a splendorous range of actions.* (Ayers, 2001, p.4).

~

7.1.2   *Sinking, Not Swimming*

> *I survived, but feel better than surviving. I don't want to jinx myself, but I feel bold enough to say that I really enjoyed myself today.*
>
> Teaching Journal (p.6)

As a beginning teacher I often have the 'sinking feeling'. Days can overwhelm me, and as some cynics anticipated, I have spent time at home and even at my desk with a few tears defecting from my eyes. The tiredness I feel can get me down and leave me drained and unable to cope with what the teaching day throws at me. Requests can fly at me from all over,

'Can I have an extension?'

'Can you help me find my school bag?'

'Can you finish your reports by Friday?'

Some days I definitely think that I am drowning in the work that I have to do.

But though the tears do occasionally flow, I like to think I am surviving my first year of teaching. That I am in fact swimming, rather than sinking! Little things, like coffee with a friend, or going home on time, can make all the difference to a long day. Making sure that I don't do any schoolwork on Saturdays is a rule that I am working on, especially when I have rehearsals twice a week, and meetings every Tuesday after school. Ryan and I try to make sure we do something fun each week, and if we're lucky we'll fit in dinner and a movie on Thursday, or Saturday. These little things help me get through each day, and then each week. They help me float above all the things that go wrong, all the things I forget to do, and all the things that I cannot and have not anticipated yet. So I guess I am surviving my first year of teaching. That's all I am supposed to do, isn't it?

'You've just got to get through your first year,' one teacher says to me during a prac.

'There will never be another year as difficult as your first,' a teacher relative states on a visit to Tasmania one Christmas.

'Just keep your head above water,' a colleague at White School suggests in Term One.

'Are you getting the sinking feeling yet?' another annoying colleague from White School jibes in Term 2.

I want them all to think that I am coping extremely well, that I am the best first year teacher they have ever seen, ever had! But I am not confident about the degree to which I am surviving. Maybe I'm just making a lot of splashing movements, but am not really swimming with any kind of effective stroke. Perhaps I am only barely getting through. I need some tricks of the trade to help get me through, whether it is advice, a hug, or the offer of a cold beverage with alcohol content. I need some floaties to help me swim.

~

The little things definitely can help me feel better about teaching. For example - 'F' day – a crazy idea that someone invents as a theme day for the staff to dress up, which turns out to not be such a crazy idea. Not 'F' for Friday, even though it is actually Friday. It's a special, secret staff day, which has been arranged at one of our special Friday night after school meetings.

Sitting on the purple lounge chairs, champagne in hand, talking about our week, someone has the great idea that the staff need a morale booster, apart from alcohol. Term Two has been full of report writing, and with no public holidays or Easter break like Term One. The monotony of the routine (for staff and students alike) is becoming overwhelming. Each day is the same. Arrive in the cold, do work, run out of time to complete work, and go home late, and often in the dark, and it is still cold! There are fewer 'hellos' and 'how was your weekend' in the staff room. The students don't seem to smile as much, or laugh at my jokes as much. I probably am not telling my jokes as often though. At lunchtime, the staff

room only contains a few dedicated socialites who tend not to talk to each other, but simply pour their coffee, microwave their leftovers and sit with their head over some written material they've found lying on the table. They're not really reading the words, but are just glad to be out of their office where they've been locked up for an extended period of time completing reports and marking piles and piles of assignments.

'What about a theme day?' the vibrant PE teacher pipes up. 'We used to have them, like something that we all have to dress like - a colour, or a subject? What about 'W' day or 'T' day?'

'No, how about 'F' day,' a cheeky science teacher adds.

The enthusiastic response from those gathered suggests that this is a great idea that will definitely lift the spirits of us all, and hopefully break the monotony of the working week that seems to never end. We write as many 'F' words (appropriate ones of course) that we can think of and put them on the white board in the staffroom that displays the school's weekly planner. 'F' becomes synonymous with fun, funky, feathers and even fur (not too many furs I hope) fairy, formal and of course I add footie. The general idea is that we will wear something beginning with the letter 'F'. The students are not in on the secret, and hopefully will enjoy trying to work out what their mad teachers are up to. It's a simple idea, but just what I need to help me survive the last few weeks of Term 2 – the darkest and coldest (and feeling like the longest) of the terms, especially with the Year 10 production only two weeks away.

'F' day arrives! I'm actually feel excited going to work today, and this hasn't happened for more than a month, when all I've felt is dread about going to work to wade through the marking that I have to do, and dreading going home because of the marking that I haven't managed to complete. I feel better, happier, getting up and putting on my football uniform – my North Melbourne scarf, beanie and jacket. And from the moment I step into the staffroom 'F' day seems to be a huge success, as our morning staff gathering is louder and more crowded than usual for a Friday. Yesterday this room was full of long, tired faces, all staring without expression at the student bulletin they would have to read aloud at morning tutor. Now, there is lively whispering as individuals admire each other's 'F' efforts. The athletic English teacher is in full costume as a fairy, with wings and a sparkly

wand. A few gentlemen are dressed to impress in formal attire, and unfortunately, a few of the older staff members have dusted off their furs and draped them around their shoulders as well. I am the only 'footie head', however, which I think is a little disappointing.

The teaching day is transformed, as students and staff become engaged in the challenge of trying to figure out the secret behind the strange fashion sense of some teachers. People are smiling, and saying hello to each other. Conversations are no longer about marking, assessment and reports, but are now about fairies, footie ('North Melbourne sucks Miss Crerar' several students declare), and the disgusting furs that are being worn. Assembly is hysterical, and looking around the gym, the usually misted eyes of the audience, are replaced with sharp and open interest. We need 'F' day everyday! It definitely cheers me up. Term Two still drags on, but at least Friday is fun. It's a nice idea, a simple survival trick, that helps lift the staff's morale, and interests and livens up the students. It changes our community atmosphere into something positive and enthusiastic, rather than dull and drab. It get us up-beat and keeps our spirits up with 3 weeks left until the end of term – oh, and the Sydney Olympics too!

~

I feel very supported by my school. My day has a nice start today. I walk into the school office and am showered with congratulations. 'For what' I wonder, covering my thinking time with a joke of 'oh, no guess I'm busted for my drink driving', and then quickly assuming that Sarah or Marge had told them about my university prizes. But no. The awards have been announced in the morning paper. I don't get the paper, I explain, while marveling at how on earth so many people have time to read the paper so thoroughly before work. I just try and wake up over my coffee, briefly listening to the weatherman on television telling me if I am wearing the right clothes or not. The congratulations continue all day from unlikely people, or so I think. It even gets mentioned in the morning meeting. Some clapped. It is surreal and I hate it and love it at the same time. Those close make jokes about the fact that I am a spock. At the end of the day the business

accountant person makes a very enthusiastic congratulation. 'It must be good for business', I think, 'that they have a staff member with her name in the paper', certainly for something like a university prize. This kind of takes a little bit of punch out of my pride. Are we all just commodities? But what makes me very happy, though, I stress that I'm competitive for myself rather than the 'glory', is when the principal, Michael, makes reference to it, and specifically to the precise awards. He takes such interest in the small details, and I feel very special - a strong sense of belonging. It is brought to his attention again in the school office, and he says 'I know, it shows you what a good choice our panel made'. I sound like I'm blowing my own trumpet (I am, but gees it feels good to have something to be recognized for apart from being new) and as a beginning teacher I'm very conscious of my inexperience. I'm constantly concerned that I'm doing things right. The school so far has done everything to make me feel that I belong, that I'm worthy and that they're lucky to have me. I'm in a very fortunate position.

~

I am trying to be a brave and confident first year teacher, not afraid to have an opinion, or to contribute to staff discussions on important educational issues. The school seems to be making this goal easier for me. This morning's PD session is all about listening to a guest speaker from Victoria explain the importance of developing a healthy school culture. She introduces herself and gives us her credentials for why she is qualified to talk to us. Lots of whispers go round about either 1) how impressive her achievements are in only 9-10 years in the profession and of 2) when has she ever been in the classroom with all this achievement so how would she know what goes on in a classroom? I am all ready to take notes, but this notion soon fades and I begin fiddling with my diary working out the weeks for Term One. I'm amazed to find out that we have three weeks break before the next term! WOW! I think my mind is wandering because I feel like I am in a uni lecture theatre again (maybe listening to Dr. Williams, who would have been much more interesting) and this does not impress me or interest me. I basically look at her and think 'I know a lot of this stuff, and so do all these teachers. Why should you be telling us this?'

What I do enjoy about the day is the small group discussions that stem from this initial session. We do this twice throughout the day, both sessions on slightly different topics. The first group is decided alphabetically, and the other in year groups. I belong to the 9/10 group, so I find out. Each group makes a direct reference to me, introducing new faces, but thankfully not expecting me to know anyone yet. There is a large focus on names at this school. I don't just get 'hi, how are you' but 'hi Marty, how are things?' Each time my name is used it makes me feel a little bit more known, a little bit more like I should be here, that I have a right to be here. Maybe this is what makes me feel brave enough to share my opinions during our small group discussions. I voice a few points, some based on my experiences during school pracs. This is, after all, the only experience I have to go on, but I figure it's still worth something, and no one seems to mind that this is my resource. I did work hard on these pracs, and had lots of different experiences. Looking around the room, I am probably the only person here who has been inside four different schools (five including White school) for an extended period of time in the last four years. Is this where my contribution to the school begins? A couple of times they open the discussion to me, directly asking me what I think.

'So Marty, what do you think?'

This is not as uncomfortable or confronting as you might think. I do feel very unqualified in this situation, not knowing the school or the profession that well, but the group does not make me feel this way, rather I do.

'Well, I think that the culture of the staff is certainly supportive, and open to new ideas, from what I've seen, and staff culture can definitely have an impact on student culture. I mean, like on the school culture as a whole.'

People nod. I've obviously said something that makes sense.

We come back together as a whole staff, to share the findings from our small group discussions. The moment comes when someone is asked to volunteer to give feedback to the whole school group. There is an awkward silence. Thoughts run through my head 'I'm the drama teacher, I'm supposed to be into public speaking – they all think that I should do it'.

'I'll do it,' I enthusiastically chirp. I want to make my group proud of me.

What a large amount of praise I get from this move. I am nervous. I take notes and am the first cab off the rank to present our group's findings to the rest of the staff. I have to stand out the front, 150 pairs of eyes staring at me. I haven't even stood in front of my classes yet. The session leader asks for the group's speaker, and our facilitator, Mark, says,

'Actually, our new member of staff has bravely volunteered.'

I walk down to the front of the stage, and ramble on (but very clear rambling) about what I think is vaguely what the group has been talking about. I stop, look up smiling to the open cheery faces, and then swiftly fly back to my seat. I get a few well dones, and sit down feeling genuinely content at my little achievement. A young female staff member (with fantastic strawberry blonde curls) comes up to me and says that I am very brave, and that when I'd gone up to speak she'd whispered to her friend that she had been there for seven years and had not spoken aloud once.

Yeah! I am brave. And others think I am worthwhile too! I can get through this year!

~

The school runs a detailed professional development program as well as a specific and formal process of staff appraisal and evaluation. This began for me, with the induction activities, and assigning of a mentor and supervisor. My mentor, Sarah, is my immediate support, my first port of call I suppose. I think she is there to help me with the little things, and to place me in the right direction. My supervisor, Marge, is the person who I think is responsible for ensuring that I do a good job. I wonder what happens if I stuff up? Marge will be the person who checks up on how I am going with my teaching, and make suggestions I suppose, for helping me develop my practice. Thankfully, they are both Drama teachers.

The school seems to offer lots of professional support to its teachers. I am impressed to find that the Professional Development pamphlet states that each staff member has an individual allowance to attend conferences and other PD activities including interstate events. My mind thinks about where the next Drama

Australia conference is going to be, hoping that it will be Melbourne or Sydney. The evaluation process is described in a clear diagram in the staff handbook, and has a special pathway just for beginning teachers over a two-year period. In my first year I will complete a staff appraisal, which seems to involve less than the full formal evaluation. This evaluation will take place next year, and will then lead to a permanent position (I hope!). As part of my staff appraisal this year I am expected to complete a reflection on my year and the things that have gone well, the difficulties I've had, and the goals I'd like to set for the coming year. I should also get students to complete surveys (proformas are in the staff handbook) – not to show to anyone necessarily, but for my own reflection. I am impressed, and not at all daunted, by this process, because reflective practice was a big focus of our training at university. One particular strategy we can also use is having colleagues, such as mentors and supervisors, come into our classroom to watch our teaching and provide feedback. Marge comes to visit one of my lessons in October, as a beginning to the formal staff appraisal process.

Marge walks in, of course, when I have just left the room spontaneously to deal with one of my tutor kids who has just turned up at school, when he has been absent all morning. I see him walking past the door, and go to address him at his locker. Most of the Year 8s are working independently in their groups, so I don't blink as I leave the room. Julian has caused me a lot of anxiety with his unexplained absences, and I feel tremendous pressure to stay on top of his case – not just because of my duty of care, but because I'm his tutor and am responsible for his overall behaviour at school. I'm not doing very well, as I've had many emails from his teachers about problems he's having in their subjects (such as PE where he hasn't participated once this semester). A short conversation eases my concern, and as he heads off to his class, I re-enter the theatre to find Marge standing in the middle of the room staring at the groups, with a pen and paper in her hand. 'Shit' goes through my mind, and I think I've already blown my first impression. Immediately I go to her to explain the situation. She listens, nods, and tells me not to worry, and just to go about my lesson. I return to the class with 100% energy, bringing the students back together for the most amazing whole class activity on non-verbal communication ever!

At the end of the lesson she thanks me, and says that we'll catch up later. She has taken some notes, and will share her feedback and comments when we chat. I suffer nervousness and discomfort, but have no time to wonder further as the Year 10s stream in.

Marge pops in to see me later. Her goal seems to be to make me feel better, and reassure that I am doing a good job – even that I am a good teacher. I thought she would say that I was neglecting my class, and that I must never leave the room, but she started with the positives including that the groups looked engaged and focused. She acknowledged that I shouldn't let concerns about one student overwhelm my immediate priorities with my whole class. She breaks her perceptions down into a few points – I had a clear structure to the lesson, she thought my behaviour management was excellent (whereas I would have said the opposite especially as I had left the classroom and was nervous with her watching me), she liked my use of non-verbal communication to guide students especially as we are studying non-verbal communication (I didn't give verbal instructions to students, but rather used facial expressions and gestures, which they soon cottoned on to), and she also thought my use of student comments to give feedback was good (such as 'as Brent said, your group did use a variety of gestures, well done'). I am starting to find out that teaching is a lonely job, and while I find the experience of being watched and observed a little daunting, it does help to open up my classroom world. I think I'm doing okay, but need others to say that too, after all, what do I really know?

What I appreciate most about Marge being in my classroom is the reassurance that she gave me when I came back into the theatre after my sudden departure to attend to Julian, obviously showing that I was a little baffled and shaken to find her there. She told me that one naughty student shouldn't impact on the learning experience of 25. Factual, logical, and just what I needed to keep going – perspective and experience. Also, she gave me a kiss and a hug at the end of the lesson and told me I had done a good job and that she had enjoyed it – this incident stayed with me in my unwinding hours at home – I even shared it with Ryan, and thanked Marge for her kindness. A reality check that made life so much easier!

~

A few people are doing little, but special things, that are helping me survive my first year. My mum is a big support for me. She writes an email to me regularly to check how things are going, as well as a weekly phone call. It lets me know that she cares, but that also there is life outside of the school. Mum's health has also been a big issue in our family. She is not well, something that I have only discussed with Sarah, oh, and Pat, when I was thinking of offering to go on the school trip to Vietnam next May. At the moment Mum is worried about how tired I am, when I worry about how tired and sick she is. Her emails help me feel better, and they also relieve a little of my concern about her wellbeing. Naughtily, I am a little snappy with her at the moment, sometimes not answering her emails for several days, with the excuse that I have my head clogged with so many other things. But I do realise how important this outside contact is. Teaching can be overwhelming, and I can feel like there is nothing else in my life, apart from over a hundred people at school all wanting something from me. Some days I definitely need perspective.

It really isn't that hard for me to answer her emails, but sometimes I feel like I haven't got time.

I love the 'you've got mail' alert that appears on my orange desktop, and which, if I don't click it off immediately, will be read aloud to me by the invisible voice/woman that lives inside my Apple Mac computer. It breaks what is becoming the monotony of jobs to do. It makes me smile. Sometimes it comes just when I need it to, like after a bad Year 8 Drama lesson, or when a criticism has been made, directly or indirectly, about something I've done wrong, such as 'the theatre door was left unlocked' or 'we're missing a CD' or 'some of your Year 7s were very loud during Period 5 today'. Mum's voice, a voice from Home Land comes into what can be the overwhelmingly seriousness of Work Land.

Ryan does a good job of reminding me that there is life outside of school. July is my birthday month, as everyone who knows me *should* remember. At the end of the month I get a phone call from the office lady, Sandra.

'Marty, there's something down here waiting for you,'

'Oh, thanks,' I say unenthusiastically, sort of annoyed at the break from the work I am trying to mark, but at the same time glad for the distraction.

'Yes, they're lovely,' she adds before hanging up.

This makes me leave my office immediately, because I suspect that something not school related is waiting for me. Could it be... yes, a huge bunch of brightly, happily coloured flowers is on the front desk. I've never really been a flower person. But there's something about receiving them at school, at work, in the middle of the doldrums that makes them absolutely magical.

'What's the special occasion,' Sandra asks warmly.

'My birthday,' I gush, opening up the card that reads 'Happy birthday. Have a good day, and see you for a special dinner tonight. Love Ryan and Hugo'.

'How old?' she adds.

'Twenty three.'

'Congratulations,' she farewells me back to my office, and I wonder if she's thinking that I am young, and that everything is grand when you're twenty three.

~

Warm fuzzy moments are the best things. A 'warm fuzzy moment' is a moment that makes you feel really good about yourself. It doesn't just have to be about a compliment that you receive. It can be when you see a student get a 'ping' – when a light bulb goes on in his or her head and you realise they understand whatever it is you're discussing. Or when, for a Drama teacher, that shy student gets up on stage by himself for the first time and performs with confidence. Warm fuzzies are a real teacher 'pick me up' when you're down. I'm starting to collect them so that when I have a crap day I can remember them and think 'this is why I am here' and 'this is what matters'. For example, walking between the staffroom block and the Drama classroom I overhear a student (no idea which class) say,

'That's my drama teacher, she's really nice.'

This is definitely what a warm fuzzy moment is all about! I need them, especially when a student, staff member or parent is not so happy with my performance as a teacher, by stating things such as,

'I disagree…'

'I'm not happy with…'

'You suck…'

'That's not fair!'

So I am now collecting warm fuzzies as memories to keep close at all times, to act like a shield against those moments when I don't feel on top of things or in control.

Another warm fuzzy moment is when one of my Year 8 Drama students comes up to me, and comments on the film poster that I have stuck to the front of my diary. It's of a young man, waving his arms around with a bunch of young children in orange tops. He is their teacher, concerned about the impact of the world on these little people, and the title of Bertrand Tavernier's film is *It all starts today.* I ask her if she's seen it. No, she keenly replies, but it is showing at her parents' cinema. They run the local cinema in town. I am amazed.

'I've written about it in my Drama journal,' she continues, 'because you said you liked films. Is it alright if you write more than one page in your diary?'

I encourage her, as I have been trained to do, but am also excited. She explains that she's written five pages, and I am amazed, encouraged and thrilled. I feel like I do have a role here, a job to do! Have I actually inspired someone? This has got to be why people teach! It feels really good to think that I may have encouraged someone to work hard, to share her thoughts, to love the subject that I love too.

I'm also really happy with my Year 9 Drama class at the moment. We've been working through a unit that I really enjoyed at the beginning, but now feel like we're getting a bit lost. It begins with teacher in role, so I guess I feel very in control. We then moved into large group work where students have to produce their own info-documentary show, which we will then film. The groups almost disintegrated before they began, the dynamics being too challenging for some students. I heard things like 'Oh no, I don't want to work with him and 'Caleb's not co-operating'. But today is somehow different – everyone came to class

willing to work. What is different? Is it the weather? Is it the day of the week? Did they all eat something in particular for lunch? I suspect that it is my insistence that this task is finished by Friday. One thing that all of these students seem to respond to is a deadline. They're a bit slack about their journals, but mention that their assessment criteria will suffer, and it's all fixed up! The two boys in the class that have been consistently off task, and slightly loud and disruptive, are focused and engaged in the lesson today, particularly Wayne who has actually found a role that he cares about – the video camera operator. I am amazed at the change in his behaviour – his care, his curiosity, but also his new found sense of responsibility when handling the camera. His filming amazes me (he said he couldn't do it cause the others would blame him if it went wrong, showing that he actually cares about what he produces – of course I said he could definitely do it!). I think about how kids can be one-way one lesson, and different the next. It re-enforces my belief in being open all the time to what students can do, trying never to judge, or hold bitterness, allowing for retribution and fresh starts. I'm also encouraged that there are many strategies out there, and that it's just a matter of me finding the right approach for each student. So it's okay when things sometimes don't work, because sometimes they will! Like today.

And I have another small success story to tell. One of my tutor group students wanders in between periods as I am just turning off the lighting and sound equipment after the grade 10 performance. I see him come in, but do not think to immediately make contact. I should have, because he does not take Drama, and the Drama theatre, though our tutor room is an unfamiliar place for him at this time. I talk to another student, and then I see him wandering up the stairs to the lighting box. (Now that I think about it, I should have realised straight away that he wanted something – how unaware of me). But he's a quiet boy (though has not always been the tutor group records suggest). I call out his name, and ask what I can do for him.

'You remember that spare key you've got' he says and the rest of the story falls into place.

'Of course,' I think, and go into what is probably a bad habit of filling in the blanks out loud.

'You've lost your key, well isn't it lucky we've put that spare aside.'

I am very pleased he has come to me, and that our strategy of the spare key for his locker has worked. 'Of course', I exclaim, 'come with me.' (Thinking about it now, it still makes me feel good because he came to me. Is this a power trip?) I am pleased for him that he has managed to admit he needed assistance, rather than simply coping without his books. I suppose I feel like I have made contact. But thinking about how I finished his sentences for him stands out to me as not a good thing to do. Mental note – listen rather than just start talking! I guess I am trying to show him that I am confident and in charge – that I can fix anything. Perhaps I'm just showing him what a poor listener I am. I'm torn between letting kids know that I'm on the ball, and up to speed, and letting them plod through their problems themselves. But I value the importance of giving them time to voice their own thoughts their way - to develop their own voice. Teachers, we were told at university, talk 90 percent of class time. More stats from uni stand out as being true. Shut up Marty! Prove your sincerity with your actions, your life, rather than your mouth. 'I want to,' will not get you anywhere if you don't actually do it.

~

This year has taught me several things about how to cope with being a teacher. In the first place talking about my days helps me get it out of my head. I have a definite need to debrief. Poor Sarah gets her ear chewed off for anywhere between half and hour and a whole hour after school sometimes. Who said teachers get home early? Teacher talk is definitely a coping strategy. And I think it's important I offload my baggage at school rather than take it home to Ryan who has no idea who 'Julian, Leila, or Matthew are'. People complain about how teachers rabbit on when they get together. At the pub on Friday nights, partners of teachers huddle together as the teachers pour out the complaints, the difficulties, and usually a few triumphs too. One person will mention 'reports' and the group will nod in unison, without adding to the comment, but simply acknowledging the statements as true. Yet we can't possibly keep all this stuff bottled up can we? I can't. I'm just conscious that off-loading with someone else could perhaps be a burden to the listener. Sarah has started sharing her problems, thoughts, and concerns with me now. This helps me feel normal, because I know that certain

issues, such as report writing, are not just effecting me because I am new, or because I am a first year teacher. She didn't share as much at the beginning of the year, but I sense that as the year has progressed, we are becoming friends as well as colleagues, and this helps to open up our conversations because of the development of trust and rapport. Honestly, I am so lucky to have her – not just as someone I can talk to, but literally there, in our office box, with me everyday. Teacher talk, then, saves me from living my school day over and over and over. I think we say a lot of things as teachers, in our school context, as a way of letting off steam. It is a way of defusing any tension, releasing the pressure, and of not focusing on the seriousness of our role. I remember on pracs when I would write notes about the cynicism of the teachers. I would be shocked by the derogatory comments made by staff members about students, parents and even other staff members. Now I'm in the middle of it, I still feel unsettled by such comments, but I'm starting to see that they don't have any solid grounding. Teacher talk can hollow. Simply because we're winding down from the amount of talking we do all day. Sometimes I don't think we want listeners – we just want someone there so it doesn't look like we're talking to ourselves.

Making lists is another strategy that I am developing. The only way I feel I can overcome these growing work castles surrounding me is to write sticky notes to myself and stick them on my laptop daily. Crossing things off actually makes me feel and see that things are getting done, that I am moving forward, that I am swimming, well perhaps splashing, through the sea of work to do.

> **Thursday**
> - *mark Year 7A journals*
> - *mark Year 7B journals*
> - *photocopy Greek worksheet*
> - *copy scripts for Year 10*
> - *phone Jane Bentley*
> - *transfer marks to mark book*
> - *return Ed's folder*
> - *production reminder for student bulletin*
> - *bank, post office*

I go for the easy jobs first – photocopy room, and then down the road to the bank and post office. With a two-hour rehearsal after school, I won't have time to get to either before they close. Both bills need to be paid today.

And developing a 'personal system' is important too. My desk that I worked so hard on making look pretty at the beginning of the year still looks organized, and it's now the middle of the term. The rice crackers that I eat throughout the day (I'm too lazy to make myself a proper lunch, all the left-overs have been eaten earlier in the week, and I haven't had time to get to the supermarket yet) are tucked sneakily away in my top drawer. Sarah jests with me about 'hollow carbs' not being good for me, and contributing to my lack of energy. I like the fact that she cares. She's right, though. I'll have to make minestrone soup tonight. But she does comment on how organised my desk is compared to hers. Ryan's not so sure though. He drops in after school one night to see where I work, and is amazed at the conglomeration of items that surround, encase, seem to be swallowing my work area. But there is definite order to the seeming chaos. My system finally seems to be working. No one told me I had to develop a system or if fact what I would need a system for in the first place. A system is methodology for sorting out the teaching paper work. Paper, even though we are a computer oriented school, overwhelms the teaching day, and if not dealt with immediately can build up and up and up – as the pile at the edge of my desk testifies to Ryan.

My system is a combination of display folders for units of work, ring binders for collating documents to do with issues such as employment, cardboard magazine style holders on the top of my desk that I use to put manila folders in for quick and easy access – topics of these folders include such things as Faculty Meetings, Year 8 Group, Moderation, and Professional Development. Sarah has put a large pile of new manila folders on top of the filing cabinet, so anytime a new topic comes a long, the new piece of paper is soon sorted into it's own special folder. At the moment I'm not sure about the combination of display, ring and manila folders, but I may review the 'system' at the end of the year. I haven't addressed the issue of sorting my email yet, and have so far collected 783 – I don't delete them because I have already found that it is important to go back to messages sometimes to check or confirm things. Each subject I teach has its own space

around my desk, whether on a shelf, or on my desk. It is an empty space, marked either by an empty plastic tray or a gap that I have labelled with the name of the class on a sticky note. This is where my marking goes. Year 7 journals go straight to the Year 7 spot. Year 10 tests go straight to the year 10 spot. This may seem anally retentive, but having been through hysterics that I may have actually lost a student's work, I find this system is the only way I can keep a track of the multitude of paper material I walk around with. I can come back after two periods of teaching with two display folders, 50 exercise books, and 25 scripts – a system is crucial. By the way – scripts go in the filing cabinet.

