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2004

## Action research as a professional development model for the teaching of writing in early stage one/stage one classrooms

Lisa Kervin  
*University of Wollongong*

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***Action Research as a  
Professional Development Model  
for the teaching of writing in  
Early Stage One / Stage One classrooms***

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirement for the award of the degree

***Doctor of Philosophy***

From the

**University of Wollongong**

by

***Lisa K. Kervin***

Bachelor of Education (Hons)

Education  
2004

## **Certification**

I, Lisa K. Kervin, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Lisa K. Kervin  
16<sup>th</sup> June 2004

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## Dedication

In loving memory of

Amy Byrum  
*1996 – 2003*

who loved to write  
and taught us so much about how to teach writing

---

## Acknowledgements

This thesis is over 90 000 words. 'Thank you' is just two words which need to be said to so many people without whom these words would not have been created.

To my supervisors, *Dr Jan Turbill* and *Dr Phil Fitzsimmons*.

Thank you for your continued guidance, support, encouragement and friendship over the past years. It has been a pleasure and a privilege working with both of you.

To *Cheryle Brennan*.

Thank you for sharing the vision with me and for your continued support both personally and professionally.

To *Kevin Devine, Winnie Cameron, Cassie Miranda* and *Joanne MacFetters*.

I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work within such an inspirational, dedicated and empowering leadership team.

To my teaching colleagues, my friends, who I have worked with at *Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School*.

Thank you to the teachers who participated in this inquiry; for your time and openness.

To *Brian Cambourne, Pat Farrar* and *Wayne Rice*.

Thank you for your many hours reading draft chapters and your encouragement as my 'critical friends'.

To all my family and friends.

Thank you for your continued love, patience and understanding. Special thanks to my beloved nanna (Marjorie Murray) for her frequent phone calls of encouragement, and to my sister (Kristy Kervin) for listening when I needed to talk.

To *Jeff Vardy*.

Thank you for believing in me and your patience with my frequent absences both emotionally and physically. Thanks also for the endless cups of tea, shoulder rubs and dinners! I still can't believe you married me in the middle of all this!

## **Abstract**

The literature addressing the professional development of teachers is abundant, presenting many different components of what constitutes “successful” professional development. An investigation of the literature suggests that the overwhelming tendency has been to provide professional development opportunities for teachers’ external to their classroom and school setting, and frequently neglecting to consider the individual teacher’s professional needs.

The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate how the various components of “successful” professional development could be used to support the professional development of teachers as they focused on their teaching of writing within their own classrooms. Specifically, it sought to explore: “Action Research as a Professional Development Model for the teaching of writing in Early Stage One/Stage One classrooms”. The way writing has been taught within the inquiry school over the past ten years was investigated, as was the previous professional development experiences of each of the six participant teachers. The principles of the action research process (Kemmins and McTaggart, 1988:11) were used to frame the professional development opportunities provided for each participant teacher in their classroom. The nature of the relationship between each teacher’s professional development experiences and their professional growth were explored. Throughout this process the teachers engaged with the researcher through semi-structured interviews and reflective journal entries. The researcher compiled field notes from classroom visits to support such data.

In response to Patton’s (1982, 1990) call for “methodological appropriateness” several research methodologies have been drawn upon in the design of this inquiry. Ethnographic principles (Merriam, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Van Manen, 1990) were used when investigating the current practices of the school with regard to the teaching of writing. A case study research design (Sturman, 1999; Burns, 1998; Stake, 1995; Guba and Lincoln, 1981) was employed for each of the six participant teacher case studies, which allowed for contextually embedded analysis employing multiple methods. One such method was Narrative Inquiry which involved transforming the collected data into “field texts”

which then allowed the individual teacher narratives to be told (Connelly and Clandinin, 1998, 1990). The constant data analysis not only informed the research focus but also continued to guide the ongoing professional development experiences.

The grounded theory that emerged from the inquiry identified key components of a successful in-school professional development experience. These components are mutually inclusive. The importance of the *school professional culture* was found to be critical, along with the components of time, relationships, the location for professional development, external influences and the need for an in-school facilitator. The grounded theory also highlighted the importance of focusing firstly on *practice* before *pedagogy*. In the beginning the teachers needed outside support as they focused on their practice: the ‘what’ of teaching writing. Once participants felt more in control of their immediate situation they then presented the need to focus on pedagogy: the ‘how’ of teaching writing. The teachers all responded to having someone work with them in their classrooms on their individual professional needs through *purposeful interactions*. The relationships between those involved in the experience moved from *mentoring to coaching*. Whilst each of the participant teachers worked with the researcher at an individual mentoring level within their classroom, eventually a “*community of learners*” emerged amongst the teachers within their grade groupings as they expanded their employment of *personal tools* and network for professional coaching, dialogue and support.



## Table of Contents

<b>CERTIFICATION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TABLE OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>FOUNDING THE JOURNEY: FROM ASSUMPTIONS TO REALITY .....</b>	<b>16</b>
PURPOSE OF THE INQUIRY .....	16
QUESTIONS THAT FRAME THE INQUIRY.....	16
ESTABLISHING THE INQUIRY GENRE .....	17
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INQUIRY .....	17
The call for a ‘balanced writing pedagogy’ .....	20
CONNECTING WITH MY STORY .....	25
Personal Background .....	26
SETTING THE SCENE: MY STORY WITHIN THE INQUIRY SCHOOL .....	28
Locus of the Inquiry .....	28
Professional Background .....	29
Background to the Inquiry at a School level.....	31
A Ten Year Overview of Professional Development Opportunities in the Inquiry School.....	32
THE BEGINNING OF OUR JOURNEY .....	38
Theoretical Location .....	38
Inquiry Design .....	39
THESIS OVERVIEW: THE JOURNEY TO COME... ..	40
Chapter 2: Beginning our Journey: What Others Before us Have Found	40
Chapter 3: The Grounding for our Journey.....	41
Chapter 4: The Process for moving from Collected Data to Descriptive Story with Interpretive Comment .....	41
Chapter 5: Teacher Stories.....	41
Chapter 6: Bringing the Journey to a Close: A Model For In-school Teacher Professional Development .....	42
Chapter 7: Theory for Future Practice .....	42
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>BEGINNING OUR JOURNEY:.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>WHAT OTHERS BEFORE US HAVE FOUND.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>THE NOTION OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE.....</b>	<b>46</b>

<b>THE NOTION OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE.....</b>	<b>47</b>
‘CHANGE FRAMES’ .....	48
Initiation of the change .....	50
Implementation of the change.....	50
Institutionalisation of the change .....	51
Outcome of the change .....	52
THE CALL FOR ‘REAL’ CHANGE .....	53
THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE TEACHER .....	55
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>59</b>
DEFINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....	59
Characteristics of unsuccessful Professional Development.....	63
Characteristics of successful Professional Development.....	66
Models of Professional Development.....	70
<b>CHANGE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN LITERACY</b> <b>.....</b>	<b>76</b>
GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM .....	77
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOR LITERACY TEACHING .....	80
The Frameworks Program.....	80
Good First Year Teaching.....	82
<b>ACTION RESEARCH AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL</b> <b>FOR TEACHING WRITING.....</b>	<b>84</b>
DEFINING ACTION RESEARCH.....	84
Action Research and Teachers .....	86
Action Research and Reflective Practice .....	87
Action Research and Collaboration .....	89
<b>THE ‘PUZZLE’ OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE</b> <b>LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>92</b>
Teacher’s conceptions of the profession.....	96
Long-term timeframe .....	96
Individual needs of the teachers.....	96
Working from what teachers already know .....	96
School context.....	97
Personal relationships .....	97
Emphasising the teacher as learner .....	97
Teacher as researcher .....	97
Action Research – acting on practice.....	97
Providing input from sources of knowledge .....	98
Opportunity to question .....	98
Creating a community / collaborative workplace .....	98
Reflection.....	99
Feedback from ‘stakeholders’ .....	99
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>101</b>

<b>THE GROUNDING FOR OUR JOURNEY .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>102</b>
Ethnography.....	105
Action Research.....	106
Case Study .....	111
Narrative Inquiry.....	114
Grounded Theory .....	117
MAKING CONTACT WITH THE ‘STORY MAKERS’ .....	120
CREATING THE ‘STORIES’: COLLECTING THE DATA .....	123
Reflective Journal .....	125
Structured and Semi-structured Interviews.....	126
Anecdotal Comments / Field Notes .....	129
CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING OUR ‘STORIES’ .....	132
Kate .....	136
Amanda .....	136
Michael .....	137
RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST .....	137
Fairness .....	141
Ontological Authenticity.....	143
Educative Authenticity.....	144
Catalytic Authenticity .....	144
Tactical Authenticity.....	145
<b>OUR JOURNEY .....</b>	<b>146</b>
PHASE ONE: ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE SCHOOL AND TEACHERS.....	146
PHASE TWO: INITIAL PROJECT AIMS                                 TOWARDS A BALANCED WRITING PEDAGOGY.....	148
PHASE THREE: EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECT .....	154
ACTION RESEARCH AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING .....	154
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>THE PROCESS OF MOVING FROM COLLECTED DATA TO DESCRIPTIVE STORY WITH INTERPRETIVE COMMENT .....</b>	<b>163</b>
CONCERN FOR ‘VOICE’ .....	164
<b>THE NOTION OF ‘MULTIPLE LENSES’ .....</b>	<b>166</b>
ACTIVE RESPONSE.....	168
CONTEXT .....	171
MOMENTS OF CHANGE.....	174
LANGUAGE .....	177
NARRATIVE PROCESSES .....	181
<b>FROM ‘MULTIPLE LENSES’ TO DESCRIPTIVE STORY WITH INTERPRETIVE COMMENT .....</b>	<b>185</b>

<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>TEACHER STORIES .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>KATE'S 2001 PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY .....</b>	<b>190</b>
INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY – KATE.....	218
Kate's Understanding of the Writing Process.....	218
Professional Development Experiences and their Impact .....	220
Impact of these experiences on Kate's teaching of writing .....	222
<b>AMANDA'S 2001 PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY .....</b>	<b>225</b>
INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY – AMANDA .....	248
Amanda's Understanding of the Writing Process.....	248
Professional Development Experiences and their Impact .....	249
Impact of these experiences on Amanda's teaching of writing .....	250
<b>MICHAEL'S 2001 PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY .....</b>	<b>255</b>
INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY – MICHAEL.....	293
Michael's Understanding of the Writing Process .....	293
Professional Development Experiences and their Impact .....	294
Impact of these experiences on Michael's teaching of writing.....	295
<b>BRINGING THE TEACHER STORIES TOGETHER IN LIGHT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>298</b>
ACTION RESEARCH AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING IN EARLY STAGE ONE / STAGE ONE CLASSROOMS.....	298
HOW HAS WRITING BEEN TAUGHT WITHIN EARLY STAGE ONE AND STAGE ONE CLASSROOMS OVER THE PAST TEN (10) YEARS AT THE INQUIRY SCHOOL?.....	299
WHAT STRUCTURES, ACTIVITIES, PROCESSES AND PEOPLE PARTNERSHIPS CAN BE IDENTIFIED WITHIN EARLY STAGE ONE / STAGE ONE TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES? .....	302
WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THESE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES UPON THEIR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING? .....	306
<b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>BRINGING THE JOURNEY TO A CLOSE:.....</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>A GROUNDED THEORY FOR IN-SCHOOL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>THE THEORY OF IN-SCHOOL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>315</b>
SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL CULTURE .....	315
SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL CULTURE .....	316
Time .....	317
Relationships.....	319
The location for Professional Development .....	320

Stakeholders' Impact .....	321
In-School Facilitator .....	321
PURPOSEFUL INTERACTION: THE USE OF ACTION RESEARCH .....	323
PERSONAL TOOLS .....	325
Reflective Practice .....	325
FROM PRACTICE TO PEDAGOGY .....	327
The teachers as individuals .....	327
Focus on practice .....	329
Focus on Pedagogy .....	331
From Individual to Collective .....	332
Mentor Relationships .....	332
Cognitive Coaching .....	336
COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS .....	338
SHARED PEDAGOGY .....	341
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN .....</b>	<b>344</b>
<b>FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE .....</b>	<b>344</b>
SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL CULTURE .....	344
Time .....	344
Relationships .....	345
Location for Professional Development .....	345
External Influences .....	346
The In-School Facilitator .....	346
PURPOSEFUL INTERACTIONS .....	347
Identification of a Professional Development Goal .....	347
Working Towards this Goal .....	347
PERSONAL TOOLS .....	348
FROM PRACTICE TO PEDAGOGY .....	349
Focus on the Individual .....	349
Focus on Practice .....	349
Focus on Pedagogy .....	349
From Individual to Collective .....	350
FROM MENTORING TO COACHING .....	350
COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS WORKING WITH SHARED PEDAGOGY .....	351
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: AUDIT TRAIL .....</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET FOR CASE STUDY TEACHERS</b> <b>.....</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION .....</b>	<b>382</b>
REFLECTIVE SESSION FOCUSES FOR PARTICIPANT TEACHERS .....	382
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATION OFFICER IN LITERACY .....	383
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL .....	384
<b>APPENDIX D: TIMETABLE .....</b>	<b>385</b>

<i>Term 1 Literacy Support Timetable .....</i>	<i>385</i>
<b>APPENDIX E: SCHOOL LITERACY POLICY .....</b>	<b>386</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: WRITING BLOCK CRITIQUE.....</b>	<b>388</b>

## Table of Figures

FIGURE 1.1 - THE WRITING PROCESS .....	21
FIGURE 2.1 - A MODEL OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW .....	46
FIGURE 2.2 – EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AS A COMPLEX SYSTEM (HOBAN, 2002:37) .	49
TABLE 2.3 – COLLABORATIVE CULTURE VERSUS CONTRIVED COLLEGIALLY .....	62
FIGURE 2.4 – ‘TEACHER AS LEARNER’ MODEL.....	72
FIGURE 2.5: THE INTERACTION OF READING, WRITING, TALKING AND LISTENING TO CREATE MEANING (BOARD OF STUDIES, 1998:7) .....	79
FIGURE 2.6: ‘FRAMEWORKS’ AS A MODEL OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (TURBILL, 2002:96) .....	81
FIGURE 2.7: THE PUZZLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE LITERATURE .....	95
FIGURE 3.2 – THE ACTION RESEARCH SPIRAL .....	107
FIGURE 3.3– ‘CIRCLE OF RESPONDENTS’ .....	120
FIGURE 3.4– OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANT TEACHERS .....	121
FIGURE 3.5 - RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANT TEACHER INTERACTION .....	132
FIGURE 3.6 – A CONTROLLED NETWORK.....	149
FIGURE 3.7 – A LINKING NETWORK.....	155
FIGURE 3.8 – LEVELS OF REFLECTIVITY .....	157
FIGURE 3.9 – REFLECTIVE PRACTICE .....	159
FIGURE 4.1 – TEACHER ‘VOICE’ IN CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE.....	165
FIGURE 4.2 – THE LENS OF ACTIVE RESPONSE .....	169
TABLE 4.3 – ‘ACTION’ FROM FIELD NOTES.....	170
TABLE 4.4 – ‘CONTEXT OF SITUATION’ .....	172
TABLE 4.5 – ‘CONTEXT OF CULTURE’ .....	174
FIGURE 4.6 - THE SHAPE AND FORM OF CHANGE.....	174
TABLE 4.7 – KATE’S ‘MOMENTS OF CHANGE’ .....	177
TABLE 4.8 – WHAT AMANDA SAID .....	179
TABLE 4.9 – ‘HOW IT WAS SAID’ .....	180
TABLE 4.10 – ‘WHAT WAS UNSAID’ .....	181
TABLE 4.11 – CONFIRMATION IN REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES.....	184
FIGURE 5.1: THE CLASSROOM LAYOUT .....	191
FIGURE 5.3: KATE’S LIBRARY THAT SHE INCORPORATED INTO HER LITERACY BLOCK .....	204
FIGURE 5.4: STUDENT ENGAGING IN INDEPENDENT WRITING .....	208
FIGURE 5.5: ‘TARA’ – BEGINNING OF TERM 2, 2001 .....	211
FIGURE 5.6: ‘TARA’ – BEGINNING OF TERM 4 .....	212
FIGURE 5.7: ‘MARISSA’ – BEGINNING OF TERM 2, 2001 .....	212
FIGURE 5.8: ‘MARISSA’ – END OF TERM 2, 2001 .....	213
FIGURE 5.9: ‘MARISSA’ – TERM 4, 2001 .....	213
FIGURE 5.10: AMANDA’S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY .....	254
FIGURE 5.11 – EVALUATION FROM MICHAEL .....	278
FIGURE 5.12 – EVALUATION FROM MICHAEL .....	280
FIGURE 5.13 – EVALUATION FROM MICHAEL .....	282

FIGURE 5.14 – EVALUATION FROM MICHAEL .....	284
FIGURE 5.15 – EVALUATION FROM MICHAEL .....	285
FIGURE 5.16 – MICHAEL’S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY .....	297
FIGURE 6.1 - THEORY OF IN-SCHOOL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT.....	315
FIGURE 6.2 - TYPES OF TIME .....	318
FIGURE 6.3 – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACILITATOR AND TEACHER.....	323
FIGURE 6.4 – THE LAYERS WITHIN REFLECTIVE PRACTICE.....	326



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# **Chapter One**

## *Founding the Journey: From assumptions to reality*

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# **Chapter One**

## **Founding the Journey: From assumptions to reality**

### ***Purpose of the Inquiry***

*Action Research as a Professional Development Model  
for the teaching of writing in Early Stage One and Stage One Classrooms*

Schools can be described as ‘...a landscape of interacting stories’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:100). What follows is an introduction to the professional development journey of six participant teachers and myself over the course of the 2001 school year. This thesis aims to capture our activities, our experiences, our processes and our people partnerships as we worked towards our common goal of establishing ‘balanced writing pedagogy’ in the beginning years of school (Kindergarten, Year One and Year Two).

### ***Questions that Frame the Inquiry***

The following research questions will guide the inquiry:

- How has writing been taught within Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms over the past ten years at the inquiry school?
- What structures, activities, processes and people partnerships can be identified within Early Stage One / Stage One teachers’ professional development experiences?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these professional development experiences and the professional growth of teachers in the teaching of writing?

## ***Establishing the Inquiry Genre***

*Stories have the power to direct and change our lives.*  
(Nel Noddings, 1991:157)

I have discovered that my personal writing style is of vital importance to this thesis. After all, to ‘...enter a professional knowledge landscape is to enter a place of story’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:2). This thesis belongs to the six participant teachers and to me – it is our story, told with my words. I chose the topic, constructed the research framework, listened to the teachers and allowed the research to respond to their needs, and put myself in the position to select the form to best tell our stories of how we traveled through 2001 together. Our journey together consisted of community, trust, respect, mentoring, cognitive coaching and reflection. The personal voice I’ve used to construct this thesis, incorporating elements of ‘story’, has allowed me to best describe how these elements came into play over the course of the 2001 school year.

Jalongo, Isenberg and Gerbracht (1995) state that stories help us make sense of our lives because they both reflect, and are constitutive of experience. It is for this reason that I have selected to write this thesis in such a way that incorporates the ‘story’ of our journeys. A story is not unlike a mirror as we can use it as a way of looking into experiences of the past, present and future.

## ***Significance of the Inquiry***

Literacy is an area that often evokes emotional responses from people who have a view about what teachers should be doing in their classroom. The New South Wales government has committed \$245 million to ‘...provide all students with the essential and basic skills they need to advance in the ever-changing world’ (Department of Education and

Training, 2000:3). Forms of media, such as newspapers and television, often carry stories about the state of current education, often finding fault with what is happening in contemporary classrooms. 'Change' as well as 'back to basics' is often called for, particularly with regard to the way literacy is taught in classrooms.

The way that literacy practices have been taught in classrooms has gone through some significant shifts over the past decades. Murray (1988:1) writes, '...it is important to look back at the events and ideas which may help to explain the present and foreshadow the future'. Over the past forty years teachers have had to deal with '...the difficulty of turning theory into practice or the greater one of accommodating a stream of changing practices for which they were not always prepared' (Murray, 1988:1). Writing instruction over the past four decades, within an Australian context, has gone through some distinct phases (Turbill, 2002; Hoffman, 1998; Murray, 1988). Turbill (2002) has drawn upon both the literature and her personal experiences to identify these in terms of 'ages'.

1960s	Age of writing as production or encoding
1970s	Age of writing as creativity
1980s	Age of writing as a process
1990s	Age of writing for social purpose

Teachers in our schools are coming with personal experience from a variety of these 'ages'. It is important to recognise the personal and professional experiences teachers have encountered when considering professional development (Whitehead, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992; Elliott, 1991). What teachers bring to their classrooms is their response to this shift in paradigm. As this inquiry sets out to develop a balanced writing pedagogy it is important to investigate these paradigm shifts in the teaching of writing, ascertain where the teachers are in their

understanding and, with deeper analysis in conjunction with the literature, define the notion of what constitutes a 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

Since 1998 the teaching of writing in New South Wales Schools has been framed by the English K-6 syllabus document. This current writing syllabus document in New South Wales primary schools is based upon a functional mode of language and the teaching of 'text types' (Department of Education and Training, 2000; Board of Studies, 1998). It is this form of teaching that is evident in many current classrooms. It is my experience that this type of teaching, in many classrooms, has become formulaic. Rather than allowing children time to experiment with the genre and allow for personal creative touches, children are being presented with a rigid formula to construct a particular text type and their writing is being assessed according to this (Hoffman, 1998). The Department of Education and Training released a document entitled 'Focus on literacy: Writing' (2000:18) which acknowledges this type of teaching and warns 'over-emphasis on text types as the object of study should be avoided...'. Whilst such interpretation was not the intention of the syllabus document (1998:66) the interpretation given to it by many teachers has led to this teaching approach. My experience within the inquiry school leads me to the conclusion that few teachers are aware of writing as a 'process' (NZ Ministry of Education, 1995; Turbill, 1983, 1982; Murray, 1982; Walshe, 1982, 1981). As such, they are unsure about how to best support this within their teaching of writing, thus demonstrating a need for 'balanced writing pedagogy' (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, Turbill, 2003; Department of Education and Training, 2000).

