

Journal Writing: A Tool For Reflective Practice

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There is much evidence in the current literature to indicate that the movement towards restructuring teacher education is a world wide trend (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and Kennard, 1993; Knowles, 1991; Martin, 1991; Zeichner 1993). Two significant issues which have emerged include the importance of the practicum as a key component in learning to teach and the emphasis on reflection as a process for analysing and examining behaviours and motives, as a means of personal professional development.

In 1994 Edith Cowan University introduced an alternative practicum model for final year teacher education students. This model, known as the School Based Semester (SBS) extended the traditional practicum from a ten week to a twenty week in-school experience. Figure 1 provides an illustration of the configuration of both the traditional programme, and the SBS programme.

Traditional Programme

On Campus - (10 weeks*)

20

In Schools - (10 week ATP)

Weeks

School Based Semester (SBS)

In Schools

On Campus

(3 days/week)

(2 days/week)

20

(12 weeks)

(12 weeks)

Weeks

In Schools (5 days/week)

(8 weeks)

Figure 1. Structural Differences between Traditional and SBS programs.

* 10 weeks includes university examination period and semester break.

As members of the SBS team, we promoted the idea that "learning to teach is a personal process, building on past knowledge and experience of education and involving growth and change in students' understanding of themselves and their lives" (School Based Semester Handbook, 1995).

The university team involved in the project was generally concerned with student teachers' lack of ability to ask and to answer the "why" questions about practice, theory and curriculum. The team was keen therefore, for students in the SBS programme to develop an understanding of the relationship of theory and practice and for students to direct their own inquiry into teaching through reflection.

In this way, we encouraged student teachers to question and assess their own learning in order to analyse their strengths and weaknesses and to explore and extend their personal knowledge and experience of teaching.

The university team was also committed to fostering a particular kind of 'quality reflection' among themselves, the co-operating teachers and

the student teachers as described by Zeichner (1993). Encouraging skills of focusing on personal practice with reference to the context in which the practice is situated, and providing students with explicit strategies for monitoring, analysing and improving their teaching were a high priority of the university teachers working in SBS.

In spite of the increased popularity of reflection as a process, evidence exists which indicates that developing reflective skills through teacher education programmes is problematic (Hatton and Smith, 1995). Hatton and Smith provide an overview of the literature on reflection and outline a study of the impact of approaches designed to facilitate reflection. In the context of SBS we were particularly keen to explore the process of journal writing as one of several strategies aimed at developing reflection during student teachers' school and university experiences. Thus, journal writing formed a key component of the requirements for SBS and we promoted it as a useful medium for reflecting on professional successes and failures, rehearsing alternatives, and making knowledge of teaching more explicit.

In recent years, journal writing as a tool for reflective practice has gained significant prominence in the teacher education literature (Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Daniels, 1992). It has been highly

commended as a method of viewing one's own practice through analysing, criticising, evaluating and defining new challenges for future action. We encouraged students to go beyond mere reporting of experiences to a deeper level of reflecting on experiences, interpreting and acting upon them, as a means of professional growth. We anticipated that journal writing would give the students a voice; a way of conversing with themselves and others as they attempted to make sense of their classroom work. We thought that by giving voice to ideas, intentions and speculations, the process would facilitate the construction of professional knowledge.

During the first workshop of the SBS programme, we examined the process of journal writing. We presented Clandinin's (1993) view that journal entries can be seen as "written conversations of practice that evolve over time" and that "the recorded data can be reviewed as historical text to which teachers return in order to gain new understanding of practice through reflection" (p.51). We reviewed a number of strategies for effective journal writing and suggested that Smyth's (1993) hierarchy of questions might be useful; what do I do? (describe), what does this mean? (inform), how did I come to be like this? (confront), how might I do things differently? (reconstruct).

METHODOLOGY

In this study, our intention was to identify, describe and interpret patterns in the students' writing as a means of exploring the nature of journal writing as a tool for reflective practice.

For the purpose of this paper, data were drawn from interactive journals written by four students participating in the SBS programme. The students were situated in two schools. Four case studies have been constructed from the journal entries which record and explain students' school experience. Through our first reading of the journals, we made

notations about the content. We noted the themes and messages inherent in the entries and summarised the topics, issues, concerns and problems described by the students. Through discussion and review of relevant literature (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Tripp, 1993; Smyth, 1993; Fulwiler, 1987) we developed a tentative framework for the second reading which we hoped would discriminate between the different forms students had used to record their experience. From this (framework), we further developed a category system for identifying types of reflective writing

and this formed the structure for our final analysis of the content of the journals. Table 1 illustrates the categories which were developed.

