The Development of A Literacy of Pedagogy for Preservice Teacher Education Students

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In this paper we will report and discuss our decision to develop a framework for preservice teachers that gave them a literacy for talking about and discussing teaching and classroom practice. The development of this framework was motivated by experiences coordinating the alternative teacher education program known as the Knowledge Building Community Program at the University of Wollongong over the last five years. A question we had to address in this program was:

“How can we help preservice teachers, in their very first School Based Learning experience, understand and get control over such complex things as creating and maintaining classroom settings that support effective teaching and learning”?

While there are proven frameworks based on the “Productive Pedagogy” (QRSLS, 2002) and Quality Teaching (NSW Department of Education & Training 2003) models available for experienced teachers, our experience was that preservice teacher education students lacked the background knowledge and experiences to use such models effectively, (at least until their final year of study). We therefore decided to develop and trial a framework based on a theory of behaviour settings pioneered by Barker (1968, 1978). Barker’s theory of behaviour settings proved to be sufficiently robust and enabled the major stakeholders i.e. preservice teachers, mentor teachers, and University facilitators to describe, discuss, and talk about classroom practice and experience without trivialising the complexity of the primary classroom.

Introduction

Preservice teacher educators have long acknowledged a strong relationship between teachers’ pedagogical skill and the quality of the learning, which occurs in their classrooms. Despite this acknowledged relationship, there has been little progress in developing ecologically valid frameworks for observing and analysing the complexities of applying pedagogical ‘know how’ to classroom settings. This lack of progress is partly a function of the conceptual confusion associated with notions of ‘teacher quality’ and/or ‘teacher effectiveness’. We found Medley and Shannon’s (1994) distinction between ‘teacher effectiveness’, teacher competence’ and teacher performance’ most helpful in dealing with this confusion. They identify ‘teacher effectiveness’ as the degree to which a teacher achieves desired effects upon students, as the way in which a teacher behaves in the process of teaching, and ‘teacher competence’ as the extent to which the teacher possesses the knowledge and skills (competencies) defined as necessary.
or desirable qualifications to teach. Our focus in this project is with the second of these three dimensions, namely ‘the way in which a teacher behaves in the process of teaching’ (i.e. teacher performance).

In recent years both the Queensland and NSW governments have showed strong interest in the broad area of teacher performance. Citing “research which has consistently shown that, of all thins schools can control, it is the quality of pedagogy that most directly and most powerfully affects the quality of learning outcomes that students achieve” (NSW DET 2003, p. 4). The NSW DET has launched what they call the “Quality Teaching in NSW Schools” initiative. This initiative was preceded a few years earlier by a similar initiative by the Queensland DET known as “Productive Pedagogies” (QRSLS, 2002).

One consequence of this focus on pedagogy has been the design and implementation of similar frameworks for analysing, discussing, describing, and ultimately evaluating classroom teaching (NSW DET, 2003; QRSLS, 2002). One significant benefit of these frameworks is their potential for developing a shared pedagogical discourse (i.e. a ‘literacy of pedagogy’) among practicing teachers.

Although we were eager to use these frameworks, we encountered some major difficulties when we introduced them to our preservice first and second year students. These difficulties originated from two sources:

i. We didn’t have the time or resources to offer the eighteen hours of seminars, which Gore and her colleagues were able to offer their sample of preservice teacher education students. (Gore et al 2002) Consequently our students lacked the background knowledge, experience, and professional learning to be able to interpret and apply the framework as intended.

ii. We didn’t have access to the observation scoring manual “that was developed to code classroom practice and subsequently used to score their own practice” (Gore et. al. 2002).

Rather than abandoning the principles inherent in these frameworks as “too complex”, and given the underlying philosophy of the KBC program, we decided to see what would happen if we gave our students the knowledge, skills and understandings to create and apply their own analytic code(s).

**Background to the Project**

The KBC program is an alternative model of teacher education conducted through the Education Faculty at the University of Wollongong. It is based on the creation of a learning environment that: supports the continuous social construction of knowledge through the constant construction, de-construction, and reconstruction and sharing of meanings, so that the community’s knowledge needs are advanced and maintained. The KBC program is specifically designed to deal with the issue of “contextualising the delivery of instruction” (Cambourne, Kiggins & Ferry, 2002). By this we mean linking the professional theoretical knowledge which teachers need to acquire through their university study to the contexts and settings
to which it applies, namely the world of schools and how they do business. In order to do this we had to address this question:

“How can we help pre-service teachers, in their very first School-Based Learning experience (or practicum) begin to understand and appreciate the complexities associated with creating and maintaining classroom settings that support effective teaching and learning”?

