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# Professionally Developing Teachers or Teachers Developing Professionally?

A Narrative Inquiry into the Professional Development  
Experiences of Three Primary School Teachers in  
North Queensland.

Thesis submitted by

Christine Margot Mensinga-Payard  
BEd (Hons); MEd Studies  
in April 2007

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the School of Education,  
James Cook University

## **DEDICATION**

**Remembering and honouring**

**Daniel John Payard**

**29-07-1960 to 01-09-2006**

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## **STATEMENT OF SOURCES**

### **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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## **STATEMENT ON CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS**

The research presented and reported in this thesis was completed with stipend support from a James Cook University School of Education Postgraduate Research Scholarship. Further support by others is acknowledged overleaf.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks to Mark and Jane—the information you provided to me in our interviews helped contextualise the research. I gained valuable insight into the history of the school and relationships on the Greenway landscape through our discussions. The material I gained from you both is so rich I can think of many more research documents and texts that can flow from them. Hopefully, at some stage in my research and writing career, I will be able to do you both justice.

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Daniel, my husband and partner in many things, you knew, perhaps more than me, that once I started this I would work towards finishing it. You made me promise I would complete it no matter what your health outcomes were. Well, I am here. Thanks for sticking with me pretty much all the way through. Our story as a family and as a couple has helped me realise the importance of the well balanced, all round person I want to be. Thanks for the ongoing love and life experiences you provided in our time together.

## **ABSTRACT**

Professional development for teachers has long been seen as a major way in which student learning outcomes can be improved and as a way in which new educational practices can be instituted within the education system. Education Queensland policy documents, statements and reports indicate a concerted effort needs to be made in Queensland to ensure that change practices yield successful and consistent results across the state in order to provide quality educational outcomes for all Queensland students. However, considerable research has demonstrated that reform strategies and change practices often yield mixed results in terms of effectiveness. According to a wide body of research, the most effective form of educational change requires the participation of teachers not only as receptors and conduits of reform, but as determiners and mediators of change. So, what really happens in the professional development of our teachers, particularly in regional Queensland?

This research project describes professional development experiences of three primary school teachers in a regional setting in 2001/2002 using a narrative inquiry approach described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). The narratives of these participants indicate that professional development is an individual experiential process that is ongoing and occurring within a complex professional landscape incorporating biographical, social, historical and systemic contexts of operation. Teachers' professional development is integrally associated with stories of identity over time and incorporates negotiated relationships with others who share the educational landscape they inhabit. This narrative inquiry includes not only the participants' perspectives of their experiences, but also mine as a researcher using a narrative inquiry process. The reader is invited to view teachers developing professionally from the individual's perspective and consider the value of such perspectives when considering teachers' professional growth within our schools.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>STATEMENT OF ACCESS .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ELECTRONIC COPY .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>STATEMENT OF SOURCES .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>STATEMENT ON CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>PRELUDE TO THIS THESIS EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: AN EVOLVING QUESTION: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHIC MOMENT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>An Autobiographical Moment .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Me and My Narrative – 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 .....</i>	<i>10</i>
Learning About Experience and Learning.....	10
A Growing Concern: Teachers and Professional Development.....	15
<b>CHAPTER 2: EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE AND POLICY DOCUMENTS – A RESEARCH CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<i>Professional Development Research – The Australian Scene.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>The Queensland Educational Landscape in 2000/2001 .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Socio-cultural factors affecting education according to Education Queensland.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>What’s missing from QSE–2010?.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Structural Context .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>School Change Literature .....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Findings of The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) .....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Addressing Professional Development Issues.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Professional Development: What really happens? .....</i>	<i>48</i>
<b>CHAPTER 3: WHY NARRATIVE INQUIRY?.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<i>Narrative Research: A Broad Picture.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>What is Distinctive about Narrative Inquiry?.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Narrative as a Way of Understanding Experience .....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Narrative Inquiry--Incorporating All Participants: Subjects, Researcher and Reader ...</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space .....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Presenting Research Findings in a Reader-Friendly Way.....</i>	<i>58</i>

<b>CHAPTER 4: BECOMING A NARRATIVE INQUIRER: A NARRATIVE ON A NARRATIVE INQUIRY .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<i>Study Details: Where? Who? How?.....</i>	62
<i>Where?.....</i>	62
<i>Who?.....</i>	63
<i>How? The Field Work. ....</i>	63
<i>Omnipresent Research Concerns.....</i>	66
<i>Research Decisions.....</i>	71
<b>CHAPTER 5: INTRODUCING GREENWAY AS A PLACE OF INQUIRY .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<i>Greenway State School .....</i>	90
<i>Introducing Support Characters .....</i>	92
<i>Adam, the Principal.....</i>	92
<i>Mark, The Deputy Principal.....</i>	95
<i>Jane, The Teacher-Librarian.....</i>	96
<i>Story 1: Beginning A Student Free Day at Greenway State School.....</i>	96
<i>Story 2: Enter the Researcher.....</i>	110
<b>CHAPTER 6: THE RUBY LETTERS.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<i>Letter One: A Letter of Introduction .....</i>	116
<i>Letter Two: The Special School Experience.....</i>	118
<i>Letter Three: Transition to Greenway State School.....</i>	123
<i>Letter Four: Staff and Collegial Relationships .....</i>	129
<i>Letter Five: Time and Hats .....</i>	132
<i>Letter Six: What is Professional Development? A Reflection .....</i>	136
<i>Letter Seven: Professional Development Experiences .....</i>	139
<i>Letter Eight: A Final Note.....</i>	146
<b>CHAPTER 7: THE MOLLY LETTERS.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<i>Letter One: A Letter of Introduction .....</i>	148
<i>Letter Two: Professional Growth at Greenway.....</i>	152
<i>Letter Three: Relationships.....</i>	158
<i>Letter Four: Relationships to Link Theory and Practice .....</i>	165
<i>Letter Five: Formal Professional Development.....</i>	166
<i>Letter Six: Curriculum Alliance.....</i>	169
<i>Letter Seven: Productive Pedagogies .....</i>	179
<i>Letter Eight: A Final Reflection.....</i>	186
<b>CHAPTER 8: THE TONI LETTERS.....</b>	<b>188</b>
<i>Letter One: A Letter of Introduction .....</i>	188
<i>Letter two: Life, Career and Professional Development.....</i>	190
<i>Letter Three: A Point About Time .....</i>	195

<i>Letter Four: Accepting Multiple Roles (Hats)</i> .....	197
<i>Letter Six: Other Educational Experiences outside the Classroom</i> .....	207
<i>Letter Seven: Greenway and Collaborative Partnerships</i> .....	213
<i>Letter Eight: Once a Teacher, Always a Learner</i> .....	216
<i>Letter Nine: Curriculum Alliance</i> .....	218
<i>Letter Ten: The Productive Pedagogies Experience</i> .....	227
<i>Letter Eleven: A Postscript</i> .....	231
<b>CHAPTER 9: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STORIES, STORIES OF IDENTITY</b> .....	<b>233</b>
<i>Some Background</i> .....	239
<i>Ruby's Experience: Professional Development, a Commentary</i> .....	241
<i>Safe Place Stories—negotiating the social landscape</i> .....	247
<i>Communal Mantras/Common Choruses—Cover Stories in the Profession</i> .....	248
<i>Stories of Collaboration and Deceit</i> .....	251
<i>Time and Removal Stories</i> .....	252
<i>An Epilogue</i> .....	255
<i>A Postscript: A Secret Story?</i> .....	256
<i>I listen to Molly</i> .....	258
<i>Molly's Experience: Professional Development, a Commentary</i> .....	260
<i>An Epilogue</i> .....	268
<i>I listen to Toni</i> .....	270
<i>Toni's Experience: Professional Development, a Commentary</i> .....	272
<i>An Epilogue</i> .....	278
<b>CHAPTER 10: A REVIEW AND A NEW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STORY</b> .....	<b>279</b>
<i>Opportunity: Greenway Participants, Different Perspectives and Additional Stories</i> .....	281
<i>Opportunity: Researcher as Participant, Developing as a Narrative Inquirer</i> .....	282
<i>Opportunity: New Professional Development Language, Definitions and Perspectives on Change</i> ..	283
<i>Opportunity: Exploring Resourcing and Time Issues</i> .....	286
<i>Opportunity: Exploring Blurred Boundaries and Stories to Live by</i> .....	287
<i>Opportunity: Developing New Professional Development Stories</i> .....	290
<i>Opportunity: Revisiting the Theory and Practice Nexus</i> .....	292
<i>Narrative Inquiry: Possibilities to Explore Opportunities</i> .....	293
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>296</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: EXCERPTS FROM TAPE 7 MOLLY 10/05/02</b> .....	<b>304</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE ASPECT ANALYSIS SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>317</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS USED IN GREENWAY STATE SCHOOL AND EDUCATION QUEENSLAND</b> .....	<b>322</b>

## **PRELUDE TO THIS THESIS EXPERIENCE**

15<sup>th</sup> May, 2006

Dear Reader,

Welcome to a narrative account of a research experience exploring professional development experiences of three primary school teachers in a regional school in Far North Queensland. This research story has taken almost six years to conduct and record as some major life experiences coincided with my academic endeavours. This story has a uniqueness that pertains specifically to me as the inquirer and author. I begin, therefore, with a brief account of several features of the document so that you, as a reader, can be prepared for the account of research experience you are about to encounter. Included are some expectations that I hold for you and your role as a reader. Whilst I cannot prescribe nor predict your reactions to this document, I can tell you a little of how I see our relationship as author and reader during this shared part of my research journey, and warn you about what you can expect from the experience before we begin. Perhaps you can view this section as the preliminary “spiel” that a tour guide may provide before embarking on an adventure.

This narrative inquiry presents the story of a research experience that began in 2000. The research text that you are reading is one representation of that experience. It incorporates a number of different styles/genres of writing that I feel best represent the purpose and intent of my research project and the method of research that I selected. A fundamental premise of mine and many other narrative and naturalistic inquirers, including Dewey (1938), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Polkinghorne (1988), McAdams (1993) and others, is that the human experience of life is shared, presented and often reconstructed and represented through stories. Those stories take the form and shape of many different genres and styles including personal letters, comic renditions and jokes, dramatic plays or serialised dramas, journal articles, novels, news stories and among others, formal positivist thesis structures. Experience, as recorded in these various genres, is, nonetheless, storied.

The structure of this thesis demonstrates the inquiry and storied nature of experience that I sought to investigate. It is not a linear construction or replication of the sequence in which the research occurred although parts of it may appear to be sequentially ordered. The table of contents provides you with the outline and sequential presentation of the research text that is fundamentally designed to provide contextual information before providing detailed accounts of the narrative experiences I investigated.

There are two parallel themes presented in this text: my development professionally as a researcher, and an account of the narratives of experience of the teachers in my study. Narrative inquiry is considered to be both phenomenon and method (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) and this thesis demonstrates that concept. In many ways, it is as much a story about my research journey and learning about narrative inquiry, as it is a story of the experiences of the participants. Whilst occurring concurrently in time throughout the research process, the concepts are not portrayed simultaneously in the research text, yet one could not be learnt without the other.

Chapter 1 is designed to provide you with an understanding of the context of the research project by including a discussion of my own personal background and history that led to the research inquiry topic. This is done primarily through the use of an autobiographical journal entry that introduces me as a major participant and character in the narrative inquiry described in this text.

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the research and documentation that existed at the beginning of my inquiry and that helped refine and focus my attention on what I considered was missing in the educational research at the time. I am aware that much research has been produced and added to the field during the period of my research project that could be included in a discussion about professional development and teachers, but to include that in this section would be an inaccurate representation of the research context that I entered in 2000/2001. References to

more recent research and theory are integrated into the chapters following the narrative presentation of the participants' accounts of their professional development experiences.

Chapter 3 is essentially a broad presentation of narrative inquiry concepts and fundamental tenets that place this method of study in the broader context of educational and social science research and that demonstrates why I selected it as a research method. It portrays the aspects of narrative inquiry and research that I believe reflect the complexity of human experience and that I endeavour to capture in this thesis.

Chapter 4 offers a narrative account of the experiences I had in conducting this narrative inquiry. It presents the dilemmas, challenges and rationale behind many research decisions. It illustrates the application of the narrative inquiry tenets and principles outlined in Chapter 3. A different narrative inquiry would present different challenges and relationships to negotiate with different rationales and decisions having to be made. Chapter 4 demonstrates why narrative inquiry cannot be reduced to a formulaic method of research. Chapter 4 also provides some contextual information about the narrative accounts that occur in the following four chapters. It positions the accounts in the research text and provides some crucial contextual details – as Phillion (2002) would suggest, it helps to introduce the inquiry landscape and the narratives I have constructed.

Chapter 5 comprises two short stories that lead you into the physical and social landscape of Greenway State Primary School, the site of my research. I introduce the narrative genres I selected for this chapter and provide reasons for my choice before 'opening the gates' of Greenway State Primary School for you.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are the series of letters I wrote as narrative accounts of experiences the teacher participants provided me. These are the essence and focus of my research and what I consider the "juiciest" parts of the research text. These are the stories of experience I was



looking for. The letters do not have an introductory commentary; that would detract from the stories. At this point in the research text I will have probably spoken enough and I allow you to hear the voices of the people with whom I worked so closely.

Chapters 9 and 10 draw together many of the issues I started to identify about professional development through the stories of my participant teachers. They include my reflections on the issues of professional development that arose during my study and draw in aspects of research from many sectors that I believe are relevant when considering teachers' professional development. Current literature and other narrative studies I read and referred to during my research journey are referenced in these chapters. In essence, these chapters draw together the narrative inquiry process as a past event and represent my current view and story of professional development now. They also pose further questions for the future including considerations of the social and physical contexts in which our teachers operate, the relationships that impact on their experience and the history and future of education in Queensland and, perhaps more specifically, in a regional centre.

Reader, throughout this thesis you will note that I discuss and reflect on my role as a research participant and I deliberately include references to my responses to the stories presented by the other participants. I believe my role in this research is characterised by subjective responses and I do my best to identify them as such. I reacted to the stories and incidents relayed to me as I was reminded of many aspects of education and personal experience I considered relevant. You, as a reader, are likely to also find yourself interacting with the stories and resonating with aspects of the narratives provided by all of the research participants. In fact, I consider that you too are a participant. I am reminded of a radio interview in which Jon Cleary, the novelist, referred to a statement by Graham Greene: "There are only two people involved in a book: the reader and the writer" (2003). How you respond and resonate with the stories of experience provided here will depend on your stories of experience.

I invite you then, to begin this adventure tour with me and enjoy the stories and opportunities it presents to you in considering the question of three teachers' professional development experiences in a regional Queensland primary school and the inquiry that brought these to your attention.

Regards,  
Chris.

## CHAPTER 1: AN EVOLVING QUESTION: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHIC MOMENT

*I am always an interpreter because I cannot rid myself of my personal history, nor can I step out of the world in which I live when I confront whatever objects I choose to explore. Interpretations permeate perception, inquiry and representation. (Conle, 2005:203)*

I begin this research document by unpacking some of the experiences that brought me to consider the research topic and the form of inquiry. It is important to consider the reasons for my selection of methodology not only from a theoretical perspective regarding what it can offer the world of educational knowledge. I also need to examine and present my own story of why and how I arrived at this place in my educational experience because an inherent aspect of narrative inquiry acknowledges, addresses and considers the personal contribution of the researcher as a participant in the research project (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Conle, 1993, 1997a; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Phillion, 1999, 2002). As Conle suggests, “Experiential narratives implicitly carry within themselves the tacit knowledge of the narrators” (Conle, 1997a:141). As a reader, you need to know then, how and why I chose to identify and investigate this particular research puzzle.

In reviewing the teacher’s role in teaching and curriculum planning, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) have discussed the concept of personal practical knowledge and its impact on teachers’ curriculum planning and teaching practices. Personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:25) involves the individual’s reconstruction of the past, incorporating “intentions for the future [in order to] deal with the exigencies of a present situation.” It is important to note, Connelly and Clandinin continue, that in various circumstances and contexts, a person’s personal practical knowledge may vary:

*A person’s personal practical knowledge depends in important measure on the situation. In many ways we are different people, and may be said to know different things, when we talk to a child than when we talk to the principal, and again when we engage in recreation, and yet again when we act as parent, friend or lover. A narrative understanding of who we are and what we know, therefore, is a study of our whole life, but it does not presume a kind of syrupy ‘Hollywood’ unity. It*

*acknowledges the tensions and differences within each of us. We are, in important ways, what the situation 'pulls out' of us. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:26)*

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), amongst others, have since gone on to develop and write about narrative inquiry as a process of researching, exploring, experiencing and writing about the experiences of others in education in order to demonstrate the complexity of interaction between individual experience and context. This research process builds on the concept briefly presented above in the discussion of personal practical knowledge.

In applying the concept of personal practical knowledge to research, contextual factors, including those surrounding the researcher, need to be considered and presented to the reader so that the research and factors impacting on its presentation are not seen as neutral, value-free and uninfluenced by the personal practical knowledge of the researcher. The researcher's "personal practical knowledge" is embedded in the narrative inquiry dimensions of temporality, place and social contexts in which he/she operates (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As researcher, I therefore have an obligation to present some autobiographical details that enable the reader to identify the personal practical knowledge that I bring to the research project not just as a researcher, but also as a teacher with experience in many different educational contexts, as a parent with experience of an education system from a parent's perspective, as a wife, as a carer, a colleague and critical friend, a partner, director and manager of a small business, and more.

The notion of professional learning and development embodied in this research project goes beyond looking at just the 'schooling' aspect of the teachers and their professional, teaching roles. It incorporates and refers to the contexts in which teachers operate sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly as the edges of contexts overlap and blur and impact on the personal practical knowledge of the participants. A fundamental premise of this research regarding the education and learning of teachers is Dewey's concept of experience as education (Dewey, 1938). As Connelly and Clandinin suggest, education and learning is "beyond that of schooling:"

*In understanding ourselves and our students educationally, we need an understanding of people with a narrative of life experience, of which the school is only a part. Life's narratives are the context for making meaning of school situations. It is no more possible to understand a child as only a student than it is to understand each of ourselves as only a teacher. We are that, but we are many other things as well. Indeed, the kind of teacher that we are reflects the kind of life that we lead. The same may be said of our students. (1988:27)*

The same, I would add, may be said of researchers. A brief autobiographical explanation of my experience and path, therefore, provides significant contextual information so that you may learn more about me and, in turn, my interpretations of experience presented in the narratives of experience in this research text. (Phillion, 2002).

### **An Autobiographical Moment**

While conducting this research project I have found myself writing journal entries that emphasise different issues of importance to me at that particular time of writing. Sometimes my journals reflect my role as a researcher playing with and testing theories and their implications for my research and the field texts that I collected. At other times I am a teacher remembering how I responded to “another professional development (PD) imposition from on high”. Then I become the carer who is viewing my role looking after a seriously ill husband and wondering what I can take from this amazing “love and life lesson” of ours that applies to the world of learning and my current and future role in education and, indeed, in life. At another point I am the mother who is concerned about the application of curriculum in my sons’ school, and the implications those experiences may have on my sons and their future as students, adolescents and ultimately as adults. Another experience as a Director of a small business then leads me to consider other aspects of professional development and to examine my reactions to being in a position of staff and HR manager trying to introduce changes in practice in order to enhance efficiency and productivity. At another stage, I am the critical friend and sister providing feedback to my sister, Jo, who is in the process of completing a narrative inquiry thesis of her own that incorporates challenges of working within a traditional positivistic academic

institution. I had different situational circumstances to negotiate in my research, but Jo's dilemmas impacted on my thinking about my research and experiences.

At another point in my journal I am the school girl wondering about my own childhood experiences as an immigrant child of difference contemplating diplomatic responses that will enable me to gain acceptance amongst a group of "new friends" at a new school while still answering stupid questions like: "how come if you're from Africa you aren't black?" I contemplate the significance of my own immigrant experience and wonder what impact that has had on me, the adult and professional that I have become.

Then, at another point in my journal, I am the daughter reflecting on the amazing role my parents have played in my life encouraging me to continue to think independently from those around me, to learn to appreciate cultural difference and honour it, to identify my strengths and abilities and pursue them. I am grateful for their world view that led them to provide me with international experiences that have impacted greatly on the development of my values and principles of living. I wonder what could have happened if we had migrated to Canada or England or Holland instead of Australia? How has my Australian, indeed my rural Queensland childhood and schooling impacted on the development of my thoughts and values and principles of practice as a professional?

The journal entries are sometimes short, but more often they are long rambling pieces that jump from one topic or thought to another. All represent an aspect of my biography and, I believe, contribute to the "whole" of who I am now. They do not encapsulate the full story of who I am, but they do provide some insight into some significant reflections that were inspired by the research process. Not all of them are directly relevant to the research topic.

So, what do I include in a piece that demonstrates how I arrived where I did in the beginning of 2000 when I started to ponder my research topic? Do I just focus on my role in the formal realm

of education even though that was across various contexts? Or do I draw together aspects of the “whole me” that I believe have greatly impacted on my personal and professional development, because I am not sure that the two are mutually exclusive?

Whilst this dilemma of mine is not new, it demonstrates the constant interplay of past experiences and contexts that have brought me to the present and that will impact on my future choices. The whole consists of all its parts, and another dilemma I face in writing this is what part of the whole do I choose to emphasise for the purpose of this text?

In selecting the aspects of my own story to include in this thesis, I chose to reflect on Harris’ remarks about the role of self-reflexivity in which she made reference to Davies’ (1999) work,

*Reflexive ethnography – A guide to researching selves and others:*

*the self-ethnographic process is a form of self-reflexivity that is at the core of methodological principles, ‘not in terms of self-absorption, but rather in order to use the inter-relationship between researcher and other to inform and change social knowledge’ (Davies, 1999:3). This self-reflexivity is a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference (Davies, 1999) in which the writer considers deeply the content of her writing with the intent of answering questions that she has about her own life story and of anticipating the questions that readers might have. (Harris, 2005:39)*

Consequently, my guiding principle in selecting what to include in this autobiographical moment becomes an issue of identifying the questions that I anticipate the reader may have about me as the researcher. I have chosen therefore to include an edited extract from my journal recorded in 2001 when I was in the early stages of the research process identifying the question, the methodology and preparing a written piece for presentation to colleagues at the University as my “colloquium” for my research project. Obviously this piece reflects many of my personal thoughts in mid 2001. Much has happened since then in the field of research, in particular in the amount of published works in narrative inquiry, and also in my own professional learning as a researcher and teacher. This excerpt is situated in the past, reflecting on preceding events, and forms part of the experiential basis which informed the research project. It describes what has become an integral component of the experience base for my research not only in terms of my

life experiences and gaining of knowledge in the long term, but also in terms of how I choose to present, craft and write the remaining parts of my research text. This is the essence and nature of the narrative inquiry experience that incorporates the researcher as participant. In order to provide some structure and reduce the rambling nature of the long journal entry, I have condensed and edited some parts and have introduced a number of headings.

## **Me and My Narrative – 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2001**

### **Learning About Experience and Learning**

*I'm coming to terms identifying myself as a researcher. I don't see myself as a traditional university researcher/academic (whatever that is!). As I read and reflect on teachers' perceptions of academics, I know the view isn't necessarily a complimentary one: "Those who can't, teach; Those who can't teach, teach teachers!" Why would I want to become one of "those"? But, good teachers can teach, and I'm quite a good teacher (or at least I've been told that!). But, I really want to know more about the life of teachers though because so much is assumed and taken for granted. **Especially, I want to know more about the way teachers continue to learn and implement that learning in their practice.** Why? Because these people influence the life of my children and our children in our society. Associated with this concern are questions like: Why don't we value the work teachers do so much? Why do we have a teacher shortage? Perhaps we need to know more and show more about what teachers actually do. But, more personally, I guess one of my reasons for doing this is to explore a fundamental belief that reflects my own philosophy of teaching and learning.*

*When teaching students, I like to get to know them, to establish rapport and discover "where they are at?" in terms of the subject they are studying or the topic we will be addressing in the course or the training program in which we are involved as a team. I need to examine the context, get to know the characters a bit and then together move towards a goal, one that I hope we share. I see myself as a facilitator of learning, someone who has skills, knowledge in enabling people to access knowledge, and foster growth both personally and professionally. I am intrigued by and am committed to the learning process and am very much aware of individual learning processes. I acknowledge that people come to my courses as successful learners already. They have learned many skills, attitudes and acquired much knowledge to get them to where they are now and in a locality that includes my presence and participation. We are joint characters on the scene, both with histories, perceptions, beliefs and biases that will influence what happens in the learning situation and impact greatly on what we take away from it. I strongly believe we are always learning, no matter what situation we are in. We learn about ourselves, about others, about situations and about our world. We learn about time and relational and temporal things. We never stop. Sometimes we are aware we are learning and conscious of the process, sometimes we are not so cognisant of the personal development that occurs. I also know that I haven't always viewed my role in education in this way. So, what are the things that have contributed to this moulding process for me? What is my history in education,*

and is that significant and important to acknowledge in a study such as this? In short, I think the answer is "Yes". My experience in education across many aspects of my life reflects my philosophy and commitment to whole life learning.

When I left school I didn't want to be a teacher, although even then I was fascinated by language, the power of language and the effects it had on perception and learning. I was going to be a speech pathologist. I soon learned that wasn't "me" when undergoing a bit of work experience with a speech pathologist. I liked teaching, and I specifically wanted to work with teenagers. I had just spent seven months as a student in a Swedish school staying with a Swedish family. I knew no Swedish when I arrived, but learned it rapidly. I realised the frustrations of communication difficulties early in that Swedish experience. I was a hesitant speaker, although my comprehension of the language and conversations around me was fairly good. I only became more confident when I heard other exchange students speaking Swedish and communicating successfully with much less language proficiency than I could demonstrate. By overcoming my fear to speak, I realised that I started to learn considerably more about the language and communicating – participation and gaining speaking experience speeded up the learning process. I am no longer proficient in the language, but the lesson in learning had a huge impact on me and my understanding of what it was like to be in a strange context.

A three month stay in Holland with my grandmother following my Swedish experience provided me with yet another lesson in adaptation. My grandmother was having her afternoon sleep. A salesman knocked on the door. I answered it and understood what he was saying in Dutch, but I answered in Swedish. I have never learned to speak Dutch, but again my exposure to the language enabled me to comprehend the situation and what was spoken. My immediate response in Swedish not only startled the visitor, but also demonstrated how I used immediate past experience and language knowledge to respond to the demands of this new situation. I was learning valuable life lessons about learning and responding to new situations.

Following my European experiences, my parents were successful in gaining a professional placement in Idaho, USA. I was given the option of returning to Australia or moving to Idaho to study. I jumped at the opportunity to study Speech Pathology in the United States. It was while I was there that I changed my mind about my professional direction. I returned to Australia in 1982, after 2 years in the USA, and pursued my Education degree in Townsville.

I completed my Research Honours degree that focussed on the mediating processes students engaged in when responding to teacher questions (C. Mensinga, 1987). Once again that research demonstrated the importance of an individual's history in responding to learning situations. In my research I realised the importance of the impact of students' prior knowledge and experience. I termed these "personal frames of reference". Each student presented a unique response that reflected their own story and each student presented different understandings and personalised learning outcomes as a result of the teacher's questions. The study demonstrated clearly that what a teacher may be intending as a learning outcome may not in fact occur as a learning outcome for the student because of the personal frames of reference, the personal stories and interpretations that the students brought with



them to the learning situation. The input = output equation wasn't always predictable. I began to hold some personal queries about the teaching/learning process especially in regard to highly valued educational findings such as Bloom's Cognitive Taxonomy and teacher questions. When a teacher asked an "Analysis" question, it didn't always result in an analytical cognitive response from the student. In some cases, the question triggered a recollection of a personal experience.

But, I was a new researcher, a pre-service teacher with little or no school-based experience, and I lacked confidence in the significance of my own research. My honours work was useful in providing me with an insight into educational research, it would possibly be helpful in future goals including teaching teachers, but essentially, it was just one step in the process of becoming a teacher. It is probably now, with the benefit of hindsight and considerably more educational experience, that I see the value of that research project. My goal at the time, though, was to stop studying, and start earning.

My first teaching positions coincided with personal changes including marriage and relocation to Brisbane to support my mature aged student husband in his final 3 years of his study to become an optometrist. I taught secondary school students in various subjects: English, History, Mathematics and Speech and Drama. I was a keen novice teacher who loved the challenge of teaching new subjects and learning ways to present those subjects to the students. I enjoyed participating in extracurricular activities and became very involved in what I considered were key aspects of my job—getting to know the students and working together with them in learning and preparing for their next step in their lives.

I suspended my teaching career for a year on the birth of our first child, but then as our family relocated to a small regional community in Far North Queensland to establish our own optometry practice, we found it economically necessary for me to return to teaching at the local High school. I was the new kid on the block (again) and I had to prove myself professionally in this new context. I had challenging classes (behaviourally) and was given another wide range of subjects to teach. At first I found the task somewhat difficult as I struggled with notions of being a working mother, and not being able to contribute as much as I had previously to the school and students in terms of extracurricular activities etc. I explored the option of working on a permanent-part-time basis, but found considerable resistance and patronising responses from the principal at the time. Permanent-part time work, although something the Education Department and Union were promoting, was still left to the administration of the school to implement, and that was not going to happen at "my" school. After one year of adaptation, I left to have our second child.

Part time teaching work was offered to me at the local TAFE College within 3 months of my leaving the high school. I taught in an Adult Literacy program for unemployed adults. Whilst I was an experienced English teacher I had no experience with teaching adults who had minimal literacy skills. I was placed in a team teaching situation with the coordinator of the program, a primary school teacher with considerable early childhood experience. Together we developed our version of the short term New Start Program. The learning curve was steep, and we both acknowledged the need to expand our professional knowledge in the realms of

literacy education, specifically with adults. We made many mistakes, some of which are rather embarrassing in retrospect. However, the biggest lesson learned in this experience, once again related to the importance of acknowledging the existing knowledge and learning with which the students came to the program, discovering skills the students had, considering their abilities and learning to build on those; the importance of a sense of self worth, confidence and a common starting point in the learning process. Contextual information and finding out about the lives of our students became crucial starting points in teaching them literacy and numeracy skills that would help them in successfully seeking employment. The initial disparity between teacher objectives and student learning outcomes was obvious. Teaching goals were altered to become far more realistic in terms of the outcomes students could demonstrate in the short term programs. We became far more aware of cultural difference in ethnicity and between socio-economic groups. We began to question many of our own assumptions about teaching and equity issues. We were very conscious of how written texts positioned participants including our students. We looked for silences in text and started to alert our students to aspects of critical literacy.

During this time my teaching colleague and I enrolled in an external Master of Education Studies through the University of South Australia. This provided us with many opportunities to examine our own practice in Adult literacy and critically view our contribution to the rapidly growing adult education sector. We initiated our own studies without support from the organization in which we worked. The TAFE College provided a number of small professional development opportunities for literacy teachers, including a compulsory Adult Literacy Teacher's course that gave us valuable lessons in teaching adults rather than children and adolescents.

My professional role took another turn. I was given the opportunity to establish and coordinate the College's Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program. This role involved negotiating workplace communication/literacy programs in a number of local industries including a foundry, local Councils, a dairy factory, banana processing plant, meat works, and sugar mills. I learned about conducting business negotiations with executive officers of these industries, liaising with government officials about funding, conducting training needs analyses, developing and adapting curricular to meet the language and literacy training requirements of the industry, delivering the programs, assessing their success and reporting on those to relevant stakeholders including executive members of the industry, college and funding bodies. I learned to write funding submissions, develop budgets and maintain records of expenses associated with each commercial program. The WELL program became an integral component of the college budget. None of these activities and how to perform them was included in my formal education. Some techniques were described in manuals written by other practitioners for Workplace English Language and Literacy coordinators. Some were gleaned through discussions at meetings with other literacy practitioners. Most knowledge was learned through my own application of what I considered appropriate practice in commercial delivery of Adult literacy programmes, and an understanding that successful courses had to fit the context in which they would be run. Discussions and close working relationships with other literacy colleagues in the college also provided opportunities to tease out ideas and determine pathways to follow in implementing these training programs. We

identified the literacy requirements of the industry and the jobs in which workers were employed, assessed the entry level of the participants and constructed courses that would enhance the overall communication skills of the participants in their work roles. Once again the importance of providing relevant learning experiences that acknowledged the current learning and knowledge of participants within a specific industrial context was etched firmly into the way I performed my professional role. I was a facilitator of communications learning within industrial contexts and in industrial situations about which I knew very little. The learning process became a focus of my educational practice.

I performed the role of coordinator for the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program for the college for about four years. I resigned my position following growing disillusionment with College administration that was undergoing significant change brought on by economic rationalist processes that appeared to have little regard for teaching personnel. The WELL program was one of the most profitable and economically run programs in the college, yet I was repeatedly told that we were not doing well enough. The rhetoric of flatter work structures and team work didn't seem to match the implementation and action. I resigned my part-time position and worked towards doing the same sort of work privately as a consultant and private training provider.

My original New Start colleague joined me in developing our own private training organization. We worked unpaid for several months establishing directions, connections and networks that would lead to a successful education and training consultancy in a regional town. Our first major project was the development of a literacy resource for working with youth. It provided invaluable lessons about costing projects effectively. We built on our TAFE and growing business experience and, over a period of twelve months to two years, established a successful consultancy working with local, regional, state and national organizations. A portion of our work included the provision of professional development programs for local teachers. These programs generally occurred during Student Free Days and occasionally after school. Although they were reasonably well paid programs, they weren't enough to sustain the ongoing costs of business. These areas of consultancy became more my interest area while my partner and our project officer pursued more lucrative projects in partnership with other businesses.

As the business grew I found my self in a personal situation that caused considerable anxiety as work demands increased and family commitments clashed. My personal goals and values for our family were being compromised by my professional work requirements. Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed the professional success we were beginning to enjoy, I could not enjoy the family strain we were beginning to experience. I chose to sell my share of the business to my partner at a time when it was just beginning to take off. I believed I could not fairly contribute to its success and maintain the level of family activity that my husband and I valued. One small business in the family (my husband's optometry practice) was sufficient at this time in our lives.

The decision to sell my share of the consultancy was the most difficult decision of my professional career. We had successfully established a business, gained respect and credibility amongst a client group that would continue to support us and things were looking up financially. Two and a half years of a frugal financial

existence were beginning to yield rewards. But, I wasn't prepared to pay the price it required in my family situation.

My personal anxiety in deciding to leave raised huge questions for me regarding professional and career development. How do people balance family values with professional growth? Different families, different individuals have different tolerances for how much they will allow their professional demands to impact on their personal lives. Can you separate professional from personal existence neatly? I couldn't, and the tension was too great for me to maintain – my professional life needed to change to accommodate my personal values regarding my family. Timing of professional development activities and professional opportunities are crucial in selection of professional development and career opportunities.

### **A Growing Concern: Teachers and Professional Development**

My time as an Education and Training Consultant enabled me to experience many varied aspects of educational and training life. I had learned not only about running a business, but also more about my philosophies on professional development and organisational change in industrial and business contexts.

One of my most impressionable experiences as a PD Provider came from the development and delivery of a short course to help teachers apply theories such as Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993) while catering for differentiated learning needs in their classrooms. The first activity in this program required teachers to reflect on their own personal philosophies and views of teaching, taking the time to outline how they viewed particular aspects of their professional life. Feedback sheets always indicated that this was one of the most valued activities in the workshop. I began to ponder why this particular activity always seemed most impressive to the participant teachers?

It had become obvious to me over a number of PD sessions that some teachers loved the material we presented and saw ways to apply it immediately and started to do so. Others seemed to react with expressions of great interest and enthusiasm regarding the concepts presented, but felt challenged in the application of the concepts in their own class situations given current work pressures and interruptions to school programs with extra curricular requests etc. They appeared tired and in some cases fatigued by the thought of trying something new. Others were polite and went through the motions of attending and participating in the PD program, but when asked if they would apply it, would answer with a comment that implied that they were happy and content with their current teaching practices and that this was just something they had to sit through because it was a student free day. These varied responses to the PD program that I delivered, and my own experiences with PD as a teacher continued to raise questions about ways in which the system tries to assist teachers in their role and efficiently provide effective PD that brings about change in teachers' teaching activities.

I began to ask questions like: What do teachers really think about the PD they experience? How do they respond to the existing formats and presentation of PD? How can a Department of Education encourage and support personnel if there is reluctance and resistance on the part of those that are receiving the PD? As the world changes and demands and expectations on teachers and the education system change, how do we adequately "take" reluctant teachers along so that

students are provided with the best educational opportunities we can give them? Not all teachers are reluctant participants. Many are very good practitioners and pursue their own professional development activities in their own time. Many comment that the changes that are being implemented are cyclical and that in many cases it is the revisiting of pedagogic practices of years ago, but under a different name. There are a wide variety of teacher responses to PD situations, yet, I noted, the voices of teachers in these areas were not often heard. Education Departments and head offices of private education organizations appeared to determine directions and styles of PD that didn't appear to acknowledge the skills, interests, personal learning and work requirements of the teachers involved.

**In my journal entry I began to theorise and develop my own positional statement about teachers and professional development based on my own experience and reading. My journal entry continues:**

The issue of PD is a complex one which crosses borders between organisational development and change management, but also includes policy directions that are perceived to be the best way to prepare children for the world they will encounter once they leave school. PD is not just for the enhancement of student learning and student learning outcomes, it also serves to provide opportunities for growth, development and enhancement of teachers' professional requirements, it enables organisational transitions to implement policy changes within an organization. It is a highly complex issue, yet the voices of those involved appear to be soft and in the background. Successful PD will become successful depending on the ability and motivation of those who have to implement the PD in the classroom. To some extent, teachers can choose whether or not they will pick up suggestions for pedagogic improvement outlined in PD sessions. Teaching is, in general, an individual pursuit/process. It is the individual's implementation of teaching practices that largely determines what happens in a classroom, and will have an impact on the student learning within that classroom. **How do teachers really professionally develop, and how do they view formal PD sessions?**

**I continued my detailed journal entry:**

These questions intrigue me and continue to fuel my thirst for understanding more about how teachers work and acknowledging the complexity of the job they do. If we don't record the many different ways in which teachers professionally develop, and consider the amount of unpaid PD time teachers contribute, then policy makers who know little about the nature of the work cannot hope to gain insight into the profession and provide policies that account for the complexity of the task. If the status of teachers is to be enhanced in our community, then perhaps we need to record more stories of what teachers actually do and how they do it. By looking at PD and teachers' narrative accounts of these, we may gain insight into the success of existing PD delivery structures, identify other ways of providing PD and understand more about the constantly changing landscape and ways that teachers negotiate that landscape of teaching.

*Gaining a view of some personal stories may help provide insight into more effective PD delivery.*

*So, here I am at this stage in my professional career, about to embark on a research journey, reviewing and reflecting on my own professional development, wondering how others view theirs, and wondering what I can learn from them that will enable me to help them more effectively. This is a fundamental premise of my own teaching philosophy: Learn about your learners in order to teach them well.*

Thus began my role as a researcher. I had begun to define specific research questions pertaining to an aspect of teaching about which I was becoming more passionate. I was ready to move on and inquire about the actual experiences of teachers in regard to their professional development, but I had to explore the research more not only to find out what existed in the areas of educational research that pertained to my own Queensland context, but also to find a way in which to explore the experiences of teachers in this context without overriding or blocking out their voices. I also wanted to continually monitor my own participation as a researcher in this process. How would my theories of learning for adults and professionals in the field evolve over the period of this research project? I wanted to use a method of study that enabled me to keep track of that progression and that would be “upfront” about my role in the research process.

The following chapter presents a review of the existing literature as I entered the research field. It is by no means exhaustive or representative of all of the literature that exists now on professional development and studies in Queensland that have been conducted and reported on whilst I have been researching my topic. It does, however, represent the educational and research context into which I entered in 2001.

## CHAPTER 2: EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE AND POLICY DOCUMENTS –

### A RESEARCH CONTEXT

(i) *A good deal of what passes for ‘professional development’ in schools is a joke – one that we’d laugh at if we weren’t trying to keep from crying. It’s everything that a learning environment shouldn’t be: radically under resourced, brief, not sustained, designed for ‘one size fits all,’ imposed rather than owned, lacking any intellectual coherence, treated as a special add-on event rather than as part of a natural process, and trapped in the constraints of the bureaucratic system we have come to call ‘school.’ In short, it’s pedagogically naïve, a demeaning exercise that often leaves its participants more cynical and no more knowledgeable, skilled, or committed than before. And all this is accompanied by overblown rhetoric about ‘the challenge of change,’ ‘self renewal,’ ‘professional growth,’ ‘expanding knowledge base,’ and ‘lifelong learning’.* (Miles, 1995:9)

Although Miles describes this opening statement of his foreword to Guskey and Huberman’s (1995) *Professional Development in Education: New Paradigms and Practices*, as an attention grabber, unfortunately, it echoed a number of my experiences with teaching staff in a range of regional Queensland schools. I later encountered Stenhouse’s: ‘It is the task of all educationalists outside the classroom to serve the teachers; for only teachers are in a position to create good teaching’ (Shkedi, 1998:575). How, though, I wondered, are those teachers best served by educationalists outside the classroom? How are teachers professionally developed and how do we determine the effectiveness of their professional development opportunities? What actually happens to teachers’ professional development as it is currently experienced? What do we know and what don’t we know about PD in Queensland? Where is the research that focuses on teachers’ professional development specifically in the Australian and Queensland context, and what does it reveal?

To answer some of these questions I needed to explore the existing educational research and ground myself in the policies and directions that were forthcoming from Education Queensland (EQ, the State Department of Education that directs the Queensland government school system). Existing research provided relevant background information regarding teachers’ professional development in Australia. The policies and directions documentation of EQ provided

information about the systemic context in which teachers worked. National Educational reports prepared by the Federal government also provided valuable contextual information.

In 2000 and 2001 I found it difficult to obtain access to significant research that was concerned with teachers' professional development in the Queensland context, especially in the primary school sector. Although there was some emerging work on Science-specific PD in secondary schools (Rigano & Ritchie, 2002; Ritchie & Rigano, 2002), there was very little that covered PD at a more general and less subject specific level. An extensive library, journal and electronic database search using the descriptors of "professional development, teachers, Queensland," revealed little information that incorporated experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in professional development activities. I therefore prepared a research proposal based on the limited material available.

Retrospectively, as I complete this portion of my research text, I am aware of a growing body of research that is Queensland-based and that incorporates teachers' voices and experiences through projects such as the Education Queensland and University of Southern Queensland combined IDEAS project (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002). Much of that work, however, was conducted and being reported on at the same time I was conducting my research and therefore could not form a major part of the research base that I was exploring in 2000/2001.

The next section of this chapter presents a literature review portraying the research context into which I entered in 2000 and 2001. It is important to note that many of the policy documents I reviewed are still referred to today in Education Queensland sectors and, although there may be some differences in application several years down the track, essentially the issues and policies that I outlined remain the same. In many ways this chapter represents the temporal nature of research and knowledge wherein existing and current knowledge builds on and incorporates knowledge and perceptions of the past. I invite you to step back to 2001 and read an edited literature review based on material available to me at the time.



## **Professional Development Research – The Australian Scene**

In an attempt to identify and describe existing PD programs in education in Australia, the Commonwealth Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) commissioned a report, *PD 2000 Australia: A National Mapping of School Teacher Professional Development* (McRae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland, & Zbar, 2001), that presents a literature review and overview of PD arrangements across the country up to 2000. According to the authors (McRae et al., 2001), there is a dearth of locally based literature that is related specifically to the topic of professional development for teachers. Indeed, “this amount, never vast, is actually in decline and ... circumstances in this country have encouraged academics working in this area to be providers rather than researchers/commentators” (McRae et al., 2001:14). Consequently, the authors suggest that their report provides “a benchmark for future studies on this topic.” It maps the nature and purpose of PD and describes PD trends including the planning, purchase and delivery of PD. It notes accreditation processes for PD, provides information on PD providers, describes decision-making structures and processes at education authority and school level and describes funding arrangements both systemic and school based. The paper also includes a description of teachers’ attitudes towards and involvement with PD, identifying teachers’ perceptions of positive and negative factors that impact on the success of PD. It identifies who has access to PD and factors that impact on that access and provides a demographic profile of users and non-users of PD. The paper also notes teacher “preferences in relation to timing, mode, content and purpose of professional development” (McRae et al., 2001:3). In all, the report provides an extensive yet comprehensive analysis of teacher PD across Australia. In presenting the Australian view, the authors have also provided an overview of the Queensland PD situation and projections for the future. This review of the national PD situation for teachers provides some significant points that need to be considered for the proposed research topic.

*PD 2000* indicates that professional development is considered a part of a teacher’s working life and is seen as a subset of overall educational activity (McRae et.al, 2001). Teachers in 2000 were undertaking more PD than they were ten years previously “largely made up of out-of-

hours, non-award bearing work” (McRae et al., 2001:8). The content and areas covered by PD were varied. Professional development offered to teachers included: mandated assessment and curriculum changes, student behaviour management, school self-management and planning issues, legal issues, equity issues, stress and time management and career planning as well as many other school-specific areas of need.

As well as a wide variety in content and focus of PD, there was also a wide range in delivery styles or formats in PD initiatives. PD was offered in formats including workshop discussions, listening to speakers, and attending conferences. The most frequently occurring form of PD was workshop or seminar/discussion. There were suggestions that PD was moving from a one-off format that had occurred historically in teacher PD to more on-going forms of PD. However, the authors claim: “we have no benchmark data to assess a trend in this area.” (McRae et al., 2001:9). A growing emphasis was being placed on workplace learning. Teacher preferences in regard to format of PD indicate

*primary teachers are more likely than secondary teachers to prefer watching and discussing teaching practice, visiting other schools and working through packages/kits with a facilitator. Secondary teachers are more likely to prefer on-line learning ... and formal courses of study. The two least favoured options were on-line learning and working with CD ROMS’ (McRae et al., 2001:12).*

Most teachers judged PD in terms of the impact it had on student learning (Dockett, Perry, & Parker, 1998; McRae et al., 2001).

Systemic provision of professional development appears to be most effective for government schools, particularly primary schools. The range of PD options available to staff, however, diminishes as distance increases from capital cities. Decisions regarding PD are usually site-based, although Commonwealth funding of activities tended to influence PD decisions and directions in favour of those activities. Market forces appear to determine the success of PD provided by non-systemic PD providers. Individual referrals and previous experience influenced provider selection (McRae et al., 2001). Results of research conducted in 2000 indicate

Information and Communication Technology is the largest focus point for PD participation and on-line activity is growing as an element of PD programs.

Generally speaking participation in PD opportunities increased with experience and level of responsibility within the educational system/institution. Many teachers in their first to fourth years of teaching were offered considerably less formal PD opportunities than their more experienced counterparts. Despite rural isolation being cited as a reason for limiting access to PD, the study found that participation levels were high for respondents in small communities. Access to PD for all teachers, however, was limited by time, cost and distance (McRae et al., 2001).

Twelve percent (12%) of respondents in the study indicated that they were currently enrolled in a formal course of study. This represents a decrease in numbers from studies conducted ten years earlier. The majority of PD conducted in 2000 was not accredited. The study indicated that 36.5 % of respondents would like credit for the PD they undertake, “although a larger proportion is not particularly concerned one way or the other” (McRae et al., 2001:11).

From these points, one can see that PD in schools was tending to become site-based, and site-focussed, and that a wide variety of PD requirements existed. Key features of successful teacher professional development identified in *PD 2001* (McRae et al., 2001) include: a focus on the purpose of PD, linking it to student performance; a focus on the practice of teaching and learning, types and sources of knowledge (including pedagogical; discipline knowledge and discipline pedagogical knowledge); a focus on active, collaborative learning; and a discussion of structures and frameworks, specifically Professional Standards. These trends in PD delivery and teacher preferences reflected current school based change literature indicating the need to drive school change from within school communities and to focus on PD that is relevant to teachers. Collegial discussions were also becoming a key component of teacher PD (Fullan, 1990, 1999;

Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1996, 1998; Smylie, 1995; Wenger, 1998a, 1998b).

An account of each Australian state's approach to PD is provided in the report. One wonders if the process of PD provision in Queensland accurately matches its description in this document. Is the source of this information in tune with what was/is occurring in schools all over Queensland? Or, was this a policy/directional statement providing a description of the ideal state? How was Education Queensland addressing this issue of reality vs. ideal educational provision for both students and staff?

### **The Queensland Educational Landscape in 2000/2001**

In 2001 I was struck by an article by McLeod (2000) in which she made reference to Cornbleth's (1991) work describing teaching as a social act that occurs within a number of non-discrete contexts: socio-cultural, structural; historical and biographical. The socio-cultural context representing "the environment beyond the education system" (McLeod, 2000:3) includes the demographic features, social, economic and political factors that impact on the education system. It includes interactions between teachers, students, parents and participants in the educational setting and occurs within classroom organisational structures, school-based organisational structures and community based/societal practices. Structural contexts include factors such as national and state curriculum decisions regarding educational funding and curriculum directions. These incorporate policies of the school system and aspects of geographic location in terms of resource availability and funding (McLeod, 2000). Historical contexts acknowledge that past experiences and situations provide a basis for subsequent experiences (McLeod, 2000). Teaching as a social act is temporal and occurs within historical contexts that incorporate personal, institutional, community based, regionally based, state based, nationally and/or internationally based history. Biographical contexts are more personal and represent each person's life experiences in education and interactions with others. "Each social interaction of teaching is a function of the biographical context, not only of the teacher but of

those with whom she interacts” (McLeod, 2000:4). McLeod’s description of these four contexts of operation provided a lens/filter through which I was able to view the literature I accessed at the time.

Initially, my focus was to outline the socio-cultural elements that made up the context in which modern and futures-based education (Luke, Matters, Herschell, Grace, Barrett, & Land, 2000) was positioned and was seen to influence the directions of State based education in Queensland. I did this by analysing current Education Queensland (EQ) policy documents and reports (Education Queensland, 2000; Luke et al., 2000) and describing some of the inherent implications for education in Queensland. I also considered other contextual issues not outlined in major EQ policy statements including a specific focus on teachers’ professional roles. In this section I provide a brief analysis of general societal trends, outline general demographic details about teachers in Queensland in 2001, and then focus on a discussion of Education Queensland’s policy document (2000) that identifies specific key socio-cultural issues and their impact on education in Queensland.

It is a truism to state that the only constant in society and in modern life is change (Broadbent, 2000; Edgar, 1999; Education Queensland, 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Senge, 1990). A personal reflection on our personal lives and the content of many media sources in the 1990s including newspapers, magazines, current affairs and news programs indicate considerable change and increasing complexity in many aspects of modern life. Advances in technology occur exponentially. Communication has become highly sophisticated and complex with a wide variety of mediums changing frequently. Traditional family structures are changing. The cultural mix of the Australian community has changed as we begin to acknowledge the wealth of existing cultures within our society, accommodate migrants from many nations and provide responses to global situations of hardship. National, State and local economic situations appear to constantly change in response to global economic imperatives. The workforce is changing and the skill levels and requirements of those in the workforce change with technological

developments and the introduction of different work practices. Privatisation of publicly owned organisations has influenced the lives of a wide variety of citizens within our national community. Competitive work practices and the removal of restriction of trade practices all impact on the nature of the society in which we live. There is little indication that the pace of change is going to slow down.

The Board of Teacher Registration (2001:), now the Queensland College of Teachers, provided the following demographic details about teachers in Queensland:

- (i) Total registered teachers in Queensland: 82 000.
- (ii) Proportion of teachers with four or more years of teacher education: 70%, of which 2% were preschool teachers, 32.5% were primary school teachers and 22.9% were secondary teachers.
- (iii) 72% of registered teachers in Queensland were female
- (iv) 2.9% of teachers were aged under 25; 7.8% were aged over 60
- (v) 16.6% of registered teachers were employed in private schools; 40.7% were employed in government schools.
- (vi) 61% of registered teachers in Queensland were employed in permanent teaching positions; 39% were not currently employed in permanent teaching positions.
- (vii) 39% of registered teachers were based in Brisbane, 56% were based in regional areas and 5.4% were interstate or overseas.

It can be seen, then, that the highest proportion of registered teachers in Queensland worked in government schools, were female, had four years or more of teacher education and were based in regional areas. The focus of my study was limited to the professional development experiences of government teachers not just because they were the highest proportion of registered teachers in the state, but because of the extent of changes that were occurring within the public education system.

An analysis of issues that have been identified by Education Queensland as impacting directly on education needs to be provided at this time as this sets the context in which the Queensland education system operates and outlines the major stimuli for systemic and educational change (Education Queensland, 2000). These factors are discussed in the next section.

#### *Socio-cultural factors affecting education according to Education Queensland*

The policy document *Queensland State Education 2010* (Education Queensland, 2000) provides strategic directions for public education up to 2010. It identifies a number of “Forces for Change” (Education Queensland, 2000:4) and provides a brief analysis of them as they impact on education in Queensland. The forces for change and their implications for education identified in the document include the following:

(i) Changes to Families

The traditional nuclear family structure is changing, replaced by various configurations including single parent families and step families. New patterns of employment require different working hours for parents and guardians, often both parents are working longer and less traditional working hours. Family mobility is more frequent and the size of families is decreasing so children have fewer siblings than in previous generations. Education Queensland sees this impacting on teachers’ work:

*Teachers see the signs of family disruption in students – anxiety, depression, lack of discipline, aggression, inadequate literacy outcomes and a greater need for adult role models, particularly male role models. This places new pressures on schools and teachers to provide children with high levels of social support. (Education Queensland, 2000:4)*

(ii) Cultural Diversity

A range of ethnic cultures provides a wide range of experience for students, as does the increased cultural diversity presented through technological changes and globally driven cultural changes. This presents challenges for education because curriculum and educational

practice will have to accommodate and promote “civic duty, cultural respect, social equity and productive diversity” (Education Queensland, 2000:5).

(iii) Economic Change

Society is moving from an industry-based society with dependence on production including manufacturing, agriculture and resource development, to one which is more service-oriented and dependent on knowledge-based industries. The workforce includes more part-time and casual workers. There is a decrease in unskilled jobs and an increase in requirements for skill qualifications when gaining employment. These changes will impact on schools as teachers find they now need to “help students develop the skills and knowledge for the knowledge economy, lay the foundations for lifelong learning and ensure that students reach their optimal potential” (Education Queensland, 2000:6). Economic changes and changes in family structures are also associated with the relative increase in poverty for families. This will have implications for education department personnel as they are increasingly required to cooperate with health and welfare department representatives to ensure adequate support is provided for students in need.

(iv) Information Technology

Rapid changes in technology and communications mean that information is transmitted and recorded far more quickly than ever before. This means teachers are no longer “gatekeepers of knowledge in a teacher-centred classroom. Teachers need mastery of and access to information technology to manage the learning of their students” (Education Queensland, 2000:6). Not only will teachers be expected to facilitate learning in the use of information technology, they will also need to assist students in the acquisition of critical analysis skills to ensure that they are informed users of the wide variety of information provided via the new technology.

(v) New Government Role

Globalisation and national responses to such phenomena impact on the control that governments have over their own economy. “There is a powerful incentive to governments to conform to the prevailing approach of smaller government, privatisation, competition and the primacy of



individual choice by consumers” (Education Queensland, 2000:7). This impacts on public education as public funds are allocated according to government policy. Adequate resourcing of public schools is a major issue that impacts on the quality of education provided to students.

(vi) Workforce Skills and Competitiveness

OECD figures from 1998 indicate that the Queensland population lags behind the leading 25% of OECD nations in completion of Year 12 education (Education Queensland, 2000). This has serious implications as completion of school is considered to add value to the competitiveness of individuals, national and regional economies. Individuals who complete school are more likely to find employment than those who do not. Individuals seeking post-school qualifications will increasingly require Year 12 to gain entry. Countries that achieve competitive levels of qualifications are more likely to develop competitive work skills and competitive industries than those that do not.

*the major imperative of the Queensland State Education 2010 strategy is the increase in completion rates of Year 12 students from 68% to 88% (in line with the projections for leading OECD countries.) Implications for education include attending to the provision of relevant pathways for students and provision of a more diverse curriculum base so those students have more options available. Coordination and cooperation between secondary schools, VET providers and Universities need to be enhanced and further developed. (Education Queensland, 2000:7)*

*What’s missing from QSE–2010?*

Whilst the issues identified by Education Queensland in *Queensland State Education – 2010* and described in the previous section provide the specific strategic focus for the Government, they do not provide a complete summary of factors influencing the practice of education in its schools. Most of the forces of change address global issues of change that education needs to strive to meet to ensure the continued effective participation of the upcoming generation in the productive, globalised world of the future. The forces of change, however, do not identify nor engage deeply with other contextual factors impacting on the delivery of education. In a later section of the *QSE – 2010* document, strategies for implementation allude to changes required within the system and provide some implications of those changes. However, there is little

reference to changes in work patterns and requirements for teachers as workers within the field. There is reference to improved professional practices and provision of professional development for teachers, but little of the documentation indicates the focus on organisational management processes that will be required to assist staff in delivering the new education system. Whilst the document identifies changes in work practices in society in general, it neglects to apply those same principles within its own organisation. Perhaps this is neither the role nor purpose of the document that provides a broader generalised direction for the organisation and that is probably directed at an audience that includes parents and government officials and is not just directed at educators. One wonders, however, what has been provided to staff to assist them in the transition to this desired state? Has the “vision” been imposed on the workforce? This issue becomes significant when one looks at the effects of mandated change and the implementation of change in education as opposed to change that arises from issues identified within the workforce. Edwards (1999:9) outlines some teacher reactions to mandated change and indicates that recalcitrant teachers are perhaps not highly resistant to change, but rather are negotiating the mandated changes, learning to live with them, manipulating them and producing “apparitions to satisfy the central powers”. Teachers’ responses to change in school systems are crucial in the implementation of innovative practices in education; a point acknowledged by Luke et al. (2001), Hargreaves (1994) and others when discussing education and change.

Edgar (1999), in a report commissioned by Education Queensland, outlined several social trends and their implications for education in Queensland over the 2000-2010 period. His paper was used as a key reference in formulation of the *QSE – 2010* (Education Queensland, 2000) documents. However, a number of points that he believes impact on the role of education in society have been glossed over or entirely omitted in the final *QSE – 2010* document. [Perhaps, in the department’s defence it should be noted that *QSE – 2010* only provides a summary of issues and cannot, in a 31 page document, provide full details contained in a 75 page report.] Some of the points mentioned by Edgar (1999), however, need to be included in an account of contextual factors that impact on Education and its practice in Queensland. One wonders who

made the decisions to omit key aspects of the Edgar (1999) report in *QSE – 2010* (Education Queensland, 2000) and why? Specifically, Edgar makes reference to changing work practices and their implications for staff working in large scale organisations. This has implications for teaching staff and students, and is apparently ignored in *QSE – 2010*.

Edgar (1999) discusses workplace changes including some of the flexible work practices employed by companies such as Nokia. These practices acknowledge personal requirements of staff and provide flexible work arrangements. Edgar cites difficulties workers have in juggling workplace and family responsibilities as a factor of change and states: “we are seeing a reaction against the stress of long work hours and a refusal on the part of employers to see that presence in the office is not coterminous with effective job performance” (Edgar, 1999:20). This has implications for education staff: teachers and principals. Lifestyle issues may impact significantly on the delivery of education if they are not considered for staff required to implement the changed strategies and focus of education. This issue is also significant for students:

*Technical skills are certainly essential, but it may be a mistake to assume that school students need only focus on skills credentialing in order to guarantee themselves a job in the future. A more holistic approach to productive living is emerging and the technology is finally making such flexibility and satisfaction possible, compared with the alienation of the industrial assembly line or the bureaucratic hierarchy. (Edgar, 1999: 21).*

Education for the future needs to address preparing students for a life with more leisure or free, non-work related time than previous generations may have had (Edgar, 1999).

Small business and entrepreneurial skills within the economy also need to be acknowledged according to Edgar (1999). Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that small businesses (those non-manufacturing businesses employing less than 20 people) comprise 97% of all private sector businesses and account for more than 50% of all private sector employment. Skills essential to survival in small business include: negotiation skills, communication skills, adaptability, business management and financial management skills. Entrepreneurial skills and

business skills required for successful small business operations, generally speaking, are not skills many teachers know a lot about (Edgar, 1999). Teachers have been

*trained for tenured jobs within a large public employment system, and the schools have been geared to the same academic competences that gave teachers their job chances rather than to this huge sector of employment in Australia. That gap in knowledge and targeted curriculum design needs to be filled in the planning of schools for the future. (Edgar, 1999:22)*

This brief, and by no means complete, discussion indicates the complexity of the societal context for education in Queensland now and in the future. This situation is further complicated when one begins to consider the organisational and professional changes that are occurring frequently within the teaching profession itself, and the implications these changes have for teachers.

#### *Structural Context*

While an analysis of the general societal “forces for change” is an important part of painting the picture of factors impacting on education, it is also important to look closely at some of the recent history and directions of change occurring within the teaching profession itself. The structural context of education within Queensland and Australia in general has changed dramatically over the past decade or more (Dempster, 2001; Luke et al., 2000; McRae et al., 2001). Changes within and upon the profession have included: industrial changes, structural changes regarding school management, funding of schools and professional activities, expectations and issues of responsibility, risk management and liability, the proposed introduction of professional standards and measures of accountability and productivity, an emphasis on vocational education pathways, curriculum directions, national testing and others. All of these impact on teachers’ lives in the education system and consequently on the implementation of change strategies.

A succinct analysis of the effects and impact of public sector reform (or ‘New Public Management’) on schooling in Queensland since the late 1980s is provided by Dempster (2001). He lists ten characteristics of restructuring public schooling:

- *decentralisation through school self-management;*
- *the injection of competition between schools;*
- *greater demands for financial accountability;*
- *an increase in consumer control through school governing councils;*
- *recentralisation of curriculum and assessment control;*
- *expanding the powers of school principals;*
- *increasing pressure for outcomes-based assessment;*
- *the exposure of school performance to public scrutiny;*
- *the assessment of teachers against employer defined competencies; and*
- *tighter regulation of the teaching profession. (Dempster, 2001:4)*

These changes have impacted on all personnel within school systems and have ramifications for principals’ and teachers’ professional development. Dempster (2001) outlines a theoretical framework for professional development (PD) and analyses current provision of PD for principals against this framework. He concludes that most PD provided by EQ and available to principals is system-focussed and oriented towards ‘system restructuring’ and ‘system maintenance’, often at the expense of a people focus which might more readily encourage ‘professional transformation’ and ‘professional sustenance’ (Dempster, 2001: 5). This, Dempster argues, presents challenges to principals as they balance the mandated requirements of a system against their own identified professional requirements and those of their colleagues.

Dempster (2001) highlights the complexity of professional development issues and indicates the difficulty of choices made by those in leadership roles when it comes to professional development. Areas of PD identified in McRae et al.’s (2001) report include: mandated curriculum and assessment practices, student behaviour management, school self management and planning issues, legal issues, equity issues including gifted and talented education, stress management, time management, career planning, and a large range of other areas that impact on daily work of teachers and that reflect more contextually specific requirements of schools such as drug/alcohol education, parent and community involvement, civics and citizenship education. This lengthy list of choices leads the authors to correctly conclude: “If the school curriculum is

believed to be crowded, so should the curriculum for teacher professional development” (McRae et al., 2001:145).

However, it should be noted that within this smorgasbord of professional development an illusion of “freedom of choice” and school-based determination of professional development begins to emerge. As personnel of individual schools exercise the ‘autonomy’ of school-based management processes, they select the strategic directions for the school and thereby select appropriate professional development programmes that will support the strategic and developmental plans of the school. It needs to be remembered though that these choices are made within an overlapping socio-cultural context that includes systemic directions for the education system as defined in policy documents such as QSE – 2010 (Education Queensland, 2000), Professional Standards for teachers (Board of Teacher Registration, 2002), and other more specific curriculum based documentation such as New Basics and Productive Pedagogies (Luke et al., 2000). Indeed systemic imperatives are tending to become more prescriptive in regard to teaching practices, educational outcomes and professional standards for staff (Dempster, 2001; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996).

Education Queensland has shown some commitment to developing and promoting the use of Professional Standards in its approach to PD (McRae et al., 2001) and, in 2000, presented a Draft set of *Professional Standards for Teachers* (see Education Queensland website). McRae et al. (2001:37) report that

*The purposes of these standards (‘applying to all teachers in state education’) include, for example, that they should ‘provide a platform for teachers to identify and then drive their continuing professional development’, and that the standards should ‘provide teachers with a process that: facilitates and encourages teachers to reflect on current professional practice; empowers teachers to identify their individual strengths and areas for professional growth; and provides teachers with a means of selecting professional development programs that can meet their identified needs (Education Queensland, 2000:1). (McRae et al., 2001:37)*

In essence, the introduction of performance standards for teachers and principals provide specific “competency-based” performance measures enabling deficiencies in practice to be

identified and addressed through targeted PD programs. Whilst professional standards provide some uniformity of assessment and some reasonably clear direction for review of professional performance, there are some associated difficulties with this approach and its implications regarding the professional development of teachers. Space limits a full discussion of these issues in this paper; however Dempster's (2001) reference to the work of West and Burnham (1997) indicates several areas of concern:

- (i) The lack of consideration of special contextual factors that often impact on the decisions and practice of an educational professional. Generic standards do not acknowledge the circumstances under which particular skills are exercised.
- (ii) "long hierarchical lists tend to fragment professional performance" (Dempster 2001:21). Often an incident requires implementation of several skills at the same time, e.g. interpersonal communication skills, curriculum knowledge, and people management skills. The value and importance of skills varies with the context in which an incident occurs and, to consider a hierarchical order of professional skills limits the interchangeable and flexible nature of teachers' work and skill implementation.
- (iii) Generic standards do not accommodate self-knowledge and personal growth, elements that impact greatly on teaching practices in schools. Additionally, the wording of competencies often incorporates a "degree of precision that is difficult to realise in real professional settings" (Dempster, 2001:21). Descriptors such as "effective interpersonal communications" defy precise measurements that can indicate improvement or otherwise.