Preliminary analysis of the journals revealed that students used their journals in a number of ways to revisit their experiences and to reflect on their actions. They wrote to: report or describe an incident, event, feeling or lesson; to review and refocus on a situation or incident by considering and suggesting simple alternatives and explanations, explaining, reworking intentions and outcomes and making plans for further action; to analyse by questioning or diagnosing the case, comparing and evaluating an incident or situation and by speculating on consequences; to reconceptualise or rework their views and ideas by stating their philosophy or vision, contemplating an image of teaching and teachers, being insightful about the purpose of education and about self as teacher. Consequently, we applied this category system

to our final analysis of students' journals as a means of investigating the degree to which writing contributed to students' reflection on classroom experiences. The categories were not linear in process. As listed, they represent a hierarchical structure, from a simple descriptive level of reflection, to a more complex level of reflective activity.

The remainder of this paper presents and discusses the experiences of four students as recorded in their journals during the SBS programme. Given that the students were placed in two schools, we present the evidence in pairs. We begin by providing a brief description of the school context and an introduction to each student and her classroom.

REPORTING AND DISCUSSING THE DATA

Setting the Scene

Eastport Primary School is located in a middle socio-economic area. The school principal heard about the programme and approached the university with the prospect of joining the project. Terri and Julie were allocated to this school based on accessibility. Terri was placed in a year seven class with a male teacher who was the deputy principal of the school. The year seven class of 32 children was housed in a relatively confined classroom space. With the usual classroom furniture, desks and children themselves, there was not a great deal of space for comfortable movement about the room. The teacher promoted a child centred approach to learning, hence children were seated in groups and many of the daily lessons involved discussions, collaboration and joint problem solving activities. Graham (teacher)

gave Terri considerable freedom in the types of lessons she prepared. He encouraged her from the beginning of the programme to teach as much as possible in order to gain experience in all facets of the job. Terri had had little experience with child-centred learning as most of

her previous experiences had been in traditional, teacher-centred classrooms. However, she quickly embraced Graham's child-centred approach to teaching and learning and this became a strong feature of her planning and teaching.

Julie was placed in a year one class with a junior primary specialist teacher. There were 17 children in the year one classroom. (Julie had not had a practicum experience in the junior primary area) and had specifically requested to teach at this level. Sue (the teacher) was an experienced junior primary specialist, who had spent some time as deputy principal of the school. She and Julie quickly formed a close relationship, and Sue consciously nurtured Julie by slowly giving her responsibility for teaching and introducing her to the various roles of the teacher.

Terri was an outgoing, sometimes boisterous young lady who often took the lead in discussions and appeared very confident in voicing her views and opinions. She quickly developed an open relationship with her classroom teacher, and was eager to please and adopt his methods. Julie was more reserved in her approach, yet quietly confident in her own ability. As she had not taught at the junior level before, Julie considered her SBS experience to be a great challenge. She and her teacher developed a collaborative partnership and she felt supported and empowered to try new ideas and to implement her own methods and strategies. Both classroom teachers wrote very sparingly in the students' journals throughout the SBS period.

Terri's Journal

Terri's journal was not a comprehensive document. In her first entry she wrote "I have a feeling this journal writing may turn out well. At least now I have told 'someone' what my week has been like. I'm just writing what ever pops into my head". This statement typified Terri's journal. She made sporadic entries as the SBS programme progressed which were short and concise, often unconnected and rambling. Her journal was mainly characterised by jottings which described daily incidents, how the lessons progressed, how the children behaved, and how she felt about certain events and children. Her writing recorded in a rather haphazard fashion personal thoughts, feelings and concerns about day to day happenings related to survival in the classroom, as well as reported her relationship with the teacher and students. For

Terri, the journal was a requirement of the programme and a chore she had to regularly remind herself to complete. It developed into a recount of the themes which seemed important to her such as the degree of success of her lessons, coping with a child-centred approach, becoming over familiar with students and keeping students on task, and these featured strongly throughout the journal.

Terri's journal entries did not vary considerably in a technical sense. She predominantly reported and described in a free flowing style her impressions of lessons, the classroom and children. The following is a typical entry.

This week we were purely finishing off the reports that we have been working on. For this reason I have not really written up many lesson plans. I'm very proud of this class. They have all worked very hard on their reports and all have come out beautifully. I am getting annoyed with Carl and Adam. They are both cheeky and today Carl called me by my first name. I got mad, but he really gets to me.

(24/2/95)

On a few occasions Terri reviewed her practice but mostly at a surface level. In these instances she revisited the situation, highlighted the problem and made a suggestion for an alternative way to proceed which she considered more appropriate.