In the process of addressing this question we identified three barriers, which worked against pre-service teachers’ understanding and appreciation of classrooms. These were:

i. Two of the stake holding groups in preservice teachers’ professional growth and development (university academics, teachers in practicum schools) talked about classrooms in different ways.

ii. The theoretical concepts underpinning some of the more recent developments were too complex for pre-service teachers in their first practicum experience (e.g. “Productive Pedagogy”, “Quality Teaching Initiative”).

iii. Students were overwhelmed by the complexity of classrooms during their first practicum experiences and couldn’t work out what was salient and what wasn’t.

We then asked ourselves:

“Is there a framework that will enable the teachers who mentor and/or supervise our pre-service students during their practicums and internships, the academics who are responsible for the specialist knowledge they have to acquire, and the preservice teachers themselves to describe, discuss, talk about, classroom practice in ways that are mutually comprehensible”?

We realised that, to be effective in our context, such a framework would need to meet the following criteria:

i. Be simple enough to be used/understood by pre-service teachers during their first two or three practicum experiences without trivialising the complexity of primary classrooms;

ii. Be able to promote a discourse which could be shared and used by pre-service teacher ed. students, practicing classroom teachers, pre-service teacher educators, with minimal confusion, or misunderstanding;

iii. Be both theoretically valid and practically relevant all for those who used it;

iv. Could be built on in increasingly complex ways as students and teachers developed their professional “know-how”;

v. Could be applied across all grade levels and to a wide range of “styles” of classroom teaching;

vi. Be a potentially useful research tool for both practitioners and academics; and

vii. Be ideologically neutral in the sense of being capable of describing, in non-judgmental ways, the differences between ideologically different classrooms.
A Theoretical Model for Meeting These Seven Criteria

We found that a theory of behaviour settings pioneered by Roger Barker and his co-workers was sufficiently robust to meet the above criteria. According to Barker's theory (Barker, 1968, 1978), behaviour settings are “stable, concrete environmental units” where people engage in behaviour. They are “stable” because they continue to exist day after day. They are “concrete environmental units” because they are bounded by physical and temporal boundaries, which are easily recognised. Examples of them abound in the world. The Church services at St Mary's each Sunday at 9.00am, the Sheraton Hotel, the Woolworths Supermarket, the corner cafe, or news agency are all behaviour settings. They are all stable; and all are bounded by physical and temporal boundaries. All are “natural” in the sense that they have not been created by researchers for research purposes. All have two classes of components, namely (a) humans behaving (praying, listening, singing hymns, buying and selling goods, etc) and (b) non-psychological objects, (paraphernalia) with which behaviour is transacted such as pews, hymn books, cash registers, chairs, walls, doors, goods etc. In each of them both the behaviour and the physical objects that constitute them are internally organised and arranged to form “standing patterns of behaviour” that are not random. All are predictable in terms of the behaviours which are likely to occur within them given normal everyday circumstances and the purposes for which these behaviour settings are created.

Barker explicates the concepts inherent in this notion of behaviour settings thus:

“Behaviour settings are mixes of physical and human components (they are eco-behavioural phenomena), and they are ongoing occurrences of (they are programs) of events. Here for example are definitions of two classes of behaviour settings: A grocery store is a business establishment where foodstuffs are bought and sold by retail; a hotel is a house that provides lodging and usually meals, entertainment, and personal services for the public. According to these definitions, grocery stores are more than rooms, shelves and foodstuffs; they are also standard patterns of customers buying and staff members selling. And hotels are more than bedrooms, dining rooms, lounges and their furnishings; they are also ongoing programs of paying guests and serving hostellers. All other behaviour settings involve human and non-human components in particular programs of events” (Barker & Associates, 1978, p.195).