Whilst these comments are perhaps generic and not targeted in particular at the Queensland Professional Standards, the reference made to the importance of contextual factors in teaching practice should be acknowledged.

McLeod (2000) also discusses the importance of context on teachers' work and the impact of competency frameworks on the teaching profession. She claims that while competencies provide a framework for practice, they are divorced from real practice because of their generic nature. They are devoid of contextual reference and do not acknowledge that the reality of

teaching is a complex interplay of various contexts that are not discrete, but that overlap and interact and that together form a contextual situation (McLeod, 2000). These contexts include the socio-cultural, structural, historical and biographical contexts I discussed earlier.

McLeod (2000:24) uses the complexity of the new teacher's situation to illustrate her point:

*When the graduate becomes a beginning teacher, her practice will be situated in a unique physical, social and temporal environment which represents the intersection of multiple, interacting, interdependent contexts and she must call upon multiple ways of knowing to begin to enact the roles of her profession.*

It is the beginning teacher's ability to apply the accountable body of professional knowledge (teaching competencies) in various situations and her own personal experience that informs her practice in teaching. That personal, lived experience started well before the teacher's pre-service teacher education, and will continue to inform teaching practice throughout the teacher's career.

McLeod (2000:7) argues that lived experience is "a supplement to the theory of the competency frameworks" that informs contextualised practice. Indeed,

*Teaching is not a journey taken in isolation. It is social action where children, parents, other teachers are fellow voyagers who bring to each interaction individual biographies, lived experiences and perspectives. The ability to understand these perspectives, to utilise the knowledges of work, language and power to facilitate the teaching act, is a function of the totality of each teacher's lived experience. (McLeod, 2000:7)*

Other international work including Clandinin and Connelly (1995) stresses the importance of teachers' prior experience and personal practical knowledge in their teaching activities. The professional teaching context, therefore, comprises a complex interplay of many factors impacting on teachers' practice (Clandinin and Connelly 1995; McLeod, 2000; Dempster, 2001). This has significant implications when considering the professional development offered to staff to bridge the gap between policy and strategic direction of the organisation (structural contexts) and professional practice. Whilst the state education system endeavours to fashion a response to global changes that will ensure the success of the next generation and sustainability of our state and national communities, it is also endeavouring to implement significant systemic change on the nature and practice of teachers' work. Mandated changes are occurring within the



system and teachers are receiving professional development to ensure implementation of policy directives. However, the success of these PD programmes may well depend on acknowledging the complexity of the teaching role, the factors that impact on teachers' practice, and the complexity of the people involved.

Significant documentation exists to demonstrate the complexity of both the socio-cultural and structural contexts of education and the importance they have in an analysis of educational purposes and direction (Edgar, 1999; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1996, 1998; Loader, 1997; Luke et al., 2000; Robertson, 1996; Senge, Cambren-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000; Swidler, 2000). However, there appears to be little literature in the Australian field combining all four contextual realms of teaching as described by Cornbleth and McLeod (McLeod, 2000). In 2000/2001 I was unaware of any Queensland-based research indicating biographical contexts and personal experience were integral components of teaching practice, professional development and school change. Issues such as teacher reactions to change and methods of implementation of institutional and systemic changes in schools needed to be addressed.

Implicit in the term "professional development" is the notion of change – change of pedagogic practice, changing curriculum direction, or PD directed at organisational and/or systemic change. Ideally, most professional development for teachers focuses on improvement of the educational context so that student learning opportunities are enhanced and, ultimately, student learning improved. Indeed research indicates that most teachers participate in PD with the intention of improving student learning (Dockett et al., 1998; McRae et al., 2001). However, reform strategies and change practices often yield mixed results in terms of effectiveness (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Hargreaves, 1997). As Hargreaves states: "successful, sustained school change that spreads beyond a few isolated sites continues to elude us" (Hargreaves, 1997:viii).

Considerable work on educational change has been conducted in the United States and Canada and has informed the work of authors of Queensland educational policy directions including

QSE – 2010 (Education Queensland, 2000) and The New Basics Project (Luke et al., 2000) .

What follows is a brief review of some of the literature and key points associated with managing change within schools with a focus on teachers as central to the success of educational reform. This work begins to draw together the socio-cultural, structural, and biographical contexts of educational practice. It begins to acknowledge and value the role of the individual teacher's biography in educational change and the improvement of pedagogical practices.

### **School Change Literature**

What does research indicate about teachers, change, and teacher development? A full analysis and review of literature available in this area is, once again, well beyond the scope of this study. However, a synopsis of some relevant research is necessary to provide contextual information for the research project.

Considerable research and policy documentation exists indicating that the linchpin to successful educational reform is the teacher (Edwards, 1999; Groundwater-Smith, 1998; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Luke et al., 2000). However, an understanding of change and the change process within the educational context is also crucial (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Hargreaves, 1997; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). It is this understanding that determines the success or otherwise of intended reform. Essentially, the problem is not a lack of innovative approaches to educational change but “the enormous overload of fragmented, uncoordinated, and ephemeral attempts at change” (Fullan & Miles, 1992:1). These demonstrate a lack of understanding and application of change processes including the impact of change on the personnel involved. In order for sustained change to occur “we must use basic knowledge about the do's and don'ts of bringing about continuous improvement” (Fullan & Miles, 1992:1).

Fullan and Miles (1992) identify seven reasons why typical approaches to reform have failed:

- i. Individuals possess inaccurate beliefs, pictures, or “maps of change” that are based on myth. These “maps of change” are beliefs people hold about how change proceeds and often include misleading assumptions such as: “Resistance is inevitable, because people resist change” and “Mandate change, because people won’t do it otherwise.”
- ii. A belief exists amongst participants, or those endeavouring to implement change, that solutions are easy and are always known. Rather, educational reform is a highly complex issue with solutions that are not often predetermined or known, but that are discovered along the path of reform and change. As Fullan and Miles state:

Even if one considers only seemingly simple, first-order changes, the number of components and their interrelationships are staggering: curriculum and instruction, school organization, student services, community involvement, teacher in-service training, assessment, reporting and evaluation (p. 746).

- iii. A political perspective exists that focuses on symbols of innovation rather than substantive change. Success is determined as occurring because it is marketed as such without real consideration of the substantive nature of the change.
- iv. Often attempts at resolving problems are superficial, and are introduced quickly to provide rapid solutions to a crisis situation. This creates difficulty when considering widespread reform across an education system such as a state-based system. Often such rapid solutions and reforms are experienced by local educators as fads. This leads to cynicism and scepticism within the educational body.
- v. Resistance by participants is often misunderstood. There is a tendency to view reactions to change as negative, without considering the need to experience transition phases that acknowledge difficulty or a sense of loss of old beliefs or practices with the introduction of new systems or processes. Fullan and Miles (1992) indicate that people facing change need time to assess the change and explore benefits of change. Resistance, they claim, needs to be clearly understood and not used as a dismissive reason for avoiding or not persisting with change efforts.

- vi. There is a tendency for success stories to be reliant on the existence of one or two key players whose departure from the scene of change often results in the disappearance of the successful practices. Significant change often comes as a result of considerable effort by key players. If those players leave, the sustainability of the changed practices often waivers.
- vii. Misinterpretation of the change process can lead to failure of reform. This is associated with the first reason for failure, “faulty maps”, and refers to the use of certain statements such as “Ownership is the key to reform” and “Lots of in-service training is required” that, if adhered to for the sake of following so called “change practices”, can result in derailed reform efforts. The focus in these instances is not necessarily on the reform processes required, but rather, on the picture the participants have of a change process that may not be appropriate for that context.

This work indicates change implementation has often neglected the role of the major participants in implementation of change in schools – the teachers, and their perceptions of the change process and the changes they are required to implement. Previously, knowledge was “imparted” to teachers from “experts” outside the field, or mandated in a top-down fashion. “Teachers were regarded as instruments of school policy not participants” (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1996:190). Approaches often assumed a deficit model of professional development in which teachers did not have the desired knowledge or skill and therefore needed to have it presented to them by external experts. Teachers would then take up the knowledge and implement it. However, as Wideen et al. (1996:190) point out “such knowledge about curriculum and about teaching, often so painstakingly put together by outsiders, frequently bore little relevance to the day-to-day work and problems faced by teachers.”

Considerable research refers to the importance of teacher knowledge and highlights how teachers mediate formal educational knowledge, apply it to their contextual situation and incorporate their own personal knowledge to develop an approach that meets the educational

requirements of the situation as they see it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Edwards, 1999; Groundwater-Smith, 1998; Marland, 1977; McLeod, 2000; Wideen et al., 1996). Indeed, teachers are selective and often attempt to subvert and modify systemic curriculum change in order to meet their own perceived educational priorities (Edwards, 1999). In a study of curriculum change in Victoria, Australia, Edwards (1999:9) concluded that a group of teachers in his study exercised considerable skill and professionalism in weaving their own versions of good teaching through the mandated requirements: They demonstrated:

*concern for their students and a willingness to sift through central mandates and find space for themselves and their students. It seems they are prepared to create apparitions to satisfy the central powers and engage in practices they deem appropriate and defensible despite central mandates. (Edwards, 1999:9)*

Work conducted by the National Schools Network, also in Victoria (Groundwater-Smith, 1998) indicates that teachers are happy to change and reform teaching practices if they are involved in the process of determining that change. Industrial and professional concerns need to be seen as impacting on each other and it needs to be acknowledged that “the conditions under which teachers work are the conditions under which students learn” ( p.22). Implementation of change in schools, therefore, is more than just an educational issue for students. It is a work-based, life affecting issue for the teachers. She also shows how teachers’ participation in introducing and designing change greatly impacts on the effectiveness of the change implementation. There is value in breaking down barriers between researchers and practitioners and in involving practitioners in the reform process. Groundwater–Smith (p. 31) cites Giroux’s belief that “teachers have it in them to be intellectuals, capable of transforming the conditions of schooling. However, they are not going to achieve that kind of intellectual power by being the subjects of traditional in-service professional development.”

It appears therefore, that a change in perspective regarding the role of teachers in educational reform is imperative to successful implementation of change in schools. Teachers need to be seen as key players in successful educational change implementation, not just conduits of change.

Fullan and Miles (1992) extend this notion and include other aspects of organisational change processes in their provision of seven propositions for success in change implementation in schools. These notions have become an integral part of the growing research base informing current educational reform processes. Briefly, the seven propositions are:

- (i) Change is a learning process and involves risk-taking. If the change process is extremely comfortable, then it is a possible sign the change is superficial and perhaps insubstantial. People require time to assimilate new concepts and come to terms with them personally.
- (ii) Change should be seen as a journey, not a blueprint with predetermined specifications. The education reform process is so complex and contextually dependent, it is impossible to prescribe a solution or present a predetermined plan that will ensure change. The change process requires an evolutionary approach that assesses what has been done, plans for the next step and then implies further action. The process is reflective, flexible and continual.
- (iii) Problems inspire creative growth and provide the stimulus to explore situations. Consequently they should be considered as natural parts of the reform process. Learning to cope and deal with problems effectively can facilitate continuous improvement.
- (iv) Change requires adequate resources. Time is the most important issue, and provision of time requires energy and money. Assistance from external sources including support, commitment, influence and power (psycho-social resources) are critical for success. Methods of adequately resourcing school reform efforts are vital in the success of change implementation.
- (v) Effective change needs to be managed well. This includes such tasks as monitoring the implementation process, ensuring adequate communication exists between stakeholders, identifying and effectively using opportunities for facilitating growth and change. Personnel need to be proactive in identifying potential problems and dealing with them before they become big problems. Essential elements of well-managed change include: change being carried out by a “cross-role” group (e.g., teachers, department heads and

administration, students and parents); legitimacy being accorded to that group including clearly defined purposes and expense allowances etc.; cooperative operational practices enabling problems to be addressed openly and resolved; and commitment outside of the school itself, including district office support.

(vi) Change is systemic and not episodic or random. There are two aspects to systemic change: firstly, a focus on the simultaneous development and interrelationships of all the main components of the system including—curriculum, teaching and teacher development, the community, and student support systems; and, secondly, a focus on the culture of the system, not just on structure, policy, and regulations (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

(vii) Change needs to be implemented locally by the teachers, principals, parents and students involved in the change. It cannot be successfully decreed and enacted from afar.

These seven propositions for successful change implementation need to occur together and as a complete approach to educational reform (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Without all of them, the change process is likely to encounter too many difficulties that will prove to be insurmountable.

As previously stated, an abundance of school change literature exists demonstrating the importance of incorporating teachers as the key players in educational change implementation. One cannot do this effectively however, without acknowledging the “life” that teachers have beyond the school system, institution, curriculum specifications and classroom. Biographical contexts impact on successful educational change. In the summary of *PD 2001* (McRae et al., 2001), a number of salient points are made about professional development and teachers’ lives. One of these pertains to the need to remain conscious of the larger picture of teachers’ work. The authors issue a warning that studies and policy discussions in which “practising teachers are not involved can forget the range and intensity of demands on teachers’ work time, and how much, if we want them to be good at their job, we need to ensure that teachers ‘have a life’”(p.163). Associated with this is a warning that we need to acknowledge the skill base and expertise that already exists in the teaching profession.

*This group of teachers—[is] the most experienced and best qualified Australia has ever had... Without this level of base skill, externally instituted changes are far less likely to succeed and, if they are to continue at the present rate, they may well in a decade produce an unprecedented level of confusion and disorder in schools— unless there is an equally skilled workforce to deal with them. This does not seem likely at present. (p.167)*

It is clear, therefore, that processes of change and implementation strategies for professional development are crucial to the success of education and in maintaining a quality teaching workforce able to meet the changing educational requirements of the broader socio-cultural context. Methods of managing PD and managing change processes become crucial in ensuring sustainable change that will not further exacerbate the change fatigue (Luke et al., 2000) experienced by teaching staff in many schools. Education Queensland appears to be aware of the issues associated with change, teachers and education and has sought to incorporate experiences and theories of international researchers and educational personnel in its approach to its futures-based education.

In 1997 EQ commissioned a team of researchers to conduct the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS). This work incorporated experiences of the Center on the Organisation and Restructuring of Schools (CORS) at the University of Wisconsin and was designed to investigate relationships between school-based management and student social and academic outcomes. The CORS work on Authentic Achievement was modified to suit the Queensland context and has become the key feature of the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Land, 2001).

The results of the QSRLS (Land, 2001) include a number of significant findings with implications for teaching practice and professional development and systemic policies. The study provides a comprehensive account of educational practice in Queensland and was used to fashion future educational delivery. It feeds directly into EQ implementation strategies and projects such as The New Basics (Luke et al., 2000) and Productive Pedagogies (Land, 2001). It is significant too because it provides a temporal perspective of educational practice as it was



seen to exist in 2000. Overall, the study indicates “a need to realign our focus for educational reform with the work of teachers and students in classrooms” (Land, 2001:1). Specifically, the QSRLS revealed a number of aspects of Queensland State schooling that impact on student outcomes both academically and socially. A brief discussion of some of the main findings follows.

### **Findings of The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS)**

Twenty elements of teaching practice directly associated with student academic and social outcomes were identified within four dimensions of “productive pedagogy”: intellectual quality; connectedness; supportive classroom environment; and recognition of difference. Participant teachers were rated against these dimensions. The results indicated Queensland teachers were good at providing a supportive classroom environment, however, there was considerable room for improvement in the other dimensions of intellectual quality, recognition of difference and connectedness (Land, 2001).

Findings also indicated that teachers did not see good assessment practices as a part of good teaching practice. Assessment tasks were often poorly constructed and did not provide students with the opportunity to connect their learning experiences to life issues. “Even where teachers believe in the importance of productive pedagogies (and aim for it in lesson structure, curriculum selection and activity), they often set assessment tasks that are low in demand, disconnected from the world and intellectually unchallenging” (Land, 2001:17). The researchers concluded that teachers need more assistance in developing appropriate assessment tasks.

Researchers (Land, 2001) found a number of factors or beliefs amongst teachers that limit the implementation of productive pedagogic practices, including:

- (i) A belief that behaviour management needs to be addressed first. Many teachers do not see that classroom pedagogic practices can reduce or contribute to behaviour management difficulties.

- (ii) A perception amongst teachers that strong social support systems cannot coexist with activities of high intellectual demand. In fact, the perception is that they are traded off against each other.
- (iii) Generic basic skills acquisition and social interaction rate higher in teachers' values than intellectual engagement and demand of teaching practices. This belief "does not align with those dimensions of productive pedagogy that are most strongly associated with higher academic and social outcomes" (p.10).
- (iv) A belief that students are totally responsible for their own learning and that teachers have little control over the factors that determine student outcomes.
- (v) A belief that instruction should be aimed at the "middle level" of the class and that some students will miss out, while others will not.
- (vi) A perception of the teacher as an "explainer of information" who has to get through the entire curriculum. There is an emphasis on content rather than concepts or skills.
- (vii) A reluctance to share pedagogical practices with other teachers and discuss areas of difficulty, assessment practices and limitations of those.
- (viii) A protective and defensive attitude to their work, presenting a guarded approach (Land, 2001).

The QSRLS (Land, 2001) also found a number of teacher beliefs occurring in teachers rating high in productive pedagogy that support student academic and social outcomes, including:

- (i) an acknowledgement that whilst they could not force students to learn, teachers still considered themselves responsible for providing appropriate opportunities for learning;
- (ii) a view that all students are capable of learning and improving;
- (iii) teachers are facilitators of learning where the focus is on development of skills and concepts rather than transmission of content;
- (iv) assessment practices are problematised;

- (v) a willingness to discuss pedagogical practices with colleagues including failures and changes teachers have been required to make; and
- (vi) being prepared to “subvert the curriculum and to create spaces for learning activities they valued” (p.10).

The QSRLS researchers (Land, 2001) also found that the variance between uses of productive pedagogical practices and professional learning communities are higher between teachers than between schools. Schools in lower socio-economic areas and schools with high indigenous populations tended to have less evidence of Productive Pedagogic Practices. Land states:

*There are strong links between three key variables and more frequent use of productive classroom pedagogies:*

- (i) *Degree of teachers’ collective responsibility accepted for student learning;*
- (ii) *Overall level of professional learning communities operating within a school;*
- (iii) *Strength of leadership focus on pedagogy (p.11)*

According to the study, leadership practices in Queensland schools have tended to focus on managerial concerns rather than pedagogical directions. This resonates with Dempster’s (2001) discussion of the effects of restructuring schools and professional development for principals outlined earlier in this paper.

The researchers involved in the QSRLS (Land, 2001) found that positive and effective professional development focuses on: (i) specific links to pedagogy; (ii) issues that are pertinent to the school and the school community; and, (iii) enhancing the professional learning community within the school. They also concluded: “Both within school and external professional development are needed to enhance teacher capabilities” (p.13).

Teachers who participated in the QSRLS reported they were often faced with difficulties in aligning the policies and practices of Education Queensland, as well as matching syllabus requirements, diagnostic testing procedures and assessment requirements of the Queensland

School Curriculum Council and/or the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (Land, 2001:14). Many teachers reported that systemic restraints seem more apparent than systemic support. The researchers reported that systemically problems occur when: there are too many programs and projects that “can create ‘silos’ within schools” (p.21). Problems also occur when there is a wide range of goals and priorities between central office, district offices and individual schools and a misalignment of policies and philosophies between Education Queensland, the Queensland School Curriculum Council and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. Often the needs and focus of the school do not coincide with systemic PD agendas.

The QSRLS presents a number of specific recommendations pertaining to productive pedagogy; productive assessment; professional development; productive leadership and professional learning communities; and systemic alignment and support. These recommendations (see Land, 2001) address the issues outlined above and significantly influenced the policy direction and strategies of Education Queensland.

### **Addressing Professional Development Issues**

Education Queensland has a number of projects in place to support staff in their transition to a more effective, futures-based education system. Its projects acknowledge the contribution of teachers as the organisation’s most valuable resource, and propose several ways to guide them through a transition to a new education system. Some of these projects are Federally funded and carry specific outcomes and performance indicators that tie in with the funding arrangements. Others are designed specifically to assist schools in developing their own PD programs and have different funding arrangements. A visit to Education Queensland’s web site illustrates that many activities and projects occur concurrently. Land (2001) provides a summary of some of the EQ initiatives dividing them into projects pertaining to learning, teaching and assessment, and strategic policy, teaching and leadership. The list he provides is not complete because other projects, such as the joint University of Southern Queensland and Education Queensland IDEAS project are also on the site and incorporate school-based reform based on the

development of professional learning communities. The Board of Teacher Registration (now the Queensland College of Teachers) also provided professional development opportunities through the work of its Consortium for Professional Development. Indeed an abundance of professional development opportunities exist and are provided by various bodies throughout Queensland. However, given that there are finite resources available in terms of time, money and personnel, one wonders how accessible these PD opportunities are for staff across Queensland, and how effective they are in improving pedagogic practice and student outcomes. Is it possible that the highly variant nature of professional development opportunities that are accessible to teachers could continue to contribute to the high individual variances in pedagogic practices across the state? Rather than potentially increasing the complexity of the situation, perhaps we need to pause and examine more closely what is actually occurring in the realm of professional development for teachers.

Results of the QSRLS indicate a need for further effective professional development to ensure that student outcomes, both academically and socially, can rise to meet the needs of future society. There is “strong evidence in QSRLS that investment in teachers—particularly in their expertise, intellectual development, professional judgment and networks—is necessary for productive pedagogies and improved student outcomes” (Land, 2001:18). One assumes that the implementation processes of that professional development will accommodate principles of adult learning and incorporate lessons for effective school change and reform. But, that is an assumption. What is the reality?

### **Professional Development: What really happens?**

In order to improve the state of professional development, one needs to adequately examine what actually happens at schools and in the classrooms. It has been recognised, and stated earlier, that for too long professional development has been imposed on teachers from the top-down. A ‘knowledge deficit’ approach has been assumed as experts tell teachers what needs to be done to improve student outcomes. Some current PD programs like IDEAS (Crowther et al.,

2002).are beginning to move away from this approach and are incorporating far more consultative and reflective practices. However, as McRae et al. (2001) indicate, there is a need for more research literature that pertains to professional development delivery and implementation in Australia. Just as effective teachers generally ascertain their students' existing knowledge before introducing new concepts, it should prove helpful to determine the existing experiences for teachers in the realm of professional development. Several questions need to be asked, and answers sought in order to determine what really happens with professional development for teachers in Queensland, especially in regional Queensland where 56% of registered teachers are located (Board of Teacher Registration., 2001).

What are teachers actually doing that contributes to their professional development? How do teachers respond to formal and informal PD opportunities? Are teachers creating their own PD opportunities? If so, what do they do? How are teachers in rural and remote areas addressing the changes in curriculum and expectations for improved student outcomes through their own professional development? What strategies do teachers use to improve their pedagogic practice given the restraints that occur in rural settings? What 'works for' teachers in regard to PD? What 'turns them off' in PD? How do individual teachers who have to implement systemic and school based changes view PD? What are the contextual features—structural, socio-cultural, biographical and historical, that impact on the effectiveness of professional development for teachers in rural Queensland? How do those contextual features impact on teachers' experience and use of the PD offered? Is there reference to professional standards or aspects of the professional standards for teachers in teachers' talk/ life experiences of PD? How does lived experience impact on teachers' PD?

These were the questions I found myself asking in 2000 and 2001 that formed the impetus for my project. I strongly believed that a study of teachers' professional development experiences would only enrich the understanding of professional development in Queensland. My study would enable educators and those who help them to build understanding and knowledge of what

teachers currently experienced in order to improve and build on existing PD. The study was also likely to provide insight into teachers' perspectives on how the four contextual realms discussed earlier interact and impact on their experience of PD and teaching life. I entered my research project believing that it was imperative that successful PD would acknowledge the major participants and implementers of educational change and the contexts in which they operate. Teachers' personal and professional contextual experiences needed to be respected and processes put in place to build on lived experiences in order to further develop effective and productive pedagogic practices.

I proposed to conduct a narrative inquiry into the professional development experiences of three primary school teachers in a rural centre in Far North Queensland. In the next chapter I discuss why I selected narrative inquiry as the best option to investigate my topic, and I explain features and characteristics of narrative inquiry as a research method.

## CHAPTER 3: WHY NARRATIVE INQUIRY?

### **Narrative Research: A Broad Picture**

The field of narrative as research methodology is large with considerable work undertaken across social science areas. In the introduction to *Narrative Analysis*, Cortazzi (1993:1-2) provides a succinct account of the importance of narrative across many disciplines of social science including literary theory and sociolinguistics (Toolan), folklore and linguistics (Hendricks), psychology and sociolinguistics (van Dijk), psychology and anthropology (Brewer), psychiatry and literature (Coles), psychology and literature (Bruner), and history, literature, psychology and philosophy (Polkinghorne). Leiblich Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) also state that in the realms of qualitative research:

*the use of narratives ... can be viewed as an addition to the existing inventory of the experiment, the survey, observation, and other traditional methods, or as a preferred alternative to these 'sterile' research tools. .... [N]arrative methodologies have become a significant part of the repertoire of the social sciences. (p.1)*

Within the realm of narrative research there are considerable variations in application of methods and interpretation of data. One form of narrative research does not necessarily imply application of exactly the same techniques or principles as another. Indeed, up until the early 2000s, much of the work that had been completed in the field was considered “widely scattered and theoretically incomplete” [Lincoln in Clandinin and Connelly (2000), dust-cover]. Works by Lieblich et al. (1998), Cortazzi (1993), Czarniawska (1998) and more recently Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have provided specific theoretical perspectives regarding narrative research.

On the continuum of narrative research that includes common elements of theories of knowledge, understanding and meaning making, lies the field of narrative inquiry as proposed and developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). In the following section of this chapter I provide an account of the fundamental aspects of narrative inquiry that drew me to it as a method of research and investigation and that matched my conceptions of knowledge,



experience and learning. Essentially, I provide an answer to the question: what is distinctive about narrative inquiry as a method of study that appealed to me as a researcher?

### **What is Distinctive about Narrative Inquiry?**

Narrative Inquiry as proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) has evolved over 20 years or more and has not developed devoid of impact or influence from other fields or paradigms of qualitative research. Their book *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, provides an account of the long term processes that led them to defining and describing the methodology of narrative inquiry. They mention theorists, including some beyond the field of education, who have informed the development of this experience-based research methodology that seeks to deepen understanding of experience and knowledge within social contexts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000:xiii) frequently refer to the work of John Dewey as having a “pre-eminent influence” on their work. They also reference the work of Geertz and Bateson in anthropology, Coles in psychotherapy and Czarniawska in organisational theory, Polkinghorne in psychology, as well as Lakoff and Johnson’s work on metaphors. Each of these scholars offered views on narrative and aspects of inquiry that Clandinin and Connelly drew together in their own understanding of experience and research in forming narrative inquiry not just as a way of obtaining and studying narrative accounts, but also as a method of inquiry and way of thinking.

By referring to examples of “what narrative inquirers do,” Clandinin and Connelly (2000:20) illustrate the processes of narrative inquiry rather than providing a formulaic description of “Narrative Inquiry” as method:

*a way of understanding experience ... a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people’s lives, both individual and social. Simply stated ... narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p.20).*

### *Narrative as a Way of Understanding Experience*

Essentially, narrative inquiry is about gaining understanding and acquiring knowledge about the complexity of human experience in context. This fundamental tenet of narrative inquiry incorporates Dewey's (1938) notion of experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain: "For Dewey, education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined. When one asks what it means to study education, the answer—in its most general sense—is to study experience" (p.xxiv). Research, as the study of experience, should begin with experience as its starting point and 'experience' should be the key term for the inquiry. The challenge is to adequately capture that in the research findings.

Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) determination to continue and sustain interest in the richer forms of experience in their research led them to consider narrative as a way of retaining individuals' experiential knowledge in the research material. They continue:

*Our excitement and interest in narrative has its origins in our interest in experience. With narrative as our vantage point, we have a point of reference, a life and a ground to stand on for imagining what experience is and for imagining how it might be studied and represented in researchers' texts. In this view, experience is the stories people live. People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities. (p:xxvi)*

The concept of stories as a way of knowing and sharing knowledge is not new to social sciences or indeed to human experience. Czarniawska (1998) cites Bruner as claiming that "narrative is the main mode of human knowledge" and Fisher for whom narrative is the "main mode of communication" (p.3). Czarniawska contends that it is "narratives--that is, texts that present events developing in time according to (impersonal) causes or (human) intentions--that are the main carriers of knowledge in modern societies toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (p.vii). Indeed it is the text between lists, tables and diagrams that helps readers make sense of the material presented in the tables, lists and diagrams. That text is a narrative construction demonstrating an event or sequence of events over a period of time.

Narrative inquiry, though, is more than just a sequence of events narrated and presented to a reader or audience. It is also a way “to capture the situatedness, the contexts, and the complexities of human action in teaching and learning” (Lyons & Laboskey, 2002:3). Narrative inquiry provides a link between the study of education and practitioner’s own ways of knowing and application of knowledge and theory in real situations that represent complex interactions between individuals and the social and physical context in which they are operating. Narrative inquiry presents that complexity of interactions and demonstrates the highly contextualised nature of individual practice in the teaching field. It demonstrates that the teaching experience is not a matter of clinically applying theory to a problematic situation, but rather is a complex inter-relational process that incorporates many social (including personal and interpersonal) and physical contextual elements. This complex interplay of context and interaction with contextual features creates experiences that contribute to the construction of knowledge that informs practitioners’ actions in the field. It is the experiential accounts of research participants (including the researcher) that form both the topic of inquiry and the method of investigation.

*Narrative Inquiry--Incorporating All Participants: Subjects, Researcher and Reader*

My research dilemma and educational puzzle was specifically concerned with the experiences of teachers and their perceptions of professional development. I strongly believed a study focussing on experiences of participants should include the voices of those participants and not just mine as a researcher. I was conscious of choosing a process of inquiry that would enable me to present versions of experience in a manner that was true to each participant’s expression of experience and that was also accessible to the reader. I needed a process that enabled me to present and maintain the integrity of the material as well as acknowledge that I was an integral participant in the research process. I had to attend to a process that acknowledged my role in the presentation of stories of experience. Narrative inquiry meets those requirements.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Phillion (2002) and others frequently refer to the negotiation of relationships throughout the research process enabling the researcher to acknowledge the

evolving nature of the research process and accommodate changes and variations to the project based on the participant's experience and participation. The focus in narrative inquiry is on individuals and their stories of lived experience, rather than the participant as an "exemplar of a form--of an idea, a theory, a social category" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:43). In a discussion about Phillion's narrative inquiry experience in her Doctoral research project, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) demonstrate the tensions experienced by Phillion as a researcher challenged by the personal experience and lived story of her participant teacher. Her dilemma required her to re-examine and acknowledge her own formalistic thinking that she brought with her to her inquiry. They state:

*We all, novice and experienced researchers alike, come to inquiry with views, attitudes, and ways of thinking about inquiry. These histories, these personal narratives of inquiry, may coincide with or cross a boundary to varying degrees with the actual inquiries that we undertake. Almost all of us--it is almost unimaginable that we could not--come to narrative inquiries with various versions of formalistic and reductionistic histories of inquiry. To the extent that this is true, we are forever struggling with personal tensions as we pursue narrative inquiry. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:46)*

I was aware that an endeavour to present voices of teachers in a research project would inevitably incorporate my voice and my perspectives of what I considered significant issues to mention. I knew that as a researcher I could not be entirely objective, and that my subjectivities would impact on the data that I selected to portray and pay attention to in my study. I wanted to select a methodology that openly acknowledged my own personal biases and conceptual notions as significant elements in the research process. The concept of the researcher as a value-free and impartial individual is, in my view, highly inaccurate. In addition to that, this research project was of personal interest to me, not just because I wanted to learn more about teachers' perceptions of their professional development experiences, but I also wanted to monitor how I grew and changed personally over the course of the research--how did my knowledge and perceptions of this issue change? After all, my learning was a key feature of the whole research agenda, and I wanted to acknowledge and mention that aspect of the research process in the record of the project. I believed room needed to be made to acknowledge that facet of the project and impart some of the process to others. The choices I made in the research process

needed to be identified and openly articulated. Narrative inquiry enabled me to focus on that aspect of my research agenda by acknowledging the importance of the researcher as participant in the research process. Indeed, as Clandinin and Connelly suggest, attention to the researcher's own experiences and "inquiry histories" is a major lesson in conducting a narrative inquiry: "narrative inquirers need to reconstruct their own narrative of inquiry histories and ... be alert to possible tensions between those narrative histories and the narrative research they undertake" (2000:46).

Acknowledging and incorporating my own narrative and presence in the field and presenting those explicitly to the reader was important so that he/she could gain further reason to inquire or seek more information and possibly ask questions about the situation, his/her own practice, his/her own viewing lenses and his/her own theories of practice. The research project would present stories of personal and professional journeys of the participants (of which I was one) which would provide opportunities for the reader to engage with the stories. Conle (2000) suggests that a powerful aspect of narrative inquiry is its capacity to create "resonance" with the reader. Resonance occurs when an individual's story reminds the reader/listener of a particular story within his/her own experience. This enables the process of inquiry to move beyond the limits of the written text, as the reader carries it forward incorporating his/her own experience. It creates metaphorical connections for participants (including the reader of the text) instead of strictly logical ones (Conle, 2000).

Research, and the effects of the research for readers, continues well beyond the time in which the actual research occurred. Findings and concepts which are identified and which, in a strict temporal sense, occurred in the past are carried forward through this research text and could well be built on in future research. Whilst relationships would be constantly negotiated throughout the research process that I was undertaking and reporting on, the relationship between the writer and the reader would also continue in to the future as each new reader interacted with the research text. The people involved in my research then would not just be

limited to those that I was working with at the primary school in which I worked. If my research was to carry on into the future and involve an ongoing interactive process with potentially new and different readers, then I needed to be present, and my research decisions and participation in the research story needed to be overt so that my reader was aware of the processes I used and the decisions I made at that point in time. (Chapter 4 details the research process and research decisions I made during the course of my research project.)

### *Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space*

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to narrative inquiry occurring in a “metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” that incorporates elements of temporality (or continuity), place (or situation) and interaction (personal and social). They claim that

*any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places (p.50).*

Specifically “temporality” refers to the notion that in research one not only looks to the event as it occurs or is described in the present, but also incorporates and references the past and the future. Experience and narrative accounts occur on a time continuum. The inquiry process incorporates both backward and forward glances recognising the impact and importance of the temporal dimension on experience and accounts of experience. The “interaction” dimension incorporates both an “inward and outward” focus that includes the recognition of “internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:50) as well as a more outward focus that incorporates social interactions. The dimension of “place” as a term of inquiry refers to “the specific physical and topological boundaries of [the] inquiry landscapes” (p.51).

This three-dimensional approach to research acknowledges change and growth, the development of the future as a result of the past and present. In terms of educational research and teachers’ professional development this concept is important in enabling us to reflect on

past experiences including teaching practices and events, to value what those opportunities and experiences have offered and consider present and future directions (Schon, 1983). It enables participants to acknowledge their own role and participation in the educational experience they are encountering by incorporating an inward and outward glance that not only focuses on their own reactions, but also on the broader social elements and implications of their experience. It also considers the significance of contextual factors including relationships and issues of place incorporating institutional and organisational factors that impact on teachers' professional lives and experiences.

### *Presenting Research Findings in a Reader-Friendly Way*

Reflections on my experience as a first year teacher reminded me of the importance I placed on sharing stories and experiences with a colleague. Carol and I had decided, in an effort to establish and maintain some physical fitness, to play a game of squash each week. Not only did this provide an opportunity for us to vent frustrations in a physical sense, but it also provided what I came to see as a crucial collaborative opportunity to reflect on our teaching experiences as new teachers in a regional town in North Queensland. Each week, after an hour of squash, we would spend at least another hour discussing our teaching experiences for the week; sharing ideas and stories of success and otherwise; asking each other for tips and recognising common pitfalls in behaviour management strategies in each other's stories of practice. We both commented on how much those opportunities enabled us to grow and improve our teaching practice. I had recently finished my Honours degree and had read considerable amounts of research pertaining to teaching. But, the realities of practice seemed very separate from those bookshelves full of theory and research. As a teacher with a fulltime teaching load, I stopped reading research. My teaching colleagues hardly ever sought out or read educational research journals. I remember thinking that it was too hard to teach full time, read research and have a life outside of teaching. I only came back to reading journals as a way to update my professional knowledge in specific interest areas during maternity leave, three years after I began teaching.

As I re-entered the research world in 2000, I wondered about the accessibility of research findings for teachers. I reflected on the patterns of teacher behaviour I had experienced as a teacher in Education Queensland and that I had observed as a deliverer of professional development opportunities as a private education consultant. Whilst teachers wanted formulaic books and time saving resources for use in the classroom, most of the enthusiastic “learning” that I witnessed appeared to come from opportunities teachers had for sharing success stories with each other. Teachers used stories to teach each other and liked to tell stories of their own experience in response to the stories of others as they recognised points of commonality and difference. Perhaps, I began to think, if research was going to bridge the perceived gap between theory and practice, it needed to be presented in a more storied and readable fashion than the traditional formalistic journal report that we were accustomed to reading at University during our undergraduate experiences. I remembered what I had considered two of the most effective university texts that I had read during my undergraduate studies: *Teachers’ Work* (Connell, 1985) and *Making the Difference* (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982). What I enjoyed was how easy they were to read.

My experience in accessing and using research was not unique. Often teachers claim that the academic world and the practical world are too separate and the researchers are ill informed about the “real world” of teaching. Shkedi (1998:559) cites Ruddock and Houser in her discussion of this gap:

*The work of the university-based educational researcher has not traditionally been characterized by concern for direct communication with practitioners (Ruddock, 1985). The image of an elitist academia has been reinforced by the use of formal language in research reports that teachers see as dismissive of practical knowledge. Others have argued that the problem is not a communication gap at all but rather a dearth of worthwhile findings, implying that educational research is irrelevant and should indeed be ignored. This view blames the research/practice gap on the researchers themselves; their work is not helpful to practitioners because it is too theoretical, and research findings do not suit the specific situations in which teachers function (Houser, 1990).*

Listening to the experiences of teachers and re-presenting them in a genre that could be described as “more readable” and less “academic and formalistic” could, I believed, only help to



bridge the gap between theory and practice personified in the academic/teacher dichotomy. My personal experience was echoed in Shkedi's (1998) work in which she states that teachers use stories as their:

*framework for organizing and integrating their experience and knowledge. Expert teachers have a rich store of situated or storied knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks, and students' understanding and intentions. According to Gudmundsdottir, pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), the way in which teachers represent subject-matter, is in fact a narrative way of knowing. It seems therefore, that while there is a gap between the paradigmatic character of the positivistic research approach and the narrative mode of thought of teachers, there can be a real bridge between the narrative mode of thought of teachers and between the narrative character of qualitative research. (p.573)*

I recalled that my developing teaching philosophy emphasized listening to the stories of students—asking about their experiences and what had brought them to the learning situation we shared in order for me to gain a better understanding of them and their previous learning. I endeavoured to discover what they already knew so that we could move on together and build on their existing knowledge.

Narrative inquiry, as a method of research, is based on a similar premise of listening to the stories of the participants and it enables the researcher to use a variety of genres as vehicles of presenting research findings. Narrative inquiry research texts are not formalistic and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) comment on the significant differences embedded in narrative inquiry research texts in comparison to more formalistic research texts. Narrative inquiry, they claim, provides an opportunity to

*break out of the bordered space created by the plotlines of formalistic and reductionist inquiries that we have learned to live within. As we read others' research texts, we see the possibilities for pushing at the boundaries between these and narrative ways of thinking. (p.162).*

This, they claim, often presents new narrative inquirers with dilemmas in writing narrative inquiry research texts. In Chapter 4, I provide an account of some of my research dilemmas in arriving at what I considered an appropriate way of presenting my research findings so that I could remain true to my participants' voices and stories as well as maintain integrity in

presenting a narrative inquiry research text. As Clandinin and Connelly (p.168) warn, “we need to shape our texts so that they have a chance to push the boundaries, yet not stretch them beyond audience belief.”

Narrative inquiry then, seemed to be the most appropriate approach for inquiry given my views about research and my role in the research process. I immersed myself in as many narrative inquiries as I could and learnt what I could from other narrative forms of research and analysis including: Bennett et al. (1997), Bloom (1996), Boje (2001), Clandinin and Connelly (1995; 1998; 2000), Clough (2002), Conle (1993), Connelly and Clandinin (1988; 1990; 1999), Cortazzi (1993), Czarniawska (1998), Dewey (1938), Dhunpath (2000), Lieblich et al.(1998), Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), Phillion (1999), Polkinghorne (1988), Reissman (1993; 2002), Smeyers and Verhesschen (2001), Swidler (2000), Syrjälä and Estola (1999), Telles (2000), Tierney (1995; 1997). I embarked on my research process and learnt its principles through applying it to my research project. The following chapter presents a detailed account of that process. It is important to note here, that whilst I learned much from the stories of research experience in the literature that I encountered on my research journey, it was the application of the process that proved the most challenging as I learned to become a narrative inquirer.

## **CHAPTER 4: BECOMING A NARRATIVE INQUIRER: A NARRATIVE ON A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

This chapter comprises three sections each providing contextual details regarding the inquiry at various stages in its evolution towards a research text. The first section provides an outline of the study details including a synopsis of the participants, location of the study and methods of data collection in the field. The second provides an account of some of the general concerns and considerations I carried throughout the inquiry process and that fashioned many of my responses. These concerns relate to, and in some cases revisit, some of the concepts outlined in Chapter 3 demonstrating in a small way the iterative “to-ing” and “fro-ing”, inward and outward glance processes that typify the narrative inquiry experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The third section provides a narrative account of specific research decisions I made in conducting and writing the narrative inquiry. Essentially, this chapter demonstrates a process of becoming a narrative inquirer.

### **Study Details: Where? Who? How?**

#### *Where?*

Greenway State Primary School, with a student population of about 350 students, is located in a regional coastal town of approximately 16 000 residents in Far North Queensland. It is one of three State primary schools in the town with four other smaller State primary schools and one Catholic primary school within 15 kilometers of the school. I selected Greenway State Primary as my site because it was close to home, I was familiar with it and I had already established a professional relationship with some members of staff through previous activities as a professional development provider.

### *Who?*

I began my research with four female teachers (Narelle, Toni, Molly and Ruby), the male deputy principal (Mark) and the male principal (Adam) agreeing to participate. At my first meeting with the potential participants I outlined my area of interest, the study proposal and what I anticipated would be involved during the inquiry process. All staff members present at that meeting agreed to join me in my inquiry and signed the required consent forms. I offered to conceal identities (via pseudonyms) unless the participants indicated alternate preferences (at that stage none did). Once I began my study I realised I had overlooked a key player in the school professional development scene and approached the teacher librarian (Jane) who agreed to participate. The participants were volunteers and were told they could pull out of the study at any time if they felt inclined to do so. One of the teachers (Narelle) participated in the initial data collection stage of my study, but, in second semester that year, pursued an opportunity to work in England. For reasons that I discuss later in this chapter, I chose not to include material collected from her interviews.

Adam, Mark and Jane, while providing significant contextual information for my study were not the key focus of my inquiry. In Chapter 5, I provide a story that portrays many of the significant issues their interviews revealed to me. Ruby taught Year 4 during the first year I collected field data. Her stories of experience are presented in Chapter 6. Molly taught Year 7 and her stories are presented in Chapter 7. Toni also taught Year 7. Her stories appear in Chapter 8.

### *How? The Field Work.*

I began to formally collect data in the second school term of 2002 (April). I began with interviews of the participants at times that suited them, usually after school for the teachers. Adam, Mark and Jane were interviewed during school time. Each participant interview was 40 minutes to an hour in duration. At times two of the teacher participants chose to be interviewed together as a matter of convenience and to accommodate very busy schedules. I had several interviews with Narelle and Ruby together, and a number of interviews with Toni and Molly

following Curriculum Alliance meetings (discussed later). Each participant had at least three interviews by themselves in which they could discuss their individual stories.

The interviews were conducted in an informal, conversational style and were audio-taped. At times I would jot down notes during the interview as reminders of points that I wanted to pick up on and follow up in further conversation. After each interview I would take notes as part of my journal exercise and note points I considered relevant and that contributed to the general impressions I was forming. Often my journals were filled with questions I wanted to pursue in later conversations. I used those as starting points for subsequent interviews. Each interview was transcribed and filed for later analysis and reading.

I was invited to attend a number of professional development sessions with Greenway staff. I attended three Student Free days. Two of those days were facilitated by a principal and teacher from two of the other schools in the district and pertained to the implementation of the Productive Pedagogies (Land, 2001) concept being introduced by Education Queensland across the State. I spent one day seated at the table with Toni, Molly, and Adam; and a second, two months later, with Narelle, Jane and Ruby. The third student free day was conducted in October at Greenway State School with the morning session presented by Adam. The school-based PD day pertained to the implementation of integrated curriculum planning processes across the school. The October student free day provided the inspiration for the short story in Chapter 5.

Molly and Toni, as Year 7 teachers, had been invited to participate in an innovative district project: The Curriculum Alliance. The Curriculum Alliance involved Year 6 and 7 teachers from five schools across the district in a shared planning process to ensure consistency of planning and delivery in implementing new curriculum and in ensuring that students from all schools would move into High School with similar learning experiences. Two High School teachers participated in several of the Curriculum Alliance planning days. I was invited to participate in the process to observe what the teachers considered would be a unique experience.

During the Curriculum Alliance I offered my assistance as a scribe so that the teachers could all equally participate and offer suggestions without one of them missing out because of secretarial duties. That offer was gratefully accepted by Toni in particular as it appeared that the role of scribe had fallen on her shoulders. I became very familiar with the units of work the teachers were planning and was able to observe the group as they worked towards their goals of completing a two year curriculum plan that all schools would work toward. I interviewed Molly and Toni after each of the Curriculum Alliance meetings. Jane participated in the last two meetings and she participated in one of the interviews following a Curriculum Alliance day. During the Curriculum Alliance process I also took notes about the process and some of the points I thought deserved attention in the subsequent interviews with Molly and Toni. Those field notes and my journal entries written after the meetings supplemented the material I presented back to the participants.

In all I had transcripts from twenty-four initial interviews totaling approximately 430 A4 pages of single spaced font size 12 typing. After transcribing, analysing and drafting first versions of narrative material I re-presented the data to the participants and gave them the opportunity to comment on the material. Teachers were encouraged to create and maintain journals that could assist in the research process, but only Molly and Toni wrote and gave me a journal reflection on two occasions which I incorporated in their stories of experience.

The field work and data collection phase of the project occurred over a period of eighteen months and could have gone for much longer, but decisions had to be made to conclude data collection. This eighteen-month period included the initial interviews, transcription of interviews, initial analysis and presentation of draft material as well as subsequent interviews with the four, then three participant teachers, the principal, deputy principal and teacher librarian. All interviews were presented only to the original interviewee; they were not shared with the others.

Throughout the study I was preoccupied with several omnipresent research concerns. The following section provides a detailed discussion of those considerations.

### **Omnipresent Research Concerns**

During my research confirmation seminar two academics shared some criticisms and concerns they believed could be levelled at narrative research. Their warnings ensured that I paid particular attention to the integrity not only of the experiences and material presented to me by my participants, but also in the development of my research processes and implementation of the research approach. Part of the well-intentioned warnings was a concern that I meet the rigorous requirements of producing a quality PhD thesis. Implicit in those remarks, I believed, was a judgement about the validity of narrative inquiry as a sound research method. While I cannot pretend to address all concerns that may be levelled at this work or at narrative inquiries in general, I have attended to what are perhaps some of the obvious concerns I encountered particularly as a researcher using narrative inquiry, a methodology known for pushing the boundaries of formalistic research processes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This section provides some insight into the processes at work during my research journey.

One of the comments was that narrative inquiry could appear to be “a-theoretical,” perhaps echoing Lieblich et al.’s (1998) statement regarding narrative research:

*the use and application of this research method seems to have preceded the formalization of a philosophy and methodology parallel to the practice. Frequently, moreover, narrative study has been criticized as being more art than research: It seems based predominantly on talent, intuition, or clinical experience; defies clear order and systematisation; and can hardly be taught.*

*We believe that the future development of the field of narrative research requires a deliberate investment of effort in the elucidation of working rules for such studies. These would necessarily focus on approaches to analysis of narrative material and the development of techniques that could be employed in relevant studies. (p.1)*

Consequently, I have frequently found myself asking how I would defend this research project, and my research decisions. I needed to thoroughly understand the theoretical basis of narrative inquiry in order to defend it as a valid research methodology. I needed to be constantly

conscious of the theoretical basis of the research processes I was using and developing in the evolving inquiry.

Another concern expressed at my confirmation seminar was that in conducting a narrative inquiry as a PhD research project, I had to ensure I was not just presenting recounts of participants' stories presented in an interview. I needed to provide something new and demonstrate original thought. As Clandinin and Connelly (1998) identified, narrative inquiry as a qualitative research method needs to include more than just a recount of someone else's story.

*There are three sets of methodological questions that confront the researcher .... One set of questions has to do with the field of research experience, the second set with the texts told and written about the field experience, and the third set with the research account. Field, text, research account, and the relations among them, name primary kinds of decisions undertaken by those who study experience. (p.159)*

The comments of my academic colleagues 'haunted' me throughout my research. I felt I could never read enough to work out how to do narrative research. When I found methodological material, I found variations in suggested directions and application of strategies in analysis and construction of a research text. It appeared that although there were similarities in methodological approaches, much of what occurred or appeared in a narrative inquiry depended on the context of the inquiry, the characters that featured in the research project and the stories of experience they offered. Above all, I learned that the decisions I made in the research project were mine and had to be justified appropriately. There was no easy recipe or procedural text that I could follow and have complete faith in because of its tried and true methods. I could not precisely replicate another study or process and discuss the differences. Perhaps because, as Lieblich et al (1998) suggest, narrative research in general:

*differs significantly from its positivistic counterpart in its underlying assumptions that there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality nor one correct reading or interpretation of a text. The narrative approach advocates pluralism, relativism, and subjectivity. (p.2)*

The narrative research process is, as Clandinin and Connelly (1998:159) point out a "messy" process: "Experience is messy, and so is experiential research." My research experiences and



account of the inquiry process had to be present in the study to clarify and account for decisions I made as an inquirer.

Consequently, during my research project I constantly questioned the method of inquiry. My journal entries and thoughts were full of questions clarifying what I was doing and why: Were my project and my methods of research devoid of theory? What was/were the theory/theories that were guiding my research decisions and practice? How was educational theory and research (current and historical) going to impact on my research? What theoretical contributions and opportunities were present in this research project? Was I merely recounting stories of others? How would I ensure that I was not? Indeed, I found myself in almost a “reverse” process of research to that which I was accustomed. Instead of looking for evidence of theories in practice, I was finding theories to match the evidence in my research project. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:4) describe the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur* who produces a piece of work which is constructed by using a variety of methods and techniques to answer questions about the social world: an apt description of my research experience in this project.

Underlying my research process was a firm conviction in what Denzin (1997, quoted in Phillion, He and Connelly 2005a:9) has termed the “sixth moment” – “a time of questioning whose knowledge should be considered valid and a time when research participants have their own ideas about how their experiences should be interpreted, theorized and represented” (Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005). In fact, Denzin and Lincoln (2003), in Phillion et al (2005:9) have suggested that narrative research has grown as a response to the sixth moment, forming “the seventh moment” in qualitative research where narrative is seen as a “response to recognition of the complexity of human experience in increasingly diversified societies.”

It appeared to me in 2000, when submitting my research proposal, that narrative inquiry had been interpreted by some colleagues as a ‘softer option’ in which a researcher could ‘do whatever he/she wanted,’ a point raised also by Eisner (1988) in his Foreword to Connelly and

Clandinin's (1988:x) work: "Narratives are regarded as "soft," and soft data do not inspire confidence among the tough-minded." It did not take me long to realise however, that what appeared to others as a "soft" research option was in fact quite rigorous. The account in the last section of this chapter provides greater detail regarding some of the challenges I faced.

The inquiry process was demanding from a personal and professional perspective. I had to become and remain constantly conscious of my position as a 'position' and not as a finite 'truth'. That became challenging especially when encountering responses, behaviours, reactions that opposed my own position and beliefs about the profession, professional development and education. Learning to suspend judgement is not easy for someone accustomed to exercising critical thought and a critical perspective in educational matters. I had to learn that perhaps at a later stage I could "reemploy" my critical lens, but in order to learn more about alternative perspectives and in order to better understand those perspectives, I needed to hear them first. I reminded myself of Nakata's account of his Torres Strait Islander experience of education in Queensland. He suggests: "The point for you as teachers and educators is that it isn't enough to just make spaces for people to speak. You have to examine your own ways of listening to what students have to say" (2001:348). The same, it can be said, applies to researchers conducting narrative inquiries.

My research interest presented an opportunity to embark on a journey of discovery and presentation of teachers' experiences. However, the prospect of using a methodology that would allow me to present those stories without acknowledging my role as the mediator in presenting that experience would mean that I would not be acknowledging or paying attention to "my own ways of listening" (Nakata, 2001:348). As much as I would have liked to pretend that the voices I was presenting were entirely the teachers', I knew that was not possible. Narrative inquiry allowed me to acknowledge my role, incorporating my responses and my experience whilst presenting the stories offered to me during my research, thus enabling me to present a voice for teachers that I had thought was conspicuously absent in the existing body of research. Above

all, narrative inquiry provided me with an opportunity to present experiences and say: “This is my reading of this situation. This is my interpretation of what you have said. This reminded me of my own experience. These are the questions I find myself asking as a result of your story of experience.” Narrative inquiry acknowledges that I am a part of the interpretive and creative process in the research project. Another individual, including you, the reader, may interpret the situations and stories of experience differently. But, as outlined in Chapter 3 and in other literature (Carger, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, 2000; Lincoln, 2003), people tell and use stories in order to share their experience with others. Those stories of experience take many different shapes and forms, but they are still stories of experience. As audience/reader of those experiences we respond and form our own present experience. As audience and reader we are invited to engage with and discuss the experiences offered. Narratives in education provide an opportunity for discussion of teaching practices and experiences that originate with the practitioners. Indeed, Lyons and La Boskey (2002:7) argue that narrative accounts of teaching experiences “provide a way to publicly interrogate, examine, and display the scholarship of teaching.”

Narrative inquiry also acknowledges and enables us as researchers to describe a part of the process involved in obtaining and presenting the stories of experience. It is overtly stating that an interpretive and constructive process occurs in research and we are kidding ourselves if we fail to acknowledge the researcher’s role in the presentation of research texts. As researcher, it is my responsibility to provide the reader an account of decisions made, a rationale of directions taken in my research, a response to the stories presented to me and perhaps more questions. As Lieblich et al. (1998:11) state:

*readers need to rely more on the personal wisdom, skills and integrity of the researcher. Yet interpretation does not mean absolute freedom for speculation and intuition. Rather, intuitive processes are recruited in the service of comprehension, which examines the basis for intuition and should test it repeatedly against the narrative material. Interpretive decisions are not ‘wild,’ in other words, but require justification. While traditional research methods provide researchers with systematic inferential processes, usually based on statistics, narrative work requires self-awareness and self-discipline in the ongoing examination of text*

*against interpretation, and vice versa. Needless to say, these attributes of narrative studies mean that they are highly time-consuming for the researcher.*

Implicit and central to the entire research process is the notion of developing a relationship with participants (including the reader) based on trust and belief not only in me as a writer and educational professional, but also as a researcher; trust that the process of inquiry and accounts of experience are credible and authentic (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Phillion, 2002). It is imperative that I have provided enough information for my reader to trust me, my reading and my telling of human experience as it was shown to me in my inquiry. At the same time, the reader remains separate yet able to identify, acknowledge and consider the opportunities the accounts of experience offer him/her to resonate with, critique or reflect on his/her own experience. This leads me, therefore, to provide a more specific narrative on my narrative inquiry experience.

### **Research Decisions**

*I experienced scraps of stolen stickers, tags of teapots, bits of bankbooks and slivers of swinging stars. Perhaps research knowledge is constructed from scraps, tags, bits and slivers; perhaps these fragments recreated and patched together from being in the midst of storied life in the classroom are the best that I, or we, can do. (Phillion, 1999:214)*

“More dilemmas! If all I get are scraps of experience and hints of deeper issues, how can I accurately portray those and adequately discuss them? But before I even get to the deeper issues, how can I make sure that the voices I am presenting adequately represent those of my participants?” Those were the questions reverberating through my head as I attempted to decipher, analyse and determine how to most effectively use the volumes of transcripts and field notes that were in front of me. Those were the questions I took to Toronto when I attended the American Educational Research Association Winter Institute on Narrative Inquiry in 2003. Those were the questions I asked experienced narrative inquirers at that Institute. “What do I do with this material now that I’ve gathered it and transcribed it?” I wanted a formula, an easy

answer, an explicit and predetermined pattern to follow like I had constructed and used when I was conducting my research in my Honours thesis. I received no easy answer.

From the beginning the open-ended nature of the research process presented decisions and dilemmas. Data collection was a period filled with learning opportunities not just about the method of inquiry and the phenomenon being revealed, but also regarding my own personal approach to issues of professional development and research. I loved the opportunities for self-realization and learning the interviews provided. I learned to identify and acknowledge the times I was projecting my explanations, theories and personal experiences onto my participants and their accounts of their experience. I learned to listen without making quick judgements in an interview setting. I learned to respect others' experiences even if they jarred with mine and my sense of righteousness or value systems regarding education and professional development. I learned to examine my own experiences and question my own responses. I was not just negotiating the recounts and accurate portrayal of my participants' experiences; I also negotiated and came to terms with my experience of their stories and professional development. I often felt pressured by my own presence and biases throughout the research. In short, I learned about negotiating relationships in conducting narrative research and exploring experience through the stories of the practitioners with whom I was working (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The question of accurate representation and credibility in the presentation of other's experience was, and still is, profoundly important to me. I felt a tremendous burden of responsibility throughout the inquiry: If I were to tell stories of somebody else's experience, I had an obligation to ensure I was portraying that experience accurately and any paraphrasing I employed sustained the original intention and meaning of the teller. This was particularly important when I found some of the material presented to me to be counter to what I considered "best practice" for teachers. Once again, suspending my judgement to accurately portray another's experience was an ever present challenge. I had to employ a process that satisfied the participants and me. In order to do this well, my data collection and the conversion of raw data

to research text had to include techniques that would incorporate as much of the participants' own voices as was possible.

During the interviews I listened to different aspects of the stories that perhaps I would not have attended to if I were just "chatting" and sharing stories. While writing I tried to be aware of the critical lenses that I was using in reporting and fashioning my texts. The whole process was made up of overlapping purposes and directions where one step led to and shaped the next. There were not completely separate or discrete parts in the processes. There was a continual "to-ing and fro-ing" between the now, the future and the past, the inward glance and the outward view (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I was aware that during the interviews (the now) I was forming and helping construct the future (the narratives I would tell) which would then be referring to the current events as well as those recounted in the teacher's stories as the past. That meant the records of the 'now' in the interview process had to be detailed and accurate without being overbearing—in places I provided a commentary about non-verbal cues and other aspects of the conversation that could not be 'observed' in an audio recording but that conveyed meaning even though normally one would not articulate or overtly comment on them in casual conversation. I had to do this in a way that did not interrupt the flow of the conversation. I would make comments like: "She says while scratching her head," or "As she rolls her eyes." The way in which I conducted the interviews impacted on the data I obtained and that in turn impacted on the stories I could tell. The things to which I chose to respond and those that I deliberately or unintentionally skipped over were also forming the contents of the field texts that I would later use for the research texts. And, despite these concerns, I was aware that I needed to maintain a flowing interview that enabled the participants to share their experiences and elaborate on aspects they considered important.

My comments in interviews became supportive ones aimed at encouraging further elaboration and provision of contextual information. I sought further details and information regarding particular circumstances and clarification of the participants' responses to situations they were

recounting. At times, some participants were easier to relate to than others—perhaps there was commonality of experience and resonance that enabled me to do that. The following extract from my personal writing illustrates this point:

*I felt comfortable interviewing Adam, the principal, where one simple question elicited a lengthy, well-organised and rich response. I didn't have to work hard to get answers from Adam. I could be silent and listen. I could learn what he thought without risking myself. I could later examine the material and question and probe aspects of his stories to gain further insight regarding his experiences and thoughts. I felt challenged by the short responses and accounts of experience initially offered by Ruby. I learned about my role in collaborating with her in order to encourage her to share her stories. I learned to accept less "full answers" as a possibility that that was all there was—perhaps there was no greater rationale or conscious explanation behind the response that was offered. Digging for and probing didn't always yield what I considered would be a satisfactory reasoned and well thought out response. I learned to suspend my judgement of the professional approach displayed by Ruby—perhaps she wasn't as "reflective" (Schon, 1983) as I had initially assumed, at least not in the ways that I considered professionally appropriate. I learned to accept, trust and acknowledge my role as a participant in the research process while at the same time learning to value the differences between my participant's experience of professional development and what it meant for them, and my own preconceived notions of professional development and what it should mean for teachers. (November 2003)*

I needed to respect the stories of experience presented by **all** participants recognising each account as legitimate. Moments of difficulty in understanding became opportunities for greater learning. I learned to question why my experience was awkward or difficult at these times in the interviews. It was hard to be objective and non-judgemental when dealing with subjective content. In fact, I am not sure I, or any researcher dealing in matters of human experience, can be totally objective. What I can be though, is aware of my subjective perspectives and lenses. That requires considerable understanding of oneself, one's own experience and a willingness to examine one's own theories of practice and operation. In order to help separate my own responses and experiences from those of the participants, I used journals.

Journal entries enabled me to channel my own concerns and records of experience into another data gathering technique, not just so I could refer to them at a later stage, but so I could articulate my experiences, pose questions and clarify my thoughts about what the teachers were

telling me about professional development, the contexts in which they operated and their responses to professional situations they faced. I could record my concerns, questions, thoughts and reactions in a space that was physically and metaphorically separate to the interview data I was collecting. My journal entries became the forum in which I could freely ask questions, probe issues and comments that arose in the interviews and it was there that I often played with ideas to determine possible future directions in tapping into the experience of others in my interviews. My journals were my record of my experience in the research journey—a way of making space in my listening and responding so that I could hear the voices of my participants more effectively.

As well as recording interviews and journal entries I took copious field notes recording my observations of participants' responses, my responses and other teachers in the professional development sessions that I attended during the data collection phase. These notes were used to prompt questions in follow up interviews with participants and also as contextual notes regarding some of the professional development situations experienced by the educational personnel with whom I worked.

In retrospect, data collection was perhaps the easiest part of the research process. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the teachers and probing for more information on how they saw their professional development. Establishing a supportive and open interviewing situation was not hard with these participants. They did not hesitate to participate in the study, and provided me with many opportunities to discuss various issues with them. They were accessible and always made time for me in their busy schedules. I respected the time they were providing. I was conscious that a one hour interview after school could be a challenge for those with family commitments and the constant pressure of planning and marking.

As previously mentioned, interviews with the contextual characters—the principal, deputy and teacher librarian usually occurred during school time while the teachers were with their classes.



Again, I was always conscious of busy schedules, but at no time did I feel hurried or that my purpose for being there was not significant. There was a sense of contributing to something relevant.

There were many stories and experiences to be shared. My difficulty was determining the parameters of my study. I collected data over a longer period of time than I had anticipated and I had to make a deliberate decision to stop gathering more material. Having said that I determined to separate my record of experience from my participants through journals, essentially they could not be kept entirely separate. I am present in the text, sometimes obviously, at other times as a “shadowy figure,” not quite visible, orchestrating the structure and flow of the text. In a similar way, I was also present in the open-ended interviews, directing them by questioning and responding to teachers’ stories. Another researcher may well have attended and gained access to different accounts of experience. Similarly, separating ‘professional development’ in stories of experience from other aspects of professional life was something I could not often do. Professional development was integrated in the stories of every day life experiences. Defining professional development became an issue. Perhaps one situation best demonstrates the concerns I experienced from an inquiry perspective. A detailed example of some of the oscillating interactions between my thoughts and reactions concerned with the concept of professional development (recorded in my journals) and the stories of experience provided by the teachers is provided in the following research story.

Both Molly and Toni experienced some difficulties in dealing with two colleagues at school. One teacher was a colleague with whom they should have been working quite closely in order to develop a united Year 6 and 7 curriculum. I was not privy to the specific details or events that contributed to the tense situation. Both Molly and Toni tried to avoid mentioning it, but ‘the situation’ frequently recurred in their shared discussions with me. References were made (as indicated in my letters to Molly) about one particular teacher. Both Molly and Toni wanted to avoid details with me, and I respected that. The situation, however, was directly impacting on

their ability to implement changes in the curriculum and in the way they saw their professional practice heading. The curriculum plans developed in the Curriculum Alliance had to be implemented the next year. While preparing the curriculum documents, Molly and Toni frequently referred to their “difficult situation” and wondered whether they would be able to implement their innovative plans because of it. The collegial and professional difficulty eventually required intervention and mediation from Adam and a Union representative. The situation was resolved when the teacher sought a transfer to another school. (As Adam would say, the teacher concerned ‘self-selected’ his way out of the school). This experience had a significant impact on Molly and Toni’s participation in the Curriculum Alliance. In many ways it impeded their efforts and enthusiastic approach to the professional agenda in which they were participating. The situation arising from ‘relationship’ difficulties proved to be a learning opportunity that impacted on and affected their professional knowledge and practice.