Teachers have been identified as being central to the quality of children's learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, teachers have '...been effectively silenced when it comes to building theories of better literacy

practice. Teachers are rarely partners in literacy pedagogy research; and even studies of high performing and reforming schools rarely position teachers as co-producers of knowledge' (Kamler and Comber, 2003:327). The provision of a 'meaning-centred' curriculum working with the cultural resources children have in connection with a balance between explicit teaching and independent practice have all been identified as integral components of literacy practice (Kamler and Comber, 2003; Gregory and Williams, 2000; McNaughton, 1995; Dyson, 1993). This inquiry aims to draw upon what these participant teachers do in their classrooms, and the changes they make, in the search for 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

#### The call for a 'balanced writing pedagogy'

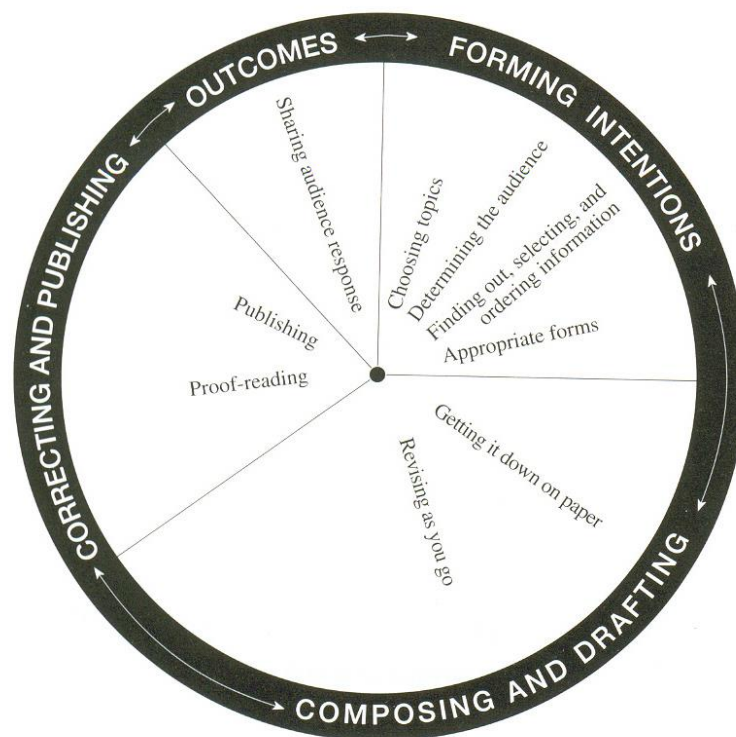
Connelly and Clandinin (1988:113) state, 'the field of curriculum is – to put it bluntly – a maze'. Literacy education is testament to this. There is much literature available in which experts indicate their 'beliefs' about how children learn literacy practices. Significant paradigm shifts have occurred regarding what constitutes sound literacy practice. In recent times it appears few can actually agree on the fundamentals, that is what is basic to literacy education. Teachers are called upon to find a path through this maze to provide a 'balanced' approach to classroom instruction. I believe that for 'balanced writing pedagogy' to occur teachers need to understand firstly what the writing process is and secondly how to best teach this within classrooms, to best suit the needs of their particular groups of children.

Graves (1994:2) directed a challenge to teachers of writing:

Writing is the basic stuff of education. It has been sorely neglected in our schools. We have substituted the passive reception of information for the active expression of facts, ideas and feelings. We now need the right balance between sending and receiving. We need to let them write.

These words call for attention to writing and the way it is taught within schools. He is also calling for 'balance' in teaching instruction.

The notion of writing as a process is crucial to the adoption of 'balanced writing pedagogy'. The Writing Process model developed by The Ministry of Education (New Zealand, 1995: 23) is presented in figure 1.1. The writing process requires the writer of the text to rehearse, draft and revise a text to make the meaning clearer for the reader.

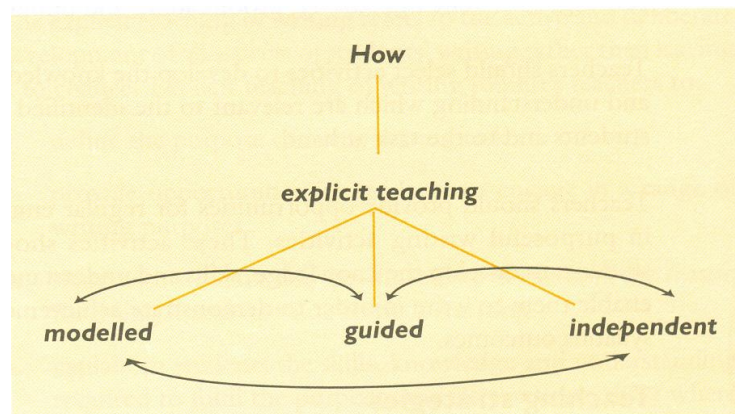


**Figure 1.1 - The Writing Process**  
(The NZ Ministry of Education, 1995:23)

This representation of the writing process supports Murray's (1982) and Walshe's (1981) notion of the process being 'recursive'; '...that is, the writer's movement from one stage to another is affected by what has gone before and what is anticipated' (NZ Ministry of Education, 1995:23). The stages within the writing process cannot happen without their

interrelationship with the other stages. Writers may move backwards and forwards throughout the stages as they construct a piece of writing (Walshe, 1981).

The terms modelled, guided and independent are used frequently in current thinking about literacy instruction in the classroom (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons and Turbill, 2003; Department of Education and Training, 2000; Crevola and Hill, 1998; Painter, 1991; Mooney, 1990; Macken, Martin, Kress, Kalantzsis, Rothery and Cope, 1989). Teachers are being called upon to provide explicit teaching, but also allow for opportunities for individual exploration of the writing process. These three strategies are acknowledged as being 'recursive' thus fitting in with the notion of writing as a process (Murray, 1982; Walshe, 1982, 1981). Modelled, guided and independent practices are recursive in the way '...teachers constantly return to them and apply them in new ways' (Department of Education and Training, 2000:28). Figure 1.2 demonstrates this recursive nature further.



**Figure 1.2 – The recursive nature of modelled, guided and independent strategies**  
(Department of Education and Training, 2000:28)



The employment of modelled, guided and independent strategies equips students to:

- Produce effective texts for a variety of purposes on a range of topics for different audiences
- Structure texts according to their purpose and select appropriate grammatical patterns and vocabulary
- Present written texts in an accessible and readable way, demonstrating skills in spelling, grammatical accuracy, punctuation, layout, handwriting and word processing
- Use such strategies as drafting, revising, conferencing, editing, and proofreading appropriately.

(Department of Education and Training, 2000:32)

The notion of a 'literacy block' or 'language block' containing organisational 'episodes' as a way to organise literacy instruction time in the classroom has become increasingly common (Ivey, 2002; Crevola and Hill, 1998; Cambourne and Turbill, 1994). Crevola and Hill (1998: 14) state that 'effective teaching is structured, and focused on the learning needs of each student in the class...' and a literacy block provides for this regardless of a teacher's '...previous level of training and expertise...'. Educators are being called upon to provide for their students a 'balanced writing block'. Such 'balance' comes about through the incorporation of modelled, guided and independent episodes within each of the language modes.

When teaching writing within the classroom, it is vital that the 'recursive stages' (Graves, 1994; Turbill, 1983, 1982; Murray, 1982; Walshe, 1981) within the writing process are adopted. Teachers need to think about what is involved within the writing process – thinking 'rehearsal', drafting, revising and publishing. As a result of observing children moving through this process, a list of 'classroom conditions likely to develop confident

writers' can be established (Hogan, 1986:46). These conditions include the following principles:

- Writing is a process
- Students need to write often
- Talking-listening-reading are part of writing lessons
- Writing topics must be meaningful to the writer
- Students need response to their writing as they do it
- They should have 'control' over their writing
- They should have opportunities to write in all subject areas
- Literature is an important stimulus for writing
- Individualised instruction assists children in overcoming any difficulties.

The proofreading process needs to be added to this list (Turbill, 2002; Kervin, 2002, 1999). Proofreading is a central 'condition' needed to develop confident writers when addressing the notion of recursive stages (Murray, 1982; Walshe, 1981) in the process of writing.

As far back as the late 1980s, the New South Wales Department of Education (1987: 5) claimed 'students develop most effectively as writers when they learn to write in an active and positive learning environment'. This document stated that the students' development as writers is enhanced when they:

- Value writing as a means of communication and personal expression
- Play an active and significant role in their own learning processes
- Write often, with purpose, in all subjects
- Respond selectively to models of effective writing, including models collected or written by students themselves
- Experiment with their writing
- Perceive themselves as successful writers
- Recognise that they have a responsibility to themselves to learn and write well
- Have teachers who guide, teach and encourage them, and respond sensitively to their individual needs as learners
- Help others by reflecting on, discussing, listening to, responding to and enjoying their writing.

More recently there has been considerable emphasis placed on the social purposes for writing. It is important that children write real texts for real purposes. Two key social purposes can be identified for students' writing – community purposes and academic purposes (Department of Education and Training, 2000:12-13). Community purposes provide students with opportunities '...to write for a range of audiences such as self, peers, parents, community members or local government' (Department of Education and Training, 2000:13). Writing for academic purposes will assist students to write in different text types for different curriculum areas. Such writing is intended to build upon students 'critical understanding' with their language choices.

Given the previous documents and literature surrounding writing theory and the teaching of writing, my inquiry began with the purpose of establishing 'balanced writing pedagogy' in the Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms within the inquiry school. This description of a 'balanced writing pedagogy' formulated my understanding. I wanted to share this with each of the participant teachers and with them establish a supporting pedagogy within their classrooms that would sustain their students as they engaged with writing as a 'process'.

### ***Connecting with My Story***

*... The more we understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do, and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be ...* (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988:11)

From my experience teachers regularly engage in oral storytelling as they retell their experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (1988:39) emphasise the importance of 'biography', in its written form, as a tool for reflection. They state, 'because most of us have not tried any biographic retelling of our lives, we feel it is a most helpful starting point to explore our personal practical knowledge'. Personal practical knowledge refers to that

‘knowledge which is experiential, embodied and based on the narrative of experience’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988: 363). With this definition in mind, it is impossible to tell the stories of others without first reflecting on my own story. I am unable to remove myself from this inquiry as it builds upon my own story. It was my passion for literacy, particularly writing, that started and drove this inquiry. The form that this inquiry takes relies on my interpretations as a member of the culture in which the participant teachers are located and more specifically on my interpretations of and understandings in the teaching of writing. It is therefore important that my own ‘story’ is recounted as it pertains to the inquiry.

### Personal Background

Significant moments and people have flavoured my journey. Such moments and people have had the ability to ‘teach’ me, motivate me and to push me on my journey of learning.

I was born in the 1970s, the eldest of four girls. My mother and grandmother frequently tell me I could read before I went to school. I always remember being an avid reader and I seemed to be always writing a letter to someone. My grandmother has kept the letters I wrote to her when we moved away from the country – her favourite is one I labeled ‘ruff cope’ (rough copy).

My own school experiences are a jumble of the ‘ages’ outlined by Turbill (2002). I was born in country New South Wales and it was there that I had my first years at school. It was only a small school and there were frequent times when we would come together as a school to listen to stories, recite poetry and sing songs. It was in these early years that my love of language began – the sounds, the rhythm, learning interesting new words, the magic of stories and my personal quest to discover more. I finished my primary schooling at a much larger school when my family

moved to the south coast of New South Wales. This school was two-stream; the sheer size of it was overwhelming for me at the beginning. My memories at this time are of classes working independently with their teacher. My memories of language are disjointed. I remember some teachers reading aloud to the class. I remember our writing always being corrected with red pen. I don't remember how often we wrote or what we wrote about. I do remember copying large chunks of text from the blackboard. I remember also being frustrated at the beginning of each year as I learnt the expectations of my new teacher with regard to writing. I remember focusing on the practicalities such as how neat my writing had to be for that teacher, how long my stories had to be for that teacher, what topics I could and couldn't write about in that classroom – their classroom rules for writing!

It is important to acknowledge one's school experiences. As Connelly and Clandinin (1988:27) state education '... is a narrative of experience that grows and strengthens a person's capabilities to cope with life'. Everyone has an experience of 'school' which cannot be changed. It is therefore important to acknowledge these experiences as they do impact upon the rest of one's 'story'.

English at high school was always something I enjoyed. My marks consistently placed me in the top rankings in the class and I enjoyed the challenge of interpreting more challenging written texts. When I think back to the teachers that inspired me most, they were always the ones that taught me English.

I've always been interested in how children learn literacy behaviours. As an undergraduate university student, I always enjoyed the 'language and literacy' subjects and there I found a real niche for myself. I graduated

with a Bachelor of Teaching from the University of Wollongong at the end of 1997.

My Honours inquiry (Kervin, 1999) supported my professional growth by highlighting the importance of proofreading in the writing process. At the end of this inquiry I felt that I had the teaching of reading and spelling under control but needed to explore further the teaching of writing.

### ***Setting the Scene: My story within the Inquiry School***

#### Locus of the Inquiry

The inquiry school is connected to the Wollongong Diocese Catholic Education Office. The school is located in the south-west area of Sydney in a low socio-economic area. The school has a significant turnover of staff from year to year with the average age of teachers in 2001 being thirty years of age compared to an average within New South Wales of approximately fifty years of age in the same state geographical location. The school over the past ten years has attracted a number of beginning teachers. The turnover of staff occurs due to staff being appointed to positions closer to their homes and promotional opportunities.

Collins (1991:21) writes that she is '...optimistic about professional development within Catholic systems'. This is attributed to the availability of resources, their 'tradition of self-help' and the following of doctrine from Vatican II, which calls school leaders to '...create a supportive environment for teachers'. These qualities described by Collins were evident in the inquiry school and the Principal readily supported new initiatives to strengthen the learning and teaching opportunities provided within the school (I – 7.2.01). As such, professional development and

continued study were encouraged and supported by the leadership of the school.

### Professional Background

The inquiry school employed me in 1998 as a recent graduate; I also embarked on studying for my 'fourth year' (Bachelor of Education) at a part time level at the University of Wollongong. I taught a Year One class that year. The majority of 1998 was a matter of survival for me: coping with the pressures of being a beginning teacher, familiarising myself with day-to-day routines in a school life, getting to know twenty-six children, dealing with the pressures of parents, programming for seven Key Learning Areas and fitting into a new working environment. It was a year of self-discovery and self-adjustment. Still, the year heightened my awareness of, and allowed me to begin to investigate, the challenges associated with teaching literacy in the classroom.

1999 saw me take my Year One students up to Year Two. This year I also began my Honours project with the University of Wollongong as part of my Bachelor of Education degree. This inquiry was concerned with spelling and the use of proofreading as a strategy for spelling development.  
(Kervin, 2002, 1999)

Beginning in 1999, I took on the role of support teacher for the students and staff at this school in the area of literacy, a role referred to within the school as 'Literacy Support'. Eight hours per week in the school timetable were allocated for me to support students who were having difficulty in areas of literacy. The way that 'Literacy Support' had traditionally operated in the school was that the 'Literacy Support' teacher withdrew students from their classrooms for an intensive small group or individual literacy program. I continued in this format throughout this year. However, when I analysed the results from such intervention, it became evident that

these targeted students did not demonstrate any significant improvements from this. When I continued this role in 2000, I negotiated with the principal to change this support structure to one where I worked with the individual teachers on their classroom practice. This then enabled me eight hours per week to work in classrooms (Kindergarten to Year Six) with teachers on their literacy practice. This structure enabled me to establish relationships of trust with the teaching staff at the inquiry school, before, during and after the collection of data for this inquiry. Loughran (1997:59) identifies trust as a central feature of teacher education. He states trust between the two parties '...regardless of the participants' previous learning experiences ... might genuinely be able to approach learning as a collaborative venture'.

My Honours project (Kervin, 1999) was concerned with spelling. This was an issue that I had heard debated many times in the staff room. It was an issue that I had frequently discussed with the principal, staff, and parents of students I had taught. It seemed to be an area of obvious and considerable need. When I approached the school principal about doing some research focused on spelling in my Year Two classroom the response was extremely positive. The results of this study I shared with the Principal, staff and parents at this school.

One of the most frustrating things for me, as a teacher, had been the lack of direction and professional development initiatives towards assisting and developing teacher's understanding of the teaching of writing. I felt this was a common need amongst the staff with whom I was working. In my role as 'Literacy Support' teacher, I felt that most people felt confident with the teaching of reading but tended to avoid discussing the teaching of writing. Again, I heard the 'right' way to teach writing and teachers' expectations of student writing debated across the staffroom table. Such discussion is part of the oral-storytelling tradition of teachers', the retelling



of issues pertinent to their practice. I believe that the issues that are worth debating in what little free time teachers have are the issues that demand our attention as researchers. Beck and Murphy (1996:46) also reinforce this point when they write ‘...one rule of thumb among qualitative researchers in education is that much can be learned about a school’s culture by listening to the conversations in the faculty lounge’.

#### Background to the Inquiry at a School level

The teaching of writing across the school was very disjointed. I couldn’t see a whole school approach and there were very distinct differences among different teachers (even within the same grade). Writing in many classrooms was being taught in a very formulaic way. Teachers were responding directly to the text types outlined in the English K-6 Syllabus (Board of Studies, 1998) and teaching children the formulae for the specific text type being taught at that time.

From my observations, there was very little creativity or differences among the children’s work. Student work samples followed the text type structures and language features outlined in the English K-6 Syllabus (1998) and were usually assessed according to those criteria. This was something that I noticed in my classroom as well as others that I visited in my ‘Literacy Support’ role.

I was frustrated that there didn’t seem to be any real response to the needs of teachers for professional development opportunities with the teaching of writing. It was ‘tacked on’ to many literacy in-services and professional development opportunities, reading always having the more emphasis and time. Writing really was ‘the poor cousin to reading’ as described by Turbill (2002).

### A Ten Year Overview of Professional Development Opportunities in the Inquiry School

The last ten years has seen some significant changes in the way literacy processes are taught in Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms. From my experience, Kindergarten students are being taught how to engage with texts and experiment with writing from day one. The days of easing Kindergarten students into school through free play and socialisation skills are gone. Accountability has changed teaching practice in these earlier grades. Teachers are continually assessing Early Stage One and Stage One students. Examples of such assessments include: rate of self-corrections in a Running Record; level of text currently being read; known word vocabulary; writing speed; spelling accuracy; reading age according to tests like the Burt (Gilmore, Croft, Reid, 1981); spelling ability according to tests such as the South Australian Spelling Test (Education Department of South Australia, 1979).

Along with these changes in teaching, new syllabus and support documents have been issued by the Board of Studies (1998) and Department of Education and Training (2000) to guide teaching practice. From my experience it has become evident that teachers are interpreting these documents at a variety of levels.

Cambourne (1994) states that our thinking and the way we solve problems are greatly influenced by the 'prevailing paradigm' that exists at a particular point in time. As paradigms are challenged, and we begin to look at other possibilities, a condition known as 'paradigm shift' occurs (Kuhn, 1962). When those who prefer the prevailing paradigm fight to maintain it, they are said to be in a state of 'paradigm paralysis' (Betts, 1992). Those in 'paradigm paralysis' can be so strongly opposed to the new paradigm that they might be able to manage to persuade others to return to the prevailing paradigm or to change practices in the new

paradigm. This is known as 'paradigm regression' (Cambourne, 1995; Betts, 1992). Teachers in our schools are likely to fall into these various paradigms in terms of their understanding of literacy practices and use of the new syllabus documents.

The Wollongong Catholic Education Office, within which the inquiry school is located, has consistently offered professional development opportunities for their teachers over the past ten years. However, there has been a significant change in the way these opportunities have been presented.

The Wollongong Catholic Education Office has employed an Education Officer in Literacy since 1989. The Principal of the inquiry school held the position from 1989 to 1994. A new person was employed in 1995 and still holds the position at this time.

The 'Key Accountabilities' of this Education Officer in Literacy, as outlined by the job description provided by the Wollongong Catholic Education Office, identifies their responsibilities as:

- Participation in the establishment and implementation of quality learning and teaching programs and student support services in system schools
- Participation in a sub-group of the Education Services Team
- Development and delivery of professional development activities to support teachers and schools in the delivery of effective learning teaching programs
- Support of system and school priorities through School Review and Development
- Implementation of a Personal Professional Development Plan.

Before the commencement of the 2001 school year, I interviewed the current Education Officer in Literacy about her personal beliefs regarding how children learn to read and write. She responded by saying she didn't believe in a deficit model. She believes that 'all children can learn', but

children 'learn at different rates'. An important part of literacy teaching is for the teacher to 'build upon what children already know'. She also spoke about 'children [needing to see] a purpose for what they're doing'. 'Children need to learn in meaningful contexts surrounded by whole continuous texts'. Children need to work in a 'positive environment which encourages children to become risk takers'. Children also need 'explicit teaching ... this is linked to a teacher's understanding of how children learn to read and write'. (I-10.1.01)

When the current Education Officer in Literacy first began working in this position in 1995, she stated that very few literacy in-services were offered – 'almost nothing in the first year ... some on request' (I-10.1.01). Literacy in-servicing offered was school based and occurred at the request of individual school principals.