~

Sometimes my survival techniques are not planned, or consciously decided upon. I just invent them as I have to. Perhaps they're not ideal either. Like drinking beer, or swearing loudly with the door to my office closed (I hope our office is not bugged). Or my 'matters or doesn't matter' policy. This is how my prioritising system has come about. I am realizing that I cannot do everything, and that I need to prioritize according to what is important and what is not. Sometimes I have to say 'no' or even 'NO' in a loud and assertive voice. This goes against my 'spock' persona, where I want to be seen to be doing lots of extra things to help out, but I just don't have the time at the moment. Like going on year 7 camp. Already I have marking to do that I feel I am getting behind with. If I want to see Ryan anytime this week, I have to stay after school to finish it – hence, I'm not going to drive an hour to visit the Year 7s tonight!

Professional development yesterday did not come up very high on my new priority list. They used a normal staff meeting time slot to talk to us about enterprise and employment as a paradigm for learning – particularly in Years 9 and 10. It must be hard for them to motivate teachers at this time of the day, particularly about a big picture issue that has nothing to do (immediately) with their daily teaching. A silent sigh went around the room as or guest speaker mentioned that he wanted us to do some practical stuff. Maybe it's ruthless of me, but I find that I've developed a kind of cutthroat attitude to information. If I don't

need it directly, i.e. the next period, or even the next day, perhaps the next week at the most, then it gets shelved or simply cut out. A coping strategy, I suppose, that I am developing. I think I'll need to be careful that I don't become the absent-minded young teacher in the department, forgetful, as I've already caught some things that have been shelved but never caught up with. For example, there was a survey that appeared in my pigeonhole last term, which needed to be in within 3 weeks. I think it was on women's issues and how we think our employer is dealing with them. See, I did read it. In fact, this is a topic that I would normally be passionate about – in the real world. But I'm sure I haven't completed it! And I'm scared to think of where it might be…The franticness of school land is changing my priorities, it seems, whether I want it to or not!

~

I am back to the importance of little things making a difference. The holidays seem too far away for me to focus on as a goal to help me get through the term. I need daily treats, such as chocolate and Chuppa Chups lollipops that we have in our staffroom. There's nothing like a good sugar fix to make the afternoon periods seem better – even the students know this! Last night I went home and went straight to the beer. I told Sarah this morning and she simply nodded with understanding. Red wine is one of her treats, and a good book.

It never ends. School, thinking about school, organizing stuff for school. It goes on and on. It's all of me, and I have to almost fight for the other parts that make up 'me', such as a family life and even cooking and cleaning. Even hobbies or fun things to do after school like going to the gym, though we just managed to squeeze a trip to the cinema in last Thursday, but I felt guilty for rushing off from rehearsal 10 minutes after the kids left. I wonder if this is just a private school thing, or just a 'me' thing – I am a bit of an achiever, and work hard to do well. Maybe I need to let things go.

~

Still feeling tired, but at least I am also feeling happy. I just had my annual performance review today with Marge, and I wasn't really anxious about it, because I haven't had any overly negative feedback, and therefore felt that there was not anything to worry about.

I've only received little comments here and there, and these comments are more like little corrections to my behaviour than any drastic complaints. For example, if I make a suggestion at a department meeting, someone will say 'Oh, we tried that and it didn't work' or 'well, it's probably a little soon for you to worry about that, I wouldn't worry until you've taught for a few years'. Sometimes such comments can make me feel patronised, and they certainly boost my determination to prove that I can do anything. But I guess they're said to make me feel better. After all, I have only been here for a minute.

The process of my appraisal is very constructive. It is lovely to read what two of my fellow staff members have said about me, and reassuring. It feels great when I am told that they enjoyed having me, and that I am an enthusiastic and cheerful staff member who has made a lot of friends – I feel loved.

My mentor Sarah writes supportively, both commenting on personal and professional traits,

> *Marty played a key role in the Year 10 production. As her first large scale play she was faced with many varied challenges of building sets, making props and costumes. I felt like Marty learned a great deal about making and finding. Throughout even the busiest time she remained cheerful and focused on the end point.*
>
> *Marty is a terrific person to work with on a personal level. As we spend each day sharing an office, discussing work and students, I feel quite lucky that we have built a friendship upon the basic need to get on as Drama teachers. Her genuine interest in the school and her colleagues has meant she has become a valued member of staff with ease.*

My supervisor, Marge, concludes the official document with the comments,

> *Marty has completed an excellent first year in this position. She has shown enormous willingness to learn; about the school and its ethos, about the students in her tutor group and about the whole business of teaching. At faculty level she is already contributing ideas, energy and time to a range of activities. As a tutor she has worked hard to develop a caring and appropriate relationship with the students in her group. As a teacher she shows infectious enthusiasm; interested in her subject and the learning process of her students. I look forward to her future at White School.*

Each of us then signs the document, and it is sent to the principal's office to be the beginning of my staff record. I hope that the larger performance evaluation of next year (the one my appointment is dependent on) will look as good.

~

Let's not raise the issue of teachers' holidays. It's 6pm and I am still at school. Yes I am a teacher. And I fully believe we deserve every single holiday we get! They help us survive!

~

7.2   *Conversation Five: Getting Through*

Researcher's Introduction*: We have somehow managed to find time to talk. We could all be somewhere else. Our conversation is more like a therapy session, and is a time to offload and debrief.*

Marty: I think I found teaching very stressful, both physically and emotionally. We did a Grade 10 production, it was supposed to be our 'off' year, meaning that we weren't doing a full school production, but my journal entries just shrink and shrink as I think I became quite tired. What did you think when you got to that section of my journal? Around August…

Eleanor: I didn't think when I was doing my production I would have got home and been able to sit down and write so I still thought you must have been disciplined enough to start writing.

Marty: There were certainly several phases during the year that I found very hard. The production period was very intense, as well as report writing time, and there are definite blank periods where I've missed writing in my journal for several weeks.

Angela: I notice that… it sort of came and went with the highs and lows. The frustration…

William: It read that way… it did! And I don't think it comes any other way at times, particularly when you're starting out. Productions are all consuming, your teaching suffers, your ability to find…

Marty: I think I resented it too. I resented the fact that my teaching suffered.

William: Yeah, and I've just gone through that process, as I always do, and you do sort of get into a rhythm after a while but you do have to compromise so much, because you just can't do the business of teaching… it's just sort of ironic that I was back from rehearsals one day and the principal walks in the door as I'm taking Wilfred Owen World War 1 poetry and trying to get them to read with a bit of sensitivity, and luckily I had the right kids doing the right things at the right time, and… it was a bit of a shame. But you do! You have to, and it read that way. You were feeling that you didn't have time to write this journal, it was taking over you… it's only natural, that's a very natural thing. You have to be superwoman, and no one is, to feel as though 'I can still march on' and at the same time you're absolutely in production mode. Everything else is secondary to the main game. So, no, it's not unnatural, nor is it abnormal, or wrong. I think that it's just part of the business. You can't do both. You can't. I don't feel you can. I didn't. I was just telling kids, just go off, and work on your monologues, and here I am running around getting props. I mean it's just the way it is.

Eleanor: My students, I think, coped remarkably well with one intensely stressed teacher taking a lot of her anxieties about all the different junk that was going on, out on them, like the fact that I had to rewrite the script, the fact that I wasn't allowed to have rehearsals with them, out of class time until a month before the show and in that month before the show we had Grade 10 ski trip, Grade 10 exams, Grade 10 work experience and the Grade 10s were like the major core of my production.

Marty: So, do you think I coped?

Eleanor: I think you were generally tired, I think you had enough drive to keep your journal going, and to keep, you know, being able to sit down and tell how you were feeling and all that sort of stuff, which, in contrast to my experience, where we actually did our full secondary musical and all the dilemmas that went with the school's restrictions, as far as that I would get home and either be completely silent, or I would be like, really… built up frustration or I would be in tears and I don't think that I would've had the ability to sit down and go through my thoughts and write them down to say how I had been feeling through the production.

Marty: So I was doing alright?

Angela: I think you skimmed over your achievements.

Marty: I wonder what I did achieve… I think it took me the whole of the summer holidays to wash out my tiredness. I mean I felt physically drained. I think it took me a good summer to come back in, and I think it was only after this break, and maybe even all of first term, that I started to notice things were different, that things were better.

Angela: I can relate to the need for space. We do need to get away, and clear our heads.

Eleanor: I would say from reading your journal that you had the ability to cope far better with your situation than I think I would have.

Marty: What do you mean?

Eleanor: You know, reading your journal, reflecting on my musical, I thought 'AH!' I would have just loved to be told to go off and be stage manager and manage and people saying 'you do that'.

Marty: What was yours like?

Eleanor: Well, you had three staff members to be involved in it whereas I had 52 students and just me in a gymnasium where often the PE teacher would forget to put his footballs away and so the first thing I would have to do is try and get the footballs back in the store cupboard and shut it up and lock it, and that probably took 15 minutes. I only had 1 hour and 15 minutes a fortnight for rehearsals with my 52 students.

Marty: That's not much time.

Eleanor: No. I was a one-man band. I videotaped a rehearsal one time and I was really horrified with the strain in my voice and the pitch and the tone was so high and so elevated and so frantic that I had to destroy the video because I was disgusted.

Marty:	Really?

Eleanor: Yep, my whole voice completely changed through the musical and to the point where I was once, we got to the point where it was the night before the opening show and I asked a few of the primary teachers to come in and watch and everything and they finished the rehearsal which was interrupted and stopped twice so that the media could come in and do their pictures and camera work and everything, so I had never done a full run through before our first performance and the primary teachers gave me some ideas and opinions and all that sort of stuff which was really helpful, and then as they were leaving, they said 'Oh, don't forget your encore and bows'. And all of a sudden I thought 'how could I forget to organise an encore and bowing' and so they left and I went 'RIGHT! You there, you there, you there, you're there in order. Right, now you know your order I'm not telling you again cause I've just forgotten the order, you come in here, and you bow like this and you go back. Right!' And there I was, standing there screaming.

Marty: I completely relate to your comment about your voice shocking yourself. I think there were many moments, some of them definitely from the production time, where I shocked myself.

Eleanor: I paid the price of the previous Drama teacher involving the whole school in it, and so that was difficult and then at the end of the show other teachers walked in and said things like 'well, what a great musical' and 'didn't the school do a lovely job' and 'weren't the kids fantastic'. And there was me – this bundle of agitation and stress and like, I just, I was glad that it was like a week before the holidays and I could just go. Because I had got to the point where I felt everything inside me was wound up. And so I think, you know, you had the ability to, to let somebody else cope with the directing side of it for your first experience, which in hindsight if I had had that ability I would have wanted to be in your situation rather than mine. I do like to jump head first into situations but in this one I felt like I drowned.

William: If the first year sets you up, if you've got a good support structure, which obviously you did Marty - I keep saying you were lucky Marty, but you were -if there's nothing like that then who knows… And your first year has the potential to, not make or break you, but it sets you up, and I feel it's pretty important for most teachers, if they look back honestly and seriously… and if I recall the past it was a fairly healthy and happy one. I went off on camps and I had good experiences, I had good colleagues, I worked well with them, also I knew some of them socially, I was doing plays. I wasn't sort of swamped, and I simply took it in my stride and staff and students alike received me favourably. So I think it's important and

that it does set you up. If you have a bad first year it can be pretty hard to get back into… well…

Eleanor: But I don't think anybody can really prepare you for some things, of how to deal with annoying staff members, or how to be professional when a student comes to you and complains about another teacher, that you don't particularly like but you have to, but how do you deal with that, or how do you deal with that whole hierarchical system of the principal and the vice principal and all the other power players within a school, and all that sort of stuff. I don't think anybody teaches you that, and I think some things you don't ever get over.

Angela: Yes, there were lots of really difficult learning situations whether it is individual kids or parents or dealing with areas of responsibility as well as being professional… the school camp…

Marty: What about the camp?

Angela: Just all those worries and concerns, but you know, your commitment comes through, but it was bloody hard, but every single time you come up for air. But if I'm you, and I'm going through this year, I've gone 'Okay, I can see Summer is on its way, I'm getting ready for next year now, and yes, I've had ups and downs, you know, there's all these good things to look forward to, and the Year 10s are coming back and saying nice things about me.

Marty: Chin up, kind of thing?

Angela: You stayed positive. I remember towards the end of your journal where you've said 'well, these were the highs and these were the lows, with the camp, and this is where I'm at now' and you're still positive, and you've got some of your energy back despite the sickness and all those frustrations and all those frustrations… I think you're quite sane, and I don't think you're quite as unusual as you might think.

Marty: I find it reassuring that you can see the positive moments.

Angela: Okay…

Marty: Because for a while there I couldn't. For a while there, I thought, first year had been really, really hard. Full stop!

William: I didn't fall as sick as you did. [*Reading from the journal*] '15 hours a week'.

Marty: Yeah, that was my load for my first year. Is that good?

William: Yes, yes that's good. I felt it was pretty generous. [*referring to journal again*] 'The guilt drove you'. [*Marty chuckles*] The guilt! 'I feel guilty at home' you know, wrapped up in my doona, uggies and tracksuit bottoms.

Marty: I hate being sick because I feel so… I feel that it is such a pain, cause then you've got to think about your classes.

William: Is it worth it?

Marty: Yeah! Am I really that sick?

William: I know. And I think it's strange that you have to ring them up and tell them what taught, and how relief teachers get more money than you do and they just ride along and don't have to do anything but baby-sit.

Eleanor: You've got to look after yourself; if you don't look after yourself you're going to have a longer period of time off school. I think sometimes you just need someone to give you the permission to be tired and to have time to yourself.

Marty: Angela, what do you think I had to cope with?

Angela: This is like a test.

Marty: No, I mean, and don't feel like you have to find it, but you know, just…

Angela: Well, just like everything… Okay… teacher mode, personal mode, in-charge of student mode, relating to the peer mode, um… projecting a professional image to the general community mode, everything Marty. Every little thing! You question, you worry…

Marty: Did I worry too much?

Angela: I think so, but then I do too. But then I know I worry too much, so if you're like me, then yes… you worry too much.

Marty: I remember the Principal saying to me, referring to an article about a teacher on the mainland who had got top marks from year 12 but had chosen to go into education because she wanted to work with kids and she described her first year teaching and saying 'so fabulous and awe-inspiring and amazing' that she, during her summer holidays she spent half of it in her classroom decorating it for her kids for her second year… And when he told me this story I felt like 'no way. I don't want to go near the school'. I want to have a complete break, I'm tired and I don't want to think about it, and in many ways I think I started to dwell on the areas where I felt that I hadn't succeeded.

Eleanor: But you said 'phew, I made it' and recognised what you'd achieved. There is that mixture between the 'oh, yes, I'm really glad that I did make it and I did have an impact' and the 'now I'm glad that's over'. You can look back over the whole thing and you know, bitter sweet looking back at what happened with the students and about the production and about that being a closure time and I think that comes through, there was closure and that it wasn't an unsuccessful closure. It was one that you felt that you had done well in.

Marty: Yeah, but at the end of the year, sad as I am to admit this out loud, I think I was really happy that the year was over and this came through to me when the Year 10s left. I realised all of a sudden that the Year 10 formal is not just for the students but also for the teachers to say – BYE you know. I felt a sense of phew! And 'I got through it'.

William: Teaching isn't easy. If people think it is, you know, they should be out of it, because it's not really that easy. It can really be taxing on you as a person. And you're lucky if you get a pat on the back from some kids. I think that's the nice thing – you get a compliment or you get a note, or you get a thank you… It's fleeting, but it reaffirms that you might be alright. You may be doing the right thing.

Angela: Are teachers nurtured? No. Are we? Absolutely not!

Marty: Did you cry?

Angela: I didn't cry, from memory, that was quite a few years now, but, oh, I felt, now I look at it it's ridiculous. Think, how many people sometimes just make these simple errors… Big deal, you know.

Marty: Yeah.

Angela: Back then it was like the end of the world, and I'm incompetent and why did I even get this job when I can't do it, you know, all that exaggerated self criticising, you know.

Marty: The whip…

Angela: Yes. But I don't remember crying.

Marty: What do you think were the things that helped you along the way?

Angela: Well, definitely mentors and support. Every time I had a question or if I wanted some resources my mentor actually came and sat in, which was a really positive thing, to give feedback or combine

classes and work together. She was excellent actually. I would say she was a major influence.

Marty: Was she an official mentor, or was she just informal…

Angela: Yes and no, she was the Head of Drama and I think the fact that there were only two of us, she was in charge of the department, and I think I was her 'underling' and she was wonderful. To be honest, I can't imagine what it would have been like to have not had that because I was never isolated or put in a school where I felt unsupported. But the people I think could make or break it, if they make you um, if they validate what you're doing and treat you well then of course, that affects your persona, and the way you approach them and, certainly your confidence and esteem is built up.

Marty: And the thing is, if everything's new, and the whole system's completely like nothing you've experienced before, then it's so tough to make decisions about what you think is right and what you think is wrong, and what you think is professional, and what you are going to do, and what you're not going to do, if you've got nothing to compare it to. And if you haven't got that person, like Curtis was there for you at home Eleanor, but I think it's so important that you have someone there are work. Sarah told me throughout the year, so many times, 'you look crap, go home'. Whereas I'd be sitting there, going 'oh, I've got this to do'. Not understanding and not putting emphasis or value on the fact that my health is important, I'm not going to cope the next day if I keep trying to fight it off, and I mean I still do that for her, we read each other, and if she's having a really hard time with something then I step in, if it's a student, or a lesson, or if it's just saying 'hey, I'm going to bring you a coffee in Period 1'. That support person, or people, if you're lucky enough to have people.

Eleanor: Hmm

Marty: It's crucial, utterly crucial, and I think, that was definitely one of the bonuses of my first year, was having a specific mentor, who, who didn't just turn out to be a mentor, but someone that I got on really well with, and might have sought out anyway, like I think you naturally seek out people, and I think than an assigned mentor isn't always going to work all the time, but that an induction program that has clear guidelines, with this and that written out, is invaluable. I appreciated our formal program. Did you have an official mentor Eleanor?

Eleanor: The first school I went to they gave me a mentor, who was a part-time teacher that taught in my free lessons, and I taught when she had free lessons.

Marty: Which doesn't work.

Eleanor: We got together after the musical, that was our first sit down and a chat, and the musical was in second term, so I, like you said, you end up seeking out someone, and I was just lucky that I got on really well with the music teacher and a lot of times, I would walk out of the drama room at the end of the day, walk through the internal door in to the music room and just go 'ahhhhh' [*mock crying to laugher*] and 'why is this happening and what's going wrong here, and how the, the, the…' and he put up with so much, and helped me through things, and you know, told me what he did in similar situations, what he regretted doing in certain situations, and gave me that wealth of knowledge that his 10 years of teaching had given him that I was yet to get, and um, I think that was really, really invaluable, like just even little things, like how to deal with the fact that you've got um, at a small school, most people related to each other and how do you deal with walking out of class and walking into the office and the child that you just had the most problem with – mum is the office lady. How do you deal with that? And how do you deal with um, things, like a staff member that you have a problem with being the vice principal's son, how do you deal with all those ins and outs of political things, um, and of those sorts of little problems, that he was able to help me with, and understand, and like you said, walk in to my classroom and go 'you look crap' and know that he could say that, and know that I could walk into his classroom and say 'you're not looking after yourself' and have that sort of level of…

Marty: Hmm.

Eleanor: …rapport and have that sort of relationship, and that was really invaluable and he said that he, in his 10 years of teaching, hadn't had that relationship with anybody before, which is a really depressing thought, because I was fortunate in the two years I was at my first school I had him.

Marty: Yeah!

Eleanor: I think you need that, people who are willing to be personal, without judgment. I think it's really good if you can have someone who can say 'you know, you really shouldn't be doing that'. The Head of the English department at my new school came to me one time and said 'Look, I just need to address something with you. At this school our grammar is really, really a top priority, and I had a look through one of your student's books and you haven't been doing much grammar with them' and I said 'oh, no, it's something I don't feel comfortable with, like I don't feel I know it well enough to be teaching it' and she goes 'well, let's fix that' and worked with me to fix it, rather than just leave it as 'you're not doing the right thing'.

Marty: And fix it up by yourself!

Eleanor: Yeah, to have that support, and she goes 'look come into the library' and we went in to the library and she goes 'look at this' and she showed me this big long shelf of grammar books and she's goes 'pick one that's your style and teach it'. And so that's what I did. I picked one that suited the way that I taught to start teaching it.

Angela: I've got a question for you Marty.

Marty: Yeah.

Angela: If you had thirty eggs… [*Marty laughs*] I want you to divide them into three baskets.

Marty: Yep.

Angela: Family, friends, and work…

Marty: I have thirty eggs?

Angela: You've got thirty eggs. Tell me how many you're going to have in your friends basket? I feel like a professional development officer…

Marty: Family, work…I mean family would be 10 to 12, and work would be 10ish and… what have I got left?

Angela: Um, you've got 8 left.

Marty: Ah, probably 6 friends, so chuck more in which ever needs it at the time, whichever basket I'm carrying.

Angela: Fair enough. I said I'd put 20 eggs in work, probably 5, maybe 6 or 7 in friends and maybe 3 or 4 in family. Now guess what we were told we should, you know, the ideal should be? 5 in work, and the others divided between whatever you feel comfortable with between family and friends.

Marty: No more than 5 in work?

Angela: That's what we were told.

~

7.3   *Thursday*

Not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, sleep, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, cry, not another day, not another day, cry, *not another day*, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, sleep, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, cry, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day,

Oh, no!
I am a cliché.

Giving in looms,
Over
little
me
(Ingersoll, 2001).

'Failure' beckons.

But,
then,
slowly,

without
noticing,

I can swim,

badly,

floundering,

guzzling water, and air, at the same time

But I am not drowning,

I am *not sinking*,

and I realise,

('together we are stronger' Featherstone, 1993)

Tomorrow is Friday!

'and the next stage of development' (Berliner, 1988; Kagan, 1992).

'And I can sleep in on Saturday,'

I sigh,

Chapter Eight

Friday [1]

~

Finally it's Friday. It is a day of relief that the working week is finally over, but also a sense that much, perhaps not all, has been achieved. At the end of the day, the weekend has officially arrived, and there will be time to breathe, to think, to catch up, and to have a life outside of the teaching day. On Friday, much has been learned. The past days have revealed much, about me, and about others. The dynamics of the community are apparent. The unspoken communications of others can be heard and seen. On Friday, the world is no longer completely unfamiliar or overwhelming. I have learned, and am hopeful once again. Next week will be better.

~

For beginning teachers schools are complex, multifaceted organizations.
(Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997, p.8-)

~

---

[1] This chapter contains two stories entitled *Personalities and Politics* and *I am Not a Maths Teacher.* These stories are followed by *Conversation Six: Fitting In and Knowing Our Place.* The chapter concludes with the stanza 'Friday' from the poem 'Teaching Daze'.

8.1   *Personalities and Politics*

> *I had an interesting experience today where I ended up in a triangle of sorts. Not the love kind, but the professional one, where I had to tiptoe around everyone's wishes, their clashing intentions, and my own concern for making sure I did the right thing.* (Teaching Journal, p.19)

No one told me that it would be the teachers, rather than the students, that would be the hardest to understand. They have their own tastes, their own styles of teaching, and their own personality quirks, just like I assume I do. There's Michael, the friendly but quiet principal, who makes me feel like a valuable asset to the school. There's Kate in the office who kindly told me that I'd come in the wrong door when I dropped off my expression of interest letter, and whom I later find out is a Collingwood supporter. Sarah is a given, my mentor, and artistic Drama teacher friend, who I am sure was shocked to find out that the Arts faculty has employed someone who actually makes plans around when the football is showing on the weekend. She has a lollies interest like me though, and the jar on our bookshelf that she will frequently stock up, is just as quickly emptied. And there's Marge, my supervisor, Elizabeth, the head of the Arts faculty, Candice, the head of the English Faculty, and Pat, the person in charge of supervisions and sick days.

There are so many new faces and so many new names to learn. But there are also the underlying aspects of working in a large school with a large staff - the unspoken factors that I have to learn too. What role does each person hold? What are his/her official duties? What are his/her unofficial duties? Who can help me when I stuff up the photocopier (accidentally of course)? What if I need help with a lesson? What if I'm crying, and not coping with the day? Who do I go to when I have a behaviour management problem? Who do I go to if a colleague yells at me in front of students? Who do I go to if I have concerns about how another member

of staff is dealing with the students? What if one of my tutor group parents has a problem with another member of staff? Which side do I take? What if a colleague has an issue with one of my students that I don't think is fair? Who do I go to?

I'm sure no one has told me, or warned me about the politics of working in a school.

~

I have an interesting experience today where I end up in a triangle of sorts. Not the love kind, but the professional one, where I feel I have to tiptoe around everyone's wishes, their clashing intentions, and my own concern for making sure that I do the right thing. One of my grade 7s in my tutor group has been having troubles organizing her cello lessons. Specific individual instrument lessons are organised by the school but are conducted and maintained by an external music teacher. During my parent/teacher meeting with Leila's mum this tutorial lesson seemed to be causing the mum, Deidre, a lot of unnecessary stress. Finance is a concern, as she has a young baby, is single, with Leila being able to be at the school because she's on a scholarship. There is information that she needed that she has not received, such as how much, when, and how to pick up the instrument. Supposedly this has all been sorted out last year, via a form, but it is now supposedly lost. You can probably tell that I am trying to piece this story together from bits of information that I am received from a variety of sources, all who seem to have a different version of events.

Deirdre, when I chat to her again, stresses that she did return the appropriate form to the school office, following the correct procedure. So there I am with a parental complaint about the music teacher not supporting her daughter – what am I supposed to do? I turn to Sarah, who happens to be only a metre away.
'Hey, can I ask you something,' I say, assuming that I can, even though she has her head over a pile of Drama journals.
'Hmm' she says, not looking up.

'Leila's mum is complaining about Andrew Jennings, and I'm not sure what to do or say? Leila's music lesson hasn't been organised and it's Week 7. Mum's pretty angry, and I don't know this Andrew at all, so I'm not sure how to respond.'

Sarah has turned around to face me now, giving my concern her full attention.

'Well, he's not a careless teacher, but we all can forget things at times, with the amount of stuff going on,' she says, broadening the issue to not be so personal or confrontational. 'It is a problem that we're now in Week 7, because she'll have missed a few lessons, but it should be easy to fix up. Why don't you just go and speak to Andrew, and see if you can organise the lessons for her. Has she got her permission form in?'

'Yeah, well Deirdre said she handed it in,' I say, trying not to announce any certain facts as everything is still only speculation.

'Just chat to Andrew,' she says, returning to her marking.

I take Deirdre's questions (which I have on a sticky piece of paper) to the music teacher, straight after discussing the best way about it with Sarah. However, my chat to Andrew in the staffroom gives me a very different perspective on the situation. To all of my questions I receive, 'this was on the information sheets that went home last year'. 'Hmm', I think. More bits of information come out.

'Well, if she handed it in then she would have received this info'.

I also find out that the person I should be contacting is not Andrew, Leila's music teacher, but the external music tutor. How am I supposed to know who this tutor is, when I didn't even know we ran private music lessons until Deirdre complained? I feel a little silly taking such a strong stand so early, and graciously take my answers and phone Deirdre to leave a message on her answering machine. I leave two because I run out of room, and get cut off by the machine. I then moved on to all the other phone calls I have to make to parents that I have not been able to meet. I see Deirdre the very next night with Leila as she has managed to come in and pick up the cello. 'Success' I think to myself. My first tutor problem solved.