I realised that this experience was significant for Molly and Toni, but it also presented me with some dilemmas during the research process. My journal entry reads:

*I also need to probe/ask more questions – but where will that stop? I’m really just beginning to scratch the surface. This is rich stuff. Do I pursue the tension/conflict issue with Molly, Toni and their teachers? I really want to explore it more. Will Adam go into it, or will it be a breach of the professional role he plays? How will my inquiry/investigation into the ‘minor crisis’ impact on what happens? Will I be allowed to go near that? Perhaps this issue could provide a focal point of the creative text I can develop – “Developing the Professional Community – Tensions and Resolutions.” The real life biographical [and personal] context directly impacting on the professional experience of the participants and indirectly, perhaps directly, influencing an aspect of their professional development! How do I do this?? (15<sup>th</sup> May, 2002)*

Later, in a discussion following an interview with Molly and Toni, I mentioned the conflict issue as a significant one that could demonstrate a professional dilemma influencing their professional development experiences. I negotiated the possibility of this research direction with them. Both somewhat reluctantly agreed to discuss the issue further. They shared some of the details of the situation with me, but requested that I did not record the specifics. Their experience was a painful one. They learned about working collaboratively within a school

situation. They learned it could be tough. Both were reluctant to go down that path again and would be wary of the other teachers with whom they would be requested to collaborate. Positive working relationships based on trust and mutual support were crucial to successful collaborative efforts in implementing new curriculum. This had been a professional development experience.

A note in the margins of my journal added more than twelve months later indicates the nature of experiences such as these that became driving forces in the direction of the research project.

*This is a list of [methodological] questions and dilemmas – what directions do I follow in the research? What opportunities do I grab? What ways do I go? These were directed more by the participants than by me. They were their experiences! Who said NI was easy? (3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2003)*

Once again I was reminded that an exploration of experience – narrative inquiry – is not one controlled entirely by the researcher. The plot, the crises, the human dilemmas and interest points are not constructed by the researcher; they come from the experiences of the participants. And, as this example demonstrated, the experience, in Dewey's (1938) terms, has led to learning. The teachers were not prepared for this occurrence. They were preparing for a different professional situation that did not unfold as they had hoped. Instead, they found themselves responding to a situation, rather than controlling it. Yet, they still learned valuable professional lessons about collaboration, their colleagues and their professional environment.

Dewey asks:

*What, then, is the true meaning of preparation in the educational scheme? In the first place, it means that a person, young or old, gets out of his present experience all that there is in it for him at the time in which he has it. When preparation is made the controlling end, then the potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a suppositious future. When this happens, the actual preparation for the future is missed or distorted. The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything. (1938:49)*

This unplanned and powerful professional development experience for Toni and Molly would, they both acknowledged, prepare them for future collaborative curriculum projects. My research

decisions pertaining to the pursuit of those experiences were “played out” first in my journal.

The field texts for this narrative inquiry therefore, whilst separate, were also interactive in their impact on the research direction.

It is difficult to separate method from phenomenon because they are so intricately intertwined.

The phenomena being revealed, shared and investigated become the shared experience of the inquiry. In many ways, the revelation of the phenomenon directs the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:130). The information provided to me by the participants directed the topics I pursued in interviews. I was strongly aware of the choices I made in the interviews to probe some aspects further while I left others alone. My interests directed some of that. The responses from the participants, however, also controlled the depth of conversation and experience pertaining to those comments. I provide another extract from my journal to illustrate this concern:

*As a researcher I'm faced with a few questions. In open-ended unstructured interviews there are lots of words/terms/opportunities to further explore concepts that are thrown up. Picking up on them, or choosing not to, flavours the evidence I collect. I know I sometimes pick up and follow things, especially if I don't think I share an understanding of the “meaning making” words. But at other times eg - jargon such as “SPS” in Mark's interview today - I know I can pick up later. Mark mentioned boys in schools and how we continue to let them down. There's an area I would love to follow up and I tried to link it with PD. But, when I pushed it I realised that sometimes there is no depth to what is being said - it's almost a matter of sprouting the rhetoric and using the words, but there may not be any real conviction or thorough thought behind the topic. Some [participants] provide that feeling, others don't. Those that I feel have more “depth” of understanding on the issues/topics: is that because what they say matches my understanding or goes beyond mine? Whereas for those areas/topics that I appear to know more about, I tend to pass their remarks off as a “bit shallow”. So, in effect I'm using my own knowledge base as the benchmark for determining shallow or deeper understanding of others. Is that the right thing to do? Does it matter? How does my “bias” or interest influence the picture of the person I'm interviewing in my research? ... I will be re-presenting what I believe are the “meanings” others have presented in their interviews. But, in effect, what I'm presenting are my meanings and interpretations of their meanings! So, what is truth? What is the value of research? There must be many common understandings though because society operates on common understandings. Teaching and assessment hinges on a belief in common understandings. But, reading Martin Nakata's experience in Barry's “Teaching, Diversity and Democracy” (2001) reminds me that the “truth” that is presented today and reasoned today, the meanings that are*

attached to what I say today are only temporal. Tomorrow (20 years down the track) they may be SO wrong. But, does that mean we stop presenting our meaning making of today? NO! I don't think so because growth needs to come from sharing and articulating meaning as we continue to probe the making of meaning and the sharing of meaning amongst participants in conversation/dialogue. So, in the research context then – I need to be aware of this positioning. I also need to acknowledge that endeavouring to establish common understanding is a part of the challenge. But, when what the participants (eg Molly, Toni and Adam) speak about PD and it strikes a chord with me I don't explore it. When I'm challenged by meaning making and establishing shared understanding with Ruby, I wanted to run away, or drop it or skip over it and say "not relevant" because I don't understand it. But, I need to explore it more and endeavour to find a common understanding/shared meaning so that I don't undervalue her situation. Again, Martin Nakata's story of people not understanding him comes to mind. I may never share that meaning and I may not portray it accurately, but I need to explore it more.

(4 June,

2002)

**Once again, the importance of sharing and verifying the texts that I crafted from the raw data became a crucial element of the research journey.**

Despite having collected volumes of raw data in interview transcripts, observation notes, journal entries and additional field notes, I was still aware that there was so much more to learn. I knew I could not "live with" the participants in their classrooms—much of their daily teaching activities did not pertain to the professional development activities they were discussing with me. Much of my research incorporated reflections over the careers of my participants. When opportunities arose for me to share PD opportunities with the teachers, I did. Yet, I was conscious that so much seemed to happen while I was not there, while I was completing other research tasks away from Greenway. At a later point in that same journal entry I wrote:

I feel as though I'm investigating a "crime". There's so much that is understood by the participants about their school, about their school culture – I'm allowed in, but I still have to guess the parts that are unspoken – fill in the gaps that are gaps to me, but not to them because that's their life/culture/school. I'm visiting the area. It's a jigsaw puzzle and I don't necessarily have the overview/whole picture to guide me in putting the pieces together. They're happy to share it with me if I ask. It's obvious and clear to them on their side. I'm the one looking through the fogged up window occasionally the demister works really well, at other times it's a bit patchy (4 June, 2002).

I was aware that what I shared and witnessed were only “scraps” of reality experienced by the participants. I was only gaining some insight through their discussions and interviews. Because of that, I frequently asked questions to “fill in” the gaps when we did meet: “What has happened in between?” This added to the quantity of raw data and contributed to what was perhaps my most challenging procedural dilemma: how to move from huge volumes of field texts to a concise and readable research text. Once again, there were no easy, well articulated procedures in the literature.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the transition between field and research texts as one of the more challenging aspects of conducting narrative inquiries:

*As we move from field texts to research texts, our field texts are the texts of which we ask questions of meaning and social significance.... These are the general questions that drive the transition from field texts to research texts as analytical and interpretive matters come to the fore. These questions are made more complex as we ask them in the midst of trying to negotiate a new way of being in relation with our participants, and as we fight against our desire to let field texts speak for themselves.*

*For a narrative inquiry of reasonable scope, the constructed field texts may appear overwhelming. (p.130).*

Reading, sorting and re-reading material is a feature of the field to research text transition with constant questioning of the significance of the field texts in relation to the research question. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000:132) suggest “an inquirer composing a research text looks for the patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in the social setting.” There are no clear steps or sequential processes that can be applied to the field texts. There is constant renegotiation of detail and plot as field texts are transformed to research texts, often incorporating feedback from the participants which ultimately are influenced by other experiences of both researcher and participant. This often includes different perspectives and readings of the material and can incorporate experience gained from reading other research or purely by benefit of hindsight and reflection removed from the immediate experience. Narrative inquiry is messy with the transition from field to research text, perhaps the messiest part. So what were the steps in the transition process from

field to research text and what guided the process and decisions I made? How did I analyse the texts and resolve dilemmas of portrayal of other's narratives? How did I become a narrative inquirer? I address these questions in the remaining part of this chapter.

Each transcribed interview became my major field text. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) outlined two approaches to narrative analysis in research. One method was to analyse the data using literary terminology: identifying theme, plot, characters, setting and formulating a narrative from that analysis. That did not match the data I obtained from the teachers or my personal writing capability at that time. I had several characters with separate stories and I wanted to treat them separately rather than join them together in one narrative. I felt I needed to analyse my material more carefully before I could present it in a literary form.

The second method built on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry concept of the three-dimensional space. This presented me with an analytical starting point. I modified Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) suggestions slightly in constructing a matrix for my initial analysis. The matrix (see Appendix A) enabled me to begin to view the data in a different physical way as I grouped the comments from the interviews into their "broad themes" maintaining the direct speech provided in the interviews. I was able to separate myself from the data more and become more analytical. I immersed myself in the transcripts—re-reading and listening to the tapes for voice nuances that could impact on the meanings intended. I started to mark the transcripts in my tables as evidence of temporality. I started to identify the place and situation in which the discussions occurred and to which the discussion referred. I started to record whether the reflection and accounts were personal or social in nature. I also began to identify themes/issues or potential "plots" in the transcripts (this was my addition to Ollerenshaw & Creswell's matrix). This last activity provided me with a broad content analysis that enabled me to organise the interviews into topics of discussion (see Appendix B). It was not until later when I read Lieblich et al.'s (1998) account of narrative research that I realised I was implementing aspects of a "holistic-content" analysis process which includes 5 steps:

- 1. Read the material several times until a pattern emerges, usually in the form of foci of the entire story. Read or listen carefully, empathically, and with an open mind. Believe in your ability to detect the meaning of the text, and it will 'speak' to you. There are no clear directions for this stage....*
- 2. Put your initial and global impression of the case into writing. Note exceptions to the general impression as well as unusual features of the story such as contradictions or unfinished descriptions. Episodes or issues that seem to disturb the teller, or produce disharmony in his or her story, may be no less instructive than clearly displayed contents.*
- 3. Decide on special foci of content or themes that you want to follow in the story as it evolves from beginning to end....*
- 4. Using coloured markers...mark the various themes in the story, reading separately and repeatedly for each one.*
- 5. Keep track of your results in several ways: follow each theme throughout the story and note your conclusions. Be aware of where a theme appears for the first and last times, the transitions between themes, the context for each one, and their relative salience in the text. Again, pay special attention to episodes that seem to contradict the theme in terms of content, mood, or evaluation by the teller. (pp 62-63)*

Lieblich et al. (1998) stress that this analysis and immersion in the data is a highly interpretive process. I found that topics were not clear-cut and clearly defined in the interview transcripts. Themes were often revisited throughout the minimum of four interviews that I conducted with each major participant. I grouped the data from the interviews and checked for consistencies and inconsistencies, for contradictions and affirmations and concurrence of thought. I looked for gaps and silences in the transcripts. I noted differences in the accounts of professional experiences between teachers with similar length of service in teaching. I noted areas that I believed warranted further investigation and I started to write notes to my participants in order to represent my readings and understanding of their experiences. In places my field notes supplemented my presentation to the participants, particularly in relation to the discussions on Productive Pedagogies and the Curriculum Alliance. I did not refer substantially to my own journal entries at this stage preferring to focus on the words of the participants. I continued to maintain journals recording my thoughts, questions and concerns. I immersed myself in the accounts of my participants and endeavoured to organise them into relatively sequential and



logical pieces that were compressed according to the themes identified in their accounts. Where possible I maintained the participants' direct speech from the interviews.

Six months after visiting Toronto and my discussions with experienced narrative inquirers about processing field texts, as I was experimenting with forms of presentation I recalled JoAnn Phillion's invitation to stay in touch and sent her some samples of my work and a list of further questions to clarify my thoughts on the process I was using. She echoed the advice I was given at the Winter Institute and suggested I follow a form that I felt I could use. Michael Connelly had said, "What do you like to write? What are you good at writing? Use that as a starting point to get yourself writing" (personal communication, February 16, 2003). JoAnn's suggestion in her reply email was "use something that speaks to you, and I would also add that our participants and our inquiries speak to how we write. In some ways the writing is guided by the process, rather than the other way" (J. Phillion, personal communication, August 8, 2003)

I had always enjoyed writing letters to friends and family recounting experiences, perceptions and thoughts I encountered in my life. During my experience living in Sweden as a 16-year old I was immersed in Swedish culture. I soon learned that writing letters home to friends and family not only provided me with an activity while I was in classes I could not understand, but, letter writing became a way in which I could note and reflect on the many cultural experiences I had learning to live, participate in and "be" in a different family and culture. I could visualise my audience. I could "speak" directly to them through my writing. An additional two years of study in Idaho in the USA provided me with ample opportunity to maintain and develop my letter writing skills. Letters, not always mailed or sent, became an outlet and record of experience that became a part of my life. Even though my overseas friends and family would now consider me a very poor correspondent, I still enjoy writing letters, rephrasing the stories and accounts I provide in order to ensure I communicate my intentions to a specific audience. When given an option about the types of writing that I felt comfortable with and that I preferred to indulge in, letters seemed an obvious choice. They enabled me to include personal reflections

that could be interspersed through a commentary of experience. I decided to experiment with writing letters to my participants as ways to re-present their stories and accounts of professional development experiences.

Eighty or more pages of transcripts and raw data for each participant were reduced to one “draft epistle” of forty pages. In many places these epistles used large portions of raw data that at that stage I felt uncomfortable in paraphrasing but that I thought reflected the experience and thought processes of the participants. These lengthy letters were re-presented to the participants to comment on and fill in some of the gaps I had identified.

The draft letters moved through various stages of interaction between individual participants and me. This was an evolving relationship that was not always occurring in an interview or face-to-face context, but rather on paper as I interacted with the experience of my participants and fashioned the texts I was using to portray the experience. This was another aspect of the letter genre that appealed to me. It implied a personal discussion with my participants. The relationship we had developed and the style and nature of our discussion could, to some extent, be maintained through the letters. The process of conversion from field to research text was an evolving one that was dependent on the relationship between me and my participants and that used a text style that fitted the data and relationship. Perhaps this is why more experienced narrative inquirers could not answer my “how do I do this?” questions with an easy formula. It was up to me to maintain and constantly check the integrity of the data and continue to utilise the relationship I and my participants were developing.

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) emphasis on establishing, maintaining and often renegotiating relationships in narrative inquiries is one reason I felt I could not use the data presented by Narelle. Narelle left to work overseas and, whilst she had given me permission to use her material, the relationship became very one-sided and feedback from her was not available. Her experiences would not have been treated with the same methodological processes and checking

mechanisms that the other participants' experiences and accounts were. This presented an incongruent element in my research experience and did not provide Narelle with the option to comment on the data I presented to her in the first letter. I decided to leave her valuable data for another research opportunity with different parameters to those I determined for this study.

Writing letters was not the only option I had for representing my characters and their experience in a final research text. One option was to compile fictional characters by combining experience as Connell (1985) did in *Teachers' Work*. This was an option when some of the participants had asked to have anonymity built into the project. I was concerned that the principal in particular could find it difficult when he read a piece that indicated he was a bit of a dictator. How could I deal with that? Fictionalising it was an option. That did not suit me though, because I wanted to stay as close to the situation and characters as possible. I dealt with the issue by discussing it directly with the principal when he described himself as a "benign dictator". The concept would not be new to him and I did not need to fictionalise the situation. Again, this demonstrates the significance of the relationship between researcher and participants as it is constantly negotiated, is fashioning the direction of the research and, indeed, the nature of the research text. Not only is narrative inquiry an exploration of experience it is itself an experience that requires recording, awareness and examination. As a method of exploring experience, it becomes a phenomenon of inquiry itself (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

All final participants were able to provide me with subsequent interviews and feedback to clarify points and discuss the presentation of their experience in the letters. Following these discussions and after accommodating concerns such as "Do we really have to include that quote?" and "Did I really say that?" and "Can we remove some of those ums?" and following a discussion with critical friends who read some of the long letters, I determined to serialise the one long letter into a number of shorter letters. At this writing stage I began to deliberately intersperse my thoughts and some of my journal recollections as the participants' stories of experience resonated or jarred with some of mine. Those points serve to draw the reader's

attention to issues I identified in the participants' accounts of experience and are precursors to another aspect of my inquiry experience and what follows in the research text.

I faced another writing dilemma. How was I to provide the reader significant contextual knowledge to understand the context in which my teacher participants worked? I interviewed the principal, the deputy principal and the teacher-librarian in length several times. They provided me with significant insight into the administrative decisions made in the school, as well as aspects of the school work culture and the educational environment in which the teachers operated.

Until writing the research text, I had treated the interviews with the principal, deputy principal and teacher-librarian in the same way as I had treated the interviews and field experiences with the teacher participants. However, I wanted to differentiate between the teachers as the major focus of my research and the other participants who provided me with significant contextual details regarding the organisation, personnel and administrative decisions that impacted on professional development in the school. Six epistles were too much to include in a thesis. Not all of the material that I had pertained directly to the experiences of the teachers that were the focus of the study. Even though I had valuable material presenting alternative perspectives, I decided not to use it in its entirety or in a similar form. The presentation of the teachers' experiences had to be significantly different from those of the principal, deputy and teacher-librarian. This was an agonising decision given the amount of time and effort put into preparing the field texts for these individuals. However, I found myself once again heeding Phillion's (personal communication, August 8, 2003) and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000:130) advice. They warn against the danger of "falling in love" with material and of a reluctance to let go of material that may not suit the purpose of the research text.

My primary purpose and focus in the contextual section of the research text was to provide details about the space in which my teachers operated. The three-dimensional space of narrative

inquiry incorporates not just a temporal aspect, but a spatial component and social element. Once again, I found myself questioning how to best present the valuable contextual information provided by other significant participants, my “support characters”. How was I to present the context and place in which these teachers operated in a succinct, yet sufficiently descriptive format that would provide adequate contextual information to the reader? Critical friends encouraged me to experiment with form and writing. They helped me step out of my traditional styles to explore other forms of written expression. Traditional academic writing would not portray the feeling I had developed for the context of Greenway. It would not portray the conviction and emotion I perceived in the principal and the teacher-librarian. A letter to each of the participants in this context did not seem right either—yes, this included personal and professional material that could have been expressed in letters similar to those I wrote to the teacher participants, but it was not enough. It did not paint an adequate picture of the interactions I observed on the Student Free Days I attended or of the school context or landscape (Phillion, 1999, 2002) of the research site. Individual letters did not adequately draw the characters together to show their relationships and the effect they had on the professional development of the staff.

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) suggest compilations of information using a problem–solution narrative structure enable the writer to re-story and sequence events according to more traditional literary theory incorporating classic elements of plot structure (characters, setting, problem, action and resolution). This offers a logical sequence of events incorporating possibilities to explain experiences: “why attempts occurred as they did” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002:344). I reflected on critical friends’ comments of encouragement and Phillion’s remark: “Why not short story? Are there characters, time, plot?” (personal communication, August 8, 2003). Buoyed by the confidence others seemed to have in my creative writing abilities, I tried a short story account of a student free day, based on the field texts I had accumulated. The attempt seemed to work. I felt it portrayed more than just a clinically cold description of the setting and the people who inhabited it during school days. It made the

context seem alive and began to portray the complexity of human experience in the educational setting where many events and experiences occur concurrently. Short stories provide possibilities including accessibility for readers not immersed in academic literature and language enabling them to make connections with the human experience (resonance) portrayed in the stories. I acknowledge there could be more depth and detailed portrayal of relationships and interactions, of physical and historical factors that contribute to what makes Greenway State School what it is, but again space, time and word limitations apply. This is, after all, an account of a research experience, a small window through which we can view professional lives, working relationships, professional development experiences and spaces in which three primary school teachers operate.

My entrance and exit from Greenway School did not mark any clear breaks in the life of the school, its teachers or the professional development that occurred and that continues to occur there. My time at Greenway captured a small portion of the professional lives that have continued to work, grow and change. The period of my study was limited, as was the data I obtained from all of the participants. I could not pretend I could capture it all. But, I had sufficient data to present an insight into professional development in the lives of three teachers at the school. The additional characters presented me with an insight into the contexts in which they all worked. A brief synopsis of each of the “support” characters and why I considered their role crucial in my inquiry appears in Chapter 5. Indeed, the following chapters present the context and the stories of experience that form the heart of my narrative inquiry.

## **CHAPTER 5: INTRODUCING GREENWAY AS A PLACE OF INQUIRY**

### **Greenway State School**

If I were to take you on a tour of Greenway State Primary School during a school day you would probably observe and begin to make judgements about the children in their uniforms, the layout of the school and the atmosphere in which teachers and students work together in their physical environment. You would note that Greenway is more than just a place, a conglomeration of educational buildings constructed in the 1970s after relocating from its original site near the old Greenway sugar mill. You would see it is more than just a site or venue where education occurs. Greenway has a rich history of people and characters; of happy children playing handball, greeting visitors with a smile and “good morning” wish. It includes teachers with varied histories and experiences in education and parents who meet every month for a Parents and Citizens meeting to hear about issues including the use of the farmland bordering their children’s school. It includes support staff working closely with students from the Hmong community, Indigenous children and other cultural groups who speak English as a second language forming a rich part of the varied cultural heritage in the school community. It is a school with over 100 years of history in educational provision in a rural community incorporating a strong commitment that struggled for funding and government support to relocate to a new site so that students could have modern facilities with ample land for sporting fields and possible expansion of buildings and teaching facilities.

Greenway State School’s colourful and rich history has impacted on the experiences of the teachers within it. One teacher in this narrative inquiry elected to come to Greenway because of its recent educational history and reputation. Another came as a first year graduate, pleased to be appointed to what she saw was a progressive and academically rigorous school. The other transferred to the school on a forced transfer from a Special School teaching position. While each teacher’s stories are individual and separate, each teacher is a member of the Greenway State School staff sharing the physical, social and cultural context that draws their experiences

together as part of a school community. It would be remiss of me not to relate to you some of the key elements of this inquiry landscape.

The importance of “place” in the three-dimensional narrative landscape is emphasised by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Phillion (2002), and Conle (1999). Clandinin and Connelly (2000:50) state that “studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places”. They continue, “any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space” (p.50). Phillion extends Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) inquiry term of “place” to include not only that “which attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” but also the “people, artefacts and ideas that cross the physical boundaries” (p. 51).

In order to introduce key features of the primary place of inquiry I have written two short stories that provide a sense of the temporality impacting on the study—the sense of past, present and future imbued throughout the experiences of those in this text; and aspects of the relationships amongst some of the participants on the landscape.

The first story, a description of a student free day at Greenway, is based on a compilation of information gained through detailed interviews of key school personnel and observation of several student free days and formal professional development opportunities at Greenway. It presents a re-storied version of the perspectives of the key personnel whose decisions impact on the delivery of professional development opportunities in the school and as such, it offers a portrayal of reality, a vignette demonstrating the social construction of professional development, life and relationships as it could exist in Greenway State School. Immediately preceding this short story is an introduction to the key personnel (support characters) who provided me with the basis of “A Student Free Day at Greenway State School.”



The second story in this chapter is my story as a researcher entering the field and primary inquiry site. It introduces me as a major character in the research process incorporating some of my history and prior relationship with some of the key characters on the landscape and Greenway as an institution. Although I was warmly welcomed into the teaching community at Greenway I felt I was still a visitor and was not, nor ever could be, a complete part of the environment. I could not be unless I was present all the time and participated in similar work pursuits with similar goals. I was there to share in parts of school life, specifically professional development, but there were still gaps in my experience of life at Greenway State School. There was not a deliberate conspiracy not to tell me things, but sometimes, because I was not there all of the time, I missed things. I missed hallway and staff room conversations. I knew before I began this research, because of my own experience as a teacher, that there would be gaps if I were only there for selected periods of time. Decisions, reflections and comments that impact on professional development do not always occur in formal, encapsulated, well-defined and predictable moments. Sometimes they just occur in passing. There are gaps even within the school community and amongst those that are there continuously—messages go astray, intentions are misinterpreted, suggestions for change occur in side conversations in the staff room or in transit to another meeting. I was aware of those gaps and was ready to look for them. I refer to some of them in my research experience as I noticed them. In some places they were not obvious, but were subtle things that seemed strange to me as an outsider. I am very much aware that the view I had of Greenway State School was through an open window. I was not completely immersed and involved in the work community. I was not living in the house. My vantage point had benefits and difficulties associated with it and I will discuss those later.

### **Introducing Support Characters**

#### *Adam, the Principal*

Ample literature indicates the importance of a principal on the culture and direction of a school (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Crowther et al., 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1996; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Loader, 1997). Adam's presence is strongly felt in all aspects of life at

Greenway. He features strongly in stories of experience provided by my participant teachers. References to him as “the ghost who walks” and “JC” (Jesus Christ) provide a metaphorical connection with the spirit of the school. As accidental as this connection may be in the references of the teachers concerned, the metaphor illustrates the pervasiveness of Adam’s physical presence and his impact on the relationships, processes, opportunities and policies that combine to form the context of Greenway State School. It is an image he would probably enjoy and, perhaps, of which he would even be proud. Adam is always present as a shadowy figure as teachers often think about “what the boss would say”, or wonder how Adam would react to curriculum suggestions. Indeed, Adam himself, acknowledged his tendency to want to “be in control” of things at Greenway, especially when those “things” impact on the wellbeing and education of the students at the school. Professional development opportunities for teachers, Adam believed, had the potential to directly impact on the quality of students’ educational experience and he therefore had to be concerned about those issues.

During my interviews with Adam I was struck by his sequential and logical analysis of issues as they pertained to his school and staff. He frequently referred to interactions between teachers’ levels of “competency” and “consciousness” in relation to teaching practice and PD. He described this interaction as a spiralling process where a teacher moved through levels of “unconscious incompetence”, “conscious incompetence”, “conscious competence” onto “unconscious competence” when the teaching behaviour or attribute became second nature and a part of the teacher’s professional approach to teaching. This process was a constantly occurring phenomenon and each teacher was at different stages within his/her repertoire of different teaching behaviours/activities or aspects of professional development. Adam could not remember where he obtained the image of spiralling progression, but found it useful in analysing his teachers’ professional performance. Adam’s role, as principal, was to help guide the spiralling process for teachers and help them develop within the school organisational environment that he wanted to create as a principal.

I perceived Adam as an astute educational professional aware of many of the formal and informal processes, policies and procedural guidelines within the department. He had clear ideas of what constituted good professional practice and what contributed to a sound educational environment. Rhetoric and “fad” or “trendy” educational gimmicks did not wash with this man—he needed evidence of successful practice before taking on a new concept. He had to be convinced of the benefits for the students and the school before committing to a concept or before encouraging staff to actively pursue and engage in activities.

Adam’s pervasive presence impacted greatly on the context of the teaching environment and, consequently, on my research project. I needed to gain an understanding and some insight into the professional beliefs and attitudes of “the boss” and how he operated within the school. He was a willing contributor and spoke openly with me about many issues, including some with which he was ill at ease. I appreciated his candour and his assistance with my project. There were many issues that I would have enjoyed pursuing and stories that I could have included in an account of Adam’s professional development experiences but my focus was on the current experiences of teachers. Adam’s role as principal, although shaped and informed in large part by his own experiences as a teacher, did not fit the specific parameters of my study. During my research process, I presented Adam with a lengthy letter that included a number of direct quotes from our conversations, but largely consisted of paraphrases of experience and my interpretations of his philosophy and concepts he expressed in our interviews. Adam read and commented on the letter and provided some further clarification of issues including a detailed discussion of the concept of the “benign dictator”. The edges of the research topic were blurred once again and I had to determine what valuable data to include and exclude and how to best present that material. There always seemed to be a story to recount that would illustrate an educational point Adam made in our interviews. But, time, space and purpose limited my ability to include them all.

*Mark, The Deputy Principal*

I interviewed Mark, the deputy principal, because of his role in the administration of professional development opportunities at the school. Mark was not only responsible for organising and budgeting the valuable and scarce Teacher Relief Scheme (TRS) days that enable teachers to pursue professional development during school hours, but he also received the fliers and advertising information for various professional development opportunities that teachers could access outside of the Greenway State School plan. In effect, I saw one of Mark's roles as a "gate keeper" for professional development opportunities. To be fair, this perception did not derive solely from my interactions with Mark during the research project, but instead had grown from my experience as a teacher and educational consultant and private provider of professional development opportunities in the local area. I knew that in schools the size of Greenway someone "filtered" the large quantities of mail received promoting professional development opportunities. The fact that Mark greeted me on all interview occasions with a pile of pamphlets and fliers that were "superfluous to the needs" of Greenway staff reinforced that notion. He decided which ones to put on the general staff noticeboard or direct to particular staff, and which ones to "file" in the rubbish bin. Decisions were based on expense, location, relevance to the school program and education department "decrees". He worked out the replacement teacher budget and had to find the supply teachers to fill the gaps created by staff absences (not an easy task given the shortage of relief teachers). Mark provided a different perspective including the financial realities and organisational limitations that the school faces in its current "self-managed" environment. In his many years of service in Education Queensland, Mark had attended and participated in many professional development opportunities. The favourite ones he reflected on in our interviews related to his personal interest areas of literacy, children's authors and writing. His many years of teaching experience gave him some insight into what he called "the older teacher's" perspective and he could relate to and recount much of the cynicism present in professional development sessions and that surfaced in the Productive Pedagogies workshops we attended. Again I found myself faced with many interesting themes, stories and experiences that could have and did relate to the research

topic. But, my focus was on current teachers and their stories of experience. Once again, I had to choose aspects of the raw data to which I would attend in detail in this text. I selected various aspects of the data to support a generalised overview of the context in which my teachers operated and presented them in the first short story.

### *Jane, The Teacher-Librarian*

The teacher-librarian, Jane, was not an original member of my research group. It was not until I had been interviewing the teachers and listening to the principal's accounts of the school program and directions that I realised I had overlooked a major player in the formal and informal provision of professional development at Greenway. Not only did Jane provide direct support to the teachers in their daily and long term planning, but she had direct influence over the strategic curriculum direction of Greenway through the new school-based curriculum initiative introduced by Adam during my study. I hastily sought Jane's permission to interview her. Because of her own personal teaching history at Greenway, she was also able to provide a view on the changes that had occurred at the school. She lent me a commemorative booklet that outlined the history of the school from 1898 to 1998, and she provided numerous anecdotal accounts of life at the school since then. Once again, Jane's stories provided ample data pertaining to her own experiences of professional development (both formal and informal). When I interviewed her after having given her the "draft epistle" of her accounts, she provided me with more stories pertaining to the implementation of the curriculum plan and the resistance she encountered with some members of staff and how she dealt with those difficulties. Again I was faced with determining material to include in my research text. Key aspects of Jane's experience appear in the first short story.

### **Story 1: Beginning A Student Free Day at Greenway State School**

Adam arrived at school early as usual. It was close to 7:30 a.m. He wanted to get some work done in the peace and quiet of the morning before many of the teachers arrived. Even though today was a student free day, it was an important one for the direction of the school and

ultimately the education of the students at Greenway State School. It had to go well and he needed to be well prepared.

The October day was a beautiful clear crisp one—a great day for fishing. Perhaps some of the students would be making the most of the opportunity and were out beside a creek, river, or, if they were lucky, they could even be out on the reef. The lush tropical landscape, the beautiful weather and the delightful surroundings did not impact on Adam this day. Yes, it was all very beautiful, but there were important issues to address with the staff today and the opportunity was too valuable to miss or mess up.

It was not often that Adam was able to spend some quality time with his staff imparting information, bridging some of those gaps between Education Queensland requirements and their classrooms. Staff meetings rarely provided the opportunity to work with teachers when they were fresh and focussed on issues. Rather, the teachers tended to be focussed on what had happened in their classrooms that day, and what they wanted to do the next day. Staff meetings usually started at about 3:15 p.m. and were scheduled early in the week. Union requirements stipulated that Adam could not keep teachers beyond 4:00 p.m. There were enough staff members who were aware of the limitations on staff meeting times and ensured that they were not kept overtime, so staff meetings had become an occasion for information dissemination and did not provide much, if any, opportunity for sharing professional stories and achievements. Teachers who had attended professional development sessions sometimes used staff meetings as an opportunity to share a report about those experiences, but the reports at staff meetings never seemed to be enough or enable teachers to adequately understand the concepts the other teachers had learned. Besides, often the teachers who attended PD sessions were really nervous about reporting back to their peers in a staff meeting and choose to inform other staff members in other ways. Adam knew only too well from his own experience that the teachers were often tired and distracted in the afternoons after a full day of what could sometimes be quite

challenging situations. The teachers seemed to want to be elsewhere, or would prefer to be preparing for their classroom needs the next day.

So, today was a special day. It was significant for several reasons.

For many months Adam had been pondering how to adequately address the increasing expectations from regional office and Education Queensland in general. It seemed there were so many new things on the boil in Education Queensland offices and the pressure for ensuring performance in these areas was starting to rest heavily on his shoulders at Greenway State School. Adam knew he was not the only principal experiencing these challenges, but he was doing his best to utilise his own abilities, his staff strengths and the resources available to him to meet the increasing pressures. Today was another day to support and direct his staff in meeting those expectations.

As Adam sat in his office reviewing his power point presentation of his latest checking device to assist teachers plan thoroughly and account for the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, he thought of some of the pressures and challenges that he and his fellow principals faced. It seemed there were pressures for principals to not only attempt to monitor and improve teachers' pedagogic practice and account for those using the new productive pedagogies terminology, but they also needed to formulate a detailed curriculum plan that incorporated aspects of outcomes-based education; show teachers how to develop integrated teaching units; meet the needs of middle schooling requirements; ensure that students were adequately prepared for the Year 3, 5, and 7 tests as well as be sure that the statistical information derived from the school's Year 2 Net process was a reasonable and accurate portrayal of the student level of literacy and numeracy achievement. These pressures and many others had been predominant in Adam's thinking not only for this last 10 months of the year, but for the last few years.

He thought about his role and it seemed to him that it was his responsibility to help teachers understand and meet the new requirements; but more than that, it was his responsibility to be a part of the answer to implementation issues in the school. He needed to provide structural support to ensure that his school, his staff, was meeting the edicts and expectations from above. He had to know about issues and help teachers respond to the changing educational environment in which they all worked. Adam's dilemma was how to do that effectively.

Adam knew he had a strong tendency to want to direct and control events. He had always enjoyed participating in the development of strategic educational directions and initiatives in his schools. In fact, it was probably this strong quality that helped him get where he was in the Department. He liked to be involved. Sometimes, because of his strength of character, his quiet and self-assured way of operating and his strong commitment to principles he believed in, he was seen as the dominant player in group-based decisions. His ability to articulate concepts succinctly, clearly and firmly, to understand strategic directions and to see and describe the big picture made it appear that he had the right answers. His position as principal fitted into that mode of thinking quite easily. It supported the notion that his way was the right way. And in fact in most cases Adam believed he did have the right answers. Adam was aware his position (most teachers responded to him as “the boss”), and his firm, determined and directive style of management, had conditioned staff members to check for his approval and ask that he sanction their decisions. That did not mean, though, that he could not be shown he was incorrect. Adam had, on a number of occasions, accepted criticism and direction from those he respected if they showed him the error of his thinking. “But show me,” he would often say, “don't tell me!”

Adam wondered who on staff today would be challenged by his leadership style. Who would be thinking of him as the “benign dictator”, the term he often used to refer to himself? Change, and especially directed change, was not easy to take, even more so in the educational environment at the moment when everything was changing so rapidly and there seemed to be little reprieve for teachers. But Adam was firmly convinced that Greenway State School needed to be taken down



the path he was taking it and teachers needed to adjust to expectations being placed on them. His suggestions and method of supporting them in adapting to the new curriculum requirements were the best way he knew of providing a solution that would produce the best learning outcomes for the students in his school. It would also satisfy the parent body to which he was answerable.

The parents who sent their children to Greenway State School expected good results. Adam was well aware of that expectation and he believed they had a right to expect that from their school. Parents and carers needed to feel comfortable talking to him about those expectations and in seeing the results achieved. Besides, it was Adam who was ultimately responsible for student learning in the school because he was the curriculum leader. Adam was well aware of Greenway's community and departmental reputation for being a strong provider of literacy and numeracy education. Greenway was perceived as a well organised, well run school where the students were well behaved. This reputation had to be upheld. Adam was largely responsible for liaising with the school community and maintaining that perception within the community. He could not do that without substantiation. That meant that the school had to deliver the goods in this field. That in turn meant that his staff had to be well informed of educational developments and today's session would address some of the implementation issues that Greenway was facing. Today's session especially, would provide the teachers with some structures to help them achieve the growing accountability expectations within the community.

As Adam reflected on the strategic thinking he had done over the last few years, he was grateful for the assistance of an administrative team that had supported his initiatives so far and that had provided him with the opportunity to address the more strategic educational issues for the school. Because of his previous deputy's efficiency in providing operational support, Adam had not been distracted by daily operational issues. Mark, the current deputy principal was new this year, and was in a transitional period. Although his style was different and his approach unlike his predecessor's, he appeared to be settling in quite well. He was an experienced teacher who had

been teaching in Far North Queensland since the 1970s. He came to Greenway from another local State School where he spent several years as the deputy principal. His operational management skills appeared to be effective and most staff members, as far as Adam knew, considered him a “good bloke” to have on board. Mark, amongst other things, was largely responsible for ensuring the implementation of the behavioural management policy. He supported staff and was the key teacher for the Year 2 Diagnostic Net. He timetabled and organised the relief teachers. There never seemed to be enough quality supply teachers available and student learning was often interrupted because of difficulties in accessing supply teachers who were able to work effectively from the teaching plans the absent teachers provided. That was one reason why Adam believed the school needed adequate, detailed curriculum plans that articulated the specific learning outcomes being addressed by each year level. Teachers were required to submit their detailed planning to the administrative team on a regular basis to ensure they were following the Greenway school programs and also to ensure consistency of educational provision should something happen requiring the absence of a teacher from school for a period of time. The deputy was an integral part of the process in making sure that teaching standards at Greenway were maintained through monitoring the teachers’ planning.

Adam was also aware that Dianne (Mark’s predecessor) had provided a strong, complementary caring role to his in the administrative team. Adam knew that some staff members saw him as unapproachable and dictatorial, but he was not going to apologise for that perception. That is not to say that he was not supportive, but he knew he could be seen as aloof and was aware that did not encourage people to express their concerns to him. Dianne, on the other hand, was perceived as someone who listened well to teachers’ concerns and was very supportive. Adam wondered if Mark would assume a similar role after his first year at Greenway State School. He knew Mark had said he “provided a shoulder to cry on,” but Adam knew his different personality and role as a deputy principal had required some adjustments on his own behalf. He wondered how the staff perceived the differences and how they had adapted.

Mark had seen many changes during his experience in Education Queensland and had learned to sit back and watch and assess how it would impact directly on his role. He felt for older teachers who had to face change and who were often told of “new, you beaut” ways of doing things without any regard for their own experience and knowledge. He fully understood the resistance of many older teachers at professional development sessions that confronted them with new theories and teaching strategies. He knew, saw and understood those teachers who sat back and cynically assessed professional development opportunities as irrelevant to their practice. “Why should they change when they’ve been operating successfully for years and they only have a few years to go before they retire? I would probably do that myself!” Mark dealt with change when he had to, but his primary concern was student learning, and essentially he believed the basic elements of successful interaction with children that encourage their learning had not changed. In Mark’s view teachers needed professional development opportunities that helped them teach effectively in the key learning areas. Professional development opportunities that came to the schools addressed many issues, but neglected the key “how to teach maths” type of issues. Instead, experienced teachers provided that knowledge to novice teachers in sharing opportunities at the school level. Theoretical issues at professional development sessions such as the Productive Pedagogies workshop that the Greenway staff attended were probably a waste of time because teachers did not see how they related specifically to their teaching strategies and practices in the classroom.

Some school-based priorities addressed particular school based teaching programs, including workshops like “THRASS” (Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills) and “You Can Do It” programs. From the school’s perspective, these needed to be addressed before individual professional development requests could be addressed. Mark organised that priority. “Anyway,” said Mark, “most models of professional development provision have limitations in application and provide little benefit for the whole school.” Mark had been around long enough to see the whole gamut of professional development models “from the ripple effect to the ‘choose your own adventure’ style.” Each of the models he had seen had limitations and difficulties. Mark

believed that some of the difficulties associated with professional development were associated with the Education Department policies that were doing little to help schools determine their professional development directions. The Department had “put it all back on the schools” for them to determine what to follow. This was all part of the self-managing schools process that Mark believed caused administrative and strategic problems for schools. There was little consistency across schools in the provision of professional development. This, Mark believed, has to lead to difficulties and inefficiencies in the department.

In his role as deputy principal, Mark encountered a plethora of fliers and marketing material addressing many varied topics. Mark skim read the material and determined which teachers may be interested. He was aware of most of the staff interest areas and could channel professional development opportunities to them individually, but he was also keenly aware that perhaps he did not know all the staff well enough yet to do that effectively. He acknowledged that the system was not as thorough and effective as it could have been, but, given the amount of material that came through, and his current knowledge of staff interest areas he had to filter it to the best of his ability. Often he would post information up on the staff noticeboard but he knew that some of the “good stuff” that came through was prohibitive because of the expense associated with it. The administrative team carefully supervised expenditure on professional development.

Adam was well aware of Mark’s perceptions of professional development and change in education at the school level. He had seen and recognised some of the older and cynical teachers that Mark referred to. He, as leader of the school, had to work with them and sometimes, he acknowledged, they provided some of his biggest difficulties in change implementation. He could not choose his staff, they were appointed to the school, and he had to work with the staff he was given. Sometimes that was an easy task, at other times it was extremely challenging. Adam was aware that Mark had an important role to play in supporting the professional development directions of the staff and in providing information about professional

development opportunities to staff members. He knew there were challenges in providing effective professional development, but days like today were opportunities to provide some in-house cost effective professional development that utilised the developing expertise of staff, including his own. Today's professional development session did not directly involve Mark and although his input was valued and his support was expected in the implementation, Mark had very little to do with what Adam was going to deliver. Most of the issues Mark had raised with Adam about professional development did not really apply today. Adam wondered though if anyone in the staff today would fall into the cynical, almost recalcitrant responses he had seen in so many other professional development sessions. The school could not afford for that to happen. The curriculum changes needed to be implemented, and perhaps his session today would continue to build on and provide the support and structure that would make it hard for those teachers to ignore and not implement it in their work. It was time to start getting ready to present to the staff.

It was now close to 9:00 a.m. The teachers had arrived and were taking the opportunity to talk with each other and socialise before the in-service session began. There was laughter and general milling around and selection of seats in the room where Adam would be addressing them. The atmosphere was light-hearted. This seemed to be a rare and savoured opportunity for staff to interact without feeling the immediate pressures of what they had to do with students that today. Although many teachers were discussing how they would rather be using their time for preparation and planning, they knew that they had to be informed about the latest direction the principal was taking them and they were resigned to spending the next two hours listening to the latest edicts. From Adam's stance in the room and his preparatory procedures, they knew that this session was likely to be significant for them in their work. Adam had been known to use these opportunities to tell the staff what they would be doing and how they would be expected to be meeting the requirements imposed on the school staff by the "them and they," in Education Queensland, "the powers that be." The staff had already been introduced to the Departmental requirements for producing a school curriculum plan that was outcomes-based

and incorporated the latest syllabus documents. That was the mind-boggling subject of the last student free day in July when they had just returned from holidays and were preparing for a very busy third term at school. It was also the reason why they had been released for a few days during Term 3 to do some collaborative planning with the teacher who also taught their year level and Jane, the teacher-librarian.

Jane sat near her husband and colleague waiting to hear the next instalment of the edicts from above. She had a fair idea of what was to come and was preparing to listen carefully to the terminology and the style of presentation. She knew the power games Adam played from her own bitter experience and she was well-tuned to the powerful positioning language and strategies he was known to use. However, she was also well aware of her role in this particular chapter of change at Greenvale State School. How would she be judged for her participation in this?

Jane, as the teacher-librarian, had attended an in-service program with Adam earlier in the year outlining Chancellor State School's "coping strategies" in implementing the new outcomes-based syllabus documents produced by Education Queensland. She remembered one of her first responses when Adam selected her as the person to attend the workshop with him: "It doesn't cost them a TRS day to release me, I'm a cheaper alternative." But, having realised that response and having laughed it off as cynical, she also remembered her excitement with the prospect that this new in-service program had presented her professionally, but more particularly what possibilities it presented the staff and students of Greenway State School.

Jane had seen considerable changes in the school she had been working at for so many years. She had been here as a teacher-librarian several principals before Adam came and had seen some significant differences in leadership styles and the effects those had on the staff and the school community. The first principal was "pretty easy going" and he did not provide a lot of whole school organisation. Perhaps he was a little bit too easy to get a long with. Unfortunately,

he had died during his sleep while he was principal. A gentleman who was a little bit more of a disciplinarian replaced him, straightening up some of the behaviour problems that existed in the school. He was worthwhile. The next principal, Nelly, was very good to her staff providing personal support whenever it was needed, but she was pretty dictatorial as far as what happened in the classroom. She was not subtle. She would walk into a classroom and say, “Do you call this teaching Maths?” and then would proceed to take over the class with “This is how you should” statements. She started to emphasise the importance of teachers’ planning. Because of some health problems, she was under considerable personal stress and she had started to take that out on some of her staff members. Her last six months at Greenway were not happy. Then it was Jane’s turn to be acting principal for six months. Jane found herself trying to settle things down at school, doing a lot of bridge-building with staff and trying to unify the staff again. She still asked for planning, but thought that she probably asked for it all in a “nicer way.” Jane enjoyed the challenge of the acting principal’s role, and it gave her considerable insight into the dilemmas that principals were beginning to face in dealing with demands of regional offices in the implementation of policies decreed from further on high in the department. She knew from her own experiences that some of those people were quite demanding and not nice, issuing decrees with “you will” and “teachers will have to” type statements. Towards the end of her term as acting principal Jane was offered a principal’s position at a smaller school in the district. But, spending six months in “the chair” had made Jane realise that teaching without direct and regular contact with children was not teaching. She came back to her role as teacher-librarian at Greenway knowing that she could be a good administrator and that she would do well in a small school setting, but that she also wanted to work more closely with children. Her role as a teacher-librarian enabled her to do that.

Adam was the next principal appointed to the school and over the eight years he had been here, she had seen him change from an “idealistic fellow” coming in from a small outback town, with many great ideas of different things he would like to do and with a style that was pleasant and effective, to a man who, because of the departmental pressures and changes, had now become

what he himself called, “a benign dictator.” Jane remembered the occasion when he had asked her to proof read a speech he was presenting to the principal’s Association that jokingly described his leadership style as that of a benign dictator. She had discussed his terminology with him and had warned, “Benign dictator’s end up with benign revolutions.” She believed he had thought she was joking at the time. She was not. She wondered how today’s presentation would be received. Would this be seen as another ‘dictatorial’ edict? Or would the teachers perceive his spiel as he intended—a way to help them improve and structure their practice in order to meet the changing requirements within Education Queensland and within society in general?

Once again, Jane reflected on her role in today’s professional development session. She reflected on the many opportunities she had to pass on professional knowledge to the teachers she had worked with. Her period as a circuit librarian visiting small schools in the district gave her an opportunity to implement her new found knowledge she had gained from a special professional development experience of her own. She had been greatly influenced by the work of a Canadian teacher-librarian couple, the Hancocks, who had come to Queensland sharing their views on the collaborative planning roles that teacher-librarians could assume in schools. Their message had resonated beautifully with Jane’s evolving concept of her role in the school and prompted her to begin to assist teachers in developing their teaching skills while using the resources of her expertise and the library. She recalled that she “was like a little bee cross pollinating all over the place with ideas and, a lot of the time it was basic teaching techniques and classroom management strategies” she carried. That collaborative planning process and provision of support for teachers was very rewarding and provided some of the best professional moments in Jane’s career.

The program that Adam and Jane had developed, proposed to the staff and had begun to implement in July was a result of the Chancellor in-service program they had attended earlier in the year. It had provided an excellent opportunity to rekindle and formalise one aspect of Jane’s



professional life that was already happening informally with a few of the teachers on staff and that she really enjoyed. This collaborative curriculum planning process Jane was facilitating in Greenway State School was a great opportunity for her professionally, for the school and students. The imperative of meeting the “edict from above” in the preparation of a school curriculum plan was providing some great opportunities to support staff in their planning and to incorporate many of the resources Jane had accessed for the library. She was able to provide some great professional bridges for staff members in the areas of technology teaching, language and literacy teaching and many other learning areas. She was enthusiastic and excited by the work they had done so far.

Jane was also keenly aware of her role in ensuring the successful implementation of a new professional development and curriculum strategy in school. She had seen Adam introduce new concepts to the staff in a way that was meant to seek consensus and collaboration, but, because of his manner of presentation, it appeared that the decision had already been made and that it was a fait accompli. She knew in July that she had to know for herself the staff was supportive of the new curriculum-planning concept she and Adam would be introducing and that she, in particular, would be facilitating. She recalled the July morning when Adam had presented the concept to the staff. He had finished his presentation and had given Jane the floor to address them about the details and implications of implementing their proposed curriculum planning process. Jane had deliberately avoided Adam’s glance, in fact her back was towards him as she addressed the staff. “I need to know,” she had begun, “that you really want to do this and that you are committed to the concept.” Apparently, according to members of the staff she had spoken to afterwards, Adam had turned a deep shade of red behind her. It was perceived that Adam had already decided the direction and that Jane had immediately undermined that by providing the staff an opportunity to say “No.” Jane was confident none of the staff would say “No,” but she believed she needed to provide them with that opportunity. She was right, and during the last three or four months Jane had spent considerable time and energy working with the teachers “unpacking” the outcomes from the syllabus documents, selecting the outcomes

they wanted to work with and in beginning to write what would be the specific curriculum plans and units to use next year in their classrooms. The work, so far, had been enjoyable. Adam had released Jane from some class commitments and that had enabled her to work closely with teachers in formulating and documenting their curriculum plans. It was challenging work, especially as teachers were required to think differently and “leave their baggage behind them” when it came to planning new units of work. Old worksheets and strategies could not just be overlaid on the new outcomes they had selected in their integrated curriculum units. Teachers struggled with the new focus, and Jane was there to help them through those struggles providing structural support in writing the documents and strategic support in the development of suggested teaching strategies. This was really resourcing the teachers and, indirectly, the students. This was a key element of a teacher-librarian’s role.

Jane was proud of her achievements in the last few months, but she was especially proud of the teachers who had accommodated a new way of planning. They had worked well and, in some cases, they had seized the opportunity to add extra activities that previously were denied them because of stricter policies regarding field trips, excursions and other fun class activities. They, and Jane, knew that Adam wanted this project to succeed and as a result he was more lenient on the implementation of some previously strict and restrictive policies relating to class activities. The teachers had done well. Jane was proud of their achievements so far. She reflected, “There are really good, quality teachers on staff and this project has enabled me to work closely with those professionals.” However, she wondered how those teachers would now respond to the “Seven Way Test” she knew Adam was going to present. She hoped he would present it in a manner that did not confront the staff, undermining some of their efforts over the last few months. But, that was beyond her control.

It was Adam's turn to present the latest chapter in the integrated curriculum-planning project. She waited and listened carefully as he began to speak and the many discussions around her automatically ceased.

### **Story 2: Enter the Researcher**

Celebrations! The confirmation seminar was complete and the ethics clearances for my project had finally come through. I could begin!

I was still uncomfortable with the formal research processes and procedures and the difficulties associated with obtaining ethics approvals before conducting a Narrative Inquiry. I had long been troubled by the confirmation seminar process that required me to outline things that I could expect from my research. The truth was I really did not know what I was going to get. I could guess, but that would not help me and, in fact, predicting outcomes could block my awareness of new and interesting information I encountered in the research process. Narrative Inquiry is, essentially, an exploration of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and really, I had very little idea about the personal professional development experiences of the teachers I would be working with. In addition to that, Narrative Inquiry is dependent on establishing and negotiating relationships with participants and discovering and presenting experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). How could I predict and write about the expected outcomes of my research before I even really knew my participants in their professional context? And, worse still, what if I could not establish a good research relationship in this school and had to select another one? Where would that put me in my time frame of completion? How would I go writing another ethics application within one or two months of the first one? "Oops! That one didn't work, but perhaps this one will!" That looked like a postgraduate student who knew what she was doing!

Following the ethics clearance process to the letter of the law meant I could not really begin to collect data until all procedures had been finished and papers signed, but just being at a school

and explaining the purpose of my research and seeking permission to conduct my research at that school was a data gathering opportunity—I was beginning my research and establishing a relationship with key participants. I was gaining an insight into the setting in which I was conducting the research. How much of these conversations I had been having with the principal and potential participants could I include? Everyone seemed to have an opinion about their PD experiences they were happy to share regardless of whether or not they had signed an ethics form. I could not pretend at a later stage that those conversations did not happen and I could not stop those conversations from happening either! But perhaps, if I was to be pedantic and precise in a “scientific way,” I had to. Once again, the supposed clear black and white lines of a research process appeared to me to be grey and blurry. There I was, I had not even started my field research and I was faced with a frustrating dilemma! What was the rest of the research going to be like?

But, that dilemma was behind me now! I had the green light to go ahead with the collection of field data for my study. I was ready!

All of my concerns about procedure and “doing this right” seemed to change as I parked the car, gathered my notebook and tape recorder and began to walk towards the gate of Greenway State School. Now my major concern was how to do the initial data collection phase correctly. I was about to establish and nurture relationships with participants that would determine the outcomes of my research. I was very much a part of the unfolding of this research process and I had to be cognisant of my role in that unfolding story. What I did and said today as I met my participants in our first and only group meeting would contribute to my participants’ decision to continue the research journey with me. They could pull out at any time if they wanted. This was just the beginning. The real stuff was about to happen. I had to trust myself and my abilities in this process because I knew I was going to learn more about me, my assumptions, my beliefs, my responses to experiences as well as find out about the experiences of others. My responsibility to accurately portray the experiences of others was pre-eminent. I wanted this to hear the

teachers' voices, not override them with my own. I had to listen, not only with my ears, but also with my eyes and feelings. I had to watch and reflect on my own responses as well as tune into the responses of my participants. I had to learn to be aware of, if not suspend, my judgement of others in the field. I was there to explore experience.

So, it was in April that I finally got to walk into the grounds of Greenway State School as a researcher (two months later than I had originally hoped). I was excited and nervous. What was I going to find? What problems, if any, was I going to encounter in my research? What wonderful things would I find and celebrate that would support my notions and theories of Professional Development in schools and how I believed teachers perceived their PD opportunities? How would my views of the people involved change? How would my views of the school change? How would I change over the course of this research project? Was I ready for this journey, this new adventure? All of these questions occurred to me momentarily. I dismissed them because today I was focussed on what immediately lay ahead. I could not accurately predict which way things were going to go. I did not want to waste energy doing that anyway. Basically, I was going to go with the flow of events and discussion as they unfolded. I was not sure how much I was in control. I was there to observe and experience a part of a school that, really, I knew very little about. It would be presumptive to assume I knew what was going to happen. I did not. That unknown element was part of the excitement of the journey on which I was embarking.

I had been to Greenway State School on several occasions. I was reminded of my first time walking through Greenway State School gates. I was beginning a new role in education then too. Damien, my eldest son had begun his school career at Greenway at the preschool eight years earlier. He was one of the students in the morning preschool group and we had formed part of the eager preschool community made up of first-time parents and experienced mothers and fathers who had been through the preschool journey several times before. The mixture of experience and stories helped shape my introduction to education as a parent and, indeed

influenced our decision to send Damien to Greenway Preschool. They also helped me adapt to the new role in which I had found myself. It was a very new role for me. One I had anticipated and had been looking forward to. My little boy was amongst the most precious people in my life besides his father and brother, and it was extremely important that his educational experiences were the best they could be. We had selected Greenway State Preschool on the advice of a friend who was also a Year 1 teacher at another school, the one Damien was likely to attend after preschool. Most of the students that had come to her class from Greenway Preschool were very well prepared for their first year in school. That was what we wanted.

Our first entry to Greenway State School was a sultry, typically wet January day. “The Great Greenway” is known as one of the wettest locations in Australia where three rural communities vie for the Golden Gumboot award given to the town with the highest rainfall. This day in April was also dark, warm and wet. As I entered the gate, this time as an educational researcher in the field, I knew that my first experience would include Adam, the principal, as the major character.

I first encountered Adam eight years earlier at a preschool Parent meeting soon after he was appointed as the new principal to Greenway. He was new to town, as we had been several years earlier. He was there to address concerns of the parent body about student of the week awards. Adam sat quietly at that meeting and listened to the concerns of the parents over what now seems to me to be quite a minor issue in the overall education of our children. He listened carefully and seriously to the parental concerns. The teacher tried to answer those concerns, but quickly deferred to Adam for support and a response. Adam spoke quietly and confidently outlining the policy of rewarding good social and academic behaviour in the whole school. The Preschool was an extension of the “big” school and so the preschool teachers followed those practices. I remember feeling that, yes, I had a right to air my concerns, but it was perhaps time to start to relinquish our parental role as the sole providers of education for our son. There were principles and policies that were far bigger than us at play and our son and we, his parents, were just starting our journey of discovery in education as a user. Adam’s confident presence and

assured manner of speaking at this meeting indicated this man was a “no-nonsense” leader who was firmly committed to students, staff and sound educational practices in his school. He was in control. Our experience as parents at Greenway State School was limited to a very satisfying, happy and pleasant preschool year for Damien.

Here I was eight years later about to enter Adam’s office to begin my research. I had encountered Adam on several other occasions within the educational community since my first experience when Damien was in preschool. But, they had been brief and insignificant encounters—usually related to our parental attendance at interschool athletics carnivals that were always held at Greenway because of the lush, green oval and wonderful sport setting. Greenway was the only primary school in the district with the space to accommodate an interschool athletics carnival. I think perhaps I always felt an element of guilt when I saw Adam because we had “used” his preschool and then selected another primary school for the continued education of our son. While Damien was really excited about the prospect of attending Greenway State School because of its big sport fields, we had selected a closer primary school for him to attend. Now, I am amused by the sense of power I gave Adam because of those experiences.

In the principal’s office on my first data collection day was Adam, Mark and four teachers Adam had asked to attend. I knew one of the teachers through my swimming club association, two others I recognised from school and sporting events our children were involved in and one younger teacher I did not know at all. I was reminded of how small our community was and how intertwined the lives of families in a rural community are. Even though these people saw me now as a researcher, all of them, except one also knew some important aspects of my life outside my role as a postgraduate student. In fact, this was probably a new role for them to see me in. They knew me as the wife of their Optometrist, the wife of a soccer coach and mother of soccer and swimming children, committee member of junior sporting clubs and the education and training consultant and TAFE teacher that I had been since my arrival 12 years before. They

may not have known a lot about me personally, but they knew who I was and roles I had played in the community. That helped me feel comfortable with them in establishing my research relationship. They knew a bit about me already. I just needed to fill in the gaps about my research—what I was doing and why, and what their roles would be. All had stories to tell and share and all were eager to participate. I felt good. This was going to work and I was going to get some good material from a variety of sources. I was on my way.

The teachers were eager to participate in my research, and even though Adam tended to dominate the initial discussion at that first meeting he convened on my request, he gave me free access to the school, staff and the professional development opportunities that were to occur and that impacted on the participant teachers. I was warmly welcomed as an observer in the school community.

I left Greenway after an hour of meeting with my participants feeling quietly confident that many of my questions about professional development were going to be answered. I could talk with these people and establish a relationship that would adequately support my research. It should be a straightforward process of interviewing teachers, sharing professional development experiences and then writing their stories. Of course I had to consider characters like Adam and Mark because my experience as a teacher and professional development provider told me that as an administrative team, they had a lot to do with what PD occurred in the school. I could not ignore their role. But, the focus was going to be on my teachers and their stories and their experiences. This was their story, not Adam's or Mark's or anybody else's that may impact on their professional development experience. Greenway was the setting, and perhaps Adam was in control there, but the stories and experiences of the teachers I was working with were the focus of attention. Yes, as all good researchers should do, I had everything under control! It was time to listen to Ruby, Molly and Toni.



## CHAPTER 6: THE RUBY LETTERS

### Letter One: A Letter of Introduction

Dear Ruby,

This series of letters presents a number of episodes of experience that both individually and together portray aspects of your professional development as a teacher as I have come to see them through the six-interviews/taped conversations that we had, through some observations of you during the times we met and at the professional development days we both attended. I am very aware that these letters/episodes provide what is really just a thumbnail sketch of you and your life as a teacher and your responses to some of your professional development experiences. Some of the letters refer to your other life roles, but the central focus of them all is your professional role as a teacher and how you described the experiences that have impacted on your development within your profession. Your confirmation of the material presented in these letters during a meeting one year later indicates you are comfortable with my portrayal.

Each time I speak with you I feel like I gain further insight into a complex and continuing story that is your evolution as an educational professional. This evolution does not occur in a cocoon of educational experience that exists only at Greenway State School. Your story, as you revealed to me, includes experiences before you reached Greenway. It includes reference to many of the professional experiences you encountered at Greenway and your reactions to those. Your story includes the opportunities that were (or were not) offered to you and the support you felt that you received (or did not receive) from key personnel in the school. The complexity of your story indicates the importance of contextual factors on the professional development of teachers. It demonstrates clearly what Clandinin and Connelly (1995) refer to as a professional knowledge landscape where you as a teacher do not work in isolation, nor, necessarily in an environment solely of your own choosing. Their metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape comprises a “notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places and things. Because ... the

professional knowledge landscape [is] composed of relationships among people, places and things, ...[it is] both an intellectual and a moral landscape” (p.5). Ruby, I wonder, as I reflect on your experiences, how you would have “evolved” if you had been in a different school context with different key characters, experiencing different support and expectations from those key people. If you were a character in a different setting, your story would be different. However, that is speculative and well beyond the explicit role of this chapter of letters which is to describe your experiences, both past and present, and if possible, those that you can predict in the future, that have impacted on, or that may impact on, your professional development.

What I have provided here is a selection of some of the factors I identified in our interviews and my observations of you in PD sessions. Your confirmation of this written portrayal in our recent interview (August 2003) indicated my interpretation of your story was fair and accurate. I acknowledge, as I said earlier, that these letters provide only a brief snapshot of a complex story that continues to develop. That snapshot does, however, provide some insight into possible experiences of a teacher in a regional school environment. Your stories and experiences reminded me of some of my own, but perhaps more importantly, they provided me with some insight into a world of experience and perspectives that I had not encountered. As a result of listening to you and writing about your story, I have learned more about the complexity of the human experiences and differences that come together in a multifaceted educational environment.

Before we proceed, I am aware that while I am retelling your story through these letters, it may seem a bit strange to you. That is not an unusual response, after all, you are reading about yourself and the reflection you see may not match the image you have of yourself. Please remember, this is a reflection of you through the mirror of me. This story is written by me, based on the information you presented. In that way, I guess it is fair to say that we are co-creators of the text. In places I have used direct quotes from the interview transcripts. These too may seem awkward and strange to you, but please take into account the differences between

spoken and written speech. The excerpts I have included not only portray your exact terminology, but they also demonstrate some of the complexity of the issues you consider and address in your position. At times you are juggling two or three, or more concepts at once and endeavouring to make one cohesive story out of those concepts. In places I have deliberately left passages like that and have not “teased out” the themes that are interlocking and occurring concurrently in your considerations because if I did that, I would be unravelling the complex fabric of your story and presenting it as a linear phenomenon, as one thread. Often the thoughts and experiences you recounted were not like that.

From what you have said, Ruby, I do not believe we can really separate true professional development as one isolated component of your professional life, as though it is a set of clothes that you choose to put on to wear to school one day and that you can then remove at the end of the day and possibly choose never to wear again. Professional development is integrated into your life and it can come from both professional and personal sources. Professional development has been that way for you since you began teaching, and possibly includes even earlier experiences. So, perhaps it is appropriate to begin the discussion of you and your professional development experiences by providing some background biographical and professional information. I will discuss those more in my next letter.

Kind Regards,

Chris.

## **Letter Two: The Special School Experience**

Dear Ruby,

In recalling your past in one of our discussions you said there was no one person in particular who influenced your choice of career. You just wanted to work with kids. That remains your passion even now. You come from a large family and always wanted to teach: “It was either that, or be a nurse.” You did not decide which until you were in high school. You were not accepted into nursing. You were accepted into teaching. So, now you are a teacher. You

presented that summary of your entry into teaching simply and concisely, yet there is more to your story and your path to teaching.

After finishing school, you entered Business College for six months. You finished that course acquiring skills you still use as a business partner and bookkeeper in your family business. You started university in Townsville, completed two and a half years, but did not complete your studies because you married and started a family. You lived in Ingham for a few years. After the birth of your fourth child you returned to your family's hometown and worked as a teacher's aide at the Special School for severely disabled children. During this time at the Special School, you decided you could be the teacher in this situation: "If I'm going to do this, then I might as well go and do the real thing." As you had six months to complete your teaching qualification, you decided to finish the Special Education course in Cairns.

Your first appointment as a teacher was back at the Special School where you once again worked with a very supportive staff with whom you had a lot of fun and with whom you shared some rewarding professional development experiences. You were at the Special School for three years in total; including a period of six months supply work and a year of contract work.