Graham and I talk a lot, and he directs my attention to certain factors in the classroom such as...the girls are all sweet and hard working, but unwilling to make a contribution to the class. What we have decided is to help the girls to become more outspoken in the classroom and not allow for the boys to suppress them and their ideas. The boys do tend to dominate the class and say that some of the girls' ideas are stupid. (1/2/95)

The principal made a surprise visit to my class on Tuesday. I think he was rather impressed with me. He wrote a wonderful evaluation. If he stayed a little longer he would have seen a mistake. For about 15 minutes the pupils were very bored with the activity. I should have stopped the activity then, and used the keywords they had just written as spelling words. But now I know how to cope with a "bad" situation and I will definitely use it next time. (1/3/95)

In both examples, Terri did not particularly concern herself with the problem nor did she attempt to analyse or diagnose the situation. She was not interested in asking the "why" questions in order to

reconstruct the event in light of "good practice". Although alternatives were planned Terri did not seem to contemplate her options or to rework her views and ideas so as to better understand the dilemma.

In one entry, Terri responded to questions raised by the university supervisor and reached a deeper level of analysis of the situation. In this instance, she was able to reach a deeper level of thinking as she reworked her ideas about the role of teacher. Terri reconceptualised or altered her image of teacher, based on knowledge and understanding gained through comparing personal experience with past understanding. In this way, Terri revised and clarified her understanding.

A child-centred approach to teaching is new to me and frightening. As a teacher I need to have enough control over the class to ensure their conversations during such a lesson are about the relevant topic. I have been in classrooms where the teachers claimed to be facilitators of teaching, even though they were still 'chalk and talk'

teachers. The actual experience of child-centred teaching is new to me, and I still have so much to learn, it's frightening. After this prac (and even now) I would never be able to 'chalk and talk'. It now seems so unproductive. (28/3/94)

This type of entry, however, was not a common feature of Terri's journal and over the period of SBS her journal writing did not change significantly. She continued to write in the same style and repeatedly voiced similar issues. Rather than demonstrating deeper reflective skills, such as those featured through reviewing and refocussing, analysing, and reconceptualising, Terri struggled to make regular entries and so her jottings became a series of disconnected thoughts.

Her entry on 9/6/95 stated:

Overall this was a good week. Last week we made paper, so many of the tasks this week were to finish the paper and card making sessions. Graham has disappeared for the week. I have many of the classes completely on my own. It is great. In the beginning I used to be very nervous about having the class on my own, but now I really enjoy it. I think the class is responding to me very well. I have no reason to be nasty when I am alone. It's great. Now I only hope they'll be just as good for the rest of the term. Monday's lesson is so exciting. I can not wait to get it underway. Lunch time! Time for a rest and to be by myself for a while. Phew!

Generally, Terri's journal entries remained brief and disjointed. Her last entry summarised her thoughts about writing;

This is most likely to be my last entry! I must say that although I did not have a specific day on which I wrote in my journal, I feel as if I have gained plenty from writing in it.

What I am trying to say is that I think it was more worthwhile to write something when I felt the need to, not because I had to. Then I would not have been able to write anything beneficial. (26/6/95)

For Terri, writing was not a high priority. When she did make entries they mainly reported and described without giving serious consideration to consequences of actions or behaviour. On very few occasions, Terri reviewed and refocussed on a very simple level. There was little evidence of Terri raising questions, or speculating about the meaning of events or situations in order to clarify her thinking. Terri was mostly concerned with survival on a day to day level. She grappled with a teaching approach which was new to her and was preoccupied with planning lessons which would keep the children on task. Thus matters of control and instructional skills remained big issues for her. Terri's journal writing did not provide evidence of personal analysis, self evaluation, or the ability to define and explore challenges. Nor was there evidence that she used the journal as a way of working through issues and concerns.

Julie's Journal

Julie made consistent entries in her journal over the period of SBS. She wrote each week and reviewed the week's happenings in general and then made specific comments about certain events or situations. In addition, she collected reports written by her supervisor, principal and teacher throughout the practice and pasted these into her journal as a record of their feedback. Her writing was systematic and she seemed to have a natural method of addressing issues and events. More importantly, there was evidence of thoughtful accounts of ideas as Julie critically investigated her personal process of learning to teach. Julie's journal documented a range of forms and categories of reflective writing.

Julie's journal writing was rich in content and ideas. She used the journal to report on her week's work in the classroom, identify issues, make simple suggestions, raise and interpret concerns, ask questions, reconsider her motives and thinking, and to make new plans in her teaching. In essence she demonstrated a mature and sophisticated level

of reflection on her practice.

In the first week, Julie reported on the problems associated with the beginning of the school year.