However, I soon receive a phone call from my head of house to tell me that Deirdre has been on the phone again, and in fact has been in tears because she did not know that Leila was participating in the swimming carnival, and also that she has still not heard from the music teacher. I think this is odd, and then feel

frustrated because maintaining this triangular conversation is becoming time consuming and doesn't seem to be coming to a natural ending. Yet I am beginning to see a pattern emerging. This mum is over reacting, I whispered to myself. When this thought enters my mind, I try to stop it because I can feel myself becoming cynical and judgmental. Marge says that Deirdre has not received a copy of the school's weekly newsletter once, and I feel like she is suggesting that I have not fulfilled my tutor role properly. In my tutor group these are basically thrown at students in the four minutes they have to get to their lockers, as I take attendance, and hand out all the notices. I know that I haven't developed an effective strategy for completing so many duties in such a short space of time. 'Right', I decide, 'Leila is getting her notice personally placed in her school bag this Friday!' I scan my memory, trying to relieve myself of blame. Too much in my head, so I give up, but do not receive the slightest bit of criticism from Marge. The issue is that the music teacher still hasn't phoned, and mum, who is in a fragile state, and is very concerned about money, making sure she knows everything, is not happy at all. Perhaps this has nothing to do with me at all. I'm just the piggy in the middle. My perspective of this situation is very different than the last time I tried to handle Leila's case. I explain to Marge the conversation I have had with Andrew already, and that I had thought it had been sorted out. I have answered all her questions, and I thought the info sheet had gone to every student, but if Leila had, unfortunately, not taken one, she has known for the last two weeks that she was participating in the carnival.

This is an important learning curve for me, as I battle opposing points of view within the professional framework. Normally, you bag someone out and get on with it. Or even, if I felt more confident in the situation; tell someone that they have not done the right thing. But now there are other factors involved.   I battle my own self-consciousness. I also try to keep everyone happy. I try not to offend everyone. I try to make sure that the parent is happy with the services she is getting for her money.

There is no clear outcome to this situation yet, and if my inexperienced suspicions are correct, there could be lots of follow-ups for this Mum. I make sure that Leila gets her newsletter today, and leave the follow-up aspect in Marge's very capable

and qualified hands to sternly but of course professionally, tell the music teacher to call the mum. If I get overwhelmed, I just keep telling myself – it's because I am still learning!

~

The staffroom is a great place to hang out and learn things about the staff, about the staff culture. During lesson times, when I have a free, I sometimes go to the staffroom to have a cuppa and catch up with some paper work. People wander in and out, and it is fascinating to watch what they do. There is a phenomenon of talking to oneself when you are wandering around the largish room, even if you are not sure whether someone is listening or not. I am in the photocopying room, just off the staffroom, spending most of the morning making worksheets and organising scripts. A young female teacher comes in to the staffroom, having just walked in through the school car park (the photocopying window looks out over the main entrance to the school and offers a great view of the mountain to stare at as the machine goes swoosh 100 times or more, churning out white, warm Reflex paper).

'She's late' I think, but perhaps she is part-time. I don't even know her name, but do know that she teaches some of my Year 7s.

In the staffroom she begins to wander around the daily notices, which are arranged on appropriate notice boards. The new rosters for supervision lessons and grounds duty are up, and of course had most of the high school staff swirling around them when they were put up at 8am. She mumbles aloud. 'Two? Two?' I am tempted to turn, but refrain. There is a need to let her have her space. She may want to talk to me, but I feel distant from this weird ritual.

Staff meetings are another insight into the people in this place. It's having a contagious effect on me. I easily fall into the negativity that exists in staff conversations, which precede this event. They're important, of course, for a number of reasons, but interestingly a piece of paper was floating around the

staffroom that said 'if you hate work, hold a meeting'. Sadly, this makes me laugh.

~

It's funny how my feelings about the principal seem to be changing. My encounters with him before the beginning of his year, and during negotiation stages, such as talking to him while I was in Perth, I feel a great deal of admiration, respect, and a warm affection for his openness and kindness.

Now I am teaching things are different. He is my principal, and just like when I was a student, I worry about saying and doing the right things around him. I don't come across him as often as I originally thought. When we have a meeting arranged, and I wait outside in his office as I did when I went for my interview, I feel like I am very much 'off to see the principal', like I am in trouble. And yet I know that this is not his character, and that in his eyes I would never be 'in trouble'. Even as a beginning teacher he has shown me nothing but respect. In my first year of teaching he is a main supporter of me as a valuable resource. When we sit down to have our 'how has your year been' conversation, he encourages me with my PhD research, by suggesting that I can contribute to the staff professional development program. Perhaps I could offer something on reflection?

What is it then that makes me start to feel self-conscious around him? Michael takes the time to talk to staff members individually and socially. He will often join us for a coffee at morning tea, or stay around on Friday for a beer and a chat. And yet, when he approaches me I can tell I am monitoring what I am say – trying to impress, and not slip up.

'How's it going Marty?' he asks, stirring his milk in.

'Fine, thank you, Michael. I'm really enjoying it here.'

'Good, good.'

What else can I say?

'So, did you enjoy the test match?'

Yes, always good for Australia to have a win.'

'Even though it was a thrashing.'

He laughs.

'Oh, well.'

And that is our conversation. It is strange how our roles (or how I perceive our roles) impact on our interactions.

~

I am very annoyed with a fellow member of staff. I am so mad, frustrated and generally pissed off that I am not going to mention his name for fear of being sued. After having Friday off last week, because I was attending the state Drama conference, I catch up with my Year 10 Drama students today after recess for Period 3. I am very disappointed, and perhaps I show this disappointment a little too openly to them (is this professional? I guess not!), when they let me know how their Friday lesson went with the teacher who was assigned to supervise them.

I begin with general questions.

'Who used their time wisely on Friday?'

And then casually,

'Did your supervising teacher write up the notes on the white board for you?'

Silence.

'Luke?'

'No, he didn't! He just read out your notes, and even read something that he realised he shouldn't have and stopped.' Luke looks at me with disinterest. He just wants to get on with the lesson.

I now feel completely irritated, and think that today's lesson is now ruined because what I have planned to do is based on what the students should have already completed. I am thrown, and spontaneously have to go in to re-planning. First, the notes they should have written down. Now we're a lesson behind the two other Year 10 Drama classes, and it's not even my fault. I spent a great deal of time organising this lesson so the students wouldn't suffer as a result of my absence. I'm not convinced this lesson is useful for them. I go over the things they needed to answer and the revision sheet that I had especially prepared for them in

preparation for their Shakespeare test, and then basically hand over the time to them, saying,

'Okay, what are you worried about? What do you want to go over?'

The lesson actually turns out fine, in fact, I think it is quite a good lesson, and we do get to move on to some practical exercises. Everyone works fairly independently, all finding a partner without complaint, and even a group of three happy to work together as the 'leftovers' so to speak. After thinking about the last lesson I had with them last week, maybe I can actually believe that they are glad to have me back. Especially after the supervisor they had.

I can't help resenting the lack of support I received from this colleague though. If I'd had one of his lessons, I would have been meticulous in following his instructions to the letter. I also have the habit of writing notes to the teacher on their supervision sheet, telling them how the students worked, and where we got up to – so they have a sense of what they're walking back in to when they return. No such notes for me, and when I see this teacher in the staffroom later, I imagine that I sarcastically say 'thanks for taking that lesson on Friday'. Of course what I actually say is simply 'good morning'.

~

Tuesdays are normally meeting days. These can be high school staff meetings, faculty meetings, year group meetings, special interest group meetings, and sometimes whole staff meetings. Any other meetings needed, such as PD group meetings, usually happen on a Wednesday because there are no Tuesdays left. Meetings are usually about big picture stuff such as long term planning, broad educational issues, and employment issues. Tonight we are called to the theatre for a whole staff meeting – a consultative meeting where we come together as employees to discuss the up-coming renewal of an enterprise agreement with our employer. I've never really thought about the school as a business, but discussions like the one we're having tonight force me to add to my perception of what it means to be a teacher. But as the principal, after beginning with a moment's

silence, introduces the topics, as well as the members of the employer group, then the words start to become unfamiliar to me, and I feel like I am somewhere else – but definitely not a school.

Lots of jargon terms are used that I do not understand. I begin to feel disinterested, and feel a headache coming on, and force myself to find some level of focus saying to myself 'come on, this is important'. But at the moment work conditions and pay do not mean much to me. I'm still in my 'can't believe I got a job' phase, and am happy that I have a full-time salary, let alone a good wage. The principal speaks about some document that he assumes we've read, about legislation and acts, and though he has the same, warm, and calm tone that he always does, he comes across as a different person to the principal who made me feel interesting during my interview last year. The dynamics of the audience are also interesting to examine (as I do, rather than listening to Michael talk about the consultative process that has happened in previous years). One teacher's mobile rings – twice. Another teacher's laptop beeps as he presses the wrong key, and someone slyly directs him to the volume button. Maybe it's not just me. There are the keen few, who are fastidiously taking notes, and who jump in at any opportunity with an assertive, union-style question. I scribble in my diary.

After lots of talking, we break into groups of about 14-15 in our various sections of interest/expertise and then again into alphabetical. I am in a mixed bag, with some part-timers, some heads of sections, and some young full-timers like myself. Everyone has a different stake. I make eye contact with another other young teacher and we silently agree to the un-written code of keeping out of it. We've got no clout yet. This meeting makes me think about my teaching life as a job. Many people voice grumbles, but I cannot think of any. Will there be a time when I am like them, with lots of little concerns about pay, superannuation, leave entitlements; dare I say maternity leave, and long service leave? At the moment I just feel incredibly lucky to get paid $35,000 and can't imagine wanting any more.

~

Semester changeover is about to happen. It's strange because in fact, while it is the beginning of a semester, it is the middle of a term. The staff is recovering from tiredness of completing reports, and are no doubt, like me, trying to reorganise the bombsites that are their desks and offices, in preparation for a new set of classes and subjects. There are worksheets to be photocopied, topics to be revised, excursions to plan, and resources to find and book. The most exciting thing for me, however, is that we get our new timetables. I'm always excited by change, and agree that it's as good as a holiday – well, not really, but still nice. In my pigeonhole is the piece of paper with the new week outlined. I'm excited, and now know some of the secrets about what makes a good timetable, like not having five periods in a row and the benefits of having Period 1 off and definitely avoiding Year 7 Drama on Friday for Period 6. (No one tells you this stuff, but you soon learn it very quickly.)

'Yes,' I say enthusiastically to myself. I have joined the 'talk to yourself' cult. Only one teaching period on Wednesdays! Hump Day now looks awesome, as I imagine myself coming to school completely stress-free with heaps of time to mark and plan, and perhaps have a coffee when I want. Emma leans over to me, as she is emptying her pigeonhole.

'Try not to brag about an awesome timetable. It will just make the rest of us jealous,' and I see that she has a six period Friday, and yes, a Year 7 SOSE class for the final period.

'Oh, right!' I say, and realise that I've been insensitive, even though she was only jibing me. Trying to cover it up, I say 'But I am disappointed about losing one of my Year 7 Drama classes, because I'm picking up English this semester instead'.

She smiles, and that is all I say on the matter.

~

Report writing raises its ugly head – the period of intense focus on our individual perceptions of students, as perceived through our writing styles and abilities. The highly critical nature with which my reports have been scrutinised has left me feeling a sense of bitterness – hence, I approach my colleagues' reports with such a fine, tooth comb. I read one of my Year 8 boy's reports (as it is practice for all tutors to do a final proof-read of all their tutor kids' reports) and come across a sentence that I immediately think is wrong. Now I'm not sure if I am over-reacting – this teacher is methodical and pedantic in her practice. She is 100% thorough. But it's not that there is anything necessarily grammatically wrong, but rather, I think, educationally. She's a similar teacher to me, not been teaching that long, and I get on with her fairly well. Peter, my student, isn't necessarily a strong student, but he is always a cheerful, cheeky chap. I have had comments from this teacher regarding his work before, as well as another teacher who took time to personally speak to me about his disruptive behaviour in class. I spoke to him, but my feeling at the time was these teachers don't really understand him, and were not trying different methods to 'hook' him in.

Anyway, in his report, this teacher has written the following description, 'He does not actively seek assistance when it is required, and this has the tendency to manifest itself into a defeatist attitude'.

My first reaction is that this is a horribly negative way to refer to a student, and not just because I know the student. Am I over-reacting? It doesn't feel like it, and as Sarah said, it's our role as a tutor to go in to bat for our student. If we don't, who will? We are there to speak up for them, and in this case, I feel like I should say something. Will the other teacher be offended? Am I judging her practice? What is it about 'manifesting into a defeatist attitude' that offends me? Surely she just means that he can become negative about his work, and then become resistant to future tasks. This makes sense, but when I first read this sentence I think it is harsh and unfair. I have automatically circled it on the report – and in red pen too. This is how we are supposed to point out corrections for our head of house, who will do the final, final read through. Have I been too hasty? I can't take it back now, because it is in red pen! Maybe I should have asked someone first – I've just reacted on instinct.

I phone Sarah to find support for my drastic step. I say 'hi' but am then straight into a brief explanation, a quick quoting of the so-called offending quotation, and then before she has time to offer her opinion, I am in there one for all justifying my circling. My defense is that I have been listening to the advice from other staff members about my phrasing for two full weeks. These readers have told me not to be too negative, no matter what we feel. Surely this is an overly negative sentence that could be phrased another way, for example, 'Peter needs to find the strengths in his work, so as to recognise his achievements and be confident in how he is progressing'.

I don't know if this would pass the 'teacher report checking process', but it's all the brainpower I have left. I have read too much into this sentence, and made a big deal out of nothing – perhaps as payback. It's like what happened at the faculty meeting after school. I made one comment that I had actually rehearsed three times in my head before I said it out loud (to make sure it made sense and no one would laugh at me – I don't often offer an opinion in such formal settings). Confidence was certainly lacking. But at least I am making decisions that are based on a reason – I can normally verbalise my reason. The music teacher queried one of my reports, asking if I thought about giving one of my Year 10 girls an effort award. I had actually considered this, but I had been told by my head of house that I had given too many of these awards, so I had crossed this student out, thinking that she was borderline, and may get one next semester. I reinforced that she had still done really well. He said this was 'Okay' because I had thought about it. Do some teachers make decisions without thinking? Are reports such frivolous documents? I'm learning the opposite, but maybe that's not the case for everyone. Now I'm once again thinking about whether or not I should have given this student an award. Ah! I emailed him to let him know that I had thought about it again, and asked him if he could reinstate the award. 'I don't care if I've given too many,' I decide 'I'm here for the students'. The music teacher thanks me for my consideration. At least he's happy now.

Sarah supports me in my decision to circle the phrasing, and gives me the all-important 'out' option. If Marge doesn't agree, she'll just reprint it, and if she

does she'll change it. I sigh, realising that the buck doesn't stop with me. It's good to know too, that the teacher who wrote the report may never find out about the little readjustment. Is this professional? Hang on, does this mean that people are doing this to my reports too? So much happens in this school, that is not necessarily official policy, and you just have to learn from experience. It's not a very nice process, I am finding.

~

Competition amongst teachers is an interesting phenomenon! Who really is the best teacher in the school? Is there such a thing? Who is the most popular? I ask one of my Year 9s how he is finding Drama with his new teacher – he'd moved to another class at the change over of semester. I secretly hope that he's missed me, even though my pretence for asking is to find out if he's still enjoying it. He plays right into my insecurities, saying,
'It's not the same as your lessons Marty.' Then he adds, 'but I wasn't worried as I have Ms Taber in Year 7 so I knew it would be alright'.
My self-criticism sinks in and I think he'll probably learn more about Drama from his new teacher. Does student approval mean I'm a good teacher or not – what are the tests? I just want to be liked. Maybe I won't be the best teacher, but I already think that I am doing a good job, and I've seen some other people do things that worry me, so I guess I can feel confident that I'm not at the bottom of the heap.

~

Today is an okay day, but I have a difficult meeting with Marge in Period 1. Whether it's my self-consciousness or not, I get the impression that the reins are on. Superior skills are needed to see me through my role as stage manager of the Year 10 production. I feel angry and upset by the firm words she used to describe my lack of quality in my props list. She speaks to me with a patronising tone of voice, commenting on my lack of clear answers to her questions. I'm in a bind, because they are not my answers to give, and Sarah, as the director, has not decided on specific colours, sizes or styles of the requested objects. Perhaps

Marge is right, but I simply feel picked on. In the reality of full-time teaching I don't think a professionally produced props list is important – or practical, with the time I have to work on this. It's like she just wants to prove that I don't know things, and that she does. I guess I'm whinging, blowing off steam, and that people are different and communicate in different ways, but I certainly still feel mad, and this meeting happened five hours ago. I'm fairly easy going, or at least I thought I was, but now I don't feel like asking her for help again. Not practical – of course I have to get on with everyone.

~

Sometimes it's not the self-fulfilling prophecy that decides what you can and can't do – it's the colleague-deciding prophecy. People are starting to sort out their timetables for next year, and I think my competitive 'I can do anything you can' streak is coming out. Drama is so popular that there are going to be two Year 11 classes next year, and Sarah has floated the idea that I may be able to take one of them. This excites me, and will no doubt challenge me, as the Year 11 course is run through the senior part of the school, and it is a pre-tertiary subject where students are externally examined. Hence very important, and carrying a lot of responsibility for teachers teaching it! In some ways, these pre-tertiary subjects seem to have an elite quality about them. Teachers taking them, are seen to be cleverer, more skilled. I'm not sure why. I know that there were several of us at university that completed our internships at colleges, so that we could gain experience with these upper syllabuses. I feel ready to take this subject, and would love the chance to do it, with someone else teaching it at the same time – that would be a great support.

Yet, I suspect there is some reservation about whether or not I am up to this task. This would only be my second year. Can they risk such an important course on a young, newly experienced teacher? They are probably going to decide against going with the new teacher (that's me) and perhaps this will be for my own good. But I can't help resenting this decision, and wondering what it would be like in another school where there are no other Drama teachers, or when staff turnover is

so high, that they are thankful to have someone keen to step in and take responsibility. First year teachers are made head of departments in other schools. Perhaps not in the private sector, but I have heard of many beginning teachers in the public system, who are recognised for their skill, and not judged on the amount of time they've clocked up, but rather on what they can do! Time matters a lot here, and I can't prove myself, if people are constantly judging me on how long I've been here.

~

Today I see a member of staff blow a fuse – literally explode! He is so angry, that I feel scared and teary as a result of the outburst. A staff member, who must remain nameless, well, lets call him Sam, comes out of his staffroom when some of the ground staff, the senior business manager, Jan, and myself are watching the Melbourne Cup on tellie. I have no idea who turned the television on! I am not to blame. But soon I will be so sorry that I am here.

The school's religion does not believe in gambling, but there is a hush, hush sweepstake organised in the morning. Officially we ask students not to focus on the race, by checking their Internet, or turning on televisions in classrooms. Luckily the race falls in Period 5, so most students are busy working hard. However, someone has put it on in the student common room, so I stop, on my way to the photocopy room, to see if I will be a winner in the sweepstake. I stop, just behind the business manager. There are no students in the vicinity. I do not feel like a criminal breaking the law, but an adult, joining in a group event. Perhaps the volume is too loud! Perhaps there is something important happening in a nearby room! Perhaps I should have not stopped!

Out Sam comes, forcefully pulling open the door. Sam glares at us, and then starts shouting, mentioning that the principal would be so disappointed if he came down, but the specific words are lost to me as I marvel at how he is speaking to fellow colleagues, adults. I rationalise that I can be yelled at, as perhaps, I am not perceived as a grown-up yet, but my mouth hangs open as I realise that he is

addressing everyone including the business manager. He is not appealing to any sense of reason, not subtly turning the volume down, or even off, and not talking to us like equals. He is blasting us! Jan has been teaching for ages, Alex is the business manager – no way should he speak like this. I blush, because I am embarrassed by the method of communication, and instantly feel like crying. I am not coping with this experience. I feel strongly about saying,

'You shouldn't talk to a colleague like that! It's rude, disrespectful.'

This outburst destroys my respect for this staff member. Sad, perhaps, and even unforgiving, but I am in total shock. My mouth does not move, and unfortunately neither do my legs, so I can't hide my red face from anyone. I am only saved by other people's reactions. The group wanders away, and the television is turned off sharply. There is no protest. Some roll their eyes, like they've seen this before, or expected this, or felt like they deserved this. Alex, oddly, chuckles. Jan is slower to leave, and I follow her, looking for some explanation. Jan is mad like me, and we don't speak as we walk down the corridor to her office. I can tell she's mad because of her pace, and the shaking of her head. She feels like letting someone know what happened. She wants to put in an official complaint. She's choked up like me. This makes me feel better because I am not alone in my shock or disapproval. After de-briefing, we end up laughing, realising that it is a reflection on Sam, rather than us. We admit to being 'naughty' but brainstorm at least ten different ways we could have used to direct staff along a particular course of action, such as not watching the Melbourne Cup.

Each following November I cringe as I pass that television.

~

I am meeting with Michael as the final step in my annual progress review. Our 40-minute chat goes fine. It is positive and refreshing. I am able to be open and honest, probably because of his manner and body language. I can tell he has thoroughly read the document that Marge, Sarah and I wrote. He makes specific references to some of my goals, and inquires about how my research on beginning teaching is going. He makes me feel like I have important knowledge that can be

of value to the school, particularly about induction. If I have any comments or suggestions on the induction process, then I should let Marge know. I'm still nervous, but not the same as I was coming for my interview. Perhaps my feelings are now biased by other people's perceptions and the way the school operates.

Anyway, I feel positive during this conversation, and happy about working at White School. I am thrilled to say that I am only 6 weeks away from having taught for a whole year! A real mile stone! What makes me feel even better is that when I ask what will happen this time next year, in regards to my formal evaluation, Michael comments that he sees no reason why I won't be given an on-going position. The only problem he sees is the issue of declining enrolments (due to a shrinking population in Tasmania) but that's a whole school issue. He then asks me if I have any good ideas on how to solve this problem. After a handshake and a 'congratulations on a good year' I leave.

'He's a good principal,' I think, recognising the important role a principal has in setting the tone for the school atmosphere and even staff culture.

~

One thing I've learned about myself is that I'm not like any other English teacher – I'm myself.

- Carol-Anne, a beginning teacher (Beattie, 2000, p.9)

~

8.1.2   *I am Not a Maths Teacher*

> *I tell you what; I am not a maths teacher. We had a school maths trail during assembly time and my poor tutor group didn't get much support from me. They didn't expect it though, which is kind of funny.*
>
> (Teaching Journal, p.62)

~

'But you're a Drama teacher,' the Year 8 student in front on me says, wide-eyed with confusion.

' I am also an English teacher in disguise!'

This answer keeps the two girls happy, and they are no longer worried about the fact that they will have had me in Semester 1 as their Drama teacher, and then come back in Semester 2 to have me as their English teacher. I hope that they are as excited about the change as I am, but they seem to forget about this issue, as soon as the material box is open. Both girls glide away creating their movement piece about fire.

When I accepted my position at White School, I understood that I would be taking mostly drama. Originally, the position was advertised as a part-time Drama load, but through the interview process and my acceptance of the job, it was discovered that enrolments were up, there would be three Year 10 drama classes, instead of the usual two, and they were also happy and confident that I could also teach English. Hence, when Cassandra phoned me to offer me the job, the position had been increased to a full-time Drama and English position.

Drama is my favourite subject to teach. Drama was also my favourite subject at high school, and one that I felt I did well in. I received a positive comment from one of the adjudicators at a local Drama festival for my portrayal of the tatty sister Valjoy in Robyn Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley*. Dad was there to watch me strut around the stage, violently chewing gum, twirling my teased and sprayed hair, and showing off my legs in black fish net stockings. I had a ball. In deciding to train to be a teacher I chose to specialise in secondary English and Drama education because I thoroughly enjoyed both these subjects at school. Throughout my training, however, I found that I loved studying English ('The Romantic Novel and Poetry in the 19th Century' was the best!) more than I did teaching it, and that I loved learning about the methodologies of teaching Drama more than I did studying to be an actor.

This probably illuminates my decision to find a position teaching Drama and nothing else. But really, thinking about it now, I am so lucky to have so much Drama in my teaching load. In my first semester I am 100% a Drama teacher. This is how I introduce myself to my classes,

'Hi. My name is Marty Crerar, and I am the new drama teacher here.'

The students recognise me as their Drama teacher.

'That's my new Drama teacher,' a little Year 7 whispers, giggling as he passes me in the corridor.

Parents come to speak to me as their child's Drama teacher,

'I just wanted to let you know that Katherine's favourite subject at primary school was Drama.'

Other staff members see me as a Drama teacher,

'So Marty, you can do some Drama activities with the Year 8's on the last night of camp, can't you?'

I don't mind these perceptions. I actually like them. They give me confidence that firstly I really am a teacher, and that secondly I have some form of expertise in my subject area. Yes, there are two other Drama teachers, but I am the only Year 9 Drama teacher, so any issues to do with this, people have to speak to me. This makes me feel important, perhaps powerful, but it's wonderful to feel like I have a clear role. I like being a Drama teacher. So much so, that when I pick up one Year 8 English class in my second semester, I introduce myself as a Drama teacher that can also teach English. The students laugh, but it take me a few weeks to convince them that I do know and care about what a dictionary is.

~

It's 1999. I manage to find the resource centre fairly easily, according to the directions Walter Brown, the Curriculum Officer, gave me. My trip here is part of my honours research, and I will be interviewing him about his perceptions on my observations of what the experience of teaching Drama is like. He has read through my field narratives, and will hopefully be able to discuss with me what he believes are the particular qualities and features of being a Drama teacher.

244

Walter, a well-known Drama person in the state, sits smiling. He has taught Drama for many years at different schools in Tasmania, and is now working for the Education Department as a curriculum advisor. As I walk in, I wonder about how I am dressed, clearly wearing my university uniform of jeans and a blue and white striped rugby top. The resource centre is in an old weatherboard building that I imagine would once have been a school, as the main building has a variety of corridors and classrooms. An old infant school perhaps, as it doesn't quite look big enough to have been a high school. Walter says hello with a firm handshake, but before we get to my observation narratives, we begin with a little chitchat about how I am progressing with my training, and what my goals are after graduation. Suddenly I am in the middle of a discussion about me – as a Drama teacher.

'So, have you thought about where you would like to be teaching next year?' he asks boldly.

'Well, I'd really like to stay in the area, but we've been told that it's unlikely that there will be any positions in Drama.' I say routinely.

'I don't know about that, but I certainly know a position in the Northwest, that will be coming up. You'd be great for it. And it's definitely got some Drama in it, a bit of SOSE, and the rest English.'

'How much Drama?' I ask, slightly interested now, and surprised that my honours research seems to be turning in to an opportunity to network.

'Point 3 of a load I think, two classes.'

'That sounds really interesting,' I say trying to change the subject. 'I am really keen to get a full Drama teaching position. Although I would like to stay in the public system, I'd also like to be in a big city school'. Gees, I think, I'm a pretentious, arrogant uni student. Who am I to think I can get what I want? Walter unsettles me with these comments, and I'm surprised that my interview seems to be turning into his interview.

He nods, knowingly,

'Yes, but you wouldn't want a full load of Drama. You'll burn out. Too much Drama is very draining for a teacher. I recommend no more than half a load of Drama to the teachers I speak to.'