While you were at the Special School you taught four boys all of whom could not speak but used sign language. Each child had an Individualised Education Program (IEP) including a physiotherapy programme, a communications programme and a work programme. You had a teacher's aide working with you. A number of experiences at the special school informed your current attitude to integration of special needs students in your regular classroom. You believe that it is too hard and too unfair to all students and their parents to integrate severely impaired children into the regular classroom. You told me a story of an autistic child, who had to be held down by staff members before he cut himself after he had gone into a storeroom, was frightened by a spider and "trashed the place." He had smashed a window during his tirade. The whole event happened suddenly and without warning. Regular schools, you believe, are not prepared

for that sort of sudden mood and behaviour change in students. A class of twenty-five students would suffer.

*It was flat out having enough in one day just for one of those four, let alone bringing them into a class of twenty-five. How do you expect the rest of the kids to learn, if you've got a kid, an autistic kid? Say you've got an autistic kid in the classroom that suddenly went off his tree one day and decided that he was going to smash everything. You know, what are you going to do? I don't know. There's just not enough funding and there's not, it's not fair on the other kids, and it's not fair on parents. No way is it fair on the parents.*

In your view, based on your experience as both a special needs teacher and a teacher of mainstream children, special needs children need special attention and special facilities to provide appropriate care and educational opportunities for them and for other students. One of your recent past students at Greenway has been ascertained as a level six, visually impaired child with some intellectual impairment. She cannot participate in normal lunchtime activities with other students in the playground because of the safety issues concerned with her visual disability. You believe there are social and educational issues associated with this for all children that are connected to students' familiarity with special needs children. Perhaps integration for half an hour a week is enough. You relate a story that illustrates your position:

*We used to take the kids over ... for integration. We used to take them for an Art lesson. But, I mean, like even that set the kids off because Greg (not his real name), Greg couldn't talk, all he used to do was make lots of noise and like it really scared the kids. It really does because they're not used to it, it'd scare them. And they'd be more worried about looking at him and what he was doing than anything else. You know, they just, I don't know, I suppose they're still like the hidden society. You know. It's not all brought out in the open and kids aren't. I mean of course kids are going to be curious (pause) but I mean like, being on the other side, I could see what they're like and I could say, you know, it is, it's a handful. It would be a handful.*

These and your experiences in your current teaching role have led you to declare that integration of severely disabled children would be too hard for everyone and unfair to all.

Your experience at the Special School has informed your current practice and your appreciation of difference. You believe it has made you more tolerant:

*You know, you've been there you've seen it all, nothing, coming out of that place, nothing could phase you. You know just the kids there are lovely you know. I don't*

*know. It makes you more tolerant I suppose of the kids that can't do things, but yeah, you really appreciate them as well. You know I mean kids like Xa and Zor. Zor left last week and I mean half the class were crying because Zor is going. And he's such a cutie, you know and when you're trying really hard and being ESL, with Hmong and that, and he tried so hard, it just makes you appreciate just the littlest thing that they do, it makes you appreciate them all the more for trying. You know, I suppose that's something.*

During your account of significant events in your Special School experience, I was struck by how your professional development was influenced by others. You learned a lot by your experiences with children, but you also relied on the support of your colleagues including a strong professional team of physio- and occupational therapists, other teachers and teacher aides. Although you experienced points of difference with your principal, you loved your work and believed you were good at it. But your experience at the Special School was short lived.

You had an unpleasant encounter with the principal at the Special School and you were told that teaching numbers at the school were to be reduced. You were transferred. You later found out a teacher on transfer from a southern school had replaced you and the teaching numbers had remained the same. Your forced transfer from the Special School to a mainstream primary school, Greenway, made you feel like you were “stabbed in the back.” Your professional career took a dramatic turn. It was not a turn that you had predicted, nor that you felt you had control over. Suddenly you were at Greenway.

Once again, I wonder how your career would have evolved had you been given the opportunity to exercise more control in that situation. I was shocked by your story and remarked on the significant impact that principal's decision had on your career and the lack of control you apparently had, how it affected your whole career pathway. You shrugged your shoulders, raised your eyebrows, smiled and said “hmm,” as if I had suddenly gained understanding and insight into your responses. But now, you look back at the experience and philosophically remark, “I really believe things happen for a reason, Chris. And I'm here now.”

I finish writing this letter wondering how I would have reacted if I had been in that position. I imagine the anger, frustration and possible feeling of helplessness. The injustice of the situation would have riled me. But, then I'm not you, Ruby, and I can only recount your experiences as you have provided them to me. I do find myself, however, reflecting on my own professional pathway and asking questions like: "Weren't there occasions in my professional and personal life where decisions/circumstances, the context including the relationships I had with other people led me to "choose" pathways that weren't always easy and that I found really hard? Perhaps I didn't have as much control in those situations as I would have liked! Didn't those instances impact greatly on my professional development and career pathway as well? And, even though they were difficult, does that make them "bad" and "terrible" events?" I can argue about the "injustices" and "inequities" of the situations I was in and about the power issues that were involved. Had I been a different person in different circumstances perhaps I would have reacted differently, but that was not my experience at the time. Yes, they were hard situations, and perhaps they did seem unjust. But, like you, Ruby, I find myself now saying, "I'm here now" and "I've learned and grown from that experience. Perhaps I can apply that knowledge where I am now." Perhaps I should have asked you to be more specific about what you learned from that experience, but you seemed reluctant to talk about it. The conversation moved on to other details.

Take care,

Chris.

### **Letter Three: Transition to Greenway State School**

Dear Ruby,

Your transition to mainstream teaching at Greenway State School was not easy. You encountered differences in staff interactions and school culture, difficulties in dealing with administrative expectations within the school, and you faced a huge transition in dealing with twenty-five students in your class instead of four. A number of things helped you through those tough times including a good friend and teaching colleague and your own determination to hang in there and not give in to the pressures you were experiencing. This was a huge and hard set of learning experiences for you. Those experiences inform your current practice. They also impacted on the view you have of key personnel in the school and provide you with considerable empathy for new staff coming to Greenway State School.

The biggest challenge you initially faced at Greenway was coping with twenty-five students:

*It really was a challenge! From day one. It is. It's really different. 'Cause you walk from a class like of four kids that you've spent, you know, your whole time amongst it and then you think, 'Oh God, how am I going to fit twenty-five kids in, in my whole day, when you're still just figuring out the four kids that you know.' They all had IEPs and stuff like that, that you had to do with them and then, 'Oh God, how are you going to handle, handle a whole class?'*

Planning for the different class situation was not easy. Each of your students at the Special School had learning programs established for them by you in conjunction with other specialists. At Greenway you were faced with twenty-five students and no outside support in preparing learning programs for them. In fact, you had not received any transitional assistance to help you deal with students with very different learning requirements to those with whom you were used to working. The task was daunting and you felt you had little systemic support.

To add to your concerns and difficulties you had problems adapting to the school planning requirements. The administrative team had high expectations of your planning and you grappled with that a lot. You mentioned you felt unprepared by your university studies to present the type



of planning Adam wanted. There was no one (at school or uni) to show you what was “right” or expected. You just felt that you were getting it wrong more often than right.

*You know, it was just so, really hard that first year because I didn't know anything about planning and I didn't know anything about term overviews and yearly overviews and stuff like that and it hits you all with it and you think 'Oh what is this?' Because you've got no idea what it is. You get lost if they don't show you.*

At one stage in our interview you were talking about feedback regarding your planning when you first arrived. I said to you: “No one stepped in to give you feedback or...?” and you responded with:

*Well, I sort of got it, but it wasn't really clear. You know, it was one of those fuzzy clouds (laughter). Yeah, no, I was lucky because I had Karen and she was really good, but she was new too, so she didn't really know what was expected, but because she was the more experienced teacher, then you know, he [Adam] wasn't worried about what she was doing, it was me. He visited me all the time. If it wasn't him, it was Dianne [the deputy principal]. And Dianne was alright. Dianne was nice, but I mean like, you know it was just like: 'back off and leave me alone!' It was just every single thing, I got picked on, and I just, I went to Dianne and I just said 'Why can't anybody just tell me what they want?'*

In one of our interviews you were discussing the difficulties you had in adjusting to the school, your duties and your class. Because you were teaching Year 3 you had to continue to assess children on the literacy and numeracy continua. You were not shown how to do it, instead your professional development consisted of: “Here's the box, go and read the box.” You added:

*It's not like 'oh, we'll send you to somebody who can show you what to do', or 'here's a sample of, you know, you've got five kids in your class and you take out your sample for which phase they're in and that!' Na. Read the book. (laughter) I thought, 'Oh mate!' You know, and the class I had was a really hard class and... I just swore that I wouldn't [let it beat me], I wouldn't, I mean there were times when I could have just thrown it in, you know, I could have quite easily. There were times when he [Adam] was on my back so much; there were times that I could have just walked out and said 'shove your job.' But, I am not going to let it get the better of me. So, you know, it's not in my personality to admit defeat (laughter) I will not admit defeat. (Pause). But I mean that is a lot better now. And I see the reason for it. Because he pushed and pushed and pushed to get, to make sure that you do do things right, but I mean, he's not there to support you. He's not there.*

I then asked you what sort of support you thought should have been provided. “I don't know, it should be like, like a whole sharing thing, like you have your buddy classroom, or your buddy teacher or whatever.” But you did not encounter any support or encouragement. You expected that to come from the top of the school staffing structure. It did not. According to you Adam is

not terribly supportive. He has high expectations and he will pressure teachers to make sure they conform to those expectations, but you found that he did not provide you with any direct and useful assistance.

I notice in your speech in these examples that you referred to Adam as “he,” you do not name him. It is almost as though he is a “being”, a “deity” that does not need to be named – he is just “He.” In fact, when I raised this with you, you laughed and told me a story of the nickname all the teachers in your block gave him during your first year of teaching at Greenway. You used to call him “CJ”, which stood for “Creeping Jesus”, because he used to just appear in your classroom, and his word was “law”.

Since your first year here Adam has “eased off” the pressure somewhat. Last year, you said, “he wasn’t in [the classroom] as much, and this year I haven’t seen him at all.” It seems that you have made it and proved yourself. You have met the standards set by the principal. Adam is very much in control of events and life at Greenway State School. You say that you have learned that life is easier if you just do what he says. “But I mean like, as it goes, I mean, Adam’s the boss, you’ve got to do what he says, you know. I mean if you want to be happy in this place, that’s the easiest way to do it. You know, and like, you know, there’s just some that haven’t figured that out yet.” But, you have.

It took what you call a “long year” to get to know how the school operates and to understand Adam’s expectations. You said:

*Like before, I would never go to Adam, you know, he’s got a reputation for himself, he really has, of being a very strict principal, making you work your hardest, work your guts out. He can make your life, he does, he makes your first year miserable. My first year was miserable. Yeah. Really, really, really, really miserable. (Pause) Last year was like a transition, you know, you slowly, I don’t know, slowly ease your way in. And I think this year because there was such a big staff turnover. It’s like I said to Karen, he must be short of friends (laughter).*

Adam, according to you, is not a people person. Mark, the deputy principal who is new to the school this year, provides a nice contrast in the administration team because he is approachable and more of a “real people’s person. You know, not like Adam.”

You have noticed that over time relationships and perceptions of work colleagues change within the school community. You believe that how the principal views a teacher can have an impact on what he asks the teacher to do. You mentioned a unit that Karen, your Year 3 co-teacher, had been asked to work on last year. It was an integrated unit that you were not asked to participate in or trial in your classroom. You said: “they trialled that last year in term three. I mean they did it and I didn’t. That’s right, yeah.” I asked why you did not do the unit, to which you responded: “I don’t know. Because Adam didn’t ask me.” You laughed and continued, “Because I wasn’t his friend at that time.”

“So is that what determines who gets to do things?” I asked.

“Yes it does, it does. It really does, especially in this place. So you can gather, you know that first day in the office, you gather that’s the group of people he likes.” (You were referring to the people Adam convened as potential participants for the research I was conducting at the school).

You believe the principal has considerable power and perhaps uses that to make decisions that do not appear to be fair or equitable. He has “favourites” and he uses those to achieve his outcomes and goals. You laugh and say, “You see, that’s how you can tell who his favourites are. He asks them to do things.”

“And that’s the way a lot of things happen?” I ask.

“It is. You get privileges. You’re privileged.”

I asked how you get to be one of the privileged and you answered: “I think you work your way there. You really have to prove yourself. But I mean like, if you’re willing to put in the time, then he knows.”

“So he makes those assessments?”

“Hmm, he does. Like you put in the time and you do the work, you know, like they say, ‘put in the hard yards’ and that. And I mean like he’s the ... I mean he hears.” Despite how you initially perceived Adam you say that perhaps he is not totally unfair. He will acknowledge work and effort that meets his standards and expectations, but basically, he decides what happens in the school, and if your life is to be a peaceful one, you do what he says. There are those that “have his ear” and others who do not. You do not see yourself as one who has ready access to him. I asked if you wanted to be in the group that did, and you answered, “Why would you want to?” According to you policy decisions that occur in the school are fundamentally Adam’s.

So, once again Ruby, it appears to me that the principal in your school and your relationship with him has had a huge impact on your professional development and although you can understand the high expectations set by Adam, you found and continue to find his firm and apparently unforgiving style hard to accept and work with. You did not feel supported professionally at a time when you felt you needed it most. In fact you felt let down by the one person from whom you had expected to receive direction and support.

It is your personal tenacity and determination that has seen you through some tough times. It is your focus on what you do in the classroom with your students that continues to motivate you. However, despite your difficulties, you appear to have ‘made it’ through the tough times. I once again ponder how different your teaching experience and professional development would have been if you had received the support you wanted from your principals, when you wanted it, if you had not had to battle through the tough times. Would you have found the same situation in another school with another principal? Perhaps. I find myself asking how do other teachers deal with difficult issues of power in their professional workplaces? Your story is just one possible scenario that reveals aspects of power in a principal/teacher relationship. Are all relationships that include powerful positions negative experiences? I wonder.

Can principals and teachers share leadership roles and build collegial, supportive relationships with each other that enable both professionals to develop and grow in their respective professional roles? Yes, I think they can. There is even some evidence that it can and does happen at Greenway. Indeed, you identified this as the case and named the teachers who you believed fell into this category. But, it has not appeared to happen for you; at least, not yet. Crowther et al. (2002) provide examples of schools in Queensland that appear to work well on a model of collaborative and parallel leadership. The Queensland Education Department supports the IDEAS project based on the principles and philosophy of shared wisdom and respect outlined by Crowther (Crowther et al., 2002) and provides assistance in implementing these projects. But, Adam had not heard of the IDEAS project, or the concepts behind it. Under the current school-based management model of educational practice in Queensland at the moment, it is possible that he may never know about it unless he actively pursues that information. Under the current school-based management system it is up to him as the school leader to discover and select the directions that he wants to take his school, within the broader parameters set by the department, of course.

Ruby, your story once again shows me the complexity involved in school collegial power relationships. An expectation for certain standards of performance is often seen to originate from a position of power and that, traditionally, and in your case, is seen in the role assumed by the principal. But, identifying the powerful and the less powerful players in a school isn't enough to change either the power games or the positioning of the players. Ruby, it seems that once again your experiences raise more questions for me about the complexity of relationships and professional support systems in our school communities. Your story illustrates a difficult scenario.

Take care,

Chris.

#### **Letter Four: Staff and Collegial Relationships**

Dear Ruby,

The previous letters left me feeling saddened by your early encounters with leaders who did not provide the supportive environment you wanted as a new teacher. However, you have also said the high expectations you struggled with, as set by Adam, helped you develop professionally. You did not see those tough times as altogether negative experiences. You did grow and you learned a lot. It was just a stressful situation for you. I wondered about how you viewed your other staff and collegial relationships. Once again, I had a lot to learn from you.

When you came to Greenway you found it to be a bit of a “cliqey” staff. It was challenging being a newcomer. If it had not been for your fellow teaching companion in Year 3, you would have found it very difficult to settle in. You were both “new kids on the block” and you both struggled to get used to the expectations and work load you faced. Karen supported you through this not only because she experienced similar trials to you, but also because she became a good friend. Karen has now left Greenway and this year you are working in Year 4 with a teaching partner with whom you are experiencing some difficulties. When I asked how you were going with the cooperative planning you were expected to complete, you responded with “It goes: you plan together, you do what you want and I do what I want and I’m not going to change! And, I could go on further.” I asked you to tell me more, but you would not that day. Later, you indicated that you enjoy working collaboratively with other teachers, but you find it very hard this year because you do not trust your partner to do the work that you believe he should be doing. You see him taking short cuts with the students and not doing the work to the standard that you would expect, both as a teacher and a mother. Your son is in his class and you have difficulties accepting some of the work requirements you have seen your son bring home. The fact that you share a double teaching space also causes a bit of frustration as noise levels vary and expectations for student behaviour are points of difference between you. Issues of collegial support and collaboration are important to you professionally, but you also indicate that if the support that you require is not there, you can operate quite well independently. In fact, this year

you are choosing to do that except for the things that you are “made” to collaborate on, for example, your term and semester overviews. You find support amongst other colleagues when you need it—Molly and Toni (Year 7 teachers), Jane (the Teacher Librarian) and Mitchell (the learning support teacher). You spoke of one instance where you were extremely frustrated with your teaching partner and the lack of work that was happening. You spoke with Molly and Toni about it and then raised the issue with Adam after they encouraged you to speak with him. That moral support was valuable to you and helped you stand up for your professional standards and explain a collegial difficulty to the principal. I am not sure how that situation was resolved. We did not get back to discussing that. But, you did receive some welcome support strategies from Adam after you approached him on the issue.

You are aware of, analyse, and use the partnerships and relationships that exist in the school. I do not quite know where you fit, but in many ways I think you do not want “to fit” either. You enjoy being an independent spirit. You come to school. You do your work. You enjoy the company of your colleagues—some better than others. Your small supportive group of colleagues allows you to have your whinges and groans about tough students and hard days. They provide you with an opportunity to release some stresses and they give you moral support and at times share welcome advice and strategies. But, it has taken you a while to reach that level of comfort with other staff members. You feel for Narelle who came to Greenway from another town 100 km away earlier in the year. You still think Greenway is a hard school for new comers because of the high expectations in demonstrating planning and accountability and because the staff can be a bit cliquey and hard to “get into.”

One of these cliques you refer to is “the boy’s club”, the males on staff: “You know, it’s ‘hey mate’ and it’s like ‘the boy’s club’.” I asked you if there was a way to break into that sort of club feeling and you answered very quickly and with scornful laughter: “Oh, would you want to? Would you want to? I don’t think so somehow.”

“So, what are the advantages of the boys club for those who are in it?” I asked.

“I don’t know, I think they might get away with a bit more. Yeah, you do, you get away with a bit more. You know there are things that you have to do that some people don’t.”

Because you mentioned staff relationships and the school climate several times, I wondered if the “cliquey-ness” concerned you and I asked some more questions about belonging to groups. You assured me that whilst you are aware of the groups and their power positions it does not overly concern you and you do not really want to be a part of them. You were brought up not to depend on others. I asked you if you see yourself as an independent worker within the system and you responded:

*I suppose so, because that way you don’t have to rely on anybody else. You know that if it has to be done, you’re going to do it. It’s just me. I’m so used to, I mean, if you’re going to do things, you do it by yourself. I suppose you know, I was taught never to rely on anybody else. If you want to do things, you’ve got to do it yourself.*

This is especially true this year when it comes to planning and implementing your teaching program because of who you were teamed with as your teaching partner. The collaborative planning process for the introduction of integrated, outcomes-based units across the school that Adam and Jane were implementing towards the end of my data collection could have presented you with some challenges because you had to work more closely with the other Year 4 teacher. If time had allowed, I would have come back to ask you more about your responses to that. However, decisions about this study also needed to be made and I did not get to talk with you again about those changes. From what you have said though, it appears that you do what you need to as prescribed by the principal and within the parameters of the Greenway School system. You realise that what your teaching partner implements in his class is beyond your direct sphere of influence and so you focus on the aspects of collaborative planning that directly impact on you and your class. Your teaching practice remains individual even if the planning process is seen to be collaborative. I could have watched and observed your teaching community for much longer and still not have a conclusion to the story of change and individual responses in Greenway. The story of education continues and this is really just a snapshot of what was happening at that time in that place with you and your school situation.



Regards again,

Chris.

### **Letter Five: Time and Hats**

Dear Ruby,

During the six or seven months I spent collecting data from teachers at Greenway I observed a number of PD sessions and also asked you about previous experiences. As PD was the focus of my study, it was obvious your previous and current PD experiences would be the focus of my questions. But I found we both explored many other issues as we talked because they impacted on your professional development and professional identity. They helped mould the teacher that you said you have become. Some of those factors I have already presented to you in these letters, but there were, and are, other things that impact on your professional identity and your teaching role: Time; your many life roles (or “hats” including: mother, wife, teacher, colleague, subordinate staff member, business partner); your views about the lower and upper school and your position in them; your views about having time off class; and the PD opportunities you have had.

So, what was the major focus of attention for me has become just one thread weaving through the complex canvas of you and your teaching life. The whole picture incorporates many aspects of school and your personal life. Your negotiation of issues and circumstances presented to you creates a bigger picture of you as a teacher. There is not just one single thing that you do or experience that contributes to your development as a teacher. That is not new or surprising, but it does place the issue of PD in an interesting position for me because it seems that new policies and practices the education department is trying to implement as common teaching practice across the state (e.g., Productive Pedagogies) still appear to depend to a large extent on a model that sees formal PD sessions as the way to introduce and implement change. Your story tells me that it is not likely to work effectively because there are too many other factors impacting on

your professional development, the formal workshops at student free days are tiny in comparison to the many other “moulding” factors that you negotiate daily.

In all our conversations “time” seemed to feature as a topic of discussion. There appears to be little time for formal PD sessions in your life. In our first interview I asked you what determines your professional development. Your answer was “Time, the time factor. And I think everybody would agree with that: TIME. Time is not what you have in your life.” Perhaps this is associated with the many roles you have. Perhaps it is an indication of the professional busyness in which you operate. I am not sure. I think it is probably impossible to completely separate your personal and biographical self from your professional identity and responsibilities because you identify yourself as performing an interchanging, balancing act of responsibilities. Your professional duties overlap into your personal home time and impact on your holiday activities. Time for additional non-school activities becomes an issue. You are like a multifaceted prism, a gem with many faces and roles that back on to the same body/mass. A simple mathematical division of the twenty-four hours in a day and the roles you play just does not work. It is a matter of priority and selection of which role takes precedence at any particular time during the day. You are a mother, wife, teacher and bookkeeper. Each of these major roles has several “arms” to it.

After 4:00 pm your role really becomes one of mother, as taxi driver and caregiver providing for the extracurricular activities of your four children. You then take on the home-keeping roles of dinner preparation, cleaning up and homework quality control. Before bed you return to the planning phase of your teaching role as you prepare mentally and physically for the next day at work.

As a teacher you aren't just the teacher of twenty-three children, you are also a colleague, a staff member in a power situation, and a co-teacher in a collaborative partnership that you say isn't working as well as it could be.

Bookkeeping takes time—you need to type the invoices and do the tax statements for your family business. You can stretch the bookwork out and attend to it on a fortnightly basis, but you can't put it off any longer.

You are constantly in a state of transition from one role to another that leads you to claim that you have “no life.” Your various roles have taken over so that there is little space or time for you to pursue many of your own desires and interests. If a Venn diagram were used to represent your roles I wonder where and how the circles would intersect.

In many ways you say parenting and teaching are complementary roles. One impacts on the other. In one discussion you commented on the distinction between teachers who are also parents, and those that are not. You said you can tell the difference although you can not define specifically what attributes are different. When you examine your own professional practice, you believe that being a parent has provided you with a greater understanding of children and how they think. It has greatly impacted on you and your teaching style.

I marvelled at the number of things you said you did and I asked how you accommodate extra demands for improved performance at school. How do you do the extra things you are asked to add to your list of duties? You laughed and said: “You just have to find more time for everything, don't you? It always comes back to the time factor.” But, basically, you have “no time”, and what little time you do have within school constraints is guarded very jealously.

You do not like having supply teachers take your class. PD during school time means extra preparation and brings concerns, based on past experience, that the supply teacher will not cover the work the way you want it covered so you will probably have to repeat the teaching. You do not have time for that in your educational calendar, your term plans, or your semester overview. If you are to be released to pursue formal PD you need to be prepared to sacrifice a lot of time and quality of work in your classroom.

I asked whether you visit the Education Queensland website to see what is happening in the more general organisational realm of Education and what is available as professional support. You replied: “No, I don’t have time to. I read *Ed Views* (the Education Queensland newsletter) but I don’t have time to do anything else.” I asked if you found *Ed Views* useful. “No,” you said, “I look up to see who has got transferred. Is there anyone I know?” I asked if you read the Director General of Education’s regular column in the departmental newsletter. “No, I don’t have time. I might just read the back page where they say the EDSCO (an Educational resource and book supplier) things are, the resources.” But, there is no time for professional reading of journals and outlines of policy directions—what is important, or perhaps more interesting to you, is the news on who is where, who has been promoted, and the resources that you access to make teaching easier. Perhaps at lunch and recess, teachers like to relax and read material that is less taxing.

You often give up a portion of your holidays to prepare for class – you hate being disorganised when the term begins so it is not unusual for you to spend a couple of your holiday days preparing for the term ahead. You have also given your own time to attend PD sessions. One was a school wide Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills (THRASS) (Davies & Ritchie, 1998) program that the entire staff attended to ensure a school-wide approach to teaching handwriting, reading and spelling strategies. You didn’t mind that activity.

Essentially, time is a major problem for you in negotiating professional development and even presents challenges in just completing your daily tasks. I asked you if you had the time—a magic wand was waved and you had the time to do whatever you wanted in professional development—would there be anything in particular that you would address? Your answer was “Hmm, no. Not really. Everything. Everything you know. It’s just one of those things where you (pause) It’s a catch up thing. It would all be catch up stuff.” And then you listed a number of curriculum areas you would like to look at: SOSE, Science curriculum, language curriculum. But, again you say, “There is no time.”

“Not enough time,” seems to be a reverberating phrase amongst teachers. In the staff room where we first started our discussions, there were a number of other teachers present. When you mentioned the lack of time, you sought the opinion of other teachers and there was a chorus of agreement—“there is no time.”

Take care, Ruby,

Chris.

### **Letter Six: What is Professional Development? A Reflection**

Dear Ruby,

At last we come to your formal professional development experiences during your five years of teaching. The structure of this letter is based on the definition of PD you provided in several interviews that I mentioned in my last letter.

We discussed the issue of professional development. You said that for you, professional development has two aspects. One is catching up on changes and developments in education. (Most of the discussions we had about professional development related to this definition because most of your formal PD experiences fell into the “catching up on changes” category. I’ll discuss some of those in the next letter.) The second part of your definition focussed on “reflecting on yourself” and your professional practice:

*reflecting on yourself ... But then, you can't even get that 5 minutes to reflect where you might think 'Oh you know, could I have done that a different way?' I mean you just haven't, because there's always somebody at you, you know, 'come and do this. Do this, do this.' And so it's not, the time's not there.*

This reflective aspect of your work is a key feature in your professional growth, but at times it is not easy to include it in your daily practice. You are so busy marking, filing, and sorting out problems that “it just seems there’s no “me” time. And then you go home and there’s still no “me” time. I find that when I go home.”

In a subsequent interview we discussed the notion of reflection in a collegial/collaborative context for implementing Productive Pedagogies. This concept incorporated the notion of teamed reflection focussing on individual teacher's teaching practices where a colleague may code your teaching practice using the domains identified in the *Productive Pedagogy* documentation. This idea had been introduced by the principal to staff members as a possible use of Productive Pedagogies in the school but it did not eventuate during the time I was observing and interviewing staff at Greenway. I asked, "How would you feel if somebody came in and coded you and you worked with them, and you did a reflective thing with them as well so that you were coding them?" Your response was "Don't know." You laughed, and then added, "Depends who it was I suppose." You mentioned that the concept is not entirely foreign because during your first year of teaching at Greenway your teaching ability was rated. In fact, you "copped a double dose" of that "inspection" system because you also had to be assessed when you were at the Special School. You had to be reassessed as a teacher in a "normal" teaching context when you made the transition to mainstream education at Greenway. After you had completed that process, you say you could do anything! It was stressful. I asked whether a reflective coding session focussing on your teaching practice would provide the same anxieties. Again, you suggested that it would depend on the colleague with whom you were working. It would have to be someone for whom you had sufficient professional respect and whom you trusted. That person would have to put in just as much effort and consideration as you. The process would be ineffective and wouldn't work with you if there were inequity in the partnership. You view co-operative teaching and planning in the same way.

Besides these two conversations, you didn't refer to the reflective aspect of professional development very much in our discussions. However, you did state that during your non-contact time on Fridays you spend some time reviewing the week's work in order to plan the next week effectively.

*I mean you go back and you say 'Oh well how did I feel about that? How did that go? Did I include them? Did such and such take it in because you know, you've got your lower ones in the class and that' ... so you're doing it all the time anyway. I*

*mean it's not something that you specifically target. Well, that's how I see it anyway, that's how ... I'm used to it.*

I asked whether that was a formal process you included in your teaching practice, or whether you just thought about it. You responded:

*I think it's just in thinking time, and like at the end of work when you go back and you're writing this thing and you say, 'Oh what did they get there? Did I cover that?' And stuff like that, you know it's not something that's just put there and just left.*

The dialogue continued:

Chris: *So you're constantly reviewing and*

Ruby: *Yeah, constantly go back, they did this and they did that*

Chris: *So do you see that as part of your professional development doing that reflecting and so on?*

Ruby: *hmm. Yeah, I suppose it would be, because you're picking out the good and the bad things about yourself anyway.*

You also mentioned occasions when you fall asleep at night thinking about what has happened that day and what to do the next day. So, whilst there may not be any formal "professional" time attributed to reflection in your working day, you do reflect on your teaching performance and try to incorporate those reflections in your work.

In the last interview we had I asked you about the research process I had used and what, if any, impact it had on you. This was your answer:

*I think it helps because you've got somebody else to tell and to talk it over with, you know because otherwise you might just put it to the back burner and wait, you know. And when you all just have a good bitch, and you say 'well this happened, and, what do you think of this? And what do you think of that?' It really makes you think. It makes you think, and it makes you reflect a lot more ... about what you've done. ... It really does. It helps you reflect. Like, you sit there and you say: 'Oh yeah, Chris is coming today. What will I tell her today because I have written nothing again?' [The reference to writing here was a reference to a journal I asked the participants to keep. You didn't write anything because you claim, "I'm not really a writer. I'm really more of a talker, not a writer."]*

Thanks again, Ruby.

Regards,

Chris.

## **Letter Seven: Professional Development Experiences**

Dear Ruby,

In this letter I want to focus more on some of your formal PD experiences. You associate professional development with concepts of change, whether they are changes in educational direction or just “learning about new things that come out.” Many of the changes that you perceive as occurring within the Education Department and Greenway in particular are associated with accountability and delivery of education services to students. You believe parents and society in general are coming to expect more from teachers in terms of accountability of process and results in student learning. This, you say, is driving a considerable amount of the reform you have witnessed in educational practice, especially as it impacts on you at Greenway. It contributes to the increase in expectations regarding your planning and the paperwork you need to produce.

You see developments in outcomes-based education as a direct result of the need to be more accountable for your teaching practices. In the latter part of the year in which I collected research data, the staff at Greenway began to seriously address integrated units and outcomes-based education. The principal directed substantial resources to assist teachers in making the transition to the development of a detailed school curriculum plan. This became the major PD focus for the year. However, that was not the case when my research began and the emphasis was on Education Queensland’s Productive Pedagogies. I will present your specific responses to Productive Pedagogies later, but you use it as an example to question some of the funding directions that have been made in the Education Department in the area of professional development. You comment specifically that “the government must have had some money left over and said ‘here this is how we’ll spend it. We’ll just pretend that it’s something new’.” The Productive Pedagogies PD sessions, like some of the other PD programs you have attended, did not provide you with a significant learning experience that impacted on your teaching practice.



Despite these difficulties and the vague appropriateness of many of the PD sessions you have participated in, you believe the department or school has a responsibility to provide professional development opportunities for you. Your experience suggests though that most of the time you as a teacher have to provide for your individual requirements and you have “to do it yourself”. Unless there is a complete school direction, for example THRASS or “this pedagogies thing”, then it is up to you as a professional to pursue it. You do not see a lot of support for you to follow your own interests within the school, and this “makes you less motivated to go out and do it.”

Funding is an issue both in terms of providing opportunities to attend, but especially in providing relief staff for release days during school time. You know it costs the school a considerable amount of money for a supply teacher through the Teacher Relief Scheme (TRS) to come in to take your class and perhaps that extra money to send you to a PD program is not always there.

*Yeah, it costs 200 and something dollars just to get a TRS in for the day, so I mean like and sometimes I think you feel guilty if you say you want to go to this or go to that. And then when you come back you've got to in-service everybody and then you think 'oh!' Whether it is really going to be of benefit to you, or are you going to sit there and be bored like I don't know what?*

The administration is in control of the PD opportunities made available to you, but you acknowledged that you have “never asked to go because we've got so much to do.” You laughed and added, “No, I would rather stay at school and just get everything done that I need. And you know if there comes a time when I really do need to go then I'll go.” Most of the PD experiences you have had have been compulsory collective staff workshops or special programs that occurred in your normal line of duty.

Your accounts of specific PD experiences focused on particular formal workshops and seminars you had attended rather than your personal attempts at improving your professional practice. These were formal PD sessions sponsored by Education Queensland, occasionally organised by

the district office, but more commonly organised by the school or the local school cluster. PD programs you discussed in our interviews included: the beginning teachers' conference when you first came to teach at Greenway, the THRASS workshop, a Special Education PD program that occurred one evening per week over a six-week period while you were at the Special School and the Productive Pedagogies workshops we attended on two student free days during the time I was gathering my research data. You did not mention other Student Free Day workshops except for those that had just happened and that I introduced to our conversation.

The Beginning Teachers' conference was presented in Cairns by the District Education Office and, as the name suggests, targeted new teachers. You had just come to Greenway from the Special School. You commented on the location of the conference—how nice it was and the good food. It was a valuable two days especially because it provided you with an opportunity to meet others in a similar situation to you. The networking opportunities were great. You were able to implement some of the information you were provided, particularly in the science area, but you believed there were shortcomings in addressing the area of planning and preparation and that was your area of greatest need at the time. The conference included various topics and you said “some of it was good and other bits were a bit.” You did not complete your sentence there, instead you agreed with Narelle who was saying concurrently: “You were just lucky if you went to something that was really important.” Apparently picking PD sessions is a gamble—sometimes you get lucky and strike a useful one that provides you with relevant information you can implement in your classroom, other times it is inappropriate to your situation. This element of risk-taking does not appeal to you especially when you have taken extra time to prepare work for your class in order to attend the PD program. You have not experienced any PD like the Beginning Teacher's Conference since your first year at Greenway except for, perhaps, the school-based THRASS program.

The THRASS program was implemented as a school-wide initiative. According to you Adam made the decision that Greenway was going to be a THRASS school, and because it was

logistically impossible to withdraw all staff during school time, the whole staff went to Mission Beach for the workshop during Student Free Days and one day of your weekend or holiday. THRASS has since been implemented across the school and new staff members are released to attend THRASS workshops. You see benefits of THRASS and acknowledge the importance of a whole school approach to this concept. You also agree that it would have been incredibly expensive and impossible to locate fourteen relief teachers to cover the staff during an in-service of this nature. You did not mind having to give up part of your own time for it because there were benefits for you and your students, but by the same token, you said you were reluctant to sacrifice your holiday time for PD and you commented that new teachers go to THRASS workshops during school time.

When you were at the Special School you and another teacher attended a PD program over a six-week period. The program involved attending a TAFE class one night a week for six weeks. Whilst you think you benefited, you also found it hard to negotiate the time and to face the TAFE class after having spent a day at work. You did not comment much more on that, other than to say the six weeks time period was difficult to deal with.

The Productive Pedagogies workshops of 2002 provided you with considerable points for discussion. I attended the two workshops that were delivered to the staff of combined schools on two student free days during the year. The workshops were about three hours long and were presented at the local Returned Services' League. The presenters were local education personnel-one a teaching principal, and the other a Year 6 teacher. Approximately 75 teachers from three or four primary schools attended the workshops. The first was held in the morning of a May student free day and the second in the afternoon of the July student free day at the beginning of semester two.

In an interview we had in April, before the workshops, when I mentioned Productive Pedagogies, you curled your nose up, put your head in your hands and said, "Everything is

changing so quickly.” You were apprehensive about what Productive Pedagogies meant for you and you had to make time to read the literature you had been given outlining the concept. Making the time to do that presented a challenge. However, you were not overly concerned about the issue believing that you would address the concepts when you had to. I asked what you thought of Productive Pedagogies at that stage and you answered candidly: “Nothing much, but you know, let’s just wait until then (pause) because you don’t have time.”

You noted some of your responses to the workshop in the one journal entry you made during the course of the study. Before the workshop you noted that the content of the workshops were likely to deal with “different stages of extending children’s thinking.” That sat well with you because you already incorporated higher order thinking and extension work in your class, especially in reading.

During the workshop you found that it was “not really engaging.” It seemed to take a long time to get into it. You wrote: “Did not really engage me. Especially when told to try to plan a unit for next term when you haven’t seen one.” This appeared to be one of the most memorable aspects of the PD session because you mentioned it several times as a concern. You could not understand what you had to do that was different to your normal planning, and you wanted some examples of units that had been prepared and incorporated the Productive Pedagogies theory. There was nothing for you to look at and compare your work with. In our interview you said, “You can’t really plan one when you don’t know what it is. How can you go and plan it when you don’t know?” As it was, you believed that it was “not really affecting my work.” You wrote, “Class already extended.” What you gleaned from the workshop “fits well with current work.” However, you commented “EQ wants more work. Larger class sizes and no time to complete everything.” You asked, “Are they going to give PD days to complete these units? [It] would be good if, for example Year 4 teachers across the district were released to work on a unit together so that all schools covered the same content.” Once again, it seems that implementation of the theory presents a challenge and you would value the opportunity to

collaborate with some colleagues to help make sense of this and ensure some standards in delivery of education across the district. Essentially you would appreciate some support and time to develop practical work-based, real strategies that you could use in the classroom. The Productive Pedagogies PD sessions did not give you anything like that.

The delivery of Productive Pedagogies also contributed to your dissatisfaction with the event:

*It was up in the air. It wasn't really structured was it? You sit there and you think, 'Well you're just reading that straight out of your thing anyway, you know the booklet that you got. So you think, 'Oh well, it's all the same.' Yeah, I mean like we could have just read the book, and sat around at a staff meeting and talked about it.*

I asked what you would have liked to see:

*I would have liked to have seen a unit plan, you know, what they do. You see I would have liked them to have had one there instead of watching a video, I want to see the time frame, you know, the one that's written up already and saying this is how you're integrating this and this and this. And I mean, I've done mine with my outcomes and stuff for this term, and it's just ... but I wasn't shown how to do mine either.*

A major aspect of the Productive Pedagogies workshops involved discussing the four domains and seeing how they applied to the classroom segments presented on the video. You found that a frustrating exercise and you got nothing from it. We discussed the documents as presenting possible benchmarks or standards against which teachers could evaluate their pedagogic performance. Your response was,

*But I mean like, what are you going to do with it? I mean like, you're going to have all of those things in your classroom anyway, and the way you deal with it. You've got a choice of dealing with it. ... inclusion, you know, including all the rest of those things, or you're targeting, like you could target race, or you could target gender, or , you know, it's just the way that you're going to perceive it anyway, use it in your room.*

So, ultimately it is the teacher's perception of issues and his/her class dynamics that will determine how issues are dealt with in the classroom and the pedagogic practices that teachers will employ. Essentially, the Productive Pedagogies documents are, once again, "nothing new" for you. I asked whether the workshops and the material you were presented would change your

planning processes or your teaching practice? “I’ll probably do more or less the same that I’ve probably done this year, I mean this term. More than likely.” I also asked whether you saw the material presented in the workshops as a reflective tool, as something that could help you with evaluating your teaching practices. Once again, time was the crucial variable: “Well if you’ve got the time, Yeah. But it just depends on how you’re going to work with it. You know, use that, like your standard of reflecting on yourself and how you’ve taught, but I mean like, are you going to get time to do it?”

Essentially, you came away from both Productive Pedagogies PD sessions saying, “it’s not something new. I think it’s more or less the same as what we’ve been doing anyway.” Your conversations with other staff members following the workshops affirm your perception, “Because it’s like I was talking to Judith about it, and that’s what Judith said, you know that was all the stuff like when they were going through uni and that and she said, ‘It’s just like a reinvention of the wheel’.” You also claimed that the material, especially the video segments that were shown, were unreal, “I mean, where were all the behaviour problems? Surely they had behaviour kids. Where are you going to get a classroom with perfect kids that are going to sit there?” Basically you said the Productive Pedagogies professional development experience was “another day of wasting a pupil free day.”

Ruby, these experiences you have recounted leave me wondering about the effectiveness of en masse, information dissemination presentations in student free days. The teachers who delivered your Productive Pedagogies workshops were themselves frustrated by the enormity of their task in adequately presenting the material to teachers. In discussions I had with them, they mentioned the difficulties they experienced in coming to terms with adequately understanding the concepts they had to present. Adam also spoke to me about the difficulties he had with the model of delivery of the Productive Pedagogies material in the district. The presenters were teachers who had been given an intense three- or four-day introduction to the Productive Pedagogies in Brisbane and then they were expected to impart that information to all of the

primary school teachers in the district in two by two and a half hour workshops on two different student free days. The departmental priority of letting teachers know about Productive Pedagogies appeared not to accommodate its own elements of ensuring deep understanding in learners.

It appears to me, Ruby, that your experience of the Productive Pedagogies was not an unusual or exceptional one and others also shared your frustrations. It also seems to me that a number of your former PD experiences have shared the same fate unless they have specifically applied to your daily teaching practice. Hmmm! What does this say about PD and its presentation in our education system in Queensland? I'll come back to that question later.

Thanks again, Ruby,

Chris.

### **Letter Eight: A Final Note**

Dear Ruby,

I have reached the end of the material you provided me during the course of our interviews. I know there is much more to your story and that it continues to develop, especially as the emphasis and direction of the school program has changed from Productive Pedagogies to outcomes-based curriculum plans to develop integrated units. You noted the change in emphasis from Productive Pedagogies to Outcomes-Based Education and curriculum planning within the school during the time I was there. You said, "I think before this outcomes-based thing came along, I think it was more focussed towards the productive pedagogies, but now this outcomes based has seemed to have, you know, stepped in the way, and stepped up ahead of it." The outcomes-based movement as you have experienced it has been directed by the school and by the administrative team. The method of delivery for this educational and professional development is substantially different from the model used to deliver the Productive Pedagogies information. You claim in one of your closing statements about future developments in Education Queensland that the direction and control of individual schools may become more

significant, “I think it might just get left up to the individual school to do their own ... back into the school programs and that, school-based. It will all be school-based.” As I mentioned earlier, it would have been great to continue to talk with you and see how you responded to this form of professional development provided by the school, but the parameters of my research timeline stepped in and I had to make a decision to stop collecting data. I hope these letters have reflected some of the complexities involved in your experiences as a professional developing in the field. Your stories have shown me that many factors impact on your professional practice including the complex context in which you work, encompassing complex relationships in your workplace; your past and present experiences and your own reflections on those including how they impact on your personal and professional learning and knowledge as well as your working interactions and relationships with others (the inward and outward glance to which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer).

I know that these letters, this story, is only a snapshot of you and your experiences. In some places it may be very brief and concise. Once again, thank you for your honesty and willingness to participate in documenting your personal and professional perspectives on your professional development.

Ruby, thank you so much for helping me with my research and for sharing your experiences so willingly over the period that I worked with you. I have learned a great deal from your stories.

All the best,

Chris.



## CHAPTER 7: THE MOLLY LETTERS

### Letter One: A Letter of Introduction

Dear Molly,

This series of letters is a reflection of the professional Molly that I came to see in the nine occasions we discussed professional development issues and the time we shared during the course of my research, particularly in the Curriculum Alliance meetings in which I participated and the Productive Pedagogies professional development sessions I also attended. Of those nine occasions, two were interviews with you alone, six were with Toni, your co-teacher, following Curriculum Alliance meetings, and one included all of the other contributors to my research early in the project. Your confirmation of the material presented in these letters during a meeting one year later indicates you are comfortable with my portrayal.

The letters present experiences that have contributed to your professional growth, some of them formal professional development opportunities, others a result of interactions with significant characters in your life. The accounts of these experiences offer an insight into the world of teachers and professional development. Remember this portrays a slice of your life demonstrating your perceptions and experiences at that particular time. The text is a co-creation in that although I fashion the story and letters and structure the text, in essence the story is yours because it is based on your experiences. Perhaps I need to begin with some background information about your entry to teaching and some formative experiences you suggest have impacted on the teacher you have become.

You entered the teaching profession as a mature adult. Your family was a family of teachers and you were encouraged to become a teacher too, but at 17 you did not really know what you wanted. After school you began a teaching degree, but did not finish it, “I started teacher’s college straight out from school and I was terrible, I was hopeless. No commitment. The pracs that I did: I had no confidence, no confidence at all as a 17/18-year old.” You left university

and experienced many other aspects of life including travelling and working with your husband in Europe and the UK. On your return to North Queensland you and your husband, Jack, managed some pubs for your family. You had three children and you found yourself in a position where Jack could only get seasonal work and you had a mortgage. “So things get really tough and you know that you’ve got to go back to work. That’s where I was. What do I do if I want to go back to work? Do I go barmaiding? Jack didn’t want me to do that. [I] wasn’t qualified to do anything else but run a pub.”

Your children were young and were attending preschool and you found yourself spending a great deal of time with them there.

*Because we lived out of town and the car was a sardine tin, and no money to go in and out, in and out, in and out with the little kids, so I spent a lot of time at preschool. It was only half-day preschool, with the other two and I thought ‘Well! I can do this!’ It was just an idea that you can do that. My grandmother died, I was with my grandmother when she died. So it was more. A few things were telling me that I could do anything after that: ‘All right, you want to do something, you can do it. You know that you have the strength to do this.’*

You considered that the only way to get financially ahead was for you to make a commitment and return to study. Your concern was whether or not you had the inner strength to complete the study and complete it well. It was also:

*a sense of knowing that [teaching] would be a decent job. You wouldn’t have to put up with any crap like you did with bar work. It would be a, a better environment knowing that it would be a job that you could do OK. You know, you would be able to do it. That was it. It’s not like it was a great driving thing, or a great love or need, you know. It wasn’t like that. It was knowing that OK, this is the circumstance we’ve got ourselves into, how are we going to make life better for all of us?*

You applied for university entrance “and got accepted and thought ‘Holy Shit! Now I’ve got to do it’.” You set high expectations for yourself:

*I thought ‘I’m not mucking around, if I don’t get, you know, if I don’t get really good marks, it’s a waste of everybody’s time, I’ll leave and go and think of something else.’ But I did really, really well, and really loved it.*

Family issues associated with your return to study were relatively easy to deal with especially because Jack was on shift work and was able to care for the children.

You did very well at University and loved the atmosphere of learning and discussion with many of your fellow students (most of whom were also mature age students) and your lecturers. You named three lecturers in particular who inspired you because they challenged your thinking whilst providing a supportive atmosphere:

*[I] had a really good group of mature age students and we were all dead set so keen and we used to have all these fantastic discussions and questions. It was really wonderful. I would really do it again. I can't believe that you read what you read and that you talked about what you talked about, you know, it was a good atmosphere, you know, and it was challenging and I want that. I want to still be challenged a little bit, but I suppose that's a bit different now. The challenge is to come up with something creative, to come up with something that every child is going to have some success with at some time. You know that's the challenge now.*

You refer specifically to one reading in your first year at University that made a huge impression on you:

*one of the first papers I ever read in Education 101 or whatever it is, was a reading by Habermas that was just so hard to read, it took hours and , I'll always remember Habermas. But it was like you know, having knowledge of something, having a social knowledge of how to work within systems, plus taking action, gives you empowerment. And I tell you what, that's it for me. Providing kids with the knowledge that they need to be able to do something, giving them the where-for-all to work within systems to be able to use that knowledge and actually taking action, doing something about it, gives you empowerment for change. And that really, I think that's what I try to do in most units that I provide.*

Your strength and determination to succeed saw you through some financially tough times while you studied and you attribute much of your strength of character to your mother.

*My mother [is] very, very ,very independent and very strong. She worked all the time. She worked for her family, but as a role model she was there and very independent and very strong and if you're going to do something, you do it properly and all that sort of stuff. Well, I totally ignored that when I was in my teenage years, but you can see that that was formative.*

Being a parent was a major influence in your decision to begin teaching. It continues to impact on the way you teach now and your desire to continue to improve your teaching practice. You say, "I think [being a parent] makes us better teachers for a start." One of your first experiences

as a parent of a school student was not pleasant, but it taught you about your responsibility as a teacher to children and parents.

*Well, I like to do a good job and I've got kids who went to school and I had a run in with some teachers at the school when my kids were there and I was a parent and I actually sent off a letter to regional, or district office, or whatever complaining about something that had happened at the school and got myself into all sorts of trouble. But I thought, 'No, no, what you've done is wrong and I'm, and I'm going to do something about it.' You know a lot of parents, it's a lot to go and confront a teacher it takes a lot, and you know, I was no Einstein but it took a lot to go and say 'Look, I don't agree with what you've done here.' A lot of people wouldn't do that, and so I knew that you've got a responsibility and some people don't take it that seriously and I want to do this job, I want to do this job properly because these are kids. You've got to make an effect on kids and you've got to try and somehow by the end of the year, bring out some personal best in somewhere for every kid in the class, that sense of achievement. So I'm like that because I want teachers to do it for my kids, you know what I mean. I would like to think that others are doing the same for mine. Whether they are or not, I don't know. But from that sense, I'm going to make sure that I do it right.*

Your parenting role also informed your participation in the Curriculum Alliance you were undertaking with Year 6 and 7 teachers of other primary schools and several High School teachers in the district. In a discussion with your co-teacher, Toni, you both reiterated that as parents you have expectations of teachers and you place those same expectations on yourself as teachers. Because you have children who are in the middle school years, you have seen their frustrations particularly at high school and, as a result, you are far more aware of what you need to provide for the children you teach. Parental insight is a considerable motivating force for you in developing your professional role and in the role you take within the professional community.

Molly, your account of your background experiences, including your parenting role, prior to entering teaching makes me think more about the knowledge and experience we value in our teaching staff. Do we have models of practice and professional development that adequately acknowledge and value existing knowledge and experience of teachers, or do our models of professional development tend to make assumptions about the level of knowledge with which teachers enter the PD programs? Are our models based on a deficit model, an assumption of "Teachers don't know this so we have to give it to them," rather than on a model that builds on existing knowledge and expertise? The Curriculum Alliance (CA) that you participated in and

that I discuss in a later letter, was an opportunity for teachers to share their expertise in developing a similar approach to curriculum implementation in the middle-school across the school district. Initially you did not see the CA as a professional development activity—rather, it was just something you had to do. This made me wonder if part of the difficulty we have with identifying relevant professional development has something to do with our conceptions of what professional development is. Do we see it as something that is “tacked on” to daily teaching experience, an extra that occurs through external workshops and Student Free Days? Or, is it integrated into our teachers’ daily activities? Indeed, is this a significant difference that needs to be identified? I think so. In order to value the professional development opportunities that occur in practice, to make more obvious what is taken for granted, perhaps we need to make more explicit what happens implicitly in teachers’ work. Perhaps we need to value the situations and opportunities that teachers’ interactions with others provide as opportunities for professional development. Perhaps we also need to acknowledge more effectively the existing experience and knowledge base that is present in our teaching workforce and build on that.

I debated whether to include some of your biographical background in this series of letters. But, I think ignoring them would be perilous because your stories indicate that many of your teaching decisions and decisions regarding your professional development stem from your background and biographical context. I cannot ignore them.

Thanks, Molly.

Regards,

Chris.

## **Letter Two: Professional Growth at Greenway**

Dear Molly,

Greenway was your first teaching appointment five years ago. In our interviews, you discussed a number of characteristics of the school that have contributed to your professional growth. Not every experience you have had has been wonderful and, in some cases difficulties have arisen

that have challenged your professional approach. However, in general you view your Greenway experience as a positive introduction to teaching.

While you have been fortunate with the professional development opportunities provided to you at Greenway, you also indicated a proactive desire to pursue them. You have deliberately made known your interests in education and professional development to key administration personnel and as a result “had heaps of professional development over the last few years. Probably more than a lot of others . We’ve got it,” referring to you and Toni your co-teacher. “We’ve put our hand up for it.”

One of the most impressionable experiences for you as a beginning teacher was being placed in Year 5 with Darren as a team teacher. You really appreciated his experience and guidance and enjoyed learning about the world of teaching from and with him. You believe you were deliberately placed with Darren so that he could act as a mentor:

*Darren was really good to start with. He was excellent to be paired with straight away. He was very supportive and let you, um, you know I know that I was put with Darren so that he could keep an eye on me and so he could guide me, you know, he’s very experienced, but he let me do stuff ... We worked out very quickly, he did Science and I did the Art and we did that sort of sharing after a term. ... and he was very structured, he had the homework sheet, we had this and we had that ... so I learned that it can’t all be airy fairy, it has to be well planned, it has to be, you know, building towards giving them a lesson that they need to do or whatever, you sort of knew that. He’s like that.*

You were a very enthusiastic beginning teacher eager to succeed in your first placement. You wanted to impress your principal and ensure that your first year teaching report was promising. You knew Adam’s expectations were high, but you were prepared to meet those and show your capabilities. This meant you were prepared to work extremely hard putting in many hours of extra work to meet the challenge. You were keenly aware of the importance of your success for your family. As a result you prepared a learning environment in your classroom that stood out as something different.

*I tell you, the first year I had Grade 5 I was very, very aware that it was my first year of teaching and that Adam would have to write a report on me and this is the*

*late thirty woman doing it with family and knowing that 'Holy shit, I've got to get a good report because this is my job, ... we need this.' So, knowing that, you had to do extra well. So, having your room decorated like a rainforest, you know as a jungle and doing all these extras was one way of you know, getting noticed. But you still had to have good discipline and lots of other things still had to happen, but it was also another way of, um, you know, putting yourself there.*

Now, you do not feel that same pressure to perform because you have established credibility with the principal, staff, students and parents in the school community. But, maintaining a high standard of professional practice remains a major concern and you will often ask your trusted colleagues whether you are “on task”.

*I'm very confident and capable and comfortable with what I do here so I don't really worry too much about what other people really think. Well, I do worry. I mean I ask Toni every now and then 'Are we doing the right thing?' And blah, blah, you know, and you do talk to some people sometimes, but there is a sense that it's OK, you don't have to worry about this. Yeah. [And you get more confident]...because you're a bit more driven and you've had kids and you're a bit more driven.*

During your five years at Greenway you have received considerable support from the principal about student issues and your own teaching development. Adam was very good in your first year even though he “just appeared” in your classroom to observe your teaching.

*I used to call him 'the ghost who walks' because he would just be there. You'd turn around and there he would be. It was a bit 'Uh (inhale of breath)', but he was checking, checking, checking everything was all right. And I had a couple of kids in that year that were really tough. One kid was suspended, he ran away. You know I've been in his [Adam's] office in tears, you know crying and carrying on because of that. But you work through it and he's very, very good to work for. I've got a lot of respect for him.*

By the same token you consider that your good working relationship with Adam is also influenced by the fact that he or his role does not intimidate you. You consider him an equal colleague who is in a powerful position. Yours is a professional relationship and he is there to encourage your professional growth. You appear to have consciously decided you are not going to give him power just because he is your principal. He is, after all:

*just someone who's the same age as me for God's sake, you know. Really, he is. So, I shouldn't be intimidated. You should show respect, but he's just a bloke you know. There's that line. But, I'm not going to be, you know, grovelling at your feet. Excuse me! We're a bit equal here.*

You acknowledge that other staff members find Adam unapproachable and you say if you were a 20-year-old new graduate you probably would not have the same attitude as you do now. You know you can work well with him. You share a mutual respect. You note he expects a lot from his teachers. But your self-assurance and affirmation that you are OK and your world experience counts for something gives you the confidence to approach him as “a bit equal.” In reference to Adam you state, “I know that you’re a principal, and I know that and you’ve worked very hard. But you know, I’ve been doing other things and, my value is not less just because you have more qualifications and you make more money.” Generally, you agree with Adam’s philosophy and approach to education, and that has helped you in your own professional development. That does not mean you agree on everything, however, and you have had your discussions that have led to some changes in his decisions.

*He expects a lot and I don’t blame him. I think his philosophy is not too bad. But he’s very willing to change, you know he will listen to you and he lets me do things. I don’t think he’s said ‘no’ to me too many times. I’ve gone and said, ‘I want to do this. I want to do this with my class, what do you reckon?’*

*‘You’re OK. I’ll get you some money from somewhere and you can do this.’ He’s been very supportive and that’s been a really good thing.*

On another occasion when you were discussing your role in the Curriculum Alliance you reflected on the support Adam provided the concept of collaborative planning across schools and sectors (both primary and high school). “Yes, he’s very supportive, and he is receptive to what you’re saying and he has listened and he is moving, though you don’t trust it, he is moving along in the same direction that you want to be moving along in. He’s supporting the challenge you know.” In a later discussion you explained what you meant by your statement: “though you don’t trust it.” You said you would like to believe Adam supported the long term educational goals you were trying to develop and implement through projects like the Curriculum Alliance, however, experience (your own and others who have been teaching longer than you) lead you to doubt the longevity and commitment to the principles and concept you as a group had developed. Implementing the plans produced by the Curriculum Alliance across the district would require long term support including financial backing for continued group meetings and



time for someone to co-ordinate the inter-school activities suggested in the document you produced. You were not sure the commitment would be there to ensure that happened. Perhaps the Curriculum Alliance provided a short-term goal that demonstrated initiative and looked good on paper, but you feared it would not be adequately resourced to ensure its effective implementation across the school district. Your statements one year later indicated that in some ways your lack of trust regarding resourcing implementation across the district was correct.

In a discussion following a Curriculum Alliance meeting, Toni, your team teacher, mentioned that Adam is a very clever and astute principal, aware of policies and directions and knows what he wants to encourage and develop in the school. You share his vision and philosophy and he encourages you and supports you in developing your ideas. You would love other staff members to be a part of this scenario and at one stage you said:

*You just need, you know, about eight other teachers who are like-minded and I'd love to, I'd love it. And that's what I say to him, you know, we just need four. Four like ourselves, not three but four. Love to be able to experience that, so that we could stretch ourselves as much as we could. We could push this.*

To effectively implement these changes in the curriculum and pedagogic practice of the Year 6 and 7 teachers at Greenway, you needed the support and commitment of other colleagues.

During my research you had a workplace difficulty with some members of staff who considered both you and Toni a threat and who did not want to implement or work on the program you were developing for the senior classes of Greenway. These teachers had launched an official complaint against you that required some mediation with the principal and union representative. You did not want me to include the details of the problem in my research, but it demonstrated some of the strains and difficulties you were experiencing from colleagues who did not share your or the principal's vision and direction for the upper school. The unpleasant experience distracted and fatigued you. You found it hard to be enthusiastic about the Curriculum Alliance, but were determined to see the project through to completion and not let the difficulties dissuade you. Teaching in the upper school was your area of work, had been since your second year of

teaching, and was likely to be in the near future. You were determined that your future work would be made easier and more manageable by the current work you were doing in the Curriculum Alliance. One or two difficult teachers were not going to sidetrack you from that. Instead, you believed cooperative staffing arrangements would have to be made to ensure the successful implementation of the vision you, Toni and the principal shared for the upper school.

In five years, Molly, you have become a respected teacher who assists in the development and design of future directions of the school. You work in partnership with your teaching colleagues, not just at Greenway but also within the school district, and with your principal to achieve what you collectively consider is best for the Year 6 and 7 students of Greenway.

The fact that you've always been at Greenway was something you discussed in both positive and concerned tones. You enjoy the environment in which you have grown so much professionally, but you are concerned this is the only environment you have been exposed to as a teacher. You suggested perhaps there was more professional knowledge you could gain from other school situations and contexts. Having been at Greenway for five years presents you with a dilemma professionally because you wonder whether you are going to be there until you reach twenty years of service "teaching Grade 7 with Toni. That's a bit of a worry: 'professionally' are you doing the right thing?" Although, having said that, you also stated that Greenway continues to present you with challenges. "It's a challenge here still, you know it's not stagnant; it's not a job that's boring here. It's not. And I think I grow every year."

Molly, this letter outlines some of your professional experiences at Greenway. There are many more, some of which I refer to in the following letters. These stories, however, provide some insight into your professional growth from a novice teacher to a teacher of considerable experience within the Greenway school community. Thanks for sharing them.

Regards as always,

Chris.

### **Letter Three: Relationships**

Dear Molly,

Following many of our interviews you said: “I’m not sure how this is all helping you Chris.” Well, during my analysis and close reading of all the transcripts I made of our interviews and discussions, I was frequently struck by what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as the process of narrative inquiry occurring in a three-dimensional space. In your stories of experience you frequently reflected on your past, your current practice and your desire to improve your future teaching practice. You use relationships to nurture/feed your personal and practical teaching knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 2000) and you constantly incorporate an inward and outward glance asking yourself how things impact on you, your work and those with whom you work. You are also very aware of the physical “place” and time parameters that impact on your work. These elements are obvious throughout your accounts. That is reassuring for me in my research journey. It provides evidence that narrative inquiry encompasses a three-dimensional space.

The previous two letters have tended to focus on your past experiences and how they impact on your current practice as well as your future teaching work. In this and the next few letters, I want to focus particularly on your descriptions of some significant relationships with others and demonstrate how those experiences have impacted on your professional development.

Discussions of your professional experiences at Greenway all tended to include key personnel – teaching partners, the principal, or other significant people including your sister and aunt whom you use to inform your professional practice. You also mentioned a desire to access feedback from university lecturers in order for you to see how your current teaching practices compare to current educational theory. In a discussion regarding Productive Pedagogies you indicated a willingness to accommodate a peer review process that would provide you with feedback you could use to improve your teaching practice. In this letter I want to focus particularly on some

of your collegial relationships and partnerships. The letters following this one address some of the other issues I've just identified.

In our discussions you mentioned the importance of your relationship with your sister who is an Art teacher in another local school. Gail has had a major formative role in your professional life; in fact, it was Gail and your Aunt Pam that encouraged you to consider returning to study to become a teacher. Since you began your teaching career at Greenway they have frequently provided you with support, resources and ideas for you to incorporate in your classroom practice. You are known in Greenway as a teacher with an art bias. A major part of your enjoyment of art with the students involves catering for your own creativity and interest level as well as providing students who are not academically inclined an opportunity to succeed: "You don't want to be too creative; you want to be explicit enough to give them [students] success." Gail often provides you with support and strategies that complement the thorough research that you undertake in this area of teaching. Gail and Pam also provide you with support regarding some of the more political organisational and systemic issues that sometimes occur at Greenway. They provide you with an alternative perspective and an educational experience that is not "Greenway" based and you appreciate and value that fresh view.

However, perhaps the most influential professional person impacting on your teaching practice at the time of my research was your teaching partner, Toni. You worked collaboratively on most things and shared planning and teaching tasks. I was able to observe the role of your collegial partnership as an opportunity for professional growth for you and Toni on many occasions. I observed you working together in the Curriculum Alliance and discussing a number of your plans for your classroom activities in other informal conversations. The shared interviews that we held after the Curriculum Alliance meetings gave me an opportunity to observe your interactions and watch how you both encouraged and supported each other's professional practice. You both acknowledge the importance of your relationship in challenging each other professionally and identify a number of factors that contribute to the success of this partnership.

Probably the most important factor in your collegial relationship is the trust you have in each other's professional abilities. You both know you work hard and you know you can trust the other to provide your students with valuable learning opportunities. You acknowledge you both have different teaching strengths and your teaching and thinking styles complement each other. You often mention that Toni is a "left-brained" person and you are more "right-brained." Toni's capacity for structured, systematic and mathematical thinking is complemented by your creativity. You enjoy teaching language and the Arts; Toni's forte is her mathematical and technological expertise. You say, "It's a partnership that works well because we are a little bit different."

Your partnership also works well because you have an open relationship in which you are both able to say if something isn't working. The example you had this year was when you both began teaching a unit and decided to change the direction because of the nature of the students with whom you were working. "I think this year's been a perfect example, we can recognise when something is not working and say 'alright, we've got to change something.' And you know, Toni will pull me up and say something, and I'll say something to her. I think it's pretty open like that."

You also mention similarities in family and life experiences that unite you: "We're both women, we both have kids, we both have husbands. We're both that similar age. A bit of honesty there too."

Following the first Curriculum Alliance meeting I attended you had a conversation with Toni in which you stated your uncertainty about the quality and level of work that you were doing at school. Toni, who has considerably more teaching experience, including professional development delivery, reassured you that your teaching practices were innovative and well-informed. This conversation demonstrates how your collaborative partnership reassured you regarding your professional practice. Toni's experiences provided a link with the practice of

other teachers and this provided an affirmation for the directions in which you were travelling professionally.

*Toni: Yeah, and the other thing that I think has really helped me when I was, probably particularly as education advisor, being able to see, to step out of a classroom, from my place in space, see what the big picture is that they're coming from up there, in their little, little office, um to see what is happening all over. Very, very interesting to be able to do that and Molly said there about getting the links here, I was able to get networks with people that I worked with all over Queensland, and every time you go to any sort of professional development like that you think 'I wish all of the teachers could go to something like this.' It just, yeah; it builds up for you because you get that idea that it's not just your own little isolated little world.*

*Molly: That's it, and that's my point exactly. Because you're here dealing with what you have to deal with, but I'd like somebody else's, another perspective on it. You know somebody who is outside our school, outside of what we're doing to say, 'Yeah, Ok, yeah, you're moving in the right direction.'*

*Toni: Oh, Molly, I think you have that, whether you've realised it or not. There have been so many times that I've been here there and everywhere and I've had people say 'Oh yeah, we've heard that you and Molly are doing these really good things.' You know, like a couple of years ago where [the district office representative] had gone back and said 'You know, these wonderful things are happening.' And um... I think if a lecturer came into your classroom now you'd find that you've probably going past them you've gone over and above, you really have.*

*Molly: Yeah, but are we going in the right way?*

*Toni: Well what's the right way?*

*Molly: Well, it's like you don't trust it. You know because this is the only way that I can really see of doing it.*

Your partnership with Toni is based on honesty and frankness with each other. You collaborate on most of your teaching work identifying outcomes, teaching activities, resources and determining assessment tasks and strategies. You are both known within and outside of the school community for your strong professional team work.