It's been a really interesting start to the school year. I thought I'd be in year 2 but ended up in year 1. The school is unsure whether they'll be allowed to keep two classes of year 1's and may have to create a year 1/2 which would mean losing a teacher.....

I found it very useful being in the class from day 1 and already I've started to see some of the different kids' personalities emerge. They are so different which is going to be a challenge in itself - catering for all those individual personalities.

One child in particular stands out already as being a challenge. I'm keeping an open mind - perhaps she had a bad couple of days and she'll settle down soon. (31/1/95)

As well as providing an account of her experiences, Julie began to think through some of the issues which she would face in the coming weeks. Through recording observations she noted matters of interest and began to speculate on the impact issues such as staffing and catering for individual differences would have on her teaching.

It was interesting to note that a significant feature of Julie's journal writing was concerned with the children in her class; their development and progress, and therefore a great proportion of her journal referred to individual children and to the class in general. Julie often speculated on various children she had identified as requiring particular consideration and sought to solve what she perceived were problems or dilemmas. A typical entry of this kind is as follows;

Anthea is quite a way behind the other children in her learning. She appears to be very unsure of a lot of things. Much of the time she just stares blankly at us when asked to do something. She doesn't seem to be able to do a lot by herself. I would like to suggest to Sue that we should see Anthea's parents next. Annie really surprised me this week. She comes out with the most amazing expressions, they make me laugh. She has an amazing reasoning ability for a child of 6. She displays the ability to think through things logically and is even able to think a little abstractly at times - all of which indicate that she is moving into Piaget's concrete operational stage. She is a "true thinker". (27/3/95)

Here, Julie attempts to understand two children in her class. She reviews the situation and makes a plan to put to the classroom teacher.

In addition, Julie displays the ability to make judgements based on

observations, and then to synthesis knowledge gained in the field and through course work.

Comments regarding her own personal needs and concerns were not as common as they were for Terri. She did however, question her own actions in relation to what would be the most effective approach to

take with various individual students. She often commented on what she perceived as her inadequacies for diagnosing individual needs and for catering for these needs. Julie analysed her actions, mulled them over as a way of giving them further consideration. For example:

Today, when we were talking about communication skills, Sue told me to relax and have fun with the kids, while still retaining the ability to snap them back. It made me realise that I don't often let all of myself go with them and have fun. I do tend to hold a part of myself back and I'd never really noticed that before. Perhaps it's because I don't feel as if I'm totally in control of them if I'm having fun because they do so easily get out of control. I can see that that is wrong, because when you're having fun, the kids can sense it and they have fun themselves. Also, I realise that good control is the ability to let the kids go and be able to bring them back quickly. (13/3/95)

In addition, Julie used her journal to explore and make sense of events and issues which impacted on the school situation. She asked herself questions, looked for explanations and drew her own conclusions. In this way she interpreted the situation through a synthesis of information which was available to her.

I have found myself aware of a lot of the politics of school this term which I'd never been aware of before and it's challenged me to think about why I really want to be a teacher. Once again, they can't tell you that at Uni and they can't really make you think about it either, because at Uni you are still a student!! I've thought about the amalgamation issues going on and the union business, the 'numbers' problem in the junior primary and everything else that is happening and wonder where the line between improving children's education or damaging it is drawn. I guess I don't understand exactly what everything is about but I do wonder how professionals in a business of educating children can do so much to endanger it or make things harder. (10/4/95)

Although Julie was concerned about the day to day issues of planning and survival, she was not totally preoccupied by these personal concerns. Instead, Julie was able to recognise the big picture of teaching and how she fitted into this wider context. This led her to reconsider ways of thinking and being. The following excerpts are examples of Julie's reflections.

I've had a lot of time to absorb a lot of information this term. A lot of things that I've learned or heard of at Uni; theories, approaches to teaching, strategies, techniques, activities - I've had the opportunity to see them operating in difference classrooms. That in itself has taught me about the individuality of teachers and teaching styles. No two teachers are exactly the same that is something I've learned. Now I have the advantage of another term to find my own individuality, to find out how I can best help children to learn, what works for me! Am I doing things right? How can I do things better? I've made mistakes, tried out new things, worked out what the children can do and now this term I can actually get to teaching them. (10/4/95)

This kind of review enabled Julie to synthesis ideas, and to refocus her intentions and goals.