The core proposition of Barker’s theory is that the behaviours which typically occur in the everyday settings that make up any human society can be understood and explained in terms of the interactions and tensions between three major classes of variable, namely:

- the physical properties of the setting (paraphernalia)
- the number and character of that setting's human inhabitants, (inhabitants)
- the program(s) of events and associated patterns of behaviour which typically occur within that setting's organisation (programs).
The various teaching sessions which most primary teachers use today can be easily located within (and described by) Barker’s concept of a behaviour setting. Not only are classrooms “stable, concrete environmental units where people are engaged in behaviour”, (the teaching and learning of the various Key Learning Areas), but they can be understood and explained in terms of the interactions between the three classes of variables identified above, namely physical properties, human components, and the programs of events that occur within them.

**Setting Theory and Classrooms**

Setting Theory is a derivative of a much larger, more complex psychological theory known as “Ecological Psychology” which Barker and his associates developed as a reaction to what they perceived as the “artificial tying and untying of variables” (Barker 1968) that dominated experimental psychology in the forties and fifties. We decided to introduce the theory to students in ways that not only made it accessible for novice classroom observers, but which also fulfilled criterion (iv) above, i.e. “could be built on in increasingly complex ways as students and teachers developed their professional “know-how”. To meet this criterion we identified four layers of complexity inherent in typical classrooms.

**Layer One: The Simplest Level of Classroom Description**

Figure 1 (below) represents the least complex layer of the Framework we are proposing. It depicts the classroom as a behaviour setting, which is both stable and dynamic. Like any other functioning behaviour setting the “Paraphernalia”, “Programs”, and “Human Inhabitants” are in constant movement and interaction. In these settings the teacher is the human inhabitant with the most executive power. This power enables him/her to manipulate two of these three variables (i.e. “paraphernalia” and “programs”) to create the kind of “learning culture” that s/he desires.

With respect to the paraphernalia, not only can the teacher decide which inanimate physical objects s/he will buy and/or use to teach literacy, s/he can decide when and how they will be used, by whom, and even where they will be stored. Furthermore s/he can decide on a host of other things, ranging from what (if any) wall print will be created, how it will be affixed to the walls, to how the furniture will be arranged, and so on.

The teacher has full executive power to create and implement the roles, routines, and relationships that make up the programs, which organize and control the setting. S/he typically has relatively little control over the third component, namely, the actual children who will become the regular “inhabitants” of this setting. Therefore s/he must decide what kind of learning culture s/he wants to create and maintain across the school year, and then what kind of a “program” (i.e. what kinds of “roles, routines, and relationships”) is needed to set it in train.

Essentially the teacher creates and maintains this program through:

- the language used,
- the actions demonstrated,
- the expectations communicated.
In the classrooms that have been studied, this ranges from constantly reminding children of how they’re to sit, listen, respond, take turns, and meet diverse other expectations the teacher has of them.

The outer-edge of the oval represents the physical and temporal boundaries, which encase the setting. For the literacy classrooms that we have studied the physical boundaries would be the four walls of each classroom, whereas the time slots between which the teacher teaches the KLA called “English” mark the temporal boundaries. In the most recent classrooms we’ve observed this is typically 9.00 - 11.00 am, but it is acknowledged that it can occur at other times.

The three generic components of behaviour settings are contained within these boundaries (not necessarily distributed in equal proportions as Figure 1 might suggest) and are in constant interaction, creating and shaping the culture that the teacher wants. This “culture” is represented by, and “floats on” the dots, which fill up the oval. These “dots” represent a fluid, “ocean-like”, ubiquitous, medium which permeates the whole setting; at one level it is moving, dynamic, and ever-changing, whilst at another, it is constant and omnipresent.