In 1998, the Education Officer in Literacy conducted a series of school-based in-services at the inquiry school at the request of the Principal. These in-services were conducted weekly for two terms. They focused on 'The English Block' and included such aspects as organising and structuring guided reading groups, taking and analysing running records, sequencing an English block in the infant classes (Kindergarten to Year Two), analysing writing samples and implementing these components in the classroom. During this time, the Education Officer in Literacy also provided teachers with the opportunity to have her work with them in their classroom implementing these into their classroom practice.

In 1999, the Good First Year Teaching program was offered for the first time. This course was developed '...as one component in a systematic approach to improving literacy teaching and students' literacy outcomes in diocesan primary schools' (Catholic Education Office: Diocese of Wollongong 2001:1).

The original Good First Year Teaching course was designed for teachers of Kindergarten and subsequent support staff. The Reading Recovery Program (Clay, 1993, 1979) had been introduced to the diocese in 1994 and the Good First Year Teaching program was intended to complement and support this program. The Education Officer in Literacy commented that this was a need by providing the example that Reading Recovery teachers were saying that classroom teaching wasn't supporting the Reading Recovery Program through such aspects as the inclusion of guided reading groups within the classroom.

The Good First Year Teaching program is underpinned by a set of ten beliefs. These are based on the characteristics of quality teaching identified by Fountas and Pinnell (1999). Good First Teaching:

- Assumes that all children can learn to read and write
- Is based on a teacher's understanding of the reading and writing processes
- Is based on assessment that informs instruction and documents individual learning over time
- Requires a large block of daily instructional time for literacy
- Takes place in an organised environment that encourages children to be active participants and supports collaborative and independent learning
- Engages children in a variety of reading and writing experiences involving connected or continuous text, on a daily basis
- Includes attention to letters and words and how they work
- Requires appropriate materials and resources
- Is designed to complement Reading Recovery programs
- Is not a program you can buy, but is the result of an investment in professional development.

(Catholic Education Office: Diocese of Wollongong 2001:3)

In 2000, the course expanded to also accommodate Year One teachers in the diocese. Throughout 2000, I worked with the Education Officer in Literacy to extend the course to incorporate Year Two teachers. I was

teaching Year Two at the time and we met regularly to work through aspects of my organisation of my literacy time. During this time my teaching within my literacy block was viewed and filmed to create resources for the Year Two program. A pilot program for teachers of Year Two was implemented during 2001.

This course was offered to groups of teachers according to the geographical location of their school. For example, all the Year One teachers in the Macarthur area of south-western Sydney would meet at a central school and form one cohort of the program. The Education Officer in Literacy facilitated all sessions which were run for half-days three times per term. During this time, the teachers would receive input from the Education Officer in Literacy, view videos of classroom practice compiled from teachers in the diocese, analyse these according to the provided input and devise some sort of action for their classroom. Between-session tasks were given to the participating teachers, which would be incorporated into the following session. The diocese provided some funding allocations to participating schools to cover costs associated with relieving these teachers to enable their attendance in the courses. Individual schools were also expected to allocate some of their school budget to cover the difference in providing release for these teachers.

The Education Officer in Literacy visited each of the teachers once in their classrooms over the course of the year. During this time their classroom literacy practice was observed with detailed feedback from the Education Officer in Literacy to the classroom teacher provided.

This Good First Year Teaching professional development opportunity flavoured the interactions between the participant teachers and me throughout the inquiry. This was a professional development experience that four of the six participants in this inquiry had experienced, and the

other two were aware of the program. My role at the beginning of 2001 began with assisting four of the six participant teachers with the implementation of the principles of the diocesan Good First Year Teaching program.

At the end of 2000, the Principal, leadership team and I negotiated a direction for Literacy in 2001 drawing upon the professional development initiatives already existing in the school and the predicted direction for the inquiry. Subsequently, a Literacy Plan (School documentation, December 2000) was developed to frame the professional development opportunities for 2001. This Literacy Plan stated a professional development goal for 2001 as being 'To provide ongoing support and development to staff in the area of literacy'. The tasks associated within this goal, as outlined by this policy included:

- Maintain and build upon existing collaborative support structures
- Establish co-learning situations where teachers share practices and view each other teaching to set goals and provide constructive feedback
- Devote a staff meeting to the Reading Recovery tutor and Reading Recovery teachers to teach behind a screen for staff
- Utilise CEO Consultants and Advisors in developing literacy initiatives and syllabus requirements
- Professionally develop a General Assistant in writing
- Adapt Literacy Support teacher to work in the classroom with teachers to work on effective learning and teaching in literacy
- Arrange for teachers to visit other classrooms and schools to observe good learning and teaching in literacy
- Ensure Kindergarten and Year One teachers are trained in Good First Year Teaching.

Whilst my inquiry acknowledges the role of the Good First Year Teaching program, it is more intent on developing in-school professional development structures to support teachers with their classroom practice. It was anticipated that the inquiry may highlight the use of action research

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) as a professional development model within the classroom, working to support other professional development input experienced by the participant teachers.

A key principle of change as described by Stoll and Fink (1996:45) is that 'people have to understand change and work out their own meaning through clarification, which often occurs through practice.' This principle justifies the selection of action research as a possible professional development model. While diocesan programs such as Good First Year Teaching may in fact change the appearance of classroom teaching behaviours, for 'real' change (Fullan, 1982) to occur these changes must also take place in teacher beliefs.

## ***The Beginning of Our Journey***

### **Theoretical Location**

This inquiry can be located within an interpretivist / naturalistic paradigm. In response to Patton's (1982, 1990) call for 'methodological appropriateness', the methodologies of Ethnography (Merriam, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Van Manen, 1990; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988), Action Research incorporating Phenomenology and Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 2000; Kemmis, 1999; Stringer, 1996; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Van Manen, 1990; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988), Case Study (Sturman, 1999; Burns, 1997; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 1995) and Narrative Inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, 1990) are drawn upon in an attempt to move towards creating a Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The interactions of these methodologies within the inquiry are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.



### Inquiry Design

At the end of 2000, I approached my principal and expressed my concern about the teaching of writing. I suggested to her that I address the teaching of writing with the aim to create 'balanced pedagogy' within my doctoral study. She was again very supportive of the research direction I proposed to take. At the end of 2000, when staffing had been finalised for 2001 I approached all the teachers of Early Stage One (Kindergarten) and Stage One (years one and two) and asked them if they would like to be involved in the development of a writing pedagogy for these early years in the following year. The response from these teachers was overwhelming. They all wanted to be involved.

I presented an application to conduct the research to the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Wollongong at the beginning of 2001. Maintaining confidentiality of data, preserving the anonymity of informants, and the intended purpose of the research were outlined. This application was approved on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2001 (HE01/023).

Throughout 2001, I worked with the participant teachers in their classrooms, in the context of their literacy block, focusing on their teaching of the writing process. We used the action research spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11) to guide us through this process. Each of the teachers and I entered into continuous dialogue throughout the year – we challenged each other, debated issues with each other, pondered over student work samples, shared interesting literature focusing on the writing process and supported each other in our shared endeavour.

At this initial stage, professional relationships existed between each of the participant teachers and me as a result of my previous and ongoing association with the school. Such relationships serve the inquiry well as it is within these relationships that we embark on the journey to create

‘balanced writing pedagogy’ in these early school years. I am not seen specifically as a researcher. The teachers know that I too will put up with the doldrums of the profession – accountability, paperwork, playground duty – and as such I will have an understanding of the day-to-day pressures they are put under besides actual teaching. Cole and Knowles (2000:111) emphasise that teaching ‘...involves much more than teaching and facilitating learning within classroom context ... teachers’ work is defined within a social context ... [and it] requires an intimate understanding of both the broader and particular contexts within which all those other dimensions are situated ...’. I was seen by each of the teachers as ‘one of them’ and our professional relationship of trust and respect for each other provided me with full entry into each of their classrooms.

### ***Thesis Overview: The Journey to Come...***

The previous pages serve to orientate you as the reader to the origins of this inquiry. What is to come continues on this journey, exploring the issues that arose, the decisions that were made, the evolution of our story of an in-school professional development model that led to curriculum change.

#### **Chapter 2: Beginning our Journey: What Others Before us Have Found**

This chapter will take you through a review of the literature. It aims to outline what is already known about educational change and professional development and places this inquiry within the context of this. This chapter identifies the key concepts of professional development raised by the literature and the ‘puzzle’ this presents.

### Chapter 3: The Grounding for our Journey

In this chapter you will be exposed to the methodology of the inquiry. The inquiry is located within the interpretivist/naturalistic paradigm and as such draws upon different methodologies to support the 'process' of the inquiry rather than final outcomes and to also respond to the guiding questions and those that the research process itself raised.

### Chapter 4: The Process for moving from Collected Data to Descriptive Story with Interpretive Comment

This chapter aims to make explicit the 'multiple lenses' with which the data were transformed into 'field texts' to create the participants' descriptive stories. The lenses of active response, context, moments, language and narrative processes will be examined. Excerpts from the data will be used to describe each of these lenses.

### Chapter 5: Teacher Stories

This chapter will provide descriptive stories developed on these three participant teachers. These stories have been created through the change of collected 'data' into 'field texts'. Interpretive comment will run parallel to these descriptive stories as they are looked at and analysed through the 'multiple lenses' explored in Chapter 4. The descriptive stories and interpretive comment aim to highlight the developments, changes and impacting factors upon the teaching practice of each of these teachers throughout 2001. At the end of each story, a model on the professional development journey that participant teacher undertook will be presented along with 'enablers' that impacted on that teacher's experience.

#### Chapter 6: Bringing the Journey to a Close: A Model For In-school Teacher Professional Development

This chapter will present the grounded theory for in-school professional development that emerged from the inquiry. This will result in a culmination of the teacher stories analysed through the lenses and the models developed in the previous chapters. Each of the identified contributing components that create this theory will be discussed.

#### Chapter 7: Theory for Future Practice

This chapter will explore the implications of this theory for in-school teacher professional development. These implications will have the potential to serve as a framework for the transference of this theory to other school sites.

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# **Chapter Two**

## *Beginning Our Journey: What others before us have found*

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## **Chapter Two**

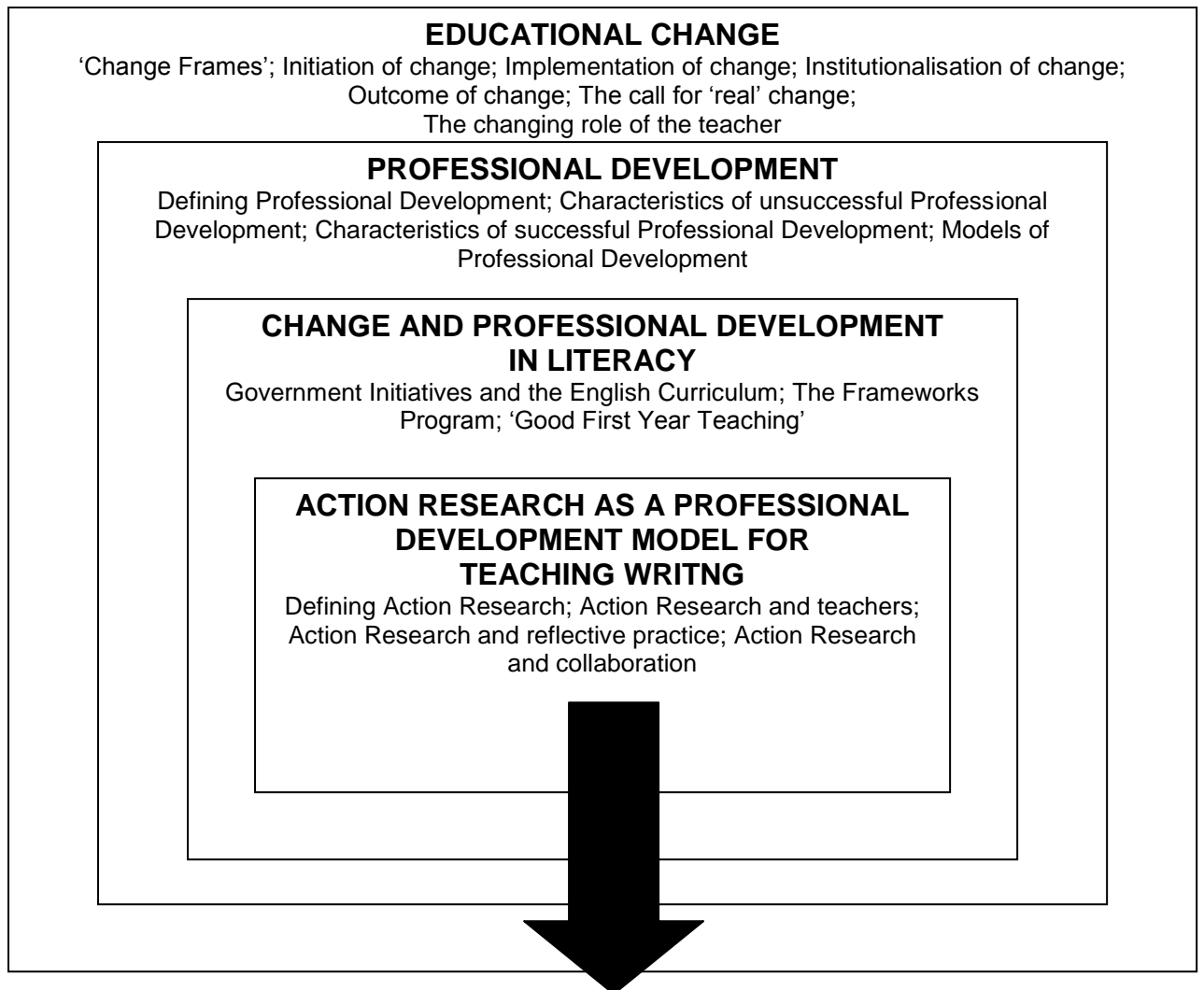
### **Beginning Our Journey: What others before us have found**

*A journey awaits you. It is one filled with possibility and meaning.  
It will call you to come to know who you are and where you are going.  
At times you will need to share this pathway, whereas at others, you will travel  
alone. You will make many important choices at cross-roads along the way.  
Each step will carry you toward new discoveries, so step with great care.  
(Whelan, 1999:20)*

Teaching can be likened to a journey and the various pathways that are presented can be in the form of professional development opportunities offered to teachers. These opportunities are usually offered in the hope of bringing about ‘teacher change’ (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Hughes, 1991). There is a considerable amount of literature surrounding the key topics of educational change and professional development, both of which are central to this inquiry. Figure 2.1 presents a model of the literature review, demonstrating the main foci, key issues and relationships among these, pertinent to the inquiry.

This review of the literature serves two main purposes. Firstly, it aims to put the inquiry into perspective with what is already known about educational change and professional development – to ‘relate a study to the larger, ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling in gaps and extending prior studies’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). It also endeavours to demonstrate the need for such an inquiry. As Cresswell (1994:21) describes, the literature ‘...provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study, as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings’. This literature review intends to ‘frame’ the issues surrounding professional development opportunities offered to teachers often used with the intention of leading to educational change. It aims to address the current theories surrounding professional development and put this research into perspective. It also aims to support the inquiry methodology; explaining further why I made the

decisions I did as I guided the participant teachers through action research as a professional development model.



**DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL TO GUIDE THE INQUIRY**

**Figure 2.1 - A model of the Literature Review**



## **The Notion of Educational Change**

Educational Change was a key area of development in the 1990s. During this time many theories around educational change were developed (Hoban, 2002; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000).

Richert (1997:73) defines the notion of 'change' being at the centre of school life.

...everything about school changes all the time: the children change, the communities they come from change, the subject matters change, the teachers change, the purposes of school change, the sources of support for schools change as does the demands for support resources.

However, in saying this schools appear to remain relatively stable places, with their actual structure appearing to be one of organisation and predictability. The reality for teachers can be different.

Teachers have been confronted with the changing nature of schools, particularly with regard to the changing nature of its clientele, in recent years. The demands on teachers at this present time are vast. Stoll and Fink (1996: 6) contribute modified curricula, the development of new teaching and assessment strategies; and dealing with the 'myriad of social problems society has dumped on schools' as being key parts of this changing nature. Teachers need support to deal with these changes, as Stoll and Fink (1996:44) state, 'although not all change is improvement, all improvement involves change'.

The key purpose of schools is to facilitate student learning. Teachers have much knowledge about the nature of learning which is gained from their experiences as a learner, the input they received through their tertiary training and input received through professional development opportunities undertaken (Whitehead, 2000). Nicol (1997: 97) also describes this 'wealth of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning'. However,

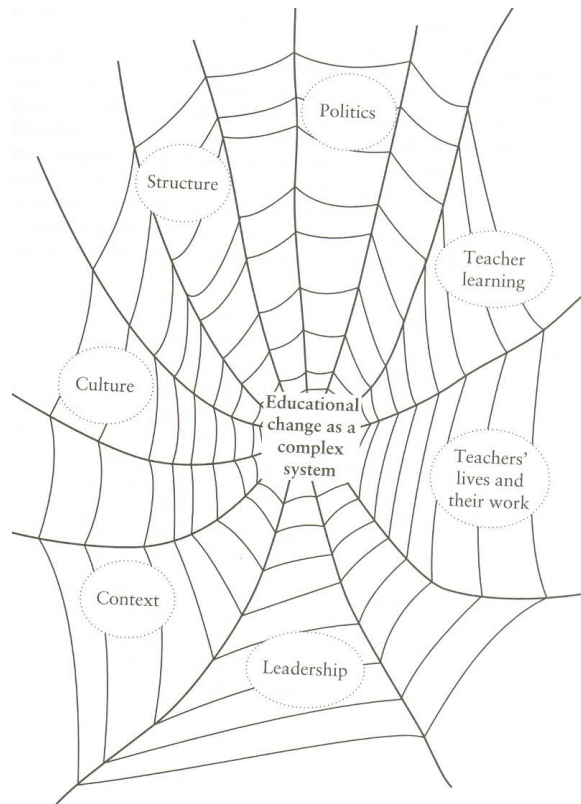
these beliefs, while well formed and powerful, can often be resistant to change (Nicol, 1997; Buchmann, 1991; Gore and Zeichner, 1991). For curriculum change to occur, a teacher's previously formed knowledge and beliefs have to be sifted through, re-organised and re-evaluated.

### ***'Change Frames'***

The theory of 'change frames' has been used to describe the change process in educational settings (Hoban, 2002; Hargreaves and Fink, 2000; Shaw and Fink, 1997). Various 'change frames' have been identified that impact upon educational change. Some of these 'change frames' as outlined by Hoban (2002:35-36) and supported within the literature, that relate to the inquiry include:

- The promotion of a shared vision for change from school leadership (Fullan, 1992, 1991, 1982)
- The school culture and its promotion of collaborative relationship (Fink, 2000; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992)
- The organisation of the school, including allocation of time and resources (Stoll and Fink, 1996)
- The context of the school within which the teachers will be working (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Fink, 2000)
- The support provided to assist teacher learning and the process of educational change (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998; Baird, 1991)

Hoban (2002:35-37) has described educational change as a complex system in which the interplay of these 'change frames' come into action. He describes 'the context of educational change [as being compared to] a 'spider web', with each frame being interconnected so that change in one frame affects change in others'. This is represented in figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2 – Educational Change as a complex system (Hoban, 2002:37)**

Bringing about educational change with the interaction of these ‘change agents’ is a complex process. Each ‘change frame’ needs to be acknowledged throughout the change process. The change process in schools can be guided by four broad phases identified within the literature. (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992) These phases can be defined as:

1. Initiation of the change
2. Implementation of the change
3. Institutionalisation of the change
4. Outcome of the change

As this inquiry was concerned with bringing about change to the teachers’ teaching practices to achieve ‘balanced writing pedagogy’, each of these phases will be investigated further.

### Initiation of the change

Stoll and Fink (1996:44) draw on the work of Miles (1986) and Fullan (1991) to describe 'three Rs' that impact upon the initiation of any change process. The first of these is '*relevance*'. This refers specifically to how important the initiative is deemed to be '...in terms of need, quality, practicality, clarity and complexity'. The '*readiness*' of the staff to become involved in the initiatives of the inquiry will impact upon its effectiveness. The availability of '*resources*' and support, including time, also play important roles in any change process. These aspects all need to be considered in the planning of the inquiry to ensure that these 'three Rs' are in place at this initial stage.

At this time some of the abovementioned 'change frames' come into play. The context within which the teachers will be working has an important role from the beginning of any change process (Hoban, 2002; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Fink, 2000). The vision of the leadership within the school has a role to play in initiating the change process (Hoban, 2002; Fullan, 1982, 1991, 1992). The provision of support and allocation of resources (Hoban, 2002; Clandinin and Connelly, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Baird, 1991), usually from those in leadership positions, supports the 'three Rs' necessary for this initial stage.

### Implementation of the change

The implementation phase consists of putting the ideas of change into practice. This phase is greatly influenced by school and external factors. Miles (1986) highlights the importance of:

- Clear responsibility for orchestration
- Shared control over implementation
- A blend of pressure and support
- Sustained staff development
- Early rewards for teachers.

The realities of school life make change ‘... a time consuming affair’ (Fullan, 1982:69). The need for a clear timeline to guide the implementation of change is imperative. It is essential that any area for change is prioritised within the school, ensuring that sufficient time is available for implementation. Hoban (2002) suggests that for genuine change to occur a long-term timeframe should exist to support the initiation of change. As such, this requires having the purpose of the change clear, having the support of the principal and school leadership team and providing regular opportunities to share progress reports within the school community (Barth, 1991).