For Julie, journal writing was a requirement of the course yet she took full advantage of the situation to report, review and analyse her actions and to refocus her plans of action. She concluded her entries with the comment "I can't say I always found it (journal writing) easy or convenient to do" (19/6/95). Yet throughout the process Julie maintained the momentum of writing and continued to raise important questions about her teaching effectiveness. Julie's journal was a substantial document. She wrote profusely about the children in her class and the impact her planning and teaching had on their learning and progress. There was considerable evidence of the first three and to a lesser degree the fourth category of reflective writing in her journal. In many cases she assessed the situation and made alternative plans for action. The journal provided evidence of Julie raising questions, revising her thinking and speculating about professional matters.

Setting the Scene

Nicole and Cindy were placed at St Mathew's Primary for their SBS semester. This Catholic school caters for students from low socioeconomic families who are diverse in their cultural backgrounds. Many of the students at St Mathew's are Asian born or first generation Australian. The school benefits from federal funding through the Disadvantaged Schools' Programme. Both SBS students were placed in year seven classes with dedicated teachers each with approximately eight years teaching experience. There were three year seven classes in the school; each with approximately 35 students. Male and female students were evenly balanced and the groups were heterogeneous except for maths where students from the three classes were ability grouped. Nicole worked with the high achievers and Cindy with the average group. Cindy had a male autistic student in her class.

The teachers had had their first experience with SBS in the previous year so Nicole and Cindy benefited from their experience with the programme. In the first year, one student-teacher pairing had been very successful, with the other somewhat strained due to the relative lack of initiative and skill of the student. Both teachers, with the support of their principal agreed to participate in the programme a second time. The two teachers had worked together for some years. They were professional and social colleagues and due to the collaborative nature of their teaching had a preference for their SBS students to be able to work as a team. Nicole and Cindy fulfilled this

criterion. Both classroom teachers made regular contributions to the journals. They commented on lessons, gave end-of week summaries and suggestions for improvement. The comments were supportive and appreciative in tone, and aimed to facilitate professional growth.

Nicole and Cindy were friends from university, shared transport, planning, successes and worries. Nicole was reserved and quiet by nature, academically strong and talented in dance. Cindy was open, unpretentious and keen to make the most of SBS. Both students were

committed to the task and confident in their decision to be part of the programme.

Cindy's Journal

Cindy wrote regularly in her journal. Entries were slightly more frequent during term one when SBS students were in their classroom for three days a week. At this time, Cindy typically wrote daily. During term two, when students became full-time in their SBS schools, entries often captured the most notable events of the week.

For Cindy, the journal was a working document. The style was open and frank. It was evident that Cindy enjoyed 'talking' to her journal and found it a useful way to reflect upon her practice. The very positive tone of the journal was quite striking. Even when Cindy was struggling with an issue or with a child, she kept focussed on the positive - what she could do to make things better, what had she done that had worked? In the entries, Cindy reports, reflects, analyses, plans and praises.

Typically, Cindy's journal entries were forthright and questioning. She usually reported in some detail which seemed to provide her with the opportunity to collect her thoughts through describing and reviewing the lesson or day's events. It was common then for Cindy to speculate on the meaning of the events and to develop a plan for action. Many entries end with the setting of a goal or task which reflects Cindy's 'do it' nature.

At the end of a week which included two days of in-service, Cindy reviews and refocusses as she makes reference to the day's lessons.

I actually got to try out one of the reading strategies from the in-service - Retrieval Charts. It actually went quite well and children appeared to enjoy it. The reason I like it so much is that children are reading for a purpose and are required to extract important information. It is also a different form of answering questions than plain comprehension. Tomorrow I am going to try a different strategy with a narrative text. Spelling wasn't too bad, actually children

worked very well. Though with some of the games, rather than just always rewarding children who are quick workers/writers (and write down the most answers) I will need to think of an alternative - e.g. rewarding those who come up with more original or interesting words - will need more time to think about it. (26/3/95)

A feature of Cindy's journal is that she reports events, and reviews and refocusses by considering the event, suggesting possible alternatives, and planning for future action. The following excerpt is illustrative of her writing style and focus.

I didn't know what to expect from Readers Theatre as I had never tried it before, however I learnt a lot. Next time - with a big group it is best to choose scripts that involve lots of characters as children can become bored listening to repeated readings of the same story. Need longer time span to allow all children to perform. Choose pieces that are going to challenge children eg. to use different forms of expression

and tone. Can now actually keep my eyes out for pieces/scripts that would be appropriate.

After seeing the standard from class assemblies, from the few groups I saw, I was very impressed with the high level of children's oral speaking skills. They were very mature about it - they didn't get embarrassed or crack up laughing and 'every' child had a clear, audible voice that involved expression. Will have to give them more opportunities to develop these skills. (28/3/95)

Cindy's journal is also characterised by attention to evaluation issues. Self evaluation is a feature of her writing, as is a commitment to developing strategies for authentic evaluation of student progress. In a March entry, Cindy develops a plan of action by identifying areas of priority and strategies for improvement of her professional skill. Here, Cindy reviews and refocusses.