During their first practicum our first year students typically complained that there was “so much happening so quickly” in their classrooms that they did not know how to make sense of what they were observing. We decided to restrict our first year students’ observations to the three classes of variable shown in Layer 1. In 2003 KBC students used this layer of the framework to interpret their surroundings in a Year 4 classroom during a literacy block. The following is a breakdown of their observations:
Table 1: Student use of Layer One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paraphernalia</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Programs (for literacy block)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wall Print – many different posters (some instructional)</td>
<td>1 Teacher</td>
<td>Only one person speaks at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text: Lucy in the Leap Year</td>
<td>12 male students</td>
<td>‘Book People’ distribute the books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie Junior Dictionaries</td>
<td>13 female students</td>
<td>Hands are raised by children to answer questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24x Students’ Desk Ensembles</td>
<td>1 x Gifted &amp; Talented (female)</td>
<td>Students proof read and edit own work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupboards</td>
<td>2 x ADD (males)</td>
<td>Line up when waiting at teacher’s desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>1 x Autism (male)</td>
<td>Students fill in their literacy worksheets using a dictionary and pencil in neat writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard Markers</td>
<td>1 x IM (female)</td>
<td>Students will use these words for Spelling Bingo and the Writing Challenge (They are familiar with the Monday morning literacy block routine) and document in their English workbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Desk</td>
<td></td>
<td>All work should be written at their own desk unless teacher states otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 draw filing cabinet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardboard Sheets of Extra Spelling Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookshelf (holding various board games)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookshelf with school magazines, display books, maths, reading, spelling, PD/H/PE &amp; homework exercise books,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencil pots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths equipment (base 10, centicubes, counters etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air conditioner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heater</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World globe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 computers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one is an example of how to use the Setting Theory framework in its simplest form. The KBC students are expected to use information such as that in Table One to write a formal report on the topic “How Literacy is Taught in My Mentor Teacher’s Class”. An extract from a 2003 student report provides an example of how the above information was used, analysed and recorded:

There was no suggestion from the outside that this classroom actually belonged to 4D. Once inside, 24 desk ensembles where neatly arranged into 6 rows with ergonomically designed chairs. The rows were strategically positioned at slight angles so that each desk was equally significant. The desks also had a double purpose as they contained a lift top lid, which opened up to a storage compartment. Each desk sat facing a westerly direction, where focus was drawn to the whiteboard, which indicated the front of the room. In contrast to the stark whiteboard, the walls were bright and vibrantly coloured. Furthermore, they were saturated with text. This text took on various forms including posters stating “Roles and Responsibilities”, grammatical classifications and quotations from the current text being studied (Lucy in the Leap Year). A copy of the novel, Lucy in the Leap Year sat poised on the left hand side of the whiteboard ledge close by the teacher’s chair. Adding to this, the walls also contained student artworks from previous lessons, which were proudly displayed in a precise manner. Thus creating a sense of value, belonging and security. (Sasha & Kylie, May, 2003)
Layer #2: Creating Opportunities to Learn

Once they’ve decided paraphernalia, programs, and been allocated their inhabitants the task facing teachers is to create opportunities for students to learn while they’re immersed in this deliberately manufactured ethos. Teachers do this by creating and orchestrating behavioural events which they typically refer to with a range of labels such as “episodes”, “strategies”, “engagements”, “mini-lessons” and so on. The teachers that we worked with prefer the term “episodes”.

Episodes are deliberately designed by teachers to create opportunities for student learning to occur. As such they are structures that “float” on the ethos created by the mix of the three generic “Level 1” components of the setting, and are influenced by this ethos. Figure 2 (below) shows an “episode” in the literacy learning setting. The boundary around the Episode is dotted. This represents its permeability. The ethos of the larger classroom setting on which it floats can flow back and forth into the episode thus shaping it, and vice-versa.

Episodes can be considered as basic units of teaching behaviour. A school session (morning, mid–morning, afternoon), indeed a whole school day, can be described in terms of a linear sequence of episodes which teachers design and then execute in order to achieve certain predetermined outcomes.

The KBC students had shown that they were adept at using the simplest level of the framework namely Layer One, in order for them to work within Layer Two it was necessary for the students to observe and to write field notes. This was a task that Sasha from KBC 2 stated was not as straight forward as it first seemed. She recalled:

Yes, the setting theory approach allows you to observe school and classroom environments in particular, the teaching and learning strategies and classroom organisation, and to obtain this research you need to observe and record. However, writing the observations was difficult. Trying to write 2 hours of constant verbatim as well as the more subtle occurrences (paraphernalia, expected behaviour etc) was extremely tiring. With reflection we recognised that we had to outline the episodes and transitions in point form, to create our detailed descriptions specific episodes during the literacy block. (May, 2003)
The above reflections from Sasha assisted another group of KBC students who were using Setting Theory for the first time. Amy and Caron recalled how they observed an episode at their school site:

We observed a one hour maths lesson that focused on measurement. We took our field notes in dot point form. These notes gave us a brief summary of the events that occurred during the lesson. From these notes we were able to compile a joint detailed recollection of all the events that occurred in this lesson – these notes became our ‘cooked’ notes. From our ‘cooked’ notes we devised a number of questions to ask Leanne (the class teacher) in order to help clarify our understanding of how maths was taught in her Kindergarten class.