The interplay of the ‘change frames’ is evident in the implementation phase of change. During this time, the context of the school, particularly with regard to its key ‘stakeholders’, is crucial in supporting teachers with the change being implemented. (Hoban, 2002; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Cole and Chan, 1994) It is imperative that the support for those involved in implementing this change is continued, throughout this often extended time, with the continual provision and allocation of necessary resources (Hoban, 2002; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992).

#### Institutionalisation of the change

The third phase ‘institutionalisation’ addresses whether or not the change is built into ongoing practice. Fullan (1991) says that this is achieved through a number of avenues. It is important that the change is supported within the leadership of the school, particularly through the commitment of the principal and incorporation into school policy (Barth, 1991). The change is institutionalised when it is ‘embedded into classroom practice’ by a ‘critical mass’ of the staff. Another consideration is whether procedures are in place to support ‘newcomers’ and maintenance of the

change through 'assistance, networking and peer support'. If change is institutionalised, the school would have removed all 'competing priorities'.

For change to be institutionalised it must be seen to be 'real' change. Change can often come about as a result of community pressure, to appear innovative or to gain more resources. This can be described as 'symbolic' change. 'Real' change is categorised by '...specific values, goals, events, and consequences' that work towards the achievement of something concrete. (Fullan, 1982:22) The journey to 'real' change can be difficult and takes time (Hoban, 2002). Schon (1971:12) described 'real' change as involving '...passing through the zones of uncertainty ... the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information that you can handle'. In order to bring about change in teaching practice, any initiative needs to be within the definition of 'real' change in order for teachers to see its value and adopt it.

In this phase, the need for the 'change frame' of shared vision is crucial for the institutionalisation of change. The change will not be fully adopted by all if those who have the power to change do not share the vision (Fullan, 1992, 1991, 1982). In this phase, the 'change frame' of collaborative relationships is important as these will help support and maintain the change that has been adopted (Hargreaves and Fullan; 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996).

#### Outcome of the change

The final phase 'outcome' generally focuses on the extent of improvement according to the specified criteria for the change. The outcome is the result of the journey through the previous phases and the degree to which the change was implemented (Fullan, 1982).

Fullan (1991: 350) discusses the difficulties associated with change in an educational setting. He writes that change is difficult because,

... it is riddled with dilemmas, ambivalences and paradoxes. It combines steps that seemingly do not go together: to have a clear vision and be open-minded; to take initiative and empower others; to provide support and pressure; to start small and think big; to expect results and be patient and persistent; to have a plan and be flexible; to use top-down and bottom-up strategies; to experience uncertainty and satisfaction.

All the 'change frames' need to come into play in this final phase to ensure sustainability of the change. Support provisions still need to be allocated, particularly to new members who join and are expected to support the change (Stoll and Fink, 1996). The school culture needs to be satisfied with the outcome of the change, with the key 'stakeholders' providing feedback (Hoban, 2002; Fink, 2000; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). For example, an increased quality in work samples produced by students would be evidence of feedback of improvements to teaching practice.

### ***The call for 'real' change***

Professional development is usually employed with the vision to bring about some sort of change in the school setting. Richert (1997:76) states that the acceptance and acknowledgement of change and uncertainty are paramount to teachers' professional development experiences. Within the inquiry, the participant teachers were called upon to review and develop their teaching practice with the intention of bringing about change; namely 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

The journey the six participant teachers moved through in 2001 needed to work towards 'real' change. Change needed to occur not only with the teaching practice but the teaching philosophy and beliefs of the six participant teachers. With this outcome in mind, it was important to

consider Fullan's (1982:21) guiding questions to guide this journey to 'real' change:

- What values are involved?
- Who will the change benefit?
- How much of a priority is it?
- How achievable is it?
- Which areas of potential change are being neglected?

From the beginning of the inquiry, I was aware that it was being directed by my 'vision' for how writing could be best taught within these early school years. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:5) highlight the tension between 'vision' and 'voice' when engaging in change. They argue that any change needs to be developed within the context of 'shared goals' as 'these are seen as essential to developing confidence and consistency among a community of teachers'. As such in the inquiry the need for me to persuade the teachers from the beginning that it was a worthwhile project and have them empowered to share the 'vision' with me was emphasised (Fullan, 1992). Also, the importance of giving teachers both the opportunity and language to develop and respond to the 'vision' with their own 'voice' was emphasised. Smyth (1993:3) acknowledges the importance of teachers '...developing a language for talking about teaching'.

The inquiry was calling upon the participant teachers to develop 'change in practice'. For this 'change in practice' to occur, the change must be multi-dimensional. Fullan, (1982:30-31) identifies three components or dimensions at stake in implementing educational change:

1. The use of new or revised materials
2. The possible use of new teaching approaches
3. The possible alteration of beliefs.



When change occurs, there is a 'dynamic relationship' among these three components or dimensions. It was this 'dynamic relationship' that I hoped the participant teachers would experience.

### ***The changing role of the teacher***

Effective teaching has been defined as '...the actions of professionally trained persons that enhance the cognitive, personal, social and physical development of students' (Cole and Chan, 1994:3). Stronge (2002:14-21) identified characteristics of effective teachers being contained within six main categories: 'role of caring'; 'role of fairness and respect'; 'social interaction with students'; 'promotion of enthusiasm and motivation for learning'; 'attitude towards the teaching profession'; and the 'role of reflective practice'. Such categories expand upon the notion of the teacher as information giver, but also look to the teacher as a person.

Historically the major purpose of teaching has been concerned with the transfer of knowledge and skills from teacher to student with an emphasis on the three Rs: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. In recent years this view is considered quite simplistic, as it has been acknowledged that teaching encompasses much more than the transfer of knowledge. The notion of teacher as learner and teacher as facilitator has become increasingly common in education circles. Researchers such as Fries (2002), Dudley-Marling (1997) and Britzman (1991) argue that teaching is concerned with the process of learning and not the product of knowledge.

Cole and Chan (1994:17-21) identify factors, which are related to the development of a teacher's professional role. The first of these is 'professional commitment'; this is concerned with the promotion of high standards of both student learning and student welfare. Ethical standards

are also included in this factor addressing issues such as equity and social justice. The second factor, 'analytic and reflective strategies', involves the application of knowledge about learning and how students learn and is also concerned with how teachers 'know this' through assessment and evaluation. The factor of 'self efficiency' encompasses the belief that a teacher's actions can impact on student learning. It is also important that teachers understand the subject matter which they are to teach and have skills in literacy and numeracy themselves to allow them to communicate effectively with the students and other stakeholders. While these factors are quite descriptive and encompass many of the historical purposes of teaching, there is little consideration of the role of professional development and understanding the processes of learning with regard to 'professional commitment'.

Stronge (2002:19-20) states, '... a dual commitment to student learning and to personal learning has been found repeatedly in effective teachers'. It is important that teachers build upon their own professional knowledge in order to best support their students. Participating in professional development opportunities enables teachers to '...model to their students that education and learning are valuable ... effective teachers learn and grow as they expect their students to learn and grow'.

Teachers are researchers in their classrooms. They daily identify problems and then work to solve them. Most teachers work within some '...action or cycle of actions' (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994: 2) to help them answer identified problems. There are many definitions to describe teacher research or practitioner research (McKernan, 1988; McCutcheon and Jung, 1990). Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:6) describe this research as,

*a form of collective, self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. Groups of participants can be teachers, students, principals, parents, and other community members – any group with a shared concern. The approach is only action research when it is collaborative, through it is important to realise that any action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of the individual group members.*

Many researchers have challenged the merits of teacher research.

Patterson and Shannon (1993:9) state,

*teacher research is not always respected within the educational community because it does not appear to offer the certainty claimed by experimental research or the lengthy teasing out of rules of behaviour and intention that comes from ethnographic studies. These sorts of studies seem completely planned, straightforward, and well managed, while teacher researchers' reflection, inquiry and action do not. Teacher research is instead organic, sometimes messy, unpredictable and generative – just like teachers' lives in and out of school.*

Teacher research reflects the complexities of school life. Teacher research is implemented in order to bring about some sort of change to best support students. Previous discussion of change in schools is reflective of the 'organic', 'sometimes messy', 'unpredictable' and 'generative' description given of this type of research.

The notions of reflection and reflective teacher education have become more common in preservice teacher education. Students in many universities are being encouraged to become 'thoughtful and alert students of education'. However, postservice professional development, often due to time limitations, is generally more input based, leaving little time for reflection on one's teaching practice (LaBoskey, 1994:ix). The value of reflective practice upon teaching practice is discussed in the literature (Edwards-Groves, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Turbill, 2002; Stronge, 2002; Whitehead, 2000, 1989; Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998; Hoffman, 1998; Carson, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Fullan, 1996; Eraut, 1995; Gore and Zeichner, 1991; LaBoskey, 1994; Strauss, 1993; Schon, 1987). Edwards-Groves (2003:92) suggests '...reflection is not profitable unless it affects practice', posing subsequent

implications for the nature of professional development opportunities with regard to individual teaching practice.

The notion of 'living educational theories' developed by Whitehead (1989, 2000) explains the role of the knowledge teachers bring and its impact on their classroom practice. Teachers, through their tertiary training and through some professional development opportunities, are presented with often 'abstract' knowledge. Teachers are called upon to integrate this knowledge with what they do in the classroom, incorporating these into their 'narrative of experience' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000:38). 'This process of weaving abstract theory into a narrative of learning from experience generates an embodied living theory of practice'.

## **Professional Development**

Before I was able to begin any professional development to bring about change in practice with these participant teachers, I first had to ground myself with an understanding of what professional development actually entails and how it has been used both successfully and unsuccessfully in the past.

The terms 'professional development' and 'staff development' are used interchangeably within the literature. The term 'professional development' will be used deliberately throughout this chapter as it is my '...intention to convey the importance of acknowledging teachers as professionals engaged in their own development within the profession rather than viewing teachers as replaceable staff members who need to be trained or serviced' (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998:xiv). The literature surrounding the professional development of teachers is voluminous. I have used it in order to highlight what has worked, what hasn't and the models that have been developed that would support the development of an in-school model using action research.

### ***Defining Professional Development***

Fullan (1991: 326-327) defines professional development as 'the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from pre-service teacher education to retirement'. He extends this by stating that the impact of professional development is dependent on a combination of 'motivation' and 'opportunity' to learn. 'Opportunity' is the stronger of the two terms and is used in an active sense. This active sense refers to both the availability of opportunities and the organisation of the system in which the opportunities are offered.

Guskey and Huberman (1995:133) state, 'professional development can also be viewed as a dynamic process that spans one's entire career in the profession, from preparation and induction to completion and retirement'. Teachers' learning is continuous throughout their professional experience. Professional development and professional growth are interrelated, one unable to occur without the other. Mevarech (1995:151) reinforces this by writing that professional development opportunities '...are assumed to be important stimuli for teachers' professional growth'. Danielson (1996:115) states 'continuing development is the mark of a true professional, an ongoing effort that is never completed'.

Holly and Mcloughlin (1989:ix) identify the professional development of teachers as a major challenge facing contemporary education. They state that there have been minimal changes to teacher professional development '...over the last several decades'. They challenge this as '...we are on the threshold of new images of teachers and new directions for teaching and schooling'. The current climate of accountability, outcome based education and standardisation in assessment demand that teachers have greater understanding of learning theories and pedagogy to develop and support their classroom practice.

Elliott (1991:106) states that professional development is more than just experiences teachers have - 'professional development is the individualistic and possessive process of acquiring techniques'. Professional development opportunities often impart knowledge and different classroom techniques that may be able to be employed to support such knowledge. If we are to use this definition from Elliott, we need to consider that professional development is more than just the input component and that in fact it hasn't occurred unless the individual teacher has demonstrated 'possession' of the techniques.

This then relates to Whitehead's (1998) assertion that professional development needs to support teachers on their journey to self-understanding. Put simply, a teacher needs to know his/her professional development and the impact of this on his/her classroom practice. Dialogue about professional development experiences and its relationship to their classroom practice '...can influence a teacher's self-understanding and stimulate new direction for practical inquiry' (Elliott, 1991:108).

Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:7) argue that professional development '...involves more than changing teachers' behaviour ... it also involves changing the person the teacher is'. Fundamental to this position is that professional development must impact upon their 'teaching behaviour' but also their beliefs about how this impacts upon how children learn. They argue that it must be acknowledged '...teacher development is also a process of personal development'.

The incorporation of individual teachers into whole staff development can be seen in two ways. Firstly, it can be a powerful strategy for implementing specific improvements. Secondly, in the long term it can work to develop the school into a collaborative workplace (Fullan, 1991: 319). These points need to be considered within what Hargreaves (1995:235) refers to as 'collaborative culture' as opposed to 'contrived collegiality'. The differences between the two are summarized in table 2.3. The notion of 'real change' (Fullan, 1982:22; Schon, 1971:12) would occur within 'collaborative culture' whereas staff development for specific improvement may be classified as 'contrived collegiality'. These categories provide a way of assessing the value of professional development opportunities.

Collaborative Culture	Contrived Collegiality
Pervasive across time and space Evolutionary 'Natural' Spontaneous Unpredictable Public mixed with private Development-orientated 'Feminine' in style	Bounded in time and space Imposed 'Forced' Regulated Predictable Public superimposed on Private Implementation-orientated 'Masculine' in style

**Table 2.3 – Collaborative Culture versus Contrived Collegiality**  
(Hargreaves, 1995:235)

The notion of the culture of the school is a key 'structure' for professional development (Turbill, 2002:102-103). Within the professional development experience '...these are the 'things' that the teacher or facilitator in that setting has some control over'. For the inquiry it became evident that it was important that as facilitator, I had control over input provided to the participant teachers. The participant teachers also needed to be encouraged to keep a reflective journal and identify specific areas of response within that journal. Each of these structures needed to '...be made explicit so that the learners not only know what is expected of them, but also why participation in that structure is worthwhile for their learning'. These structures need to play an important role within the school culture and as such need to be supported by the leadership of the school and within the inquiry by myself as the researcher, the 'change agent'.

Fullan (1991) argues that staff development cannot be separated from school development. The direction the staff is taken through their professional development should be reflective of the overall direction a school is aiming for. This responds to the 'shared vision' change frame discussed previously (Fullan, 1992, 1991, 1982). This should then be supported in school policy and documentation, allocation of resources (both time and financial) and within the direction of the school leadership.



## Characteristics of unsuccessful Professional Development

Not all professional development results in positive experiences. Often professional development opportunities are labelled as being 'unsuccessful'. This section aims to identify what characteristics lead to 'unsuccessful' professional development.

Conners (1991:78) argues that 'in-service teacher education has been a somewhat neglected area and that it has been under-resourced, under-researched and under-financed ... the complexity of the process has not been fully understood by employing authorities and those responsible for providing professional development programs'. The importance of providing adequate support and resources has been identified as a key area when implementing change (Hoban, 2002; Connelly and Clandinin, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Baird, 1991).

Professional development has often relied on the individual. An individual teacher may be sent off to a course or workshop. While the input received may be worthwhile and logical, it is often not implemented due to lack of support for that individual. This could be due to time factors, personnel issues or lack of support from the school (Fullan, 1991). Huberman (1995:207) refers to this as a 'lone-wolf scenario' which has the teacher '...working alone ... interspersed with short readings or pieces of advice ... long latency periods'. The professional development of teachers needs to be adopted as a whole school focus with the many personnel of a school supporting its implementation. Fullan (1991: 315) says, '...teacher development depends not only on individuals, but also on the teachers and administrators with whom he or she works'. The importance of a 'shared vision' and the role of collaborative relationships within this are reinforced within the literature (Fink, 2000; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992).

'One-off' opportunities are common professional development opportunities. From my own experience as an executive member of staff, the volume of promotional materials advertising workshops, conferences and information session from 'experts' are overwhelming. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:6) refer to such opportunities as 'skill-based teacher development' which is '...too often imposed on teachers rather than developed with them'. Hoban (2002:68) extends this by referring to it as being 'isolated ... based on limited conditions for teacher learning ... the presentation of new content over a relatively short time'. Schools often make these opportunities available for one or two teachers to attend; the limited numbers are often due to the high cost of attending. Likewise, Fullan (1991:315-316) argues that these 'single-factor solutions' to the professional development of teachers has limited gains without '... an accompanying understanding of the characteristics of effective as compared with ineffective in-service education efforts'. Fullan goes on to explain how wasteful in both time and money professional development tools such as workshops and conferences can be as they lead to no significant change in teaching practice once that teacher returns to their classroom.

It is common for a school district to offer professional development opportunities to its teachers. Such opportunities are one of 'the largest and potentially strongest forms of staff development' (Fullan, 1991: 316). However, such 'outside-in' approaches (Calhoun and Joyce, 1998) work with the assumption that '...teacher learning is a linear process and that educational change is a natural consequence of receiving well-written and comprehensive instructional materials' (Hoban, 2002:13). Pink's research (1989: 21-22) based on his study of four urban improvement projects found that the following factors acted as barriers to this type of staff development:

- An inadequate theory of implementation, resulting in too little time for teachers and school leaders to plan for and learn new skills and practices
- District tendencies towards faddism and quick-fix solutions
- Lack of sustained central office support and follow-through
- Under funding the project, or trying to do too much with too little support
- Attempting to manage the projects from the central office instead of developing school leadership and capacity
  - Lack of technical assistance and other forms of intensive staff development
- Lack of awareness about the limitations of teacher and school administrator knowledge about how to implement the project
- The turnover of teachers in each school
- Too many competing demands or overload
- Failure to address the incompatibility between project requirements and existing organisational policies and structure
- Failure to understand and take into account site-specific differences among schools and
- Failure to clarify and negotiate the role relationships and partnerships involving the district and the local university.

There are many reasons why common forms of professional development for teachers do not act as 'change agents' for teaching practice. Some of these key reasons have been discussed. Fullan (1979:3) summarises the reasons in-service education fails as often being:

- One-shot workshops are widespread but ineffective
- Topics are frequently selected by people other than those for whom the in-service is intended
- Follow-up support for ideas and practices introduced in in-service programs occurs in only a very small minority of cases

- Follow-up evaluation occurs infrequently
- In-service programs rarely address the individual needs and concerns
- The majority of programs involve teachers from many different schools and/or districts, but there is no recognition of the differential impact of positive and negative factors within the systems to which they must return
- There is a profound lack of any conceptual basis in the planning and implementing of in-service programs that would ensure their effectiveness.

### Characteristics of successful Professional Development

This section aims to identify what characteristics lead to 'successful' professional development.

Professional development usually comes about in an attempt to refine, develop or change teaching practice. However, this is more likely to occur if the teachers see a purpose for this within their own classroom experience. Stallings (1989: 3-4) in her study dealing with improving teaching and student achievements in reading practices in secondary schools found that teachers are more likely to change their teaching practice and continue to use new ideas under the following conditions:

- They become aware of a need for improvement through their analysis of their own observation profile
- They make a written commitment to try new ideas in their classroom the next day
- They modify the workshop ideas to work in their classroom and school;
- They try the ideas and evaluate the effect
- They observe in each other's classrooms and analyse their own data;

- They report their success or failure to their group
- They discuss problems and solutions regarding individual students and/or teaching subject matter
- They need a wide variety of approaches; modeling, simulations, observations, critiquing videotapes, presenting at professional meetings
- They learn in their own way to set new goals for professional growth.

Such features relate to the previous discussion of what brings about educational change.

Darling-Hammond (1997) argues that theory and practice or application cannot be separated from effective professional development.

Teachers learn just as their students do: by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see. This kind of learning cannot occur solely in college classrooms divorced from engagement in practice or solely in school classrooms divorced from knowledge about how to interpret practice. (Darling-Hammond, 1997:319)

Darling-Hammond (1997:322) claims that by integrating theory with practice in professional development opportunities, teachers are more likely to remember and continue applying what they have learned. Professional development and classroom practice need to be addressed within a 'partnership' mentality (Lefever-Davis, Heller, 2003). Such a process is more likely to counteract teachers reverting back to the way they were taught which has often been the result of unsuccessful professional development opportunities.

Professional development needs to be linked to meaningful change. From my experience as a teacher and working with teachers, teaching practice is personal and different from teacher to teacher and teachers need to feel

appreciated for what they offer to the profession. For this reason ‘...good professional development must make an impact on morale’ (Beck and Murphy, 1996:105).

The constructs of effective professional development differ in the literature. Joyce and Showers (1988) focus on instructional theory and skill development as making up ‘good’ professional development. Gitlin and Smyth (1989) take on the position that professional development should involve critical analysis and an action perspective. Danielson (1996:115) emphasises that professional development should be concerned with both content knowledge and development of personal pedagogy. Fullan (1991:326) states ‘teacher education should foster the development and integration of several aspects of teacher effectiveness – technical skill development, critical reflection, inquiry and collaboration’. There is an emphasis within the literature of creating a ‘balance’ with the input provided and the place and impact of this within individual teacher’s teaching pedagogy.

Stallings (1989: 4) summarised her study on professional development by stating that the key features of professional development need to be:

- Learn by doing – try, evaluate, modify, try again
- Link prior knowledge to new information
- Learn by reflecting and solving problems
- Learn in a supportive environment – share problems and successes.

When the literature on successful professional development is compared and contrasted, these key features are confirmed further.

Examination of the Department of Education and Training’s web site ([http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/edu\\_leadership/prof\\_read/index.php](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/edu_leadership/prof_read/index.php): 2003) is covered in the ‘buzzwords’ of current thinking with regard to

professional development. There are calls made for 'teacher development', 'collaboration', 'learning communities', 'mentoring' and 'reflective practice'. Such terms surrounding professional development are acknowledged as being important in developing teaching practice to support educational change. The challenge of how to incorporate and utilise all of these within professional development remains.