There are a couple of areas I want to concentrate on and I have a plan of action!! I want to really get stuck into evaluation. I am lucky as Linda has given me lots of opportunities to focus in a particular area with continuous teaching which allows for remediation. I want to start this by beginning a consistent form of evaluation. Mention has been made of the need to evaluate in terms of objectives - this will be done in my Daily Work Pad with mention of children's behaviour and children who are experiencing difficulty. In my journal I will include more in-depth evaluation, particularly self. I also want to begin a lot more formal evaluation. I am going to have an A3 sheet on my desk with boxes and children's names that will allow me to do daily anecdotal notes. I am hoping this will also help me in my formal assessment and identifying individual strengths and weaknesses. Maybe this will be worthwhile for maths as well. (13/3/95)

Cindy also indicates that she plans to pull together the strands of her activities in Language Arts. She makes a suggestion for a simple alternative.

I plan to tie up some loose ends. On Monday next week, I would like to give the class as a whole feedback on read and retells, two narratives and current recounts. This would also give me an opportunity to praise children on the great work they have been doing, using particular examples of work which children can read out. I will also be able to remediate on particular areas which the class needs as a whole. (13/3/95)

This 'plan of action' entry continues for four more pages. Cindy methodically documents additional areas for attention, identifies alternatives, poses questions, and resets priorities and intentions. She goes on to describe the children's behaviour during one part of the day and analyses what lay behind their actions. She reports that children were 'out of routine', more talkative than usual, had difficulty listening, speaking over others, and were slow to respond to direction. Cindy suggests that, "this may have been, on reflection, that often they were engaged in work like science for example, however they needed to be stopped for an instruction or an important point. They may have been reluctant to stop what they were doing. Will need to watch this tomorrow" (13/3/95). Later in the entry, when focussed on the language lesson of the day, Cindy reports and assesses the

lesson.

Language went well. They appeared to be motivated by the display, especially when children knew they were involved in making a decision for the display - some very able and creative suggestions were made. Brainstorm went well, a lot of good ideas were generated. I wondered if I skimmed the surface too much but I have the opportunity tomorrow to work in depth. Would do differently next time - eg. find a better example of a recount.

This portion of the entry provides an example of reporting, reviewing and self diagnosis. As a conclusion to the day's entry, Cindy apologises to her teacher for what she calls "the monumental reading task" but also writes that "I find problems don't seem to be of such epic proportions when thought about clearly and clarified on paper." For Cindy, the writing task provides a tool for clarification.

As the pace and commitments of SBS increased, Cindy reports her personal feelings of frustration. The frustration is linked to the high expectations she has set for herself. She acknowledges that there is more work ahead of her.

Nearly halfway through my prac - wow! The pace now is definitely starting to increase as commitments to both the school and uni are growing. Presently, I seem to be stuck in a bit of a hole and feel like I am not getting anywhere. (Funnily enough talking to other SBS students they seem to be feeling the same thing.) I have high expectations of myself and I look back and think what have I achieved? and feel frustrated as I feel I am lacking in this area or that. However, it just means that I will require a better effort and more work. (26/3/95)

Evaluation continues to be an issue of concern and as Cindy thinks about evaluation, she analyses and refocusses her 'worry' on the purpose of student evaluation.

My immediate concern at the moment is evaluation. Looking over the evaluation requirements for SBS (ATP), I think one of the most important words is 'effectively' perhaps 'purposefully' could be added as well. As Linda said, make them working documents. This could be achieved by focusing on 'why' I am evaluating and what I am hoping to learn. (26/3/95)

Cindy often makes comment on being a part of the SBS programme in her daily writing. She recognises and praises the opportunities it has provided her. In sharing her rationale for planning a lesson in the way she did, Cindy indicates that;

A friend said an easier way would be just for the students to draw the fish. Reflecting on this I thought yes, I could do that but the effect would not be the same. My way will be hard work but when the kids and myself see the results it will be rewarding. I guess the same thinking applies to this course, the easier way would have been to do the 10 week ATP. However, yet again the same extent of learning would not have taken place nor the amount of generous rewards. (30/1/95)

A reflection about SBS reveals the importance Cindy places on

developing positive relationships with children and how respect is a critical feature of that relationship. She thinks about how the structure of SBS provides opportunities for relationships to develop and to be maintained. The comments provide an insight into the priorities Cindy holds for teacher-student relations.