(September, 2003)

Amy and Caron reported that the more they observed the teaching episodes in their classroom the easier it was to identify the explicit implementation that their mentor teacher was using in her classroom. Through their series of observations they recognised that each episode had:

- An introduction
- Explicit teaching of concepts
- Practical application of concepts taught
- Conclusion

Figure 2: Layer 2

Episodes are mini-settings, which are specifically created for “Opportunities for participation in purpose/raison d’etre” of the setting as whole.

1. Episodes are mini-settings, which are immersed in and saturated by the “ethos” which underpins the larger setting.
2. The boundary around the Episode is dotted. This represents its permeability. The essence of the larger setting can therefore flow back and forth into the episode and shape it and vice-versa.
3. Episodes are basic units of participant behaviour, and are therefore sub-settings of the larger setting.
4. A Literacy Session is made up of a linear sequence of episodes, which teachers design and then execute in order to achieve certain predetermined outcomes.
5. While episodes can vary in duration, purpose, label, the numbers of inhabitants who “enter” them, the paraphernalia these inhabitants interact with, and programs which they adhere to while in them, there is one thing they all have in common: they are deliberately created "opportunities for participation in purpose/raison d’etre” of the setting as whole.
In their report looking at the teaching of maths in this Kindergarten class the KBC students explained the above sequence:

The introduction and much of the explicit teaching is oral. The practical application of the concepts is mainly hands-on and these often include activities or short games from the *Count Me In Too Program*. At the conclusion of an episode the children are formally assessed to ensure that they have understood what has been taught.

(Amy & Caron, September, 2003)

**Layer Three: Unpacking Episodes**

Figure 3 (below) is an example of a typical classroom setting in which a series of episodes have been “chained” together by the teacher to enable him/her to achieve the multiplicity of outcomes associated with the KLA being taught. The arrows between the episodes represent what teachers refer to as “transition” activities, (“hands on heads, shoulders, knees, up in the air” etc) which function specifically to focus the students’ attention so that a new episode can begin.

To utilise the Framework effectively the students were being asked to intently observe their classroom. As a result of doing this they actually discovered that there was more going on in the classroom than they had first realised. Derek and Tammy were in the second year KBC program and like Sasha, Amy and Caron this was their first experience using Setting Theory. They commented thus:

The first field notes session was physically hard. And as second year students we had a basic understanding of how the classroom worked and therefore we did question the value of the Setting Theory Framework.
However, by undertaking this exercise it allowed us to fully appreciate what actually happens within the setting, as well as the multiple roles of the teacher. We really didn’t realise how much actually went into a morning literacy block. We actually saw that the teacher completed in one session three episodes and two transitions. (Derek & Tammy, May 2003)

In their report the KBC students represented the structure of this literacy session thus:

![Figure 4: KBC 2 Students Representation of Layer 3](image)

The above diagram shows that the students had observed in the course of the literacy block, Modeled Reading, followed by a transition game (Guess What?), which led to another episode, Spelling. The Spelling episode was then followed by yet another transition activity called Spelling Bingo which was in turn followed by the final episode; Writing Challenge.

At first when the KBC students were asked to utilise the Setting Theory in their assignment tasks they commented initially that the Framework seemed “too obvious”. They thought that as second year students they understood the observations they were making. However it was not until they started to analyse their field notes and discuss their observations with their mentor teachers that they developed a deeper awareness of the rationale behind the structural and procedural organization of the teaching of literacy.

Sasha and Kylie also questioned the rationale for engaging in Level 2 analysis, especially the value of the questions they asked their mentor teachers. Their comments are similar to Derek’s and Tammy’s:
Based on our observations of the literacy block and the breakdown of the Spelling episode we believed our interview questions were too simplistic. One of our questions was Why do you make students mime the spelling words? To us it seemed obvious that this was to cater for visual and kinesthetic learners. Although this was true, throughout the course of the interview our awareness about children’s learning was deepened as Margaret stated: “Students do not always have excellent comprehension skills. Also, you should never assume the students’ prior knowledge. Combining comprehension as well as their background knowledge makes the learning relevant and can reinforce new ideas being learnt”. We had not taken this into account previously but valued the new information gained. (Sasha & Kylie, May 2003)

It seemed the experience of doing a Layer 3 analysis spilled over to their own literacy lessons. The students became acutely aware of both the structure of episodes and transitions as well as the rationale behind each episode they used. Sasha and Kylie for example reported that with the insights gained through the use of the Layer 3 analysis, they were more conscious of the relevance of the content they needed to provide and how best to respond to student answers and behaviours.