'Reflective practice' in current times is frequently linked to teacher professional development. Eraut (1995:247) states that the professional development to enhance reflective practice requires:

- Time set aside for deliberation and review
- Self-awareness developed through collecting evidence from others on the effects of one's actions
- Opportunities for observation of alternative practice
- Access to feedback and support when significant change is being attempted.

These words highlight again the importance of 'time' for professional development opportunities. It also refers to the collection of 'evidence' which supports the claim that teachers are researchers in their classrooms (Hoffman, 1998; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994: 2; McCutcheon and Jung, 1990; McKernan, 1988; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:6).

Darling-Hammond (1997:326) identified several strategies that professional development needs to include to improve teaching practice.

These are:

- Experiential, engaging teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, and observation that illuminate the processes of learning and development
- Grounded in participants' questions, inquiry, and experimentation as well as professionwide research
- Collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators

- Connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students as well as connected to examinations of subject matter and teaching methods
- Sustained and intensive, supported by modeling, coaching, and problem solving around specific problems of practice
- Connected to other aspects of school change.

### Models of Professional Development

The literature provides numerous models of ways teacher professional development has been and could be conducted. The models of professional development can be categorised according to a number of different labels. Guskey and Huberman (1995:269-272) devised two sets of countervailing models to capture the 'diversities of professional development' – the 'deficit' model as opposed to the 'growth' model and the 'individual' model as opposed to the 'institutional' model.

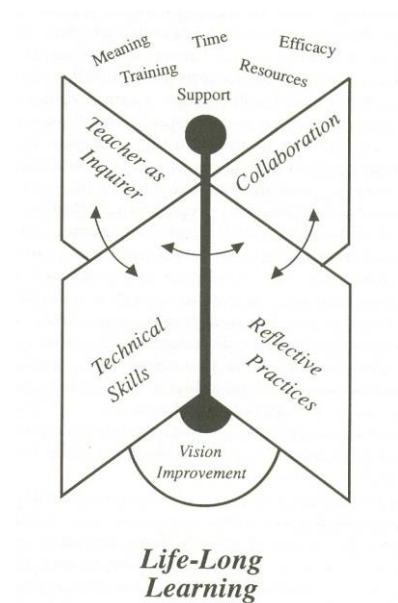
- The 'deficit' model '...is based on the idea that something is lacking and needs to be corrected'. Such deficits are usually determined by others, people who are in power, and the teachers become '... the objects, rather than the subjects, of their professional growth'.
- The 'growth' model '...consists of a variety of professional development activities that accompany 'continuous inquiry' into one's instructional practice'. Such opportunities are usually conducted within the school with the teachers guiding the process.
- The 'individual' model builds upon professional development as being largely 'an individual enterprise' as it '...meshes with instructional concerns for particular pupils and classes, with particular moments in the professional life cycle, and with individual aspirations toward growth, change, and challenge'. Hargreaves (1995:23) challenges this model as it can result in 'a narrow, utilitarian exercise that does not question the purposes and parameters of what teachers do'.



- The 'institutional' model '...can take the form of systematic collaboration among subsets of teachers ... but, at the same time, it shares a commitment to greater risk-taking across settings, to more continuous attempts to coordinate work across grade levels, and to modification of instructional arrangements that depress student learning and motivation'.

For the purposes of this review, I have drawn upon some models that support the characteristics previously outlined of successful professional development within the definitions provided by Guskey and Huberman (1995) for the 'growth' and 'institutional' professional development categories. The models presented will then provide the foundations for the development of an in-school professional development model using action research to support the participant teachers towards 'balanced writing pedagogy' throughout the course of the inquiry. Such action supports Fullan's (1995:253) call for the need for professional development to have '...a theoretical base and coherent focus'.

Much of the literature on successful professional development suggests that the teacher needs to be a learner (Turbill, 2002; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Fullan, 1991; Stallings, 1989). Teachers need a balance of the theory and practical application on the area being developed. Fullan (1991: 326-327) expands on this idea with the 'Teacher as Learner' model that portrays the image of the professional educator as a learner. Fullan argues, '...educational reform will never amount to anything until teachers become simultaneously and seamlessly inquiry oriented, skilled, reflective, and collaborative professionals'. He goes further to say '...this is the core agenda for teacher education, and the key to bringing about meaningful, effective reform'. This model incorporates many previously identified features of 'successful' professional development.



**Figure 2.4 – ‘Teacher as Learner’ model**

(Fullan, 1991:327)

Teaching is sometimes referred to as being a ‘craft’ within the literature and as such can be defined as ‘... a repertoire of skills or competencies that are accrued over time’ (Hoban, 2002:10). Huberman (1992:136) advocates a ‘craft model’ as being the most powerful form of professional development. Huberman asserts:

...teachers are artisans working primarily alone, with a variety of new and cobbled-together materials, in a personally designed work environment. They gradually develop a repertoire of instructional skills and strategies, corresponding to a progressively denser, more differentiated and well-integrated set of mental schemata; they come to read the instructional situation better and faster, and to respond to it with a greater variety of tools. They develop this repertoire through a somewhat haphazard process of trial and error, usually when one or another segment of the repertoire does not work repeatedly. Somewhere in that cycle they may reach out to peers or even to professional trainers ...

The merits of such a model are clear as it encourages teachers to take ownership of their professional development through engagement with their immediate professional responsibility and experience. The

sustainability of this model for all teachers throughout their career can be challenged upon investigation of those characteristics of 'unsuccessful' professional development previously discussed. It does, however, allow for the interaction of others into the process.

Strauss (1993; quoted in Mevarech, 1995:167) proposes that a professional development model could include the following:

1. Helping teachers discover their espoused mental models about instruction and children's learning by beginning the course with semi-structured interviews
2. Providing opportunities to discuss espoused pedagogical knowledge
3. Introducing the new model of learning and instruction by making connections between the old and the new knowledge and
4. Informing the teachers of the expected process of gaining expertise.

This model emphasises the importance of establishing what the teacher already knows and using this as a starting point for further input. It also reinforces the importance of keeping teachers informed about the process, which supports Fullan (1992) and Stoll and Fink (1996) with their notion of supporting the change process in school.

Tickell (1990:3) identified some characteristics for professional development in the 1990s. These are outlined below.

1. Planning
  - (a) at a system level, a strong emphasis on longer-term, system wide planning to ensure completion of major government initiatives.
  - (b) At a school level, professional development becoming an integral part of school improvement or renewal planning and/or program budgeting.
2. Integration: a movement away from the notion of professional development as an 'add-on' towards integration of professional development into program/policy implementation and personnel management.
3. Coordination: tighter coordination of professional development resources to ensure efficient use of funds, teacher-release time, study leave, consultancy services, etc.; and more explicit and structured arrangements between schools and support services.
4. Evaluation: a more comprehensive view of evaluation of professional development with emphasis shifting from the short-term success of individual activities as perceived by participants at the time to the effectiveness of overall programs in bringing about changes in professional practice and organisational behaviour with tighter monitoring and analysis of the use of resources, access to programs etc.
5. Liaison: more effective liaison between schools/systems and post-secondary institutions, including contractual arrangements for the provision of specified programs and services.
6. Training: a more systematic and structured approach to training based on training needs analyses, skills audits, etc. and closely related to career structures.

This model highlights the importance of professional development opportunities being supported within the school community with the allocation of funding and time resources. It also reinforces the notion that the initiative must be provided for and supported by the school leadership in order for these provisions to be met.

Hoban (2002:68-69) claims that an effective model of professional development is a 'professional learning system'. He outlines 'conditions for teacher learning' that are needed to support this system. The first of

these is concerned with the '...conception of teaching as an art or profession'. This acknowledges the relationship '...among students, other teachers, school, classroom, curriculum and context'. Another condition is 'reflection' which recognises the need for teachers '...to become aware of why they teach the way they do and to focus on understanding the patterns of change resulting from the dynamic relationships...' Similarly, what has been long advocated for children as learners, teachers as learners too '...need a purpose for learning to foster a desire for change and so content should be negotiated'. Professional development needs to respond to individual teacher needs rather than a mass-produced program for all. Professional development needs to have a 'long-term' timeframe '...as changing teaching means adjusting the balance among many aspects of the existing classroom system'. Teachers need to be supported within professional development opportunities through 'a sense of community'. This '...is necessary so that teachers trust each other to share experiences' which in turn extends the life of the professional development opportunity as '...new ideas are always evolving'. Another condition emphasises the importance of teachers being able '...to experiment with their ideas in action to test what works or does not work in their classrooms'. This further reinforces the call for professional development opportunities to be responsive to particular needs teachers are experiencing at that time within their own practice. The participants in such a professional development opportunity need access to '...a variety of knowledge sources' to support their professional learning. The final condition that teachers need is 'student feedback'. Teachers need to see that what they are doing is impacting upon the quality of the learning and teaching experiences offered to their students. Hoban states that it is the combination of these conditions that '...establishes a framework to encourage long-term teacher learning'.

Each of these professional development models present implications for the leadership role within a school. It is vital that those in leadership positions recognise and value professional development initiatives within the school. It can be concluded from this that the success of professional development models are often dependent on leadership styles.

## **Change and Professional Development within Literacy**

Literacy is an area that often evokes emotional responses from people who have views about what teachers should be teaching in their classroom. Media often carry stories about the state of current education, often finding fault with what is happening in contemporary classrooms. 'Change' is often called for, particularly with regard to the way literacy is taught in classrooms.

Such calls for 'change' falls more into the category of 'symbolic' change rather than 'real' change. It is reflective of Fullan's (1982:22) description of 'symbolic' change resulting from community pressure. Edward-Groves (2003:103) claims that '...policy makers have traditionally aimed professional development at the macro level of teacher practice...' when addressing professional development in literacy. Such opportunities are aimed at improving literacy learning for students, but within the realm of 'symbolic' rather than 'real' change.

The reality is that many people do have a right to comment on and have input into what happens in classrooms. Education is surrounded by 'stakeholders' – '...a person or group of persons with a right to comment on, and have input into, the curriculum program offered in schools' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988:124). Schools and society are incalculably linked. Therefore, it is important that teachers acknowledge who these

stakeholders are and acknowledge their impact on their classroom practice.

### ***Government Initiatives and the English Curriculum***

Teaching practice embodies both ethical and political considerations (Winch, 1996: 88-89). There is conflict between the progressive and traditionalist views of education. Winch (1996:89) attributes this to education not always considered as both a political and social responsibility - 'It was only when education became the subject of considerable public and political interest from the mid 1970s onwards that a debate about practice became possible and only in the 1990s that it became at all prominent'. Arguments from these arenas surrounding literacy and the way it is taught in schools focus on the individual development of a student versus the academic attainment of government accepted literacy standards.

In 1990 the Commonwealth Government of Australia developed a White Paper entitled 'Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy'. This policy was endorsed by the Federal Cabinet in 1991 after '...consultation with all States, territories, professional bodies, and providers of language and literacy education ...' (Brock, 1995:19-20). The four goals of this national policy are:

- all Australians should develop and maintain effective literacy in English to enable them to participate in Australian society;
- the learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved;
- those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages which are still transmitted should be maintained and developed, and those which are not should be recorded where appropriate; and
- language services provided by interpreters and translators, the print and electronic media, and libraries should be expanded and improved (DEET, 1991:iii)

This White Paper included the following definition of Literacy:

*Literacy is the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately, in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding, to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of numbers and basic mathematical signs and symbols within text.*

*Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing. Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and continues to develop throughout an individual's lifetime' (DEET, 1991:9)*

This is the same definition was adopted the New South Wales English K-6 Syllabus document (Board of Studies, 1998:5).

The National English Statement is consistent with this Policy. 'It insists that literacy is more than a set of static, decontextualised skills' (Brock, 1995:30). The Statement presents the role of schools in the literacy development of it students as being:

*...at school, as in the early formative years, language is best learnt in use, with the aid of well-chosen teacher demonstrations, explanations, correction, advice and encouragement. Effective teaching is based on what children already know and can do. The teaching of English will achieve most where the considerable informal language knowledge and competence of students, whatever their cultural or language backgrounds, is acknowledged, used and extended (Curriculum Corporation, 1994a:3)*

Teachers are called upon to be familiar with the theories surrounding literacy learning. Brock (1995:35) states, 'Teachers need to be aware of a wide repertoire of theories and strategies from which to draw eclectically when teaching language, literacy and literature within the particular educational contexts that they teach their students'. From my experience, this 'eclectic' gathering of strategies and theories has often resulted in disjointed teaching approaches within schools.

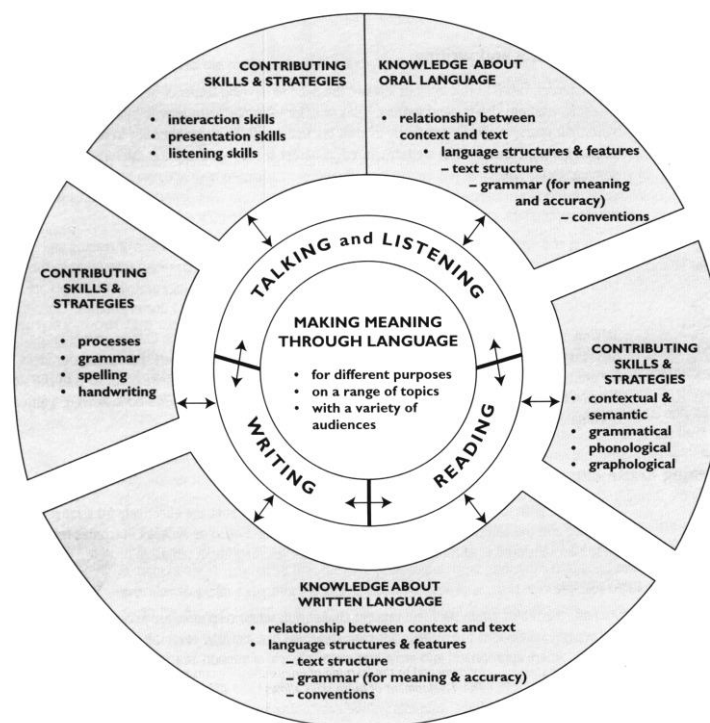
Schools in New South Wales are all guided by an English K-6 Syllabus (1998). This syllabus identifies four key modes of language that children need to be taught – reading, writing, talking and listening. The syllabus is



made up of outcomes for each stage group working towards these language modes.

- Early Stage One: Kindergarten students
- Stage One: Year 1 and Year 2 students
- Stage Two: Year 3 and Year 4 students
- Stage Three: Year 5 and Year 6 students.

The ‘...core of the syllabus is an emphasis on language as a resource for making meaning’ (Board of Studies, 1998:7). The document makes clear that there is a vital relationship between talking, listening, reading and writing when using language for social purposes. This is illustrated further in diagram 2.5.



**Figure 2.5 - The Interaction of Reading, Writing, Talking and Listening to Create Meaning** (Board of Studies, 1998:7)

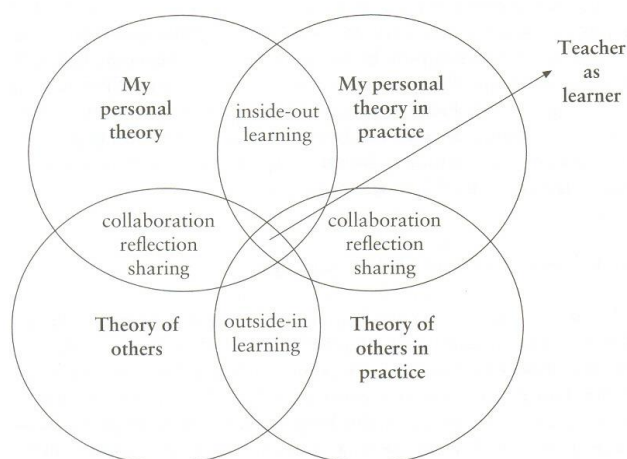
## ***Professional Development Models for Literacy Teaching***

Professional Development has previously been discussed according to characteristics that have worked, have not worked and suggested models. It is important to acknowledge that specific models have been designed previously to support classroom literacy practice. Two of these existing models will be explored further. The Frameworks Professional Development Model will be explored as it has played a role in my professional formation. I have used it as a basis for previous research (Kervin, 1999) and have been exposed to it through my professional interactions with both Jan Turbill and Brian Cambourne. Good First Year Teaching also needs to be explored further. It has been referred to in the introduction chapter, but needs additional explanation as it has been the main literacy professional development opportunity offered to the teachers within the system from which this inquiry has drawn its participant teachers from. Four of the six participant teachers have been involved in this form of professional development.

### **The Frameworks Program**

The Frameworks Program (Turbill, Butler and Cambourne, 1991; 1999) encourages teachers to explore their own personal teaching philosophy and practice. The teachers are given the opportunity to explore their beliefs and the theories of others. From looking at both personal and external thoughts, teachers are able to compare and contrast these, thus reinforcing and building upon their own teaching philosophies. The implications of these beliefs can then be considered in the context of classroom teaching. Teachers in their own classrooms can try any 'new' practices. The program is designed so that the results of old and new teaching practices can be reflected upon with colleagues in a supportive environment.

The Frameworks model of professional development draws upon the notion of the teacher as being a learner through the interplay of four basic knowledge domains. This interplay between the knowledge domains is represented in figure 2.6



**Figure 2.6 - 'Frameworks' as a model of professional learning** (Turbill, 2002:96)

The notion of a 'facilitator' is of paramount importance to the Frameworks program. A facilitator needs to be able to make 'professional judgement' with regard to when input is provided according to individual teacher needs and its place within their context of situation (Turbill, 2002:100).

Reflection, collaboration and sharing are some key 'conditions' to the Frameworks professional development experience. The facilitator of the program has an integral role within these as they '...provide structures to encourage interplay between the knowledge domains' (Turbill, 2002:100). Each of these 'conditions' '...should be viewed as a collective and not as independent learning processes' (Turbill, 2002:101).

This model for professional development for literacy incorporates many of the characteristics identified in 'successful' professional development. It

provides a balance of theory and classroom practice within the context of a supportive community.

### Good First Year Teaching

The Good First Year Teaching course was developed ‘...as one component in a systematic approach to improving literacy teaching and students’ literacy outcomes in diocesan primary schools’ (Catholic Education Office: Diocese of Wollongong 2001:1). In 1999, the Good First Year Teaching Program was offered for the first time to teachers in the Wollongong Diocese.

This original ‘Good First Year Teaching’ course was designed for teachers of Kindergarten and associated support staff. Reading Recovery had been introduced to the diocese in 1994 and the Good First Year Teaching program was intended to complement and support this. The Literacy Education Officer for the diocese designed the course to meet needs identified by Reading Recovery (Clay, 1979) teachers. Feedback from Reading Recovery teachers was indicating that classroom teaching wasn’t supporting the Reading Recovery Program through such practices as the inclusion of guided reading groups within the classroom and the regular assessment of reading practices (I-10.1.01).

The Good First Year Teaching program is underpinned by a set of ten beliefs. These are based on the characteristics of quality teaching identified by Fountas and Pinnell (1999). Good First Teaching:

- Assumes that all children can learn to read and write
- Is based on a teacher’s understanding of the reading and writing processes
- Is based on assessment that informs instruction and documents individual learning over time
- Requires a large block of daily instructional time for literacy

- Takes place in an organised environment that encourages children to be active participants and supports collaborative and independent learning
- Engages children in a variety of reading and writing experiences involving connected or continuous text, on a daily basis
- Includes attention to letters and words and how they work
- Requires appropriate materials and resources
- Is designed to complement Reading Recovery programs
- Is not a program you can buy, but is the result of an investment in professional development.

(Catholic Education Office: Diocese of Wollongong 2001:3)

A key principle of change as described by Stoll and Fink (1996:45) is that 'people have to understand change and work out their own meaning through clarification, which often occurs through practice.' This principle justifies the selection of action research as a possible professional development model. While diocesan programs such as Good First Year Teaching may in fact change the appearance of classroom teaching behaviours, for true change to occur these changes must also take place in teacher belief, in their 'individual learning and teaching theory' (Whitehead, 2000).

## **Action Research as a Professional Development model for teaching Writing**

*As you travel to new places, you will learn much from those who have walked these trails before you. They will provide you with direction, yet they will respect your journey and let you find your own way. They are the travelers of days gone by and they have much wisdom to share with you. Listen to their voices and learn alongside them.*

(Whelan, 1999:23)

Action research as a methodology has been linked to teachers and education for some time. It is seen to be a valuable way for teachers to address issues that arise in their classrooms as they plan, act, observe and reflect in order to work towards solutions. From my own experience as a classroom teacher, action research is what teachers do naturally in their classrooms – they problem-solve identified issues. McNiff (2000:95) writes, ‘during recent years I have been struck by the variety of responses to action research by different communities. Workplace-based practitioners welcome it. They frequently comment, ‘This is what I do in any case, only now there is a theoretical framework to it’.

### ***Defining Action Research***

There are many definitions of action research. Cohen and Manion (1994:192) describe it as:

essentially an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. This means that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies, for example) so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustments, directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary, so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself...

It is important to note that this definition makes clear that the task is not finished when the project ends. The participants continue to review, evaluate and improve practice.

Elliott (1991:107-108) states that teacher-based action research has specific characteristics. The problems that are addressed reflect a 'practical/moral' nature and reflect the real issues of classroom life. The process of the action is increasingly important as teachers consider 'the concepts of value' which shape their teaching practices. These values are realised in a teacher's interactions with the students. Teacher-based action research is a 'reflexive practice' as the teacher evaluates and appraises the quality of their 'self' through their actions. Actions 'are conceived as moral practices rather than mere expressions of techniques'. Theory and practice are integrated through teacher-based action research. An increased understanding of educational theories is demonstrated through consistently improved teaching practice. Dialogue with 'professional peers' is important as it helps the teachers 'realize professional values in action' as 'they are accountable for the outcome to their professional peers'. Such characteristics unpack the framework of action research, with an emphasis on its practical nature.