I think one of the major benefits of this program is that you are accepted as a teacher right from the very beginning. Rather than on ATP where you just suddenly 'appear' and then leave. I think you also have more valuable time with children to gain their respect not just as a teacher but also as a friend. I think it would be awful if children never approached me if they had a question, or even just to talk to me.

I really appreciate that when Linda is taking a lesson and they can see that she is busy, that they will often ask me. It is obvious the great deal of respect that the children have of Linda and Linda of them. Consequently, this is a great motivation for me to also foster this respect. (28/3/95)

In June, Cindy reports that she has had a really good week. She analyses what has transpired and concludes that changes in her actions and priorities have contributed to the success.

Had a really good week, not due to any specific factors but a number of things. I felt that some of my lessons went well. I sat down and thought why and felt that rather than concentrating on always achieving my objectives, I have become more in tune with the needs of the children. I have also felt that I am achieving more using groups. This still needs more work and practise with working and giving two groups instructions - also closely monitoring that while working with one group - the other is on task - will develop with time. (2/6/95)

While she acknowledges that there is still more work to be done, Cindy interprets the events of the week and makes sense of them in a way that leads to new understanding of her own professional practice. Recognition of her own progress is evident in her final journal entry.

I just read through my whole journal - what an effort!. I just about cringed at some of my comments - though I guess it shows me that I have progressed. In the beginning, I appeared to stress about little things such as classroom management, putting names on the board. Now I find many of them are not even issues anymore. Things I find important are qualities from the outstanding (assessment criteria for teaching mark) areas - effective group work, on-task behaviour and meaningful evaluation. (22/6/95)

Cindy's growth as a teacher was evident in her classroom practise and in her journal over the course of SBS. Her journal records her achievements and documents her trials. The journal is a place where Cindy 'figured things out' and made decisions about ways to move forward - ever focussed on her own professional growth as a way of encouraging student learning.

Nicole's Journal

Nicole contributed to her journal throughout SBS. She used the journal to document and comment upon events, to plan, to organise, to record reminders to herself, to evaluate her practice, and to wonder about alternatives. Nicole's journal was more than a diary; it was a daily

organiser, a reminder list and a goal setting record.

The journal was very personal in that Nicole used it to record her

feelings about many of the day to day events of the classroom and of the practice. Classroom events were reported only to the extent that they provided a context for discussion of Nicole's

thoughts and feelings. In the first excerpt, Nicole is reporting the activity of the class but only as a way of connecting her musing about what she wants out of the practice. The focus of the message is not on the events of the lesson in terms of a detailed report but on the sense that she is able to make of it.

Religion lesson today made me think!! Fran talked about belonging to groups, various communities like Catholics, sports, Australian. Involves large element of trust, safety, honesty, courtesy. My class emblem (which the children had to design reflecting what belonging to this community involves) would be a big smile. I hope the children will eventually see the real me, I realise it will take time though. (6/2/95)

Again, in the next excerpt, Nicole does no reporting. She knows what happened in the lesson and focuses her thoughts on ways to improve her future lessons. Nicole is planning her time and actions. Having identified an area of concern, she generates alternatives, evaluates them and sets herself a task.

Patience in 36 degree heat!! Social Studies - Chaos. It is difficult to think through a lesson and know what is going to eventuate! I'm going to find out some different strategies for organising groups! Strategies, my ideas now - set up children into named groups like koalas etc. - but this is 'babyish' and limiting. As the theory suggests, flexible groups that change frequently are best. I'll have to think about a way to number members of groups quickly. (7/2/95)

Nicole often uses her journal to comment upon and analyse her own progress. In this entry, she reveals ways that she assesses her own progress and provides an insight into some of her teaching priorities. She indicates that her own desire to continue to learn and to succeed is something she hopes to instil in children. Nicole makes known some of her thinking about how she sees herself as a teacher and her image of teaching.

Now I really know why we have 10 week terms - everyone looks exhausted. I can't believe it is the end of term!! As I said in the tutorial last week it's amazing how much one achieves over time with prac teaching without really noticing it!! I was sorting out my resource file when I found my first year prac lesson plans, which had the supervising teachers notes on them. After reading these I realised the progress I've made since then. I know I've come a long way in terms of confidence I

can remember my first 'formal' lesson so well; changing 'y' to 'ies' endings!!! I was so nervous. I also remember looking at the teacher's timetable and thinking gee! the class spends a lot of time on language.

I wonder what they are learning!! True, I didn't know it referred to spelling, reading, writing, etc.!! It's all these little things you pick up along the way. Evidence of learning . Many of us (the SBS

students) are commenting on not achieving as much as we thought we would. Perhaps as Fran suggests our ideas are realistic or without realms at this point in time. Deep down I know I've achieved things through the term, I certainly know a lot more about my class and about teaching, and I know that by the end of next term I will have learnt twice as much maybe three times. This learning will be never ending - can't expect to be the best teacher I'll ever be by the end of this term. But I sure will try!! That's an interesting question to ponder.