Now he's got me worried that he has some control over what I will be teaching, so I decide to agree with him.

'Yes, certainly, it is a very demanding subject' I say, trying to affirm his point.

'I see it all the time… teachers who teach mostly Drama. It can just suck the life out of them. You know, because you have to be so giving, and constantly on the go, and all the performance demands, and requests made by the school…'

He's making his point, but I sneak a glance at my watch and worry about getting his response to the work of the particular Drama teacher I have studied. So I attempt to bridge the two topics.

'I certainly saw how demanding it can be to be a Drama teacher, in my observations. Running everywhere, 100 things on the go…'

Success!

'Yes, I found your narrative very interesting,' he says, opening up the documents to check the many notes he has scribbled down.

~

2000. I am nervous about teaching English this semester, and take time to attend a few English lessons before Semester 2 is due to start. I am a trained English teacher too, but I am anxious that I may have forgotten how to operate in an English classroom. For a start, there are books, pencil cases, folders and computers spread over desks. In the Drama classroom we don't have desks, and all other resources are sectioned off away from the main area of the class so as to not get in the way of all our action. The set up is very different. And in my observations I am struck by the extended periods of silence. Students read for 10 minutes at the beginning of each lesson. They spend time writing. Yes, there are opportunities for questions and discussions, but there is a distinct sense that there is work to be done, and that when talking is happening work is not. While the desks are grouped in fours and fives, I notice that the teacher operates mainly from the front of the classroom, in front of the white board. I realise that being a teacher of English is going to be very different to being a teacher of drama!

~

I am worried about what sort of teacher I am becoming, or even what kind of teacher I am already. Am I sexist? I'm doing a bit of self-monitoring and I think I talk to the boys more than the girls. I'm very conscious of my teacher behaviour at the moment. I think this is because I am having lunch with the school heads tomorrow and the induction process is officially moving along. Looking at my staff handbook again, we're moving towards the period where my supervisor enters my classroom and when I start getting assessed. This is no longer prac teaching – I'm responsible – and accountable. People will be coming to watch me teach, and making judgments about what sort of teacher I am becoming. So I've been thinking about my interaction with students.

I'm trying to make sure I am the type of teacher who caters for individual needs. I'm conscious of trying to talk to a different student casually each lesson, such as my Year 9s, which is my biggest class – 25. I still don't know everyone's name. How can I teach people I don't know? The ones I don't remember are the quiet students – why is this? It's not because I've taken the effort to learn everyone else's and not theirs, but the ones I've been quick to know are the names I need to know – particularly three noisy boys who I talk to the most. This doesn't seem right that the students who are not on task, who are misbehaving (whatever that means) are the ones that get the most attention, and get the most focus. The students who are on track, working independently are the ones who I don't worry about as much – why is this? I'm still trying to fill in the gaps, put names to the quiet faces. I also want to reduce the amount of casual talk and move into real subject talk – do I talk too much with them about unrelated school stuff, as I still try to find my place in the school – to make contact with students?

~

When I started training to be a teacher, one of the first questions the lecturers got us to think about was,

'What makes a good teacher?'

Even our friendly, cartoon-filled *Beginning Teaching* textbook starts by identifying the qualities that make a good teacher, asking us to reflect on the teachers that we ourselves had liked at school. Seeing as I enjoyed high school the most, these are the teachers I think about. And because Drama and English were my favourite subjects, I consider the two teachers that I had who stood out to me the most.

I did like my Drama teacher. I had her in Year 7 and then again in Year 10. A nice beginning and ending to my high school Drama career. She married during my time at high school, turning from Miss Mandini into Mrs Tipper. She was a good Drama teacher, but I don't describe her as great, because I think saying she was great distracts me from my point. A great teacher suggests that it is the teacher that is the focus of your memory, or your experience, rather than your time in that particular subject. Mrs Tipper was a good Drama teacher because she let the subject take over, and not her. We didn't go there to see her, we went there to enjoy Drama. My time in the Drama room was not about working with her, or getting to see or hear her, it was about entering my favourite room and thoroughly enjoying the work we were given. Hence, she I guess she was a great Drama teacher because she did not steal the limelight. Yet, through training, I didn't think to myself,

'I want to be like Mrs Tipper.'

My goal now is for my students to enjoy Drama as much as I did. To feel empowered by it, and to feel safe and important in the Drama classroom. I don't believe that Mrs Tipper's way is the only way to teach Drama, and look forward to developing my own way.

~

This week is production week for one of the pre-tertiary Drama classes. The Year 12s are doing their first major performance for the year (they have to do two) and Marge is directing them in Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* I don't have to help out,

but I want to make a good impression. Sarah has been helping with painting the set, and sorting out some costume issues, so I assume that I am supposed to be an extra helping body as well. This is my first chance to see how a production runs at White School, and to gain some more experience in working around our theatre.

These kids are really easy to relate to, and seem to respond positively (openly) to my presence in their final rehearsals. They don't know me, before Marge introduces me, and I marvel at how I am only a few years older than them. I'm not sure how I am supposed to act, as I am not their teacher, and don't even feel like a teacher at all when I am with them in the darkened world of the stage. My role here is very different. If anything, I think I am adopting a tech person role, rather than an assisting teacher role. I slip in quiet comments to check how Marge, as the director/teacher is going. I assume that she will tell me what she wants me to do, and apart from that, I help out students, move things around, run props back stage, or make cups of coffee. The odd bit of sewing also comes my way, but nothing creative, just a bit of temporary stick together type stuff. I pass quiet comments/hints to performers and lighting crew, only softly and one at a time so as not to interfere with Marge's overall direction of the room. I get her anything she vaguely asks for, trying to solve any problems before they arise. I find this role easy to slip into, remembering my role as stage manager from first year at uni. In fact my conversations with the tech crew (a conglomeration of my students from Year 9 and 10), revolve around my memories of this experience. The Year 12 boy running the lighting board, has more skills than I ever remember having – and I've told him this. I don't feel like a teacher, in fact I feel more qualified, after school in the theatre than I do sometimes in the classroom.

~

English land, as I call it, is a completely different world to Drama land. Maybe it's just how I feel, or teach, or maybe the different physical dynamics of the space actually impact on learning. I can't believe how the classroom layout affects me. I am prepared for the desks to intimidate me, and the fact that students would be sitting down for most of the lesson. But I am not prepared for my constant

movement – my own inability to sit down. I catch myself doing blocks around the students as they commence their first writing activity, circling them like a shark. I can see some of their eyes following me around and around, wondering what I am doing, suggesting that my behaviour is not normal for an English teacher. I force myself to go and get a chair as I have given mine up for a latecomer. I leave the room, dashing quickly along the corridor so as not to get busted for leaving the classroom, grabbing a spare chair from the empty room next door. Coming back in, I listen, look, and am shocked to see that the room is just as I left it. No litter suddenly strewn around, not chairs flying through windows, no loud cheering or chaos of any sort. Everyone is still writing. They didn't even miss me. Maybe it's too early to really get a sense of these students – or maybe, this is what being an English teacher is all about. How strange! Teaching English is certainly a new experience, but it looks like a good one.

~

Being a Drama teacher is not always easy. In fact, it's harder than I imagined. The school day has officially finished, which means that four o'clock has come and gone, and now it's co-curricular activity time. I am still here at school, tired and hungry, and fed up. The Drama classroom is transformed into a factory production line. The workers (students) on this factory line handle volatile ingredients. There are sewing machines, needles, scissors, and an assortment of multi-coloured and shiny fabrics down one end of the room – thankfully, on the carpeted end, although I worry about a needle getting embedded in the pink material, and then surprising an unsuspecting Year 7 the next day.

What am I actually doing? What is my official role? Where do I fit into this production? At the beginning of the term, it is decided that I will be the stage manager of *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew*. I understand what this role entails, because I had training in stage-managing at university. In my first year I was the stage manager of the musical *Gloriously Gershwin,* a small concoction of colour and movement that the grannies and grandpas at the casino enjoyed. And yet, here I stand, in the middle of the Drama classroom, hands on hips, yelling orders like a

sergeant major. This is not me! I have 20 something kids in my production crew. And yet, they are not operating as a professional crew. I have to continually ask them what they are doing, what have they completed, where should that needle be kept, and why is there paint on the carpet. I am turning into a bossy teacher, and I don't like it.

~

I'm feeling much more confident with my Year 8 English class, and I think the reason is because I am not worrying about the controlling forces that exist outside the classroom such as the English Department instructions, extra handouts and timeline that have been plonked down on me. The last three weeks I've found daunting as I've been working quite closely with the other two Year 8 English teachers, and I've felt that I've been existing in a program which I was floating along with my kids, rather than having any direct input into or relationship with – it wasn't my course, and I wasn't sure if I really understood the logic behind how it ran. This week, however, my approach to my work with the kids has been quite different. I'm not saying that I can't work on a general program with others, because in Drama it works very well having shared resources and outcomes for certain periods of time, but certainly not lesson to lesson, and we all have our one splash of this and that that we add here and there to make the lessons meaningful for us and the kids. I think I've been preoccupied in English about sticking to a rigid program that I had no relationship with. What changed was I started to add a bit of me into the lessons, such as a pop spelling test, or deciding for myself when things were due. I've even started planning the next unit, using all the resources given by the English department, but am arranging the journey ahead in a way that is representative of me as a teacher, but also to what I know about the students and how they work. The difference in how I feel after this lesson is amazing – it's relevant for me because it comes from me.

~

I'm finding that I need to develop a private- Marty and a public-Marty. I need to have some part of myself that has nothing to do with school – otherwise I swear I'll go mad! Marking can consume my day. I carry a class set of exercise books home, only to return with them, unmarked the next day. I spend my evening giving evil looks to my school bag, like I can hear the books saying in a sinister voice 'mark me, mark me, mark me!' But I find that there is so many domestic things I need to do at home, that by the time I find a moment to sit down (needing at least an hour plus to mark a set of books) I am sacrificing time with Ryan, or my favourite TV show (I have lots) or even just sleep time, remembering that often I am seeking the doona covers as soon as I get home from school.

Marking – ah! I know it's supposed to be a drudge, but just looking at the piles of work in my marking boxes makes me sigh. I think at the moment I'm starting to withdraw a little from the routine my days are becoming. I've discovered that not only am I a Drama teacher – I am a procrastinator – and this probably isn't a good combination. It is taking me absolutely ages to mark the journals for my Year 8 Drama classes. Why does it take me so long? Am I writing too much? Am I thinking too much? The students have only written short answers to the questions I set them. I am only assessing two criteria, and am trying to limit myself to a few sentences per student. It's funny. What I think is slowing me down is that I am also checking my own spelling, as well as theirs. Eek, a personal weakness coming through! I am a poor-speller, as well as a procrastinator. I am not their English teacher (although I will be next semester) and it frustrates me to have to do both. What does spelling matter in Drama anyway? A lot of the time I don't think it's important if I understand what they mean. I feel mean picking up errors, when surely their ideas are the focus. Jumbled sentences, though, are driving me nuts, as they are showing me that they are writing without thinking and this, I think, suggests laziness. I suppose spelling could be a result of laziness, but I guess, ashamedly, that I don't really care about it when it comes to journals. Maybe laziness is actually my problem. I'm so paranoid about making mistakes, of being culpable, of giving someone opportunity to say 'you're not doing a good job'.

'Marty, Marty, Marty,' the marking calls me from my procrastinations.

~

I am a Drama teacher who has boundaries.

The last two lessons of today are very different – my two Year 8 Drama classes. An image is stuck in my head that has boosted my teacher esteem. I actually have time to mark during the lessons. The students know what my boundaries are, and are working productively for the entire time, rehearsing the scripts that they have written over the last two weeks. This is not what happens in my Year 10 class however as they were floundering to remember a film they saw only last week. One boy (the ratbag of the class) is running between groups with a police hat on, being the clown of the moment. He turns to see if I am watching. I am. Not moving from my seat, where I am marking journals, I make direct eye contact with him and strongly but slowly shake my head from side to side. This has an immediate impact. He skulks away, back to his group, taking off the hat. I am amazed that this simple look has influenced his behaviour. My class knows me now!

~

It is so hard to be a teacher and a student at the same time. Am I splitting my loyalties? University seems like a world away, a time and experience that doesn't fit into the reality of my teaching life. The goals that were expressed in tonight's staff meeting were about how to get to senior teacher status. We were once again discussing roles, hours of work, responsibilities, and leave entitlements… I still can't believe I actually get paid! It really doesn't feel like a job, especially when I go through periods of feeling unqualified. It's like one long prac at the moment, where Sarah is my supervising teacher. I think I feel guilty for having one foot still in uni land. I'm not fully one of them yet. Maybe I'm being paranoid again.

My goal until the end of term, now that I've actually fulfilled my first goal of learning all the names of my Year 7s, is to feel more confident in different

teaching styles. I'm fine with moving activities, with the process from rehearsal to performance, but feel very shaky when it comes to the theory. Kind of funny, when, from what I hear, most teachers would rather stand and deliver. I worry about whether I know enough, am I really telling them the correct facts? Experiential learning I can analyse intuitively. But facts, it's like I don't have enough room in my head at the moment. And to have to do Greek Theatre with one class and Shakespeare with another… That's why my university study seems to be causing me problems because I feel the need to live at school at the moment. But I can't do that. I need some distance each day. I learned from camp how emotionally draining it is to be a teacher for 24 hours a day. I need 'me' time, in order to have something to give the kids each day. I think that's why it is so hard to teach when you're sick, because you're not your full self – whatever that means!

Keeping a journal, as part of my PhD, is a really hard thing to do now, as my teaching self takes over. It's not necessary the time, but the experience of reliving school at home. Home time, out of school time is so important to me, as I am realising, that if you don't recharge, there's nothing to give the next day. I believe that I am a reflective practitioner, but can feel the knowledge in practice process coming on, as I think, do, rethink, and move on at a furious pace, that I only imagined when I decided to continue studying through my first year of teaching (mad, surely I am mad!). At the moment I don't want to think about school at home, I just want to leave school at school. Likewise, the difficulty of marking at home crops up again. Exercise, fresh air, different people and places are what I need – certainly, to clear my head. Anything that is beyond the routine. It's like I need to empty some things out of my head, and create more space. I can't carry it home and dump on Ryan all the time. I need to find a way to get some distance.

~

Felt much more in the swing of things today, succeeding in switching between the multiple roles that drama demands of me. Most of my classes ran smoothly, according to my perceptions of them – perhaps the students have different ideas.

But I felt like I touched base with most of them, randomly testing knowledge with spot questions to the whole group, individuals, changing the activities from theory to practical. There are the few that I just can't seem to cater for, who either through attention spans, difficulty or lack of motivation, do not come prepared, are easily distracted, and who opt out of most class work. I have spent many 'after lesson' moments reflecting for half an hour, unable to use the time for marking or other preparation, as I sit baffled rethinking possible changes to the lesson, working out what I could do next lesson. Last week, however, I actually thought about how I could spend so much time thinking about helping the disruptive ones that I'm really not catering for the very capable ones. What is the solution? Is this fair? No. I need to stop over catering for those who are choosing to lag behind, and make sure that I can challenge those who are zooming ahead. I need to be exciting, firm, motivational, and use all of my powers of observation to make sure that I am being everything to everyone – shouldn't be too hard!

~

The Drama Department has organised for a guest performer to come to the school and do a show in Period 6 for all of Year 8, including non-Drama students. The time Cameron Jones is supposed to arrive, I am the only Drama teacher free, so it is my responsibility to go down to the front office and welcome him, then bring him up to the theatre and help him get organised before the Year 8 audience arrives. I'm a little nervous, but feel important being the official 'welcoming committee'. I am now a Drama Department representative! What will he think of me?

I get the phone call to tell me he has arrived, and I go down to collect him. Nerves are still there, and I check to make sure my jacket buttons are done up and my collar is straight and smooth. He's easy to identify, surrounded by a stereo, and bag of performance goodies. I wonder if I am easy for him to identify, as he stands in the main corridor, swaying slightly, looking around. I hear myself chatting with him, before he has even had time to shake my outstretched hand.

'I'm the new teacher on the Drama staff here,' I say, almost apologising for being new, in case I say anything wrong, or don't provide him with the service that he needs. But saying I'm actually a teacher, out loud to people who don't know me at all, actually helps to make me feel like a teacher.

We wander up to the theatre, and I feel bizarre, not quite sure about what I should do now. I remember both Sarah and Marge showing people around, and I do my best to mimic their actions.

'This is the stage, we can pull the curtains forward to give you some wing space if you like, or you can have it completely bare. There's a cyclorama too, if you would like a particular colour behind you. What type of lighting do you need?' I babble on, not stopping. 'When would you like the kids to come in, can I get you anything? Would you like a glass of water?'

Think I do all right, but I'm sure I'll do much better next time, when I get over my nerves. When I don't feel like a fraud.

<center>~</center>

I wonder if I enjoy my lessons too much, am too personal and free with the kids. I've been thinking about this issue after I spent time with my supervisor talking about the evaluation and annual review process where she will start coming into my lessons and observing. She has been wandering through frequently anyway, as that's the way the Drama Department works, open classrooms, though I must say that when the main door to the classroom opens I do give a concerned gaze over to see who it might be, and then quickly glance around the kids to see if it 'looks alright' – but who knows what that means? Another example of my anxiety about how things look is when I took my Year 8s to the library, both classes first thing this morning. They chatted fairly loudly into the room, and as I came in after them, I was unsettled to see at the other end a larger circle of students all focused and listening to one speaker – we must have seemed like a heard of elephants. Then I thought what must these teachers and the librarian think of me? So I sat

them down, and then told them what they should try and achieve in the time with the resources, but quite quickly the library assistant and the librarian came over and checked with the kids and advised them of sections where they should head. They actually backed me up very sensitively, and made me realise that I'm not sure how the system really works about using the library space and using resources, maybe I should have told the librarian what we were looking for, rather than let them traipse all around the space.

~

In Long Tutor (the weekly lesson with my tutor group) I am sitting chatting to the Year 10s, and I find I do this quite frequently, basically to keep them on some kind of task, and to try and keep their chatter quiet. My supervisor walks in, as she is head of our house, and I was in the middle of filling in the Folder Duty Roster, basically jesting with a girl that she only has one slot to choose from.
'Where is Marty,' she says boldly to the entire group.
'I'm here Marge,' I reply, raising my hand. She has not seen me, or perhaps she has, but not recognised me as the teacher. She smiles, observing my interactions with the student and waiting until I have finished. She comes over, and I give her my full attention. But I am worried. This thought of professionalism hits me again, as I sit on the table watching the Year 7s do quick improvisations. They have to, on a particular theme, show how you offer a line, block it or accept it. Some of them are great! And I laugh, and joke, interacting with them on a fairly personal level. Is this too much? I worry a little, and it will be interesting to see if this is an issue that Marge brings up in her feedback.

~

The Year 10s are all in front of me, mouths closed, eyes staring. I am giving them a huge lecture regarding their class dynamics. I spend a few minutes telling them that I'm not the kind of teacher to yell (but I can feel that my voice is in fact slightly louder than I would like it, a few scratchy vibrations stretching my vocal

chords) and that while they may see me as the 'controlling factor in the classroom' I'm sure they wouldn't like it if I took over all the time!

'It is important,' I say 'to treat one another with respect'. Is this me or my mother, I wonder, continuing to express my beliefs that we cannot tolerate unsupportive comments or actions in our theatre, especially where people are expected to put themselves on the line. I am really on my soapbox, but at the end, after taking a breath, I ask 'is this fair?' and a few of the quieter kids say 'yeah' with enthusiasm and this makes me feel encouraged.

I've been feeling a bit low after reading some of their comments that they wrote in a teaching reflecting survey they did for me last lesson. Some of the comments that are still ringing around my head are,

> *Marty seems to take a liking to certain students – not too badly, but it is noticeable sometimes*. (Student Survey Response)

I think this is true (am I really admitting to favouritism – have I become an example of a bad teacher?) but that it isn't necessarily something I need to work on or change. Each student is different, and I act differently with him or her in order to appeal to his or her different learning styles and needs. I think my concern should be that a student is perhaps not feeling like they are getting the same kind of attention, and also that my responses to situations are consistent and fair.

I think that this is very interesting, because as a passionate, young teacher, I suppose I am giving my heart and soul to these kids – trying to reach every one of them on an individual level – probably too much! I think there is some relevance to perhaps me not creating enough role distance, and clearly establishing the boundaries – maybe I'm concerned about things (such as how they're feeling) and they don't want me to. Perhaps they don't want a caring teacher.

Perhaps I'm taking these comments too much to heart. We are all tired at the moment. I am a tired teacher. Reading back through the surveys the overwhelming response is that they like the way I speak to them 'as equals' and 'on their level' and that I have a 'sense of humour'. They find the Drama classroom is a 'relaxed place'. This feedback would stand up all right against the 'good teacher traits' lists. Maybe I am, in fact, a good teacher.

~

I am so many people, all caught up in one body. At school I am known as Marty, not just by the staff, but also by most of the students as well. Being a Quaker school, there is the point of not over emphasising titles. This is hierarchical and denotes status, which the Quakers, as I understand, are against. At the beginning of the year, I whole-heartedly embraced this policy, and was happy that I could introduce myself as Marty Crerar, rather than Miss or Ms Crerar. Using a title, I imagined, would make me feel old. I also enjoyed calling the principal by his first name, and thought this did indeed suggest a sense of equality, not like at the school where we talked to and about the principal by his official title – Mr. Black. This helped to ensure that I never felt like a teacher when I was in his presence, which was only twice, but that was scary enough!

But now, because I am Marty at school, and at home, I am confused by what being Marty means. Don't panic, I'm not having an identity crisis. I am just finding it hard to clearly establish my role as a teacher, and to work out what belongs to School Marty and what belongs to Outside School Marty. It's an issue of boundaries I suppose. Like how much I say to students about my personal life. Most of them know that I am a North Melbourne Kangaroos fan, and a select few (mainly from my Year 8 Drama class) also know that I am mad about the Academy Awards and films, because of an incident with a boy named James, who in the final period of one day in May, was brave enough to tell me that Kevin Spacey had won the best supporting actor award because he'd checked on the internet (we chuckled about this later). At the time I let me personal feelings show my disgust at having one award ruined before I got to watch the replay on

television. I cried, 'JAAAAAAMMMMMEEEEESSS!' as he scampered away with a big grin on his face. It's only now that I question what I should let them know and what I should try and keep for myself.

~

8.2   *Conversation Six: Fitting In and Knowing our Place*

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

It really reads like a teacher. (William, Critical Reader)

</div>

Researcher Introduction: *My first year is behind me, as is Eleanor's, and while both William and Angela had vivid memories of their own first experiences, we are all recognising that we have moved on. Our focus becomes bigger and broader as the little issues of school life fall to the side. We are all discrete, tiptoeing around mentioning colleagues by name. We share, but censor our sharing.*

William:	Did you find in the first year that it took you a whole year to become part of the furniture or are you still feeling a little sort of new?
Marty:	No, actually, in many ways I think this was very lucky for me, I felt very supported and in fact now in my second year, I am finding I am part of the furniture and missing the support, because everyone assumes you can do it, so now I'm forgetting things and getting into trouble for missing meetings.
William:	Yeah, I probably went in a bit blasé. It's a disease the school drives you, you know, know the damn thing. Monday to Friday, and sometimes the stuff even keeps going on Saturday and Sunday.
Marty:	Yep.
William:	So, you've caught the way in which a school can change your perspective to some degree because of the paperwork, the memos, the crap that goes with it. There is a lot of crap that goes down.

Marty:	Which I felt fully unprepared for!
William:	Yes.
Marty:	Angela, you've written in the margin here 'The principal'. What do you mean by that?
Angela:	Oh, just the whole concept of the relationship with the principal and how you perceive the principal, and how the principal is towards you, and…
Marty:	Did you have similar experiences? Of feeling like you were going to see the principal?
Angela:	Like, there's a big differentiation between the principal the professional, and the principal the person, and relating to them, and how they perceive you, and how you are around them and what they're thinking of you, just the, the…
Marty:	Discrepancy?
Angela:	You know I just feel that there's a huge gap between what we do and say with kids and what we do and say with the staff, it worries me a lot, I mean, our principal, fortunately, is the sort of principal who now and again, will write you an email, or send you a card and say thank you for something, and its minor, but it does make a difference.
Marty:	I think it's really important.
Angela:	Yeah.
Marty:	I think I came through my first year with as much confidence as I did because I knew I had the principal's support and encouragement and in fact he, towards the end of the year, said 'don't think you can't apply for positions because you're young or you're new'. And I thought 'wow', here's someone actually saying I'm worth something. I ended up becoming one of the PD support teachers. I would have done nothing there, particularly in a school where, you know, not only am I young or new, but I'm one year experienced as opposed to 30 years, so the size of my voice you know… but he was 100% behind me and it just helped so much!
Angela:	I think I should add that my principal was very much the same. I had a very, very strong female principal, and she copped a lot of flack from some of the males on staff, obviously they didn't like that, but I found her absolutely outstanding. She was my advocate, you know, she was very, very supportive and definitely, and I

hadn't mentioned before, but if it had been somebody different I think that would have made a big difference.

Marty: It's that affirmation of confidence in what you're doing, and you're ability to do it, I think. What about my immediate colleagues? Eleanor, what about the difference between you and me because you were the only Drama teacher, and like you said before I was, you know, the third of three. The newest and youngest!

Eleanor: I wouldn't say that it made your job easier or harder or mine easier or harder. I think that seeing that you had other colleagues that you could bounce ideas off that you probably found an enjoyment. If I was really stuck I found that I had to either go to the primary school, talk to the primary teachers that ran the musicals or that I had to ring my old prac teachers and say 'look, this is what is happening in my class' and 'I'm a bit unsure about this, could you lend me a hand'. So I could still bounce ideas off, but… I think also the difference we had was that seeing I was the only one I could make all the decisions for myself and when they were wrong then it fell on my shoulders, but, that I had the opportunity to just go in head first and then hope for the best. But when it came to the musical it was something that I really felt I lacked experience, I lacked confidence, I lacked having someone there to talk to. I think it was exciting being the only teacher and getting to make decisions but then again it was quite hard not having anybody else to talk to, and not being left any resources was the other thing.

Angela: I got the impression you were miffed about what you interpreted as not being given responsibility for a senior class. That came through to me, as a difficult thing to suss out. How does she perceive me? Why haven't I been given this responsibility? How does that reflect on me?

Eleanor: Yeah. I think you wanted to have a lot more freedom and a lot more say and a lot more ability to jump in, and initiate things, and barrel in head first and try out situations, and leap into the older year groups and have a say in the classes and… I think that's where you wanted to be, you wanted to be in the thick of where it goes towards assessment or to major performances or it goes to exams and all that sort of stuff so that you can actually see the impact that you are having on the students. I don't think you were given the ability to do that but I think also, given the fact that you were going 7, 8 and that 8 was your own year group that this year and next year you'll see what progress the students make and that is where your success will come from.

Marty: Do you feel like your school took advantage of you?

Eleanor: In a small way I'd say taken advantage of, I think, I've been brought up with a commitment ethic, as in once I'm committed to

something that's it. I'm committed to see it through, and so I think that along with not being fully aware of my rights as a teacher was hard. But I felt your school had a much stronger… um… collegial effect within the school, like there was a much tighter unit, because our school is run by lots of different denominations, lots of different beliefs, and everything, the school's always bending over to please each different denomination so, I can remember one time, one particular church group wanted to put an ad in our herald for the Jesus video that was going on at Easter time and so they put the ad in and then we got a whole heap of phone calls and everything from another particular denomination that believes it is idolatry for anybody to act as Jesus and so our school came into huge conflict and now we just don't put ads in our heralds at all to do with any church denominations . They have to distribute them some other way, so it's a bit upsetting, that it's cramped in that way, but then again the school backbends a lot so, which is a bit sad it doesn't stand as an educational institution.