The fundamental aim of action research '... is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge' (Elliott, 1991:49). In this inquiry, improved practice occurred through the participant teachers increased capacity to discriminate and judge situations that occurred in their classroom practice when teaching writing. Such skills have the ability to impact upon the teachers' practical understanding of increasingly more complex issues.

The literature surrounding action research identifies key aspects of the methodology. Elliott (1991:69) states that an important aspect of action research involves making a 'practical judgment in concrete situations'.

The purpose of action research is to help 'people to act more intelligently and skillfully'. Theories that are developed through action research are 'validated through practice'. Another key feature of action research is its '...potential for empowerment and the inclusion of a greater diversity of voices in educational policy and social change. We see practitioner research as an opportunity to make the voices of those who work closest to the classroom heard' (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994:6).

### Action Research and Teachers

This inquiry looked to action research as a way to support the teachers' understanding of the literacy curriculum, particularly their understanding of the writing process and how to teach this to students. For some of the participant teachers, this required them to change their teaching practice. It required others to evaluate and tighten teaching practice. Nunan (1989: 3) states that curriculum changes and changes in thinking surrounding a curriculum area will be more readily adopted if teachers are encouraged to take a '...critical and experimental approach to their own classrooms'. Such an approach encourages them to become action researchers where they carry out research on their own class dealing with problems they have identified. This process is more likely to lead to change in teaching practice.

Huberman (1992:137) also supports this notion with his 'craft model' which can be likened to the action research process. Encouraging teachers to 'tinker' within their classrooms, through the use of the guiding action research principles leads to the development of 'personal teaching efficacy' amongst teachers.

Turbill (2002:103) expands upon this idea with her call for teachers to build upon what they already know through professional development opportunities. She asserts: '...the transformation of new knowledge with



what the learners [the participant teachers] already know as well as digging deeper into what they already know, think and believe ... [will enable] ... this tacit knowledge ... [to become] ... prepositional knowledge'.

Marsh (1988:29) defines an action research model of staff development as involving '...groups of teachers systematically analysing an issue or problem of concern to them and then planning action programs, executing them, evaluating their efforts and repeating the cycle if necessary'. Key elements in this approach include '... the participation of teachers in the self-reflection, discussion and argumentation'. It is this practical nature of action research that makes it so appealing to teacher researchers.

#### Action Research and Reflective Practice

Terms such as 'teacher research' and 'reflective practice' have become increasingly more common in educational reform (Whitehead, 2000, 1989; Carson, 1997; LaBoskey, 1994; Gore and Zeichner, 1993). Such terms suggest that teachers must play active roles '...in formulating the purposes and ends of their work as well as the means' (Gore and Zeichner, 1993:205). Reflection is a key component of the action research process. As Elliott (1991:54) states, 'Action research integrates teaching and teacher development, curriculum development and evaluation, research and philosophical reflection, into a unified conception of a reflective educational practice'. Edward-Groves (2003:92) argues that reflective teachers '...want to interpret and learn from their own teaching'.

Schon (1987) has claimed that reflective practitioners are engaged in a form of research. He goes further to say that most professional development opportunities work to solve given problems. However, in actual classroom practice the practitioner has to first identify the problem before beginning to solve it. Such a process needs the practitioner to

have an understanding of research methodology to assist with this (Shulman, 1992). Action research is a meaningful form of professional development as it relies on firstly the identification of a problem then provides a structure for the problem to be worked through. However, little indication is given as to support structures that can be used to assist teachers in this process and when to actually stop the process.

Danielson (1996:106) identifies the ‘...ability to reflect on teaching is the mark of a true professional. Through reflection, real growth and therefore excellence are possible. By trying to understand the consequences of actions and by contemplating alternative courses of action, teachers expand their repertoire of practice’.

Reflective and action research practices have been identified as useful tools for the professional development of teachers (Stronge, 2002; Mills, 2000; Grimmer and Erickson, 1988; Kemessis, 1987; Liston and Zeichner, 1989; Oja and Smulyan, 1989; Schon, 1987). Action research has been used as a methodology for social scientific research and social change, therefore linking it historically to a language of ‘democracy’ and ‘transformation’ (Gore and Zeichner, 1993:206). The work of Kurt Lewin suggests that action research, when employed, gives the members a greater say in, and sense of control over, improving the negotiated area (cited in Gore and Zeichner, 1993:206). Such literature reiterates the merits of action research as a form of professional development.

‘Reflection begins when an individual is perplexed or uncertain about an idea or situation and ends with a judgement’ (LaBoskey, 1994:4).

‘Reflection can be done individually, in small groups, or by a scribe for a large group such as a school staff (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998:62). Teacher-based action research is usually initiated by classroom teachers in response to an issue they’ve identified in their classrooms.

According to Nunan (1989:3), teacher initiated research has the following advantages:

- It begins with and builds on the knowledge that teachers have already accumulated
- It focuses on the immediate interests and concerns of classroom teachers;
- It matches the subtle, organic process of classroom life
- It builds on the 'natural' processes of evaluation and research which teachers carry out daily
- It bridges the gap between understanding and action by merging the role of the researcher and practitioner
- It sharpens teachers' critical awareness through observation, recording and analysis of classroom events and thus acts as a consciousness-raising exercise
- It provides teachers with better information than they already have about what is actually happening in the classroom and why
- It helps teachers better articulate teaching and learning processes to their colleagues and interested community members.

'Reflecting on one's actions, however, is central to making meaning of work and becoming a professional' (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998:62). Such reflection can occur through a journal, however 'dialogues with colleagues about something that happened during the day ... or thoughts about the profession' (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998:63) are other valuable forms of reflection.

### Action Research and Collaboration

A criticism of action research has been that it doesn't move anywhere. Teachers working alone keep moving through the process without making any real change. The incorporation of collaboration among a variety of professionals leads to make this process more worthwhile, as the action

research support network is extended. Such collaboration includes a willingness to talk with others about problems as a way of finding solutions (Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999:62). Calhoun (2002:18) states 'action research can change the social system in schools' in the way that collaboration with others enables learning to be supported within a culture where such learning is expected. The practice of 'like-minded' practitioners all working on addressing a common issue is referred to as 'critical friends' with their role being 'to critique one's work within a context of support' (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994:7).

Observing teachers in their classrooms is often considered to be the most 'natural' way to evaluate teachers. However, in saying this, many aspects of teaching '...such as knowledge, understanding and attitudes...' are unobservable (Nevo, 1995:146). The use of action research as a process assists teachers in clarifying their own knowledge, understanding and attitudes. Doing this in a collaborative way enables teachers to create connections with others and have a forum to dialogue about these aspects of teaching (Edwards-Groves, 2003).

Brumfit (1985: 152) claims that the ability to '...question and revise fundamental assumptions about the nature of education...' is the key to quality teacher education. However, he also claims '...such questioning and revision must be based on a close understanding of the nature of teaching and learning, derived from experience as well as theory'. Stronge (2002:21) states that questioning and reflective practice are interwoven as one cannot occur without the other. The principles of action research support this process. Darling-Hammond (1997:320) argues that real learning occurs when '...questions arise in the context of real students and real work in progress where research and disciplined inquiry are also at hand'. The importance of questioning to the action research process is

clear; working through these within a collaborative community provides a way of drawing upon other teachers' expertise.

Elliott (1991:54) proposes, 'Action research does not empower teachers as a collection of autonomously functioning individuals reflecting in isolation from each other'. The literature strongly emphasises the benefits of action research in terms of improving classroom practice. Indication is given that this can be done in conjunction with others in order to create 'commitment to worthwhile change' (Elliott, 1991:55). However structures within the literature to demonstrate exactly how this could occur are not clearly indicated.

## **The ‘Puzzle’ of Professional Development from the Literature**

The literature has identified a number of components to consider when working towards refining teaching practice within a curriculum area, such as Literacy, more specifically the teaching of writing.

Change and education go together concurrently. For ‘change’ to occur and be successful, it’s imperative that the teachers see value and a need for that change to occur. The four phases of change (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992) need to be moved through in order to achieve this ‘real’ change.

The literature acknowledges the importance of identifying ‘stakeholders’ and recognizing their importance and impact in terms of what teachers do in their classrooms (Nieto, 2001; Barth, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Such ‘stakeholders’ can often form powerful people partnerships, which impact upon teachers classroom practices. When considering literacy in these early school years, it is vital to acknowledge the role of school policy and directions, the support from the Principal and school leadership team, the expectations of parents and the provision of programs such as Reading Recovery (Clay, 1979). These ‘stakeholders’ all impact upon literacy classroom practice.

The role of the teacher has changed significantly in recent times. This changing role needs to be addressed in order to understand teaching practice. A disjointed approach in teaching can be the result of previous learning experiences, which contribute to one’s ‘Living Educational Theory’ (Whitehead, 2000). Such experiences may also vary among ‘stakeholders’ which again impact upon their expectations and demands of the classroom teacher.

Professional Development opportunities provide for teachers are varied and are often reflective of the 'unsuccessful' and 'successful' characteristics that have been described. Too often, teachers have been seen as 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled up with teaching knowledge through professional development opportunities. Johnson and Golombek (2002:1) write, 'for more than a hundred years, teacher education has been based on the notion that knowledge about teaching and learning can be 'transmitted' to teachers by others'. Teachers need to be acknowledged individually for what they bring to the profession and work from their own starting points on their individualized areas of need. Teachers need to see the value in professional development for their personal teaching practice and must be supported in its implementation by those in leadership roles and by the school community at large. The challenge for this inquiry became how best to develop and incorporate the participant teachers within a 'professional learning system' (Hoban, 2002; Turbill, 2002) that would support them on their journey towards 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

Opportunities provided for teachers in professional development are needed to support the direction of the school in terms of curriculum and planning goals. For 'real' change (Fullan, 1982:22; Schon, 1971:12) to occur in teaching practice through professional development, the experience needs to be valued as important by the school and provisions made for it in terms of priority, time and resources.

The discussion of action research leads to the conclusion that this methodology is about empowering teachers to explore identified issues in order to improve their own learning and their classroom teaching practice. Through action research teachers are called to explore, experiment, reflect upon, talk about and rethink their own practice with the vision to redesign literacy programs and classroom organisation to best support this

increased understanding. This needs to be done in relationship with current literacy theory while at the same time recognising previous literacy learning experiences that have impacted upon individual teachers. The benefits of doing this within the context of a collaborative community are frequently mentioned in the literature.

The challenge extended by this review of the literature is to engage with action research as a professional development model to guide the participant teachers in the pursuit for a 'balanced writing pedagogy'. The characteristics (both successful and unsuccessful) and identified models present a course of action to manoeuvre this process aiming for 'change' in teaching practice. In response to all the literature explored in this review, figure 2.7 presents the puzzle this presents. There is an abundance of literature on professional development that explores the key terms indicated in the puzzle pieces in figure 2.7. The arrangement of these puzzle pieces is in no particular order, the intention being to represent the array of issues the literature presents when addressing professional development. However, it must be noted that there is little indication given as to if and how they fit together in order to establish a cohesive and interconnected approach to professional development, particularly within a school context. The exploration of the puzzle pieces from the literature will assist with identifying the components to be considered for the development of an in-school professional development model to guide the six participant teachers on their professional journey throughout the inquiry.



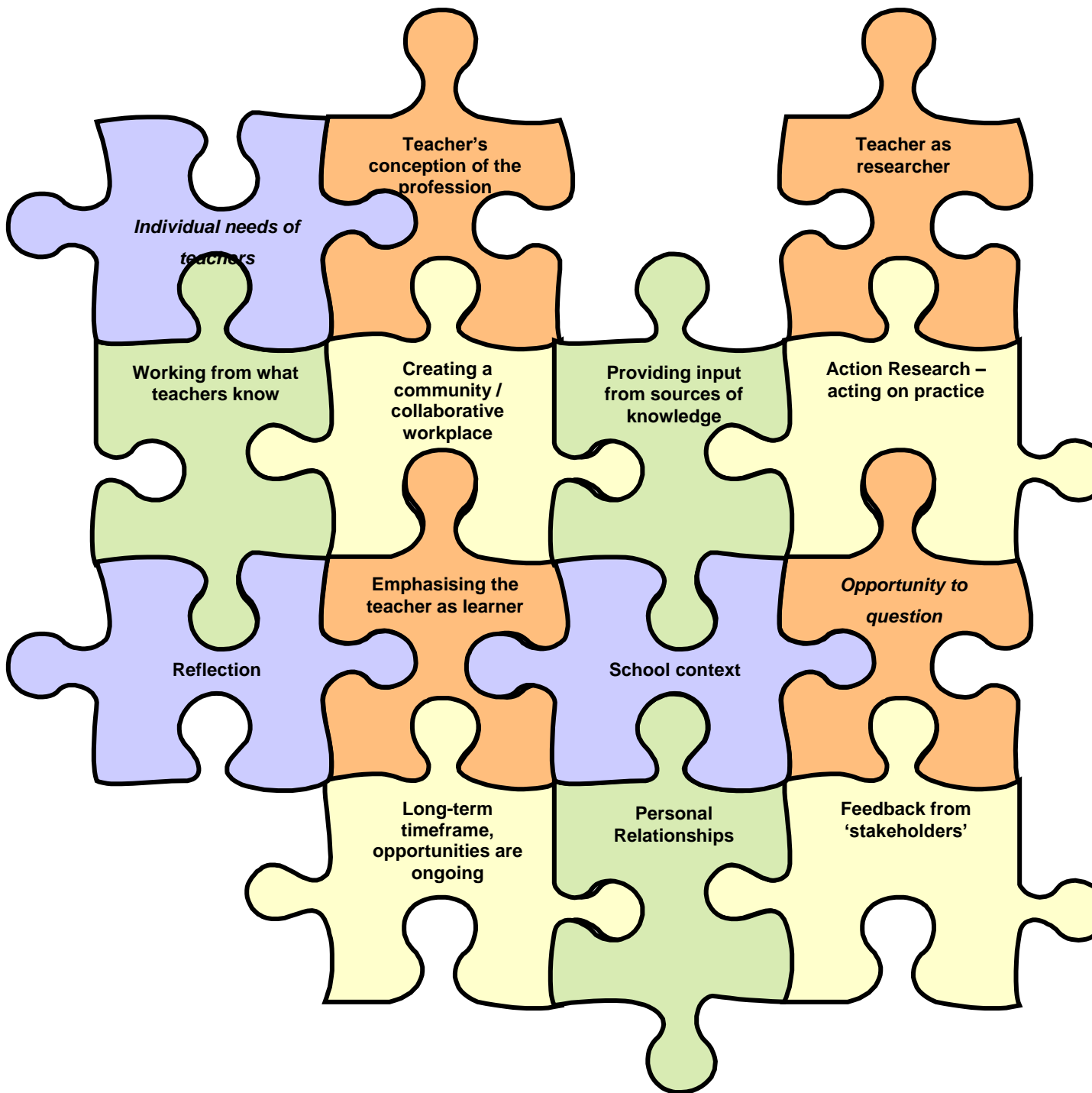


Figure 2.7 - The puzzle of Professional Development from the literature

### Teacher's conceptions of the profession

The literature suggests that the way an individual teacher perceives both the teaching profession and their role within that profession as being important factors in their attitude towards professional development. (Hoban, 2002; Turbill, 2002; Beck and Murphy, 1996; Danielson, 1996; Huberman, 1992)

### Long-term timeframe

The characteristics of 'successful' professional development clearly identify that one-shot or disjointed approaches have not been successful. What have been successful are those models that enable professional development opportunities to be ongoing within an extended timeframe. (Hoban, 2002; Hoffman, 1998; Darling- Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Mevarech, 1995)

### Individual needs of the teachers

Teachers are individuals and as such have individual needs. The literature suggests that it is important to acknowledge the personal and professional backgrounds of teachers. It is important that professional development opportunities work within the knowledge base of the individual teacher and within their professional needs at that time. (Turbill, 2002; Whitehead, 1998; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992; Elliott, 1991)

### Working from what teachers already know

The literature suggests that it is important to establish what teachers already know about an area before moving further. In this way, teachers are recognised for the knowledge they already have and professional development opportunities can work to move the teachers from that point. (Turbill, 2002; Whitehead, 2000; 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1997)

### School context

The school in which the teacher is working is an important consideration. Professional development opportunities are not successful if teachers aren't supported by the school leadership and with appropriate time and resources. (Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Stallings, 1989)

### Personal relationships

A facilitator usually runs professional development opportunities. It is important that teachers respect and trust the person who is coordinating their professional development experience. (Turbill, 2002; Tickell, 1990)

### Emphasising the teacher as learner

Professional development should be ongoing throughout one's career. As such, it is important to acknowledge that teachers are constantly learning as current thinking and understanding changes. (Turbill, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Fullan, 1991; Stallings, 1989)

### Teacher as researcher

Teachers have been described as researchers in their own classrooms as they consistently identify and respond to areas of need. As such, teachers need support with this process as it contributes to their professional growth. (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Shulman, 1992; McCutcheon and Jung, 1990; Nunan, 1989; McKernan, 1988; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)

### Action Research – acting on practice

The 'teacher-as-researcher' model of action research has been advocated as an effective model for teachers to utilise in their classrooms. The guiding principles of action research – plan, act, observe, reflect, revise

plan – are useful for teachers as they organise their teaching. What is also important though is constructing forums to review and discuss this process. (Lefever-Davis and Heller, 2003; Hoban, 2002; McNiff, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Gitlin and Smyth, 1989; Stallings, 1989; Marsh, 1988; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)

#### Providing input from sources of knowledge

Teachers are called upon to provide input within their teaching. The literature suggests that it is important for professional development to address the content teachers need to know. The literature also suggests that sources of knowledge – text, courses, people, - are available to teachers to assist this professional input. (Hoban, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Brock, 1995; Huberman, 1992; Stallings, 1989; Joyce and Showers, 1988)

#### Opportunity to question

The literature calls upon teachers to challenge and question their teaching practice in light of professional development opportunities. (Stronge, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Brumfit, 1985)

#### Creating a community / collaborative workplace

Traditionally teachers have been seen as working independently within the confines of their classroom. The literature encourages teachers to form professional networks to assist with professional practice, creating a community within individual schools, districts and curriculum areas. Teachers are also called upon to work together in a collaborative way. (Edwards-Groves, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Nevo, 1995; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Fullan, 1991; Elliott, 1991; Tickell, 1990; Marsh, 1988)

### Reflection

Reflection has been suggested to be of benefit to teachers' understanding and organisation of their teaching practices. The literature suggests that reflection can occur at an individual level, with a 'critical friend' or in a collaborative workplace. (Edwards-Groves, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Turbill, 2002; Stronge, 2002; Whitehead, 2000, 1989; Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998; Hoffman, 1998; Carson, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Fullan, 1996; Eraut, 1995; LaBoskey, 1994; Gore and Zeichner, 1993; Strauss, 1993; Schon, 1987)

### Feedback from 'stakeholders'

The literature acknowledges the importance of the key 'stakeholders'. The literature acknowledges the impact 'stakeholders' can have on teaching practice. It also recognises the importance of receiving feedback from 'stakeholders' particularly in light of changes in teaching practice. (Hoban, 2002; Nieto, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Cole and Chan, 1994; Tickell, 1990; Barth, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988)

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# Chapter Three

## *The Grounding for Our Journey*

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## **Chapter Three**

### **The Grounding for Our Journey**

*Action Research as a Professional Development Model for the Teaching of Writing in Early Stage One and Stage One Classrooms.*

The purpose of this study began with the intention of examining a cohort of Early Stage One and Stage One teachers over the course of one year to investigate their professional journey as we explored their teaching of writing. This study aimed to identify and address factors that guided this process as we moved towards shared, 'balanced writing pedagogy' for the first years at school.

The following questions guided this inquiry. However, as the inquiry had an interpretivist/naturalistic basis, the changing nature of these questions and the possible emergence of other questions were recognised.

- How has writing been taught within Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms over the past ten years at the inquiry school?
- What structures, activities, processes and people partnerships can be identified within Early Stage One / Stage One teachers' professional development experiences?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these professional development experiences and the professional growth of teachers in the teaching of writing?