But, sometimes, circumstances cause you to decide not to work closely together. This occurred during the third term of my research when a number of personal and work circumstances led you to conclude you were better off not working collaboratively. You both had family bereavements within a month of each other. You did not get the holiday and rest break you had

anticipated at the end of second term because of your family commitments and you were unable to get together with Toni to plan the term effectively and in adequate detail because of her bereavement. You found time was passing too quickly and you did not have the opportunity or the energy to pursue a team approach in teaching that term. Additional complications you did not want to deal with included Toni supervising a fourth year pre-service teacher who was completing her last block of full time teaching during her professional experience (three weeks at the beginning of Term 3). Term 3 was also a busy term because of interruptions to class time with inter-house and inter-school sports commitments. Time limitations, fatigue and a realisation that you do not have the energy to deliver to two classes at times contributed to your decision to “go it alone” in Term 3. This extract from your interview outlines the difficulties you encountered:

*I'm tired and like I told Toni today, I'm just going to do my own class this term, I don't want to have any thing to do with her class, and I don't think that went down very well. But I don't have the energy for it, and I don't have the energy. I can have the energy for my class and have them settled and do everything, but then to pick up and deliver again from one other class that I really don't have, do you know what I mean, I just don't want to do it. And I certainly don't want to do 50 kids all at once. I don't want to have to mark 100 pieces of artwork. You know, two from each kid over the term. I don't want to do that. I just want to do my class because I've started behind already this term and I'm tired. I haven't had a break you know, so it's like, no I can't handle that. So, I did my planning on the weekend, and I've planned, I've given out my assignment list to my kids and, you know, I've given it to her and if she wants to do the same, well then that's all well and good, but if she wants to do it a bit different, we'll try and do the same outcomes and everything like that, probably, but you had to make a decision. Had to plan something, it's like week 2, coming up to week 2 and what you want, Grade 7's, you want them to be planned and organised. You want them to have to get it to them so they can get it written in their diary, so they can get it in their timetable, so they can start research and they can start doing all of that. All of those things that I want to have happen, so you have to have the content. Where are we going? What's this unit going to be about? Plus over there [referring to Toni's classroom and the student teacher] you know, they've got like a four week unit. Nnext week, we're going to have like two afternoons scratched, and then we're going to have sports the following week. That [four week unit] might not get finished, so where does it get left? So she's [Toni's] going to have to carry it on, and into week five and into week six most probably. I don't want to be just marking time here, you know what I mean? So I think it's best that we just (pause) And that was pretty, that was pretty awful to just sort of: 'I've already done this, and I really don't want to do your class.' But, I've done it and I think that she's a good enough friend to know that it's nothing personal, it's just something that I can't do. I can't do any more of. And I'll have to have another talk to her and we'll have to have a cup of coffee and make sure she knows that, you know, that it's not, it's not a personal reflection of her or whatever, it's just me. I really can't do it. I don't want to, I don't feel like it. I've done a lot of teaching this year with 2 classes. A lot of my*

*classes have been you know in the afternoons with 50 kids. That's a lot of energy. And I'm tired. I'm buggered.*

Our discussion went on for some time and you outlined benefits of collaborative teaching including that “the kids get the benefit of two heads, two lots of ideas, two lots of thinking.” They also benefit from your different subject strengths: Toni in Maths and IT, you in Language and the Arts. But, for it to work effectively you need adequate time to set up a shared teaching program. You said:

*the setting up is the big thing, and once it's set up, it flows really great, and we haven't had that [time], we haven't had it. So it's like it's better off that I just do this and I don't have the added responsibility of over there [indicating Toni's classroom]. You know, I just want this. And I will worry about this class. I won't worry about that class.*

Another factor impacting on your teaching relationship with Toni and that “wore you down” towards the end of second term was the role Toni played as the IT in-service person for the school. Each Friday Toni was released from her class duties to attend to IT maintenance and professional development issues within the school. This often meant you had to collect assessment work and follow up on homework issues with members of her class because you were familiar with the tasks and requirements for the students. You began to resent those extra incursions on your time and duties:

*She teaches four days, and on the fifth day there's another teacher there, and I find that I have that responsibility, there's assignments due in, I'm the one that has to make sure that I chase them up, you know there's all of that. I don't need that this term. I don't want that. What I can handle here is enough.*

You also have some difficulties with the model of technology professional development the school is using to address technology PD and maintenance, i.e., using a classroom teacher, because it removes the teacher from the classroom and you believe Year 7 students in particular need the consistency of a full-time teacher five days/week. You outlined your concerns:

*At the end of the year you always have a choice, you get to say who you would like to teach with and what year level you would like to teach at. And so, [last year] I, of course I said Toni 'coz we worked really good together. I put down a couple of other teachers' names down as well, but her name and a year level. But, I did not know that she was going to take on the role of technology person, you know that wasn't told, that wasn't explained, and it does have an impact, because I spent last*



*year with four teachers do you know what I mean? [A reference to an unpleasant experience as a member of a team of four teachers that had difficulties working together.] And I didn't need that again this year. And now I've got two. So, even though it's only one day, and it's really only half a day because you have sport the Friday afternoon (you don't really have it). But, that's an impact and it's me, it's more responsibility for me. But if I'd have had two weeks holiday and I'd have been planned, I would have felt differently, but you know what I'm saying? I can't handle. I don't think I could come up with the um , what is it? The necessary, 'Oh it's alright, I'll do it.' That sort of generosity, I don't think I. I would resent it. You know. (Pause) So, I would think about it, with Grade 7, I don't really think, and with some classes, I think they need a teacher all day, every day, and that technology person I think should be somebody from, and the way it was worked the term, the year before, Toni was deputy and so she did it in that role. So really, the deputy should have done it again this year or it should have been somebody like learning support or somebody like librarian, technology person. Not necessarily class room person, technology person, I don't think it works as well as what it could.*

*Towards the end of last term I was quite resentful of a few things and that's because you're getting tired as it's going along. And things weren't smooth. You know all those other problems, and it was like, 'I just don't need that this term.' I don't want it.*

Collaborative planning and partnerships in teaching therefore have some distinct advantages, but there are also difficulties to be overcome. Your account of your experiences demonstrate some of the “nitty gritty” issues involved in implementing collaborative partnerships. Your story demonstrates difficulties but it also highlights and celebrates advantages of such collegial partnerships. You have expressed a commitment to this process of planning and working but also, through your story, you have demonstrated that it is not an easy process to establish and maintain a productive partnership that meets the professional and personal requirements of both teachers. Just putting teachers together and saying “collaborate” is an oversimplification of a complex relationship that can be very powerful and effective in professional and educational outcomes. Thanks again for your honesty, Molly.

Take care,

Chris.

#### **Letter Four: Relationships to Link Theory and Practice**

Dear Molly,

You mentioned in your discussions that you are sometimes unsure whether the direction you are taking in your teaching practice is “right” or theoretically sound. You know your teaching practices are yielding good results from students and you know you have the support of your principal, but there are times when you would like to gauge your work against others from outside the Greenway arena. You value the links you made between theory and practice at university but you see a gap in current practice. You are hungry for more current theoretical knowledge. University provided you the opportunity to learn about current theory and you would like a university link to be a stronger element in your current work situation in order to develop that aspect of your professional knowledge. In a discussion with Toni after a Curriculum Alliance meeting you said:

*But actually, one thing that I think, um you [Toni] were talking about doing your Masters and getting sort of like a reset of your thinking well, I would really like, I would really like to hear from University lecturers about what I'm doing now. And I would really like, you know, when I first came out and started sitting in staff staffroom meetings, and we were looking at curriculum and we were talking about different things. Adam always got on about 'Process'. The process of writing, and here we were at Uni learning, you know, how 'critical literacy' was it. So you know you [Molly] have been the leaking tap, you've said, you know, 'But what about critical literacy? What about reflective writing? What about this? What about that?' and you're starting to see the changes but, you know, that's been 5 years ago. What are they talking about there now that I need to know about? You know, is there something else? Some other new theory, you know? I've formed my thinking through all the literature that I've read, but now, has that changed? Has there been a shift? Is that now, no longer the way it is?*

You see scope for pre-service teachers to serve as a link between the schools and universities, current theory and knowledge.

*I'd really like one of these young prac teachers, there's so many in our school, actually stand up and tell us something about what they're learning at uni, you know, just so that you get some handy hints on what's going on there, you know, what's the latest bit of thinking? Where's 'equitable multiculturalism' now? Where have we moved on to? You know equitable multiculturalism, I had to read lots of papers on that, I had to consider that. You know, what's the latest? Let me know! You know, there's that component to it that I don't see anymore because I don't have time to read anything except what passes over my desk. Adam goes on about Allan Luke, he thinks he's wonderful and he shoves books underneath you every now and then 'here read this, do this.' So you read that, you do that, at a staff meeting it gets presented, but it's improving what you do. So you're mad if you*

*don't take opportunities, but then, there's not the time to do enough of it. There's not the time given to teachers to do enough of it. So that's it.*

I wonder, Molly, how we can encourage more of what you are seeking. I know that Education Queensland has Commonwealth Government funding available for Quality Teacher Projects (QTP) that encourages and fosters links between universities and schools. But how do you get to know about them? How do you prepare project submissions and concepts that fit the QTP guidelines? Is that your responsibility? Is it too easy to put it in the “too hard” basket because you do not have the time to pursue these concepts and ideas to see them come to fruition? How do teachers in a rural/regional setting make links with universities? My guess is that again it becomes a matter of priority. If that priority and vision is not shared or understood by those in the position of power to commit to and support those concepts, then it becomes too hard consequently, as in your case, it doesn't happen and, as you said, “that's it!”

Take care Molly,

Chris.

### **Letter Five: Formal Professional Development**

Dear Molly,

The information I have presented to you so far in these letters demonstrates many of the informal ways in which your professional practice has developed. During your time at Greenway, you have attended a number of formal professional development sessions focussing on various topics including curriculum development in Language, the Arts and SOSE. You did not remark specifically about any of them as particularly significant or formative except the Apple School. In this letter I focus on that past experience and its impact on your teaching. The other experiences are perhaps notable for their absence in your discussion. I am not sure if that is because you cannot remember specific events associated with particular programs, or if they were not significant. I did not ask you for more information at the time—perhaps I was listening to what you were saying rather than paying a lot of attention to what you were not. But, having noted that as a possible aspect of the interview and research process, I think that perhaps there is

an alternate possibility. During my research I was able to observe you in a number of PD sessions where you commented that the concepts covered were affirming of your existing practice (e.g. ,Productive Pedagogies) and did not cause you to alter your practice and so you did not view them as making significant contributions to your professional development. I wonder if PD programs that do not push/stretch your boundary of knowledge are actually considered by you as professional development. To you professional development is “improving your teaching practices in whatever way you can. Becoming more professional in what you do.” You added, almost parenthetically,

*I don't know. But, what's professional? What's a professional person? Some of them aren't very good; they aren't very nice people are they, some of these so-called professionals? Sometimes I'd rather have the, you know, the brickies. Yeah, so I don't know what makes a person 'professional'. But for me professional development is seizing any chance that I can to learn about something, and that's the thing. I don't have time to sit down and read anything. But it's improving what you do.*

So perhaps then, attending a session that does not contribute substantially to “improving what you do” isn't really professional development?

The “Apple School” on the other hand was something different. It was perhaps the most formative professional development activity you have attended. You and Toni attended the week long “Apple School” [the Apple Computers of Tomorrow Practicum (ACOT)] in Brisbane in 1999. It showcased the use of Macintosh computers to integrate learning opportunities across subjects across the lower and middle school.

*[It] was very, very good the way they had computers in use, the kids working, the integrated work, all of that, it was good to see it in action. It was good to see, the teachers worked on their ... they had quite a lot of scope, I think and they had quite a lot of room to move with their units, but they all worked together as a team and came up with things and I like that idea. Both of us, we did that together.*

Whilst you gained a lot from the visit to the school, there were aspects of the experience that caused you some concern. For instance, you remarked on the coverage of Maths at the school and considered your approach to Maths required a more direct style of teaching that was more explicit.

*I still reckon you've got to have chalk and talk and 'This is the rule, learn it, because if you learn this rule, it will get you success'' You know, and there's some things, you've got to be explicit. You've got to tell kids how to get that success. It's not a secret! If you keep it a secret, how are they going to learn? Assume it? It's got to be spoken and a way it's spoken is on the board with you talking and so that's got to happen. But I didn't see too much of that happening down there.*

So, you selected aspects of your professional development opportunity in Brisbane to develop and implement in your practice at Greenway. You qualify your enthusiasm for the experience with this remark but you indicate that it still impacts considerably on your practice:

*I didn't come back a raging convert or whatever, but it was like, and you still think about it and you still sort of 'well, you know we could do something like that here,' and 'We could..' you know. [I] Still use it and that's probably like the only professional development. You know all the computer work helps you and helps you get your job done, and helps you get kids switched on to the computer and the technology and that helps drive and get your knowledge out there that you want the kids taught. You know it's a tool to do that, and then a tool to help them present it.*

Molly, your responses are thought provoking and again trigger a number of questions in my mind. If you have attended many PD sessions, as you say you have, why are not there more memorable or significant ones for you? I did not receive your answers to these questions, but I wonder: How can we measure the effectiveness of PD sessions to ensure that you are developing professionally as a result of those sessions? Do we use your definition: "it's improving what you do?" If so, is teacher's professional practice, "what you do," on a developmental continuum where PD either pushes your development and stretches your boundaries, or it does not, you have already covered that? If that is the case, then perhaps we need to assess where teachers are at in order to ensure effectiveness of PD opportunities. The "one size fits all" concept does not work with our teachers and so perhaps we need to rethink some models of PD. Perhaps the issue is how we define PD in our professional terminology. Indeed, as you suggested, how do we define "professional" in relation to teachers work? Perhaps workshops or PD sessions like Productive Pedagogies need to be redefined as "information sessions" rather than PD opportunities. Perhaps "professional development," the term and our use of it in the profession needs to have a more specific focus as you suggest on "what teachers do." "What teachers do"—does that mean in the classroom, or does it also include the broader organisational roles that teachers assume?

Thanks again Molly, your stories of experience once again have provided some significant points to consider.

Regards,

Chris.

### **Letter Six: Curriculum Alliance**

Dear Molly,

During the time I spent with you on my research, I was able to attend several professional activities that you said contributed to your professional practice to varying degrees. One of those was the Curriculum Alliance (CA). The conceptual seed for the Curriculum Alliance came from your Apple School experience where you learned a considerable amount about developing integrated units as a means to cover learning outcomes across several key learning areas using a two-year rotational plan. The establishment of the Curriculum Alliance was a result of what you referred to as “a dripping tap.” You added: “I talked about it when we came back from that thing [the Apple School]. I can remember coming back from the Apple thing saying, ‘This is what we should do. They had this two-year thing.’”

Since then you have continued to refer to that model of planning for the senior school to enable you to plan and prepare work more efficiently using the skills of the teachers available. You thought collaborative processes would eventually reduce the amount of energy you had to put into planning and preparation to meet learning outcomes in the new syllabus documents.

Combined with this was the frustration you shared with Toni about your students having to repeat units of work once they reached high school. This inspired you to use the impetus of the general systemic middle schooling push to get something happening in your school area:

*So we came up with the idea, you know, ‘Let’s save ourselves. Let’s try and design it.’ And then of course all of the Outcome things, and New Basics with the Rich Tasks and everything, and that leant itself to the integrated units that we do anyway.*

You were able to work with Adam who convinced other principals in the area to utilise funding usually allocated to an educational advisor to pay for the establishment of the Curriculum Alliance. The funds were channelled towards providing an opportunity for Year 7 teachers from five primary schools, the teacher from the Environmental Education centre and two high school teachers to meet and prepare a common curriculum plan that all of the participating schools would use. This would enable teachers in the High School to know what students had covered in their final two years at primary school and assist in reducing replication of work at the high school level. It would also enable interaction across primary schools in various curriculum activities.

Both you and Toni were involved in the Curriculum Alliance (CA) that met on six days throughout the year. I attended five of those days as my research began after the initial CA meeting had been held. I spoke with you about the processes you were using in the meetings and how you responded to this professional activity/opportunity. I interviewed both of you together at lunch time or following the conclusion of the day and recorded your responses. The venue of the Curriculum Alliance meetings changed after the first three meetings from the district's Learning Development Centre to the library at Greenway. This move, you told me later, occurred because you thought you may need to use library resources in your planning. Adam agreed the CA could use Greenway's resources for that purpose. The high school teachers attended two of the days (the second and the third days) in which you all decided the general direction of the curriculum plan you were developing. The teacher librarian from Greenway attended the fourth and fifth CA meetings to provide some insight into the curriculum planning process being implemented at Greenway.

The CA provided you with some valuable opportunities to establish networks and find out how other teachers in the area approached various issues and outcomes in their schools. It also gave you an opportunity to prepare general work plans with others. There was a lot of "cross pollination" of ideas and you seemed to enjoy the opportunity offered to you to gain more

insight into how others do their work. You also became quite frustrated with the process towards the end as it seemed to drag out considerably and you just wanted to get back to your own work and get things done there. Finalising the document started to frustrate you and you began to question whether the process would ever end.

You experienced a number of reactions throughout various stages of the CA process. At the beginning you had a discussion with Toni as to whether the Curriculum Alliance was actually a professional development activity:

Molly: *Well, it wasn't really a professional development day*

Toni: *Well it is.*

Molly: *Well it is, but like, not like we're learning about something, even though we're going through a process, but we're developing something for use in our school system, which will help us.*

Toni: *So rather than a professional development for us, which it will be a little bit, it will be professional development for other teachers. We're setting that up for them really.*

Molly: *But I actually found like, you know I've got some links to. Like I talked to Joan Road [High school teacher] And you know like, they're writing their Arts program this year for the middle school and so you know Greenway has to have theirs written by the end of this year and I'm part of that. So you've got links to people with expertise, people that are going to help you. That's what I find being one of the biggest things for me today is knowing that I'm going to be able to have some help later on in the year to do something that I have to do and that comes through their knowledge. So there's a bit of professional development there.*

So it appears a part of professional development for you also involves opportunities to establish networks with people who can provide you with appropriate professional knowledge when you know you will need it. The Curriculum Alliance provided you with that opportunity whilst you were working towards developing a useful planning document for yourself and other teachers.

The process involved in the Curriculum Alliance was not predefined. In fact it evolved as you all worked through a number of documents including syllabus documents, the elaborations, source books and other departmental guidelines. I commented about your ability to flip between multiple texts to create another text, one, as you said, "that is going to be of more use to you."



This skill is something you have developed through your teaching experience and as a result of reflecting on your planning practices and the requirements of the system you are working in.

You put it like this:

*Ah, I think it's got a lot to do with the way you think because I know like, this is only my fifth year teaching, but straight away from teacher's college with not that much scaffolding you know, with regard planning and what you have to teach, integrated units and working, within and joining them together, merging them, was natural. It was a thing that I just naturally did. It wasn't something that somebody said, 'Go out and do it.' It was like 'Oh, I can't do all of this, unless I do this.' But this is real easy for me.*

The Curriculum Alliance enabled you to interact with others who used similar planning processes to develop a useful document for yourselves and other teachers; to prepare a scaffold or skeleton curriculum structure for the upper primary schools in the district. However, you were initially a bit concerned about such a large group of teachers working together. Your experience at Greenway where you, Toni and the teacher-librarian worked well together to formulate exciting and effective units of work was something you knew worked well. But, you were “really worried about doing this” with a larger group of teachers because you thought “you’d have to compromise too much and you’d be maybe left with things you weren’t too happy with.” Some of those reservations were fed by another teacher’s story at school in which she had to work with a group to develop an English programme for the district. She said ‘there are still people I won’t speak to after that.’ Your fears, however, did not come to fruition, and the members of the CA worked well. The reason for the success, you believe, was:

*because we've all listened to one another, and I think, well it's been working over a few times. Like, we've taken our time, there's been a lot of discussion, people listen to one another and you take into consideration, you know that your way is not the only way and you've got to sort of have that frame, don't you, before you start.*

Toni mentioned another contributing factor to the success of the CA was that the idea did not come “from the top down. It really started from the work that we were doing.” You agreed adding, “It’s something that we want to do. We can see the value in it.”

Even though the CA process was developing a plan you had all generated as a group of teachers, you were still conscious of the fact that Adam, who had ensured the funding for the alliance and who was reporting back to the principal's association about the progress of the group, was still "present" in the process. You said:

*he still speaks, he reads over our notes. He still says, like, I had this 'boys thing' in my ear; you know 'make sure that this is all not too feminine, what you're coming up with. Make sure you have provided these things.' He's still having an input and I tell you we'd still be doing this, whether or not we'd be doing it as an alliance, we would still be doing this. And like I said, we've got to start this term one next year. Year 6 and 7 will be starting this program so, for us, it's our school, that's the way our school's going, it's a district and it serves Greenway.*

The end product of the CA and its implementation at Greenway also presented you with some professional dilemmas regarding other teachers who would be required to implement the document in Greenway. In particular, one Year 6 teacher was presenting you and Toni with some challenges. I had asked you "How do you reckon your Year 6 teachers will come on board with it?" Both you and Toni looked at each other and almost provided a united groan. Neither Toni nor you wanted to elaborate, especially while a tape recorder was running. This was the discussion that followed:

Chris: *O.K. so there are challenges there?*

Toni: *At this point in time there are big challenges there.*

Chris: *So that's the grief that you're experiencing?*

Molly: *They, but they will go away, I can tell you that.*

Chris: *The issues will go away, or the people will go away, or both?*

Molly: *The people will go away... It won't be a problem. It won't be a problem.*

Chris: *It won't be a problem next year?*

Molly: *It's a problem this year; it won't be a problem next year.*

Toni: *We hope.*

Molly: *It won't.*

You were confident the support for this project and its implementation in your school was so strong that barriers to cooperative planning and collaborative work practices would be

addressed, including resistance by other teachers on staff. This is probably best demonstrated by this section of our interview:

Toni: *And if we had four good, and like you say actually, you're right, we will have four decent teachers*

Molly (interjecting): *We will.*

Toni: *to work with next year because, well we will.*

Molly: *Yeah, we will.*

Chris: *Is this positive thinking, or have you organised that?*

Toni: *It will be organised.*

Molly: *It will be organised.*

Chris: *You're pretty powerful ladies aren't you?*

Molly: *Yes!*

Toni: *Well, we know, we know Adam.*

Chris: *Well, he shares this vision as well doesn't he?*

Molly: *Exactly.*

Toni: *Exactly right.*

Molly: *He wants this to work, and this is it. And if we want this to work, we need four, not three and one contentious one, not two and two that are against you, we need four that are for it.*

Toni: *Or two that are wanting to work hard and two that are wanting to be laid back, or anything like that, you need four motivated.*

Molly: *Our school does need four and if he wants it to work, he's got to try very hard to find the four and that's his dilemma.*

Chris: *So what you're saying then is that*

Molly (interjecting): *the team is important,*

Chris: *yeah, and the composition of that team is extremely important to the success of this development, for the kids, for the school and*

Molly: *In our situation, but in others it will be simpler because there's only one*

Toni: *or two*

Chris: *So this whole concept, and correct me if I'm wrong, originated from an idea of getting the district working in a similar direction, and your focus is making it work in Greenway.*

Molly and Toni: *hmm*

If Adam was the one at Greenway who would then ensure the successful implementation of the CA product through his staffing arrangements, then, I asked, what would make it work across the district? You both indicated the principals were the key to implementation. You said, “like before this started, it started at a principals’ meeting and like we got together, and it was like are we interested enough as a district for this to go ahead, and there were plenty of principals there, but how they’ve chosen to be involved in it is different.” Principals from various schools indicated they would use the curriculum planning document produced, but they could not or would not be sending staff to participate in the CA process. You continued, “so it should have the support out there, and if it doesn’t have the support of all schools, then I don’t care. You know, at least it has the support of the majority.” You added, “And we might have schools that jump in on the first rotation, because you know this is going to take a while, but as they develop their new curriculum plans for their schools, you know they’ve got to take this into account, they’ve got to deal with it.” Toni mentioned the work you were doing was timely because of the departmental push towards curriculum plans. You added:

*Yeah, but it’s been given more value really, because the principal has a purpose, he has something that he has to do [reference to school curriculum plans], he can see that this is the way it can be achieved, so it’s been given value at the next level and he’s probably got his support from the next level above that as well, you know, so, that’s something that we will see.*

Despite the consideration of the powerful role of the principals in each school and its impact on the implementation of the curriculum plan, resistance and reluctant participant teachers who would have to use the document you created was a concern to the group. You considered ways to address this dilemma in the document you were producing. The group process and discussion of ways of approaching this issue boosted your confidence in the professionalism of other practitioners in the district. This was very affirming for you and your own teaching practice.

*Molly: I tell you what, that’s something that I’ve learnt and I’ve learned that today, I didn’t learn it last time we met, or the time before, but I learned today, that there are at least one, two, three, four schools where Year 6, 7 teachers are doing pretty darn good things. I didn’t know that before. I knew that we were doing pretty darn good things, but, listening to some of the things that they’re doing I can see*

*'Oh yeah, you know, you're not the lone ranger here.' There's other good stuff going on.*

Chris: *And does that help you professionally?*

Molly: *Yeah, it does. You know, plus you get to share a little bit and you get their ideas. Yeah.*

On another occasion you spoke again about the importance of sharing ideas and discovering different ways of approaching your work. "There's a lot of stuff that we're learning just by talking to other people and having people there. That's a by-product of the process, a really rich, learning about, you know all those different ways that people see things, different ways that people view things. It's been really good." But, during the fourth CA meeting you started to get tired of the process and the work. It was near the end of term, you were still facing challenges at school with the uncooperative teacher and you had basically had enough. You said, "I just want to get back to my own little world and plan next term I've had enough. I have, I've had enough. The group's great. Everything's working great, but yeah, you just want to get back to the way things, you know, to the everyday, I suppose." You add:

Molly: *When I say I've had enough of this, I think: you've got the two year plan, I would just look forward to now going and developing the next step myself you know, that's where I am. I don't really need to do any more with any one else. OK we've done that, we've provided something now, I'd rather just get on with what's going to work with our classes. I want to get to back to what I can do for me and my class. You just get on with it then, you can just go ahead and write it and think about it and you don't have to ask anybody else really. You just have to run it by Toni.*

Chris: *So it's basically achieved its purpose for you personally, and now you're ready to go on.*

Molly: *Ready to move on and look forward to that. I'm glad we don't have to do integrated units for each and every one of them... mmm. It would probably be really good, but who can afford that time, you know? If they were going to give us a week out of the classroom to get it all done, then that would probably be right. But this every two weeks [referring to CA meetings every two weeks] and it takes you an hour to go back to where we were and what we were thinking about before you can then move on again.*

The whole Curriculum Alliance process took considerably longer than you had anticipated and the slow pace of progress frustrated you, although you acknowledge it was a process you had to go through to achieve your aims. At some stages, classroom pressures and the stresses

associated with getting your every day work done contributed to your frustration because it was taking so long. However, if given an opportunity to repeat the Curriculum Alliance, you would. “I think planning is one of the best parts of teaching sometimes. For me personally, I like to come up with the different ways of doing things, what you’re going to do and then seeing it all evolve, that’s exciting too, working with the kids.” In fact, when I asked whether this could be a model for future projects, you said,

*Definitely, I would like to see it evolve into something. I think it would be good if you had half days where you got to go to [another] State School, and people came here and you checked out each other’s different ideas and then you went back at the end of the first semester, or the first term, you know, the first unit, and shared what you’ve done. Have somehow, building like an intra, inter school you know, thing of resources and sharing. You know: ‘how did it go? What worked for you? What didn’t work for you?’ That sort of thing.*

You identify funding as a major limiting factor in future projects like this. It takes a commitment from the district principals to support the notion and redirect funds to finance the concept. You believe, however, that as a combined force, schools in your district would be more effective in obtaining quality professional development opportunities. “There’s buying power there, you’ve got a connection between schools.” Ultimately, you believe, teachers have to present their ideas to the principals for these sorts of reforms and actions to occur. “But, you’d have to say, you’d push it because that’s what happened here—we pushed it. We said, you know, we need to make Year 8 better for our Year 7 students, how can we do this? Plus they [the high school] had a need to develop their programs, their plans for their things ... so if you’re not saying anything to the boss all the time, nothing is going to change. He’s not going to think of it. He’s got 100 other things.”

The Curriculum Alliance began with teacher-generated concepts (yours and Toni’s) and it coincided with some broader general educational directions being pushed by the education department. Adam saw an opportunity to mesh the concepts and ensured it by convincing other principals to support the concept and fund it from a district perspective. The project was completed and was presented to the educational community in February 2003. You gained

professional benefits from participating in the process, some of which you hadn't anticipated before embarking on the project.

Molly, once again I finish a letter with more questions! It seems that the Curriculum Alliance happened because it provided a solution for several systemic issues in the primary school sector in the district:

- curriculum plans were developed using outcomes based syllabus documents thereby meeting an Education Queensland imperative for principals;
- collaboration across State Primary Schools would potentially ensure some commonality of experience for students feeding into the one State High School thereby addressing some Middle Schooling imperatives;
- common integrated curriculum documents were developed.

It also met some of your own goals for your planning requirements in the Year 6 and 7 classes at Greenway. I wonder now, one year later, if support for some of the interschool activities and professional exchange options that you mentioned and looked forward to came to fruition. Was there continued resourcing of the project to ensure integrity in implementation across the schools? Or, did the CA serve its purpose of meeting the systemic accountability requirements (like producing school curriculum plans) and so resourcing to support continued development of concepts in further educational opportunities and professional exchange of ideas in implementation of the CA ceased to exist? It would have been good to see what your thoughts were 12 months down the track. But, alas, this study has to have parameters drawn somewhere and perhaps I won't be able to find out the answer to these questions. Thanks again, Molly.

Take care,

Chris.

## **Letter Seven: Productive Pedagogies**

Dear Molly,

Another professional development opportunity I was able to share with you was the Productive Pedagogies workshops presented to the staff of Greenway and other State schools over two different student free days. Your response to Productive Pedagogies provided another insight into the way professional development opportunities such as these impact on you.

Initially you were introduced to the concept of Productive Pedagogies by way of some literature you were asked to read before the first student free day seminar. You glanced at that and believed you had a fairly good grasp of the concepts outlined in the document. You were also told about Productive Pedagogies by one of the facilitators who came to the first Curriculum Alliance meeting and urged you all to consider it in your planning processes. The Productive Pedagogies facilitator, Peta, was also a classroom-based teacher who withdrew from the Curriculum Alliance because of the time it would require out of her classroom. She did not want to lose more time with her students.

Peta provided you with an information sheet on the first CA day and you said you looked at it, and at the poster that is up in the staff room, but you “didn’t pay much attention to it, because you looked through it and you said, ‘yeah, well we do that anyway’.” You anticipated that the Productive Pedagogies sessions would affirm your teaching practices:

*I hope it’s going to be alright. But I think it’s going to be a confirmation of a lot of the things that we already do. I really do, looking at it and looking down it, I think, yeah, ‘We do that.’ Some things we don’t do and I’m looking forward to sort of hearing about that, so that will be great, but I think for the most part it will be just another case of just settling in your mind ‘yeah, OK this is what we’re doing. You’re on track.’ I think it will be good. Well, I think that there won’t be too much of a challenge, do you know what I mean? It won’t be a confrontation.*

Before the Productive Pedagogies sessions you expressed some expectations and hopes for the sessions that also indicated your general approach to professional development opportunities that are presented as a seminar on a student free day:



Molly: *I'm hoping it will be good. I hope it will be good. I don't know, maybe, sometimes... I think sometimes, I think with professional development you just need it to cement things in your head, sometimes, and then to challenge you sometimes. You want to be informed a little bit, you want to know that 'oh yeah, maybe I should try that, or maybe I've been forgetting that because I've been too busy concentrating on something else.'* So you always want some knowledge at the end of the day. Whether or not it helps to make your job better, or it informs you or consolidates what you already know, you want something from it. You don't want to sit there, because the worst thing is to sit there and think 'Oh well, I'm not going to use this and I've just wasted a whole day that I could have done all this other stuff with', because time is your big, bloody enemy, you know, you don't have enough of it. And I think it will be pretty good. And you know there'll be a lot of things that you go 'Oh yeah, we do that, yeah, we do that. Oh, I might think about that. Oh we don't really do enough of that.' I think it will be like that for me, but I hope that with all of us going that it might put a few light bulbs on for some others. So I don't know, with us, I think for the two of us it will be a kick in the head and readjust, you know, that sort of a thing.

Chris: *It will be good to see the results afterwards.*

Molly: *Well, I hope it's like that. There's nothing worse than a waste of time.*

Chris: *And that happens?*

Molly: *Yeah, yeah, it does.*

Your response to the two professional development days indicated that you did “get something out of it,” but you were not sure as to how the concepts and material you were presented with would be incorporated into practice at Greenway. You mentioned that the emphasis in your school during Term 3 had changed to curriculum planning and you had to concentrate on completing the Curriculum Alliance work so that the two-year rotational plan could be implemented in the following school year. Productive Pedagogies was pushed to the back as a major consideration in your professional practice. I said to you: “So at the moment you as teachers are grappling with planning for the future, as well as the doing of today, as well as looking at this additional Productive Pedagogies stuff?” To which you responded, “And you see, that's why we haven't really looked at it that much.” So time constraints, other planning pressures and daily teaching activities limited the amount of attention you could direct towards implementation of Productive Pedagogies. Having said that though, you also saw opportunities to implement some aspects into your practice by providing a peer review system using the Productive Pedagogies as a matrix for providing feedback to teachers about their teaching

practice although it is not something that you believe you would use as a scoring device all of the time.

*Molly: You'd do it for prac teachers and you'd do it for each other. It should probably be built in that you at least have one lesson or one thing a year or a term or semester where you do get evaluated like that to just keep you on the right track. I wouldn't worry about somebody doing that for me, I would encourage that. I don't know that anybody else would. But that was.*

*Chris: With a random selection of who would do it or?*

*Molly: Oh, I suppose, although I probably wouldn't like, there would be some people I wouldn't really, but it probably wouldn't worry me. I'm confident enough to do it and it wouldn't worry me I don't think.*

You mentioned what you considered was the underlying concept of Productive Pedagogies: “[it] is not about evaluating each other’s teaching practices, it’s about improving each other’s teaching practices, the recognition of difference, those things, the inclusivity and all of those other things, it’s to get it in your head so that you at least think about it when you’re planning and within your class room practices, you provide it.” I asked whether or not you thought the professional development you received on Productive Pedagogies was successful in conveying that to the teachers who attended. Basically, your answer was “No.” You were looking for specific ways to apply the Productive Pedagogies to your work. You had been asked to bring a unit of work and you thought you would be using that to apply productive pedagogies to your practice. That did not happen and you were disappointed with that. The facilitators showed you a video of several lessons and each table of teachers was asked to code the lessons using the Productive Pedagogies matrix. You did not mind watching the videos because you could use those to compare with strategies you applied in your classroom. However, a specific connection to your own work was not made and you had wanted that opportunity to occur in the workshops:

*Molly: The video showed you, you were looking to see, oh well is it being, is it being, does it have this intellectual quality or whatever here? So you're looking for it and you can say 'Oh well I do that in my classroom,' Or, 'They should have done this, or they should have done that,' thinking about it. But I would have liked to have seen it, I thought they said 'have your unit planned, bring it in and re-evaluate that.' That's what I wanted. I had some units that I'd already done. I brought those things because I thought that was what we were going to be doing. We were going to look at our actual unit, a unit and say well 'how could I improve*

*this to cater for individual difference?’ Or ‘how can I, what activity could I do to ....’ You know?*

Chris: *And that didn’t happen?*

Molly: *No, but you know, you got it in your head a little bit, you got the information, but I didn’t need, I don’t think, I know it explains a little bit what deep understanding looks like, and it showed you what a picture of it. I don’t know if you could see it in the, oh maybe not deep understanding, that’s not a very good one to do but, um, metalanguage, you could hear it in the video. And you know you get more of an idea of it.*

At a later stage when discussing the concept of metalanguage you pointed out what you considered was possibly a successful element of the workshops “But the point is, metalanguage, some people have never heard of it, and at least they got exposed to it. And that’s it isn’t it? That bringing it out there, so that somebody might think about it.” You considered the program was reasonably successful because you now know where to go for more information if you want it. “I know where I can go if I have a problem. That’s, so going over and over those things may have been helpful, but maybe not so much for me.” You said you would have liked it to have been a little bit more like: “Here we go, here’s my planning, how good is it? Where are the holes? Have I done, have I provided the supportive classroom environment? Have I done this, or have this built in? That’s what I would have liked from it.”

The future direction of Productive Pedagogies was also a point of conversation. The implementation of the concept in your school was not something you could foresee in the near future even though there had been some discussion of how it could be used as a peer review system. The possibility existed for it to be used to improve teacher practice:

*I know it’s been mentioned before, bandied about before that we would have other teachers visiting other schools and looking at each, looking at classrooms at work, and things that are good. I wouldn’t mind something like that or, within our own school, setting some sort of system up that as well as handing in our planning every term, which happens once or twice, we usually, as we get busy it falls in a heap, but we do have somebody like the boss sit in on our lessons or we do have somebody else come in and say well, you know, you’re doing this really, really well, um however I noticed that, and it mightn’t have been in this lesson, do you think you’ve done it in other lessons in this unit. You know that sort of application I wouldn’t mind seeing.*

But you qualify that statement: “I feel like at this point in time, our school is going to be just so busy with the planning and the program setting, and then once that’s done, then we might think about delivery.” If the principal decided it was to be a major consideration in the school, then it would happen:

*if there’s a big enough push with Adam, then it will happen. And it could happen with us. It should happen, but who knows because a lot of us are just busy trying to get the doing part done. You need somebody to make you, or to say, ‘right, this week we’re going to take, we’ll provide a bit of non-contact or during whatever’, (no it couldn’t be during non-contact because there would be an uproar): ‘we will come in and sit in on your lessons and we’re going to evaluate you’, and if it’s commitment from them, and it’s done once or twice, then people might start doing it a bit more in their classrooms. And then it’s in place. Toni and I for example, where Toni and I are working together, if I’m taking a lesson, then it could very well mean that she can evaluate me and what we’ve done and that, or we could just be doing it within our own planning time, you know, that sort of thing.*

I asked how you thought other teachers may respond to that concept and you indicated that “there might be some grumbles, there always is. People might be threatened. But I think most would probably think it will be all right and it doesn’t matter really does it? You get told you have to do something, and you have to do it.” But, you think Adam will not go down that track because he is trying to implement the new curriculum planning strategy based on the Chancellor model of developing integrated units to deliver outcomes-based education.

*for the moment, this is enough that we can handle and I think that’s probably it. You’ve got to know when enough is enough. As it is, our job is big enough as it is. He’d be stupid if he put anything else on us, you know he’d be really. But then again, you never know.*

You continued to reflect on this point as you were speaking and identified a number of other issues that could possibly impact on what would happen with Productive Pedagogies in the school. It appeared you were almost thinking aloud about contributing factors that could impact on the decisions regarding implementation of Productive Pedagogies and ramifications and consequences of those implementation strategies:

*I don’t know. Productive Pedagogies. Yeah, I think that was him [Adam] making sure, you know the push came from, that was because he wants more effective teachers. The time that we have in the classroom, we’ve got to be more effective. Our clients are really, we’re dealing with kids that are different abilities, different backgrounds, different, different, different. It’s just all, and you’ve got to, you’ve got to teach better, haven’t you, more effectively, haven’t you. You’ve got to plan better and this is just you know putting something that’s a really good idea, and it’s*

*talking about our teaching practices, it's making them better, so you know. Well, I don't know, I think, we did more talk, we did talk, we have talked heaps on having people come and sending us off to other places, but the reality is that TRS [funding for supply teachers] is pretty non-existent, and you know funding comes into it and all of those sorts of things, and the planning is the big thing. The planning and the program is the big thing that we have to have done, so, that's it. I don't know.*

Later, you again said the imperative in the school at that time was on planning curriculum, not on pedagogic practice. You suggested perhaps it would come later, but the planning and organisational structure had to come first:

*So maybe, slipping in productive pedagogies, if there was emphasis on that, maybe we would become better planners, better teachers, but at the moment the nuts and bolts of our program have to be written, it has to be done, then maybe afterwards when we reflect on it, you can say that we can use things like productive pedagogies. Now what went wrong? Why has it gone wrong? Where did we miss out? What haven't we done? How can we make this better? And then maybe the next, because this is a once up thing, this is our first go at it, maybe after we've trialled it, we then use these things as our indicators of success and we go away and say 'well, let's make the next one better.' 'Let's make sure that we have done all of these things, and maybe it will have a strong role then. You know, but for the moment we've just got to get it out there and done.' You've got to have this plan thing done, I don't know, curriculum plan or whatever it is.*

Molly, I find myself asking “Why?” and “Whose imperative is that?” It seems that once again resourcing opportunities for application and implementation of ways for teachers to enhance pedagogic practice appears to be the major issue—TRS days! There is not enough money to resource it. There is, however, funding for development of school curriculum plans. The focus at Greenway changed during the time of my research from Productive Pedagogies as “the” PD focus to the development of a school curriculum plan. What drove that change? Pressure from Education Queensland? A change in Adam’s perceptions of priorities? Or, was this an opportunity to approach pedagogic practice through addressing planning first? Perhaps the assumption is that a good curriculum plan leads to productive and effective pedagogic practice. Perhaps this story in improving teacher effectiveness as you mentioned in the above quote is happening now, twelve months later, and is unfolding now as the curriculum plan is implemented. If the change in focus to curriculum planning occurred because of an Education Queensland directive to principals, I wonder what would have happened if implementation of Productive Pedagogies had been “the big thing” from Education Queensland. Would it have

received the same support that curriculum planning received? Once again, I ask more questions like: why is the emphasis on production of documentation (curriculum plans) and not on teachers' pedagogic practice in the classroom? Does a good plan mean good teaching practice? Are we resourcing the right things in our schools? What impact does accountability within the broader education system have on teaching practice in the classroom? I know I am not the first to ask these questions and I am limited by the parameters of my research question to address it effectively here, but at times I do find myself wondering about the real needs of students and teachers – where is the emphasis? Perhaps teachers do need to plan well before they teach well, but the danger is, much like the Curriculum Alliance, that once it is on paper and meeting an accountability and audit requirement, it is believed to be happening in the classroom. Is it? Is there follow through to assist teachers in their development of pedagogic practice? Perhaps the introduction of Productive Pedagogies in Queensland could have presented that opportunity for teachers and students. It did not happen in Greenway during the period of my research. Perhaps it is happening now.

Essentially, the Productive Pedagogies workshops were interesting, but you could see no time or opportunity to implement the concepts. As it is, you are constantly thinking about your teaching role. It permeates your life and your teaching style; it even affects the person you think you have become. You mention at times you become fatigued with the notion of constantly “caring” about children and their behaviour. “I don't like that you become this person, this cranky old woman that has to deal with lots of stuff. I don't like that and I feel like I'm changing as a person.” The teaching role, as you see it, requires you to be constantly alert and checking various aspects of student behaviour, including menial and tedious behaviour issues. I asked whether you were cranky with the students or cranky with the situation.

*Not with the kids, I mean not being cranky I mean just being the one that's um being the bloody responsible one all the time you know like 'Tuck your shirt in' That's boring to say that 100 times a day, but 'pick up the rubbish', 'no, you have to be organised', 'stop, think about what you're doing.' All of this mum stuff, all the time I get tired of that. It is constant, and I think it changes who you are, you know?*

You spend most of your day ensuring you abide by your teaching principles of showing students respect and expecting them to respect you and your role:

*It's always been: I've got rules, but I'll work really hard for you and I'll show you respect, but you've got to show me respect. It's always been like that, but you get tired of it. Then you've got to go home and do it with your own kids too. Sometimes as a person you think 'Oh flaming hell! Where's that Molly gone that you used to know, that now you've just about forgotten?' That sort of thing.*

I paraphrased by asking whether you considered that now you have become a full time teacher – at home too. Your response was candid: “Yeah, that’s crappy, Chris.” But, you then acknowledged that even though that part of teaching life is less than desirable, you still enjoyed the challenge of the work and enjoyed using your creativity to engage yourself and the students with whom you work, “it’s very challenging and I don’t like, I wouldn’t really like to let it go.”

Thanks Molly,

Chris.

### **Letter Eight: A Final Reflection**

Dear Molly,

As a final point of discussion in our interviews, I asked whether you believed your participation in this research project had influenced or contributed to your professional development in any way. This was your answer:

*I wonder how I'm helping you, that's how I wonder. Um, I don't know that it's made me examine what I do, that much. I wonder about it, it brings to the... It makes you think a little bit about professional development and you know, what should happen and what shouldn't happen, and maybe gets you to think a little bit about it, but it's really, really out of your control a little bit professional development isn't it? Like the boss, like they offer you things, like I'm, Jane and I are going off to a SOSE thing up on the Tablelands in a couple of weeks time, a few weeks time I think it is. So that was something that they said 'well how about you?' And because it's after Tournament of the Minds, it's after sport, it's after all these things, I said 'Alright then.' And because we are doing a unit on Discovering Democracy and all of that sort of thing, I said 'alright.' But apart from that, it's what's offered at the school, and you might have a bit of influence over it, but it gets taken out of your hands a little bit, so, yeah, you've just got to go with it and if the opportunity comes up for doing things like evaluating our teaching practices, you know, using our Productive Pedagogies things, if that comes up, then that will be good but, I don't know that I've thought too much about it because there are too many other things that I have to think about. But it's good that it [the research]*

*does bring it, anything that brings it to the front of your mind and makes you examine yourself a little bit is worthwhile, so, if nothing else, it does that.*

*Every now and then I reflect on what's happening and what's doing, and I just don't move to the next thing and I can thank you for that, because we have to think about it. And we've been discussing things, and that's good, you know it helps you sort through some stuff, but, um, there's not enough time to it. But we're not at uni are we? We're working with specific kids.*

Molly, your story indicates to me that whilst you encounter professional challenges and difficulties you choose to practice your teaching the way you do so that you can achieve your learning objectives with the students whilst at the same time maintaining your own interest and creativity in providing an effective learning environment for your students. This means you will pursue professional development opportunities when and where you can and will mould those to fit in with your capabilities at the time, if you have the time to reflect and apply them. You use your colleagues, family and friends as sources of professional growth and discussion and you value the partnerships you have formed professionally. Formal professional development activities appear to provide you with opportunities to select aspects to incorporate in your practice and whether or not you choose to implement them then and there depends on various factors including your current workload, preparation for the future and the opportunity you have to apply the concepts to your work. If the opportunity and time is not there for you to reflect and apply it, you won't take it on immediately. Perhaps opportunities to formally discuss issues with colleagues such as your co-teacher in the CA process have provided you with a reflective opportunity that you see as professionally valuable.

Molly, thank you for providing me with some insight into your professional practice and the way that you construct and use your professional development opportunities. Your honesty is appreciated.

Regards and take good care,

Chris.



## CHAPTER 8: THE TONI LETTERS

### Letter One: A Letter of Introduction

Dear Toni,

These letters are based on your accounts of PD experiences (both recent and past) that you shared with me during my research. The letters provide a story of you as I have come to see it through eight interviews (six of which included Molly) and the time I spent with you in professional development sessions during the course of my research. Essentially this text is co-constructed because, although I fashion the story and construct the text, the stories of experience and content are yours.

Writing these letters to you has confounded me somewhat. If I were to present your experiences as a linear and chronological account I know I would oversimplify and undermine the richness of your frequent vacillations between past and present experience as you discussed your own professional growth and observations you have made regarding the professional development of teachers. Consequently, I've structured these letters in what could probably be termed more of a patchwork of topics. Like a patchwork there are similar themes and threads that recur and unite each patch. Having said that though, I need to begin your story somewhere, and perhaps the best place to start this letter about you is to reflect on your entry into the teaching world.

You entered Teacher's College straight after high school. You were not aware of many career options considered appropriate for females. A couple of young teachers college students addressed your senior class about their experiences and, consequently, you decided teaching would not be a "bad option" to pursue. You obtained a scholarship to attend Townsville Teacher's College and enjoyed your time there knowing you did not have to work too hard because you were guaranteed employment on completion of your studies. However, not everything was a wonderful experience. Your teaching practicum during your second year was not enjoyable. You recall saying:

*'No, I'm not going to do this. I'm quitting this.' But I had a couple of friends that were teachers already and they said, 'No, no, no. It's different when you start teaching. No, no. Stick with it. Stick with it.' Obviously I was very malleable 'Yeah, all right. I'll stick with it.' And I did and, um, probably by third year I was starting to realise 'Yeah, this is probably what I want to do.'*

Because your elder daughter is now selecting her career pathway, you reflect on your own career decisions and wonder what you would have done if more options had been available to you. Your daughter, after having discussed studying medicine, recently mentioned teaching as a career choice. You demonstrated your response with aggressive negative head shaking saying "Ohhhhhhhh!" but you qualified your response with this remark: "But no, of the two, I think I would probably prefer her to go into teaching rather than into medicine. I know she might possibly make more money in medicine, but you need a life."

Even though you compare yourself to Molly, saying you "didn't have as exciting a life," your experiences in education have been varied. They include working at a two teacher school, returning to your home town to teach, completing a Bachelors degree in Education, spending time in New York State while your husband taught there, returning to work in Australia after taking leave for child rearing responsibilities, being a supply teacher, becoming an educational advisor at the Local School Support Centre in Maths education for three years, completing a Masters degree in Maths education while still working, then returning to the primary school sector as a full time classroom teacher. Since returning to classroom teaching at Greenway in 1998, you have also undertaken the role of acting deputy principal for almost a year. You are now back in a predominantly teaching role, but you have other professional development responsibilities within the school that have reduced your face to face time with your Year 7 class from five to four days per week. Your time at Greenway is the longest you have spent in one school.

You have many and varied points of reference in your professional experience and you frequently referred to them in discussions, not just with me as a researcher, but also with your less experienced, but highly valued, teaching colleagues, in particular, Molly. Your discussions were characterised by a frequent interplay between your past and current educational experiences. Your reflective, yet constructive approach informs your insight into the profession and helps you formulate ideas for your own future career directions. This is especially noticeable when you discuss your professional development opportunities.

In writing these letters to you I found myself experimenting and changing the structure several times to fit your story and the way in which you related your experiences. You constantly referred to past and present events, linking them in your discussions with future professional areas of work in which you would like to become involved. Your parameters of discussion were not confined to life at Greenway. My challenge then was structuring your story in such a way that the richness of your experiences was not diminished by a structure that oversimplified the factors impacting on you and your professional development. This was challenging because writing can be such a linear and singularly focussed phenomena. I wonder if that complexity mirrors the complexity of the true nature of professional development—it is not linear, nor is it sequential. At least, your story and experiences demonstrate that.

Take care,

Chris.

### **Letter two: Life, Career and Professional Development**

Dear Toni,

In our interviews and in staffroom conversations you noted your professional development and career progression had been influenced considerably by your biographical context (i.e. , your personal, family and life experiences). Being a parent significantly affects your teaching ensuring a greater commitment to, and a better understanding of educational standards you expect of others and that you also set yourself as a teacher:

*when I started teaching, I was, you know, no children of my own and I thought I was pretty good you know, I was pretty smart. But I didn't realise, when I compare it to what I'm doing now. I thought I was doing a pretty good job. But, I probably, I probably was. But, now I've got different standards I suppose, I don't know. But, my understanding of the children really wasn't there, when I think back. You didn't really learn at Uni and it wasn't until when I had kids and when I went back teaching again that things really clicked into place a lot more and you did become more committed because, what Molly was saying, you're a parent and you've got expectations of a parent and you put those expectations on yourself as a teacher as well.*

Like Molly your family life and values are important in formulating the teacher you have become. You also believe similarities between your and Molly's life (especially your family commitments and responsibilities) have contributed to the development of a strong collegial relationship that works positively for you both professionally and yields effective and good learning opportunities for your students. I will return to this point more when I refer to your collaborative working style and collegial partnership with fellow teachers.

Even though your personal life experiences have contributed substantially to your professional development and your increased understanding of your professional role, taking time off for family responsibilities has impacted on your career progression. You are aware of a professional "glass ceiling" and its effect on the career pathways of many women in the education department. Towards the end of the Curriculum Alliance meetings, you commented that you were mainly a group of women working on the final stages of the project and a group of predominantly male principals would be making the decisions about adopting and implementing the final product:

*Toni: Actually, that's interesting, it's not being presented to principals who are all men, there are principals out there that are women, but it's the big schools, they're men.*

*Chris: The movers and shakers?*

*Toni: Well, they didn't have to bring up children.*

*Chris: OK. Why is that significant?*

Toni: *Because, well, like us we, um we brought up our kids. We had time off to bring up our kids. We couldn't move along in the system whereas the, I think it's happened, I know it's happened, whereas the fellows that have stayed in the system, yes, they might have had a big part in bringing up their children, but they didn't have to give up work to do it.*

Chris: *So that hiccup in our careers means that there are.*

Toni: *That you miss out on opportunities.*

Chris: *You miss out on promotional opportunities?*

Toni: *Oh yes, of course, bloody oath.*

When I re-presented this conversation to you I asked whether you had personal experiences to recount. This was your written response:

*In my first few years I was too young and inexperienced to really notice. If I had REALLY wanted to advance through 'the ranks' I could have, but it would have been to the detriment of family life. I was offered [a principalship] at the end of my EA [Educational Adviser] tenure (that would have been great with two primary aged kids huh!) then a couple of months later, [another school]. Once again conditions did not prevail – young kids, long distance to travel, big hours as a Teaching principal. DP [deputy principal] job was perfect – the girls were older, VERY close to home and it was within a very familiar, well-organised situation. Was then offered six months acting principal at [a closer school]. Thought a bit about that but Cathy (daughter) was going into Year 11 and I felt it wouldn't be a good family thing to have us both so busy so knocked it back.*

*So, in all, perhaps I've been a bit gutless [after further explanation you changed the "gutless" to "reluctant"] in taking up career challenges but I know I'm glad my family has come first. Jack [my husband] had done some acting principal stints and I know from that just how time consuming it is.*

The gaps in your service due to family and child-rearing responsibilities, however, have reinforced your commitment to remaining current and well-informed about technological changes and general trends in the education sector. The diverse career opportunities and professional development experiences you have had have been a result of your proactive approach in identifying and participating in professional development. You have actively pursued extra professional knowledge in the areas of Information Technology (IT) and Maths so that you remain current with developments in the field and within education. You are excited by new developments, especially in IT, and you look for ways to incorporate those in your

classroom. This is not new to you. You provide examples of your approach before your children were born over fifteen years ago:

*We had the first lot of Apple II e computers into [our] school and I straight away had the interest in them, so there was myself and [another teacher], we taught together, and he had the interest in computers too. And he and I were really the only ones who were doing things with them, and let's see, we had one computer in the school and then we ordered another one. When the computer turned up, well, [he] and I were like, it was like Christmas. I still remember us rushing into the office where this thing was and getting it and putting it together and oh, it was so exciting.*

Further reflection led you to add:

*but you know I was doing more things than he was, than him, I would go and, a couple of times I was able to go and borrow four or five computers from [the district education centre] and have a couple of days where we had all of these things happening [in the classroom] and there was hardly anything you could do with computers then and God, I must have been crazy.*

Your interest in technology was sparked. Your family roles changed. In 1987 you resigned because of parenting responsibilities, but you maintained contact through supply teaching work until 1990. In 1991 you spent a year in the US. You returned to supply work in 1992 and secured a 0.5 (part-time) teaching contract for 1993 and a full time contract at another district school in 1994. In 1995 you began a three-year role as an educational advisor in Maths education at the School Support Centre. You returned to a school position at Greenway in 1998 and have been there ever since. Even though it was relatively short, the break in your career for parenting responsibilities impacted greatly on your confidence in your own knowledge requirements as a teacher:

*When I came back I'd had that time out when I felt that I had probably missed out on lots, and I did miss out on a lot of things that were happening and the language with ELA [English Language Arts] and that sort of stuff, but I was lucky in that, I tried to keep my finger in for about two... or, I must be somebody who doesn't like to miss out on things I think, and I did a little bit with Greenway school, I was lucky that I had friends teaching here and they were pretty happy to share stuff with me and tell me what was going on. ... I remember being at [another school] and actually, Mark, my friend Mark was an advisor at [the district educational support unit] then and he was a curriculum advisor and he'd been going around the schools trying to find out what their needs were and I remember a lot of the schools identified as being, um, computers, needing help with computers and I remember sitting down and thinking 'Oh look I just don't know. There's so little I know about computers and I really need help with this.' And it's interesting to look back on that obviously I knew a lot more than a lot of people because I had a*

*computer at home, but I just felt that I didn't know. You know when you were talking about teachers not having confidence; I felt that there must be more that I should know.*

Your pursuit of professional development has largely come from your personal commitment to improving your professional abilities through formal educational programs and through reflections on your experience in the field. You completed a Masters in Education and frequently refer to your previous teaching experience. The connection between theory and practice has become significant for you as you have gained experience and knowledge through your studies and practice. In fact, you are a bit concerned about what could be next:

*I've found but even before I, even before I had the kids I think the more you're teaching, the more committed you probably become to the kids. This is my own experience. When I was at Uni I, um, you're learning things that are a little bit meaningless because then after I'd been teaching for a few years and I did my Bachelor Degree suddenly it was making a lot more sense, and so I went from just being happy with a pass to doing really well. And, um, it's. Yeah, having more meaning. Then after teaching for a while, I became an education advisor so I went into that role of having to provide professional development for other people and once again, you just see that I got lifted again until you get even more committed, then I did my Masters degree because I felt I really needed to know more. And, um, it's just that experience, it just keeps building and building and I'm getting really worried. Let's get out now! How much more can I take on myself?*

Toni, I experience a sense of irony in these comments when I find myself reflecting on my own role in education. Although my career path was different, similar “life issues” have intervened in my career. I recognise and empathise with the feelings of inadequacy in professional knowledge that occur because of a life that is less “professionally active”. Like you, I have sought to fill that gap by accessing other avenues of professional knowledge in order to stay informed and “keep my hand in” while balancing family responsibilities. I grinned when you said “it just keeps building and building and I’m getting really worried.” I remember thinking, “Look at me, the researcher! Here I am doing my PhD research! Look out lady!!!” But perhaps more seriously, I also remember thinking about personal motivation for pursuing greater professional knowledge. Why do I feel an urgency to know more and constantly try to fill my own perceived knowledge deficiency? I need to be honest with myself and perhaps

acknowledge that “fear of failure,” of “being caught out not knowing” is a contributory factor in my personal pursuit of greater professional knowledge. Your story indicates I am not alone.

Thanks, Toni.

Chris.

### **Letter Three: A Point About Time**

Dear Toni,

In general, Education Queensland has given you many professional development opportunities and you appreciate those. You are grateful Education Queensland supported you in your Masters study by providing you time to complete your degree. Once again, you identified an opportunity and pursued it:

*that supportive thing when I think about it, you got me thinking about this professional development, since I've been to Greenway, well, my Masters degree, I was able to do that compliments of the Education Department because ... Maths was one of the focus areas at the time, I was able to do that. You know that was Professional Development that my employers have provided for me and I got one day a fortnight off when I was doing that, to be able to work on that, so I started that. The first year of that was when I was an advisor and the second year I was teaching at Greenway.*

You comment though that it is your personal commitment to improving your professional practice that spurs you to actively pursue professional development opportunities. Arguments about no time to pursue PD do not sit well with you. You acknowledge time management is a challenge and sometimes it is extremely difficult to meet the demands on you because of time limitations and difficulties with non-contact time. However, you also say using the “no time” explanation for not pursuing professional improvement opportunities is also an excuse. You have been given school time to pursue professional development opportunities, it is a matter of using it well.

*You know if you go back to school, you'll find that there will be other teachers that you'll talk to there who'll say they haven't had very much [professional development], but then they haven't put themselves forward and shown the enthusiasm and commitment. Like you said before 'What makes you good teachers? What makes you able to do this?' It's commitment. It's commitment and willingness to say, 'Yeah, we'll give up that time.' Now I heard you talking to a teacher there yesterday, or whenever it was and 'Oh no, there's no time, there's no*



*time.’ You’ve just got to make time. You just have to do it. Sure there isn’t any time, we run around like chooks with our heads cut off and, um, you know you’re supposed to be having non-contact time and specialists coming in and half the time they’re not there and that makes it even worse, but you’re committed*

The major “time issue” for you is not the time you put into extra PD opportunities, but the time it takes you from your class, your frustration with the quality of the supply teachers who replace you and the difficulties in conveying to them the work you want to have covered in your absence. In a journal response to a question about the time you were spending on the curriculum alliance you noted:

*It’s been an interruption to the continuity of my units of work. Even though I’ve probably put in an extra hour or two of prep for the days I’m away to ensure that the necessary work is clearly explained and easily laid out for the TRS, I’ve found that gaps have occurred.*

You provided me with a detailed example of a Maths lesson you had left for a supply teacher. You had to reteach the lesson providing students with another opportunity to construct their understanding of the concept of an area of a circle. You were frustrated because you had thought your instructions and guidelines were clear and fairly obvious. Not only had your time in preparation been wasted, but also two lessons were taken to teach something that should have taken only one.

Your frustrations in this area, however, are not enough to stop you from pursuing opportunities that could be used to help student learning in the classroom at a later date. In a journal response to a question about how the Curriculum Alliance has impacted on your current students, you responded:

*It’s obviously been somewhat confusing for them. The major assignment they had to do this term was pitiful for the majority, on their first attempt. I would have to assume that the fact that I was only with them for three days a week in the three weeks leading up to this had to have had a negative impact (CA days, IT days, and IT workshop in Cairns)*

*Yes, I guess it’s the price you pay and unfortunately it just has to be—otherwise you can’t move forward. The impact wouldn’t have been so hard on others’ classes as they only have the CA to deal with.*

Toni, you acknowledge your desire and eagerness to develop professionally comes at a cost to your students. Your participation in educational activities outside of the classroom impacts on them. But, you choose to continue to be well-informed on educational issues outside of your immediate classroom. The benefits are there for students over a longer period of time and your interest in broader educational issues is sustained. I begin to wonder about the systems that are in place to support both students and teachers while teachers receive or participate in PD activities that take them out of the classroom. It seems you and other teachers, including Molly and Ruby, see opportunities to pursue PD as immediately detrimental to student learning in your class. Is this the case? Is there a way to adequately address that? The answers to those questions are beyond this research, but perhaps it warrants further investigation.

Thanks again, Toni.

Take care,

Chris.

#### **Letter Four: Accepting Multiple Roles (Hats)**

Dear Toni,

You are an extremely busy teacher with a number of roles at Greenway and you have many family commitments. Essentially, the time in your life is consumed by your roles at home and at school. This letter outlines some of your roles at school and addresses how those experiences have impacted on your professional development and practice. The next letter looks more specifically at your role of ICT coordinator and PD provider within the school.

At Greenway, you are not only a Year 7 teacher, but you are also the Maths coordinator, the Information Communications and Technology (ICT) coordinator and ICT professional development expert (one day a week). You are the Sexual Harassment Referral Officer (SHRO) and also a supervising teacher for a fourth year education student from James Cook University. You are a key member of the Curriculum Alliance and are responsible for formatting the

document the group has produced to present to the principals of the district. As I mentioned in an earlier letter, the year before my research project you were the acting deputy principal. These are the roles I know about and the ones you have referred to in our interviews. Apparently you do not mind contributing to the improvement and smooth running of the school community and so you take on roles to assist. The SHRO, for example, was one of those positions you accepted because no-one else was willing to volunteer and your school community required it:

*Toni: I'm a SHRO, I haven't had any training in that, but that was a thing where you're sitting there, no body is, nobody is going to do it, and then, 'It can't be too hard. Yeah, alright.' So yeah, you end up, and that's what's happened with the information technology, that you know you become the IT coordinator and, um, yeah, it does get hard because you've got all these jobs that have to be done in the school and somebody's got to do them and like there are things in the school that I'm not doing which means that you know [you began to laugh] I haven't taken on the English hat, or the Science.*

*Chris: So you're starting to define yourself by what you don't do!*

You reflected on the number of roles you have taken on and looked back at another teaching experience and said, "Thank God I'm not in a two-teacher school anymore. I was in a two-teacher school for a while and oh thank God we didn't have all of these things happening or I would have been just driven around the bend."