Marty: What kind of teacher, from this journal, do you think I am?

William: Passionate, passionate. Committed. More so than I, I mean I've been going for 20 years mind…

Eleanor: I think you're the newest recruit of an airline, you're on the airplane, and your customers are the students that might be coming in at different destinations and getting off at different destinations and so they're not all going to the same place. They haven't got the same experience and there's a kind of pecking order amongst the cabin crew but on top of that there's the pilot, that guides the whole school, you know your principal guides the whole school… But even over-riding that one particular airplane which might be your Drama Department, is the whole airline company, the whole fleet and then that big head boss that you know, like the captain of Virgin Blue, which is the whole education system. There's different airline companies which are your different schools. You might be the most posh nosh airline company which it might be your upper, well-off schools down to those cargo things which have different types of planes. But within this one place which can be all consuming, you know, you're there to serve and you might get a brief moment in that journey to stop and talk with a particular customer or student and you might be able to build that relationship and have a say in what you wanted to do, but still you have to serve the meals that are predetermined and you don't get a chance to say 'well, look, I'll just cook you up some pasta' or anything like that but you just have to give it out.

Marty: You can give them an extra magazine.

Eleanor: You can.

Marty: If they're nice.

Eleanor: And a blanket and a pillow. And maybe some Coca-Cola, or some
                extra treats you've hidden, but there are things that personally, are
                turbulence for you and then there's turbulence that might rock the
                whole Department or the whole school. Little bump. But there's no
                set destination, it's a continuous journey, so the plane might land in
                London, but… so I think you're kind of bound within the role of
                the air hostess but still have the ability to put your own flavour to
                it.

Marty: Angela?

Angela: You know you can do the job. You know you can function in a
                school. I think that it's the right job for you. I think you know
                you're on par with your peers, you've got quality. I think you know
                where your priorities lie now. At the beginning it's like questions,
                questions, questions, at the end it's like I can't believe you haven't
                learned from those experiences. Okay it was difficult, and you
                were floundering and had to get advice but don't tell me this hasn't
                been something you've learned from.

<div align="center">~</div>

8.3   *Friday*

I can't believe it.

The maths teacher yelled.

The science teacher cried.

The social science teacher said she was leaving.

The teacher of a subject I've never heard of said that the maths teacher yelled,

made the science teacher cry, and now the social science teacher said she was sick

of it all and was leaving to work somewhere calmer.

'When did this happen?'

I ask

I whisper

I eat my lunch

'Before your time,' he says.

The bell goes, and playtime is over.

Back to work,
after digesting the
personalities and politics

'Glad *I'm not a maths teacher'* I say,
as I walk past the Principal,
giving my
best,
professional
smile,
acting,
like a

good,
beginning,
drama
teacher.

Close the door

c   o   l   l   a   p   s   e

in the chair
put my head in my hands,
and mutter
'I am SO happy it's Friday.'

Chapter Nine

Saturday[1]

~

Saturday finally arrives, like a cool wind on a humid afternoon. Finally, I am able to breathe, for a moment. Finally, I stop. The week is over. Tomorrow is Sunday. Today is the day just for me. I share the day with friends, telling stories of our week, celebrating our triumphs and commiserating our failures. Today, I am not just a teacher. I am a friend. I am a partner. I am a woman. I am not purely defined by my job, my work, my career. I am me. Marty! Who that is? I'm not exactly sure. But on Saturday I don't need to be. I don't have to think about my teaching days, if I don't want to. But I do. I realise now, this is part of who I am. And I'll put a load of washing on, so my work shirts are ready for next week.

~

For me, one aspect of finding a professional voice involves coming to a better understanding of myself: it is an issue of self-recognition. (Bellamy, 1997, p.110).

~

---

[1] This chapter contains the stories *It's Okay to be Me.* This is followed by *Conversation Seven: New Conversations.* The chapter concludes with the stanza 'Saturday' from the poem 'Teaching Daze'.

9.1   *It's Okay to be Me*

> *I remember thinking that the most important thing I have learned from my first term is that it is Okay to be me. I realise that I pour so much of myself into what I do.*   (My teaching journal, p.44)

Finally. The end! I am now Marty the teacher. I introduce myself as a teacher to new people that I meet. Ryan has found at job at a small accounting firm in the city, and I meet his new boss for the first time at a Friday night drinks gathering.

'Hi Marty, it's nice to finally meet you, what do you do?' he asks.

'I'm a teacher,' I say, and feel quite proud.

'Oh yes, what do you teach?'

'High school Drama.' I say, worrying that he has already stereotyped me as a hippie, who wears florescent baggy pants to work. I know I had my own misconceptions about what it would mean to be a Drama teacher. Sarah and I have a sarcastic poem on our notice board that begins with the humorous assertion that 'Drama teachers constantly hug everything on sight'.

Malcolm, Ryan's boss, chuckles back.

'High school, eh! That must be hard work,' he says, assuming that I am already one of those complaining teachers who think they have the most difficult job in the world.

'It can be challenging, and this is my first year, but I am actually really enjoying it.' My response has left him quiet. I've never been very good at saying the right thing during small talk conversations.

But what does it mean when I describe myself as a teacher? Who is Marty the teacher? Some days, I have no idea what type of teacher I am. I compare myself to other staff members, thinking,

'No, I'm not like Sarah, who is fast-paced, thorough, enjoys using costumes in her performances, and can design and paint theatrically interesting sets.

'No, I'm not like Marge, who is a trained actor, and prides herself on the quality of the many productions she has run during her many years with the Drama Department.'

'No, I'm not like Wendy, in English Land, who wears a suit every day, prides herself on her stoic strength with students, staff and parents alike, and who carries a tight bundle of whiteboard markers with her everywhere.'

I'm Marty. I love Drama. I like working with students in Drama. So far this year I have taught Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 Drama classes. My wardrobe is developing, but my staple uniform seems to be becoming a pair of black trousers, and a stretchy ¾ length top that has 6 brightly coloured faces on it. A bit loud, perhaps a bit hippy, but it's just a little touch of flair beneath the black suit jacket that I wear over it. I never thought I'd work at a school where I had to dress-up everyday. On one of my pracs, I wore a pair of overalls. They were great for working in Drama, with so many pockets to keep string, scissors, bits of paper and white board markers in. They were practical, but not very smart. I struggle some days with what to wear, so as to not wear the same thing everyday. But I get busted by a Year 9 boy,
'You wear your faces top all the time, Marty'.
'You wear that uniform everyday Col!'
That conversation ends quickly with a chuckle from both of us.

I can't paint sets very well, and I don't think of myself as an actor or a director. I'm quiet in front of senior staff members, and will tend to avoid saying something wrong by answering a colleague's question with 'I don't know' implying that I will find out, and get back to them. I continually lose white board markers. But I can make students laugh. And get thanked by a parent for the work I've done with his Year 7 son who is thoroughly enjoying Drama.
'I don't know what you do in your subject, but keep it up.'
I'd better get some new clothes.

~

Today I discovered that I have to be mediator. One Year 7 girl, Kylie, who is particularly silly in class and can be quite abrupt to the point of being rude, has come in with her Mum for the parent/teacher interview I requested. I have been worried about her, not just because of her tendency to call out at any opportunity, but to continually wander around the room aimlessly. She doesn't seem to have found one particular special friend, but is more than willing to comment on everyone else's work.

'That's crap.'

'Don't do that.'

'I would do this if I were you.'

She is also unable to complete any homework, or is choosing not to. When I asked for the parent/teacher interview I had not received one Drama journal. This week I found one had magically appeared in my pigeon hole, and it was of quite a high standard. Basically, it was an 'A'.

I am sitting at my desk, with my paper sign propped up saying 'Marty Crerar', in case anyone is wondering. The sign suggests that I am supposed to be here, so I am no longer worried about being a fraud or of parents worrying that I'm not really the teacher of their child. I see Kylie enter. She is not my next appointment, but no one has turned up and perhaps they won't. I smile at her, and she responds with a scowl. She's not scowling at me, but at her mother. I am shocked to see she is dragging her mother by the arm, and pulling her over to me. Surely this dragging movement is round the wrong way. Should it not be the mother doing the dragging? Mum is following, not leading, and is slightly flustered. A younger brother, I assume, is attached to the mother's waist clad in a sports uniform and disinterest.

At first I am not sure if they would actually come over and sit at my table (the one I randomly selected from the 12 that are scattered around the library). Kylie plonks down, sighing, and is soon followed by her mother. I begin by saying that I have requested this meeting mainly because I had not received any homework, but

that I am pleased to have received something during the week. I pass Kylie a tape that I have dubbed for her of some music that she liked and asked for during one of our movement lessons. I'd hoped this would have made her excited, and spark some genuine interest. Her response is mildly enthusiastic but I am disappointed. I thought I might have been able to score some points with her – earned a little respect, found a way in. My disappointment is soon forgotten as her Mum starts to ask me what I want her to do – not Kylie, but the mum. She, I think, is actually asking for help. This surprises me, and I think 'this is not my job to tell you how to parent your child'. I am shocked by the way Kylie is acting towards her mum. She openly rolls her eyes, and huffs to her mother's questions. It is the same disrespect and slight loathing that she has towards the students in class, and sometimes, also towards me; although, I do not tolerate it. Mum puts up with comments like 'shut up' and 'don't say that'. I laugh awkwardly, trying to break the tension, and feel like I am hearing and seeing something that I shouldn't. This is private home stuff. This is none of my business. A staffroom comment springs to mind,

'At least we don't have to take them home.' Another teacher survival comment to get us through a hard lesson with a difficult student.

Sometimes we see students' foibles mirrored in their parents. After several parent/teacher interviews I find that things that have baffled me previously, about a student's behaviour, are made all the clearer upon meeting their parents. This situation has not cleared anything up. I end up feeling sorry for Kylie's mum, and glad that I don't have to go home with Kylie. I am her teacher, and not her parent. This problem is not one I can solve.

~

Listening to other teachers' stories I realise I can learn more about what it means to be a teacher from these tales that they tell. Sometimes I overhear teachers reminiscing about past students, and the successes they've had. Sometimes these teachers are openly recalling difficult moments they've had. A formal story telling opportunity arises at our Staff Day at the beginning of Term 2. A guest speaker

from the university has come to work with us on reflection. Right in my field of interest! We are separated into groups of 12 or so, and move off to different classrooms to begin our individual sessions with our assigned group leader. The task set is to tell a teaching story, one that we feel comfortable telling, and for the group then to identify the key issues in the story, and develop a set of professional learnings that we can take from the story.

'That's what I want to do with my PhD,' I think, feeling confident about my ability to participate in this workshop.

Pat tells her story emotionally, which at first unsettles me but then moves me. It's about a boy who had spoken up about how he felt Pat had been treating him. Teaching was her second career, she confides, so she began as a mature beginning teacher. The student character in her story is a Year 10 boy, and she had developed a banter-like rapport with him in class. He had slack work habits, and didn't keep up with work, so she would continually check up with him, razzing him as if to challenge him to complete something. However, one day he replied that he was only doing what she expected. He was not achieving because that's what she expected from him. In telling her story, Pat pauses at this point. Genuinely she reveals that this confession from the student shocked her, and as Pat was telling this story her voice was cracking slightly. She says that she felt so bad that she may have affected this boy's perception of his life in a negative way. She apologised to him, and said she was very sorry. A couple of months later, the student's mum came to parent/teacher specifically to tell Pat that her son had told her how much Pat's apology had meant to him. Pat keeps referring to how she felt bad, and how this incident has impacted continually on her teaching practice. I am moved by Pat's honesty and think about my own beliefs about my students' capabilities. Do I underestimate or undervalue anyone? Her openness at apologizing, her obvious care about what she did in the classroom; would I be so open and honest if I had made a mistake? She concludes that this incident illuminates for her that one of the things she brings to teaching is a respect for her students. I silently sit rethinking my relationships with particular students that I would describe as having difficulty managing, hoping that I can bring similar caring and thoughtfulness to my relationships.

~

I realise now that it's okay if I don't save the world everyday. It's okay if I don't make an impact on every student's life. It's okay if sometimes I crack, and say the wrong thing. It's okay if I make a mistake. And it's okay if I am completely at a loss about what to do. I am a teacher. But I am also human.

My goal is not to feel, sad, guilty or unqualified when students do not achieve or take responsibility for their own achievement. There are the students who try hard, and they're the ones you boost up wherever they are at. The ones that are lazy, disinterested, rebellious – they're the challenge.

My Year 9 Drama students are a mixed bag. There are the high-fliers, performing with confidence at a drop of a hat, producing work to a standard that I don't think I ever reached. And then there are the students who are struggling academically and socially. The latter group is the harder one to mark. Of course there are the odd cases, that don't fit into either of the two already mentioned categories. I'll admit I felt pressured when Bill told me that he gets paid for the standards of results he gets on his report. Suddenly I am no longer his teacher. I am his salary broker. A bad mark from me could significantly affect this term's profits. My mouth wobbled slightly, and almost fell open were it not for the tension building up in my jaw, as he told me that he gets $100 for every top mark he receives. Unfortunately, for him and I guess me, I've been thinking that he is not passing the subject at the moment – which probably has a minus monetary value – so I am not sure how I am going to resolve this situation with him. Obviously, I could appeal to his need to profit financially. However, I am not sure that I'm comfortable working within the classroom when it is viewed as a stock market where learning has a share price that the student broker can manipulate by shouting numbers at other brokers.

But how do I evaluate their achievements in a subject where they cannot complete any of the set tasks, let alone listen to my instructions for less than a minute! These are the students that continually find ways to move outside the boundaries that I have set – like playing with the wooden guns, sniggering during someone's

performance, or running behind the cyclorama when someone is on stage. There is one particular boy in this class, Phil, who I am particularly worried about. He has not shared one piece of work all year. He has been unable to speak in character, has not presented any polished work, or been able to memorise any lines, actions or movements – all of which, at a Year 9 level, are almost prerequisites. I fear giving them an unsatisfactory will do these students more harm than good. It could send them over the edge, and that's not the type of teacher I want to be. I feel the need to encourage them as much as I can. Sarah, as I pour out my confusion to her, is advising me to,

'Just call it like it is. That's your job. They're in Year 9, and now need to think seriously about making decisions about their own learning.'

I told her what one of my Year 9 boys, Phil, said,

'I am not doing Drama next semester! It sucks. I hate it now!' I feel like he's blaming me, and I go over and over whether it is me, or the course, that he has issue with. I feel sad. I feel responsible. Have I turned him off Drama? How could he give up Drama, the subject I love so much? And I am feeling worse, because Phil is one of the students who is likely to fail, which basically means that I am saying he shouldn't continue with Drama as well. Have I got time to turn things around? Can I fudge his report?

Next lesson, I am still concerned about Phil and his negative attitude. I find a quiet moment to say to him that his comment last lesson had worried me.

'Don't worry about it,' he says casually, not phased by my question.

'What can we do,' I throw out as a genuine question. He shrugs his shoulders, but does not have the same anti- attitude that he did last lesson, when I felt that he was a little angry with me. Perhaps, he doesn't really hate Drama. Perhaps he doesn't really hate me. Phil now has his head down, and is trying to talk with the group that we eventually found for him to work with. Many of the students, quietly and sometimes loudly, voice their lack of enthusiasm for working with him. I think they don't like working with him because he is overtly and loudly negative – often disagreeing with other people's ideas in quite an aggressive manner, swearing loudly, and when he chooses to he can do everything to avoid working for himself and his group.

At the end of the lesson, I am still trying to find solutions for his discomfort in the class. I say to him,

'Who would you like to work with?'

'It's not that,' he says openly, 'it's that no one wants to work with me.'

Something clicks inside my head. 'He does care about what is happening here,' I think to myself. I analyse him further. He is taking out his anger on me, on his peers, on the subject, because he is upset and feeling rejected. I quickly reassess what I can do to make this situation better. I decide to choose the groups for the next unit of work and purposely separate all the boys (this is not hard as there are only 8 in the class of 25). I mention to Sarah that I am feeling bad that I may have been the reason he has been put off Drama, but she tries to lighten the mood by joking 'thank you' and implying that this will make the class easier to teach in future semesters if he is not there. This comment made me sad, until I realised a few years later when I made the joke to someone else, that it's a teacher's defence strategy. One of the worst things, I think, for a teacher to feel is responsible for ruining a student's interest in a subject – it is in fact a crime of sorts, and something that a bad teacher does! But when dealing with Phil, perhaps this was a matter of course counseling rather than teacher survival. Sarah was trying to tell me that this might not be the right subject for Phil.

Deep down, I don't want to believe this. Drama has the potential to impact on every student's life, so I believe. But then I stare at the three Unsatisfactories I am about to write in his term progress report, under the headings Attitude, Effort and Homework completion. How is this fair? I worry about how such feedback will be received, by his parents, by his tutor, and even by him. Maybe it will make him pull his socks up. Maybe it will make him hate Drama even more. Maybe it will make him hate me. It's only mid way through the term, he still has 10 weeks of this semester left, and such a report may cut him off from any future learning opportunities. I might bum him out!

The system in my Drama class is just not working at the moment. I am not doing my job properly. But I am trying really hard, and I suppose that that's something. My instinct tells me not to give up. All I can do is try as many approaches as I can

and make sure that I stay positive. I am still learning after all. Maybe it will just take time.

~

Well, information systems are already on overload. I wonder what my head would weigh before school and then after school, because of all that floats into it, and then lies in clumps. No wonder I feel exhausted now, and tired, and crabby. It's hard to empty my head of such stuff, and I often carry it home with me, which is hard, and unfair to both Ryan and me. And anyone else that tries to get an attentive conversation out of me on a weeknight. I can still put a smile on my face, but I think that's one of my coping mechanisms. Marty is generally a cheery, goofy person. And I believe the saying 'a smile can make you feel better'.

I missed so much of the last month, in my journal writing, because I had several moments where I just felt like crying and I really didn't want to write, or even think, about school anymore. I just wanted to go home and switch off, to leave my teaching self behind. The Year 10 production was chaotic, but amazingly a process did emerge, and I coped with being a stage manager, full-time teacher, and girlfriend all at the same time. Just! It came together on the night, and seemed to make sense, though when we were in the middle of rehearsals I had no idea who I was supposed to be and I'm sure my teaching suffered. I'm wasn't sure if the kids, the play, or I would ever make it through. How on earth can I do it all again, and this time for a full school musical, that I fear will be run as if it were a professional show – after all, it is held at the Majesty Theatre. Being a Drama teacher demands so much of me, emotionally, physically. It's a wonder Drama teachers actually run shows over and over. I hope it gets easier to do everything all at once.

But after the final show the students, transformed into a cast, gave me a large bunch of flowers and a wine glass that had been engraved with the words,

Year 10 Production, 2000

I have taken a picture of this beautiful array of brightly, happy coloured flowers, so I won't forget it. I realise I am proud of them. Personally proud! The flowers sit on my table in my lounge room – a nice piece of school life to bring home with me. A lot of hard work went into this nice memento. This gesture makes me feel appreciated. Even though at times I don't appreciate myself.

~

It's hard when you've got personal, non-school things on your mind. This morning Ryan and I have an argument, and it doesn't upset me too much, but the tension is unresolved. It is over who has the car and when, but the topic really isn't the issue. It is more of a squabble than an argument, probably because we're both tired. As I walk into the schoolyard I have to make a conscious decision to block it out of my mind. When something bothers me it can tend to distract me, and get in the way of my usually enthusiastic Drama teacher self. I know they say teaching is very much like acting, and I've found that I seem to be playing a role. But there's nothing like something else on your mind to weigh you down and take the spark out of your teaching.

I can think of many occasions when real life has crept into my teaching day. Like during the Year 10 production when I found it so hard to continue to play the normal classroom teacher, when there were 100 other things that I was supposed to be organising. I've spoken to Sarah about this too, and she agreed that it is often something that is very hard to do, and is often not recognised as an issue in the broader school context. I know my planning did not exist very much throughout that period – I flew by the seat of my pants, so to speak.

Also, when I was sick, I found it very hard to play the role of the teacher, no energy, no enthusiasm and the kids picked up on the change in me, and some responded sensitively, while others took the opportunity to experiment with expectations.

This morning I think I find that a good way to keep going is to just put it out of your mind. I think teachers really only have a certain amount of information that

they can maintain and function with at any given time, and survival and function ability are a matter of prioritising what goes in and what doesn't – so I guess that means that my private life got cut out of my day today!

~

I realise now, that I am not just a teacher. Perhaps there is no such thing as just a teacher, as every day I am a multitude of things to a multitude of people. A teacher is not just one single role, but a hundred all rolled into one. Each of these roles affects how I experience what happens to me in this first year of teaching – because these roles do not disappear when I become Miss Crerar. They are still there, swirling inside of me, confusing me, distracting me, and making me who I really am.

I am a partner. I met Ryan a month before I started university. He knows me as Marty the waitress at a Chinese Restaurant, Marty the video freak, and Marty the Driving Instructor, way before I turn into Marty the teacher. Likewise, I know Ryan as someone who is more than the sum of his professional stereotype – an accountant. Ryan and I make conscious efforts every week to do something that has nothing to do with work, and that gets us back to the people we like each other as, and like ourselves as. We go to the cinema, we go out for tea, we get a video, and basically every second weekend this year we have been travelling home to Launceston to see family and friends. Amazingly we managed to maintain some of our Launceston-life activities. Ryan managed to continue to play some of his social soccer games, and when we couldn't go up there for the whole weekend, we would make a Sunday day trip. We fight for our lives outside of our jobs, and sometimes it's hard, but it is very important.

I am a friend. I was really excited about moving to Hobart this year, as my best friend, Ruby, had moved down several years ago to study Art at the university. I'd made several trips down to see her for a few days at a time, but it was not the same as the frequent and often spontaneous get-togethers we would have. And now I am living in the big city, Hobart, and fully plan to take advantage of all the

luscious, good coffee making cafes for some best buddy chatting. Sadly, and strangely, this doesn't happen. I rarely see Ruby during the week, and can go several months without even speaking to her on the phone. A text-message might break the silence barrier every so often, but that makes me feel further away from her than when we were living in the cities two hundred kilometres apart. Thankfully, we both make a special effort for events like birthdays. In my second year of teaching my solution is to combine friendship and exercise – we both join a gym, and aim to attend at the same time three times a week.

I end up going three times a month, and always miss her.

I am a daughter. At the beginning of 2000, we have a family barbeque where the news shared by Mum and Dad is not of the warm, sentimental kind that you can usually associate with a meal of sausages, cheap steak and beer. Mum has been ill for many years, so many, that her illness is normal in my life, and trips to the hospital after school became part of my daily routine. Well, the doctors (meaning GP's, specialists, and any other medical group anonymously into this neutral term) have told her that her health is continuing to deteriorate and they anticipate that she probably has no more than a year to live. Quite a big revelation, but sadly, one that I handle with both shock, and resolve, because this has been a secret fear for so long. My move to begin teaching in Hobart now fills me with guilt. How can I leave my mum now? How can I give up time to be with her? How can I cope with two hours' distance? But this is why they did not tell us earlier, because they want our lives to go on as normal. There's no talk of giving up, just a lot of tears. Soon I am operating on a week-to-week basis with my family, constantly prioritising my activities with family-based stuff at the top. The move south goes okay, and I manage to teach and worry at the same time. Mum seems to value the stories that I have to tell her about what I'm up to. The constant email contact helps break down the distance. Throughout the year, though, I am probably operating first as a daughter, and then a teacher, because as Sarah and I often discussed, a simple phone call from Launceston would make me go – the school won't fall down without me, but I only have one Mum.

One particular day, I get an email from my Dad. It is a very special email, which I read three times, and then immediately need to find someone to share its contents. The person I find in the Drama theatre is Marge, who is in the lighting box, fiddling with stuff for her next production. There are no students in the room to see me leap up the steps (my leaping is probably why I rarely wear skirts to school).

'Mum's been diagnosed!' I blurt, without asking if she has a moment.

'What?' Marge looks up.

'Mum's been sick, and they said she was going to die, but now they've diagnosed her, it's treatable, and with medication things look much better. I think she's going to be Okay, and she might even get better.'

Marge smiles, but can have no idea of the magnitude of this announcement. Ruby will, because of our teary Thai meal we had in February when I had 'the talk' with her about Mum's doomed fate. She is very sympathetic though, and reflects later when this news comes up in conversation, that she'll never forget my reaction to the news. I spend the rest of my free period on the internet looking up Addison's Disease, as Dad had instructed me, and make notes about the symptoms and treatment. This is one day when my private life becomes public. The news of Mum's diagnosis is more important than any of the students I need to see, any of the books I have to mark, and any of the pieces of paper I need to file.

~

I believe that the best thing you can give your students is yourself, and let them see who you are; maybe not all of you, because it seems to be that you need other stuff to escape to. If you don't have a life outside of school, what can you bring, offer, and share with your students?

The challenge is to find a way to exist simultaneously in a variety of roles - to live with the conflict and tensions of being so many different things for so many different people, to find a sense of definition for ourselves, and who we are as teachers.   (Teaching Journal, p. 64)

~

9.2   *Conversation Seven: New Conversations*

Researcher Introduction: *This time I enter into new critical conversations with three beginning teachers, each on the cusp of their career. When we met to talk, Kate had just completed her third year of her Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) and was just about to commence her internship. Max was in his final year of his teacher training, having first completed a Bachelor of Performing Arts. This was the new pathway for secondary Drama teachers in Tasmania, after my course (Bachelor of Education (Secondary Drama and English) was cancelled. This resulted in students graduating with having two degrees after five years of training.   Genevieve, like Max, trained first as an actor, then as a teacher. Unlike Max, however, Genevieve had taught for one year at a Catholic girls' school.*

Marty:	Thank you for reading my stories. I can't believe you read it so fast.
Kate:	It was great I could not put it down.
Max:	It gave me, not only a look inside what it's like to teach, but it gives you something to sympathise with, and you really feel as if you're going along on the journey with you.
Genevieve:	They made me realise that a lot of the things I was thinking in my thoughts… that other people had experienced them too.
Kate:	It was an insight into something that I'm excited about, and looking forward to doing. I didn't take it as gospel or anything, but it confirmed a lot of fears that I have, about the challenges that I'm going to face next year, as in report writing for example.
Marty:	Is it a bad thing, to have stuff confirmed that you might be worried about?
Kate:	No, not really.
Max:	It was extremely relevant. I know there are still going to be times when I just go, what am I doing? Because it's going to be hard, and you'll get classes that test you. It was refreshing to hear, the honesty, that 'oh my god, I just want to crawl into bed'.
Marty:	So, it's true?
Max:	That's what I'm expecting it to be like.

