CHILD-INITIATED LITERACY EPISODES:

SITES OF SIGNIFICANT LEARNING IN

EARLY EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of Doctor of Education in the Faculty of Education

at James Cook University, Cairns, Australia.

December, 2004

Abstract

This teacher-research explores child-initiated literacy episodes within the literacy-learning context of a particular Year One classroom. The aim of the case study was to identify and explore the elements, effects and outcomes of the literacy-learning context and the ensuing child-initiated literacy episodes that occurred. Data were collected daily using qualitative data techniques and classroom experiences were documented using observations, field notes, journalistic notes, written comments of interactive sessions, samples of student work and a reflective journal.

Child-initiated literacy episodes occurred within scheduled literacy practices of the classroom and arose from child interest in an environment of co-operation and collaboration where literacies and learning embodied children's lives. The interactive literacy episodes encompassed children's sharing and volunteering information as they demonstrated understandings and literacies. The teacher-researcher acknowledged literacies as social practice and considered construction of learning, co-construction of knowledge and interactive scaffolding as effective early childhood pedagogy. The open-ended scheduled literacy practices built on the children's literate identities as they called on lived experiences, immediate and global worlds in everyday classroom life.

The research conclusions illustrated children as dynamic and powerful learners as they initiated meaningful learning, made connections and demonstrated multiple ways of knowing in building their literate identities and using everyday literacies. In addition, the 'enabling' teacher established classroom conditions that were

underpinned by core assumptions and key understandings about how young children learned. Such classroom conditions enabled child-initiated literacy episodes to occur within the rich literacy context and become sites of significant learning.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and thank those who have been instrumental in the completion of this project. To Dr. Mary Klein, James Cook University, Cairns who has been there every step of the way. Thank you for the pertinent questions, lengthy discussions, writing advice and invaluable assistance throughout this venture. Your guidance and unfailing encouragement will always be remembered.

To Dr. Merle Iles, University of Melbourne, who has pushed and pressed from afar helping me ponder and write from different perspectives. Thank you for refocussing me at those critical times when one inevitably strays from the track.

I would like to give special thanks to the children who participated in the study and the parents of the children who made it all possible. The children's creativity, originality and different 'ways of seeing' often kept me going. Thanks also to the school Principal who made administrative tasks much easier and supported the project from the beginning.

Finally, heartfelt thanks go to my family. To my parents, William and Marjorie Malcolm who started me on this lifelong literacy journey all those years ago. To children Laura and Malcolm, who gave their love and encouragement from afar. To my husband William Swan, who supported and encouraged me despite the very long hours at the computer, I thank you.

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