You then explained part of the process that draws you into assuming various roles within the school. You mentioned in particular your desire to share positive experiences with other teachers, especially when there are advantages for students:

*You just do it and get interested in it and so then when you're interested in it, you want other people to get interested in it too and you see what, and you see what you're doing with the kids and you want other people to do it, it's with the kids as well.*

Your explanation of your role as supervisor of a pre-service teacher includes a reflection on how you came to have this particular student, but also considers a broader social commitment. You feel you have a responsibility to the educational sector and to society in general:

*Taking on a prac teacher – now that was a case of Adam and myself sitting over there [in the administration building] at the end of last year. He gets this thing from JCU [James Cook University], ‘Oh two, needing to have two supervising teachers, oh. Gee, who are we going to get?’ You know we’re going through trying to organise the classes get new people in. I’m sitting there ‘Not me, not me.’*

*He’s sitting there ‘I wonder who we’ll get.’*

*‘Oh alright.’*

*So yeah, you do get blasted into things a little bit. I don’t know if I’d do it again. I’ve done it before, I’ve done prac teachers before, um, so yeah, and the other thing is too you realise you can’t just. Life doesn’t allow you to just go along and not do your bit you know, if there are teachers there learning to teach, if people didn’t take them on then well, what are we going to do, we aren’t going to have more teachers are we? So, I’ll be the dummy.*

Perhaps you used the word “dummy” because your supervision of a student teacher presented you with some dilemmas in organising your class work, especially in Term 3 when there were many other events happening in your personal life as well as at school. Molly referred to your role as a supervising teacher as something that impeded your collaborative work during Term 3. You acknowledged pre-service teachers “slowed things down” in your classroom. You added, however, that it did give you an opportunity to reflect on your own teaching style and on aspects of teacher education you found interesting. Your pre-service teacher didn’t appear to be aware of many initiatives in Education Queensland such as Productive Pedagogies. She also appeared to lack some conceptual understanding of aspects of teaching in which she had expressed interest. You were very aware of the gap between her professed theory and her teaching practice. This provided you with a reflective opportunity in which you noted the difficulties you have implementing your theory of practice in your teaching context:

*See now, that’s interesting because some of the things that she wrote down in her initial thing, the things that she wanted to get out of her teaching prac, she wanted to look further into Constructivism, and um I found out that she really doesn’t understand what Constructivism is. Because I thought ‘Oh good, oh, she’s done that.’ Because I did a lot of that in my Masters and you try to do it practically all the time, sometimes you don’t do it as well as others, and it is very hard in the classroom because it’s not an ideal situation. You’ve got so many kids in there and you’re trying to get them to playing, doing something with blocks and stuff, but you’ve got limited resources. But ... it was like she had no idea.*

This comment prompted me to ask whether you called yourself a constructivist. You replied with this assessment of the difficulties in implementing your theoretically informed philosophy of practice:

*I try. But it doesn't work a lot of the time. You try, oh yeah, you try really hard, but you've got all those limitations. Like when I was um reading all the theory behind it and all that when I was doing my Masters, you look at it and say 'Oh that is, it's definitely the way to go.' Oh yeah. But then when you try to implement it, that's when you come up with problems. Like the other day I was doing a, getting the kids to learn about volume, the volume of prisms. And so I 'right!' I wanted to use the cubic centimetre the MAB's [Multi-base arithmetic blocks], and 'yeah, well we should have plenty of those.' Well I searched the school and I, you know to do this properly with 33 kids, I would have needed you know, a few hundred of these blocks. I'm probably flat out having a hundred blocks and I had to really scale it down. And you know I was able to have them working in groups, and putting the layers, and building it up and doing all that sort of thing. So they were constructing meaning from it, but, it was hard. Um and you know I think, with the Grade 7s at least, and with that group, they're a bit more switched on and they seemed to get it, but, um, I think in the lower classes they must find that a bit hard.*

Toni, what does this say about implementing theory in practice? Are we able to accommodate and adequately resource teaching practices that are based on alternative theories or models of teaching practice to what traditionally existed in our schools? Is this an issue of cost associated with gradually resourcing new approaches? I did not get to discuss this with you in detail in our interviews. What does this situation and the difficulties your student teacher had in applying constructivist practices in the classroom say about the processes of implementing new teaching practices in schools? Is it a lack of experience in observing, analysing and understanding constructivist practices in the classroom? How do we support and ensure changing practice in student teachers? I am reminded of a conversation with a colleague some time ago, in which we concluded that unless pre-service teachers had a thorough understanding not just of theories of practice, had strategies and methods to implement those theories, they were likely to resort to what they knew and had experienced themselves as students. Perhaps their own learning experiences have more impact on their teaching practice than the theoretical frameworks presented to them at University. Transmission students perhaps become transmission teachers unless they are deliberately shown strategies to overcome those tendencies. That possibility raises similar questions for me in considering the presentation of PD opportunities for teaching

staff. My own experience as PD provider suggests this is one consideration requiring further exploration. But, this is your story. Back to you and your multiple responsibilities.

Your role as the Maths coordinator at Greenway requires extra time not only in organising and identifying resource allocation for Maths, but also in gaining new knowledge about changes in this Key Learning Area and sharing that with your colleagues. During my research, you attended a number of workshops presented in Cairns pertaining to the introduction of the new Maths syllabus documents. Your experience as an Educational Advisor in Maths has helped you with your maths coordination role and you feel quite comfortable in passing on relevant information to your colleagues at school. You still call on some of your Educational Advisor experiences in your current roles of Maths and ICT coordinator and professional development provider at Greenway. In my next letter, Toni, I'll pay more attention to your role as ICT coordinator because that has significant implications for your own professional development and it impacts on the delivery of professional development within the school. I don't have the space in this letter to do that topic justice!!

Take care,

Chris.

#### **Letter Five: ICT Coordinator and PD Provider**

Dear Toni,

Each Friday you work in what is perhaps your biggest and most demanding "extra" role. As Greenway's ICT coordinator and professional development provider, you are required to assist in the maintenance of the Information Technology system and deliver PD for teachers and teacher aides. While you do this, the deputy principal takes your Year 7 class. When you were acting deputy principal the previous year, you and Adam worked out a way to provide some computer technology professional development for teachers—an area of need identified within the staff body. You mentioned how you and Adam had been creative in your use of funding opportunities to ensure this professional support was available to the Greenway staff. Teachers,

you believe, require ongoing support to implement new concepts because “unfortunately teachers are just left hanging so much, they’re given this little bit of help.” The model you and Adam worked out for the school partially addressed the deficiencies you both identified in ICT professional development:

*I was able to do the technology there and in that as part of the DP job, but once again, we weren't really getting professional development for teachers. It would happen every now and then when teachers had a particular problem, a particular thing that they wanted to do, we would try and get it in sometimes. I'm just trying to remember how we did it. There were a couple of days where I was able to relieve teachers, but to get the TRS and to figure that into your budget is really hard. So, this year, when Adam and I were doing the budget at the end of last year, we got a bit of a windfall, there was an amount that came through from the Government that was a little over \$6000 and it was, the proper term for it, it was something to do with, it was supposed to be somehow to 'develop your networking', but we sort of twisted it around, manipulated it that 'Oh that could be providing professional development.' So that's what we decided, that's what we're using. So, for example this Friday, I've got a TRS person coming in and he'll be releasing a Year 1 teacher in the morning and I'll work with her and in the afternoon a Year 3 teacher and then next week, vice versa, the other Grade 1 teacher. I've already gone through last term having all of the teachers out from Grade 4 up to Grade 7 released, um and it's been for various things, it's been to some of them just to help them with their basic computer skills. Some of them it's helping them to build up an intranet site, to get all the links and that for their internet for the kids, as part of their planning. Up in this block we did it as a, once again fitting in, basically it was going to be 'how does the internet fit into your program'? We were a little bit loose with it and we were able to do it as a planning day. Although that fell to pieces, but that's another story. Yeah, so you can be flexible with it, but we had, when Adam first said at the end of last year when we were looking at this budget thing, he was going, well what we can do is have you as 0.3 technology and I straight away I sort of 'Oh, this is going to be really difficult having a day and half off from your kids all the time,' but then when we looked at it a bit closely and looked at all of the things Mark [the deputy principal] had to do, you just couldn't, we couldn't do it. We decided that 0.2, and that's hard.*

During the year each teacher was to be given a release day to work with you in the area of computers and the classroom. You were aware that for many teachers that would not be enough for them to gain the confidence required to implement different strategies in their classroom. This meant that while aspects of the work you have done may be written into the program, they were unlikely to be implemented. “You go away worrying you know that ‘oh well, they’re probably just saying that’, you know that will be written in, but they really won’t do it very well.” The solution you and Adam worked out for Greenway is not enough for what you

believe needs to be done, but it is the best you can organise given the organisational parameters of your school.

Ideally, you would love to see a situation where there are professional support personnel in schools to assist teachers in their planning and implementation of new concepts and strategies, not just in the ICT area:

*There is a place for support teachers. This, at the moment, having one day a week to do the computer, to do the computer stuff, it's a joke, you know, you ... I could see, not as a full time in one school, say a school like Greenway, but oh, it would be so fantastic to be able to do even three days a week, I was going to say two but I don't think that would be enough, to be able to go in, actually be in there with the teachers to have sat down with them with their planning and say 'So, how are we going to integrate computer technology into your plan? All right we're going to do that. OK you're a little bit worried about doing that... well that's fine, I'll do that, I'll come in and I'll work with these kids in that time. Or, we can do stuff together within the classroom.' You need to have that support person in the classroom. Perhaps it is Productive Pedagogy. You need a little more of on-site help.*

You frequently mention funding difficulties in providing support for education initiatives:

“Which ever government is in at the moment, they want us to be the Smart State, but they're not putting the money there.” So, you look for opportunities to mould existing and new funding opportunities to meet the requirements of the school. As acting deputy principal you were involved in budgeting for the overall school programme and as a teacher you are still aware of the processes involved in accessing funding for various projects. This is particularly significant in the area of ICT. You regularly contribute to discussions with the principal and teacher librarian about identifying opportunities for staff and the school. This is an additional pressure for you:

*You just get so much pressure. Now we've got the ICT coming through, the information communications technology and this whole funding thing where, you know, it's a real dogfight. You've got to, the money is there, but the school is going to have to apply for this money, 'What are we doing? What's our initiative going to be? What innovations are we making in this computer technology so we're going to get our big enough slice of the pie?' Like I said to Jane, you know, coming from a big family well, you don't risk it, it's 'Oh I've got to get my biggest slice of this pie. I'm not going to sit back.' And you know you want to 'what can I do to get the biggest pie?' And it's really hard because you've got to get around to getting time to sitting down and thinking 'All right where can we take the school for this? What's the best track that we can go on for this?' And you know trying to get the teachers; you know the teachers are 'What am I going to do? Think Productive*



*Pedagogies. We've got to think about integrated units. It's hard.' So we've got, we've got that that's pressuring us with computers at the moment, plus all of the keeping things up and running, pressure.*

You know the current ICT work you are doing is valuable and potential exists to make it more effective for teachers and students. However, your role also includes maintenance of the computers throughout the school.

*I don't know. I just wish I had more time to do it. One day a week to do everything, but just the computer stuff. I get one day a week and I'm trying to do the professional development for the teachers, just helping them to, um, the curriculum aspects of working the computers into their program, but then there's all the other stuff to do. Like keeping the computers up and running. That's a part of it too. Even though I've got, there are three of us that actually work on that, Jane, the teacher librarian, Adam and myself, but none of us really seem to have enough time to do it and we're each doing little bits at a time so it ends up being like (sigh). Jane and I especially find you know she'll say to me 'Did you do such and such? Have you done that yet?'*

*'No'*

*'Oh, then I'll do that then but I haven't had time to.' Because you know you just are not getting time to do all the things. It's just hit and miss and not knowing what the other one's done so that makes it really hard. I'd like to see, um, I think, [another school] I think, they've got the situation where they have a librarian, I think, 0.5; ... 0.5 librarian and 0.5 technology and I think that makes it a lot easier.*

You are not just providing ICT instruction and assistance to teachers, but also to teacher aides with whom you really enjoy working and have ever since you were an Educational Advisor. They seem to have a hunger for knowledge and information that makes them easy to work with.

*It's because they really don't get much professional development and they, they do often feel undervalued, and to get the recognition that 'Oh we are worth while, having professional development provided for us.' They are so appreciative of it, so appreciative. They're such hard workers.*

Because of your links with various personnel in a variety of educational support roles across the state, you are at times given opportunities to participate in broader educational projects than those that occur within the school. You have been asked by your friend Mark, a project officer for Access Ed, to be an evaluator of the program intended to develop and implement on-line learning for students in primary schools. This may present your colleagues with an opportunity to provide some extension and support work for students who require additional challenges thus

enhancing student learning and helping teachers improve their practice. But, you are also concerned you have taken on more than you are able to deal with. You are concerned it will become “just another thing” that you add to your list of duties and responsibilities. Once again, ideally, you see yourself in a support role for teachers. Indeed, that could be a career move you would enjoy. But, the department does not offer that opportunity. It does not exist. If you are interested in pursuing these options for enhancing learning (yours and your students’) then, you need to do it as an additional duty to your current teaching role. There is a personal cost for seeking those opportunities for your own professional development, for the school and the students. You explained those concerns in relation to the Access Ed project:

*We’re hoping that Greenway can do some of the trialling, so there’ll be schools who’ll be trialling these learning objects um so that, the way I would see it is perhaps, we might have a group of kids that, we do, we’ve got a group of kids who are very talented, very gifted, and Molly and I try to find ways of extending them right, when we’re doing our units. So, perhaps we could have one of these on-line learning objects that we would say, ‘All right, well, that’s going to be part of your thing, how can we put that into our unit of learning’ and they can do that. Or conversely I might have these groups that are really struggling, these kids that are struggling, that once again we’ll try to cater for, by making things a little bit easier for them, it might be some computer-related thing that they can do which is on-line learning. So that’s why I was keen when Mark said, ‘Well you know, what do you think about doing it?’ I said, ‘Yep. OK.’ Then I think I’ve found out I’ve bitten off more than I can chew. Because now I’ve got to go to this evaluator’s training which is going to mean that as an evaluator I will have to go to some different schools that are trialling it and, um, you know sit with teachers, sit with kids and evaluate what they’re doing. Once again it takes you out of the classroom, but, um, I don’t know, I’ve, after tomorrow I will be starting to think well maybe that will be another avenue for me to go, um, not that I’m, it’s interesting for the stage. It’s not that I’m keen to get out of the classroom. I enjoy doing that. But I’m looking for ... for something else. Something else that’s, I worry about getting into a bit of a glut [sic] and being in a, yeah, down there in a little hollow. But I’m a bit worried that it’s just going to mean ‘No, not something that I can branch out into, but it’s just another added thing’ where, like tomorrow. Here I’ve got a supply teacher coming in. I’ve got to sit down and that day, for me to have that day off tomorrow has required probably, oh probably two or three hours work over and above. Because I’ve written everything out, and I know that a lot of the time you’re going to have that person come in, and I’m silly to have gone and written it out, I’m probably better off giving them pages out of a text book for the kids to sit and do. But I can’t do that, I’ve got a work unit that has to get done. I’ve got the curriculum alliance day that we’re out, so if I decided for every day that I’m out, that’s last week, this week, next week, plus all my Friday’s with Mike, my kids would be. That wouldn’t be a happening thing for them. Then I’ve got to make sure that I’ve got it done and I hope that this teacher actually does it and I think, well, even if they do half of it. So, um, yes. So it better be worth it tomorrow.*

*Chris: Got a lot hanging on it?*

*Toni: Yes, it has. My friendship with Mark. (Laughter)*

As you mentioned, the extra roles you assume in school and the opportunities you take to improve yourself professionally cost your students some consistency and quality in their educational experience. But you try to accommodate the difficulties by being creative and flexible in our teaching program:

*Toni: It's hard to have that day off every week but, um, the way we've done it is, um, we made it on a Friday because that's the least intrusive.*

*Chris: hard from a teaching perspective more than the PD perspective?*

*Toni: Oh yeah. Yeah, it is because, um, you know you're having to, you're losing that bit of continuity. So what we've ended up doing this term, is working a bit better than last term, 'coz we've restructured our Fridays to try and make it where it's not going to matter quite as much, and there's of course, sport on Friday afternoon. So, you know, that was the best day to choose. But, um, having that, and having the curriculum alliance day and having pupil free day and ANZAC day and public holidays, it's just been. They're the things, just about every week this term; I've only been in the class for three days in the week. So that gets hard, and you know, when you've got somebody else coming in to take your class, you've got to have it all prepared for them too, I mean Mark [the deputy principal] is terrific, he'll do whatever I ask him to do with them, but it's hard for him too.*

Although you acknowledge the challenges in balancing a support role in providing professional development to teachers, it is also good to be one of the practicing teachers in the school.

Because you are on staff, teachers can come up to you and ask questions about their efforts to incorporate computers in their programmes when their dilemmas occur.

*Me being on staff is good because as problems come up they can just come and say, 'Oh this is happening,' and I can come and say, 'oh all right, I'll put that down and I can get to that when I possibly can.' I'm there to talk about it with them if they need so, I think if they had somebody who was not in the school, they would be having to wait for that person to come back and that would be, that would be really difficult.*

So, Toni, the venture you and Adam took on in providing support and professional development in ICT at Greenway has come with its share of challenges, not just in organisational issues: choosing the best day, discovering the extent of the maintenance duties, but also regarding your primary role as a teacher. You would like to extend your duties to incorporate more PD provision and collaborative work with staff in order to enhance student learning. But, you have

had to manipulate funding opportunities to provide that. From an organisational perspective, resourcing such a supportive staff development position is difficult. It also puts a strain on your students as you are often out of the classroom obtaining more information and strategies to bring to the school. That in turn provides personal stress for you because of your commitment to provide quality learning opportunities to your students even if you are not present to deliver them. This is quite a balancing act! I wonder how many other teachers in our schools have similar experiences. I also wonder how many stop to analyse the multiple roles they assume, the challenges associated with fulfilling those roles and how they manage them.

Take care,

Chris.

#### **Letter Six: Other Educational Experiences outside the Classroom**

Dear Toni,

Your role as an educational advisor (EA) offered many insights into the world of teaching from the perspective of a professional development provider and gave you an opportunity to see some very good teaching practitioners in your local region. As I mentioned earlier, you still call on those experiences when you talk with other, less experienced colleagues who question their standard and level of performance.

One of your reflections indicated the importance of gaining an understanding of education from what you called a “big picture” perspective. As an Educational Advisor you were able to see and learn more about the policy directions of Education Queensland. You experienced some of the challenges and joys associated in transmitting those to practitioners in the field. The “space” the EA role gave you from teaching gave you an opportunity to participate in education in a very different way and incorporated considerable team work:

*The other thing that I think has really helped me when I was, the big picture, being able to see, to step out of a classroom, from my place in space, see what the big picture is that they're coming from up there, in their little, little office, um to see what is happening all over. Very, very interesting to be able to do that, and you're working in a team there at the support centre, so it's not just, even though I was*

*Maths, you're working with these other people, you have to um present a united sort of a, not a front, that's not the right word, but, you know, you had to make sure that it all sort of gels in together.*

A major component of your EA role included opportunities to network with other practitioners, not just in your district, but also within the state and even on a national level. You presented papers at Maths conferences in Rockhampton, the Gold Coast and Brisbane and went to a Maths conference in Melbourne. You were “able to see what’s going on all over the place.” And every time you went to any sort of professional development like that you thought: “I wish all of the teachers could go to something like this because you get that idea that it’s not just your own little isolated little world.”

“Teacher isolation” recurred several times in our interviews. It concerns you that teachers underestimate their ability and the quality of their work, and you believe that largely stems from the fact they do not get to see or share in the work of others. You claim teachers lack confidence in their own professional abilities and skills and suggest this lack of confidence is a major factor impeding the implementation of new strategies and concepts in education and also limits sharing successful experiences with colleagues:

*Confidence , you know it's like with that Productive Pedagogies it's the confidence to know, and that's what I've found with teachers a lot, and I find myself doing it too, that, um, you'll find teachers are doing really good stuff, but they'll run themselves down 'Oh no, you know that can't be as good as somebody else is doing.'*

As an EA and in your current teaching practice you have found yourself “having to go up and say ‘Hey, it is!’” You continued:

*I found that one of the important things, important aspects of my job was being able to say to teachers 'Hey, yeah, that's something. That's really good.' Um, 'I haven't seen anybody else using that, and look how effective it is!' And 'Can I take that idea and give it to other teachers?' It boosts their confidence up a little bit and they 'Oh, I am doing alright.' I think it's isolation. I don't know.*

You mentioned a self-evaluation and comparative process you believe teachers engage in:

*I think often they'll look at other teachers in the school and it will seem to them that other teachers must be doing better than they are because it might be that another teacher in the school might come over and start doing things very cool and calm alright, comes in saying about 'Look at, Johnny did this wonderful thing.' And meanwhile this teacher has just had a really bad lesson and you go 'Oh, God-wish...' And, um, they don't know until they've actually gone into that classroom, how it's really going.*

Much of this self-judgement and almost comparative process you believe stems from the fact that you think teachers are high achievers. I asked whether you thought teachers were competitive but you answered:

*I think that's all your high achievers. Competitive? Competitive, I think only competitive to the point, not competitive 'I've got to get, I've got to be the best,' but, um, let me think, um, yeah, I suppose they don't want to seem like they're not doing as well as other teachers.*

This process and the complexity of some of the learning tasks students and teachers are engaging in contributes to increased pressure teachers experience:

*Pressure from so many things that they're trying to cover. Hey, there's so many things that you're trying to cover and 'how can I be doing it properly?' But you still have the shock of ... 'AHHHH!' ... Because you've just had this, I mean my afternoon was really full on, the kids were demonstrating all of their contraptions that they did to demonstrate renewable energy ... solar power things happening out there, we had hydro happening out there, we had wind power, then I was doing the, I had a data person there to show them the stuff from the internet that they could [use], and then you've got, the bell goes and you can't switch off and you've got all of these things to do ... and feeling so pressured.*

As acting deputy principal you gained another perspective on teacher isolation. You realised the importance of looking at teachers as individuals operating within a whole school system, teachers as whole people with outside lives and personal issues impacting on their work. The individualised nature of a teacher's work, even though he/she is in a room full of students, can lead to isolation:

*There are so many times you've got to stop yourself from being a very isolated entity in the school. Teachers will tend to do it because you're so busy in doing things, and you don't get time to go and chat with other teachers, you'll only be in your one little area. It's not a socialising thing.*

Your experiences in various levels of education have given you a more general understanding of the profession, but, you acknowledge, being involved in other roles outside of the classroom can

also distance a person from the real issues facing teachers. While you really enjoy the professional development aspect of your work and whilst you have a desire and see a need to do more in that area, you acknowledge that continuing to teach “really keeps your feet on the ground.” You referenced several experiences and ways you were able to stay in touch with teaching.

*One of the things I found when I was an EA ... is the possibility and sometimes the tendency to just move too much away from the chalkface, and you see it happening with, people would come up with these wonderful ideas, but to go and implement them in the classroom, for God's sake. And, even though, and I know that was one thing that I was really aware of the whole time that I was an EA, probably having my husband as a teacher too helped keep my feet on the ground with the difference having my kids in primary school at the time. But, even still it was really hard to keep yourself grounded like that, so you know. And you're going in and you're trying to say to the teachers well 'You know, this is something that you can implement, and this is a good way to implement it.' One of the things I used to do was sometimes actually go in and take the kids ... for example Maths centres, maths task centres and do problem solving so that you're actually demonstrating. ... Yeah, so that you've got ... you are actually doing it and you know that it works. And so, doing this computer stuff, um, I think it really helped last year doing the deputy job because with that I actually had to go and take the younger classes again and that's been a few years since I've taught the younger classes. So now, with um doing the computer work with those teachers, not only have I been able to probably develop a relationship with those teachers on a different level than I was, would have had as class-room teacher, I got to know their problems and that a lot more, which is, um, yeah. It was little scary for myself to see the other side of the fence like that. Um, and then to be able to go in, I hope I've got a little bit more um empathy with them a little bit more understanding of what they're up against, you know in the lower school.*

As an Educational Advisor you encountered some “less than enthusiastic” participants and some challenging times. You identified the best and the worst education personnel with whom you worked:

*The best people that I've worked with, when I've given workshops and things, have been teacher aides. Because they don't come in with these huge expectations and they don't come in with these negative attitudes, they just come in so glad to be able to get some sort of development. They're fantastic. The worst ones to work with have been High School teachers and principals and it's been because they come along I think 'No, I've got these ways of doing things, I don't need to change. What are you going to tell me?' And of course it was worse in the first year when I was an advisor and they were trying to implement Student Performance Standards which were probably the precursor to the outcomes um based education and people were there with a lot of negativity and a lot of negativity was driven through the unions, because the unions were, 'Oh no, you can't be putting too much on our teachers' and 'You can't be doing this and you can't be doing that.'*

You explained your statement about challenging principals and teachers:

*Well, not all principals, but if we were going to have negativity, it would be with some of those people that, and I think that where it stemmed from was lack of confidence. 'Cos they were people who were supposed to you know 'We're in this position now, we [are] supposed to know what we're doing, but 'Ooh Shit I don't.' And so, 'I'm going to be very negative about it, um.' You know. There were a lot of teachers who were really good. But, older teachers more often, they were the ones that were negative because 'I don't want to change, I've been doing this for, this way for so long.' But then you'd get some that were just, probably like the Molly's in the world who were ready to move forward and take it on. And oh marvellous things were done.*

Your account of “audiences” in PD sessions led us to discuss teachers’ behaviour in the Productive Pedagogies workshops we attended. You noted that there are always cynics amongst the crowd and that they are “like the kids in the classroom.” They sit in the back and they “goof off.” Perhaps they behave like this, you say, because they do not get many opportunities to sit with their colleagues in a workshop situation. As an advisor you used to find it hard not to treat them like “they were naughty kids in a classroom.” As well as that, the presenters of workshops such as the Productive Pedagogies are faced with a dilemma because they have so much information to present, and so little time to do it effectively. You used to be “the naughty person down the back,” but you have since decided that if you have given up your time to attend these professional development sessions, then, you want to “get out of it” what you can, you add, “I’ve gotten over that!”

The most memorable and enjoyable experiences for you as an EA were the times when you were the link between isolated practitioners. You visited many small schools that often only had two teachers. One particular teacher in an isolated school was doing some wonderful things in Mathematics and you sourced funding to enable her to attend a state Maths conference to present a paper and share her ideas. This provided you with a great sense of enjoyment and satisfaction because you were able to provide the opportunity for her to share her knowledge and experience with others. You were able to provide the link between teachers.



*A key part of my role was that I was acting as a network for teachers. I was able to, especially with little schools, teachers felt very isolated 'I'm on this island'. You know, they don't have a team to work with. And, I've been in that situation myself. And to be able to say 'Look, see this thing that you're doing, do you mind if I take it and give it to somebody else?' and being asked to share that, or give people you know, names of other contacts. But you don't have so much of that happen now. You still have education advisors a little, depends on the schools, and what they want to do, but, um, I don't know how much. You're not going to get those networks happening so much. That's why this thing is really good, this Curriculum Alliance thing, what we're doing, because you're getting that network thing happening.*

Toni, once again I find your reflections on your varied experiences in education interesting.

Your career pathway does not appear to be typical. You are eager to seek information and participate in broader educational arenas and you are interested in helping teachers develop professionally. You pursue almost every opportunity that you can. Yet you have not followed the traditional promotional pathway of deputy principal to principal. In fact, as you wrote earlier, you have deliberately chosen not to. You allude to a desire to do more co-operative professional work alongside practicing teachers in classroom situations, but there is no recognised role within the department for you to do that. EA positions (perhaps the closest formal position you have had to that role) have changed and after three years you returned to what could have been a more isolated educational practice in the classroom. You have explored and in some cases forged new roles enabling you to work with teachers. You believe the extra costs it puts on you in terms of personal hours spent in extra preparation for your class, is worth it. I find myself resonating with your experience. After having worked with teachers in collaboratively developing teaching strategies and approaches as you have done, I am not sure I could easily step back into a classroom-teaching role. It seems our "system" does not recognise a formal professional role for teachers in supportive, collaborative professional development, particularly in a regional area such as Greenway's. Perhaps those roles do exist and you and I are just uninformed. But if our ignorance is the case, then does not that too make a statement about varied career options for teachers in regional areas within our education system?

Thanks again, Toni,

Chris.

## Letter Seven: Greenway and Collaborative Partnerships

Dear Toni,

You chose to work at Greenway after your EA experience because of all the schools you visited, you saw yourself fitting into that school the best:

*I just always found when I went to Greenway I just really liked, something about it I liked. And I think a lot of it is, um, just consistency; there are programs there that, the expectations of the teachers are really quite clear. ... the behaviour management, the kids you know that, I know that if I'm going to tell the kids to go and put their hats on to go down to the oval, to take something very mild, every other teacher is going to do it .... And, it's just having that, when you know you've got that backup all around you, and you know that you've got these programs and you've got these expectations but, at the same time you've got the flexibility ...*

Much of that consistency comes from the leadership within the school, especially Adam. You work well with Adam and your experience as acting deputy principal in 2001 provided you with an opportunity to view his leadership from a different perspective. You believe he is very clever and that most of the teachers on staff do not get to see that aspect of the man.

*He's amazing. I think a lot of teachers don't see it. We'll be sitting down talking about different things and policies and that that have to be developed in the school and he just, or he'll have gone off overnight and he'll come back and he'll say 'Oh you know.' And he'll reel this stuff off and its just wow, that's you know, really good.*

You acknowledge your “ideals and ... values are probably reflective of Adam’s.” And, although there are many things that he does with which you do not agree, you believe he recognises your efforts in the school and he is a good principal with whom to work. You acknowledge some staff members experience difficulties with Adam’s leadership style and expectations, but you have high regard for him saying he is a “very astute man.”

*It's funny because I know that some teachers get a bit cranky with him, because he's not, until you get to know him, I think he doesn't come across as being a very warm person who will really listen to you, but he is. Um, he just, he, you know when there is something happening he will really listen and he will take it on board and then he'll decide what he's going to do with it. Um, and I think as teachers, if they've got any, they'd have to be pretty stupid to not realise that after awhile, and I think most of the teachers do. It doesn't take them too long to come to terms with the fact that OK, he might be coming down pretty hard on them like with planning and that he does try to run a pretty tight ship, he wants these policies done, and he wants those things done and he wants the other thing done. And then they realise*

*that 'Hey well, yeah, this is pretty important', and 'We're going to get things done a lot better if we do it this way', and so I think that they end up, whether it's grudging or not, they end up with a respect for him. Think that's why we've [Greenway State School] got such a good reputation and um, Yeah, and that's hard because you do, it's hard to get everybody on staff performing at a high sort of level, you know, and we don't have it.*

At this point in your conversation you referred to a challenging situation in the Year 6/Year 7 block that was occurring at that time. You continued,

*I think Adam, he's done a good job with it, he, keeps an eye out on, he really tries to, um, put people in teaching situations where they'd have a mentor, um, this is difficult at the moment because Molly and I are just having a really bad time with a particular person and, um, yeah, OK. We've finished with that one.*

You chose not to discuss your “bad time” in detail, but referred to it as a situation that provided considerable professional challenge because it undermined your trust of a colleague with whom you and Molly were supposed to work quite closely. The situation was a new experience for you and you found it difficult. Adam provided support and encouraged you to continue with your programs and initiatives. Molly assured you that the problem would “go away.” It did, as the teacher concerned sought a transfer to another school at the end of the year.

In our interviews, you frequently referred to your collaborative partnerships with teachers, in particular your teaching relationship with Molly. This is perhaps one of the most effective teaching partnerships you have experienced in your profession. You met Molly, who was a first year teacher when you first came to Greenway, five years ago. You recall you were pleased that your daughter was not going to be in Molly's, a graduate's, class. You soon learned Molly was a very creative and committed teacher and you gained appreciation for the learning opportunities she presented to her students. Now, you are embarrassed by your initial reaction and say, “Fancy having that flash through your mind! ‘How dare you?’ You know, it was just so wrong. But that's just the perception that you have ‘Oh, graduate teacher! Oh! No experience!’ But right from the very beginning she's just been so switched on.” You and Molly have worked together in the senior school for several years now. You remark, “We've

just got closer and closer, because you need to build that up ... I think we just sort of balance each other out.”

As Year 7 teachers you usually plan together and collaboratively teach both classes. Your working relationship gives you considerable professional joy and provides you with a trusted and reliable colleague whom you know is as committed to optimising student learning as you are. Jokingly you say, “She’s not allowed to leave, and I’m not allowed to leave, so we’ll have to find something that we’ll have to work together. I don’t think Adam will let us go.”

I asked what factors contributed to the success of your working relationship. You identified maturity, similarities of background and experience, patience with each other, trust, and a shared understanding of roles and pressures outside of school. You mentioned you are both married with working partners, and are parents of children who are approximately the same age. You are both able to acknowledge the foibles of the other and accommodate those in your working relationship. You both share a similar level of commitment to your students, but more than that, you are able to trust each other professionally and personally.

*I don’t feel that it has ever happened where I just don’t know what she’s on about. I mean sometimes she’ll come in and be tired and cranky, but I do that too, and we just seem to handle that with each other. I think she handles it with me alright (laughter). Because you know, nobody is perfect, and you can’t expect to breeze through every day. And I think too that we are both very willing to support each other in that, if she’s feeling a bit tired or sick or something, hey I’ll take on the load a lot more, and that goes both ways. You know that you can depend on that other person. Depending on them, knowing that, um, knowing that they’re going to take their share of the load in the planning and that. That’s been another thing where we’ve tried to do planning and teaching with other people and you find that you’re just carrying the whole load because, hey, Molly and I have both got pretty forceful personalities we’re pretty out there and so, we’ll just end up ‘oh you know, this person isn’t going to bloody do it.’ So we’ll do it, and they just ‘oh we’ll just cruise.’ And, um, whereas we know that each of us aren’t going to do that.*

Your teaching strengths complement each other. You continue:

*Do all of those things show what makes a partnership? It’s such a combination to be able to rely on somebody, is a big part. I know I can rely on her. Um and that relying on her is in the planning, but it’s personally too. I know that if I’m going to have a bad day, I know that if a parent came in here having some sort of a whinge, I know that I will be able to rely on Molly to back me up. Or, if I was at fault to be*

*able to say, 'Hey, what happened here?' Um, not that that's happened, but you just know that if it did that um she'd be there.*

You discussed other successful partnerships in Greenway, including the Year 1 teachers who are perhaps more conservative in their teaching style than you and Molly, but what they do is great. "They've got a lovely gentle sort of thing happening in their classroom, and they're getting really good results, and it's that teamship again." When you think of other successful teaching partnerships you have seen the one strong element common to all of them is commitment. "You know, you've got that professional commitment, and the consistency and the commitment is probably the greatest thing. But because they were committed, and that's what makes a good teacher I think, if you're committed enough, you've got to do alright."

Take care,

Chris.

### **Letter Eight: Once a Teacher, Always a Learner**

Dear Toni,

Your commitment to teaching and continued professional development and learning came through very strongly throughout our interviews. When discussing your multiple roles during your professional career, I asked what motivated you to do all that you do. This was one of your responses:

*Actually that's an interesting question. I think a number of things, it depends on the situation, but I think, number one, probably the fear of not having enough of the knowledge I need to do these things. Thinking 'Oh my God, there are these new things out there and I've got to do this with the kids and I've got to go and ...' those things.*

I asked you to clarify and expand on what you meant by the phrase "fear of not knowing". You believe you need to have a thorough understanding of what you are teaching to the students in your class—whether the students are children or fellow teachers. You said:

*Yeah, I think you'd be letting the kids down, you know, if you don't go ahead and get the information for yourself and you're out there in front of a class of kids and you're trying to get them to know these things, and you haven't bothered to find out yourself. And I think for, when I did my Masters [as an EA] it was another step*

*where I was supposed to be, it was even worse. (I shouldn't be saying that, I'm using negative language here and I shouldn't use the negative language.) But, the um... the onus is on me there to make sure that I have the knowledge to impart to teachers who are then going to be imparting it to kids and you know, also you've got that fear that 'Oh God, somebody is going to ask me a question that I'm supposed to know the answer...' and I don't know the answer. And that's really silly because you say to kids the whole time, it's getting more important to be able to say to them: 'I don't know all the answers. Where are we going to get them from?' That's happening more and more and with the computer technology I mean that's the sort of thing that, and, doing the sort of thing that Molly and I do with the kids and I think it's founded on the belief that they've just got to be able to go on and do the research themselves, find their answers, I can't do it for them.*

Later in our discussion you added you also pursue professional development opportunities out of interest because of your own love of learning. Pursuing greater knowledge is very important. You need to remain current with changes in content areas and within the profession. When you had time out of work for child rearing responsibilities, you returned feeling you had “probably missed out on lots, and I did miss out on a lot of things that were happening.” You had teaching friends who kept you informed of developments, but you say:

*I must be someone who doesn't like to miss out on things I think. I must have a drive to go finding out these things. I've been doing the same with Excel. I got all these books off Adam to try and um find out a bit more about Excel. I think it's a worry that people are going to find out that you don't know as much as they think you do. (Laughter). Find out that you're a humbug! So, and then you find out because you're really interested in it, then you come along and you come into school and hey, you're the person who's interested, you're the person who's doing things and so suddenly you get this hat.*

Once again the boundaries of personal and professional knowledge and contexts are blurred and overlapping. In this case, your personal interest is likely to lead to the assumption of another role in the school. It seems my modified phrase “Once a teacher, always a learner” applies to you.

Take care, Toni,

Chris

## **Letter Nine: Curriculum Alliance**

Dear Toni,

I apologise if this letter in particular seems lengthy and as though I am stating the obvious, repeating things you already know about the curriculum alliance, but I do need to clarify and accurately portray your experiences of this professional opportunity that you and Molly shared. I find the two perspectives provided by you and Molly interesting because they demonstrate similarities and differences in experience that the same professional activity generated. In particular, I am struck by the importance you place on your prior educational experiences and how you use those in your discussions with Molly.

During my research you were a major participant in the curriculum alliance (CA). You and Molly were chief players in the establishment of the CA by continually mentioning to Adam that you needed to do more for your students once they left Greenway. The lack of consistency across the upper primary school levels in the district meant the high school was often repeating work that you had covered in Year 7 with your students. The CA was a way to work together to inform the high school of what directions Year 7 teachers were taking and it enabled a network and collaborative planning group to be established that would ensure a more cohesive approach to curriculum across the district. Your role in the CA included coordinating venues and refreshments, recording the results and ensuring the formatting of the document the CA produced was effective and able to be understood by the audience for whom it was intended (this included principals—Adam first, and other upper primary school and lower high school teachers—basically, teachers of the middle school years.) I attended six of the seven 2002 CA meetings. At the first CA meeting I attended I noticed you were trying to actively participate in discussions, manipulate various education department texts including syllabus and support documents (elaborations) and record the outcomes of the discussion. You were not very relaxed! I offered to record for you so that you could participate more effectively in the discussion with the other teachers. You acknowledged that actually “freed” you up and enabled you to focus more on the direction of the discussion.

When I presented you with the original version of this letter I asked what impact my recording had on the project. You wrote in response: “It was fantastic having you take over that job. I knew right from the start that it was going to be very difficult trying to do it myself. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” I was pleased I could contribute something and was once again reminded of why I selected narrative inquiry as a method of research and why I offered to help in that way at the CA. But, that is an aside and I shall return to this point later! Back to you and the CA.

You were an active contributor to the process and discussion and you appeared to really enjoy the opportunity to hear a cross section of ideas and perspectives on various teaching issues and educational directions. In our follow up interviews you spoke frequently of the importance of establishing networks with other like-minded teachers. “That’s why this thing is really good, this Curriculum Alliance thing, what we’re doing because you’re getting that network thing happening.” Once again, the Curriculum Alliance reminded you of your Educational Advisor experience and reinforced your belief in the professional quality of many teachers in the district. This was something that you had the opportunity to share with Molly who had not yet experienced such a detailed networking opportunity in her professional life. When Molly questioned whether or not your teaching partnership and the work you were doing in the CA was heading in “the right direction”, you emphatically responded: “But it’s working for us.” Molly was still uncertain: “It’s working for us, but it’s not necessarily **the** best way... you know what I mean?”

“Well, you see, here’s the difference,” you said to me as the researcher. “Where I’ve been able to go and see what other teachers are doing, I’m very confident that it’s the right way because I’ve seen what other people are doing. Molly hasn’t had that ability to go and see.” You then addressed Molly:

*If you were able to go and watch what other teachers are doing, you’d come back and say, ‘Yep, we’re good, we’re on the right track.’ And it’s not surprising that you know*



*like when we presented that stuff to those teachers that day; some of them were just like 'Oh!' Because they haven't taken that step forward.*

Another positive aspect of the CA was the opportunity it provided to rekindle your excitement about work you could cover with students. The CA affirmed you were doing good things in class and it provided you with exciting options to pursue in the future. You also knew there would be a number of like-minded individuals working towards the same goals across the district. These are some of the things you said about the process:

*I think it's just wonderful. I think it's just so good. I think we've got a pretty powerful team here, that we've got people who are so willing to try new things and so willing to share what they've done already, and not feeling threatened to share things. You know that if you're going to say something you're not going to have someone who is going to say 'Oh that's a stupid idea' or 'My idea's better than that.' You know you've not got any of that, you're able to put forward your ideas and you know you're going to get them built on and I think it's just fantastic and it's a pity that more teachers can't ...*

You were reminded of your reactions to other positive professional development opportunities.

You connected those past experiences to your present situation and continued:

*Any time that I go to any sort of professional development in any way I think 'Oh it's such a pity that other teachers can't be involved, especially those teachers who aren't doing this sort of thing.' I'd like them to be able to sit in. Like I think it's been good for Jean Hogan [a teacher from another school] to sit in because she keeps saying 'Oh, I'm no use here, I can't do this' but gee she must be learning a bit from it. It would be interesting to talk to her. Personally, it's probably given me a bit more confidence in the stuff that I've been doing. Um it helps a bit with the trash that Molly and I have been going through in the last couple of weeks, where you're starting to feel like you're blcccchhh, and you um start to feel a bit better about yourself again, like your reaction there 'Oh God I think I'd like to be teaching again.' Yeah, it does, it rejuvenates you in the things because you do these sorts of things and they're exciting and you're getting all these really wonderful ideas and its, and if you had to sit down and do it by yourself, you're not going to come up with all those ideas, yeah, you're going to come up with some of them, but you're never going to come up with them all, like you know the way, even when Molly and I are doing these things, she's already started to come up with ideas for this next term, but then we'll sit down together and I like it when Jane [the teacher-librarian] sits in too because the three of us seem to, like this, because you're suddenly going boom, boom, boom, boom like this you know, you get on that sudden, um,*

Molly interjected: "It's like a connection isn't it, you're connecting?" "Yeah," you replied, "you work off one another. Yeah and there's ideas that are coming out and you've started this and suddenly you've gone from here to here to here and sometimes you come back to that one." "That's what I like about it," added Molly, "yeah, it evolves."

The CA was characterised by an air of cooperation and support. You told the story of a colleague who had worked together with a panel of teachers and had found it a distressing experience. She mentioned there were still people she was not speaking to after that. However, you note, that does not seem to be the case here because of the respect shown for various views, but also, you say, “this is a bit, in a little way its directed from the top down, but it really, when you think about it, it really started by the work that we were doing.” You all see valuable outcomes that will impact directly on your future work. You all share a commitment to the success of the alliance. You are also very aware that your perceived need for the CA parallels a movement in the education department towards integrated curriculum planning and the implementation of outcomes based education in the middle school. You know it has support from the principals in part because of the kudos it will provide the district, and in particular Greenway. You know Adam is using it for those purposes, but you see those as positive forces that have enabled you to achieve positive outcomes for your teaching and your students’ future learning.

*So that’s, knowing Adam, ‘Oh this is putting GREENWAY in the limelight.’ So that’s, I think that’s spurred on Adam, and we’ve been having all these talks ‘Well, you know, what can we do from here?’ So Adam started, he’s the one now in the Principals, pushing the Curriculum Alliance, and he has but also um on the High School level, they had already started wanting to look at Middle Schooling. You know, they could see that the gaps, that you really need to have that link.*

You also mention the District Office representative supports the concept and you are sure he has passed on that message to Adam to encourage the project. You note, however, that the district school community had to support the notion otherwise it would not have begun. The continued success of the project you say will rely on sustained collaborative support across the district. It cannot be tied to one individual. I asked whether sustained implementation was dependent on the personalities in the Curriculum Alliance. You replied:

*Toni: Something like this, yes you do need to have the personalities there, yes you do need to push it, but of course it’s not just one person driving it. If it was say, Greenway and Adam left the scene and we got a different boss who wasn’t interested in all that, Molly and I might just continue with it in our own little way but that would be it. And on the district level it had to take a couple of principals*

*who were really keen to do this to say 'alright, well we're going to put aside the money that is given to us as a district for education advisors. Instead of using that, we are going to use it to relieve these teachers.' And if we hadn't have had that happen, it would have fallen on its face. If all of these teachers here decided 'oh stuff it we've had enough'*

Molly: *'Can't work with that bitch.'* [Interjecting].

Toni: *Yeah, well it could it would fall down.*

I was curious about whether you and/or Molly had perceived a potential problem like that during the project. Molly replied, "Well that was one of the things I was worried about, that it would turn into something 'coz I'm soooo, believe in it, that it would fail because of, you know, who you had to sit down with and." You continued, "And that has happened to us on a school level, where we were going to do some planning and it fell down." You then recounted a story of a primary school in another district where the innovative practices of the school depended on the dynamic principal. You said, "He really pushed it. He was the one that pulled everyone together. You know Adam has been the one here that has really done that." You added, though, that once something was up and running it would/should be a bit easier to keep it going "but I've seen that happen before." Once again you recalled an experience as an Educational Advisor:

*I go back again when I was an advisor. Down in the [neighbouring] area again, they always seem to get things going, but then they fall. Like they had a maths group that were meeting once every couple of weeks and there was some really good stuff happening, all these schools getting together, but then they lost the person who was really the driver of it and it just fell through, and you do need to have somebody who can keep it together.*

You laughingly suggested setting up a committee would be one way to ensure sustainability of the concept you had developed, but Molly added:

*Well, its going to become part of our curriculum plan, so that's where we will be moving anyway, and other schools have to come up with their own curriculum plans and to deal with all these outcomes, and I don't see that, unless it all changes, New Basics falls flat on its face, Outcomes get turfed out, you know this will be the way that you have to more or less go. Yeah. It's more or less the way a school has to go if they want to be smart about it.*

You added, more seriously now:

*Yes, and I think one of the things that will make it work is the fact that for teachers, it's got to be the safer option to go with something like this, especially to begin with, because, especially those teachers who aren't really getting into integrating things. They'll die if they have to do something like this because it's just too much to cover.*

Molly interjected, “and that’s why principals have grabbed it, they’ve said if you can do this that’s great. If we can do this, that’s fantastic.”

Essentially, you believed the document would be successfully implemented because it would assist future teachers in their planning. The CA provided a basic document that incorporated the outcomes of the syllabus documents and integrated them across various subjects in a curriculum framework. You believed its longevity would be assured because it provided strategic assistance to teachers in their planning and preparation of their work plans. It was also a guide that left “scope for other people to do what they wanted with it.” The document was deliberately designed not to be too prescriptive.

The CA meetings began early in 2002 and continued until mid-Term 4 (October). By the third term, enthusiasm in the group seemed to be waning slightly. Molly in particular wanted to get back to her class and “just get on with it.” In the fourth meeting I attended at the Greenway library the teacher librarian from Greenway addressed the group about the curriculum planning process that was occurring in the Year 1 to 5 year levels at Greenway. She spoke of her role facilitating the planning process and the emphasis she had to make on the importance of focussing on student learning outcomes rather than taking a ‘content-based’ approach to curriculum planning. There had been a considerable time lapse between the third and fourth CA meeting and various aspects of the document had to be revisited, including the direction you were intending to head as a group. Not all members of the CA were able to attend, but those who were there chose to continue because you all wanted to “get it done.” The High School members could no longer attend because it was becoming too expensive to cover TRS days from the budgeted funds. You explained:

*Not enough money—it had to be the core group. But it just makes sense to just have it the core group. That was, really disappointing when I found out that they couldn't be here because they've had such valuable input and I was a bit worried about how it would go, but it's been alright.*

The presentation from Jane, the teacher-librarian triggered a number of reflections for you, which you called “a healthy reflection type thing.” You found yourself asking questions, “You know, you’ve got racing through your head, ‘Have we covered those things? Oh God where are we? Do we, you know, have to go and start all this over again?’ Then it’s ‘settle, settle! It’s all right. It’s there’.” The group used the opportunity to clarify the “collective thinking”, question the approach and validate the decisions you had made as a group. As an alliance you countered any concerns Jane raised about your approach with rational discussion and concluded that what you were doing was correct and the middle school direction needed to be slightly different to the lower school approach because you were forming alliances with schools across the district, including the high school. The Greenway model was not right for the purposes of the CA.

In an interview with you and Molly, I mentioned that it appeared to me that the CA had not only developed a document for use, but it had developed a process of planning on a larger scale across the school district. Molly had obviously had enough by this stage and said, “So what, are we going to repeat it? Far out! Don’t suggest it’s going to be repeated. Ohhhh!”

You responded: “I really, I don’t think I had a full concept that it was going to take as long as it has. I knew it was going to be a big job, but.” Again the conversation led to a discussion of teachers having to learn to integrate their planning because there was so much they had to include in their planning, integration was the obvious way to deal with the “extras” put on teachers. The pressure to change and include new things into the curriculum is constant. Again you reflected on your experience and said:

*You think over the years that you’ve been teaching and think about all the different initiatives that have come in that we’ve had to try, right back to when I was first teaching in Townsville ... and there’s always, there rarely seems to be a time where something has been put in place and you can sit back, take a sigh of relief, and just do it.*

This comment prompted Molly to ask, “Are we going to get to the second year of this?” (referring to the implementation of the two-year curriculum plan). You replied, “I keep asking myself and I keep thinking this is looking really good, but hey, a year down the track, are they going to say ‘Oh no, there’s this other way’?”

Having discussed issues of sustainability and implementation, I was curious about what was going to happen to the CA document once it was completed. Both you and Molly said it would be presented to the principals who had sanctioned the process and expenditure of funds on the alliance, but the way it was to be presented to the teachers had not been decided. You said you had expressed your ideas to Adam, but Molly suggested, “We’re just the people who develop it aren’t we?” You responded:

*Yeah, we’re the plebs. I have mentioned that sort of thing to Adam that it needs to be presented to the teachers because ... It will depend on the principals. I just get this feeling that principals will just go back and put it into whatever agenda they wish, but that’s their business, isn’t it. You know, we can’t go worrying about what they do.*

I pursued this issue when I presented my original letters to you seven months later. You wrote as a note on the original text: “Have been proved right!” and “Being ‘stuck’ in your classroom weakens your influence.” You continued:

*Perhaps I’ve become somewhat embittered through experience. But you have to be careful not to too readily dismiss the scope of your influence (squeaky wheel). This group of principals though ... let me just say it dates back to EA times; even though there have been changes in the group, the flavour still seems to remain the same.*

During the CA process though, your concerns were only a premonition.

At the last CA meeting and discussion in 2002, you reflected on the project and ended up comparing it to a movie you had seen years ago. “It’s like ‘The Blob’, you know that movie years ago .... This meteor came and this thing got bigger and bigger, and this is getting bigger and bigger. This is so much bigger than I thought it was going to be.” In answer to the question

“would you do it again?”, you responded, “Yeah, I’d do it again because I think it’s a good thing to do, yeah, and I think it’s been really good having everybody to work with, to see what other people are doing, what other peoples input, it’s been a great thing I think.” One of the advantages of the process was that it forged links with other schools and it broke down the isolationist practice you have seen on an individual and group basis.

*So, basically you’re moving away from that isolation that happens in schools, at the moment you have schools that are very isolated from each other and you have like this school might be saying ‘Oh! We’re doing the very best in this school. No other school could be doing as good as us.’ Or maybe you’ve got the vice versa, um ‘Those schools must be better than mine’ and you don’t know because you’re not working with those other schools, and then you start work with those other schools and you find that ‘Oh yeah, they’re doing the same sort of stuff that we are and they’ve got the same sort of problems that we’ve got.’*

We briefly discussed the possibility of future projects and you suggested, once again, funding was a major issue. You would like to see teachers visiting and working in other teachers’ classrooms to break down the isolation they experience. In many ways, the Curriculum Alliance has fulfilled that purpose and that started because you, as teachers were persistent in asking your principal for something to happen. You were proactive teachers seeking improved processes for yourselves, but primarily for your middle-school students. You took those concerns to your principal and pushed for something to happen.

*He’s got one hundred and one other things to do and he’s got to rely on the people, they have to rely on the people who are actually there doing the teaching to come and say ‘hey this has to happen, that has to happen.’ And unfortunately, a lot of times, those teachers don’t do that, don’t come and say it for whatever reason it is, but a lot of the time it’s because you’re so flat out doing what you’re doing that you’re just trying to get from one day to the other without having to go up and say ‘Well I think I should have a half day where I’ll. Look, I’ll go and organise with Jean, I’ll go and look at her class, and she’ll come and look at mine,’*

Toni, I felt fortunate to be able to share and participate in the Curriculum Alliance project. Like you, I enjoyed experiencing a group of professionals collaborating on the development of an exciting educational concept, not just for you, but for the school district and its students. I wonder about the continued progress and implementation of the plan. Like you, I wonder if other issues beyond your control will impact on its successful implementation. You alluded to that in our follow up meeting seven months later. Once again, the Curriculum Alliance

experience in itself could have warranted a research project of its own. But, I would not have known about it had I not been able to share in some of yours and Molly's professional development experiences. I wonder how many other good things are happening in the profession that go unrecognised or unreported.

Take care,

Chris.

**Letter Ten: The Productive Pedagogies Experience.**

Dear Toni,

During my research we attended a number of formal professional development sessions presenting departmental initiatives. I was able to attend the formal Productive Pedagogies workshops presented to the district schools by two teachers from within the district. This professional development occurred during two sessions on pupil free days, one in May and the other in July. Because these were formal PD sessions, I wanted to gain some insight into your responses about this professional development opportunity presenting a strategic direction from Education Queensland. You sat at the front table during the session and participated in the discussions and activities with Molly, Adam and other teachers from your school.

Essentially, you found the workshop interesting, but not very useful for you and your practice:

*I think [the presenters] have been doing a pretty good job with it. They obviously put a lot of work into it, um. None of it is very uplifting though and I don't find that it's helping me any in the classroom and I'm not sure what could be done differently to make it help me in the classroom but, you know I think we do a lot of that stuff anyway, without. You know we might not sit down and say, 'Alright I'm planning to do some substantive conversation today, or I'm planning to do this particular thing,' you just do it.*

You suggested that perhaps the workshops would be useful for beginning teachers, but then hesitated and added:

*I said 'new teachers coming out,' but a lot of times you know, it's us old teachers and you just get in a glut. I don't know if I'm in a glut. I don't think so... Having someone like Molly to teach with too who's just recently out of Uni, um, brings you*



*up a step, having done the things that I've been doing has kept me from being in a glut.*

You reflected on some older teachers who have not been active in pursuing extended learning opportunities and said:

*I just shudder sometimes, when I think about these teachers that have been the same class at the same school for 50 million two hundred and five thousand years or whatever ... it drives you crazy. Couldn't do it. But I don't know. I'm sure there are ways that I can improve.*

You experienced some frustration with the workshop arising from the loose use of terminology and application of dimensions across the groups of participants. One of the set tasks was to observe a video and rate the teachers in the video on the Productive Pedagogy dimensions. Your group had rated Metalanguage as close to a 5, indicating there were ample examples of metalanguage in the demonstration; another group gave it a rating of 1 arguing there were very few examples of metalanguage in the video demonstration. This caused you some concern:

*And you know some of the things you think 'How could people have thought that?' Some things that we were discussing at the table, you might have variations, you know, a little bit of a variation, or even if it was a big one, once you talk to other people about it, either they change their mind or you change your mind because you discuss it. But there were some that you just couldn't fathom. And I think it is the different directions that people are coming from, ... but they took it totally, a totally different swerve at it and had totally different, different things and it, that's what I said is 'what's the different angle that you're taking?' And, um, yeah, so I don't know what's, whether that served its purpose.*

The variations in interpretations of terminology troubled you. Essentially, you claimed teachers have not had enough opportunity to learn and use terminology correctly:

*I mean because what professional? We haven't had any learning on it! We haven't had any. Nobody, most of the people around, currently in the teaching department, there would be very few people probably, oh few people, the minority, would have done study on things like metalanguage, you'd have a huge group that, you know, this is all new stuff.*

I asked whether Productive Pedagogies was an opportunity to start introducing a language, to which you responded "Oh yes. Yes." The two workshops were the only opportunities you as teachers had to interpret the terminology and apply the coding process mentioned in the Productive Pedagogies seminars. This led me to ask how you felt about the use of coding and

application of the Productive Pedagogies as a technique for guiding your pedagogic practice.

You replied:

*Pretty pathetic. You know, um unless you're all, unless you really, I don't know, you're training couldn't just be little band-aid things. If you really want to get into that, you've got to really be trained in it properly, I would imagine. Just going to try that sort of thing it has to be a fair dinkum, 'Let's do this properly.' That's the problem isn't it with the education department, so many of these things that, um, sure we've got this great idea, what's the cheapest way that we can do it?*

You believed the workshops were ineffective largely because of the nature of the presentation.

You were not blaming the presenters. They were doing the best they could in the circumstances.

Once again, the underlying issue is funding:

*You're trying to take a huge group of people, and that session wasn't the only session, they're trying to present this to different sessions of people, it's happening all over the place, and you've got a variance of ability and such a variance of knowledge of the basics of it. Um, you know there would be people there who would know so much more than I would on all that stuff, because they might have done a bit of study on it, or they've taken a, or taken more time to go and do it already. There would be people who know as much as I do about it, that just haven't done anything. So you've got that, um, cross section and catering for that is just hard in these little bandaid things that they're doing. I think if you were going to do it properly, you would first of all try to find out, even, try to get perhaps 3 different levels of teachers and say 'alright, well, these people are at this stage do the work with them on that.' 'These people at this stage, you know ....' But of course, that's not practical; you know it's not economical.*

You were pleased you were not one of the workshop presenters. You said, “They’ve been given a huge job.” Presenting the Productive Pedagogies workshops was an additional duty for them. They had a very difficult task ahead of them including contending with the “cynics” amongst the audience. Additionally, the presenters had to deal with the timing of the presentations. In the second, July workshop, Greenway staff had just finished an intense morning session with the principal and teacher-librarian discussing and beginning to implement the process of creating integrated curriculum plans across the school, in particular years 1 to 5. A number of teachers, including Molly and Ruby, commented on the difficulty they had in making the transition between topics on that day. You had your pre-service teacher about to begin her block practical experience with you and that was concerning you: “it was the start of her stuff, and she was like, she didn’t have stuff organised like I had hoped that she would.” In addition, you had to

leave early because of personal commitments. You described the second session as one that “was a little bit harder to, hard to have to do.” The day reminded you of your Educational Advisor days and you concluded, “It’s difficult for them because they’ve got such little time to have to, to present it. I’m just glad I’m not in their shoes, I’m glad I’m not having to do it.”

The second day of workshops in July concluded your Productive Pedagogies professional development opportunity, so I asked you where you thought it would go from there. “Oh it’ll be the flavour of the month for a little while and um... Um, it depends, I suppose, on the push it gets from the school.” You explained there are many things that need to be covered at school.

You recalled an experience as acting deputy principal the year before:

*You wanted to prioritise things. You had these things that you wanted to get done, that you’ve got them and you’re working on them. Then something else comes up and then and suddenly you realise that this thing that was such a priority a couple of months ago it’s just taken a back slide and you, yeah, it’s really hard to keep up with it all because you know you just keep getting more stuff, more stuff coming down and, um, really hard to keep up with it.*

You know from personal experience as a teacher, PD provider (EA) and as an acting deputy principal, issues of change and its associated pace, organisational and personnel responses mean that PD issues are complex and interconnected ones with no easy solutions to the challenges presented. Perhaps this excerpt from one of our discussions summarises your thoughts in regard to changes in education, including your own professional development. Ultimately, because of the pace of change, you need to make professional choices to stay sane. However in making those choices, you also need to remember to include the needs of the students. I asked whether at times you found yourself sometimes stepping back and watching it go past. “Yeah, yeah,” you replied:

*If you can, you tend to, you know it’s like when you’re going through your mail ‘Oh, is this important?’ ‘That goes in the bin that goes in the bin.’ ‘Oh, let’s put that down’, ‘I might get to that.’ ‘This is the priority.’ You’re tending to do that with a lot of it. You sit down to do your planning and you try to cater for all of these things that you know you’ve got to prioritise, and then you’ve got to remember you’ve got these kids out there and you’ve got to be thinking well ‘what are their needs?’ Yeah, there’s, ‘These things that I’m trying to push into them are their needs,’ but hey, they’ve got others, other little individual needs as well. Then you start to go around the bend.*

You laughed and added, “Somewhere, I suppose, somewhere down the track you start to pop Valium, but I don’t know about that yet. I’m not at that yet!!”

As I write these letters, Toni, I realise that there is no conclusion to the story of your professional development or experiences of professional development. In many ways, it may feel like this account, these letters, just end. I guess they do! But, the story is continuing, and evolving now even as you read the letters. This type of story does not have a dénouement, a neat ending—surprise or otherwise. It is continuing, and I’ve been privileged not only to record some recounts of your experiences, but also to observe and participate in some of the more recent ones. Thankyou for sharing your experiences and reflections so candidly.

Once again, take care,

Chris.

### **Letter Eleven: A Postscript**

Toni,

I realised after interviewing, transcribing and analysing your data for re-presentation to you in the form of these letters I had forgotten to ask you about the influence, if any, participating in my research project had on you. Thankfully you responded to my written request for more information eight months down the track. You wrote:

- *It made me envious of you! One of the things I got to nudge on as EA and with my Masters was Active Research. I would have liked to have gotten into that with ‘how kids learn/teachers teach.’ One of my lecturers had asked me to be involved with some of her research but she never followed it up (She was in Brisbane—wow, so far away).*
- *Reflection ALWAYS helps!!! Such a ‘structured’ reflection ... even better.*
- *Getting to sound off about or simply discuss what’s going on with your everyday work life to someone who actually listens (and then has to listen again from tapes) is ....*

You did not finish that sentence in your writing. Perhaps you were interrupted again. Whatever the reason, it seems to provide an appropriate open ended conclusion for your story and the research process.

All the best, Toni,

Chris.

## CHAPTER 9: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STORIES, STORIES OF IDENTITY

*Identity is a term that tends to carry a burden of hard reality, something like a rock, a forest, an entity. Being true to this identity, being true to oneself, is often thought to be a virtue. Yet, from the narrative point of view, identities have histories. They are narrative constructions that take shape as life unfolds and that may, as narrative constructions are wont to do, solidify into a fixed entity, an unchanging narrative construction, or they may continue to grow and change. They may even be, indeed, almost certainly are, multiple depending on the life situations in which one finds oneself. ... But ... identities both have origins and change. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999:94-95).*

I began this research journey with the intention of discovering more about teachers' experiences and perceptions of their professional development. I think in some way I had hoped I would find some obvious pointers and common themes that I would be able to proclaim were key to successful PD opportunities. A first reading of the data presented, in some ways, lends itself to analysis addressing issues such as time, relevance of PD, principal's role as key factors to consider in PD. Portions of data could be extracted in order to identify patterns across the three participants and similarities and differences could be used to propose claims about professional development delivery and implementation in primary schools in regional Queensland. Perhaps teachers' notions of issues such as time could be placed on a continuum which would provide a basis to question definitions of "professionalism" and its manifestation in the teaching community. But, such comparisons and analysis, although perhaps valuable in identifying issues of concern for professional teachers, would, I believe, reduce the value of the complexity of experience the stories of Ruby, Molly and Toni offer. Clandinin and Connelly cite Schwab in referring to the phenomenon of de-contextualised theory as a "rhetoric of conclusions" wherein "theoretical knowledge claims [are] uprooted from their origins ... standing in abstract, objective independence" (1995:9). They continue, "This 'theoretical' knowledge is then packaged for teachers in textbooks, curriculum materials, and professional-development workshops" (1995p.9). The "rhetoric of conclusions" is usually de-contextualised and presented as statistics and/or abstract conceptions of what is deemed "best practice" with inherent implications that alternative practices/stories may, in some way, be deficient or morally inappropriate.

Dewey (1938), Clandinin and Connelly (1995; , 2000), Cortazzi (1993), Denzin and Lincoln (1998), and many other educational and social science researchers have demonstrated that reductionist approaches in data analysis are, in many ways, inappropriate and over simplify the complexity of human experience and the role of stories in understanding the human experience in professional contexts. Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) work on teachers' knowledge and experience provides useful descriptors which I intend to use in a discussion of the experiences of Ruby, Toni and Molly as contextualised stories of professional development. This alternative way of reading the data helps preserve the integrity and value of the individual participant's experience in the school context, rather than separating and parsing it.

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe the context of teachers' work as a professional knowledge landscape, "a changing landscape with a history of its own" (p.28). This concept, also identified by Dewey (1938) and Carr, cited in Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) work, recognises that communities have their own life history and stories that are shaped by the people who work and live within those communities. Phillion (1999; , 2002) and Clandinin and Connelly (1995:28) refer to it as a "kind of archaeological site for epistemological and moral reconstructions." They continue: "Thus, it is not only that teachers have a professional life on the professional knowledge landscape. The landscape has a life as well. Teachers who live their lives on the professional knowledge landscape shape the landscape over time and the landscape shapes them" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:28). Newcomers and visitors to the community learn about the landscape, its history and how it has influenced its development.

In this thesis I have intentionally structured the stories of experience to first display some aspects of the professional knowledge landscape as revealed to me through my interviews with Adam, Mark and Jane, and as a result of observations of professional development days I attended and my perceptions of the landscape from the many times I attended Greenway both as a researcher, visitor and parent (Chapter 5). The individual stories of experience of my participants are then set

against this background. They are characters in the Greenway State School scene. These characters highlighted and mentioned many aspects of their own personal and professional biographies that they perceived as influential in their “evolution” to where they were at the time of my interviews and data collection processes. The major common denominator in each teacher’s situated practice and stories of experience was her teaching role at Greenway and her response to the professional knowledge landscape in which she operated. Throughout this study, I have come to realise that the value in this study lies not in pulling apart the experience of the three teachers looking for specific PD answers, but in examining and learning about their experiences within this context of schooling: a context that did not have clearly delineated boundaries, but blurred boundaries in terms of the relationships, values, beliefs and experiences each teacher brought with them and encountered when they entered the Greenway environment. These are stories of the relationships and professional directions they negotiated and managed inside and outside the school including the broader district educational context. Each of the teacher’s stories offers not only considerable value in understanding the professional development processes that they experienced, but also stories of professional identities. Implications of this approach for future professional development within education in Queensland will be discussed in the following chapter.