## ***The Process of Developing Appropriate and Relevant Research Design***

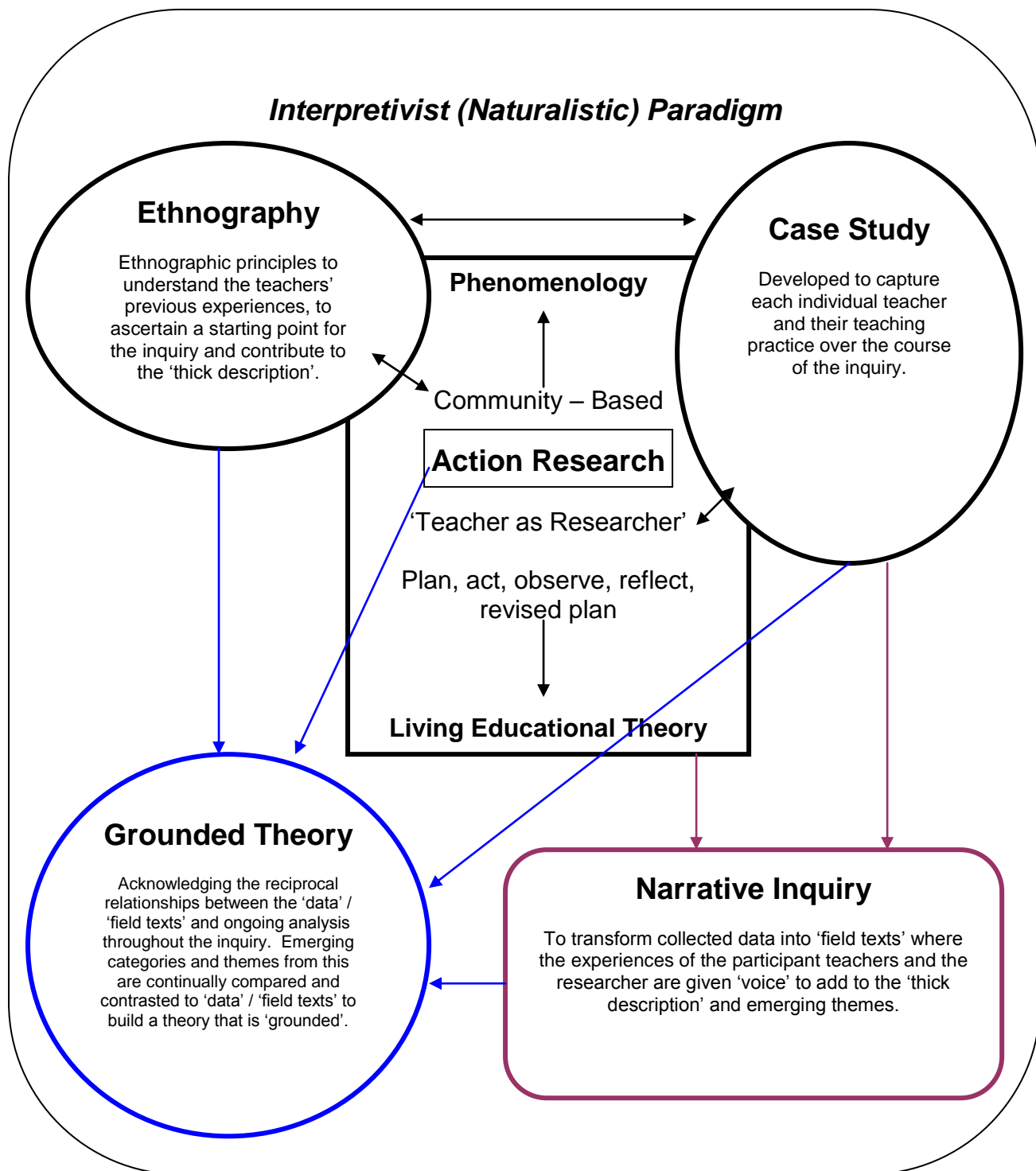
*I advocate a paradigm of choices. A paradigm of choices rejects methodological orthodoxy in favour of methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality. (Patton, 1990:8)*

In this chapter the stories of my research choices, questions, dilemmas and decisions— decisions to locate the research within an interpretivist/naturalistic inquiry framework and supporting methodologies are shared. The direction of this inquiry came from concern for the ‘process’ as well as final outcomes. Aspects of different methodologies were drawn upon to support the direction the inquiry moved in to respond to the guiding questions and those that the research process itself raised. This process can not be described within the context of any one existing form of methodology and highlighted the need for researchers to consider need rather than methodology orthodoxy. Patton (1982, 1990) refers to ‘methodological appropriateness’. Taking his advice, I drew upon several research methodologies in the design of this project. These are:

- Ethnography (Merriam, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Van Manen, 1990; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988)
- Action Research incorporating phenomenology and Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 2000; Kemmis, 1999; Stringer, 1996; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Van Manen, 1990; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)
- Case Study (Sturman, 1999; Burns, 1997; Stake, 1995; Guba and Lincoln, 1989)
- Narrative Inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, 1990)
- Grounded Theory (Glaser, 2002; Creswell, 2002; Charmaz, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Glaser and Straus, 1967)



The interactions of these methodologies within this inquiry are represented in figure 3.1. Each of the methodologies will be explored in more detail according to their purpose and role within the inquiry.



**Figure 3.1 – Inquiry Design: Methodological Appropriateness**

## Ethnography

The inquiry began by employing ethnographic principles. Burns (1997:226) states that such principles are based on 'general commitments and orientations to research'. These include:

- The importance of understanding and interpreting cultures within a particular society.
- Focusing on the process of generating meanings and interpretations, rather than assuming them to be fixed entities.
- Investigating natural settings rather than artificial settings.
- The study of a social phenomena within the holistic context of a culture, sub-culture, or organisation.

Van Manen (1990:177-178) describes ethnography as being both 'ethnos' and 'thick description'. He defines ethnos as '... the task of describing a particular culture'. For this inquiry the culture of professional development in the inquiry school will be explored as will the 'history' of literacy instruction over the past ten years. Thick description (Geertz, 1973) plays an important role in ethnography as it enables the researcher to '... provide accounts not only that present and organize the 'stories' as the informant(s) related them, but also that explore deeper meaning structures ... '. Such description is 'more interpretive and analytic than mainstream ethnographic work'. Ethnography as 'thick description' is also described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992:39) and Merriam (1998:156).

This inquiry did not look to ethnography as a way to explicate meanings specific to particular cultures (Van Manen, 1990:11). Instead, ethnographic principles were used as a way of understanding where the teachers were coming from, to ascertain a starting point for each participant teacher involved in the inquiry and add to the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) required to tell these teachers' stories. Put simply, it was

my aim to understand the context in which these participant teachers worked. Connelly and Clandinin (1988:22) state that it is important to acknowledge the role the 'past' has played when collecting data in the 'present'. The desire to treat this inquiry '...as an open ended endeavour' (Delamont and Hamilton, 1993:26) was of paramount importance from the beginning.

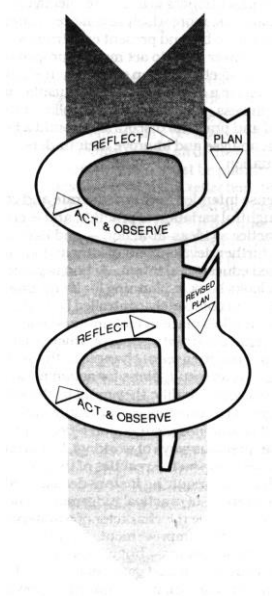
The inquiry drew upon both the 'etic' and 'emic' perspectives of ethnography; that is, the working cultures of the school. As I had had a personal association with the school for five out of the ten years being investigated, I drew upon my own 'etic' perspective when addressing how writing had been taught in the school. I also drew upon 'emic' perspectives in looking at the school culture and those that had been associated with this, thus drawing upon documentation within the school, the school principal, the diocesan Education Officer in Literacy and the participant teachers. (Merriam, 1998:157)

### Action Research

*'Action research is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change'* (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:223)

Kemmis (1999) states that there are two main contemporary 'schools' in the use of action research for educational purposes, aspects of both were incorporated into this inquiry. Action research can be '...interpreted as a means of improving professional practice primarily at the local, classroom level, within the capacities of individuals' (Kemmis, 1999:157). Such an interpretation is incorporated within the work of Whitehead (2000) with the notion of 'Living Educational Theory'. It was this view of action research that the inquiry was initially embedded within for the purpose of exploring 'balanced writing pedagogy' with six participant teachers teaching within Early Stage One / Stage One.

The guiding principles of the action research spiral as proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:11) directed the course of this inquiry as we explored 'balanced writing pedagogy'. The action research spiral is represented in figure 3.2.



**Figure 3.2 – The Action Research Spiral**  
(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11)

The guiding principles of this spiral – plan, act, observe, reflect, revise plan - provided a framework for the interactions between the participant teachers and me. The participant teachers and I met frequently to discuss their teaching of writing in their classroom and any issues or required direction that arose in their personal reflections. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:228) state that when conducting action research '...you must think about the process as research and you must call the evidence you collect data'. The use of the action research spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11) enabled each of the participant teachers and I to identify and reflect upon what was working, what was not working, areas of confusion, and subsequent points of action. This constant peer debriefing and

member-checking among us provided the direction for the inquiry throughout the year.

The action research was conducted within the school community, thus drawing upon the 'Working Principles of Community-Based Action Research' as described by Stringer (1996:25-38). These principles are concerned with relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion, which '...help practitioners to formulate activities that are sensitive to the key elements of this mode of research' (Stringer, 1996:25). *Relationships* in this inquiry were important as they promoted feelings of 'equality' for all who were participating in the inquiry, allowing 'personal and cooperative relationships' to form the basis of interactions. *Communication* emphasised the importance of 'active listening' in all interactions and being 'truthful and sincere' to the issues and themes that arose from ongoing analysis of collected data. This principle draws upon the work of Habermas (1979) who suggested '...positive change originates from communicative action'. Understanding, truth, sincerity and appropriateness are four fundamental conditions for effective communication that were incorporated into this inquiry. The data that were collected throughout the inquiry were aimed to support the meaningful *participation* of each of the participant teachers. Planning from the inquiry was aimed to support the teachers while at the same time making a meaningful contribution to their teaching within their classroom. All the teachers within this Early Stage One / Stage One cohort were invited to take part in this inquiry thus ensuring that all relevant individuals were *included*. All issues presented by the participant teachers were addressed throughout the inquiry.

As stated previously, Action Research has been extended through Whitehead's (2000:14-15) discussion of the concept of 'living educational theory'. This can be applied to teaching in the sense that teachers create

their theories about how children learn best and put this into practice in their classrooms. Teachers generate their own theories about learning and teaching from both their own experiences as a learner and experiences gained through professional practice. Such theories can be found in the '...stories they tell and the words they write ...they generate their own educational theories'. The 'stories' told by a teacher provide great insight into their 'living educational theory'. Whitehead argues that teachers take their 'living educational theories' with them in their classroom teaching and as such play a role in their ability to use the guiding principles of the action research spiral.

The other school of thought identified by Kemmis (1999:157) is that action research can be '...interpreted as an approach to changing education and schooling in a broader sense'. This approach to action research incorporates aspects of the methodology of 'phenomenology'. Van Manen (1990:9) asserts: 'Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences'. This supports the analysis of what happened as the participant teachers and I engaged in the guiding principles of the action research spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11). It enabled me as a researcher to reflect on what happened in these interactions through the analysis of the data, which in turn led into the development of a grounded theory for teacher change. Such potential is recognised by Mills (2000:v) in his claim that '...action research fosters a democratic approach ... it empowers individual teachers through participation in a collaborative, socially responsive research activity'. Throughout this chapter it is my intention to demonstrate how both these 'schools' came into play throughout this inquiry.

*Phenomenological human science is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness ... phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live then in our everyday existence, our lifeworld. (Van Manen, 1990:11)*

This inquiry incorporates elements of phenomenological research within the context of action research. It is the story of how one researcher/classroom teacher joined with another six teachers to create a shared writing pedagogy in the early years of school. It is also a story that Mintzberg (1983: 108) describes as using ‘peripheral vision’ – ‘...poking around in relevant places, a good dose of creativity ... that is what makes good research’. I immersed myself in six classrooms of complexity, and with the participant teachers worked through answering the research questions framing the inquiry, collecting data as an ‘effective detective’ and compared and contrasted this data with what happened in the action research cycle.

Phenomenology is concerned with ‘...the meaning of events and interactions’ (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:34). This definition in an action research perspective is concerned with the implications arising from the guiding principles of plan, act, observe, reflect, revise within this Community-Based approach.

*A phenomenological question must not only be made clear, understood, but also ‘lived’ by the researcher. A phenomenological researcher cannot just write down his or her question at the beginning of the study. There it is! Question mark at the end! No, in his or her phenomenological description the researcher/writer must ‘pull’ the reader into the question in such a way that the reader cannot help but wonder about the nature of the phenomenon in the way that the human scientist does. (Van Manen, 1990:45)*

The questions that framed this inquiry have already been described as being interpretive in nature. The use of action research in the inquiry played an important role in allowing the inquiry ‘process’ to best respond to



both these questions while also responding to participant needs. It is anticipated that this chapter will guide the reader through this journey of process.

### Case Study

... the distinguishing feature of case study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits ... case study researchers hold that to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do ... requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge. (Sturman, 1999:103)

Aspects of the case study methodology were employed in order to address the individual 'case' of each of the six participant teachers. Time was allocated regularly for me to work with each of the participant teachers in their classroom on their classroom practice. It therefore seemed appropriate to use the case study methodology to guide the interactions with and collection of data from the participant teachers. This methodology enabled me to study each of the participant teachers throughout the year.

The literature offers many different definitions of the term 'case study'. Many references are made to different types of case studies; however there seems to be little agreement as to what a case study actually is. Definitions for a case study '...range from simplistic statements...' such as '...a slice of life...' or '...a depth examination of an instance...' to such more formal statements as '...intensive or complete examination of a facet, an issue, or perhaps the events of a geographic setting over time...' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:360).

Burns (1997:312) states '...the case study is a rather portmanteau term but typically involves the observation of an individual unit, eg. a student, a

delinquent cliché, a family group, a class, a school, a community, an event or even an entire culture'. The purpose of a case study is to do an '...intensive and detailed study of one individual or of a group as an entity, through observation, self-reports, and any other means' (Tesch, 1990:39). As it was the intention of this study to examine the teaching of writing by Early Stage One and Stage One teachers, a collective case study methodology seemed an appropriate method of collecting, analysing and recording data and then reporting the interpretations of that data in an individual descriptive case study for each teacher.

This methodology was suited to this research as it enabled me to report on how each 'case', namely each participant teacher and how he/she taught writing at an in-depth level over the course of a school year. Evidence was collected on each of the teachers systematically and within the context of their own classroom teaching practice. Methods of collecting the data were the teachers' own reflective journals, interviews (both structured and semi-structured), researcher field notes and work samples from the students in their classes.

Case study methodology treated each participant teacher as 'a bounded system' (Stake, 1995:2). It enabled me to seek possible places and people that might be the subject or the source of data and then search for a suitable location for the study. Once these had been established, I was able to begin to collect data. These data are reviewed and explored, and decisions are made about the direction of the study. Ideas and procedures are continually modified as the study evolves. The research then develops a focus and the data collection and research activities narrow to suit this focus. The end of the case study process sees the creation of more directed data collection and analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992:62).

Bell (1993) warns that validity is an issue with case studies. The researcher selects both the area of research and subsequent evidence. Crosschecking is difficult and distortions of the data to meet the preconceptions of the researcher are highly possible. However, as pointed out by Bell (1993:9):

A successful study will provide the reader with a three-dimensional picture and will illustrate relationships, micropolitical issues and patterns of influences in a particular context.

The six participant teachers and I worked closely throughout the inquiry continually checking each other's interpretations and responses to ensure accuracy in interpretation and that the direction of the inquiry best suited their needs.

As mentioned, the case study does have limitations. However, it also has many valuable strengths. These strengths include:

1. The case study provides a 'thick description' which is of great importance to naturalistic research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The amount and type(s) of data collected for the study influences the 'thick description'. Burns (1997:313) states, 'a case study must involve the collection of very extensive data to produce understanding of the entity being studied'.
2. The case study is grounded in theory as it provides an external perspective (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).
3. 'The case study is holistic and lifelike...' as '...it presents a picture credible to the actual participants in a setting, and can be easily cased into the 'natural language' of the involved audiences' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:316).
4. The case study allows the reader to be presented with essential information in a conversation-like format rather than being overwhelmed with technical terms and statistics (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

5. The case study is able to communicate more to the reader through presenting the data in a way that ‘...focuses the readers’ attentions and illuminates meanings’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:376). The case study builds upon the ‘tacit knowledge’ of the readers and moves them into the realm of the study.

The case study thus provides an in-depth investigation into the particular instance in action. Throughout the inquiry, data were collected on the six participant teachers to create six individual teacher case studies.

### Narrative Inquiry

Action Research has been identified as being at the core of the methodology of this inquiry. Story is identified as a way of representing action research (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996:132). Close analysis of the ‘data’ displayed the process the inquiry went through. Processes do not fit well into the case study methodology (Stake, 1995:2) nor is case study reporting typically storytelling (Stake, 1995:127) so Narrative Inquiry was built into the inquiry in order to help illustrate the processes each of the participant teachers went through over the course of the year – adding to the ‘thick description’ already compiled. Therefore, Narrative Inquiry was explored as a way of ‘...fitting the data together so that the story achieves coherence’. This process is ‘...an exploration in which the search for the theory behind the story is important’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998:170).

For this inquiry, the process of ‘re-storying’ the collected ‘data’ into ‘field texts’ allowed for the emergence of themes for the developing grounded theory to become more evident to the reader. Much of the data collected from the participant teachers through their reflective journal entries and interview transcripts was made up of ‘first-person accounts of experience’

which could be 're-storied' to 'form the narrative 'text' of this research approach' (Merriam, 1998:157).

Stake (1995: 127) describes the elements of a story as 'it becomes apparent that characters in a certain setting have a problem. Initial efforts to solve the problem fail and the problem takes a turn for the worse. Then by extraordinary and climactic effort the problem is resolved'. Analysis of the teachers through the case study methodology did not depict 'problems', nor am I suggesting that the stories of the participant teachers as being characterised by problems. Close analysis of the process of the inquiry did however show how teachers worked with identifying and working at problems or issues in their classroom. This process is important particularly in terms of the emergence of categories and themes for the grounded theory. The use of Narrative Inquiry adds another dimension to the 'thick description' being compiled on the participant teachers and highlighted the process they moved through over the course of the year.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990:4) describe Narrative Inquiry as '... a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restory-ing as the research proceeds'. Narrative Inquiry seemed to be a plausible way to tell the stories of these participant teachers. Teachers are the creators of an oral craft tradition where '...stories are shared daily ...' (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994:35); therefore it is appropriate that their interactions and their journeys are captured within the narrative genre. The data collected through the use of case study and action research methodologies could be transferred to this methodology as previously discussed. Clandinin and Connelly (1998:161-162) state that 'field texts' are '...created by participants and researchers to represent aspects of field experience'. My use of 'data' collected with use of other methodologies is valid in the creation of 'field text'.

Some documents that eventually became field texts may have been created prior to the inquiry, or even during the inquiry but for a different purpose. Such documents become field texts when they became relevant to the inquiry ... How we get from field texts is a critical matter in personal experience methods. Central to the creation of field texts is the relationship of researcher to participant. (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998:162)

This understanding of 'field texts' extends upon the notion of 'case study reports' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998). 'Case study reports' are designed to '...take the reader into the case situation...' (Patton, 1990:387) and are '...richly descriptive in order to afford the reader the vicarious experience of having been there' (Merriam, 1998:238). However, the process of Narrative Inquiry '...revolves around three matters: the field, texts on field experience, and research texts which incorporate the first two and which represent those issues of social significance that justify the research' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:134). Paramount to this inquiry were the relations between the participant teachers and me. Narrative Inquiry best responds to the reporting of this interaction as it is concerned with '...both phenomenon and method' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:2).

Connelly and Clandinin (1988:24) describe Narrative Inquiry as '...the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories ... that both refigure the past and create purpose for the future'. The stories of each of the participant teachers have literally been written and re-written over and over again to develop stories that best reflect their journeys.

After I had recorded the 'story' of each of the participant teachers, the stories were reconstructed with each of the participant teachers. We have worked through a process of collaboration where my interpretations and ideas have been constructed through looking at the 'data' through 'multiple

lenses’ – comparing and contrasting the sources, sharing these ‘findings’ with my supervisors and the participant teachers, writing each story according to these interpretations, then sharing draft after draft with each of the participant teachers. The reactions from the participant teachers have been of paramount importance to this process as I am communicating, after all, their stories.

This inquiry sees ‘stories’ as a way of recording the experiences of each of us whilst providing a way for me to write about these experiences thus providing a way for participants and readers to respond to the inquiry. Narrative accounts are recognised as supporting ‘vicarious experience’ as they typically emphasise time, place and person and the relationships among these (Stake, 1995:87). Building case study and narrative inquiry methodologies together created a process that views the participant teachers and my own experiences through ‘multiple lenses’ and then uses the views highlighted by these lenses to write descriptive stories. These ‘multiple lenses’ have been employed to tell the participant teachers stories without ‘...diminishing the stories of people whose experience they are reporting’ (McNiff, 2000:164). Such a process supports the telling of other people’s stories where the main focus is the researcher’s interpretation of those people’s experiences.

### Grounded Theory

Its systematic techniques and procedures of analysis enable the researcher to develop a substantive theory that meets the criteria for doing ‘good’ science: significance, theory-observation and compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification. While the procedures are designed to give analytic process precision and rigor, creativity is also an important element. For it is the latter that enables the researcher to ask pertinent questions of the data and to make the kind of comparisons that elicit from the data new insights into phenomenon and novel theoretical formulations. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:31)

There is much debate about what constitutes grounded theory (Creswell, 2002; Glaser, 2002; Charmaz, 2000). Creswell (2002:462) identifies three main designs of grounded theory:

1. The systematic procedure of Strauss and Corbin (1998) involves using predetermined categories to interrelate the categories, visual diagrams, and specific propositions or hypotheses to make connections explicit.
2. The emergent design, consistent with Glaser (1992), relies on exploring a basic social process without pre-set categories.
3. The constructivist approach of Charmaz (2000) focuses on subjective meanings by participants, explicit researcher values and beliefs, and suggestive or tentative conclusions.