Marty:	So what does it confirm for you, in terms of what you expect your first year to be about?
Max:	That it's going to be hard, that it's going to be rough, and there will be days when you feel like crawling into bed. I've already gone to school and gone 'I don't want to be here' although I've never had a sick day, during any of my pracs. It's going to be something that, while you're qualified for it, and you're ready for it, even with all the experience you've had, it isn't real yet. That's what I mean.
Marty:	Kate, what do you imagine your first year will be like? What do you hope for?
Kate:	Well. I hope one of the schools that I've done my prac at, I know this will never happen, but I hope they will say 'oh, come and do some work for us Kate' and I hope it's fulltime. I definitely want fulltime work, I just can't wait to get up every morning and there's my little class, and we go and do stuff together and learn stuff together, and yeah, that's what I'm hoping.
Marty:	Do you think the reality could be different?
Kate:	Oh, the reality is definitely different. That's my dream, you know, what I hope for.
Marty:	So what if that doesn't happen?
Kate:	We've had people come in and talk to us, from the Education Department, and the private schools, and they've said 'there's just not a lot around' and they can't place us, and the University accepts all these students, there's something incredible like 160 of us, that are going to be graduating and I think 'why have you taken so many students?' I don't know how I'm going to beat that many people.
Marty:	Genevieve, you've had your first year of teaching. What was it like?
Genevieve:	I floated through. I was just going from one thing to the next, and hoping everything worked out. I didn't have a lot of time to plan anything in-depth, because I was just hoping everything would work. It would have been nice to have something to start with.
Marty:	No filing cabinet?
Genevieve:	No! Nothing!
Marty:	No bookshelf?
Genevieve:	No scripts, or books!?

Marty:	Max, what do you want to do next year?

Max:	In my teaching? I want to give the students an experience, and this probably sounds really self-centred and directed, but I want to give them experiences, that they will learn from, that will challenge them, that they will remember, I'm not saying forever or to change their lives. The teachers I remember are the ones that sparked an emotional response in me. I had one teacher that challenged me the whole time over everything, not in a nasty way, but would constantly ask me questions, and challenge me. It was just brilliant because he was the first person to challenge me to think, and I want to do the same. I want to provide students with experiences more than just, 'this is what I say, and this is what you need to learn'.

Kate:	I'm a mature age student, it took me a long, long time, I left school, I did nursing, and I hated that. Everyone always said to me, 'why don't you try teaching?' and I was 'no, mum does teaching, I don't want to do teaching, to follow in mum's footsteps, I hate school, I don't want to be stuck in a school'. Then I did administrative work. I had a horrid boss, and I didn't want to put up with that, and that was when I decided I was going to go to uni.

Marty:	Why teaching?

Kate:	I can't even remember what it was. I suppose it was people going 'you should do it'.

Marty:	Are you happy now you've chosen it? Do you think that it was the right decision?

Kate:	Definitely. I've had my ups and downs with it, but I really feel comfortable in the role.

Genevieve:	I'm very pleased and grateful that I had the opportunity to read your beginning teaching stories because it helped me through understanding my first year and reflecting on it positively, believe it or not. I hated my first year. I loved it and hated it. I loved the fact that I learnt so much, and I love the fact that my second year isn't going to be as hard as last year, but yeah, there are a lot of things I hated too. And hate is a strong word.

Marty:	It made you rethink your first year? Like what?

Genevieve:	Issues with students, problems with teachers. I think my first reaction was 'wow, you're so lucky' to have such a good experience, and then negativity about my own experience. I have definitely had positive experiences, and being thrown in the deep end my first year was a massive learning curve.

282

Marty:	What did reading my thesis make you realise?
Genevieve:	That I was really thrown in the deep end, but that I floated. They made me realise that a lot of things, that I was thinking, and I thought that I was alone, in a lot of my thoughts, that other people had experienced them too, even though you perhaps had a more positive experience than me, we still had a lot of similar things happen, students crying, what do you do? Gifted students, what do you do?
Marty:	It's nice to hear that reading the stories made you feel… less alone.
Genevieve:	I thought you were lucky to have other Drama teachers to help you. It was very fortunate for you to be able to go to work with like minded people.
Kate:	I think because you were away from home, that made it a bit more challenging, that came through, and you have to rely on staff members to be your outlet, I think, and it just consumes your whole life, and you've only got teachers that you can talk to, but they're there, which is the other thing.
Max:	The deaf girl. I found all of that surprising. Just in terms, I guess probably like you, I was never expecting to. It's not like you're reading a text book, it's like reading a novel and getting sucked into the character, but that's the bit that surprised me in the things you had to deal with there.
Marty:	What was surprising about my school?
Max:	It just seems well off. And just also the Quaker thing, in terms of thirty minute silence, that kind of blew me away. It just seems very… regimented sounds wrong, but it just seems like something that had been there forever, and this was the way things were done. That kind of makes them sound like they come off mean or something, and they don't but I guess, the sense that you're going in to a very structured school, as opposed to ones I'm familiar with.
Genevieve:	Different schools do different things. I hated my first year, because I didn't have a support group. I thought that the general staff as a whole, were obviously very supportive of you, which is fantastic, and I think when I started my staff were generally supportive of me, but then you sort of go into the year and everyone's doing their own thing, and that sort of drifts off a bit, and that's when it was really important for you to have other Drama teachers helping you through.
Marty:	What was different between my first year and yours?

Genevieve: The fact that you had other teachers. That is really the biggest thing.

Marty: What if there had been another beginning teacher in your school?

Genevieve: There was.

Marty: Did you talk to them?

Genevieve: I did a little but, not a lot. They were Maths/Science, and I was Drama.

Marty: So it matters the fact that there needs to be assistance that is relevant in terms of the subject you teach.

Genevieve: I think like-minded people discuss things in more depth. I might have gone up to this other beginning teacher and gone 'I'm tired, having a hard week, had a six period day, it's been really busy, and all these extra supervision and extra curricular activities, that's pretty tough isn't it' and she'd go 'oh, yes, that's it'. Whereas like-minded people I think you can relax a bit more, and you're more likely to talk about things that you're actually struggling with. There is an Art-teacher at the school, who's been there for a long time, and we became really good friends, and she shared a study bay with me, and so we were semi-like-minded. She's very negative though, and I think that, it makes it hard when you're around negative people all the time. I can sound very negative at times about the whole thing, but it was still good to have her there.

Kate: It's always nice to talk to another person who shares, it doesn't matter what it is, whether it's teaching or basketball. You've straight away got a common bond.

Marty: I think I drove my colleague teacher nuts.

Kate: You pointed that out a lot, your reliance on her.

Max: Sarah, your mentor, she seemed really lovely, and really warm, really helpful. As a whole your school comes off very warm and welcoming.

Kate: Later in the stories you were getting in to it, you were relaxing into your role, at first you kind of singled yourself out as the new teacher, and that's how I look at myself, and then you were kind of talking about 'we went' and 'us' meaning you and another teacher and other staff.

Marty: So becoming part of the wood work so to speak?

Kate: Yeah, and I haven't, I can't relate to that, because I can never imagine being part of that, a link.

Marty: A link?

Kate: I always feel a bit, like I want to and I *don't* want to. It's just so new to me. I've got so much excitement and nervousness about it, I can't imagine myself ever going in there and going 'I'm just going with it now'.

Marty: Is there anything specific about being a Drama teacher that stood out?

Max: Just that maybe the expectations of a Drama teachers being different than that of being, I don't know, a maths teacher.

Marty: How did I portray being a Drama teacher?

Genevieve: I think that Drama teaching is a lot more exhausting than other subjects. You've got to be energetic, it's often a choice subject, the students often choose it, so you're trying to instill your passion for the subject to them, so you're constantly on the go, and you're constantly trying to jump around.

Max: I think your definition of what it is to be a Drama teacher is that you have to be someone who is willing to explore things. A Drama classroom is different to a normal classroom you know, because they're not behind desks, and you're exploring issues, themes, and you want the class to be open, and you want there to be an open dialogue, with people. I think you present yourself to be very human, very approachable, very warm.

Genevieve: There were definitely things in your stories that I think all beginning teachers go through, whether they're Drama teachers, or English teachers, or Maths teachers, all beginning teachers could relate to quite a lot of it, the student crying. And just some of the basic things like 'what will I wear? How will I wear my hair? How should I speak? What are these people thinking of me as I walk down the corridor?'

Marty: Do you find teaching an emotional experience?

Genevieve: Yes, I cried a lot. Tiredness got the better of me a lot, and also, I'm a very emotional person, and I take home a lot with me, and I had to learn to stop that, because that was affecting my partner. I found that in Drama, you have a very different relationship with students to what you would in an English classroom, and last year I was teaching English and Drama, this year I'm just Drama, and in Drama our relationship is a lot more casual, we can be sarcastic

with each other, make jokes, and the kids knew that, and I knew that, but sometimes in that first year it was hard to get that line, that student/teacher line, and you'd find yourself crossing it at times and go 'ooh, I shouldn't have done that'.

Marty: I wonder is that just a female thing? Or just a Marty type of thing, because I'm quite an emotional person too. I wonder if the emotional qualities I found in starting teaching are just a girl thing?

Max: Yep.

Marty: Do boy beginning teachers cry, do you know?

Max: I haven't yet.

Marty: Do you find teaching an emotional experience?

Max: Absolutely and there have been times when I've just been crushed by lessons, by the feeling that I'm not an effective teacher.

Marty: What did you think of 'Not another day', the story of not coping?

Kate: But you did! That's what I kept thinking all the way through it, and a lot of it was negative, but okay, you got through it, you did cope, and I was thinking, 'am I just going to collapse in a heap if I was going through this? Tired run down, gastros, flus'.

Marty: Did you learn anything from my stories? What are the themes that come through?

Kate: Themes? I think one was relationships, like the different relationships you have as a teacher, and the different levels.

Max: That was probably the thing that really made me go 'oh wow' when I was reading the stories. I think I even wrote it down. Did they really ask that of you in your interview and say 'what do you think Grade 8s should study in Drama'? Because that's something I probably haven't thought about too much. That question really threw me.

Marty: Kate, you said relationships. With whom?

Kate: With everyone. You've got… you're a girlfriend. You're a daughter, a colleague, then you're one to one as a teacher with a student that won't turn up on time, then the student with the hearing impairment, then you've got thirty other students, and then you do a production, all those different relationships you have, and you have to take on a different role, the roles you have. The many, many, many roles of a teacher.

Genevieve: I learnt a lot of things that were very important for me, not being afraid of things that I think are just happening to me because they are happening to everyone else. But, in order for that to happen, you need to have contact with other beginning teachers because there's no way, if I hadn't read your thesis, I would have gone 'oh yeah, that's my first year, that's what happened, possibly a negative experience, but I loved it all the same'.

Kate: '157 reports!' I was like, 'what?'

Marty: That's the high school joy isn't it! You'll do reports on each student for each subject won't you?

Kate: I think that's what happens, I'm not sure. I haven't been part of the reporting process. Are you ever going back to it? To White School?

Marty: Yes, next year.

Kate: You are?

Marty: Yeah, I miss it a lot.

Kate: Really?

Marty: I really miss it.

Genevieve: I had a horrible first year, but now, looking back, I'm glad that happened because now I've established my own style of teaching in that school and I had the opportunity to do that. Reading through your thesis made me realise even more that that was a good thing, not a bad thing.

Max: Yeah. It actually tells you that it's okay. You get all the people, all the teaching practitioners, once they get out there and become experts, telling you about what your first year teaching's going to be like. But they always tell you the bad stuff, 'oh you'll be tired, you know', 'you'll feel like crying, you'll have no time to yourself,' all of that but they never elaborate, or they never give you ideas of what you can do. Whereas I think your stories actually tell you that it's okay, it gives you more of an insight into what teaching's going to be like than any other thing I've had put in front of me,

Marty: Really?

Max: You know, in terms of documents and stuff like that, texts books about becoming a teacher, and because they're all heavily strategy based or curriculum based, whereas this is what it's actually going to do to you, personally.

~

9.3   *Saturday*

Today, I won't think of school at all.

Sleep.

Family,
friends,

sleep,

films
and
good food.

It's okay,

I can iron my shirt tomorrow
I can mark those essays tomorrow
I can read that play tomorrow
I can.

It's okay,

I'm not usually this tired
I'll come home next weekend
I'll come out for coffee next week
I'll watch that film when it comes out on video
I'll pick up takeaway later

It's okay,

I'm learning.

I shouldn't try so hard.
I shouldn't write so much.
I shouldn't say 'dazzle' or 'flair' in a student's report.

I should learn to relax
I should look after myself
I should give myself a break

I should just…

'Beginning teachers need to learn to ask 'who am I?' (Bullough et.al., 1989)

…be me!

That's easy.

I'll buy the beginning teacher's guide to the

'art   transformation   change'
    of   and   (Fox, 1996)

I can do that tomorrow.

~

Separate and isolated.
Disconnected and fragmented.

Then I start stitching (Featherstone, 1993),
and learning,

to look out

to look beyond

to look for the other in me

and for me,

in the other (Ellis, 1997)

There is so much more.

I realise,

I believe,

'Teaching is a complex and delicate act' (Danielewicz, 2001, p.9)

I am beginning,

and becoming,

a teacher.

And I'm glad.

Part Three

After

Chapter 10

Weaving Words, Linking Lives[1]

~

What does it mean to create a different space in which to undertake other performances, other thinking, power, and pleasures, to experiment differently with meanings, practices, and our own confoundings? (Lather, 1997, p.234)

~

10.1   Asking Again

Why is my autoethnographic research into beginning teaching important? I have asked myself this question continually for the last six years. In seeking answers I have also asked colleagues (at university and at White School), other Drama teachers, and other beginning teachers about why they think my investigation into my own experience of beginning teaching is valuable to them and others. In this chapter I ask again, realising that finishing this dissertation is about asking for more questioning. I close *Teaching Daze* by urging researchers, policy makers, and beginning teachers to question their understandings and preconceptions of this issue. I ask 'is it possible to embrace rather than resolve the tensions and

---

[1] This title was the name of a literature festival organised and hosted by White School. Hearing local, national and international guest authors speak about their passion for writing reminded me that before I chose to train as a teacher, I actually went to university to become a writer. This dissertation, while embracing the union between teacher and researcher, also opens up the space for a third link - that of artist. I am a teacher researcher inspired by the arts environment in which I have worked in the past (writing) and work in now (Drama and Theatre).

confusions of beginning teaching?' Rather than theorising that beginning teaching can be transformative, we should begin by transforming limiting perspectives and rediscovering hope.

~

Writing a self, turning it into a textual artefact, makes…

~

10.2   Collapsing - Old and New, Me and You

I wove lives,

and ended up,

quilting hope (Denzin, 1999).

Before,

'surviving',

in a daze of

'development'.

Then she came.

The artist, within (Slattery, 2001).

After,

we were 'transformed',

having quilted our way out,

of the daze,

'collapsing' (Richardson, 1993)

into days.

Hope, became courage.

New days and fresh daze,

began.

~

> *...makes it productively useable in ways in which it was not prior to it*
> *being written down* (Kamler, 2001, p.54).

~

10.3   Beginning Again – (Un)limited

This research has led me to believe that autoethnographic tales of beginning teaching are important for two specific reasons. Such work (that is self-authored, reflective and critical) can establish powerful and transformative connections between new, developing and established professionals. It allows for continued involvement and support of teacher trainers and their students as they make the crucial journey from training to teaching. Certainly, recent research calls for the increased involvement of universities in the care and involvement with beginning teachers in their first year of teaching (Brady & Schuck, 2005; Education & Training Committee, 2005; Freese, 2006).

It can also assist in the creation of rich images of one's self as a teacher. Doecke, Brown & Loughran (2000) wrote that such professionally constructed and interpretive stories can 'open up new dimensions, new ways of seeing and understanding' (p.347). In a field which is overwhelmed with negative images and extensive documentation of limitations, autoethnographic research into beginning teaching enabled me to explore, push, collapse and create new boundaries. It allowed me to move beyond the limiting perspectives held by myself, and others.

From here, I once again see my first year of teaching anew. My stories, rewritten and recreated, are now rich and complex. They lie interwoven with the stories of other teachers, beginning teachers, and researchers. Examining the fabric now, I feel differently about my experience of beginning teaching. Before, I entered teaching labelling myself a 'beginning teacher'. Along with this labelling came the belief that I needed to learn much. This research has given me opportunity to realise what I had not realised previously. I realise, after, that I tended to focus on

how much I had to learn, on what I was lacking and missing, and on what I was doing wrong. I paid little attention to my successes, rarely dwelling on what I was doing well. This meant that I was very conscious of how I was not as competent as others. I saw myself as less than, and viewed my first year of teaching in terms of a deficit model of teaching. This confirms the perspective (as discussed in Chapter 1) that beginning teaching is portrayed negatively. I was guilty of defining my experiences as lacking. Holding such a view restricted the degree to which I started to develop a clear teaching identity. Certainly, after the first year was over, I was glad. I was proud that I had survived, and saw making it to the end as the achievement. Little thought or concern was given to any long term impact (positive or negative) that I may have had on my students. In hindsight, I find this realisation daunting and saddening. I was a successful Education graduate, who had 'merely survived' her first year of teaching. This gives credence to Orland-Barak's (2002) concern that successful Education graduates do not necessarily have successful first years of teaching, or are necessarily effective or 'good' teachers.

My eyes were closed to broader issues of what type of teacher I was becoming, about how my beliefs and values had developed, and about how much influence and in what ways I had been socialised into my profession. There was no sense of transformation in any pedagogically hopeful sense. There was no reflection on the theoretical foundations that my teacher training had given me, or how such theories had been recontextualised from university to the classroom. I held a limiting perspective of my first year of teaching – until I rewrote it through the course of this research and managed to undo the limiting perspectives I myself held. This research enabled me to find my teaching self again, and to relabel myself a teacher, rather than an unfortunate beginning teacher. The power of perspectives, and of language to frame and conceptualise our understandings, became clear to me through this research.

My goal from the beginning of my researching days was to do something different on this issue, to offer a different way of knowing about beginning teaching, and to present the work differently. This is the second reason that autoethnographic research in this issue is important. It generates new ways of knowing about

beginning teaching. It challenges us to read, literally, the issue differently. Seeing 'anew' is a journey of transformation, of change, that can benefit all the characters of the stories. It is an act of generation, rather than dissection – of creation rather than breakdown. In this light, autoethnographic research is an act of growth. Connections are important in an issue such as beginning teaching. This issue is one predominantly characterised by terms of reference such as isolation and separation, and frequently of de-construction. Many researchers have worked to pull apart the experience in order to find out why it was broken. Like a mechanic, the parts have frequently been taken out, cleaned and reassembled as they should be.

In Chapter 2, I commented that this dissertation was 'arts-influenced' and constructed with 'aesthetic vision'. Reflecting on Dewey's (1934, cited Janesick, 1994) beliefs about the function of art in understanding our experiences, Janesick (1994) noted that 'Dewey sees art as the bridge between the experience of individuals and the community. In other words, art forces us to think about how human beings are related to each other in their respective worlds (p.210). In crafting *Teaching Daze* I sought to create, to rebuild, to make, and to connect. The topic I chose and the methods I used to investigate the topic were intended to establish connection.

Broadly, I hoped to find ways of making connections with and for other beginning teachers. Contemporary research emphasises the importance of making and continuing connections in this issue – with beginning teachers, schools, Education Faculties, policy makers and the research community. In some ways I limited this research by choosing to explicitly focus on the first year of teaching. This meant that I largely ignored the crucial and critical step from one context to another. Ensor (2001) pointed out that this journey is an ongoing one, and stressed that it is important to view the teacher education and beginning teaching experience as distinct but intertwined. Value can come from exploring how the teacher travels between these two significant contexts, especially from the 'traveller's' perspective.

I did strive to develop connections in this research. I did this by actively seeking difference, by writing artistically, and by crafting an arts-influenced autoethnographic research text. This was also how I transformed my own views of the issue and encouraged others to see in different ways as well. Ayers (2001) declared that 'teaching is spectacularly unlimited' (p.5). I agree, and believe my research embraces and celebrates the unlimited potential of beginning teaching specifically. Beginnings are about possibilities, not limitations. If the beginning is not a place of optimism, opportunity and hope, then 'beginning teaching' will not be a site of transforming and change.

Connections are also important in relation to the autoethnographic methods used. Qualitative researchers continue to call for experimentation and boundary crossing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) as they did when I started this research in 2000. Reed-Danahay (2002) explained the notion of connectedness in autoethnography:

> *The line between narcissism and effective ethnographic writing lies often, however, in the writing abilities of the author and in his/her ability to make use of his/her own experiences as a way to teach us about our craft and/or the social worlds of those "others" who are the participants in our research* (p.424).

Here lies the test for *Teaching Daze*. Again, I ask, can this text be used by others? Does it matter to others? Does it have meaning for others? Is the writing evocative? Viewing the dissertation in many ways as a work of art, I heeded Dunlop's (1999) belief that 'works of art have the power to move us spiritually and emotionally in transformative ways' (p.5). Do the artistic qualities build bridges, make connections, and encourage others to share their stories? Are others moved? Does the text evoke connections? As an educational research text, Barone (2001) argued that it must be used and useful to practitioners. Is *Teaching Daze* useful?

10.4   'Other Meanings'

The heart of *Teaching Daze* is the links that are made between my self and others. It is about me. It is about you. It is about us. From my conversations with three critical readers (Eleanor, William, Angela) who read my teaching journal, and the three beginning teachers (Kate, Max and Genevieve) who read the final ten stories, I found the threads running through my data. They became my sounding board for ideas, my 'guinea pigs' on which I trialled my storytelling abilities. Their connections and resonances are inextricably woven throughout the chapters. Their meanings are integral. Their presence – treated with respect.

The final conversation in Chapter 9 *Saturday* contains new voices, not previously heard in the other chapters. These are the voices of three new critical readers that were invited to join this research project late in the journey – in 2004. Max, Genevieve and Kate were three beginning teachers existing in the moment I had been in 2000. These three beginning teachers became crucial in the final stage of pulling all the threads of the dissertation together. They helped me see if my work was useful. These 'new' conversations are important. Yet now I wonder why these conversations began later in the research project?

The involvement of these three beginning teacher 'friends' was not detailed in Chapter 2 for a specific reason. I have purposefully saved them for the final sections of the dissertation. In striving for difference, I didn't want to begin with these voices and then move on to discussion of their experiences. These voices, the voices of beginning teachers, are the ones that I wish to emphasise, celebrate, and elevate – hence their inclusion later in the dissertation – they have the final say. Did they find *Teaching Daze* useful? Their voices close this dissertation in the 'Epilogue'. They have the final word, deliberately and purposefully. Also important are the links that this work has with contemporary research. My research journey was complex. It was carried out in many contexts and has taken six and a half years to complete. The presence of the perspectives of others', as reflected in research literature, has also occurred at different times and in a variety of ways. It began with the initial review of current research literature in 2000/2001, occurred again through stages of analysis and interpretation in 2003,

was reflected on once more during the writing of the poetic researcher realisations 2004/2005, and now, in 2006, I stop to consider how my research now sits amongst the current theoretical context.

Martinez (2004) noted that there is now a substantial push to advocate mentoring as the main means for supporting beginning teachers in their first year. She raised concern, however, about the variety and training that mentors have, and suggested that mentoring is recognised as just as complex and important an act as any teaching practice. She raised concern that mentoring in Australia should be reviewed nationally, and given increased focus and funding for it to be effective in the development of beginning teachers. There is also a move to utilise the internet and web-based support strategies in assisting beginning teachers in their early years of teaching (Brady & Schuck, 2005). Martinez (2004) noted that information technology 'offers opportunities to provide new teachers with the substantive information they may need – about students, policies and procedures in particular sites, and about general issues of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment' (p.101).

Discussions of beginning teaching are still inextricably linked with discussions of learning to teach. Beginning teaching is still recognised as complex, difficult, and potentially career-ending (Brady & Schuck, 2005; Eilam & Poyas, 2006). Teacher educators are still concerned about how to make the first years better (Freese, 2006). Researchers are still concerned about the detrimental effect that beginning teachers can have on their students (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Context is still recognised as a powerful influencing factor in the experience of beginning teaching (Flores & Day, 2006).

Sadly, still missing are the voices of other beginning teachers, though as in previous decades case studies seem to be the main way that the voice of beginning teachers are represented. Little research has been conducted by beginning teachers about beginning teaching. However, self-study is now promoted as a key strategy in the development of beginning teachers. Loughran (2004) posed the challenging notion that student teachers need to take an increased role and responsibility in their own learning. Certainly, my research demonstrates the power of practitioner

research to access beginning teacher knowledge that significant benefits the beginning teacher. It enabled me to (re)write the complexity back into my first year of teaching. It renewed my enthusiasm and passion for my chosen profession. It made me realise that I am a teacher, not merely a beginning teacher. It empowered me to become an active producer of knowledge about beginning teaching.

~

10.5   Conviction and Commitment to Self and Others

Researchers recognise that autoethnography can be confronting for those involved (Ellis & Bochner, 2002). For the researcher (the self) it generates vulnerability as one's life experiences are the focus. Personal and professional experiences are publicly exposed, analysed and represented. It can and does force the researcher to confront issues that may have been previously hidden, difficult to deal with or unpleasant. For the participants (the others) autoethnography can also be confronting as their role is in many ways beyond their control and carried out with less power (Tsang, 2000, cited Sparkes, 2002).

One of the strengths of my research project was my explicit commitment to ensuring that this work would be about professional development: for myself as a beginning teacher; for my participants – colleagues, critical readers, other beginning teachers; and for my chosen field of investigation – that of beginning teaching. My conviction, about contributing to the field of knowledge about beginning teachers for the good of everyone involved, underpinned all aspects of my project. This included how my data collection methods, my processes of analysis and interpretation, and the structure, content and shape of the final dissertation. I conducted this research with moral and ethical conviction and commitment to finding hope, and was direct and open about this intention.

I see this commitment to my research methods and dissertation construction as a significant aspect in the strength of *Teaching Daze*. I reason that such conviction

and commitment, to the respectful place of self and others in this work, is an addition to my defence of the value of my work and another element to consider when judging the quality of the research text.

Another important aspect to consider is the commitment I had to including and valuing the place of the 'theoretical others' in my research process and final research text. While I have used conventional methods of reporting on contemporary research literature and the views of others in the field earlier in this thesis, I also aimed to elevate my own voice and the voice of my participants, especially other beginning teachers. Clough (2000) raised concern about inadequate representation of the voice of theory in autoethnography. Clough (2000) stated:

> *I strongly want to resist the recent tendency among cultural critics to refuse theory as if theory were a defense against the emotions or to refuse cultural criticism because it is in a language that seems impersonal compared to the melodramatics of vexed agency characteristic of autoethnography* (p.290).

While I do not agree with the melodramatic use of the idea of the 'melodramatics of vexed agency', I do value contrasting and opposing theoretical standpoints, and have respected and acknowledged the multiple-perspectives of theorists throughout my writing. Their place in the final dissertation, through reference to and discussion of direct quotations and paraphrasing of concepts, was important throughout *Teaching Daze*. It was another layering of my voice and my experience with the lives of others – in this case with the broader theoretical frame in which I existed and was researching. I was able to respect such perspectives in traditional textual strategies, but not at the expense of my commitment to seeing the issue anew and of presenting my topic in a different way. The development of my poetic research realisations, therefore, was my strategy for including and acknowledging the voices of my theoretical others, but in a way that embraced my desire to present the issue differently. They are an artistic expression of my closing understandings situated in respectful relation to the work of others in my field.

~

(After)

Separate and isolated.

Disconnected and fragmented.

Then I start stitching (Featherstone, 1993),

and learning,

to look out

to look beyond

to look for the other in me

and for me,

in the other (Ellis, 1997)

There is so much more.

~

While I talk about my convictions (of finding hope, of benefiting those involved) and my commitment to ensuring that the involvement of others was and is positive and beneficial, there is a third point that I would like to raise in these final pages of *Teaching Daze*. Sparkes (2002) raised the notion of 'fidelity' as an important element of good autoethnographic research and as an aspect that could be addressed in judging the quality of such research. He posited that 'impact, evocation, authenticity, fidelity and believeability' (Sparkes, 2002, p.223) should be considered in judging the standard of the final text. While the other concepts have been addressed in Chapter 2, fidelity is an interesting notion to consider at this point in my dissertation.