In order to present an analysis of the negotiated and storied positions of my participants, I need to first outline a few more theoretical terms I will be using to structure my discussion. As previously mentioned, I will draw heavily on the conceptual frameworks and language used in the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995) and Connelly and Clandinin (1999).

Clandinin and Connelly state their area of interest succinctly: “We want to ask the question of how the embodied, narrative, relational knowledge teachers carry autobiographically and by virtue of their formal education shapes, and is shaped by, their professional knowledge context” (1995:3). They provide an analysis of their work over many years by use of the metaphor a



“professional knowledge landscape.” This metaphor enabled them to contextualise the personal practical knowledge which they had been exploring in their previous research. They continue:

*A landscape metaphor is particularly well suited to our purpose. It allows us to talk about space, place, and time. Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things, we see it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:4-5)*

Indeed, they claim “the professional knowledge landscape that teachers inhabit creates epistemological dilemmas that we understand in terms of secret, sacred, and cover stories” (p.4). I propose to discuss the experiences of Ruby, Molly and Toni as revealed through their narrative accounts in these terms.

If there are to be any generalizable lessons from my approach, I hope that they will be that we need to view professional development as an experiential phenomenon that incorporates individual negotiation of professional knowledge and content within a context that includes not just the physical and social dimensions of the context in which individuals operate, but also incorporates temporal notions pertaining to institutional and personal histories and biographies. The data I collected in my research revealed stories of experience that add to the growing body of knowledge and stories that demonstrate the complexity of the professional and personal processes at work within a teacher’s life as a professional in a highly complex work environment. The stories of Ruby, Molly and Toni demonstrate epistemological dilemmas they encountered and ways in which they made sense of and storied those experiences.

Teachers work in essentially “two epistemologically different places on the landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:5). These are the “in-classroom” place and the “out-of-classroom” place. Essentially, the in-classroom place involves the place “behind the classroom door with students” and the out of classroom place, includes “professional places with others” (p.5). “In classroom” dilemmas, cited by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) and researched by Lyons, and

Lampert, and “out-of-classroom” professional dilemmas, cited by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) and researched by Cuban, draw specific attention to the dilemmas teachers experience moving between the two domains of professional practice. Clandinin and Connelly’s focus was to “describe the uneasy state of teachers’ professional lives as part and parcel of moral and epistemological dilemmas associated with living in, and repeatedly crossing back and forth between, two epistemologically different places on the landscape” (1995:5). My interpretation of many of the experiences related to me by Ruby, Molly and Toni as they negotiated the sometimes challenging terrain of the professional knowledge landscape in which they worked reflects this notion of traversing both in-classroom and out-of-classroom domains.

I will draw attention to specific aspects of the participants’ stories that intrigued and puzzled me in my understanding of their professional development that went well beyond the realms of the formal PD opportunities they discussed. I draw attention to what I consider are some significant issues that demonstrate the complexity of the professional development dilemmas that perplex many educationalists at all levels of training and education. In discussing the transition between the in- and out-of-classroom places, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) also identified significant elements that fashioned /formed the professional knowledge landscape. In particular, they refer to “the conduit” and “the funnel” through which broader systemic policies are forced on to the professional knowledge landscape. In the story of Greenway, Jane (the teacher-librarian) provided an overview of the history and changes on the professional knowledge landscape she had witnessed during the various administrative terms of the principals of Greenway school (Chapter 5). She also provided her interpretation of the current landscape under Adam’s reign as principal and her current role in the developing professional knowledge landscape. Jane identified Adam as a key player in creating the landscape and also identified a number of staff who collaborated with him in working towards a particular type of school with particular characteristics, including expectations covering teachers’ planning and pedagogic practice in accordance with selected systemic curriculum reform expectations, “the funnel” and “the conduit” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

Toni and Molly were active players in creating the story and image Adam envisioned and strived to achieve at Greenway. They were given significant professional development time to not only develop the agenda and landscape in Greenway's context, but also help establish the "story" of Greenway's progressive curriculum approaches in the broader school community (through the Curriculum Alliance) and within the Department. Ruby, on the other hand was not an active player in designing or creating the Greenway sacred story, but, like many of the other staff at the student free day, was told what the expectations were and how they would be applied at Greenway and what support they would be given to identify with and start to "own" the story as their own. In Adam's words, if the teachers did not learn to take on the grander narrative of the school—the sacred story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999)—then one likely possibility would be that they would "self select" a way out of the Greenway staff system. The teachers' different stories of experience with the sacred story of Greenway and the possible consequences for the teachers in relation to the sacred stories, I believe, influenced the professional development opportunities and consequently, the PD stories of the three participants in my research. The stories I was told and have relayed in this research text are stories the participants not only tell, but, at the time of my research, also lived by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). They are stories of identity, of who they were on the Greenway professional knowledge landscape.

Before proceeding in my analysis and discussion of each participant, I want to remind myself and you as the reader about some of the key features of my research experience with the participants. Although the material presented in Chapters 5 to 8 are essentially the stories of experience of each participant with some interjections from me, I find myself thinking that at this point in my research journey our stories now begin to become more closely intertwined. Ruby's, Molly's and Toni's stories of experience are becoming my story of my research experience—this is a distinct transition and one I want to draw attention to as a key feature of the research process. This is my reading of Ruby's, Molly's and Toni's experiences. In keeping with a narrative inquiry tradition that includes me as a character in this research story, I have incorporated my responses as a researcher.

## Some Background

When faced with the dilemma of “analysing the data” and making knowledge claims for Chapter 9 of this research text I found myself having to write and rewrite the chapter several times. I had a number of my own epistemological dilemmas to resolve as I continued to develop as a narrative inquirer and as I contemplated the material I was producing and the direction I thought it may lead my readers. I was keenly aware that as a “guide” in this research journey I was at a crossroads in determining how to structure the next part of the tour. In continuing this analogy, I explored some of the possibilities by “scouting” out the potential directions and tracks I could take. A number of times I found I had doubled back on my material and had just rewritten and repeated sections of the material I had presented in Chapters 5 to 8. I was not saying anything new. I found myself bogged down by the options and my desire to stay true to my participants and the methodology I had selected, including some of the fundamental epistemological premises on which I had based my study. At one stage my frustrations led me to consider presenting material in an alternative genre as a possible way of encapsulating my thoughts about the participants’ experiences and my merging research story. I chose to write some poems. In an email explaining my decision to my supervisors I wrote the following:

*I started to ‘play’ with my ideas and writing. I remembered that JoAnn Phillion wrote a poem in her thesis and I was struck at the simplicity of it, and, because it was poetry, the personal nature of it that didn’t have to be ‘justified’ with academic theory. I also want my thesis to incorporate and demonstrate what I am suggesting is a major part of PD—a personal response to situations and shared professional experience, not just a clinical reference to theories and existing literature. Poetry enables the writer to do that. It is not so closely bound by reader’s expectations of what it ‘should’ be. (C. Payard, personal communication, November 16, 2005)*

Subsequently I found a way to restructure and represent this chapter. The poems, however, continue to play an important role in reminding you of the stories of experience of each teacher and in demonstrating some of my responses as a researcher. They are included here as an introduction to my discussion or commentary on each participant’s stories of professional development and appear on a new page to indicate a new reflection on that individual’s experience. The ellipses (...) in the poems represent pauses and moments of reflection.

## *I listen to Ruby ...*

*I hear Ruby,*

*Confounded by her responses;*

*Confused, angered and righteous about systemic injustice and circumstance.*

*Where was her help?*

*How could she develop professional confidence?*

*But ...*

*Caution enters the picture ...*

*Suspend judgement ...*

*What don't I know about her, her story, her experience?*

*How can I adequately and fairly re-present her story?*

*Just tell it as she did!*

*I listen to Ruby ...*

*What can I celebrate and learn from her?*

*She offers:*

*Honesty,*

*Candid responses*

*Willingness to share experience, personal versions of professional difficulty  
and challenges*

*A possible focus on classroom activity and children's learning ...*

*(Why didn't I pursue that?)*

*Oh...Questions????*

*Yet, more ...*

*An opportunity to listen:*

*not just to her stories, but to my ways of listening and thinking.*

*An opportunity to learn about and appreciate professional difference, diversity  
in practice.*

*A new view: the class focussed educationalist? Perhaps ...*

*A teacher overlooked in formal PD offerings? Perhaps ...*

*But, PD takes time and comes at a cost ...*

*'the students miss out ...'*

*'I have to reteach ...'*

*'it's a gamble'*

*'I do that anyway*

*... I think ...'*

*A multifaceted gem ...*

*Balancing family, school, business responsibilities*

*personal feelings of inadequacy and incompetence, yet*

*a dogged determination to persevere ...*

*'Mum taught me not to give up easily?'*

*(Did she say that?)*

*'Stabbed in the back,'*

*'He must be short of friends now!'*

*'Would you want to be a part of it?'*

*'But, it's OK now ...'*

*'Feel sorry for new comers.'*

*Reflect?*

*'Not enough time.'*

*'It was good talking with you ...*

*Makes me think:*

*'Chris is coming today. What shall I say?'*

*Ruby, a multifaceted professional ...*

*Evolving ...*

*Developing ...*

*A story unfolding.*

### **Ruby's Experience: Professional Development, a Commentary**

Phillion (1999; , 2002) in her account of her narrative inquiry and PhD research relates the story of confronting her preconceived notions of multicultural education and multicultural educators.

In her analysis of her own response to Pam, her participant teacher's classroom and professional practice, Phillion identified the source of a major research dilemma. She noted she originally began her research on a quest to identify "Ms Multicultural," a "distillation of everything there is in the literature that affirms the need for more minority teachers in ... school systems"

(2002:112). Phillion continues, "Ms Multicultural not only personified the sacred story from the

literature, she also embodied my ideology, my beliefs, and perhaps most important, my desires. Ms Multicultural had all the attributes I believed were necessary to teach immigrant, ESL, and low socio-economic students, attributes I also thought I had” (p.113).

In many ways my research experience with Ruby was similar to Phillion’s with Pam. I though, was “Ms Professional.” I believed I knew what it took to be a true and good professional based on my reading and experience not just as a student and teacher, but also as a professional development program writer and consultant. A “good professional” was motivated by a desire to continuously move forward finding better ways of teaching and promoting learning. A true professional teacher was so motivated by learning and teaching that he/she would strive to learn more and more about new pedagogic practices and curriculum requirements so that they could be the best teacher they could ever possibly become. A true professional would know how to plan and meet the educational needs of mixed ability students from culturally diverse backgrounds and provide learning opportunities that would not only teach students valuable content, but also inspire them to love learning as I and all good teachers should. A true professional was able to identify learning opportunities, reflect on their own practice and articulate the learning and teaching processes in which they and their students engaged. A true professional constantly sought improvement in his/her own practice and was never content to sit back and claim he/she knew enough. A true professional was easily identifiable both in and out of the classroom.

I think I was looking for examples of the quintessential professional. I hoped and felt that I had a good deal of those attributes, and I was confident I was able to identify them in others. I was “Ms Professional.” I had hoped Ruby was too. She was not. At least, she did not appear to be so in my first interviews.

It is no accident the poem about Ruby begins with my responses to her and her professional stories and experiences. Ruby presented me with the most confusion in analysing and

understanding her experience. During the research/interview process I found her answers often short and perfunctory. She did not elaborate on points, and when pushed to do so, would introduce clichés and rhetoric that I found shallow and hard to interrogate. Initially Ruby's stories confused me because I could not identify the themes of professional practice I thought I should and would be hearing about. Fortunately I decided early in the interview process that I needed to pause to try to make sense of her situation. I had to discipline myself to listen to Ruby and suspend my initial tendency to pass judgement on her professionalism during the interview process—after all, I was not there to judge her professional approach according to my unspoken standards, I was there to hear about her professional development experiences. My listening ability became a key issue. But, what was I listening for?

As the interviews progressed, and Ruby became familiar with me as an interviewer and the research process, and as our relationship developed, she opened up much more. In later interviews I was able to revisit topics in an effort to gain more insight into her perspectives. I was pleased I had forced myself to suspend judgement until I had the opportunity to find out more about her. Because she did not fit my preconceived notion of a “highly professional teacher” I had to reassess and try to understand her experience. Indeed, it was not until I was able to view much of her experience as a dilemma within the professional knowledge landscape that I was able to better negotiate my own way of “dealing with” and understanding the material she presented.

It was probably Ruby's stories and experiences that challenged me the most in considering professional development at Greenway. Her struggles to succeed and “make it” on the Greenway teaching scene, her apparent lack of theoretical comments and deep thinking and application of those concepts in her professional work as she discussed them, highlighted the dilemmas of coming to terms with key aspects of the professional knowledge landscape in which she lived and worked. Ruby's stories and explanations clearly highlighted and demonstrated the existence of cover, sacred and secret stories in her experience at Greenway.



They demonstrated her personal ways of knowing and understanding the dilemmas she faced and they presented some of the ways she was able to deal with and negotiate her ongoing professional role within a strange and problematic setting. Her ways of negotiating the terrain she faced at Greenway were storied in a manner that enabled her to maintain a sense of personal integrity in the face of professional and personal challenge.

In my reading of Ruby's experiences I came to see her not as a trailblazer on the landscape forging ahead with her own predetermined map or direction, but rather as someone who preferred to follow others and be directed by them if it ensured survival. This was particularly the case when it came to negotiating the demands of the conduit and the intrusion of the out-of-classroom professional spaces into her safe in-classroom teaching space.

Ruby's appointment to Greenway was a contentious point and problematic beginning that caused her not only to question the integrity of her previous "boss", but also to re-examine her professional ways of operating in the classroom. The dramatic differences between the Special School and Greenway ensured that her first focus was survival in a classroom of 24 or more students without direct and collaborative support from other professionals to help plan programs and educational directions for her students. She was the sole planner and instigator of educational activities faced with a classroom of able-bodied students with varying ability and backgrounds. She was intimidated by the transition and was further challenged by the edicts of a principal who emphasised planning as a key element of professional success: "Good planning makes good teachers. Good teachers plan well." (The opposite implication is: "Bad planning makes poor teachers. Bad teachers plan poorly.") If Ruby did not plan well, and she was led to believe she was "wanting" in that area of her professional practice, then perhaps she was not a good teacher. Her identity as a good teacher and professional was challenged from the outset.

In essence, Ruby found herself having to negotiate expectations about unfamiliar classroom management and planning processes; assess, understand and work with able-bodied students;

deal with an apparent lack of collaborative planning personnel to address the needs of those students; account for student learning on a State standardised continuum about which she knew very little, and deal with feelings of inadequacy as Adam passed on expectations for improved documentation in her planning. The “beginning teachers” PD programme she attended before starting at Greenway had not provided any insight or help in dealing with these challenges.

Ruby quickly identified the “conduit” of knowledge and policy coming through Adam at Greenway and realised that her perceived success there was highly dependent on proving her capacity as a good planner. Success and acceptance by the “boss” at Greenway meant learning to play the game by his rules. Initially Ruby had difficulty identifying, learning and applying the rules of appropriate lesson planning. The standards Adam required were not only high, but also mysterious. The Greenway sacred story “Good planning makes good teachers. Good teachers plan well” was also a secret story to which only a few were privy. Ruby asked the deputy principal, “Why can’t anyone tell me what they want?” Ruby felt abandoned and had to source help from other colleagues. In addition, Adam’s frequent sudden and unannounced presence in the classroom, added an extra dimension to the “sacredness” of his edicts and his omnipresent nature resulting in Ruby’s secret nickname for him: “CJ” (Creeping Jesus).

Ruby’s focus in the first year of her transition into Greenway was on her “in-classroom” activities and planning. Adam’s practice of frequent, unannounced visits and requests for planning broke down Ruby’s sense of autonomy and comfort in the classroom. The conduit and funnel of expectations from “higher” levels began to impact directly on her teaching practice in her classroom. The experience was not pleasant. It is perhaps not surprising then, that in the rest of her narratives, Ruby remains classroom- and student-focussed in her discussion of professional development that could take her out of the classroom. Adam’s visits had blurred the in- and out-of-classroom boundaries. Formal “out-of-classroom” experiences had failed to help her cope with the in-classroom pressures she was facing. In Ruby’s mind, formal PD sessions should provide material and strategies to help the teacher with in-classroom life. In

particular, she wanted to identify strategies she could apply to her teaching and her students. But, very few PD sessions she attended afforded her those opportunities. PD was a gamble. Experience had shown her it was probably a gamble not worth taking. Even compulsory PD opportunities on student free days often revealed little useful material for her in her classroom. Ruby found the Productive Pedagogies workshop particularly frustrating: “It’s not something new. I think it’s more or less the same as what we’ve been doing anyway. Another day of wasting a pupil-free day.” In fact, the only PD sessions or experiences Ruby had attended in her teaching career at Greenway that had provided her with confidence and specific strategies to implement in her classroom was THRASS (Davies & Ritchie, 1998), a compulsory teaching program the school had determined all teachers at Greenway were to implement.

Ruby’s dilemma where abstract PD concepts lack connection with practical application is not uncommon and is featured in literature as a nexus between theory and practice; for example Schon (Schon, 1983), Clandinin and Connelly (1995) discuss this dilemma.

Throughout the telling of Ruby’s experiences, I was struck not so much by the formal PD opportunities she attended, but perhaps more by the lack of them. Ruby did not proactively seek PD opportunities, nor was she offered them other than the mandatory staff attendances on student free days. At first I saw this as a possible lack of agency and desire to take control of her professional career—Ruby seemed to be reactive rather than proactive and my concept of an agentic teacher was one that identified opportunities to take control of her professional destiny and select the direction in which she wanted to go. Again, I was working from my premise and assumptions that most professional teachers were alert to opportunities, sought them out and actively pursued them as ways to not only improve their practice, but also their professional standing. Ruby, once again, challenged that notion. Rather than forging a trail, she floated along and was moulded by forces over which she had very little, if any, power—her first boss “stabbed her in the back”, Adam seemed unapproachable and would not tell her what he wanted in plain and specific terms. Perhaps the only safe and truly comfortable place she felt was in her

classroom. Perhaps, I began to think, Ruby used “cover stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) for avoiding PD, thus ensuring that she remained “safe” in her classroom space and practice. Cover stories enable “teachers whose stories are marginalised by whatever the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories” (p.3).

Ruby storied her responses to formal PD in several ways, each with common elements, but varying emphases that demonstrate aspects of how she negotiated the professional landscape of Greenway State School and how she storied her professional identity. She told what I call “Safe Place Stories” that indicated places and people with whom she could be and work (sanctuary). Associated with those stories were, what I now call, “communal mantras” or “common chorus” stories of like minded teachers, including the “We already do this” response. She told “stories of collaboration and deceit” in which she identified personnel with whom she could work professionally, and others with whom she pretended to work well. But, above all Ruby told “time and removal stories,” stories that meant PD would take her out of her classroom and away from her students and their core learning–time, the feature of those stories. These stories were articulated clearly and frequently in the research process. I was, however, also aware of “secret stories” Ruby did not share specifically or in any great detail with me, but that, I believe, influenced her professional identity. I will discuss one particular “secret story” at the end of this commentary.

#### *Safe Place Stories—negotiating the social landscape*

Ruby commented on the staff “clique-ness” she encountered on her entry to Greenway State School. Later she mentioned feeling sorry for newcomers to the school because of the clique-ness. They (the staff) were a hard group to break into and she became immediately aware of “in-groups” (such as the “boys club”). She did not want to become a part of “the boys club” though, it was not her thing. Ruby felt like an outsider at the beginning of her career at Greenway. At first, it was only her experienced Year 3 teaching partner, Karen, also new to the school, who provided Ruby with much needed professional and personal support. Later, Ruby

found the deputy, unlike Adam, was approachable. These female colleagues provided refuge and assistance when Ruby was concerned about her capacity to meet the pressures and expectations of her new teaching role. The deputy helped her negotiate her planning dilemmas. Karen helped her collaboratively plan and negotiate the new learning environment, student cohort, curriculum documents and administrative accountability requirements of the State-wide literacy reporting program (the Year 2 NET). It took Ruby a while to find her own comfort zone and friendship group within the staff body.

During my time at Greenway, though, Ruby was clearly accepted by staff. In the one interview we had in the staff room after school, Ruby often drew other teachers who were passing by into the conversation in order to reinforce her points. She enjoyed the chorus of agreement she received from other teachers—she portrayed a sense of belonging, of understanding the culture of the staff and of pride in being able to share aspects of the staffing relationships at Greenway. At the Productive Pedagogies workshop, Ruby sat with and worked with teachers with whom she felt comfortable—the same teachers I had seen her eat lunch with in the staff room. I noticed she deliberately did not sit with Toni, Molly and Adam at their table. Later, she mentioned conversations she had had with other teachers about Productive Pedagogies and the content of the two workshops. They agreed it was all a “revisit of what we did at Uni.” There was a commonality of experience and interpretation of the PD experience amongst those teachers. She had found security and like-minded “travellers” on the landscape.

#### *Communal Mantras/Common Choruses—Cover Stories in the Profession*

Not only was there a commonality of experience among the teachers Ruby associated with at PD opportunities, but there was also a common language that some teachers used when discussing implications of PD. (Indeed, in all honesty, I remember using the same phrases both as a way of affirming my own professional capacity as well as a way of avoiding having to adapt my behaviour). Molly used some of these phrases too, and like most effective cover stories, there is enough truth in them to make them credible:

“We’ve done this all before,”

“It’s reinventing the wheel,”

“We do this already,”

“It’s no different to what they taught us at Uni.”

Ruby remarked after the first Productive Pedagogies workshop that she “already did that” in her classroom practice. I found Ruby’s response an interesting contrast to the results of the QSRLS (Land, 2001) study indicating few teachers incorporated all of the productive pedagogy principles in their practice. But, during the lunch break and after the workshop, I had heard a number of other teachers use the same phrase while reflecting on the workshop material. I was intrigued by this notion that they “already did this” and began to quiz Ruby about what she did and how it reflected the productive pedagogy principles. What intrigued me the most was that she had told me she had not had time to read the material outlining the concepts before the workshop, and I knew the workshop had only provided a very brief and cursory glance at the concepts, yet she knew enough to know she “already did it.”

I need to note that perhaps my personal frustration and dissatisfaction with the workshop was highly influential in my response to Ruby’s remark. I was saddened that what I thought was such a potentially significant approach to education (and pedagogic practice in particular) could be so quickly and cursorily addressed in a mass audience situation. The delivery, in my mind, had undersold and, in fact, probably derailed much of the positive information and concepts of education embedded in the Productive Pedagogies material. Ruby’s statement reinforced my perceptions. I felt a need to probe and find out her perceptions about what she did in her practice and how it related to the productive pedagogy dimensions to which she was referring. I found that she had identified a number of key phrases that resonated with her personal practical knowledge and had seen that as enough evidence of her ability to apply the Productive Pedagogy concepts. There was a lot that she did not mention or refer to in our discussion that I knew was incorporated in the Productive Pedagogy principles which she said she already

applied. But, because there was sufficient commonality and resonance with her personal practical knowledge in the presentation, she could quite justifiably claim “I already do this” and consequently dismiss any other Productive Pedagogies material and concepts. Neither the district workshop providers, Education Queensland representative, nor the school administrators followed up on the possibilities the Productive Pedagogies offered and that Ruby was looking for—an opportunity to connect the theory with her practice. Indeed Adam dropped the concept of Productive Pedagogies in the school and selected the introduction of outcomes-based curriculum and work plans as the next professional development focus. Adam indicated to me in our discussions that perhaps Productive Pedagogies was something they could revisit at a later stage. He too was frustrated by the delivery of the material. [Interestingly, this situation exemplified the power of the school administration as “conduits” of policy from Education Queensland. If principals didn’t believe in the significance of the concept or policy, they too could subvert the process just as Ruby had in her “collaborative planning” activities with her Year 4 team teacher—see the next section of this chapter.]

In my mind, the delivery of the Productive Pedagogies workshop had defeated the entire purpose of encouraging teachers to reflectively and honestly assess their own practice in light of the somewhat complex dimensions embedded in Productive Pedagogies. Ruby’s responses confirmed my frustrations. She had reflected briefly on what she did and, like many other teachers could quite honestly claim and use the chorus: “I already do this.”

Other mantras/common choruses Ruby mentioned included “This is nothing new—it’s all stuff we’ve learned at Uni.” She quoted another teacher on staff as having made the same comment. Implicit in these remarks is an assumption that because the teachers have heard similar theoretical concepts before, they are embedded in their practice. If the concepts are not a part of their practice, then that is because “there is such a difference between theory and practice.” I am reminded of Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) reference to Schwab’s “rhetoric of conclusions” and their discussion of this major epistemological dilemma of theory vs. practice.

Perhaps the material presented to the teachers in the workshop (although having been enacted in practice and demonstrated via videos in “real” classrooms with “real” students) was still too abstract and remote from real contexts and situations that would enable these teachers to accept and apply them to their classroom practice. The teachers did, however, find enough to resonate with to confirm that “we do it anyway.” These “mantras” are perhaps the essence of cover stories, enabling them to continue to practice and sustain their teacher stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999:3). Essentially cover stories which are communally “sanctioned” and sustained can then become stories to live by: stories which are perceived by colleagues and broader society as acceptable. This, in essence demonstrates Clandinin and Connelly’s observation that “stories to live by are communally sustained as people support one another through confirmation of their beliefs, values, and actions and as they value stories and recollections (p.101)”

#### *Stories of Collaboration and Deceit*

Ruby obviously enjoyed and valued working with professionals in planning and working with students. Her experience at the Special school involved collaborating with a team of specialists who helped organise individual learning programs to suit the needs of each student. When she encountered planning, preparation, curriculum and accountability challenges in her new role at Greenway, she actively sought input from her Year 3 colleague, Karen. She also named staff members she would approach for assistance in dealing with difficult children, challenging curriculum or developing interesting classroom activities and materials. Those personnel included specialist staff such as the guidance counsellors and Jane, the teacher-librarian.

Yet, successful and collaborative professional partnerships could not just happen with anyone on staff. Ruby encountered difficulties with her fellow Year 4 teacher. She could not and would not do more than the bare necessities with him when it came to collaborative work. She had little or no respect for him as a professional and she ensured that she only did enough to meet the expectations of collaborative year group planning funnelled through to them in Adam’s



decrees. Indeed, Ruby became proficient at telling and living stories of collaboration in regard to planning that would satisfy Adam's mandates. She fulfilled the requirements, but it was generally all pretence. Her practice defied the principles she knew Adam had hoped to engender through mandating collaborative planning and work. "It goes: you plan together, you do what you want and I do what I want and I'm not going to change, and I could go on further." This is reminiscent of Edwards (1999) research in Victoria in which teachers subverted the "decrees" from above, yet were seen to be doing what was requested. It is also another example of a cover story Ruby used to negotiate her place in the landscape of Greenway.

### *Time and Removal Stories*

When I began this discussion of Ruby, I claimed it was Ruby's negotiation of the in- and out-of-classroom spaces on the Greenway landscape that probably spoke the loudest in her stories. As I mentioned previously, my concept of a professional was of someone who sought opportunity to improve his/her practice. Ruby did that through a number of professional development opportunities outside of school time (including a conference and a TAFE course she attended while at the special school). Personal business and family commitments meant pursuing such opportunities was limited. Pursuing opportunities in school time, however, was also a dilemma for Ruby. Time was a key factor. "There is no time", claimed Ruby. No time to reflect on professional teaching activities in her own classroom. No time to plan well. No time to set up work for supply teachers, not enough time to repeat and reteach concepts after having a day off for PD because the quality of the teaching was less than she expected. There simply was not enough time in a crowded curriculum to do it all and to do it well. According to Ruby there was no time for her "removal" from the classroom to pursue other quality professional development alternatives.

Associated with this concept is Ruby's perception that PD was a gamble. Formal PD programs she had attended, with the exception of the THRASS (Davies & Ritchie, 1998) program, did not provide her with extra skills and strategies in the classroom. Ruby's in-class focus was very

practical and skill-oriented. She valued professional development that was skill and strategy based. Conceptual and theoretical PD programs were not relevant. If she did not have the time and the assistance to adapt the theory to her practice, then it was a waste of her time. That was how she viewed the Productive Pedagogies PD. Perhaps Ruby, and other teachers like her, were the target for Adam's PD plans. Perhaps he recognised the importance of the skill and strategy based teacher who did not want to look at education beyond their vision of their role in the classroom. Perhaps that was why he focused on developing integrated outcomes-based semester, term and year plans. Perhaps that was how he would begin to integrate and introduce Productive Pedagogy concepts.

All of this however, is speculation and conjecture, and unless I obtain confirmation from both Adam and Ruby about this conceptual understanding of the Greenway Landscape I cannot claim that it is anything other than conjecture. But, it was a combination of Ruby's and Adam's stories of experience that led me to this possible alternative story on the Greenway scene. Perhaps what I had originally perceived as a potential lack of professionalism because of Ruby's reluctance to seek, find and participate in professional development opportunities was in fact an effort to remain focussed on specific teaching skills and strategies that could benefit her students. Or, perhaps these "No time" phrases are part of another cover story, another communal mantra that is considered an acceptable reason not to pursue or investigate alternative professional practices.

I may never know the answer to these questions, but the lesson for me here is the importance of listening to the stories of experience and testing them to discover more about the nature of the story. Is Ruby a marginalised teacher who was not offered the opportunities that Molly and Toni were because she was identified, as I had initially responded to her, as not the "ideal professional?" Are her "no time" claims a way to sustain her own stories of professional integrity? I also wonder, given the difficulty that I had in "scratching the surface of many of Ruby's comments", how conscious Ruby is of the use of cover stories in her professional practice. Does she find the communal mantras and identify herself with those because they are

acceptable cover stories within the profession? Perhaps they enable teachers to sustain their own professional stories and identities that are acceptable not only to their peers and colleagues, but also others in the broader community. Are these cover stories, or do they represent devotion to the in- classroom space and the teacher's major role as classroom teacher and an inability or reluctance to negotiate the demands of the out-of-classroom space on the broader educational landscape? If so, what does this mean for teacher education, and the concepts of professionalism and life-long learning? These are generalised questions I have now begun to ask as a result of Ruby's stories of experience.

There is so much more I need to know about Ruby and how she viewed her role at Greenway. I wonder how many of her storied experiences were cover stories so that she could "succeed" in a landscape in which she felt very strange. If they were cover stories used to shape and project a professional identity that "worked" on the Greenway scene, how different would she have been if she had stayed at the special school? How different would her professional identity stories and development have been if she had encountered a different principal with different educational foci to implement or support?

All of these questions are speculative and perhaps can form the basis of further conversations with Ruby. The "snapshots" of life at Greenway that I gained access to were like moments frozen in time. There was more to Ruby's story and more has since been added. Ruby's professional development is ongoing, but it is not a direct result of her formal professional development opportunities and experiences. Rather, her professional development was largely impacted by the ways she was able to negotiate her survival on the Greenway State School landscape, incorporating social, systemic and institutional factors as well as temporal notions over time with a view to her present and future success on the landscape.

### *An Epilogue*

I recall meeting Ruby in the main shopping street of our town in 2004. Our conversation led to a discussion of her professional directions. At that stage she was contemplating undertaking extra studies in Indigenous Education. She was enthusiastic and excited about the prospect of studying and gaining access to work with a smaller group of students with particular educational requirements. She talked of the possibility of obtaining a scholarship to pursue this area of interest. I am not sure if she followed those ambitions, or if she put them aside.

Ruby, in 2005, moved back to the special needs school as a special teacher. Another shopping centre encounter in November 2005 allowed me a moment to ask how she was and how she enjoyed being back at the special needs school. She was happy. The year had flown past. It was “all good.” I asked if she had a greater sense of belonging there. “Oh yes,” she replied.

Ruby is still actively supporting her children in their individual sporting pursuits, both in school-based and club arenas. Their sporting successes have taken them to various centres around Queensland and interstate. Ruby continues to do the book work for their family business.

Now I find myself asking more questions: I wonder if, on her return to the Special school, Ruby now feels like she is perhaps back from the wilderness? But more than that I wonder why she made the transition back to the Special School? Will she stay there? How does she story her professional life at Greenway now? How have her Greenway professional experiences shaped and moulded the teacher and person that she is now? Would the stories stay the same, or would they have changed slightly with reflection, perhaps changed understanding and knowledge? I also begin to wonder about other teachers who may share similar stories and experiences to Ruby.

*A Postscript: A Secret Story?*

Earlier I mentioned secret stories in Ruby's accounts. One particular story has presented me with a number of dilemmas, the initial one being whether I include it in the research text or not. I have elected to share it with you not only to demonstrate a research dilemma, but as a possible way of gaining further insight into Ruby's professional identity as she storied it throughout my research. Implicit in this discussion is a notion that we are not only shaped by the things that we articulate and pay attention to, but also by the things we do not talk about publicly—the silent stories. They too contribute to our identities, professional or otherwise.

You, as a reader, are now quite familiar with Ruby, with her professional dilemmas on the Greenway landscape and how she storied those experiences. Does it make any difference to your understanding of Ruby if I now tell you she has Indigenous heritage?

Did you sit back and say (as some of my critical friends with knowledge of Indigenous education issues and culture reacted) “Ah that makes sense now. I now think I understand why she emphasised the points she did, why she experienced dilemmas with lack of collaboration, working with large groups?” Or, did you respond with a comment (as some other critical friends did) that basically states “Is that relevant? If she didn't mention it, do you have to?”

Ruby, by her appearance, is obviously of Indigenous background. Her children are actively involved in State Indigenous sporting activities that have taken the family interstate on representative duties. However, in questioning Ruby about influential factors of her childhood and family background, not once did she mention her Indigenous heritage. I chose to take the lead from Ruby—if she mentioned it, I would follow up on it. If she chose not to mention it I would not pursue the topic. I was guided in this decision by the work of Nakata (2001), an educator with Australian Indigenous heritage, whom I have cited earlier in relation to Ruby's stories. In my interview processes I believe I gave Ruby a number of opportunities to discuss her heritage and its possible influence on her teaching practices, particularly during the time that

our interview coincided with NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee—See glossary) (Department of Communities, 2006) week activities at school. She did not mention it, and I respected that as a choice.

Perhaps that is something I would now pursue in a discussion with Ruby. Perhaps she was waiting for me to ask the inevitable question about the Indigenous teacher making it through? Perhaps it was not significant to her –she was and is proud of who she is and her heritage and did not mention it, just like Molly and Toni did not mention their cultural background. Just as I have not mentioned mine in detail. Why should I have made an exception for Ruby because she is of Indigenous heritage? Why am I mentioning it now? I guess because it is a dilemma I still have not resolved. I was struck by my interpretation of Pam’s response in Phillion’s (1999, 2002) narrative inquiry indicating Pam should not be judged according to preconceived notions of a good “multicultural” professional just because of her cultural heritage. She was a teacher, and the research process was focussing on her teaching role not her personal cultural heritage.

The many facets of our storied lives as portrayed through narrative research cannot capture and present all aspects of our participant’s lives. We see snippets and are privileged to hear parts of what makes up the whole person. We hear what they tell us and we respond to those stories. We see and observe their actions and incorporate them in our stories of practice and experience. As a researcher I am selective about what I attend to and present and, as this story perhaps demonstrates, what I choose to avoid or not follow up. Indeed, is this a secret story intentionally concealed, or is it perhaps a silent story unarticulated by Ruby because of my research decisions? I do not know. Perhaps that is something I could explore with Ruby at another time. What other aspects of Ruby’s identity, the stories and experiences that have shaped her professional identity have I missed?

## *I listen to Molly ...*

*I can listen to Molly straight away ...*

*I need not teach myself to pay attention.*

*Why?*

*Because I think I can listen and share meaning straight away?*

*Is this because of a longer term relationship and shared experience?*

*After all I first met her when she had just begun studying and her children swam with mine?*

*Maybe ...*

*But, I make myself listen carefully because the 'swimming mum' Molly, may be quite different to the professional teacher Molly.*

*She is ... yet she isn't.*

*I look for and listen for differences.*

*I listen and find myself:*

*Celebrating her passion for children's learning;*

*Relishing her enthusiasm preparing a unit of work that will enthral and intrigue*

*Acknowledging her thoughts: PD is an interruption to student learning yet it is also an integral component of improving teaching practice;*

*Sharing her fatigue and disillusionment,*

*'All we need is a team of us to do this, not one or two, a team.'*

*Admiring her tenacity and growing professional assertiveness:*

*'We're a bit equal here!'*

*'I'm too tired to do it this term'*

*Perhaps envying her clarity of focus on her professional teaching goals.*

*I find myself:*

*Smiling at her apparent inherent understanding of systems, political forces and expectations within the system.*

Enjoying her capacity to describe and take action;  
Appreciating her decisions to attend or not attend PD opportunities offered;  
Imagining I'm watching her become 'empowered' in her situation.

'That's it for me,' she said emphatically,  
'Having knowledge of something, having a social knowledge of how to work  
within systems, plus taking action gives you empowerment.'  
She said,  
She lived.

Her rendition of Habermas echoes in my mind,  
reverberates through her stories of experience.

I listen ...

I learn ...

Has Molly been professionally developed?  
or, has she developed professionally?  
Her story continues.

She practices,

She reflects,

She talks and converses

She argues and discusses

She seeks affirmation from colleagues, administrators,  
significant others, sisters, aunts ...

She lives her role

'I go home and do it.' 'Constantly mother'

'Sometimes it stinks, Chris'

(I think she really said 'sucks'; I've paraphrased)

She looks back to see what she has learned,

'As a parent ...' She sets her own high expectations



*Assesses what she is doing now*

*'These kids need preparing ... have to consider them ...'*

*Looks forward to what she can do ...*

*integrated planning and preparation;*

*Curriculum Alliance - 'it's the only way to do it'*

*Professionally developed? Professionally developing!*

*Self assured, seeks opportunity, shares*

*Professional ...*

*on going ...*

*Development.*

### **Molly's Experience: Professional Development, a Commentary**

*Having knowledge of something, having a social knowledge of how to work within systems, plus taking action gives you empowerment. And I tell you what, that's it for me. (Molly:3)*

Molly's paraphrased version of this aspect of Habermas' theory and a lesson she learned in her "Education 101" readings is a recurring theme throughout Molly's stories of experience. Molly not only believes it is imperative she provides her students with the knowledge and "where-for-all to work within the systems," but she also tries to live this sacred story (her philosophy) in her professional context at Greenway.

Molly's stories of experience are predominantly based on understanding and working within the system, identifying and taking opportunities for action and empowering herself within the professional role she defines for herself. She is very aware of the conduit and funnel and the systemic restrictions impacting on her professional practice and she endeavours to take action to ensure she has some sense of empowerment in the process. During the time of my study she learned that restrictions need not come from just the principal or significant, "officially" powerful figures in the school, but can also come from colleagues, curriculum restraints and

broader systemic imperatives. How she responds to the professional situations she encounters (the professional knowledge landscape) determines her sense of professional autonomy and identity and, consequently impacts on her professional development. Indeed she constantly reflects on and develops her own sense of identity within a professional context, something Danielewicz (2001) refers to as a crucial element of teaching and professional development.

Molly's story is not just school-based. It speaks loudly of a passionate individual practitioner who values all aspects of her personal and professional experience as educative opportunities that can fashion and shape her professional approach to teaching. She internalises her teaching role and has blurred the edges between personal and professional identity. The stories she lives by transcend the boundaries of school and curriculum demonstrating that teaching is becoming a way of life and living.

Molly's stories of family influences (including both extended and nuclear family experiences, circumstances and relationships) are engrained in her philosophies of practice as a staff member, teacher and colleague both in the in-classroom and out-of-classroom spaces that she inhabits. Reflections on her pre-teaching life experiences overseas, as a pub manager and pub worker enable Molly to value her life lessons and acknowledge that despite Adam's greater experience (and higher pay) in the education system, "We are a bit equal here." Molly's stories demonstrate the interactive three-dimensional nature of storied experience: space, temporality and social relations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

It seems Molly has determined the type of "professional" she wants to be by identifying and considering the implicit systemic expectations for professional behaviour in the professional landscape at Greenway, considering her past experience as a parent, student and mature adult and valuing her personal practical knowledge acquired through those life experiences, in conjunction with a view to the "professional" she wants to become. Her previous life experiences have provided her with strategies, philosophies and stories to live by that enable her

to confidently negotiate the Greenway landscape. Her approach seems to not only be appreciated by Adam, but also rewarded with opportunities to not only pursue professional development, but also create and mould curriculum directions not just for her classroom and the Greenway Year 6 and Year 7 levels, but also beyond the school in the district out-of-classroom space through the Curriculum Alliance. Molly's stories to live by and projected teaching identity appear to conform to the conduit's notion of what it means to be innovative and responsive to changing policy requirements. She is professional and is often rewarded with further out-of-classroom professional development opportunities that will continue to nurture the innovative practice she has developed and implemented in her classroom and the broader Greenway school space.

All is not smooth sailing for Molly however. She encounters collegial resistance that presents her with a professional dilemma that causes considerable anxiety in negotiating a direction to follow and stories to explain the phenomenon she encounters. Molly's important knowledge of the system and how it operates has been challenged and extended to include other players who do not play by the systemic rules and standards she understands quite well. How she stories those experiences and determines her course of action in the face of this dilemma impacts greatly on her personal sense of empowerment when she finds herself challenged by a colleague who does not play the "team game."

Molly was always aware of institutional settings and systems of operation even as a novice teacher. As a mature-aged beginning teacher, she was aware she had been teamed with an experienced colleague from whom she could learn significant amounts about the practical aspects of teaching success. She was also conscious of the role the principal had in her professional future in assessing and reporting on her success as a teacher. She deliberately decided to work hard and be creative in her teaching practices to ensure she was noticed as an effective teacher, as someone special and worth keeping on staff. She had to be seen to be good because if she was not "good," that could have negative ramifications for her whole family –

this was not just her career, but her family's livelihood. Molly not only recognised the institutional sacred story of "good practitioner," she knew and clearly understood its implications for her immediate and ongoing behaviour as a teacher because of the ramifications it could have for her personal and professional future.

Molly never stated where she obtained this insight and knowledge, but her account of what she considered an unsuccessful entry to Teacher's College and the teaching career as a 17-year old indicates an awareness of the commitment and self-confidence she believed (and continues to believe) are a necessary part of a teacher's identity and role. In considering Molly's stories of professional development I am again reminded of Danielewicz's work on teaching identities and teacher education in which she states: "What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving" (2001:3). Molly's reflections and stories demonstrated a constant inward glance at who she was as a teacher and professional in the situations in which she found herself and an outward view regarding the expectations of the system in which she worked, the colleagues with whom she would work and above all the students who were the focus and purpose of her work; all of which included consideration of her personal family experience as a granddaughter, sister, spouse and parent. She knew what constituted a "professional identity" in the system and it complied with her own stories and conceptions of a professional. She chose, and was able to live, the sacred professional identity stories in the Greenway landscape.

Perhaps the strongest professional story Molly lived by was her story of "teaching." It was the most significant aspect of her professional identity. Her story of teaching and what it meant to be a good teacher impacted greatly on the professional decisions she made as she considered what would provide the best educational outcomes for herself and her students. She selected the professional development opportunities she would attend based on her perceived notion of the value it would add to her classroom practice and the learning of her students. Leaving students

with supply teachers had to be weighed against the longer term value attending the PD opportunity would present the students. When the Curriculum Alliance appeared to be “dragging on,” Molly was anxious to get back to her class and begin implementing the new concepts and directions they had identified. Molly’s reflections again reminded me of Danielewicz’ analysis of her own teaching in a tertiary setting:

*I came to believe that pedagogy, when it’s good, means everything. In the broadest terms good pedagogy means putting into practice one’s theories about learning and teaching. It requires teachers to conceive of and to structure their classrooms as social settings that promote interaction and to invent activities that invite students’ deepest engagement. Pedagogy is absolutely not synonymous with methods, a collection of decontextualized practices described as a series of steps that can be handed from one teacher to another like so many tools in a kit. The best pedagogy gets its shape and force from its theoretical roots: a teacher puts what she knows into practice while considering the material conditions and needs of her students. Then begins the cycle of reflection and reconception. Teaching is an act that once started is never over.’ (p.15-16)*

Molly not only had clearly defined stories to live by in the classroom, she also had an understanding and awareness of the “sacred stories” she needed to negotiate in the out-of-classroom professional landscape. Molly was aware of systemic imperatives and aspects of educational change being pushed within the department. She knew about New Basics, and was gaining knowledge about Productive Pedagogies. She was familiar with Outcomes -Based Education and Integrated Curriculum and had conceptualised what those terms meant for her in her practice as a teacher. Although she was perhaps not able to proclaim an intimate knowledge of the changes and developments (such as in Productive Pedagogies at the time of my research), she was able to analyse the general material presented to her and determine how it would fit in with her educational philosophy and apply it to her teaching.

Molly’s response to the Curriculum Alliance demonstrated her ability to recognise a systemic opportunity enabling her and Toni to implement concepts learned in a previous PD opportunity (The Apple School). The systemic imperative of introducing outcomes-based education in conjunction with new curriculum documents, enabled her to further develop her already effective planning strategies with other teachers in order to improve and effectively manage her

classroom teaching. This innovative concept initially driven by Molly and Toni became a story that Adam ensured would also gain wider recognition amongst the district educational landscape by sourcing funding for the CA. In Molly's professional story, the CA was a means to ensure and improve the opportunities offered to students across the school district by working together with other teachers, including High school teachers. This was not a professional development opportunity for her, but rather an opportunity to enhance children's opportunities. It was not until Toni re-storied the concept as a networking professional development opportunity that Molly conceived of it in that way. Her primary focus, however, remained the benefits it would provide her students. This opportunity was one worth sacrificing her direct student and teaching time for so that future student learning activities could be enhanced and coordinated more effectively across the district.

It was interesting to note that despite the enthusiasm and excitement that something so big had grown from their work, Molly and Toni both shared an air of scepticism that the process and opportunity of collaborative planning across the district would not continue beyond the immediate imperative defined by Adam to meet curriculum planning requirements set down by EQ. It was as if they knew this was not a long term story that would be revisited or repeated. In the eyes of the conduit, it would have served its purpose and, as long as the funding was there for this innovative project, it would continue but, otherwise it would probably not run again. It was interesting to note that whilst Molly and Toni were officially the Greenway School representatives and key participants in the CA process, Adam's presence was still keenly felt by both teachers. He reviewed their work on their return to school and passed comments to ensure Molly and Toni considered factors he viewed as crucial. Molly and Toni, it seemed to me, carefully and skilfully ensured the CA project continued to meet their needs as teachers, but also ensured it met the systemic and educational imperatives they were frequently reminded of by Adam through his review process. Indeed, Adam had considerable input into the content and concepts raised in the CA meetings through Molly, Toni and also, I believe, later through Jane's participation in the CA process. Molly's and Toni's skilful negotiation of the situation ensured

they met Adam's expectations in a manner that also suited their ideas and creative responses in the planning process. I wonder how many cover stories were told to ensure both sets of priorities and identified goals were met. I was also intrigued by how the other teachers from other schools viewed the "Greenway influence" in the CA process. But, perhaps that story is one I can pursue at another time. Molly's story of the process is the point of interest now. In essence, I found Molly's story of the CA process demonstrated clearly the notion that "we constantly construct and reconstruct ourselves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future" (Bruner, 2002:64).

As the Curriculum Alliance meetings occurred over a number of months, I was able to witness how Molly used those opportunities to not only reflect on her past and present teaching practices, but also determine how she was going to teach in the future. She was excited by the collaborative opportunities the CA provided, but was also eager to ensure it had a practical application to her teaching practice. When it started to "drag out" and become laborious in terms of completing the document for other teachers, Molly was eager to get back to her classroom and her class and "get on with it." She just wanted the process to finish. Molly knew what the process implied and meant for her, her teaching partner and the classes they would be working with. She also understood the broader implications of having a district planning process that would ensure the smooth and effective transition to high school for the district's Year 7 students. But, she was eager to implement it. She was sceptical of the administrative and continued financial support the project would continue to receive, but that did not deter her from getting as much as she could out of the process to make her professional role more effective and efficient.

Molly's strong desire to connect theory and professional development opportunities with practice was further evidenced in her disappointment with the Productive Pedagogies workshop which hinged on the lack of time available for the teachers to connect the concepts of the

Productive Pedagogies with their own classroom work and management of the learning environment in their classrooms. Like Ruby, being unable to make specific connections, especially when it had been promised in the first Productive Pedagogies session, frustrated Molly and meant that she could not see immediate opportunities to implement her learning in the classroom. She knew she would have to do more work and spend more time learning more about Productive Pedagogies to be able to implement some of the concepts effectively. She was not sure if that was an immediate priority.

Molly knew implementation of theoretical concepts in the classroom often took time and needed to be clearly understood with the benefits clearly articulated before it would/could have an impact on student learning. The evolution of the Curriculum Alliance demonstrated the longevity of some ideas and reinforced Molly's understanding that professional development was an ongoing process involving application of concepts to constantly improve "whatever you do." Professional Development, in Molly's story, was not something that automatically signalled improvement in pedagogic practice. Professional development was part of an ongoing process. Although formally it was, or could be used to describe an in-service program, professional development itself was an action—"something you do to improve whatever you do." It was also personal and owned by the teacher—"something **you** do to improve whatever **you** do." "What you do" almost always, in Molly's stories, related to her role as a facilitator of learning in the classroom. While she was interested in broader systemic imperatives and issues, what counted for Molly was what would directly impact on her teaching and her students. In her discussion about her Term 3 planning and her decision to move away from collaborative planning and teaching because of personal fatigue and bereavement, as well as professional pressures such as her team teacher's involvement in Technology PD and supervising a pre-service teacher, Molly indicated that her primary focus was her ability to teach her students well and provide them with the best teaching opportunities possible. She was not going to compromise her personal professional standards (the stories she lived by) because of perceived



expectations of others (in this case her team teacher). Once again, Molly's sacred story of her professional role as a "good classroom teacher" came into focus.

When I think of Molly now, I wonder what direction she will go in the future. Will she stay at Greenway and continue to develop in the institutional culture that has helped mould and develop her professional identity, or will she look for a challenge and go to a new school as she suggested she may need to do to broaden her view of what teaching is? Danielewicz claims that "it is within institutions themselves that collective identities are resisted, deferred, accepted, adopted or asserted" (2001: 91). Molly appears to understand that notion when she questions her own place and role at Greenway. How would she respond to different institutional dynamics? Identities are constantly under construction. Molly's stories, with her frequent forward and backward glances, inward and outward views across the boundaries of the educational landscape in which she lives, demonstrates the value of experience as an educative process and the basis of a philosophy of practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; , 2000; Danielewicz, 2001; Dewey, 1938; Sato, 2005). Her discussions of experience and practice also demonstrate "practical leadership—leadership enactment through local deliberation and action" (Sato, 2005:56).

### *An Epilogue*

Since my research process with Molly, further discussions at school and in the community have indicated she was in a period of transition during my research process. I believe she was becoming autonomous and self-actualised as a teacher and was getting ready to move on to a different professional partnership that would more likely position her as the mentor and more experienced teacher, instead of the mentee. Her confidence in her ability and professional judgement was growing. I saw her in the latter stages of 2003 and she appeared to me then to be ready to move on from the teaching partnership in which she had worked so effectively with Toni. She wanted to try some new things. She was beginning to feel "cramped" by the

relationship and increasingly frustrated with the additional roles Toni was assuming within the school.

Molly is still at Greenway State School. In 2004, she was assigned a new teaching partner when Toni moved to another position within Education Queensland. Molly's working relationship with her new teaching partner has provided her with a huge sense of satisfaction and professional achievement. Molly is noted within the broader community as a tough teacher with high expectations who wants to push her students to achieve the best that they can, not just while they are in her classroom, but in their future high school experiences. As Molly comes closer to ten years in-service and is eligible for long service leave, I wonder whether she still reflects on her role at Greenway and considers that she needs to be exposed to different contexts of operation, a different landscape.

I listen to Toni ...

Oh Dear!

A mirror?

Perhaps!

.....

Resonance hmmm, that's it!

Scary when you recognise yourself, ... or at least it can be!

Affirming too ...

not alone in my experience.

I listen to Toni,

Recognise family/professional choice dilemma

determination to maintain currency and knowledge

hunger to know and learn more

growing desire to help teachers teach and learners learn

'I can never know enough.'

Appreciate 'career creativity' meeting professional ambition whilst balancing  
values of family and child rearing:

want to be there for children

'Can't do that yet, not with Kathy in year 12'

'Those men didn't have to do that.'

Choices!

An effective, efficient time manager:

'You make time'

'You just do it ...'

(Did she say that, or did I hear it in a resonant moment?)

Envy the energy.

Appreciate the broader educational view,

responsibility reaches beyond the classroom

'Got to give something back to society, the profession.'

PD - takes you out of the classroom,

*'But worth it; in the long run.'*

*(Wonder how long she will stay in the classroom.*

*Expect her to move on)*

*What lies ahead? '... Scarey! What's next?'*

*Been an educational adviser before, ... maybe find another, similar, niche?*

*Theories of teaching:*

*Constructivism,*

*try it ... needs resourcing ... not easy ... but ... Wow!*

*Teacher isolation:*

*lack of confidence, they 'run themselves down'*

*Don't share and realise the good things they do*

*... networking: a positive option.*

*Challenging other colleagues:*

*'Think about it Molly! You do that already'*

*'Teacher's Aides - they're great. So hungry.'*

*Leader:*

*Deputy? Done that for a while*

*Principal? Not yet. Family, travel ... no not now.*

*Teacher? Great team and partnership - share ideas. Both parents - share experience, expectations: 'Want that for my children.'*

*Consultant/Advisor? More scope for that - love to work with teachers, help them plan, learn IT, teach ... a dream?*

*Toni ...*

*So easy to hear,*

*So much to say,*

*So many stories ...*

*Resonance? I listen, recognise situations, sometimes see myself...*

*Has it influenced my listening?*

*Stopped me from asking questions?*

*clouded my judgement?*

*impeded my telling?*

*(Maybe, but I'm a part of this project too!)*

*What did I miss in Toni's tales?*

*(More concerning to me at the time was what I missed/didn't*

*hear in Ruby's telling?)*

*Toni, ... so many stories, so much experience, so easy to recount, tell*

*Continuous ...*

*iterative processes ...*

*Developing professionally.*

*(Hmm, another valuable research story.)*

### **Toni's Experience: Professional Development, a Commentary**

*All identity categories, even those that seem biologically designated like gender or race, are processes under construction. They are not unified or fixed entities that exist permanently inside individuals. This process of becoming is what I call identity development. As persons in the world, we are continually engaged in becoming something or someone, such as parent, woman, white person, old person, teacher. Because identities are conditional, restless, unstable, ever-changing states of being, they can never be ultimately completed. Though identities are fluid, individuals do have recognizable selves. We might think of a person's identities as points of fixation, temporarily arrested states, that are achieved moment by moment in the course of relations between individuals. (Danielewicz, 2001:3)*

Toni had many more years of experience in Education Queensland than each of Molly and Ruby. She had worked in and visited a range of professional knowledge landscapes through her activities not just as a teacher and parent, but as an educational maths consultant in the Far North Queensland region. Her stories of experience, in my eyes, were predominantly stories that encapsulated the fluid nature of identity to which Danielewicz (2001) refers in the extract above. Toni's professional identity was constantly under construction—she always had more to learn and more to become. Her perception of the educational landscape in which she could

explore and “test” her identity was larger than Greenway and, even though I interviewed her while she was placed at Greenway, I had the distinct impression she would not be there for too much longer—she was eager to explore the broader, more global landscape of education that already and potentially existed within the geographic area in which Greenway is located. Not only was Toni not limited by the boundaries of Greenway State School, she ensured she was not bounded by the title of “classroom teacher” within the school, which would have limited her professional practice even more to the in-classroom space of her Year 7 classroom. This lived story of moving across artificial boundaries was almost a deliberate challenge to what she saw as a predominant teacher story in which teachers tended to isolate themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), reluctant to share their experiences and abilities with other teachers primarily, she reasoned, because of a lack of confidence in their abilities. Toni, in contrast, was not intimidated by “artificial” barriers that limited cross pollination of ideas and teaching practices.

The irony of pursuing many sanctioned professional development opportunities is that the teacher has to move out of the classroom and away from teaching students. This irony is not lost on Toni. She recognises the apparently conflicting sacred stories within the education system: “Be the best teacher you can for you students” vs. “Get out of the classroom to improve your teaching practice.” However, the apparent conflict is not enough to stop Toni pursuing opportunities outside of the classroom. Indeed, Toni interprets the stories as complementary. The costs of pursuing those opportunities are, in most cases, well worth it. Generally, Toni has elected to pursue the option that could lead to improved professional practice not only by accessing external sources of information through formal PD options, but through informal networking opportunities that “formal” PD sessions offer.

Toni’s almost deliberate challenge to the more dominant teacher PD stories and communal mantras demonstrated the concept of conflicting stories in the professional knowledge landscape at Greenway. The “mantras” she heard from other teachers to avoid PD opportunities did not wash with her. “Not enough time for PD,” she had heard Ruby say, was, to Toni a furphy. “You

make time,” said Toni. Effectively, you can not afford not to if you want to grow as a teacher and improve your educational practice for the benefit of the students. Pursuing professional growth is one of Toni’s personal defining features of what is a professional teacher; having said that, though she also understood and had personally experienced supply teachers not teaching work effectively so that she had to reteach concepts to children. This was part of the sacrifice entailed in pursuing professional development opportunities that had to be managed by the classroom teacher and support staff. The fact that at times the supply teaching solution failed to provide quality teaching outcomes was not enough to deter her. This was a gamble well worth taking.

Like Molly, Toni is cognisant of the conduit, the funnel and other limitations within the Education Department. She is very aware of the politics of funding in Education Queensland and is adept at working in various “terrains” according to different rules and expectations. She clearly identifies Adam’s contribution to the conduit and works within the parameters he defines. She is not always compliant or complicit, but she is aware of the limitations imposed on him and is able to discuss her differences of opinion with him. Her acting role as deputy principal gave her insight into Adam’s methods of operation and ideas leading her to claim “he’s a very clever man.”

Toni’s work experiences, including her enforced return to classroom teaching following funding changes for her Educational Advisor role, contributed to her personal practical knowledge that enabled her to negotiate various professional knowledge landscapes and to move across boundaries of the in-classroom and out-of-classroom space. Not only was Toni adept at crossing professional boundaries, but she was also able to identify and balance personal and professional parameters in a professionally satisfying way within the system that “moved” her from one terrain/location to another depending on the funding available and policy direction of the Department.

Toni's stories at the personal/professional boundary fascinated me. While she was on leave for parenting responsibilities, she ensured that, even though she was absent from the formal education setting of a primary school, she stayed "in touch" with educational issues through conversations with colleagues and her husband (also a teacher). The break from her professional career child-rearing responsibilities did not seem so much as a "pause" to me, but rather a response to a situation that Toni ensured would not impede her hunger and thirst for increased professional knowledge. Whilst the "formal structure" of the school system was not her context of operations while she was primarily involved in child-rearing, she maintained and consciously worked on ways to maintain currency and knowledge not only in content areas of maths and technology, but also with systemic changes and teaching processes associated with those content areas. What motivated her to assume a proactive role in maintaining professional currency? Essentially, she said, it was a fear of being left behind; of returning to a professional teaching position not knowing enough. Changes were happening so quickly in technology she felt she had to remain current. I wonder if this same fervour and desire to find out as much as she could about technology in particular would have been supported and resourced if she had stayed in the system as a practising teacher. That is a moot point however, and one that can be neither confirmed nor proven otherwise. The reality is that Toni found herself in a potential position of professional isolation whilst at home as a primary care giver, and she decided to ensure she would not fall behind in her professional knowledge. She was creative in her responses to the situation.

This form of creative professional response is something, she notes, many of the male principals and deputies in the area did not have to do: "We brought up our kids. We couldn't move along in the system whereas the fellows that have stayed in the system, yes, they might have had a big part in bringing up their children, but they didn't have to give up work to do it." This raised many feminist issues that I did not have the time to explore more deeply. It did, however, illustrate the flexibility and creativity many working mothers have had to develop to ensure professional currency. The promotional opportunities Toni had and declined were primarily



declined for personal, family reasons. Financially, and from a hierarchical status view, Toni's decisions to prioritise family have meant she has not been able to climb the professional ladder and receive financial remuneration for her work. I did not explore the financial ramifications of this decision for Toni, but it raises questions that perhaps warrant further study and investigation.

Toni's stories indicate she was aware of many forces on the landscape that mould and shape teachers' identities (including her own), yet she also appeared to me as an individual who is, on occasion, able to channel those forces to achieve her own professional goals and identity. She had a strong sense of agency in her own professional development. Like Danielewicz (2001:164), for Toni, "agency is always a possibility.... In everyday life, we live and breathe as active agents." Danielewicz continues her discussion of agency in relation to Ellen, one of her participant teachers in her research:

*In proposing a modified theory of agency, current pragmatist theories of action grant agency to the individual, but a person who is a fabricated, contingent self, not the autonomous self posited by the modernists. Instead, the pragmatists conceive the individual as a social self, living in a world that includes other people, social arrangements and institutions, and the physical environment. Thus agency is interactive with no one factor any more controlling than another. We see that while Ellen is capable of action, her intentions and actions are inextricably tangled up in the dynamic of a situation that includes her mentor-teacher, students, the immediate context of the school, the institution of public schools in general. Such a complex web means that for any individual and in any one moment, there are many possibilities for action and response. For Ellen, there is no one right thing to do; there is only the realization (and its accompanying urge) that she can and ought to do something. She feels neither powerless nor passive. Her recognition that she can alter the situation by some action of her own is what is significant. This is agency. (p.165)*

Toni, however, in contrast to Ellen, does at times feel a sense of powerlessness, particularly in the face of the overbearing "conduit" and "funnel"; that determines funding policy and that can undo or restrict the implementation of potentially exciting work in the classroom. This was particularly apparent in her discussion of the future of the Curriculum Alliance. According to Toni the ongoing success and implementation, professional support and effective networking

she saw in the CA would rely on the enthusiasm and good will of the participating teachers and principals across the district. She believed the CA had served its purpose on the broader educational landscape in storying the participant teachers and schools as innovative. She did not expect further funding to support the programme. (Retrospectively, she was right!)

In reviewing Toni's stories of experience across the broader landscape of education in the Greenway district, with a particular focus on Greenway State School, I find many different aspects of professional development. Toni is passionate not only about her own professional growth and progression, but she is intrigued by and is passionate about other teachers' growth. Her definition of professional development goes beyond the formal PD opportunities offered to some through Education Queensland; it is lived experience that incorporates reflection on one's own practice across educational boundaries, both individually, and collaboratively with other like-minded professionals. Her collegial approach and shared understanding of the challenges of working in-classroom and out-of-classroom spaces informs her approach to providing professional development for others. Her own personal and professional experiences enable her to feel comfortable in sharing them with other teachers and lead her to see the value in breaking down barriers that keep teachers isolated. She has not only come to value networking and sharing with colleagues in her own professional career, but actively encourages and facilitates professional interactions in her practice. During the interviews with Molly and Toni, I often found Toni supporting, encouraging and helping Molly to reflect on their practice as colleagues and collaborative practitioners in order to identify moments of brilliance and success. She was a teacher of teachers by being a partner with teachers. Toni had found a way to enter the classroom space and bring the outer-space into the teachers' world and assist them in meeting some of the challenges of the "out-of-classroom" space, particularly in the field of technology and planning.

### *An Epilogue*

Toni continued to teach at Greenway for one more year after my interviews. She implemented some of the aspects of the Curriculum Alliance and continued to provide support for technology implementation with teachers at Greenway. The following year Toni obtained a position as an advisor at the local Teaching and Learning Centre. She is now in a full time position as a literacy and numeracy advisor for the teachers of the district. She is actively pursuing opportunities for teachers to enable them to reflect on and improve their teaching practice in the light of the new curriculum and syllabus documents developed by Education Queensland. Whilst she has found the role challenging, and has needed to update some areas of content knowledge, she has thoroughly enjoyed the transition into this role of education. Her professional development story continues. Her impact on teachers' teaching and her perceptions of her successes and challenges in that area would be an intriguing topic of future conversations.

## **CHAPTER 10: A REVIEW AND A NEW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STORY**

The stories of Ruby, Molly and Toni invite us to reconsider the ways in which we view professional development experiences of teachers on the complex professional knowledge landscape in which they work. Significantly, the stories demonstrate the importance of listening to stories of experience. Without listening to and paying attention to our teachers' experiences of the past and present, it is possible that we can undermine and underestimate the foundations of their future professional decisions, directions and activities. Listening, though, means more than just hearing. It also means attending to our own expectations, assumptions and ways of listening. "Listening" in this context of research requires that we explore our own definitions, values and beliefs about broad and significant educational concepts such as professional development. In addition to this we are also challenged to review past and current research in light of individual experiences in a regional primary school setting in North Queensland and consider the opportunities these individual's stories present for future educational research, departmental policies in the area of professional development and application of professional development processes in individual schools and regions.

This research project contributes to a growing body of literature (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Lyons & Laboskey, 2002; Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005a) indicating the multiplicity of stories and professional experiences that contribute to the shaping of professional identities in education by focussing specifically on three Greenway State School teachers' PD experiences. The stories of Ruby, Molly and Toni have demonstrated that professional development is essentially an individual experience although there are elements of commonality in setting and contexts of experience within the educational landscape. The stories showed the constant and ongoing nature of professional development within a complex context

and ways in which each teacher negotiated and experienced elements of the professional landscape in which she worked.