When does one become the best they ever can??" How do we know we've achieved our best?" We'll never know if we don't try. Basically this is what I would like children to take away from school - trying their best and making achievements for themselves. (10/4/95)

The journal writing 'got in the way' a bit for Nicole during the second half of SBS. While she continued to write, she admits that, "journaling has become harder towards the end of prac - some days the last thing you want to do is write, or think! The time constraints in terms of other work that has to be done limits journaling time too" (22/6/95). Throughout the journal, Nicole makes comment about journal writing, its process and benefits.

I was too busy during the day to jot anything down! I'm finding that I talk about things better than writing things down. A lot of things come up in my conversation with others but I don't think to write them down. I'll endeavour to do this in the future. Another thing is the awareness that although I'll be teaching a lot more in term 2, I'll still need to write in my journal. It's not a hard thing. I really can see the value of journal writing. It became especially apparent to me after reading my final Reading Response article - the one regarding Experience as the Best Teacher. The quote from the article that shone out to me was the experience of prac teaching alone is not enough. It is the thought and subsequent action that is associated with the experience which determines its value in the learning process. Journaling provides the thought and makes you consider subsequent action or goals. Which reminds me, this weekend I shall write down my goals - update them! (5/4/95)

Here, Nicole reflects upon a course reading and how its message has

made her think about the importance of the connection between experience, and thinking and acting upon that experience. Nicole suggests that her journal writing acts as a catalyst for her action.

CONCLUSION

The four categories of reflective writing identified in the analysis framework were useful in exploring student's journals. Forms of writing and the extent to which writing became a reflection on classroom practice were identified and the journals provide examples of each of the four categories. Whilst the journals provide substantial evidence of reporting, reviewing and refocussing, examples of analysis are less frequent and signs of reconceptualisation prove to be rare. Although the first category of reporting, is generally regarded in the literature as non reflective in nature, we conclude that mere reporting does in itself have some merit. Writers in this case are making observations and attempting to recapture events through writing, and this has value as a beginning stage. Reporting classroom events and actions provides the writer with an opportunity to relive their

experiences and this at least forces the writer to retrieve information and revisit the situation, a process which in itself can be useful. However, as we regard the review and refocus, analysis, and reconceptualisation categories to be more substantial forms of reflection, the aim is to help students move beyond reporting. This is not a simple task. Writing as a form of reconceptualisation proved difficult for all student teachers. Indeed, reshaping views, philosophies and image of teachers and teaching to a sophisticated level may require substantially more experience and professional knowledge beyond that of an Undergraduate Teaching Degree.

In the SBS programme we conducted a workshop session on the purpose for reflective journaling and introduced students to a suggested process that might be useful as a way of getting them started. This clearly was not sufficient. The skills of reflective journal writing need to be nurtured and developed gradually with the goal of moving to a more sophisticated level of writing. To support the development of journal writing, students must be provided with opportunities to acquire the appropriate skills. Educators need to be explicit about the purpose of writing together with what are pertinent techniques of writing. The danger is that we assume that students will become reflective writers solely through 'doing'. This may be enough for some writers, but the majority require clear goals for writing and the time to develop appropriate strategies.

What is evident from this study is that some students struggle with journal writing as a tool for reflective practice. For those students who have not been part of a 'reflective culture' either at university or school, the skills associated with reflective journal writing are both alien and daunting. From a university perspective it is not enough to encourage journal writing either on a voluntary, personal basis, or as a requirement of a course. If a certain quality of reflection is to be the goal, then writers need to be instructed and indeed inspired with the skills of reflective journal writing. What we found in the SBS programme was that students generally regarded journal writing as a chore. As teacher educators, we realise the importance of sustained personal reflection on professional experience and the value of journal writing as a method of achieving this goal. However, we need to find a way to demonstrate that journal writing is a useful tool for learning about teaching and a means of structuring future action and assessing one's own learning. This lesson needs to be taught early, within a university culture which promotes and values the reflective practitioner as one who is actively responsible for self directed learning and self discovery.

The issue of personal writing versus writing as a course requirement needs to be addressed. In SBS the students knew that journals were a requirement of the course, and would be read by others. University supervisors, classroom teachers and school principals were encouraged to participate in the process of journaling by making entries as part of an interactive process with students. This approach to journal writing at least ensured student's commitment to the task, albeit for disparate reasons. The process of interactive journal writing is the subject of further investigation and represents phase two of this study.

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