Fidelity, I believe, is how *Teaching Daze*, as a research text, encourages and fosters hope for the issue of beginning teaching. In exploring the definitions of

this concept, words such as faithfulness, accuracy, and truthfulness are discussed. I conducted my study with respect for the issue and for those involved in the project. I strove to faithfully fulfil my objectives, of presenting the issue differently, and of searching for hope. Fidelity, I have realised, is the core value of my research into beginning teaching, and the underlying thread that runs through the quilted text that is *Teaching Daze*. This was not the easy option. In my explanation of my methods of inquiry, I clearly describe the meticulous processes of data gathering, analysis and interpretation and writing stages that were carried out. This commitment to research and beginning teaching, I hope, demonstrates my fidelity to the field (Krizek, 1998).

In my research over the last six years I have had many goals and aims. Honestly, as a doctoral student, my ultimate goal was to be assessed successfully. This is a tremendous factor, a powerful factor that must have influenced my work. I acknowledge this over-arching and shaping goal as ever present and ever shaping. I wanted to innovate, but to do so appropriately, ensuring that I was contributing to the field of knowledge of my chosen issue. Therefore I needed to have significant theoretical support for my experimentation with the dissertation format. This is evidenced in the first two chapters of *Teaching Daze*.

In terms of my field of research, however, my goals were in many ways less selfish and less self-focused. I sincerely cared and continue to care for the plight of beginning teachers. For what other reason would I, as a beginning teacher, have added the intense and extremely challenging aspect of a doctoral research project amongst my beginning teacher experience.

Exercising fidelity, with values such as loyalty to my participants, authentic and truthful methods of recording and representing my multi-layered research, was my way of demonstrating commitment to the field of beginning teaching.

10.6   Self Findings

What did I learn from researching my own first year of teaching?

~

It's okay to be me.
It's okay to hope.
It's okay to begin again
and again.

~

My on-going journey of understanding and misunderstanding is represented in every page of this dissertation. The various research texts reveal my many realisations throughout the six years of research.

Constructing detailed and analytical accounts of our teaching experiences is an important and crucial form of teacher development, most importantly for the beginning teacher. Beginning teachers can be tremendously influenced by the opinions of others. Roehrig et.al. (2002) commented that 'the beginning teacher's sense of self can definitely be affected by how students, other adults, and significant others react as she or he struggles to be a professional' (p.18). Our experience can be created by these perceptions if we don't actively become involved in our own story telling, and hence, our own professional development. Smith & Latosi-Sawin (2000) argued that writing about our own experiences of teaching turns us into critical thinkers by allowing us to see ourselves as 'knowledge producers', rather than merely 'knowledge consumers'.

The days of the week, the chapters contained in Part Two, are in many ways the answer to this question – what did I learn about beginning teaching from this research. These chapters represent how I became a producer of my own teaching knowledge, rather than merely a consumer of knowledge provide by others. In this final chapter I do not give the reader a summarised or simplified answer to my research questions. This would undermine my argument about needing to provide complex and different views of this answer – hence complex and different answers as well. The 'days' of this dissertation are the result of my research process. They are evocative of discussion, analysis and findings. They are partial

and fragmented, but they are not (as I realised) disconnected. These chapters are my answer.

Sunday is the first day of the week. Seemingly outside of the working week, it is often perceived as a day of rest (religion-founded or not). When I explored historical meanings of the days of the week I learned that Sunday is officially the beginning of the week. Just like beginning teaching, I had misperceived it. In beginning my PhD journey I had joked that I would easily be able to teach fulltime and complete a PhD, because teachers finish work at 4pm and have the weekends as well to get organised. I found this to not be true. Like my topic, I had misunderstood the function of this beginning and ending day. Sunday was the foundation for the coming week: the organising day; the catching-up day; and rehearsal day. In my chapter 'Sunday' I looked backwards and forwards, considering how I ended up on the pathway to becoming a teacher and why I made this important and life changing career move. Motivation for being a teacher is understood in the literature as a crucial element in the success and shaping of the first year experience, so in this chapter I explored why I took the path to teaching in the first place in *The moment I decided not to be a teacher.* Sunday is important. It is the day I reflected on why I wanted to be a teacher, and reaffirmed that I did want to be a teacher.

As I continued to plan my doctoral structure around the days of the week, and as I explored the meaning of the days and how I could use them to frame my research stories, each day (chapter) got given its own role and function. In *Monday* the shock of the first moments of teaching were explored. The abrupt and overwhelming nature of the beginning teaching experience is understood to 'cloud' the new teacher's eyes to the complexities of teaching. It was a blur. It is a blur. My use of the word play in 'daze' and 'days' captures this confusing state of existence that I believe evokes the experience beginning teaching. It is my way of interpreting Corcoran's (1981) rich concept of beginning teacher's paradox, as discussed in Chapter 1. I was participating in the experience and yet unable to make sense of what was happening. I felt and lived the blur and the daze. Until I re-looked at these days, I was unable to make meaning from them.

As time passed (even though only a little), on *Tuesday* I was able to look a little deeper into my issue. I described my first experiences and considered my specific context, though not very critically at this stage of the week. I could separate the experiences in my day and identify initial, basic elements. Time has been a crucial element throughout this research journey. Taking time, I realise now, to look backward and forward is crucial if there is to be development in this field. I needed to look back at my first year in order to make sense of where I was going in my future. And I needed time to do this. In some ways research in teaching demands more time for both roles (teacher and researcher) to be fulfilled successfully. Finding the balance was difficult, but possible, and ultimately rewarding. More importantly, taking and making this time, has empowered me to ask 'where do I want to go' in my future teaching days.

Wednesday is the middle of the week – half way there. A day, like Sunday, when things are evaluated in order to assess what can still be achieved in the remainder of the week. On this day I remembered why I was there – the students. The positioning of this topic is important in the framework of my dissertation. The students are central to the teaching experience; everything revolves around them, so hence they are considered in the middle of the week. But as teacher development theory explains, the beginning teacher's understanding is often ego-concentric and focused on the concrete and tangible experiences of classroom. The catch phrase I found repeatedly was that 'beginning teachers are always worried about behaviour management'. Yet as time and experiences pass, the beginning teacher is then able to look beyond themselves and to focus on the more intricate and less tangible facets of the classroom such as student learning. So, on Wednesday, after a couple of days of settling in, I was able to look out and beyond my own experiences, to those who I shared the journey with – my students. I stereotyped them, as I had myself. I viewed them in terms of myself: their success was a reflection of my success; their failure – my failure. While I slowly started to identify individuals and to think critically about my work with them, such concerns stemmed very much from my feelings of dilemma, rather than any professional insight into catering for the needs of individuals. I saw them, but saw them in terms of how they saw me. This leads me wonder – how did my self focus impact on the learning of these students? As a graduate, did I

really understand the notion of 'student-centred learning'? Was this evident in my practice?

Thursday is a day of endurance and resilience. I discovered that by sticking it out, by persisting, I found ways to cope, and even develop some successful strategies to deal with the particular situations and incidents that arose in and out of the classroom. As the end of the week approaches there is still much to be completed, yet there is excitement as well as anxiety about the approaching weekend break. On this day I considered the difficulty of dealing with the continual and physical demands of teaching as the difficulties take their toll, but with the sense that I could still smile and realise that I had made it this far, somehow, and that there was only one day to go. There are benefits from 'sticking it out'.

Friday is a day on which I celebrated the end of the week, and looked with reflection over how much I had achieved, but also look with dread about how much needed to be accomplished in the final day of the week. In other words, so much to do, so little time! As the final work day, I looked around with a deeper sense of understanding about the teaching experience than I did at the beginning of the week. I explored notions of workplace disputes and collegial interactions. At the end of the day, I had a stronger sense of 'who' I was as a teacher – however small the understanding, and made the claim that 'I am not a maths teacher'. This claim is not intended as one which declares that I know exactly who I am as a teacher, but that rather I am on the journey to working out what type of teacher I am not. Crossing possibilities off the list, in order to define what is left. I identify myself as a Drama teacher, and do so with pride. I love my subject, and see it as a separate and individual discipline that has a tremendous amount to offer other subjects. This is evidence that I do hold particular and clear views about my role as a teacher. It reveals some of my beliefs and values about Education. I wonder now about the implications of such a perspective. How has my definition of Drama teacher been shaped by the Drama teachers with which I work? How have my understandings about the form and purpose of Drama in Education been changed by working at White School? What impact have my mentors had on my teaching and myself?

Saturday is the space where reflection is possible. It is the day outside of the school structure, and the day that White School's Drama Department has traditionally ruled a 'no school day' due to the number of Sunday rehearsals we ran over the year. It was on this day, away from the real context, that broad, reflective and critical conversation about my week occurred. On Saturday I had the time and the chance to consider what my days, weeks and now years as a teacher actually mean to me and my life, even to those around me. A question I have not considered, and perhaps should in later inquiries, is 'how does being a teacher impact on the others of my life'. Certainly, as the voices of others weave in and out of this story, their role in my life is evident. In my first year of teaching I took a great deal of my work home with me, and not in the form of school books to mark. There were feelings, worries, and stresses that did not stay in the classroom or locked in my staffroom. On this day, in this chapter, I managed to solidify what I felt I had learned from my first year of teaching – that *It's okay to be me* and that beginning teaching is necessarily difficult because it is intertwined with exploration of the self and the individual's sense and development of identity. Over bacon, eggs and coffee, sitting with family and friends that have nothing to do with my working week, I realise that I am 'Marty, the teacher'. Beginning teaching is not just about entering teaching, it is about becoming a teacher. I didn't see myself as a teacher in my first year. I saw myself as a beginner. However, the ramifications about my changing sense of self were felt by those around me as I struggled, slept and complained about the difficulties I was experiencing. I saw teaching as my new job. I was wrong. It was my new life.

Spending the last six years delving in and out of my first year of teaching, in many ways and from many perspectives, forced me to closely examine myself. After all, I was the main character in the teaching and researching story I was crafting. So, what did I learn about myself?

One of the most prominent realisations I had about myself was that I learn by doing. As a Drama teacher I value and promote learning kinaesthetically. In my doctoral journey, learning kinaesthetically was also important for me as a teaching researcher. I loved the practicality of teaching, and while conducting my research during years of fulltime work was difficult, this close relationship between the

acts of teaching and researching was significant. In 2003 when I took study leave from White School to immerse myself in the PhD experience fulltime at university, I floundered. My pace of thought slowed down. I felt unproductive. Sitting at a desk each day, looking out the window, was restricting. I missed being on my feet, thinking through moving, seeing and touching to make connections with my world. I felt boxed in, isolated and disconnected from teaching, and hence my topic. Certainly this was the time when I managed to read widely and immerse myself in my data, which ultimately lead to the creation of the ten stories. Yet removed from my teaching context I found it difficult to make the conceptual connections required to pull the theoretical framework together. I learned that I needed practical contexts in which to experientially explore, and even live, theory. I needed to learn by doing. As *Teaching Daze* is a multi-layered text, I learned that I also work best with multi-layered days. However, I did need to stop in order to give credence to the more demanding tasks. Time to think, was important and necessary, so the challenge was to find the balance that allowed me to think in action, but have opportunity to capture that thinking as well.

Another aspect of examination of my entrance into teaching could have been to include more reference and exploration of my preservice training. Certainly, data could have come from the many reflective journals that the School of Education required us to maintain for curriculum units as well as during our school experiences and internship. Ensor (2001) recently pointed out the need to consider preservice experiences and beginning teaching experiences together because the beginning teacher's learning and development spans these supposed boundaries of before and after, then and now. Certainly the literature is characterised in terms of 'preservice' and 'school' or 'beginning' contexts. This is certainly a journey that is important to examine further in order to map the individual's change and growth in this transition phase. I wonder now how influential the labels we use (teachers, schools, researchers, teacher educators, policy makers) are in shaping how this issue is conceptualised. Categorising simplifies the issue. Unitising the journey into before and after is perhaps one of the things that can cause the beginning teacher to see themselves, as I did, as less than a 'real' teacher. Maybe we just need to be on-going learners, actively participating in assisting others on the

learning journey with us? I have learned that words, when presented as terms, labels and concepts, are powerful and potentially limiting if left un-questioned.

The big question that is perhaps missing from this research, in an explicit sense, is 'who am I?' Identity and explorations of self are broad and highly philosophical topics. There is a significant and well developed body of literature that examines the issue of teacher identity. Certainly, if the focus of research in teaching stems from 'teachers' desires to make sense of their experiences' (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p.450) then identity was not a crucial concern for me as a beginning teacher in 2000. I was very much focused on the person and the personal, rather than bigger issues of selfhood, self image and identity. This was not the direction I took with this study.

However, it could have been. How beginning teachers develop, maintain and change their sense of identity is an important issue that needs more research. What are the factors that shape a beginning teacher's identity? How much awareness can a beginner have of this development? What control do they have over their identity? How interwoven is the personal and the professional in the self concept of the beginning teacher? For me, both are inextricably fused. Beginning teaching changed me, impacted on my family life, and resulted in several big life decisions. Beginning teaching was a life and life-style choice.

If context is significant in the development and shaping of beginning teachers' practice, then it must also have a powerful impact on the creation of the beginning teachers' identities. How did White School shape me as a teacher? How has my identity (as a teacher, as a researcher, as a woman) been influenced by this context? These questions, while not explicitly asked, are also subtexts that come through the pages of my dissertation. As a critical reader who read the final draft commented, 'White School suited you Marty'. I see now, she was right. Practically, White School was very supportive of my doctoral studies. I was given days off to conduct interviews, and given leave to return to fulltime study for one year. Philosophically, the school's values matched my own beliefs and hopes for education, specifically the worth of the individual and the need to cater for students as individuals. I also embraced the notion of teaching the whole person –

academically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The school's tremendous emphasis on community service (locally, nationally and internationally) inspired me in theory and practice. There was so much about this school, my school, which I valued and admired, then and now.

While I was exploring my experiences of beginning teaching, the by-product of this investigation was a deeper and richer sense of my own 'self' and 'selves'. For me, I learned more about my character. It began as a process of working out who I was not, and what I did not agree with. It was my reaction to the theoretical and practical contexts in which I found myself. I did not believe that survival was the only means of portraying the issue.

I started my first year of teaching heavily focused on myself. In many ways I was selfish. Like teacher development theory identifies, to me my first year of teaching was very much about me, what happened to me, what I did not do well, where I worked, what I did in my classes. I was concerned about the students, but specifically because they were 'my' students. This egocentric focus in some ways stemmed from my desire to do a good job and be seen to be doing a good job. In terms of my character, I am driven and achievement focused.

I also, however, reaffirmed that I care passionately about teaching and learning, and for those in this important community that includes the students I teach, the colleagues I work with (in and out of White School), the researchers I share with, and the broader issue and state of beginning teaching in Australia. I care about Education, when I decided to be a teacher, when I started teaching, and still now, six years later, I love being a teacher.

So, now, as someone who cares about the issue of beginning teaching and beginning teachers my responsibility is to continue to participate actively in the teaching and researching contexts. From this research I have learned that action is important. My concern is that the responsibility for care of beginning teachers is unclear, inconsistent and varied. Who is responsible for the support of new teachers? Beginners can be more pro-active in their own learning and development. Asking more questions, I believe, is the key. Ask ourselves: what is

happening to us? Ask ourselves: what do we want to happen to us? The goal should always be to reclaim our hope that things can be better - to persist, and resist limiting perspectives.

~

It's not enough to adapt within the norms of the past. We need to discover profoundly new ways of perceiving the world in which we live.

(Deveson, 2003, p.19)[2]

~

10.7   Closing Connections

Beginning teaching initially appears as 'my' story. It is particular, limited, social and culturally constructed. It is not about everyone. It is not for everyone. It is not contributing directly to curriculum change or policy development. But it models multiplicity and illuminates unions – teacher and researcher, personal and professional, writer and reader. Richardson (1993) referred to it as collapsing dualisms. For me, it was about embracing them.

In stating that it was my desire to create a new way of perceiving this issue, I believe that I have managed to do this. *Teaching Daze* is a different style of doctoral dissertation. It contains thematic stories, conversations and poetic researcher realisations. The structure is metaphorically crafted based around the days of the week. Analysis and interpretation are implicit not explicit, interwoven throughout. My dissertation is an evocative woven portrayal of a connected research journey. My findings lie in the entire text. The complete research poem 'Teaching Daze: Realisations by a Beginning Teacher' is included [Appendix 3].

---

[2] Anne Deveson's (2003) *Resilience* was book that impacted on me during my years of teaching and researching. She evocatively wove her theoretical investigation with the events of her personal life. This quotation was taken from an email sent to her from her partner, as he reflected on the problems of contemporary education systems. The notion of developing 'resilience' is certainly one that could be considered specifically in relation to beginning teaching.

Whether deemed 'results' or 'findings', these realisations are the textual representation of my professional learning – artistic, multi-layered and different.

My recommendations, then, for further research are surprisingly simple. Collaboration is the key. If I look at my journey, I have felt tremendously supported and encouraged by the stakeholders in this work. The supervisors of this research believed that doctoral research by a beginning teacher was important but also possible. This belief allowed me to also believe that such a pathway was possible. While I acknowledge that such a demanding experience is not ideal as the basis for all first year teaching experiences, I have found the experience not only possible, but empowering. Conducting this research influenced and shaped my first year of teaching. It became more than a step toward academia, but an interwoven aspect of my developing teaching values, beliefs and practices. Research was a part of what I did – not separate to it. Hence, I recommend the continued development of research culture and research relationships at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level in the Education field, because this is the means by which such work is made possible.

The second point I wish to address when discussing recommendations is the important role of both university and schools in valuing and developing the voice of beginning teachers. I was very fortunate in my two working contexts – the University of Tasmania and White School. Both provided me with the flexibility in working structure that I needed in order to complete the teacher-researcher journey. While not explicit, this supportive partnership enabled me to create this role for myself, and to battle through the sometimes conflicting expectations, in order to conduct and then write this research. Hence, I now see this partnership of understanding and support for beginning teachers to continue links with their training institutions as crucial to the growth of beginning teachers as qualified researchers as well.

My closing recommendation for this study addresses the beginning teacher community. Through my work I have been able to develop key relationships with beginning teachers within and outside White School. This was the most significant personal and professional result for me of my work. These

relationships with other beginning teachers at various stages of their careers allow me to maintain important conversations with people like and unlike myself, who are engaged in this complicated task of beginning teaching with a desire to 'become a teacher'. They remind me that this work has not just been about me. Beginning teachers must be encouraged to engage in their own community. Such contact can and should be made easier for these new professionals to participate in important conversations and to fight the often isolating nature of their particular teaching contexts. Beginning teachers need to talk to beginning teachers, regularly and supportively, outside the realms of assessment or evaluation. This is where we find our own voices. This is where we find confidence in our own voices.

Last year I was happily distracted by a literature festival that was being attended by many local and national authors. It was called 'Weaving Words, Linking Lives', and was for everybody, not just teachers and not just students, but for those of us captivated by the way words help us make sense of our days. The opening ceremony was a lavish affair and there was a buzz of celebration in the air, as White School patted itself on the back for its impending success. But there was also a sense that this event was about simple indulgence as well - the chance to participate in something just for the love of it. I took several of my classes to talks, and attended luscious breakfasts, where authors shared the magic world of writing everyday, not just for the sake of publication, but because of a need deep inside themselves, because someone said they couldn't, and for the joy writing brings. These were people who made sense of their world by writing, and we were there to soak up their worlds, fictionally and factually, weaving our words and linking our lives.

This tremendous event, and the thought of words being a means of linking lives, is where I wish to close this chapter. The notion of words being woven within, through, and around our everyday lives inspired me, and made me realise that was my deeply felt hope for my research.

I have made many friends throughout my doctoral journey, personally and professionally. This research allowed me and others to delve into the world of beginning teaching from a personal and provocative standpoint, by beginning

teaching and beginning doctoral research simultaneously, when few others had done such an examination in such depth. This is also why I think such work is important. It is about having hopes of a better future. *Teaching Daze* is more than my story of beginning teaching. It is the journey of many who came with me on this research expedition in an attempt to make sense of the chosen issue. By examining my particularities, and pushing beyond similarities in order to find differences, we have found a means to acknowledge the value in an individual's own now treasured first year of teaching.

I am grateful for this confusing, but ultimately, deeply rewarding experience. I am grateful for a project that enabled me to embrace all of my ambitions simultaneously – researcher and teacher, doer and thinker, writer and artist, talker and listener. I entered a woven world, where the complexities of life as a beginning teacher could be celebrated rather than simplified. I learned that to be a beginner is not a bad thing at all. The first year of teaching is more than merely bad or good, survived or not. I remember Ayers (2001) again - 'teaching is spectacularly unlimited' (p.5).

The first year of teaching is not simply something to be completed and forgotten. The bad thing is simply not to begin. The beginning days are the most important days of all.

~

'So?' my supervisors asked.
'What now?' my colleagues asked.
'Have you finished yet?' my friends asked.

'More questions,' I answered, but then rephrased.

~

After hope,
become courageous.

Find,
resilience.

Declare,
persistence.

Begin,
new daze.

Epilogue

1.   **Ending Up, Realising**

~

How do you end an autoethnography? You start from a point and you don't know where you're going. You play with the story, and you go with the story to see where you end up (Ellis, in Flemons & Green, 2000. p.92).

~

I ended up, realising.

~

I ended up,
being told to
'step up' [1]
by others.

But I chose, rather
to 'open up'
the world of beginning teaching,
for myself,
and other voices of the many beginning teachers not heard .

I ended
up,
realising,

---

[1] Education & Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria, February 2005, *Step Up, Step In, Step Out: Report on the Inquiry onto the Suitability of Pre-Service Teacher Training in Victoria*.

'It's okay to be me.'

How do

I

know this?

Beginning teachers

told me,

so.

'Until I read your thesis,

I thought it was normal' Gen shared[2].

And Max added,

'it's an insight Marty,

unlike any other thing I've had put in front of me'[3].

Kate's response made me smile,

'I didn't take it as gospel or anything,

but it confirmed a lot

of fears,

of challenges,

and even

report writing'[4].

My stories of

my

teaching daze,

(re)created as stories of

our

teaching days.

---

[2] Quotation from interview with Gen, a second year drama teacher 23rd April 2005

[3] Quotation from interview with Max, a pre-service drama teacher 16th September 2004

[4] Quotation from interview with Kate, a pre-service early childhood teacher 18th May 2004

I end up, realising

'it's okay,'

 to go back,

 to the beginning.

~

> *Finally, there is resolution – not necessarily a tidy summation, or*
> *definitive solution to the dilemma, but a sense that the character has*
> *changed or grown as a result of the detailed events.* (Barone & Eisner,
> 1997, p.78)

~

2.　　(Beginning Again)

Separate and isolated.

Disconnected and fragmented.

Then I start stitching (Featherstone, 1993),

and learning,

to *look* out

to *look* beyond

to *look* for the other in me

and for me,

in the other (Ellis, 1997)

There is so much more.

'In seeing anew,' I sigh.

I realise,

We realise,

'Teaching is a complex and delicate act' (Danielewicz, 2001, p.9)

The beginning is

'unresolved,' (Tanaka, 1997).

The end is

unlimited.

'A teacher,'

I see anew,

'becomes'.

And,

I am!

(with hope)

Not alone.

References

Achinstein, B., & Athanases, S. (2005). Focusing new teachers on diversity about equity: Toward a knowledge base for mentors. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 843-862.

Alexander, D., Chant, D., & Cox, B. (1994). What motivates people to become teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 19(2), 40-49.

Anderson, G. (2002). Reflecting on research for doctoral students in education. *Educational Researcher*, 31(7), 22-25.

Anderson, G., & Herr, K. (1999). The new paradigm wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities? *Education Researcher*, 28(5), 12-21.

Australian Council of Deans of Education. (1998). *Preparing a profession: Report of the national standards and guidelines for initial teacher education project*. Canberra: Australian Council of Deans of Education.

Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: The journey of a teacher* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Ballantyne, R., Thompson, R., & Taylor, P. (1994). Principals' conceptions of competent beginning teachers: A report on research in progress. In *Knowledge of competence for beginning teaching* (pp. 109-119). Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Banks, S. & Banks, A. (2000). Reading "the critical life": Autoethnography as pedagogy. *Communication Education*, 49(3), 233-238.

Barone, T. (1990). Using the narrative text as an occasion for conspiracy. In
E.W. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The
continuing debate* (pp. 305-326). New York: Teachers College Press.

Barone, T. (2001). *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching*. New
York: Teachers' College Press.

Barone, T., & Eisner, E. (1997). Arts-based educational research. In R.M. Jaeger
(Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (2nd ed., pp.73-
98). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

Batten, M., Griffin, M., & Ainley, J. (1991). *Recently recruited teachers: Their
views and experiences of preservice education, professional development
and teaching*. Canberra: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Beattie, M. (1997). Fostering reflective practice in teacher education: Inquiry as
a framework for the construction of a professional knowledge in
teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 25(2), 111-128.

Beattie, M. (2000). Narratives of professional learning: Becoming a teacher and
learning to teach. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 1(2), 1-23.

Bellamy, D. (1997). Finding my voice as an english teacher. In D. Featherstone,
H. Munby, & T. Russell (Eds.), *Finding a voice while learning to teach*
(pp. 109-119). London: The Falmer Press.

Bennett, B., & Martin, K. (1980). *The practice of teaching: A positive start*.
London: Harper & Row Ltd.

Berliner, D. (1988). Implications on studies on expertise in pedagogy for teacher education and evaluation. In *New directions for teacher assessment: Proceedings of the 1988 ETS invitational conference* (pp. 39-68). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Birell, J. (1995). "Learning how the game is played": An ethnically encapsulated beginning teacher's struggle to prepare black youth for a white world. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(2), 137-147.

Bleach, K. (1999). *The induction and mentoring of newly qualified teachers: A new deal for teachers.* London: David Fulton Publishing Ltd.

Board of Teacher Registration Queensland. (1991). *Welcoming new teachers*. Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Board of Teacher Registration Queensland. (1994). *Knowledge and competence for beginning teaching: Report of a policy development initiative.* Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Bobbit, S. (1993). Heaven or hell? The teaching environment of beginning teachers. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Atlanta 12-16 April.

Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (Eds.). (2002). *Ethnographically speaking.* Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Bochner, A., & Rushing, J. (2002). Breathing life into work. In A. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (pp. 150-164). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Boreen, J., & Niday, D. (2000). Breaking through the isolation: Mentoring beginning teachers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 44(2), 152-163.

Brady, L., & Schuck, S. (2005). Online mentoring for the induction of beginning teachers. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 6(1), 65-75.

Breidenstein, A. (2002). Researching teaching, researching self. *The Clearing House,* Jul/Aug, 75(6), 314-318.

Brettell, C. (1997). Blurred genres and blended voices: Life history, biography, autobiography and the auto/ethnography of women's lives. In D.E. Reed-Danahay (Ed.), *Auto/Ethnography: rewriting the self and the social* (pp. 223-246)*.* Oxford: Berg.

Britzman, D. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Brock, B., & Grady, M.L. (2001). *From first-year to first-rate: Principals guiding beginning teachers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press Inc.

Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Brookfield, S. (1998). Critically reflective practice. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 18(4), 197-205.

Brown, J., Doecke, B., & Loughran, J. (1997). Understanding beginning to teach: Learning about the transition from tertiary education to a professional career. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane.