Whilst I emphasise that generalisations about professional development for teachers cannot, nor should, be drawn from this study, it is important to state that there were common stimuli on the professional landscape that evoked different narratives of experience from the participants. The different storied perspectives offered by Toni, Ruby and Molly about these issues provide possibilities of gaining a richer and deeper understanding of these features of the professional landscape previously identified as significant issues pertaining to teachers' professional development, professional lives and professional practices (see Chapter 2). The stories of Tony, Molly and Ruby do not collectively endorse or negate specific past research, rather, they present a different perspective from which to view professional development. There are significant resonant components in the stories of experience demonstrating the relational and temporal nature of knowledge—past leading to present, informing and shaping the future, within a broader educational social context. I propose in this chapter to view some of these issues from the stories of experience offered by the individuals in this study, thereby demonstrating some of the richness and complexity associated with concepts identified in other research. The stories, after all, demonstrate that how teachers see and story themselves professionally contributes substantially to their professional development. Indeed, when working with teachers, we need to start with the teacher, his/her professional identity in process, and work from there.

In this chapter, I outline opportunities and possibilities my inquiry offers, not just in professional development and teachers experiences as phenomena, but also in Narrative Inquiry as research, beginning with a discussion of the research participants. I then focus on issues associated specifically with professional development as revealed in the inquiry including possibilities of exploring a new language of professional development; examining further the concept of blurred boundaries and stories to live by and developing new professional development stories. I also consider an opportunity to examine more closely perceptions of a

theory and practice nexus in teacher's work. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Narrative Inquiry as a way to further explore the opportunities presented by the inquiry.

**Opportunity: Greenway Participants, Different Perspectives and Additional Stories**

Narrative Inquiry as both phenomenon and method provides an opportunity to gain insight and understanding into the experiences of others, in this case the professional development experiences of three teachers at Greenway. During my research, however, I gained access not only to the professional development stories of the three teachers, but also to stories of other significant contributors to the Greenway professional knowledge and educational landscape, in particular the principal, deputy principal and teacher-librarian. This material is a valuable source of alternative perspectives and more stories of experience on the landscape, but because of my specific research parameters, I was unable to maximise the opportunities they presented and selected what I considered significant aspects to include. The possibilities to explore stories of administrators, teachers, teacher aides and other professionals such as teacher-librarians, guidance counsellors and others appear endless. I provided a truncated view into the broader educational landscape at Greenway using some of the stories Adam, Jane and Mark presented. I also provided a limited institutional history. Each of these elements on the landscape is rich and worthy of further inquiry in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the complex interplay of characters and experience over time in a regional state school setting. Opportunity lies in returning to examine more stories on the Greenway landscape, some of which I already have in my notes and transcripts.

Opportunity also exists to further explore the professional development and changing identities of Ruby, Molly and Toni several years later. The epilogues in Ruby's and Toni's letters raise many questions about their transition to their new educational roles. Exploring the experiences and decisions they made would provide further information about how teachers shape and determine their professional path and the factors that impact on their choices. Similarly, a follow-up opportunity with Molly would provide further information about life at Greenway

with different teaching partners and implementation of curriculum reform programmes. The potential to gain further rich information about how professional lives are storied and experienced seems limitless.

**Opportunity: Researcher as Participant, Developing as a Narrative Inquirer**

Becoming a narrative inquirer involves considerable personal and professional reflection on one's own epistemological perspectives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Conle, 2000; Phillion, 2002). It clearly shows the temporal properties of knowledge and experience and the inquirer's frequent re-negotiation of existing theories and literature in coming to new stories of experience. Schon (1983) referred to this process as "reflection-in-action." It is not pain free. Indeed, at times it is extremely self absorbing as one confronts and closely examines ethical and personal dilemmas embedded in and exposed throughout the research process. Developing a keen awareness of my responsibilities as a writer and presenter of other people's stories was not only an incredibly humbling experience, but also a daunting one. Narrative inquiries cannot be rushed. The telling carefully constructed so that the experiences of the researcher and participants are not overly abbreviated. Narrative Inquiry is both method and phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and both aspects need to be considered thoroughly in presenting a transparent, clearly defined and accountable research experience. Determining how much of oneself to include in the telling is one challenge each narrative inquirer must face. At times, the process was almost cathartic and therapeutic, but the personal processes and the inclusion of those experiences had to be weighed against the primary purpose of the research. Research and writing decisions I made in that regard needed to be explained and justified in terms of the broader research task (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Phillion, 2002). The lines of distinction in incorporating personal writing and reflections with "relevant" research material are often blurry and will no doubt cause concern for some readers. My story as researcher is interlinked and indeed closely interwoven in the stories of teacher's professional development that I have

presented. Opportunity here lies in the possibilities inherent in further examining the notion that the researcher is as much a participant in the research process as the participants who are the focus of the inquiry.

### **Opportunity: New Professional Development Language, Definitions and Perspectives on Change**

This project provides an opportunity to further discuss and explore the nature, definition and language of professional development from systemic and institutional perspectives and from a personal, individual view. Specific issues and questions warranting further investigation include the following:

- What do we institutionally and personally believe “professional development” to be?
- Do the institutional and personal professional definitions match?

Ruby’s, Molly’s and Toni’s experiences indicate that the concept of “professional development” as it is used and perceived in Greenway is very broad. “Professional Development” is used both as a noun and a verb: it is something that teachers attend—whether by choice or by decree; it is something that teachers “do” in response to activities set by the department, or in response to interactive opportunities (networking) with other teachers; and it is a process of becoming a “professional.” The term is almost all encompassing. Perhaps therein lies one of the dilemmas in discussing and determining the effectiveness of “professional development.”

While we continue to use the term “professional development” in its broadest sense, we will continue to get varied stories of experience and varied levels of success in implementation of concepts. “Professional development” is likely to lack specific impact for many teachers. “Professional development,” in its broad manifestation within the Greenway landscape, either meant “more work” or a gamble. If “professional development” was viewed and used as a verb—an experiential and ongoing process that “happens” to an individual in professional practice, rather than something someone attends, then perhaps the connotation of the “gamble” would



decrease. Perhaps professional development sessions such as the Productive Pedagogies workshop I attended could be more accurately described as “information sessions.” Perhaps teachers will learn to view the “information sessions” as an opportunity to learn more about an educational concept in their continued experientially based professional development, rather than as something in which they are perceived as deficient and that requires remediation through the presentation of abstract theory that has to be interpreted and applied in their practice. Indeed, it is possible the current use of “Professional Development” (such as in the Productive Pedagogies experience) invokes a perception of deficit, and immaturity on the part of those attending the session, placing them in defensive mode before the session even begins. Semantics perhaps. But we have seen there is power in words and stories. Departmental/institutional stories can and do influence the professional growth opportunities of professionals; Ruby’s, Molly’s and Toni’s stories demonstrate that.

Changing terminology alone, however, is not enough. There are many more complex issues to address in considering teacher’s professional development and learning, as the stories and experiences of Ruby, Molly and Toni indicated. Connelly and Clandinin suggest, “school [and institutional] change is the creation of new stories to live by” (1999:100). Acceptance of these stories by teachers invokes the deeper question of teacher identity and experience. It calls into question their response to the “institutional stories” remembering that “teacher resistance is the maintenance of a story to live by in the face of school change” (p.101). Teachers’ professional development experiences as stories-to-live by are crucial because they not only demonstrate the teachers’ reflections and views of their current professional practice in the professional knowledge landscape, they help determine how the teachers will approach and respond to PD opportunities, thereby shaping their future practice. In essence, they demonstrate a substantial component of teachers’ personal practical knowledge in relation to their own learning within the profession. Experience, as suggested by Dewey (1938), Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 2000); Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1990, 1999), Lyons and Laboskey (2002), and as seen in the

stories of Ruby, Molly and Toni, is in fact a key element of teacher's learning and determining what they will focus on in their professional development.

This research project demonstrates the complexities of examining professional development from a formulaic, systemically imposed change reform perspective because PD cannot be seen as a separate part of a teacher that can be worked on specifically. My research indicates that professional development is closely integrated with teachers' identities and demonstrates the importance of integrating educational change processes in the professional lives of teachers. Opportunity lies in further exploring the application of change propositions in individual teacher's experiences in order to further understand the application, possibilities and implications of implementing educational reform in our schools. Are "change reform" and "professional development" used interchangeably in our system of education? And if so, should they be?

In addition to this, opportunity exists to examine research providing a rich personal and contextual perspective from teachers in conjunction with broader and more generalised institutional change research identifying "ideal conditions" for instituting systemic change (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Narrative research such as this complements broader and more generalised research by demonstrating the importance of individual responses in the face of institutional change processes. Narrative inquiries such as this reinforce the notion that teachers are the linchpin to systemic educational change (Hargreaves, 1997), but more than that, they demonstrate *why* teachers are central to change implementation strategies. Professional practice is more than application of pedagogic principles and practices deemed as "best practice" from others. Professional growth and change in professional practice is integrally associated with each teacher's professional identity (Conle, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Crowther et al., 2002). The process of melding individual professional stories to live by and institutional change is emerging in some schools in Queensland with the implementation of programs such as the IDEAS project incorporating notions of developing teacher leaders (Crowther et al., 2002; Education Queensland, 2001) and needs to be further explored from the teachers perspectives.

Narrative inquiries exploring teacher's experiences in these programs as they negotiate their positions in the changing professional knowledge landscape provide considerable research opportunities.

### **Opportunity: Exploring Resourcing and Time Issues**

Adequate resourcing of professional development, especially with regards to time was a common element in the stories of all participants in this research. Decisions about attending PD opportunities were integrally entwined with the teacher's perception of "time", "time usage" and their role as a classroom teacher. Each teacher negotiated and storied the time dilemma differently, but essentially the issue surfaced on many occasions in each account. McRae et al. (2001) suggest that access to PD in Australian schools is limited by time, cost and distance. The stories of Molly, Ruby and Toni, whilst generally supporting this finding, indicate that there is more to the "story of time" including not just the teacher's time in attending formal PD opportunities, but in meeting student learning needs in a teacher's absence both in terms of work preparation and also in revisiting concepts not adequately taught in the teacher's absence. These are likely to be associated with financial resourcing issues with all teachers aware of the "TRS" shortage and limitations that impacted directly on their ability to access quality PD time during school hours.

All three teachers indicated value in engaging in reflective processes in improving their professional practice (Schon, 1983), but again a lack of time relegated this activity to an "at home extra". No formal time was identified as being allocated to teachers to assist them in incorporating reflective practices in their professional practice although Molly made reference to "release time" during specialist teaching sessions, but did not detail how she used that time. Each of the teachers indicated a willingness to travel to attend quality PD sessions and contribute the time necessary to attend distant PD opportunities, but needed to be convinced of the value of the PD before taking the gamble to attend, especially if it encroached on private family time.

Time and resourcing issues are not new items of discussion concerning change and reform in education (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Groundwater-Smith, 1998). Ruby's, Molly's and Toni's stories of experience present an insight into how those issues are experienced and storied at the personal level, where professional development and change implementation decisions are made. Opportunities exist to further explore the complexities of the "time and resourcing" issue as identified in this and other research by further exploring the experiences of other teachers in various sectors of schooling in Queensland, indeed Australia.

**Opportunity: Exploring Blurred Boundaries and Stories to Live by**

Ruby's, Molly's and Toni's narratives provide an opportunity to examine the professional knowledge landscape and the domains and boundaries of the in- and out-of-classroom spaces (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) as they were experienced, negotiated and storied by the teachers at Greenway. Each teacher's PD story was greatly influenced by her experiences of these spaces and also included reference to biographical spaces including home and family commitments and values.

Ruby's dilemmas in her professional experience at Greenway were largely associated with the imposition of blurred boundaries between her "in-classroom" space and the "out-of classroom" spaces on the professional knowledge landscape. Her professional identity (stories to live by) was challenged not only when she entered a new professional knowledge landscape at Greenway but also when the out-of-classroom space came sneaking through her classroom door. Ruby clearly preferred explicit distinctions between the in- and out-of-classroom spaces with specific and clearly articulated bridges between the two domains. Crucial to her sense of comfort was the notion that the out-of-classroom space should support and enhance her in-classroom activities through specific strategies, rather than challenge her to deal with abstract and non-tangible educational concepts like her experience of Productive Pedagogies. How she storied her responses to this aspect of the professional knowledge landscape influenced the narratives she shared with me and contributed to her professional identity and survival on the

Greenway landscape. Indeed, her professional development narratives did not just relate stories of the past, but also indicated a direction for many future PD opportunities.

Molly's stories of experience showed how she negotiated the professional boundaries in a manner that fitted her values, beliefs and philosophy of how she should behave and live as a teacher on the Greenway School scene. The boundaries between the in- and out-of-classroom spaces were not as daunting or professionally threatening for her as they were for Ruby. Molly's professional identity and understanding of the professional knowledge landscape enabled her to accommodate both places. She faced challenges and found herself re-storying and fine-tuning her views of what a professional teacher was in light of the social relationships she faced as a professional. But, essentially, her story of who she was as a professional teacher at Greenway remained the same. Molly's primary focus, like Ruby's, remained her in-classroom space, but the out-of-classroom space provided a resource for enhancing her in-classroom role. If the out-of-classroom domain became too imposing, she backed away and preserved her "in-classroom" integrity and professional identity. Molly moved between the two domains quite comfortably using her experiences from both to careful advantage in each. Clearly though, the classroom space and her activities in that space remained Molly's priority.

Toni moved fluidly between the in- and out-of classroom places on the professional landscape and appeared to enjoy "blurring" the boundaries not just for herself, but for her colleagues across the school landscape. She found professional challenge in applying theory to practice and in addressing dilemmas of confidence and identity she recognised in her teaching colleagues. Her stories to live by, her professional identity, based on notions of collaborative teaching and professional growth are similar to the concepts of "Teacher Leaders" (Crowther et al., 2002; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Teacher leaders are not intimidated by the in/out-of classroom boundaries. They seem to enjoy and revel in the opportunities blurred boundaries present for ongoing professional development in the broader educational landscape often reaching beyond the specific schools in which they work. Indeed, my "feeling" about Toni's future as I was

conducting my research was that she would have preferred to be in the “out-of-classroom space” providing professional development support for teachers, particularly in the areas of technology and mathematics teaching.

Institutional and systemic demands for greater accountability in student learning outcomes and through the introduction of professional standards means that teachers can no longer close their classroom doors and control who sees or hears what happens in there. Accountability processes have significantly blurred the in/out of classroom boundaries. Teachers have to adapt to the impost of visiting personnel and increased paper work to demonstrate their professional capacity in the classroom; professional capacity as defined by an external body (Queensland College of Teachers). It is clear that the conduit and funnel (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) no longer land just on the broader “school” based professional landscape, it feeds directly into the classroom and the teacher’s professional practice.

The role of the principal in blurring the boundaries for each teacher, and the consequent impact on the professional experiences of each teacher, whilst similar in many ways, was also experienced and storied differently by Ruby, Toni and Molly. Adam’s focus while I was at Greenway indicated that systemic imperatives such as curriculum reform, its associated accountability processes and incorporating outcomes based imperatives were the priorities. Other systemic foci impacting directly on teacher’s pedagogic practice, including Productive Pedagogies, appeared less crucial and, consequently, less emphasis was placed on this EQ area of development within Greenway. The Curriculum Alliance seemed to serve a dual purpose for Adam—not just a curriculum planning direction for the senior school, but also a way in which to gain broader kudos and credibility within the broader school community including regional office representatives. It appeared to me that the activities that were well-resourced within the school were not only the “system restructuring” and “system maintenance” issues identified by Dempster (2001), but aspects of educational planning that were significantly important to Adam. Ruby, who may possibly have benefited from PD to encourage professional transformation and

professional sustenance (Dempster, 2001) particularly in her early years at Greenway, was not offered those opportunities. Adam's leadership style and role impacted directly on the professional development opportunities for each staff member. Opportunity lies in exploring this concept of principal leadership further with these teachers and Adam. Opportunity also lies in exploring other teachers' and principal's experiences in regard to principal leadership and professional development, particularly as new projects such as the IDEAS project (Education Queensland, 2001) are implemented in schools across Queensland.

Opportunities exist to learn more about teachers' and their experiences of blurred boundaries in their work environment by conducting further narrative inquiries with various educational personnel across the state and within different sectors of education including secondary schools, pre-schools and vocational education programs.

Ruby, Molly and Toni all referred to their out-of-school family commitments as formative and impacting on their professional practice. Opportunity lies in further exploring the possible gendered perspectives inherent in these and other teacher stories including the blurring of boundaries between family and professional spaces in the lives of the participants. Incorporating the stories of male primary school teachers' experience of professional development opportunities could provide further insight into the professional growth processes within our school systems.

### **Opportunity: Developing New Professional Development Stories**

The way in which teachers view the landscape and negotiate the various epistemologically different places on the landscape will, in large measure, determine how they respond and story their experience in the contexts in which they operate (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Ruby's, Molly's and Toni's stories demonstrated that in their regional Australian school context.

The ways in which teachers respond and story their experiences in a continuing period of intense systemic and socio-cultural (Education Queensland, 2000) change will prove very interesting. Will teachers develop cover stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) which will become stories to live by that are resistant to the changes? What will those stories be? Will they, or aspects of them, become communal mantras? How will they be communally sustained? Will teachers be given an opportunity to articulate their stories of experience during the change process and note how their future is built on the foundations of their past and present responses and storied experience? Will teachers begin to view their role as a professional, and their professional stories not as static stories in which one graduates from university and has “become” a teacher, but as a professional who is constantly “becoming” a teacher? Will teachers begin to “own” their professional development processes and responses recognising opportunities to work with educational concepts and adapt them to their practice? Will teachers be given adequate time and resources (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Groundwater-Smith, 1998; McRae et al., 2001) to develop their professional stories so that they begin to not only take on, but fashion and mould the stories of change offered through research and departmental initiatives to become their own professional practice stories? There are, and will continue to be, many more questions to ask and stories of experience to investigate.

Opportunity also exists to investigate pre-service teachers’ awareness of the various spaces that exist on the professional knowledge landscape and how they view and story their position in relation to those places on that landscape (Beattie, 2007; Conle, 2000). How does pre-service education in the Queensland context contribute to and help develop teachers stories-to-live by so that they can successfully negotiate the terrain they will encounter once in schools? Do pre-service teachers see the professional world which they are about to join as limited to their classroom and specifically, the student-teacher learning relationship, or do they view the out-of-classroom place as a crucial component of their professional context in which they will be working with other teaching colleagues, support staff and administrative personnel? Substantial work indicates the power of narrative approaches in teacher education programs as a way to



encourage professional reflections that help students identify, examine and shape their professional identities (Beattie, 2007; Conle, 2000; Lyons & Laboskey, 2002). Opportunities exist to explore this area of work further in Queensland and Australian contexts.

### **Opportunity: Revisiting the Theory and Practice Nexus**

The dilemma of bridging theory and practice has been referred to by many (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Phillion, 2002; Schon, 1983). As new policies and standards of teaching are introduced onto the landscape, I wonder about the perceived gaps between theory and practice. Will they begin to decrease? Will the “communal mantras” using the separation of theory and practice continue to be a defensible story and reason for “avoiding” implementation of theoretical concepts? Will theoretical concepts continue to be portrayed as “rhetoric of conclusions” or will teachers begin to be exposed to more contextualised research that does not separate real experience from the theoretical concepts embedded in them (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Dewey, 1938)? Again, will teachers be afforded the time to reflect on, assess, evaluate and apply theoretical concepts into their own professional practice so that the concepts become embedded in their own contexts of operation and within their own theories of practice as teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Schon, 1983)? Will they be given time to reflect on their practice (“reflection-in-action”) and incorporate it into their “knowledge-in-action” (Schon, 1983) in order to suit their student body and the contexts in which they work, including the increased demands for accommodating more technology and curriculum changes in response to a changing global context? Will the value of prior and present experience, the value of teachers existing knowledge base, be recognised and used as a launching pad and/or bridge to new educational concepts that can be incorporated into the teacher’s stories by which they live, their identity as a professional? Opportunity lies in exploring these issues using narrative inquiry processes, building on the work by Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 1999, 2000); Phillion, He and Connelly (2005a); Richert (2002); Lyons and LaBoskey (2002); Conle (1993, 1997a,b 1999, 2000, 2005); Conle & Sakamoto (2002); Danielewicz (2001) and many others by providing an Australian contextual perspective.

This work provides some insight into how teachers story theory into their personal practical knowledge. Molly's pre-service learning experiences impacted greatly on her personal philosophy of teaching. She mentioned the importance of Habermas' theories as one of the most influential stories to live by in her approach to teaching. Toni's reference to her Masters study of "constructivist approaches" in teaching Maths indicated she had adapted her stories to live by in her practice to include this theory. Ruby too was not without reference to theoretically-based approaches in her classroom. She particularly appreciated that the theory to which she was exposed in the THRASS (Davies & Ritchie, 1998) workshops, also included specific practical strategies for implementation in her classroom. Not all theory misses its mark in becoming important stories-to-live-by in teachers' practice. There is an opportunity to explore the theory-practice nexus more specifically using methods such as narrative inquiry where teachers are encouraged to reflect on their experiences in context specific situations based in their personal practice and share those with others. Perhaps the theory-practice gap is not as big as we tend to assume, but is manifest in many different ways?

### **Narrative Inquiry: Possibilities to Explore Opportunities**

I began this research project asking about teachers' perceptions of professional development. I now find myself questioning how we facilitate processes of professional development, provide opportunities and environments that foster teachers' professional growth. It seems teachers develop professionally over time anyway—experience provides that opportunity, regardless of the "quality" of that experience. How we facilitate the processes and enable teachers to reflect on and story those experiences and their position in the professional knowledge landscape becomes a key issue (Beattie, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Conle, 2000; Danielewicz, 2001; Lyons & Laboskey, 2002). Indeed that is, perhaps, one way in which we can offer quality in professional growth opportunities as stories-to-live-by are articulated, reflected on and changed in response to features on the professional knowledge landscape. Narrative Inquiry provides many possibilities to explore these concepts. It offers more than just a way to study other people and their concepts of their professionalism and professional development in

context, it also provides a process to examine, inquire into, assess and determine one's own professional and personal development (Beattie, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; , 2000; Conle, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Lyons & Laboskey, 2002; Phillion et al., 2005). Articulating the stories we live by, sharing them and listening to the stories others live by, not only informs us about how others experience their world, it allows us to listen and hear how we story our world and experience. There is a significant and growing body of knowledge and material demonstrating the potential and power of narrative research in practice across the social sciences (Cortazzi, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003; McAdams, 1993; J. Mensinga, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1988). This study adds to that body of knowledge, particularly narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), providing insight into a specific northern Queensland setting and the teachers inhabiting that landscape.

I have outlined a number of potential opportunities embedded in this research text. The list is not exhaustive. But, as with many professional development opportunities, they are there to be taken or left. Choices need to be made. A crucial choice lies in how we are going to view the experiences of the past (including institutional, systemic and individual experiences) and use them to inform our analysis of the present and help develop responses for the future incorporating considerations of where we are (place) and the relationships involved; the three dimensions of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Essentially, these are processes we tend to carry out anyway (either consciously or otherwise) when we story our experience and determine our responses to the present and future challenges of education (Bruner, 2002). We all have a capacity and tendency to story our lives and our identities within the complex settings and contexts in which we live and work. We have the capacity and processes to reflect on those stories, the characters, the relationships, the setting, and the histories (personal, systemic and institutional) and we can use those to look to the future. Narrative Inquiry offers a research process and material that recognises and utilises human experience to reflect on individual teacher's roles and participation as professionals on the education landscape. It

provides a rich resource of material for sharing with pre-service, new and experienced teachers, non-teaching educational personnel and other interested parties. More than that though, it provides teachers with an opportunity to recognise and use their stories of experience as the foundation for their professional development. It acknowledges the significance of what they have often taken for granted—their experience.

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**APPENDIX A: EXCERPTS FROM TAPE 7 MOLLY 10/05/02**

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		<i>Personal</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>	
Character Background info.		X		X			<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p><b>C:</b> So, tell me about teaching, how did you get into it? You knew I was going to ask that one!</p> <p><b>M:</b> How did I get into teaching? Well I started at school, but then didn't really want to do that after school. Family of teachers – there's a few teachers in the family and "Come on Molly, you'll be a teacher." That sort of thing but, didn't really want to be. Yeah, but you don't know what you want when you're 17. So I was there for a little while and then left. OK, then you find yourself married, married with 3 kids and you find yourself with a mortgage and you find yourself with a husband who only has, who does not have any qualifications and can only get seasonal work. So things get really tough and you know that you've got to go back to work. That's where I was, what do I do if I want to go back to work? Do I go barmaiding? J didn't want me to do that. Umm wasn't qualified to do anything else but run a pub.</p> <p><b>C:</b> Which you did for ... How long did you do that for?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Worked in the (Pub name) for 4 years and (another pub) for a couple, and then did barmaiding before that</p> <p><b>C:</b> You've been all around here. But, you travelled a fair bit too didn't you?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Yeah, we did that between pub (s) umm we went overseas and then Mum called us when we were in London and said that um actually, no I was barmaiding and left we had enough money so we went to travel J and I and then come back and run the pub, we need someone to come and run that pub. You see we were at that stage overseas too where you had to find work, or you had to come home. You know when your money runs out so I thought oh well, we'll come home and um yeah.. what are you going to do? Kids started preschool and there was, ... was the preschool teacher over there and I used to, because we lived out of town and the car was a sardine tin, and no money to go in &amp; out, in &amp; out, in &amp; out with the little kids, so I spent a lot of time at preschool, it was only half day preschool, with the other 2 and I thought "Well, I can do this." It was just an idea that you can do that, so. My grandmother died, I was with my grandmother when she died. So it was more ... there were a few things that were telling me that "Alright you want to do something, you can do it, you know that you have the strength to do this. That sort of thing." You know, it was an idea that "you might like to do this", then it was like "I know that I can do this" or</p>

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
							Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)
							that I had the strength to sit there and do that. I know that going to Uni and all that would be OK. So then you had to approach the husband ... (laughter) but it was at that stage where you knew that “ You know, oh.. Ok we have to do something here because it is getting too tough. ...
Teaching and personal life	GSS	X		X		X	<p><b>M:</b> It has hasn't it?! But it has, and that's a worry that it's been 5 years and your still here at Goondi?</p> <p><b>C:</b> Yeah? why is that?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Well you think well “Am I going to be here to what 20 years? Teaching Grade 7 with Toni?” (Laughter) ...</p> <p>Toni mumbled in the background. Molly still laughing.</p> <p><b>M:</b> Toni will be older than me though!</p>
Colleague support			X			X	<p><b>T:</b> You'll have to support me in my old age.</p> <p><b>M:</b> That's a bit of a worry, you know, that “Professionally” are you doing the right thing for you? But, it's a challenge here still, you know it's not stagnant, it's not a job that's boring here, its not ... and I think I grow every year. There's some parts that I don't like about it but, I don't like that you become this person, this cranky old woman that has to deal with lots of stuff. I don't like that and I feel like I'm changing as a person ....</p>
Work & Personal life		X			X	X	<p><b>C:</b> Because you're dealing with a whole lot of ...</p> <p><b>M:</b> Dealing with a whole lot of stuff.</p> <p><b>C:</b> Cranky with the kids? cranky with the situation?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Not with the kids, I mean not being cranky I mean just being the one that's .... Um being the bloody responsible one all the time you know like “Tuck your shirt in.” That's boring to say that 100 times a day, but.. “pick up the rubbish”, “no, you have to be organised”, “stop, think about what you're doing.” All of this mum stuff, all the time I get tired of that.</p>
Work & Personal life		X	X		X		<p><b>C:</b> And it's constant yeah?</p> <p><b>M:</b> It is constant, and I think it changes who you are, you know?</p> <p><b>C:</b> In what way?</p> <p><b>M;</b> Well you don't, you can't sit down and have a good old cackle and laugh and carry on with the kids. You can't be friends, like some teachers are friends. You know, like, I don't see that as being productive so, I don't know.</p>
(Character info)		X				X	<p><b>C:</b> So you're relationship with the kids basically has changed over the 5 years?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Very firm and fair, No, it's always been the way it is. No, my teaching style hasn't really changed. It's always been, I've got a lot of rules, but I'll work really hard for you and</p>

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
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							Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)
Loss of self through work		X	X	X	X		<p>I'll show you respect, but you've got to show me respect. It's always been like that. It's always been like that, but you get tired of it. Then you've got to go home and do it with your own kids too.</p> <p><b>C:</b> That's right. So that's where you're saying it</p> <p><b>M:</b> It's too much</p> <p><b>C:</b> It affects you as a person?</p> <p><b>M:</b> It's a bit too much. You know, sometimes as a person you think " Oh, flaming hell! When are you going to? You know Where's that Molly gone? That you used to know that now you've just about forgotten, that sort of thing.</p> <p><b>C:</b> But now you've become a teacher fulltime.</p> <p><b>M:</b> Yeah, that's crappy Chris.</p> <p><b>C:</b> That may be why I'm not there May be that's one reason!</p> <p><b>M:</b> Don't you know that? But that I find hard, but then it's very challenging and I don't like, I wouldn't really like to let it go, you know some parts, like I say, I think oh God, fancy doing this for another 10 years, but the momentum of it and the pace of it is really quite fast and you think and try to be creative all the time, trying to think about all of those things, and you think Oh can you do that? Can you sustain that for a long period of time? And then, what if you don't? Do you want to be one of these teachers that just rock up everyday, you know and ...</p> <p><b>C:</b> So, what drives you to be so creative? Because I mean you are creative in your ..</p> <p><b>M:</b> I want to be interested, I like ... it's the only time you get to have a go at it, plus, you want it to engage them too don't ya? And it's behaviour management, I don't know, I don't know.</p> <p><b>C:</b> So explain the behaviour management bit.</p> <p><b>M:</b> Well, if kids are engaged, then they're not going to be a problem, if they're interested they , you know, you set it up so that they really want to do something they can see that there's a purpose, even if the purpose is just to learn for an exam. You know, it can be so boring like that but, the other things, they've got to see why that the stuff that I'm teaching and the stuff that they're doing the activities that they're doing they're learning for a reason and you have to do it in different ways so that you can hook them in. And you've got to think of those kids that you know, we've got quite a few ESL kids and Murray kids and you've got to sort of think, well you've got to get them haven't you, You've got to get a bit interesting sometimes, you can't just be all</p> <p><b>C:</b> So, how do you do that? How do you get your ESL kids?</p>
Work and planning		X	X		X	X	

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
School		X	X	X	X		Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)
Teaching style/work			X				<p><b>M:</b> Well, you structure your assignments. Like I've done, we did the children's story book every year, or every couple of years because you know, you've got those kids that can really draw, that are good at art so, their end product with a short children's story they don't have to have too many complex sentences. They will have had to have thought about the story. It still has the generic structures. It still has everything to it, but it offers them success and that's the big thing you know. The assignment this term is not going to give that to them. But You need to, you try to give them as many as you can you know there so that those kids can think "Well I can do this" and everybody can look at them and praise them, and they do do good work and um just try and do those sorts of things with them and then um.. Well I know at Uni it was all the grouping and cooperative work and all of that sort of stuff when we went through and I do that sometimes, we do that. Toni does it more than I do, I can't hack the noise. So if I do any group things, I do stuff like Hot Potatoes where I make it like they've got 3 minutes and they have to do this, then I blow the whistle and they've got to move it on to the next one. So, it's 1 minute left, so that there's this urgency and you know they're working at it and the noise is. You know if you've got 20 minutes and they've got time, they'll loose it and they'll be talking like (whisper: in their Italian class today), you know it'll be like that and I can't hack that, I can't hack the noise, and I don't think a lot of kids can hack the noise either. I don't think that cooperative teaching is entrenched enough in the lower grades and through the school for it to be really successful in the upper school. You know you can try it with them but, they don't have too many of the skills and they loose it, and the kids that want to do really well, and we have kids that are really goal driven in Grade 7, well at the beginning of the year, they want to be dux, they want to win a major award, and they write that down, and they're working their little bums off, and that's what their goal is. And they get cheesed if they get distracted. They get cheesed if there is a behaviour management problem. They'll let you know if they don't like it and it's not fair to them. And then you've got the kids that need to listen more, so I tend to have more quieter classroom, and a lot of it is structured, and even with the art, the thing I get .... The trick is to always make them have success, to do that you've got to different things. You can't just say oh, we'll have an art day, you're going to do a painting of a landscape and just let them loose with a palette of paint. Your landscape would look like, there's a mountain a road, a tree and maybe a house somewhere, but you haven't taught them anything you know, so I teach a skill lesson and we put it together, so that when they do get their end product, its something they're proud of that mixture of ... I'm rambling; I can't remember what the question was ... (Laughter) (p3 – 5)</p>



Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
<p>Personal philosophy of teaching.</p> <p>(The richness of this data: incorporates internal glance, outward glance, uses the past and assesses the present to predict/present a hope for the future. This richness of thinking doesn't seem to be evident in R's transcript— <i>check</i>. Is this one of the characteristics of a reflective practitioner – M takes/makes the time to do this sort of reflection!)</p>		X			X		<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p><b>C:</b> So what you're saying there is the strategies you use to maintain your sanity in teaching and to keep your own interest that's basically a philosophy of your work.  <b>M:</b> Yeah, mmmm.  <b>C:</b> Have you always had that.  <b>M:</b> I don't know. We had to write our philosophy at Uni and I, I think that maybe some things have changed and that maybe that cooperative group work thing. But I find that I would like to be able to do that, I'd love, like if it was a whole school thing and it was really done and really pushed as a whole, the kids learn their role within groups and they have all of that entrenched, then I think that would be a great place to work at, I'd like that. But I don't think enough of it is done and the kids don't have the listening skills, or the ability to know that this is work time, not discussion time, or you know or they can't manage themselves enough, I don't think and it's too much. We have a really busy workload in Grade 7 here and you can't waste time.  <b>C:</b> But your work load.  <b>M:</b> We basically scare the shit out of them. I like to. We're not doing it is as much as we did. I know I'm not giving them as many assignments as I have done in other years and maybe that's the class, the class that we've got. You've got to look at that every year too. Sometimes you can really go with the classes and other times you know, but this time we've had to just stop and we've got 17 there and 33 there and those over there. And those 17 aren't great, I'm teaching them Gr 5 maths and spelling words and Toni is doing Gr 7 work over here with Maths and we ... the English and I'm going with English with this lot and we're doing it that way because they can't cope, they couldn't cope with anything other than really basic stuff. And um, so you know, we've had to tone down what we expect, our expectations of them and yet we've got 5 or 6 definitely 3 kids that are really very, very capable and able and another, maybe another 6 or 7 that are really just not far behind. And you know, but hard to manage when we have the real spread, the spread is really, there's not too much middle ground this year so we've had to sort of cut back what we'd like to.</p> <p>And when I think about how I like, because it's not so long ago that I went through Uni, you know, and what school was like, I can remember that. Tests freaked me out, so I have a bit more sympathy for kids with that, so I really like to prepare them for tests. Um, or with assignments, we have it really structured and we try and have give them at the beginning of the term what their assignments are for the term and then we do. This criteria sheet that we</p>
			X				
				X			
			X				
				X	X		
		X	X				

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
Teaching philosophy/strategies			practice)		X		Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm) do up it's a bit late, because they had to hand in one part of it today, but they'll have the whole lot for the other parts to it, it will all be there. But you like to give them that so they know what's expected of them and how to get the good mark if they want the good mark. So we structure it like that. Plus we use a research strategy so that, and we put a lot of value on the planning part so that they learn. We want them prepared for high school and that, most of the Goondi kids are and they go there and they're bored out of their brains in Grade 8. Or, they might be those kids that might have been sound students, and they're starting to get a taste, you know some of them get A's for something or some of them get B's and there's that "Oh, this is good" there's that feeling of Good-ness, so I don't really, you know, the first few times, the first year that I taught Grade 7 I had quite a lot of parents very concerned about the work and everything, but at the end of the year, they're very happy with you, you know because when I say "Yeah I expect all this term 1, but yeah, they do have to complete all these things, but the level that they have to complete them to in term 1 is going to be, the expectation is going to be very different to term 4 and if you keep, the kids have the safe (??) folders for their assignments and that, the information report that they have in term 4 looks very, very different to the one that they hand, term 1 to term 4. So, you know term 4 is the one that you're interested in. You want at the end of term 4 for kids to be organised, to be able to manage their time, to be well planned, to have that confidence to be able to know that they can handle things, and that's what you aim for. So it might be really hard here, yeah, I like the assignment handed in on time, but I'm not going to be too concerned what's in that assignment. The fact that you've managed to deal with what you've had to deal with to get it there is very important to me.... So.... Now I've forgotten what we started to talk about.... (laughter) <b>C:</b> Your philosophy and how you use it. So you have very high expectations from the beginning because you see this is as a preparatory year for high school. Is that a fair way of paraphrasing you? <b>M:</b> Hmm. And it works, it works.  <b>C:</b> Have you always had Grade 7? <b>M:</b> No, I had Grade 5 from the first year and um, there was a spot for Grade 7 and after I had Grade 5, I really liked having Grade 5 with D, um , you know we got, what do you want to do and I put down, you know, 5, 6, 7's and Adam gave me 7 and now I really don't want to move out of here now. ..., I like it and they're ready for you and you, it makes it pretty easy because they know
Character background		X	X	X			

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
							Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)
Collaborative partnership.  Seeks colleague support		X	X		X	X	that you expect a lot and they know that you expect a lot from these kids. Other classes know so, <b>C:</b> I guess that's the benefit of being here a few years. <b>M:</b> Yeah, that's exactly right. They know. You've still got to come up with things that are interesting and sometimes you wonder, you know. You don't want to be too creative, you want to be explicit enough to give them success, but you know, you can't be airy/fairy about it. <b>C:</b> So you're catering for your creativity and your interest level as well. <b>M:</b> Yeah, because a lot of people say to you: "You must really like Art, or you must be an artist, or you must like, you must do a lot of art." But I don't do anything like that at home. I don't. I never have anyway, I never ever did anything like that at home. Gillian is an influence on me, my sister, and she, but she's an art teacher and she'll do stuff like that at home all weekend, you know, but she's different. But since that, this is an area where kids that aren't so academic can achieve success, you know and if you give them the tools, if you make it interesting enough, if you put value on it, they'll appreciate it. And a lot of the stuff I don't know about, because you just get books, and you think, well I can do it, I've never done that style of painting before, but I'm sure I can. And you ring her up and she'll say "Do this, do that, don't ... or be a bit careful with this." And she gives me a few handy hints so there's a fair bit of support there. <b>C:</b> So you've really developed that avenue.
Principal's Role.		X	X	X		X	<b>M:</b> Yeah, the first year that I did it, I tell you, the first year I had Grade 5 I was very, very aware that it was my first year of teaching and that Adam would have to write a report on me and this is the late 30 woman doing it with family and knowing that "Holy shit, I've got to get a good report because this is my job, and this is, you know everybody, you know, we need this." So, knowing that you had to do stuff. So, having your room decorated like a rainforest, you know as a jungle and doing all this sort of stuff was one way of you know, getting noticed. But you still had to have good discipline and lots of other things still had to happen, but it was also another way of um, you know putting yourself there. But I'm very happy, and I wouldn't bother with that sort of thinking anymore, but, the 4 <sup>th</sup> year of prac was like that knowing that you did have to come up with the goods because you did need this job. First year of teaching was like that too, but now, I couldn't. I'm very confident and capable and comfortable with what I do here so I don't really worry too much about what other people really think. Well, I do worry. I mean I ask Toni every now and then "Are we doing the right thing?" and blah blah, you know, and you do talk to some people sometimes,

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
							Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)
Collaborative partnership					X		but there is a sense that it's OK, you don't have to worry about this. Yeah. <b>C:</b> That confidence just grows. <b>M:</b> Yeah, yeah. <b>C:</b> But then, you'd want it to wouldn't you? <b>M:</b> That's right. And I think you will get it a lot more because you're a bit more driven and you've had kids and you're a bit more driven. <b>C:</b> So what drives you? <b>M:</b> (yawn) Well, I like to do a good job and I've got kids who went to school and I had a run in with some teachers at M school when my kids were there and I was a parent and I actually sent off a letter to regional, or district office, or whatever complaining about something that had happened at M school and got myself into all sorts of shit. But I thought "No, no, what you've done is wrong and I'm." And I'm, you know a lot of parents, it's a lot to go and confront a teacher it takes a lot, and you know, I was no Einstein but it took a lot to go and say "Look, I don't agree with what you've done here." A lot of people wouldn't do that, and so I knew that you've got a responsibility and some people don't take it that seriously and I want to do this job, and I want to do this job properly because these are kids. You've got to make an effect on kids and you've got to try and somehow by the end of the year, bring out some personal best in somewhere for every kid in the class, that sense of achievement. So I'm like that because I want teachers to do it for my kids, you know what I mean. I would like to think that others are doing the same for mine. Whether they are or not, I don't know. But from that sense, I'm going to make sure that I do it right.
Character background		X		X			<b>C:</b> So really then, your personal life, your personal ... biography, or your biographical context that you work in has a huge impact on what you're doing.
Motivation						X	<b>M:</b> Probably, and you know, you could even go right back and say "You know, my mother was very, very independent and very strong. She worked all the time. She worked for her family, but as a role model she was there and very independent and very strong and if you're going to do something, you do it properly and all that sort of stuff. Well, I totally ignored that when I was in my teenage years, but you can see that that was formative. She was a strong woman, and she still is a strong woman, so that thing maybe has had an impact as well.
Biographical context		X	X	X		X	<b>C:</b> So what other factors have shaped your professional growth?

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
Personal/ professional growth			X				<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p><b>M:</b> Oh well, being at University a second time round. Actually, some lecturers the first lecturer I had, I loved her I thought she was beautiful. She was a really, really big woman but very, very, she was wonderful, very supportive and um challenging and I thought she was great. I listened to her a lot.</p> <p><b>C:</b> What was she ....</p> <p><b>M:</b> She taught education and I don't know, some of them said that she got kicked out because it gets a bit political up there, I don't know, but she upset some people and she left. But I don't know the story, but she left after first or second year, um there were a couple of others up there. Old E, he was alright, he was OK to listen to. I Um, I did all science subjects S. was a really good lecturer to have, you know really focused and inspiring, plus good people too.</p> <p><b>C:</b> So a lot of your uni experience was relevant.</p> <p><b>M:</b> Yeah, yeah it was and even, I listened to a lot and I did my readings (laughter) and I think a bit of it was from, some bits I wouldn't worry too much about, but especially I think in first year, I read. And we were with a group, had a really good group of mature age students and we were all dead set so keen, and we use to have all these fantastic discussions and question. It was really wonderful. I would really do it again, I can't believe that you read what you read and that you talked about what you talked about, not at all, but you know, it was a good atmosphere, you know, and it was challenging and I want that. I want to still be challenged a little bit, but I suppose that's a bit different now. The challenge is to come up with something creative, to come up with something that every child is going to have some success with at some time. You know that's the challenge now.</p> <p><b>C:</b> So then that's since you've been in school that that has come in ...</p> <p><b>M:</b> Um, well, who you work with. D was really good to start with. He was excellent to be paired with straight away. He was excellent to be paired with straight away. He was very supportive and let you um, you know I know that I was put with D so that he could keep an eye on me and so he could guide me, you know, he's very experienced, but he let me do stuff aye? He let me, you know we worked out very quickly, he did Science and I did the Art and we did that sort of sharing after a term. That's what we were doing sort of thing, and he so he was, and he was very structured, he had the homework sheet, we had this and we had that we had... so I learned that it can't all be airy fairy, it has to be well planned, it has to be, you know, building towards giving them a lesson that they need to do or whatever, you sort of knew that. He's like that.</p>
University		X		X			
Professional colleagues			X		X		

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
Principal's Role		X					<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p>Adam is um a big influence, and I think he was very supportive in the first year I was here. I used to call him the ghost who walks because he would just be there. You'd turn around and there he would be. It was a bit Uh (inhale of breath), but he was checking, checking, checking everything was alright. And I had a couple of kids in that year that were really tough. One kid was suspended, he ran away. You know I've been in his office in tears, you know crying and carrying on because of that. But you work through it and he's very, very good to work for. I've got a lot of respect for him and I think, but then you know he's just a man too and I won't be intimidated by him. He's just someone who's the same age as you for God's sake, you know really, he is, so you shouldn't be intimidated. You should show respect, but he's just a bloke, you know. There's that line, but I'm not going to be, you know grovelling at your feet. Excuse me, we're a bit equal here. That sort of thing.</p> <p><b>C:</b> And do you think that's a different attitude that others on staff don't have?  <b>M:</b> I would never have been like that, as a 20 year old. No way! No way! Knowing that you can deal with him gives you that " Yeah well alright, I know that you're a principal, and I know that and you've worked very hard. But you know, I've been doing other things and I've got, I can, you know, my value is not less just because you have more qualifications and you make more money. It's that sense of..  <b>C:</b> I'm OK.  <b>M:</b> Yeah, that's right  <b>C:</b> A mutual respect for ...  <b>M:</b> and he expects a lot and I don't blame him. I think his philosophy is not too bad. But he's very willing to change, you know he will listen to you and he lets me do things. I don't think he's said no to me too many times. I've gone and said I want to do this. "I want to do this with the class, what do you reckon?" "You're OK. I'll get you some money from somewhere and you can do this." He's been very supportive and that's been a really good thing.</p> <p>I've worked with other teachers in Grade 7. Toni was in Grade 6 and I was in Grade 7 with another teacher for a few years and he had a lot more of experience than me, and I was doing all of the work. And so there was a sense of "Flamin hell!" You know, you can do stuff. And um Toni is really good to work with, there's a good balance with learning styles and teaching styles you know, we both have beliefs, similar beliefs and like things to go the</p>
Principal's Role			X	X			
			X	X			
			X		X		
		X					
			X	X	X		

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
Collaborative partnerships			X	X	X		<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p>same way and the kids are another, similar age. It's good now. We share a lot of</p> <p><b>C:</b> So there are a lot of life things in common with you..</p> <p><b>M:</b> I think so, but there's other teachers that you don't see too much, you know, you don't see too often, because you really don't, there's 14 here, you don't see them too much. And they're very different from you, but I think they're all, most of them around here, with the exception of about 2 or 3, that really want to do good stuff, so you know...</p> <p><b>C:</b> So is it a good community?</p> <p><b>M:</b> yeah, I think it's a good community. Sometimes it gets a bit picky and there's, gets a bit contentious every now and then but, that's because your job's very demanding, I think people don't. It's like this nonsense you know, you've got to give and take a little bit. You know yeah "I might have snapped at you the other day, but I snapped at you because of this, this and this and this. And couldn't you have just understood that. You know you're not perfect and sometimes you'll do crappy things to me, you know, and I'm not going to go and, you know, it's sort of," but mostly, it's a really good place to work, this school.</p> <p><b>C:</b> So you use your collegial relationships that you establish to challenge yourself?</p> <p><b>M:</b> A little bit.</p> <p><b>C:</b> Is that the major impact that, on you developing professionally, or is there any particular professional development activity that you ....</p>
Professional Development  Example	Brisbane	X	X	X			<p><b>M:</b> Um ( pause) Oh, the Apple school was probably the most formative thing.</p> <p><b>C:</b> That was the one in Brisbane?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Yeah. If you're looking at a professional development experience, that was probably the most formative. Um, thinking that. I know that when I went, that I wouldn't advocate every single thing that they did. When we went down there, I didn't see any Maths on the board. They might have done maths, I think they did maths 2 times a week, and I know why, because it was timetabling, I can see that with the things that we're trying to do that um, integrated work, and um working in teams, I can see that timetabling is a major issue, and um that's why they would have had like Maths maybe until lunch time 2 days a week and then the other days, and that's all they would have done, but it didn't seem much chalk and talk, and I still reckon you've got to have chalk and talk and this is the rule, learn it, because if you learn this rule, it will get you success. You know, and there's some things, you've got</p>

Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
					X		<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p>to be explicit. You've got to tell kids how to get that success; otherwise, it's not a secret. If you keep it a secret, how are they going to learn? Assume it? It's got to be spoken and a way it's spoken is on the board with you talking and so that's got to happen. But I didn't see too much of that happening down there. And, but the other things that I saw were really good, so I know that there's got to be a balance of the two but this was very, very good the way they had computers in use, the kids working, the integrated work, all of that, it was good to see it in action. It was good to see, the teachers worked on their ... they had quite a lot of scope, I think and they had quite a lot of room to move with their units, but they all worked together as a team and came up with things and I like that idea. Both of us, we did that together, so that's um ....</p> <p><b>C:</b> And then you can build on that then especially if you've got....</p> <p><b>M:</b> Yeah, like I said, I wouldn't, it wasn't like, I didn't come back a raging convert for whatever, but it was like , and you still think about it and you still sort of ... well, you know we could do something like that here and we could you know, still use it and that's probably like the only professional development... You know all the computer work helps you and helps you get your job done, and helps you get kids switched on to the computer and the technology and that helps drive and get your knowledge out there that you want the kids taught. You know it's a tool to do that, um and then a tool to help them present it, but you know, we don't have too much.</p>
Productive Pedagogies		X				X	<p><b>M:</b> Productive Pedagogies, I'll be looking forward to that.</p> <p><b>C:</b> What are you expecting from that, do you know? Do you have any ideas?</p> <p><b>M:</b> I'm hoping it will be good. I hope it will be good. I don't know, maybe, sometimes I think sometimes I think with professional development you just need it to cement things in your head, sometimes, and then to challenge you sometimes. You want to be informed a little bit, you want to know that "oh yeah, maybe I should try that, or maybe I've been forgetting that because I've been too busy concentrating on something else." So you always want some knowledge at the end of the day. Whether or not it helps to make your job better, or it informs you or consolidates what you already know, you want something from it. You don't want to sit there, because the worst thing is to sit there and think "Oh well, I'm not going to use this and I've just wasted a whole day that I could have done all this other stuff with, because time is your big, bloody enemy, you know, you don't have enough of it. And I think it will be pretty good. And you know there'll be a lot of things that you go "Oh yeah, we do that, yeah, we do that. Oh, I might think about that. Oh we don't really do enough of</p>



Issue/ Plot/ Theme	Setting	Interaction		Continuity			Excerpt from interview transcript
		<i>Personal</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>	
				X			<p>Interview setting: Molly's classroom after school (3:20 – 4:00 pm)</p> <p>that.” I think it will be like that for me, but I hope that with all of us going that it might put a few light bulbs on for some others. So I don't know, with us, I think for the two of us it will be a kick in the head and readjust, you know, that sort of a thing.</p> <p><b>C:</b> It will be good to see the results afterwards.</p> <p><b>M:</b> Well, I hope it's like that. There's nothing worse than a waste of time.</p> <p><b>C:</b> And that happens,</p> <p><b>M:</b> Yeah, yeah it does.</p>
Research Process		X			X	X	<p><b>C:</b> You're not rambling. I can't remember the question.</p> <p><b>M:</b> Oh, how are you going to listen to all this Chris?</p> <p><b>C:</b> Oh, I'll come back to it ..</p> <p><b>M:</b> Working through the mud. The murky bits of Molly's brain. That's dangerous!</p> <p><b>C:</b> There's a good title. (Laughter). Well, you've given me plenty of time today, plenty of material there.</p> <p><b>M:</b> A lot of waffle. Toni has marked all her homework in all of that.</p>

## APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE ASPECT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Narrative Aspect	Issue/Plot/Theme	Tape Reference Number	Ruby Data source (Tape no.)	Narelle Data source (Tape no.)	Molly Data source (Tape no.)	Toni Data source (Tape no.)	Adam Data source (Tape no.)	Mark Data source (Tape no.)	Jane Data source (Tape no.)	Chris Data source (Tape no.)
<b>Character</b>	Background info	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8,11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22; 19	2, 4, 12, 14	4, 8, 15	3, 7	3 (3yrs as EA), 11; 19	5	6, 13	22	
	Personal PD motivation	11.1, 22;19				11.1; 19			22	
<b>Setting</b>	Staff	2, 7, 5, 12, 13, 14, 16.11,18.14	2, 12, 14, 16		7, 9	9	5, 18.14	13	24	
	School	2,3, 4, 7,8, 12, 13,14, 15	2, 4, 12, 14, 16.11	2, 4, 8, 15	3, 7,	3		13	24.(28-30)	
	Ed Q.	5, 6, 18.9.10; 19.4				19.4	5, 18.9.10	6	24:(24.25. 26.31)	
<b>Plots/Themes</b>										
<i>Teacher's Work: Time issues</i>	Time	2,3, 4,5, 6, 8, 11, 12,14, 17.10, 17.15; 18.9.12; 19.9	2, 4, 12, 14	2, 4, 8	17.10, 17.15	3, 11; 19.9	5; 18.9.12	6	24.(33)	
	Work & Personal Life	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17.6.8.10.13; 19.18; 21.4	2, 4, 12, 14, 16	2, 4, 8, 15	3, 7, 17	3; 19.18; 21.4S		6		
	Multiple roles	19.7.8.15.17				19.7.8.15. 17				
	Aides/ Time	2, 11	2			11				
<i>Principal's Role</i>	Principal Role	4, 5, 7, 8, 9,11,12, 14, 1517.5.6.7.8; 18.3.5;	4, 12, 14	4, 8, 15	7, 9, 17	9, 11	5; 18.3.5;		22, (24.30)	
	Planning	1, 2, 4, 8, 10.5, 12, 17.8	1, 2, 4, 12	1, 2, 4, 8	1, 10.5, 17.8	1, 10.5	1			
	Man age chan cycle	Teacher competency cycle	18.1.14.15; 5;				5; 18.1.14.15		24	

Narrative Aspect	Issue/Plot/Theme	Tape Reference Number	Ruby Data source (Tape no.)	Narelle Data source (Tape no.)	Molly Data source (Tape no.)	Toni Data source (Tape no.)	Adam Data source (Tape no.)	Mark Data source (Tape no.)	Jane Data source (Tape no.)	Chris Data source (Tape no.)
	PD Process (lever t'chers)	18.6.13.8					18.6.13.8			
	Change process	18.6.7.10.14					18.6.7.10.14			
	Time & staff	18.9.12					18.9.12			
	Autocrat/Benign Dictator	2,4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17.8	2,4, 12	8	7, 17	11	5, PS to letter		24.(30)	
<i>Professional Development</i>	PD – Definition	4,5, 8, 14, 15, 17.15; 18.1.2.11.12.13	4, 14	8, 15	17.15		5; 18.1.2.11.12.13		24	
	PD & Ed Qld.	5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14; 19	12, 14		9	9; 19	5	6, 13	24.25***	
	PD – School plans	1, 4,5, 11, 16.2, 17; 18.4	4, 16		17	11	1, 5, 18.4	6	24	
	PD – Resourcing	17,18.11; 19.4.9.10.14;			17	19.4.9.10.14;	18.11			
	PD – General (delivery)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17.15	2, 4, 12, 16	1, 2, 4, 8	1, 3, 17.15	1, 3	1, 5	6, 13		
	PD – implementation	2, 5, 8, 10.8, 16.3, 17	2, 16,	2, 8	10.8, 17	10.8	5		24.2***; 24.21	
	PD & Supply teaching	2, 4, 10.3, 10.4, 11, 14	2, 4, 14	2, 4	10.3, 10.4	10.3, 10.4, 11			24*	
	PD – Funding	4, 5, 6	4	4			5	6		
	PD – work & class time	2, 4, 10.3, 10.4, 11, 15, 17.12	2, 4	2, 4, 15	10.3, 10.4, 11, 17	10.4, 10.4, 11				
	PD -- motivation (why ?)	11.1, 17.15; 19			17.15	11.1; 19				
	PD –T's attitudes/roles	11.4, 13, 15; 18.2; 19.5.6.10.11		15		11.4PD; 19..5.6.10.11	18.2	13	24	
	PD – reflection & PD	4, 15, 16.8	4, 16.8	15						
	PD – EQ accountability	4,15,8,1,5,18,24	4	4,15,8	CA	CA	1,5,18		24.28	
	Seminars (past exp.)	2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12	2, 4, 12	2, 4, 8	7		5	6	24	
Curric before pedagogy	17 notes				17		Notes Oct.		24(cur & ped)	Notes Oct.

Narrative Aspect	Issue/Plot/Theme	Tape Reference Number	Ruby Data source (Tape no.)	Narelle Data source (Tape no.)	Molly Data source (Tape no.)	Toni Data source (Tape no.)	Adam Data source (Tape no.)	Mark Data source (Tape no.)	Jane Data source (Tape no.)	Chris Data source (Tape no.)	
	Change	2,3,5, 6, 8, 13,15, 17.9.14; 19.7; 20.11.12.13; 21.5	2	2, 8, 15	3; 17.9.14; 21.5	3; 19.7; 20.11.12.13; 21.5	5;	6, 13;	20.11.12.13; 24.27		
	PD – Private Providers	1, 5, 6, 13, 15		15		1	1, 5	1, 6, 13			
	Technology (t'ing, planning – internet)	1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13; 17.12; 19.7.8.9; 20.9		1, 4, 8	1; 17.12	1, 11; 19.7.8.9; 20.9	1, 5	13	20.9; 24		
	Past PD experience in other roles: EA, DP, parent, a principal	3, 7, 11, 14	14		7	3, 11			24		
<i>Collaborative partnerships</i>	PD – Networking outside school context	3, 4, 5, 8, 9; 18.2.11.12; 20.5; 21.3.5		4, 8	3, 7, 9; 20.5; 21.3.5	3, 9; 20.5; 21.3.5	5; 18.2.11.12				
	Professional Collaboration & PD (Collaborative/colleague support in school)	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,13, 15 14, 15, 16, 17; 19.2	4, 12, 14 14, 16	4, 8, 15 15	3, 9, 10.1, 10.3, 10.7 17	3, 9, 10.1, 10.3, 10.7, 11 19.2	5	13			
	Success factors & difficulties	11.11 – 11.13; 16; 17.10.11.12	16.10		17.10.11.12;	11.11, 11.12, 11.13					
<i>Curriculum Alliance</i>	Process	General comments	1, 3, 9, 10.1, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 20, 21,			1, 3, 9, 10, 20, 21	1, 3, 9, 10, 20, 21	1	20, 22		
		Collaboration	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5; 10.1, 10.3, 10.7; 20.5; 21			9, 10; 20.5; 21	9, 10, 20.5; 21				
		Success factors	9.2, 9.3, 9.7, 9.8; 21			9; 21	9; 21			20,22	
		Big Picture Vision	20.10			20.10	20.10			20.10	
		Principal's role	9.3, 9.5, 9.7, 9.9, 10.2, 10.3; 20.4			9	9; 20.4				
		Membership	9.8, 9.9; 20.7.8.5			9; 20.7.8.5	9; 20.7.8.5				
	Product	3, 9.4, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.6, 10.7, 20, 21				3, 9, 10, 20, 21	3, 9, 10, 20, 21		20, 22		

Narrative Aspect	Issue/Plot/Theme	Tape Reference Number	Ruby Data source (Tape no.)	Narelle Data source (Tape no.)	Molly Data source (Tape no.)	Toni Data source (Tape no.)	Adam Data source (Tape no.)	Mark Data source (Tape no.)	Jane Data source (Tape no.)	Chris Data source (Tape no.)
	Applica tion of product	School	9.5, 9.6, 17.9, 20		9, 17.9,20	9,20	1		20	
		District	9.4, 9.9,20		9	9	1			
		Sustainability	9.10; 20.13		9; 20.13	9; 20.13				
	Ed Q Directions	9.4, 9.6, 9.7; 20		9; 20	9; 20					
	Curr. All. As PD	3, 9.1		1, 3, 9	1, 3, 9	1				
	Benefits of Process	21.2		21.2	21.2					
	Resources	21.5; 20		21.5; 20	20;21.5					
	Impact on class work	10,21.1		21.1						
<i>Integrated Units and OBE</i>	Outcomes Based Education & Integrated Units	2.5, 12, 13, 16, 17.6.7.8; 18.5.13 20.5.19	2, 12, 16	2	17.6.7.8; 20.5.19	5; 18.5.13	13	20.5.19; 24		
	Productive Pedagogies (expectations, reactions, process, problems, predictions, success, failure)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10.8, 10.9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.3; 18.16; 19.2.3.5.6.4	2, 4, 12, 14, 16	2, 4, 8, 15	3, 7, 10.8, 10.9; 17.3	3, 10.8, 10.9, 11; 19.2.3.4.5.6	1, 5; 18.16	*6, 13	24.20.	
<i>Productive Pedagogies</i>	Delivery	17.1.2; 18.18.19; 19			17	19	18.18.19		24.20	
	Implementation	16.1, 16.3, 16.7, 16.15, 16.16; 16.3-6; 17.1.3.4.5.7.9; 18..17.18.19; 19	16		17.1.3.4.5.7.9	19	18.17.18.19		24.21	
<i>Teachers &amp; professionalism</i>	Professionalism attitudes to.	2; 19.5.6.10.11;	2	2		19.5.6.10.11;			24.25	
<b>Other topics</b>	Specialist teachers	3			3	3			24	
	Testing	4, 8	4	4, 8					24	
	Meeting Student Needs	4, 7, 12	4, 12	4	7					
	Student Teacher	1, 3, 11; 19.18; 17; 20.8.14			1, 17, 20.8.14;	1, 3, 11, 19.18; 20.8.14				
	Parent r'ship	16	16							
	Student achievements	8, 12	12	8						

Narrative Aspect	Issue/Plot/Theme	Tape Reference Number	Ruby Data source (Tape no.)	Narelle Data source (Tape no.)	Molly Data source (Tape no.)	Toni Data source (Tape no.)	Adam Data source (Tape no.)	Mark Data source (Tape no.)	Jane Data source (Tape no.)	Chris Data source (Tape no.)
	Research Process	1, 3, 7, 8, 10.5, 12, 15, 16, 17.14	1, 12, 16	1, 8, 15	1, 7, 10.5; 17.14	1, 10.5; PS to letter	1	1	1	1, 3 (social interaction) ref: <i>Conversational PD examples -- community of practice.doc</i>
<i>Research Process</i>	Clichés & common phrases “No time” “No life”	3, 8, 15, 17.15	2	2, 8, 15	17.15	3				Journal 26/10
<b>Language</b>	Importance of common language	5, 15, 17.3.4		15	17.3.4;		5			

Notes:

\*6 – Productive Pedagogies: Noticeable for its absence in discussion (Mark). A direct question re Productive Pedagogies was not answered.

Molly talks a lot about her teaching strategies in # 7. It is rich data that reflects a constant interaction between personal & social, past, present and future.

Adam in #5 demonstrates a deep understanding of EQ directions and provides insight into the difficulties in implementing policy directions in practical terms at the school level.

Mark #6 provides a good contrast to Adam and his understanding of broad Ed Q issues. Mark appears to get his info from media sources and Ed Views – doesn’t appear to search and reflect on policy documents etc. as Adam does. Mark demonstrates a love of learning and practical activities that involve students. Rich past data – “seen it all”.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS USED IN GREENWAY STATE SCHOOL AND EDUCATION QUEENSLAND**

**Curriculum Alliance:** An initiative originating from the Greenway staff endorsed by the district principal's association who sourced funding for the program. Involved year 6 and year 7 teachers from several primary schools in the district working cooperatively to create curriculum plans using the new syllabus documents and meeting the criteria for integrated curriculum units proposed by Education Queensland. The opportunity also enabled the teachers to work in collaboration with several High school teachers so that they were aware of the work being covered in year 7, thus reducing the likelihood of replicating year 7 work in Year 8 (a way to address some middle schooling issues across schools in the district).

**Ed Qld (EQ):** Education Queensland – the State Education Department that directs the Queensland government school system.

**Ed Views:** Official publication for the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts. Delivered to all staff rooms on a fortnightly basis and usually left on staff room tables for teachers to read. In 2002 it usually included a comment from the Director General of Education about a relevant issue of the day, staff vacancies and appointments throughout Education Queensland, relevant EQ articles and advertisements for educational programs, camp sites, resources and other items of interest.

**EDSCO:** An educational resource supplier who advertises resources in Ed Views

**IDEAS:** A joint project of Education Queensland and University of Southern Queensland. Used to facilitate school development revitalisation processes including developing school plans and meeting accountability requirements. Further information available: <http://education.qld.gov.au/staff/learning/ideas/>

**NAIDOC:** \*NAIDOC week acknowledges and celebrates the history, culture and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian community. NAIDOC week is usually celebrated in the first full week of July. Further information available: [www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/naidoc/about.html](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/naidoc/about.html)

**Productive Pedagogies:** An outcome of the QSRLS and “is the name given to a multidimensional model of classroom practice. It is recognised as a framework for professional development that focuses on classroom practices and equity concerns in education. The four dimensions of productive pedagogies are: intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference” (Queensland, 2006a) Further information available from: [http://education.qld.gov.au/public\\_media/reports/curriculum-framework/qsrls/html/keyi\\_pp.html](http://education.qld.gov.au/public_media/reports/curriculum-framework/qsrls/html/keyi_pp.html)

**PD:** Professional Development

**QSRLS:** “Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) - an observation study of classroom practices commissioned by Education Queensland and conducted by researchers from the School of Education, The University of Queensland, from 1998 to 2000. The final report makes recommendations on improvements to the quality of: teaching, learning, assessment, leadership, management and administration.” (Queensland, 2006b) Further information available: [http://education.qld.gov.au/public\\_media/reports/curriculum-framework/qsrls/](http://education.qld.gov.au/public_media/reports/curriculum-framework/qsrls/) -

- TAFE: Technical and Further Education colleges for post-secondary vocational study.
- THRASS: Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills, a program adopted by the school in 2000 as a school wide initiative based on the work by Davies, A., & Ritchie, D. (1998).
- TRS: Acronym used in Queensland schools for Teacher Relief Scheme – funding allocation for covering teachers absent from school for sickness or professional development purposes.
- You Can Do It: An educational program focussing on student achievement and social and emotional well being adopted by a number of primary schools in the Greenway district, including Greenway State School.. Further information:  
<http://www.youcandoit.com.au/about.html>