One of the hoped-for spin-offs of the use the Setting Theory Framework was to create a professional dialogue between mentor teachers and preservice students, which focused on the teaching and learning of children in the classroom context. The students generally agreed that what they initially thought was straightforward and mundane developed into an interesting exercise.

The research component was interesting the observations and interviews provided a more relevant means of investigating and understanding the teaching and learning that we were observing in the classroom. Our mentor teacher’s answers were always pitched appropriately for us as second year preservice teachers. Her responses did not rely heavily on intellectual jargon instead we spoke as colleagues would in a discussion concerning students’ learning. (Kerrie, September 2003)

**Layer 4: What Makes an Episode Tick?**

We have identified one more layer of analysis which builds on and extends the previous three Although we haven’t had a chance to trial it with students yet, it can be reliably applied to archival field note records of classrooms we have studied in previous research projects.
Figure 5 above is a schematic representation of this final layer of possible analysis. The episode, which has been “unpacked” in Figure 5, is one taken from repeated observations of a daily episode employed by a Kindergarten teacher. She refers to the episode as her “Days in Week/Weather/Numbers Present Episode”.

The teacher uses this episode to teach both calendar and literacy skills and knowledge. Typically she leads a joint construction of predictable sentences about the day, date, the weather, and uses the opportunity to focus her students’ on reading, writing, spelling, phonemic awareness and other literacy-related skills, as well as some counting, adding, and subtracting of numbers.

Our attempts to apply this level of analysis to our archival data has identified four discrete components of episodes:
1. “Field”
This refers to the content knowledge, which permeates the episode. In terms of the episode in described in Figure 5 the Field consisted of multiple aspects of literacy and/or mathematical knowledge, which the teacher thought were appropriate for her class at this particular time in the school year.

2. “Structure”
This refers to the specific teaching strategies the teacher employed in the episode. In this example the teacher typically began this episode with what she called “teacher demonstration of the expected behaviour and responses in this episode. This was followed by the teacher and students jointly constructing the new chart message. Interspersed throughout this joint construction students were called on to apply knowledge by shifting word cards on the chart, responding to questions about sounds, words, order of days in the week, numbers of boys, girls in the class, and lots of feedback relating to the responses the students gave to these questions and application.

3. “Expectations”
These refer to the messages about the roles, routines, and procedures to be used and employed during this episode. At this stage of the kindergarten year these were predominantly messages about attending, listening, responding, sitting, moving, using print resources in the room etc.

4. “Processes”
These refer to the processes, which underpin their structures and make them “work”. In the main they are language processes, which the teacher employs to support the students’ learning. In this episode the teacher used such things and oral cloze (If yesterday was Tuesday tomorrow must be…?), “think-alouds” (“Let me see, what sound does Friday begin with? What letters can carry that sound?) and “giving reasons” (or making explicit the rational for) engaging in the field and expectations of the episode. (It’s important to listen carefully because… We can learn how to write, read, and spell better if we can use both letter names and the sounds they carry).

We intend to trial this layer of analysis with fourth year students who have demonstrated competence in applying the three previous layers.

Conclusion

Although we were hopeful that the graduated use of Setting Theory would enable students to make connections with theory and better observe the daily happenings of classrooms, until we were able to trial it with our KBC students we could not test this assumption. From the analysis of students’ reports, interviews and conversations undertaken with them it would appear that the first three layers of the Framework can and does support their attempts at systematic observation of classrooms. It would appear from first attempts with the Setting Theory Framework that the students were able to think, write and report about teaching in terms of the four generic components, (i.e. paraphernalia, inhabitants, programs, and episodes) without being overwhelmed by the complexity of what they were being asked to observe.
It also provided an opportunity for preservice teachers and mentor teachers to have a common dialogue that helped them talk about the subtle and complex differences between different classrooms and the nature of the learning, which takes place in them.

It is envisaged that with further research and subsequent cohorts of students that the Setting Theory Framework can become a useful adjunct to the ‘Productive Pedagogies’ and ‘Quality Teaching’ policies currently being promoted by both the NSW and Queensland Departments of Education.

References