Bruckerhoff, C., & Carlson, J. (1995). Loneliness, fear & disrepute: The haphazard socialisation of a student teacher. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 24, 431-444.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Bullough, R. Jr. (1989). *First-year teacher: A case study*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Bullough, R. Jr., Knowles, J., & Crow, N. (1989). Teacher self concept & student culture in the first year of teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 91(2), 209-233.

Burroughs-Lange, S., Downing, A., Francis, D., & Sellars, N. (1994). Significant episodes in the acquisition of professional knowledge by teachers. In *Knowledge of competence for beginning teaching* (pp.22-60). Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Cameron, R. (2001). Identifying the developmental phases encountered by beginning teachers during an internship. A paper presented at the AARE Conference in Fremantle, Dec 2-6th. Retrieved April 11, 2001, from http://www.aare.edu.au/01pap/cam01221.htm

Carter, M., & Francis, R. (2000). Mentoring and beginning teachers' workplace learning. Paper presented at AARE Conference, December, Sydney.

Clandinin, D., & Connelly, F. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clough, P. 2000. Comments of setting criteria for experimental writing. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 6(21), 278-291.

Codell, E. (1999). *Educating esme: Diary of a teacher's first year*. North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Conle, C. (2000). Thesis as narrative or "what is the inquiry in narrative inquiry?" *Curriculum Inquiry*, 30(2), 189-214.

Connelly, F., & Clandinin, D. (Eds.). (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Corcoran, E. (1981). Transition shock: The beginning teacher's paradox. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(3), 19-23.

Craig, C. (1997). Telling stories: Accessing beginning teacher knowledge. *Teaching Education*, 9(1), 61-68.

Crawford, L. (1996). Personal ethnography. *Communication Monographs*, 63 (2), 158.

Cunningham, D., & Hall, G. (2000). Teacher education: Meeting the challenges of the future. Paper presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Sydney, December 2000.

Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves: Identity pedagogy, and teacher-education.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dean, J. (1996). *Beginning teaching in the secondary school*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Dempster, N., Sim, C., Beere, D., & Logan, L. (2000). Teachers in australian schools: A report from the 1999 national survey executive summary. Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Denzin, N. (1997). Two-stepping in the '90s. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(4), 568-572.

Denzin, N. (1999). Interpretive ethnography for the next century. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), 510-519.

Denzin, N. (2000). Aesthetics and the practice of qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 6(2), 256-265.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Department of Education, Science and Technology. (2002). *An ethic of care: Effective programmes for beginning teachers*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Deveson, A. (2003). *Resilience.* Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Doecke, B., Brown, J., & Loughran, J. (2000). Teacher talk: The role of story and anecdote in constructing professional knowledge for beginning teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16, 335-348.

Dowding, G. (1998). Beyond survival: Supporting beginning teachers through effective induction. *The Practising Administrator*, 2, 18-20.

Dunlop, R. (1999). *Boundary bay: A novel as educational research.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of British Columbia, Canada.

Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2005). *Step up, step in, step out: Report on the inquiry into the suitability of preservice teacher training in victoria*. Melbourne, Victoria: Parliament of Victoria.

Eilam, B., & Poyas, Y. (2006). Promoting awareness of the characteristics of classroom' complexity: A course curriculum in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 337-351.

Eisner, E. (1991). *The enlightened eye*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Eisner, E., & Powell, K. (2002). Art in science? *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(2), 131-159.

Ellis, C. (1993). "There are survivors": Telling a story of sudden death. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(4), 711-730.

Ellis, C. (1997). Evocative autoethnography: Writing emotionally about our lives. In W.G. Tierney and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the Text* (pp. 115-139). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ellis, C. (1998). "I hate my voice": Coming to terms with minor bodily stigmas. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 39(4), 517-537.

Ellis, C. (1999). Heartfelt autoethnography. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(5), 669-683.

Ellis, C. (2000). Creating criteria: An ethnographic short story. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 6(2), 273-277.

Ellis, C. (2001). With mother/with child: A true story. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(5), 598-616.

Ellis, C. (2002). Being real: Moving inward toward social change. *Qualitative Studies in Education,* 15(4), 399-406.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (Eds.). (1996). *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing.* Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 733-767). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ellis, C., & Flemons, D. (2002). High noon: A "fictional" dialogue. In A.P. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (pp. 344-356). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Ensor, P. (2001). From preservice mathematics teacher education to beginning teaching: A study in recontextualising. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 32(3), 296-321.

Evans, G. (1992). The knowledge base of beginning teachers: Competence and competencies. *The Journal of Teaching Practice*, 12(1), 16-23.

Featherstone, H. (1993). Learning from the first years of classroom teaching: The journey in, the journey out. *Teachers College Record*, 95(1), 1-20.

Flannery, M. (2001). Quilting: A feminist metaphor for scientific inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(5), 628-645.

Flemons, D., & Green, S. (2002). Stories that conform/stories that transform. In C. Ellis & A. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp. 115-121). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Flores, M., & Day, C. 2006. Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 219-232.

Fox, K. (1996). 'Silent voices: A subversive reading of child sexual abuse'. In C. Ellis & A. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp. 330-356). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Freese, A. (2006). Reframing one's teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 100-119.

Fuller, F. (1969). Concerns of teachers: A developmental conceptualization. *American Educational Research Journal*, 6, 207-226.

Gergen, M., & Gergen, K. (2002). Ethnographic representation as relationship. In A. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature and aesthetics* (pp. 11-33). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press

Gottschalk, S. (1998). Postmodern sensibilities and ethnographic possibilities. In A. Banks & S. Banks (Eds.), *Fiction and social science research* (pp. 205-233). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Gratch, A. (1998). Growing teaching professionals: Lessons taught by first-year teachers. Paper presented at the annual conference on qualitative research in education. Athens, GA.

Gratch, A. (2001). The culture of teaching and beginning teacher development. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28(4), 121-126.

Gray, R., Ivonoffski, V., & Sinding, C., (2002). Making a mess and spreading it around: articulation of an approach to research-based theatre. In A. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: autoethnography, literature and aesthetics* (pp. 57-75). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press

Groundwater-Smith, S., Cusworth, R., & Dobbins, R., (1998). *Teaching: challenges and dilemmas*. Sydney: Harcourt.

Grumet, M. (1988). *Bitter milk: Women and teaching.* Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Hamilton, G. (2003). English in the city. *English Journal*, 93(2), 84-85.

Harris, M. (2001). Learning from new teachers: Project launch in broad stokes. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Dallas, March 1-4, 2001.

Hebert, E., & Worthy, T. (2001). Does the first year of teaching have to be a bad one? A case study of success. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 897-911.

Hobart, L., Self, K., & Ward, J. (1994). Beginning teachers exploring their own knowledge. In *Knowledge of competence for beginning teaching* (pp. 65-80). Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Hollingsworth, S. (1992). Learning to teach through collaborative conversation: A feminist approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29(2), 405-424.

Huberman, M. (1996). Moving mainstream: Taking a closer look at teacher research. *Language Arts,* 73 (2), 124- 140.

Hunt, M. (1968). Tips for the beginning teacher. In L.H. Clark (Ed.), *Strategies and tactics in secondary school teaching.* London: Macmillan.

Ingersoll, R. (2001). *A different approach to solving the teacher shortage problem* (Teaching Quality Policy Brief, No.3). Seattle, WA; University of Washington, Centre for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Retrieved September 17, 2003, from http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail

Jalongo, M., & Isenberg, J. (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Janesick, V. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 209-219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Jenks, E. (2002). Searching for autoethnographic credibility: Reflections from a mom with a notepad. In C. Ellis & A. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp.170-186)*.* Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Kagan, D. (1992). Professional growth among preservice and beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(2), 129-169.

Kamler, B. (2001). *Relocating the personal: A critical writing pedagogy.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Kane, P. (Ed.) (1991). *My first year as a teacher*. New York: Signet.

Kiesinger, C. (1998). Portrait of an anorexic life. In A. Banks & S. Banks (Eds.), *Fiction and social science research* (pp. 115-136). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Kiggins, J., & Gibson, S. (2002). Planning since boxing day: Addressing some of the perceived problems of beginning teachers. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, 1st-5th December, Brisbane.

Kilbourn, B. (1999). Fictional theses. *Educational Researcher*, 28(9), 27-32.

Kim, E., & Kellough, R. (1978). *A resource guide for secondary school teaching* (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Krizek, R. (1998). Lessons: What the hell are we teaching the new generation anyway. In A. Banks & S. Banks (Eds.), *Fiction and social science research* (pp.89-113). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Kronowitz, E. (1996). *Your first year of teaching and beyond* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

Kuzmic, J. (1994). A beginning teacher's search for meaning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10(10), 15-27.

Lang, C. (1999). When does it get any easier? Beginning teachers' experiences during their first year of teaching. Paper presented at the AARE-NZARE Conference, Melbourne, November 29th –December 2nd, 1999. Retrieved February 21, 2003 from http://www.aare.edu.au/99pap/lan99269.htm

Lather, P. (1997). Creating a multi-layered text: Women, AIDS, and angels. In W. Tierney & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: Reframing the narrative voice* (pp. 233-258). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lather, P., & Smithies, C. (1997). *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*. Colorado: Westview Press.

Lidstone, M., & Hollingsworth, S. (1992). A longitudinal study of cognitive change in beginning teachers: Two patterns of learning to teach. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Fall, 39-57.

Lincoln, Y. (1997). Self, subject, audience, text: Living at the edge, writing in the margins. In W. Tierney & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: Re-framing the narrative voice* (pp. 37-55). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lortie, D. (1975). *School teacher*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Loughran, J. (2004). Student teacher as researcher: Accepting greater responsibility for learning about teaching. *Australian Journal of Education*, 48 (2), 212-220.

Loughran, J., Brown, J., & Doecke, B. (2001). Continuities and discontinuities: The transition from pre-service to first-year teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 7(1), 7-23.

Lytle, S., & Cochran-Smith, M. (1992). Teacher research as a way of knowing. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62 (4), 447-474.

McCammon, L., Norris, J., & Miller, C. (1998). Cacophony and fugue: Preservice narratives create conversation about drama education. *Research in Drama Education*, 3(1), 29-44.

McCormack, A., & Thomas, K. (2002). The reality of uncertainty: The plight of casual beginning teachers. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, 1-5th December, Brisbane.

Manuel, J. (2003). 'Such are the ambitions of youth': Exploring issues of retention and attrition of early career teachers in new south wales. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 31(2), 139-151.

Marland, P. (1994). Research on professional knowledge and competence for beginning teaching: A synthesis of some queensland studies. In *Knowledge of competence for beginning teaching* (pp.202-214). Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Marti, J., & Huberman, M. (1993). Beginning teaching. In M. Huberman (Ed.), *The lives of teachers* (pp.194-213). London: Cassell.

Martinez, K. (1992). Teacher education: Wasteland or watershed? *Australian Educational Researcher*, 19(1), 59-68.

Martinez, K. (1993). Supporting the reflective beginning teacher. *Educational Research and Perspectives*, 20(1), 35-45.

Martinez, K. (1994a). Teacher induction revisited. *Australian Journal of Education*, 38(2), 174-188.

Martinez, K. (1994b). Postcards from the edge. In *Knowledge of competence for beginning teaching* (pp.121- 140). Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Martinez, K. (1998). Preservice teachers adrift on a sea of knowledge. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 26(2), 97-106.

Martinez, K. (2004). Mentoring new teachers: Promise and problems in times of teacher shortage. *Australian Journal of Education*, 48(1), 95-108.

May, D. (1995). Cleats and candy: Surviving your first year of teaching. *English Journal*, 84(2), 68-69.

Maynard, T., & Furlong, J. (1993). Learning to teach and models of mentoring. In D. McIntyre, H. Hagger, & M. Wilkin (Eds.), *Mentoring: perspectives on school-based teacher education* (pp.69-85). London: Kogan Page Limited.

Miller, M. (1998). (Re)presenting voices in dramatically scripted research. In A. Banks & S.P. Banks (Eds.), *Fiction and social science research* (pp. 67-78). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Mulholland, J., & Wallace, J. (2001). Teacher induction and elementary science teaching: Enhancing self-efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 243-261.

Mykhalovskiy, E. (1997). Reconsidering "table talk". In R. Hertz (Ed.), *Reflectivity and voice* (pp.229-251). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

National Working Party on Teacher Competency Standards. (1996). *National competency framework for beginning teachers*. Leichhardt, NSW.

Neumann, M. (1996). Collecting ourselves at the end of the century. In C. Ellis & A. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp.172-198). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Noddings, N. (2004). Listen to our students. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, Summer, 40(4), 154-160.

Norris, J., McCammon, L.A., & Miller, C.S. (2000). *Learning to teach drama*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Olebe, M. (2001). A decade of policy support for california's new teachers: The beginning teacher support and assessment program. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28(19), 71-75.

Otto, W. (1991). *How to make an american quilt*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Page, M., Marlowe, B., & Molloy, P. (2000). The power of a poem to teach us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(3), 228-232.

Peterson, K. (1990). Assistance and assessment for beginning teachers. In J. Millman and L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), *The new handbook of teacher education* (pp.104-115). Newbury Park: SAGE Publications.

Polkinghorne, D. (1997). Reporting qualitative research as practice. In W. Tierney & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: Reframing the narrative voice* (pp. 3-21). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ramsay, G. (2000). *Quality matters: Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices – Review of teacher education in nsw.* NSW: Department of Education and Training.

Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social.* Oxford: Berg.

Reed-Danahay, D. (2002). Turning points and textual strategies in ethnographic writing. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(4), 421-425.

Richardson, G. (1970). X is for the Unknown. In K. Ryan (Ed.), *Don't smile until christmas* (pp. 60-79). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Richardson, L. (1993). Poetics, dramatics, and transgressive validity: The case of a skipped line. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(4), 695-710.

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating Ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), 253-255.

Richardson, L. (2002). Skirting a pleated text: De-disciplining an academic life. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The qualitative inquiry reader* (pp.39-50). Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications.

Richardson, L., & Lockridge, E. (1998). Fiction and ethnography: A conversation. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 4(3), 328-336.

Roehrig, A., Pressley, M., & Talotta, D. (2002). *Stories of beginning teachers: First-year challenges and beyond.* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Ronai, C. (1992). The reflexive self through narrative. In C. Ellis & M.G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. 102-124). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Ronai, C. (2002). The next night *sous rature*. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The qualitative inquiry reader* (pp.105-124). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Rust, F. (1994). The first year of teaching: It's not what they expected. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10(2), 205-217.

Ryan, K. (Ed.) (1970). *Don't Smile Until Christmas*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* London: Temple Smith.

Schuck, S. (2003). Getting help from the outside: Developing a support network for beginning teachers. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 4(1), 49-67.

Schuck, S., & Segal, G. (2002). Learning about our teaching from our graduates, learning with critical friends. In J. Loughran & T. Russell (Eds.), *Improving teacher education practices through self study* (pp.88-101). London: Routledge Falmer.

Sellars, N., McNally, P., & Rowe, K. (1998). *Queensland board of teacher registration induction project 1997: An evaluation.* Toowong: Board of Teacher Registration Queensland.

Slattery, P. (2001). The educational researcher as artist working within. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(3), 370-398.

Sparkes, A.C., (2000). Autoethnography and narratives of self: Reflections on criteria in action. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17, 21-43.

Sparkes, A.C. (2002). Autoethnography: Self-indulgence or something more? In A.P. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (pp. 209-232). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Spry, T. (2001). Performing autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), 706-732.

Smith, M., & Latosi-Sawin, E. (2000). Moving backwards to move forwards: Helping beginning teachers through autobiography. *Contemporary Education*, 71(3) p.13.

Stake, B. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stock, P. (2001). Toward a theory of genre in teacher research: Contributions from a reflective practitioner. *English Education*, 33(2), 100-114.

Sullivan, A. (2000). Voices inside schools: Notes from a marine biologist's daughter: On the art and science of attention. *Harvard Educational Review*, 70(2), 211-227.

Tanaka, G. (1997). Pico college. In W. Tierney & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: Re-framing the narrative voice* (pp. 259-304). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Teasley, A. (1994). Surviving your first october. *English Journal*, 83(6), pp. 92-

Tierney, W. (1997). Lost in translation: Time and voice in qualitative research. In
W.G. Tierney & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text:
Reframing the narrative voice* (pp.23-36). Albany: State University of
New York Press.

Tillmann-Healy, L. (1996). A secret life in a culture of thinness: Reflections of
body, food and bulimia. In C. Ellis & A. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing
ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp. 76-108). Walnut
Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Tillmann- Healy, L. (2002). Men kissing. In A.Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.),
Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics
(pp. 336-343). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Tromans, C., Daws, L., Limerick, B., & Brannock, J. (2001). Winning the lottery?
Beginning teachers on temporary engagement. *Teachers and Teaching:
Theory and Practice*, 7(1), 25-41.

Urzua, A. (1999). The socialization process of beginning teachers. *Journal of
Teacher Education*, 50(3), 231-233.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of
Educational Research*, 54, 143-178.

Wasserman, S. (1999). Shazam! You're a teacher: Facing illusory quest for
certainty in classroom practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(6), 464-470.

Watzke, J. (2003). Longitudinal study of stages of beginning teacher
development in a field-based teacher education program. *The Teacher
Educator*, 38(3), 209-229.

Weiss, E., & Weiss, S. (1999). Beginning teacher induction. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved May 17th, 2003, from www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed436487.htm

Wideen, M., Mayer-Smith, J., & Moon, B., (1998). A critical analysis of the research on learning to teach: Making the case for an ecological perspective on inquiry. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(2), 130-178.

Williams, C. (2002). Telling tales: Stories from new teachers in nsw country schools. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, 1-5th December, Brisbane.

Wilson, B., Ireton, E., & Wood, J. (1997). Beginning teacher fears. *Education*, 117(3), 396-400.

Wolcott, H. (1990). On seeking – and rejecting – validity in qualitative research. In E.W. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp.121-152). New York: Teachers College Press.

Zeichner, B., & Tabachnick, R. (1981). Are the effects of university teacher education 'washed out' by school experience? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(3), 7-11.

Zepeda, S., & Ponticell, J. (1997). First year teachers at risk: A study of induction at three high schools. *The High School Journal*, 81(1), 8.

A Beginning Teaching Story

2000-2005 – PhD Research Project
School of Education
University of Tasmania

Chief Investigator: Dr. Heather Smigiel

PhD Student: Martina Moroney

Purpose of Study: Teachers' stories are valuable tools in the creation of knowledge about teaching, education, and the development of practice. When we share our stories, we evoke stories in others, thereby connecting our experiences in our classrooms and illuminating our profession. Thus, by extensively recording and interpreting my own experiences and teaching practice the final account will assist teachers, researchers of education, teacher trainers, and schools.

Study Procedures: Autoethnographic procedures, the study of one's own practice, will be used to explore my experiences during the first two years of commencing professional teaching practice.

As a teacher/researcher I will record my thoughts and feelings in a journal, choosing specific anecdotes to illustrate key experiences throughout my first two years of teaching practice. Other forms of data collection will be anonymous student reflections, informal and formal interviews with staff members, and observation of my practice by specific staff members. These methods will help to broaden my perspective of my teaching experiences.

During a period of analysis, the data will be crafted into a detailed portrayal of my experiences as a beginning teacher.

**Participation
and Confidentiality:**
The school has the right to refuse or withdraw its involvement from the study without prejudice.

The study seeks to illuminate my own teaching practice and experiences as a beginning teacher. The focus of the study is not the school, its staff and students. However, context has an inextricable relationship with experience and perceptions.

The level of recognition of the context will be decided in discussion with the school and its principal, so as to respond to the needs for anonymity and confidentiality of the students.

Presentation of Findings:
The final document will be available for review by the school, and will be available from the Faculty of Education, upon request.

Contact Numbers:
Dr. Heather Smigiel (Chief Investigator)
Flexible Education Unit
Launceston/Hobart
Phone: (03)

Or:
Martina Moroney
PhD Student
Phone: (03) 6278 7342 or 0438787342

Concerns or Complaints:
Any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the project is conducted may be directed to the Executive Officer of the University of Tasmania Human Ethics Committee.

Executive Officer:
Ms. Chris Hooper – (03) 6226 2763

Thank You

––

A Beginning Teaching Story

2000-2005 – PhD Research Project
School of Early Childhood/Primary Education
University of Tasmania

_____

Statement of Informed Consent from Participating Staff Member

I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.

I understand that my participation in the study involves the following:

- Discussion regarding teaching practice (general and specific)
- Formal and informal observation of the investigator's teaching practice
- Written feedback on investigator's teaching practice

I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.

I understand that data gathered from discussion and written feedback may be cited in the final analysis.

Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name: ……………………   Signature: ……………………   Date: …………

(*Investigator*)

I have explained this project and the implications of participation to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands and accepts the implications of participation.

Name: ………………….   Signature: ……………………   Date: …………

'Teaching Daze: Realisations by a Beginning Teacher'

(Before)

I began my first year of teaching.

At first, there were only days,

and I was dazed.

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Separate and isolated,

disconnected and fragmented.

Then I started stitching,

and soon there was so much more.

~

Sunday

(The end and the beginning)

The end

of university,

and the beginning

of teaching.

'Teaching Daze: Realisations by a Beginning Teacher'

'I could be a teacher,' I muse publicly.

'Good students want to be teachers,'

Alexander, Chant, & Cox, (1994) concur.

but

inside

I

did

not.

'I resent sounding like a cliché!'

I speak.

'I will NOT teach'.

I shout.

The moment I decided not to be a teacher.

And then I do!

Full of…

hope?

 'Be prepared to be tired' they nod,

'and cry'.

'There is no doubt beginning teaching is hard'

(Doecke, Brown, Loughran, 2000).

I read,

and read,

and read.

'I wanted it badly' Eleanor echoes.

'I fell into teaching' William echoes.

'I cared deeply' Angela echoes.

I did not.

I did not.

I did not.

I chose,

'Simply'

to begin.

And to see,

if I could,

teach.

'I'll show you!' I echo.

'Are you ready?'

~

Monday

'It all starts today' the front of my teaching diary shouts;

the cut-out movie advert,

carefully selected, tool of inspiration.

'It should all start today.'

But I can't find my name,

      pigeon hole,

      coffee cup,

      toilet,

      or

      classroom.

'I am qualified to do this!'

'I am *not* experienced to do this!'

Trapped,

'in the beginning teachers' paradox' (Corcoran, 1981).

Shocked,

'by reality' (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002)

As I am supposed

to be?

It's all a blur.

I can't see

I can't imagine.

I can only do my best.

'It should be a blur!' (Britzman, 1991),

and more excuses follow.

'There is little doubt that beginning teaching is a difficult and demanding task,'

(Loughran,

Brown

& Doecke,

2001, p.8),

I *feel*

little

and

I *feel*

alone

(Boreen & Niday, 2000; Gratch, 2000).

Telling me,

'it will be hard' (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998; Ballantyne, Thompson, & Taylor, 1994)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Telling me,

'it will be frightening' (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995; Gratch, 1998; Marti & Huberman, 1993; Wilson, Ireton & Wood, 1997)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Telling me,

'it's supposed to be stressful' (Batten, Griffin & Ainley, 1991; Lang, 1999)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Telling me,

'there will be many problems' (Birell, 1995; Kiggins & Gibson, 2001)

doesn't

help

me

at

all.

Unknowing,

the hype,

the clichés,

is the only way to avoid drowning

under the 'sea of advice' (Martinez, 1998).

I turn away,

Discontented and disillusioned,

whispering, by myself,

'Is this really the beginning?'

I am angry,

now.

Confused and bewildered,

'similar, but different' the echo calls.

So, I begin again,

differently, asking

'Who am I, here?'

~

Tuesday

The first time I wear my new suit

The first time I get called 'Miss'

The first time I write a report

The last time, I wish.

I can't wait for the second time.

'Before you begin your first year, promise to teach a second,' Ryan (1970) stated

then.

There are too many 'firsts'

Looking around,

I feel lost, confused, dazed, somewhere that I'm not sure I'm supposed to be.

'Context is everything.' (Birell, 1995; Teasley, 1994; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997)

'You could end up anywhere.' (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998)

'You're so lucky to be at such a good school,' Eleanor adds,

and adds,

and adds.

But where am I?

~

Wednesday

Looking back, **looking** forward,

(*but not inside,*

only outside)

'I'm almost there'

escapes my chewed, cracked lips.

Two days down, **Two** to go,

Not counting today.

'There you go again' Carolyn Ellis (1997) worries,

making me think,

'It's all about me,'

'Marty-indulgence!' Spry (2000) tuts.

My day.

My week.

My story.

'But what about the students?'

Birell (1995) worries,

'She'll damage those students if she doesn't recognise her own prejudices'.

I let them down.

I made them cry.

I made them feel like a 'dumb ass'.

I, I, I,

'But what about the students?'

Allison

Yoko

and Matthew

and Barone's (2001) interconnectedness,

and I remember,

'*It is all about the students.*'

Esme reminds me (Codell, 1999),

'they teach us'.

Tom inspires (Barone 2001),

'remember Marty, they touch eternity'.

So I re-look,

so I can re-learn,

(*inside*

and out)

realising,

'I am not really alone'.

~

Thursday

Not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, sleep, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, cry, not another day, not another day, cry, *not another day*, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, sleep, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day, cry, not another day, not another day, not another day, not another day,

I am a cliché.

Giving in looms (Ingersoll, 2001)
Failure beckons.

And then,

I can swim,

badly,
floundering,
guzzling water, and air, at the same time

But I am not drowning,
I am *not sinking*,

and I realise,

('together we are stronger' Featherstone, 1993)

tomorrow is Friday,

and the next stage of development (Kagan, 1992; Berliner, 1988)

~

Friday

I can't believe it.

The maths teacher yelled.

The science teacher cried.

The social science teacher said she was leaving.

The teacher of a subject I've never heard of said that the maths teacher yelled,

made the science teacher cry, and now the social science teacher said she was sick

of it all and was leaving to work somewhere calmer.

'When did this happen?'

I ask

I whisper

I eat my lunch

'Before your time,' he says.

The bell goes, and playtime is over.

Back to work,

after digesting the

personalities and politics

'Glad *I'm not a maths teacher'* I say,

as I walk past the Principal,

giving my

best,

professional

smile,

acting,

like a

good,

beginning,

drama

teacher.

Close the door

c   o   l   l   a   p   s   e

in the chair
put my head in my hands,
and mutter
'I am SO happy it's Friday.'

~

Saturday

Today, I won't think of school at all.

Sleep.

Family,
friends,

sleep,

films

and

good food.

It's OK,

I can iron my shirt tomorrow
I can mark those essays tomorrow
I can read that play tomorrow
I can.

It's OK,

I'm not usually this tired
I'll come home next weekend
I'll come out for coffee next week
I'll watch that film when it comes out on video
I'll pick up takeaway later

It's OK,

I'm learning.

I shouldn't try so hard.
I shouldn't write so much.
I shouldn't say 'dazzle' or 'flare' in a student's report.

I should learn to relax
I should look after myself
I should give myself a break

I should just…

'Beginning teachers need to learn to ask 'who am I?' (Bullough, 1994)

...be me!

That's easy.

I'll buy the beginning teacher's guide to the

'art   transformation   change'
        of   and   (Fox, 1995)

I can do that tomorrow.

∼

(After)

Separate and isolated.
Disconnected and fragmented.

Then I start stitching (Featherstone, 1993),
and learning,

to look out
to look beyond
to look for the other in me

and for me,
in the other (Ellis, 1997)

There is so much more.

I realise,

I believe,

'Teaching is a complex and delicate act' (Danielewicz, 2001, p.9)

I am beginning to become

a teacher.