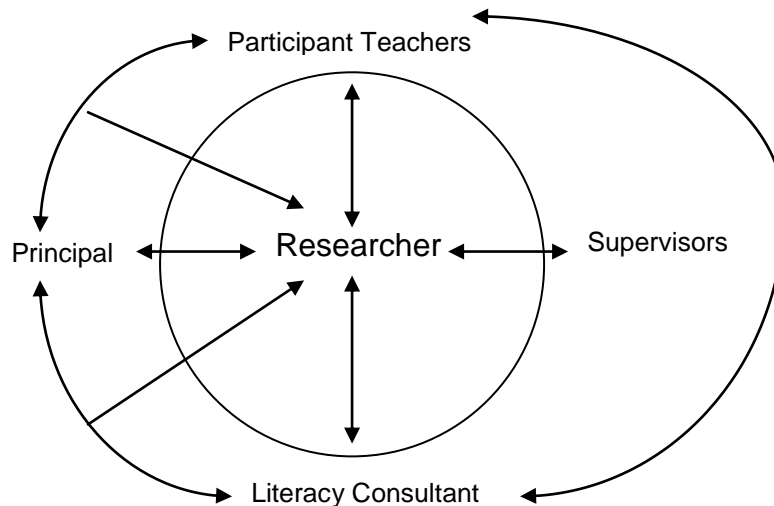
This inquiry draws upon the understandings of grounded theory which support the 'methodological appropriate' design specific to this study. Grounded Theory has been linked with ethnography and case study (Sturman, 1999) and '...its perspective is the most widely used qualitative interpretivist framework in the social sciences today' (Denzin, 1998:330). Grounded theory has been defined as '...an action / interactional oriented method of theory building' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:104) thus enabling it to be linked with action research. Grounded theory supports action research as it is '...directed at managing, handling, carrying out, responding to a phenomenon as it exists in context ...' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:104). Grounded theory acknowledges the '...sequence of actions and interactions among people and events pertaining to a topic' (Creswell, 2002:448).

Despite the different understandings and designs of grounded theory within the literature, there are six key aspects consistently presented that need to be addressed in the generation of theory (Creswell, 2002:462; Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 104-105). Grounded theory is concerned with the *process* of the inquiry; '...it is processual, evolving in nature ... it can be studied in terms of sequences, or in terms of movement, or changes over time' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:104). It is also concerned with



*purposeful action* aimed at working towards an outlined goal, ‘...it occurs through strategies and tactics’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:105). Grounded theory employs ‘... a procedure of *simultaneous data collection and analysis*’ (Creswell, 2002:462). Constant *questions* are asked of the data. It is vital that the ‘intervening conditions that either facilitate or constrain action / interaction’ are identified (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:105). Grounded theory considers failed action to be important as it engages the researcher in asking ‘why?’ that happened. The identification of a ‘*central phenomenon*’ enables the researcher to ‘process out’ this into a theory (Creswell, 2002:462). The process and the analysis of this are explored to create the *theory*. These six aspects were all addressed throughout this inquiry.

Guba and Lincoln’s (1989:149-155) notion of a ‘Hermeneutic Dialectic Process’ in this study formed the basis for the comparing and contrasting process. The process was ‘hermeneutic’ in its interpretive nature and ‘dialectic’ as it drew upon the constant comparisons and contrasts of the divergent views of the inquiry participants. The main purpose being ‘... not to justify one’s own construction or to attack the weaknesses of the constructions offered by others, but to form a connection between them that allows for mutual exploration by all parties’. As the researcher I first analysed the data, then returned it to the teachers as the participants and then shared it with my supervisors. At the same time I was in constant dialogue with the Principal as she was a key stakeholder in this research. The Literacy Education Officer for the diocese was also kept informed of developments within the inquiry. This process represents the ‘circle of respondents’ involved in this process – which includes participants, stakeholders and respondents - working towards the construction of the emergent themes from the data. Some interaction also occurred amongst the respondents, which was fed back to the researcher. These interactions are represented in figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3– ‘Circle of Respondents’**

Employing such a ‘circle of respondents’ assisted with the development of a grounded theory. It made use of the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This continual relationship of member-checking and peer debriefing enabled a grounded theory to be explicated that ‘...consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties’ (Merriam, 1998:159).

### ***Making contact with the ‘Story Makers’***

At the end of 2000, I invited all the teachers of Early Stage One (Kindergarten) and Stage One (Years One and Two) for 2001 to be involved in the development of a ‘balanced writing pedagogy’ for these early school years in the following year. The response from these teachers was overwhelming. They all wanted to be involved. An overview of each of these teachers at the beginning of 2001 is presented below.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years Teaching</i>	<i>2001 Grade</i>	<i>Previous grades taught</i>
Natalie	23	Female	1 year casual 2 years permanent	Kindergarten	Casual (all grades), K
Kate**	29	Female	1 year casual 4 x 12 month contracts	Kindergarten	Casual (K-2), Entry (Isle of Mann), K
Lee	26	Female	3 x 12 month contracts 2 years permanent	Year 1	Casual (all grades), Year 5, Year 3
Amanda	23	Female	2 x 12 month contracts 1 year permanent	Year 1	Casual (all grades), Year 1
Cathie	24	Female	1 x 12 month contract 4 years permanent	Year 2	Year 5, Year 1, Year 2
Michael	36	Male	11 years permanent	Year 2	Year 6, Year 4, Year 3, Year 2, Year 1

\*\* Kate entered the inquiry at the beginning of Term 2, 2001 as the original teacher had gone on maternity leave, the original teacher has not been included in the inquiry due to the short length of time she was involved in it.

**Figure 3.4– Overview of Participant Teachers**

I had worked with each of these teachers as professional colleagues through my role as ‘Literacy Support’ teacher. I had also established personal relationships with each of them and they were in fact friends. One of the teachers and I had been in the same year at high school; another I had been grade partners with a few years beforehand. At this early stage in the inquiry we had pre-existing expectations of each other – we knew how each other worked, we knew each other’s passions and guiding forces.

At this initial phase I felt very vulnerable and exposed. I had a professional and personal association with the school community. They

had seen me develop from a beginning teacher to a school executive member to a part-time teacher. They willingly accepted me as a researcher, as they had seen me conduct research in the school before (Kervin, 1999). However, overall I was seen as a practising classroom teacher, which I believe, gave me credibility that this inquiry needed in order to be fully accepted.

Some researchers may believe that my personal association with the school was in fact a limitation to my research. On the contrary, having such an association with the inquiry school and being known and familiar to the staff, students and parents, enabled a climate of trust to be established from the beginning. I was who I was. They all knew that from the beginning and were prepared to take the journey with me. This supports Stake's (1995:135) description of qualitative case study as being '...highly personal research'. He argues that the '...way the case and the researcher interact is presumed unique'. The setting for this inquiry is a situation that is unique and as such needs to be recognised.

I presented an application to conduct the research to the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Wollongong at the beginning of 2001. Maintaining confidentiality of data, preserving the anonymity of informants, and the intended purpose of the research was outlined. This application was approved on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2001 (HE01/023). According to the requirements of this application, I asked each of the participant teachers to sign the required consent form and made clear to them that they could withdraw from the inquiry at any time. I also prepared a one-page outline of the intended aims of the inquiry and met with them to discuss this as a way to inform the participants of the task. Due to the changing nature of this inquiry, I have had to consider just how well informed the participants actually were. 'In the traditional sense, the concept of informed consent means the individuals involved in a study not only understand what is

expected of them, but also the possible consequences of having taken part in the study' (Schulz, Schroeder and Brody: 1997:477). Considering the multi-modal nature of the inquiry and the notion of appropriateness of methods as described by Patton (1982, 1990) the participants were kept informed of changes and developments within the inquiry. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999:171) suggest 'ethical matters shift and change as we move through the inquiry'.

Reflections over the course of the inquiry demonstrate that the participant teachers were in fact empowered through the nature of the inquiry and this enabled them to direct it according to their needs. Whilst we started out originally to create a shared 'balanced writing pedagogy', the nature of the research design responded to their needs and extended into their ownership of the inquiry.

### ***Creating the 'stories': collecting the data***

The methodology of this inquiry is as Van Maanen (1983:249) describes as 'personalized'. It has been developed in response to this inquiry. 'Behind-the-scenes revelations' will come through my voice. I decided to use the pronoun 'I' to tell the story of the methodology and the impact I had on it. The human element is very present in this inquiry.

Action Research, Case Study, Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry, as methodologies, all value collection procedures such as field notes, interviews and reflective journals (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Burns, 1997; Stringer, 1996). As such, these items were the core forms of data collected. Throughout 2001, I recorded and gathered descriptions of key moments as 'data' using these procedures.

Over the course of the 2001 school year, the classroom teachers explored the teaching of writing in Kindergarten, Year One and Year Two classrooms with me, through the use of action research and personal reflection upon this process. Data were collected either during times of teaching writing episodes within teachers' classrooms or in teachers' own time in a common space in the school. I worked with each of the participant teachers in their classrooms within their normal Literacy block according to a timetable I devised at the beginning of each school term.

While this inquiry drew upon Patton's (1982, 1990) notion of 'methodological appropriateness', careful consideration was given as to which forms of data collection would work best within the selected 'tapestry' of methodologies. Patton (1990:100) writes that it is important when making these selections to ascertain 'what is it you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study'. 'Discovery' was my aim throughout the inquiry, therefore the data collection methods I employed were structured to allow for this (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:180).

For this inquiry, the main forms of data collected were centred on teachers' reflections of their teaching of writing in their classrooms. This was recorded through their reflective journal entries, structured and semi-structured interviews and my recording of anecdotal comments. Such data relates to Van Manen's (1990:63) notion that 'the 'data' of human science research are human experiences'. Each of these methods attempts to capture what was happening with the individual teacher – their thoughts, questions and action. Other data, such as the teacher's classroom program and students' work samples were available to support this.

Each of these data collection methods aim to develop the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) required for the paradigm this inquiry is working

within. Merriam (1998:11) describes 'thick description' as being '...a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated'. Guba and Lincoln (1989: 119) state that it means '... interpreting the meaning of ... data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions, and the like'. This quest for 'thick description' demonstrates the interplay of the selected methodologies used within this inquiry.

### Reflective Journal

A journal is a comprehensive and systematic attempt at writing to clarify ideas and experiences; it is a document written with the intent to return to it, and to learn through interpretation of the writing. (Holly and McLoughlin, 1989:263)

The keeping of a reflective journal by each of the participant teachers allowed them to become 'reflective in action' (Schon, 1987). It allowed them to recall in writing the teaching experiences they had engaged in and their thoughts, attitudes and changes surrounding their teaching of writing. This reflection process was the basis for many of the interactions between each of the participant teachers and me as the journal entries acted as a stimulus for further interaction responding to the individual teachers' needs.

Cazden, Diamondstone, and Naso (1988) report that reflecting upon their own teaching practice can help teachers 'recalibrate' their pedagogy and their own understanding of what they do and why they do it. Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon (1998:72-73) also emphasise the importance of reflection but stress that 'not every teacher will like the same reflection process'. While the reflective journal was the central data collection method to capture reflective thoughts, time for teachers to 'recalibrate' their pedagogy was captured through the data collection of interview as well.

The use of a reflective journal was the key method of data collection. Van Manen (1990: 73) states that '...keeping a journal, diary or log can be very helpful for keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of the work in progress, for reflecting on previous reflections, for making the activities of research themselves topics for study ...'. Furthermore, such 'reflective accounts of human experiences ... are of phenomenological value'.

The reflective journals that the participant teachers were asked to keep were designed as a way of keeping '...ongoing records of practices and reflections on those practices' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988:34).

Reflective journal entries were used as a way to capture the teachers' thoughts on different issues and experiences pertaining to the writing process as they saw it in their classrooms. These reflections were both open-ended and structured (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe and Gagnon, 1998:74) according to the purpose of the task. Connelly and Clandinin (1988:180) describe the importance of reflecting as a way to comment, '...on how she and the students felt about the experiences'. It can be described as an '...emotional sense that triggered new questions [as the teacher] engaged in dialogue with her practices'. The reflective journal entries also worked to allow me to identify the structures and people partnerships that developed amongst the participant teachers as they developed and established their own learning community (Rose, 1999:62).

### Structured and Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews both structured and semi-structured throughout the inquiry were developed with Bogdan and Biklen's (1992:97) statement in mind – 'good interviews are those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view'. It was my aim throughout all interviews conducted



that the participants would reveal their perspectives as honestly as possible, providing as much detail as possible. The maintenance of positive relationships between the participant teachers and me was paramount to this.

The notion of 'interviews' was a consistent form of data collection throughout the inquiry. However, while they are referred to as being 'interviews' in the context of this document, in the reality of the flow of the inquiry they were more 'teacher-teacher conversations' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988:51). To the participant teachers and me, these opportunities were a time to dialogue about what had happened in their classrooms, working through arising issues, reflecting on teaching practice, as two members of the same profession.

A key aspect of these researcher/teacher interactions was with the researcher's ability to listen. 'The listener's response may constitute a probe into experience that takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an interview ... there is probing in conversation ... but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience described by the other' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999:168).

Van Manen (1990:63) describes the hermeneutic interview as having two main phases as a data collection method, neither of which can be separated but are part of the process. The first of these is the 'gathering of' lived experience material through a 'conversational interview' technique. This related to the initial project aims of this inquiry. The second phase is referred to as 'reflecting on' lived experience material. This enables the '...researcher to go back again to the interviewee about the ongoing record ...', thus enabling the interviewees to become collaborators of the project. The evolution of this inquiry reflects this

process as the transfer of responsibility went to the teachers as they took ownership of the developed writing pedagogy.

Interviews both structured and semi-structured conducted with the participant teachers relied on Strauss and Corbin's (1990:62) notion of 'making comparisons' and 'asking questions'. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 102) refer to this as 'the constant comparative method of analysis'. Through this approach, categories and themes could be continually identified which in turn worked to direct the course of the inquiry.

Semi-structured interviews were favoured throughout the inquiry as they best responded to the flexible and often impromptu nature of the interactions between case study teachers and me (Mertens, 1998:322). The direction of the inquiry stemmed from my interactions with each of the participant teachers and their 'needs' that arose from the analysis of collected data. Semi-structured interviews supported interactions that arose from this as '...certain information [was] desired from all the respondents' (Merriam, 1998:74). It enabled me to best respond to the needs that the participant teachers identified at that time. Mertens (1998:323) cites Adler and Adler (1994) as stating that this interview approach requires a strong rapport between the researcher and respondents and encourages a 'human-to-human relationship'. Fontana and Frey (1998: 60) reinforce this notion of rapport as being fundamental to achieving 'understanding' which is 'the goal' of such interviewing. They write, 'close rapport with respondents opens doors to more informed research...' This interview approach suits the nature of this inquiry as it works with the professional relationship the participant teachers and I shared.

Connelly and Clandinin (1999:446) describe humans as 'storytelling organisms'. I found through my interactions with the participant teachers

in semi-structured interviews that they often responded to the emerging categories and themes with stories of what happened in their classrooms. They spoke about practices they used to abide by, changes they had made in their classrooms and to their teaching practice, their own beliefs connected to that category or theme, and stories about the students in their classrooms. The participant teachers as 'storytelling organisms' would often provide extension to our semi-structured interactions in the hours after, in the like of 'retrospective recall'. These were captured by the researcher after the discussion and presented back to the participant teacher. They were then coded with the semi-structured interview from which the discussion was initiated.

Throughout all interviews, my role was one of a facilitator. Mertens (1998:322) describes this role as '... a challenging one. He or she needs to be able to control the interview process so that all participants can express themselves, one or a few people do not dominate the discussion, more introverted people are encouraged to speak, and all important topics are covered.' This was an issue that was of particular importance during occasions when all the participant teachers came together to discuss something of importance. 'Cathy' often tended to dominate these proceedings. She was a very confident teacher of literacy and her executive position involved her in working with me in overseeing literacy direction and practice throughout the school. This was an issue that I struggled with, as her input was very valuable, but it did overshadow the insights of other teachers. After discussion with my supervisors over this issue, I did approach her and discuss this with her.

#### Anecdotal Comments / Field Notes

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:108) describe field notes as consisting of '...two kinds of materials'. They describe the first of these as being 'descriptive ... the concern is to capture a word-picture of the setting, people, actions,

and conversations as observed. The second is 'reflective ... the part that captures more of the observer's frame of mind, ideas, and concerns'. These two aspects were kept in consideration during the writing of all field notes for the inquiry.

Key components of the field notes were my observations of the teachers during these times. Merriam (1998:88) writes that observation is a research tool when it:

- serves a formulated research purpose
- is planned deliberately
- is recorded systematically and
- is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability.

These points were addressed throughout data collection times. My purpose for observing the teachers and documenting this was '...to see things firsthand' (Merriam, 1998:88) and then use my 'theoretical sensitivity' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to then interpret my observations. Recording my observations through field notes enabled me to '...record behaviour as it is happening' (Merriam, 1998:88), thus assisting me in recording the teaching practice of each participant teacher in a systematic way. These observations were shared with the individual teachers to ensure accuracy in recording and reliability in interpretations and at times worked to wave the 'red flag' as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 91-93).

I made field notes from each classroom visit. These observations were used to stimulate discussion in semi-structured interviews. Wherever possible I recorded these while I was in the classroom. On most occasions though, I was involved in the classroom activities so I reconstructed the session as soon as possible after. These notes were also used to assist planning for future classroom visits.

The field notes collected throughout the inquiry also aimed to demonstrate and acknowledge the relationships the participant teachers and I shared. As Clandinin and Connelly (1998:168) write, 'the nature of these relationships shape the construction of records'.

Anecdotal comments made by the participant teachers to me were recorded and used in conjunction with the other collected sources to add to the 'thick description'. During times in the participant teachers' classrooms, I attempted to capture all that Connelly and Clandinin (1988:56) suggest; '... keep notes on as many activities, events, exchanges, materials, conversations, instructions, bodily movements, facial expressions, and uses of time, space, materials as possible ... keep notes on discussions about plans and proposed activities. Particularly note those points where you sense uncertainty about what one of you is doing and what the other is proposing'. These were compiled in a journal and presented back to the participant teachers to ensure accuracy with my interpretation.

An overview of the data collected throughout the duration of the inquiry is outlined in detail in the Audit Trail which can be found in appendix A. This audit trail works to enable the reader to '...authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher' (Merriam, 1998:172; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The process of the inquiry and analysis of data were closely related throughout the inquiry. 'Process is a way of giving life to data by taking snapshots of action / interaction and linking them to form a sequence...' (Straus and Corbin, 1990:144) As such, the audit trail works to capture the inquiry process analytically and work with the analysis that is presented. Analysis of the data and the direction the inquiry moved in are identified by three key phases in this inquiry.

## ***Constructing and Reconstructing our ‘Stories’***

*Narratives raise the question of how best to learn from these stories, how to analyse them, and how to keep the speaker’s voice intact. (Anderson, Herr, Nihlen, 1994:122)*

All participants in this study were given pseudonyms for confidentiality purposes.

Each of the teachers and I engaged in sessions of classroom teaching, semi-structured and structured interviews. Each of the teachers also compiled a reflective journal where they responded to issues that arose throughout the course of the inquiry. These issues were in direct response to categories and themes that emerged from the data during my constant analysis. Figure 3.5 represents the frequency of these interactions over the course of the year.

Participant Teacher and grade taught	Interviews (semi-structured and structured)	Hours spent with researcher in their classroom	Reflective Journal entries
Kate (Kinder)	9	23	9
Natalie (Kinder)	7	27	12
Amanda (Year 1)	11	26	18
Lee (Year 1)	8	26	12
Michael (Year 2)	9	21	19
Cathy (Year 2)	2	6	3

**Figure 3.5 - Researcher and participant teacher interaction**

Cathy, whilst interested and involved in the direction of the inquiry, was not able to take a completely active role in all of the tasks due to her ever-increasing workload as a member of the school executive. The collection of data from her was irregular.

Kate began teaching her Kindergarten class part way through term one when the class's original teacher went on maternity leave. The original teacher, while expressing interest in the inquiry, did not participate in any of the data collection procedures.

In order to ensure that the data were providing the necessary 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), data analysis was conducted as it was collected throughout the year. After each classroom visit, I took the time to analyse this in terms of what was working and what wasn't. This was then reported back to the participant teacher/s for cross checking to ensure the data had been accurately interpreted. This assisted greatly in planning subsequent tasks and also to ensure that the data were relevant to the focus of the study. Structured and semi-structured interviews and reflective journal themes stemmed from what was happening in each teacher's classroom. The six individual classrooms, and what was happening within them, were used as the core for the inquiry. At the conclusion of the data collection period, I had a 'feel' for the information collected, which assisted greatly in the final analysis stage.

The concept of 'theoretical sensitivity' was kept in mind during this time of data collection and analysis. I was aware that 'theoretical sensitivity is the ability to recognize what is important in data and to give it meaning' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:46). In order to do this, I consistently read the literature surrounding the methodologies selected and drew upon my own professional and personal experience and that of the participant teachers through constant member-checking and peer debriefing. It was important while doing this to '...keep a balance between that which is created by the researcher and the real' and as such I used the following points devised by Strauss and Corbin (1990:47) to guide me through this process:

- Asking, what is really going on here?
- Maintaining an attitude of scepticism toward any categories or hypotheses brought to or arising early in the research, and validating them repeatedly with the data themselves, and
- By following the data collection and analytic procedures' associated with grounded theory.

Huberman and Miles (1998:187) identify a set of 'tactics' to assist with the generation of meaning, working from the '...descriptive to the explanatory, and from the concrete to the more abstract'. An awareness of these 'tactics' took an integral role in my analysis of collected data. These are outlined below.

*Noting patterns and themes* (1), *seeing plausibility* – making initial, intuitive sense (2) – and *clustering* by conceptual grouping (3) help one to see connections. *Making metaphors*, a kind of figurative grouping of data (4), is also a tactic for achieving more integration amongst diverse pieces of data. Counting (5) is a familiar way to see 'what's there' – and to keep oneself honest. *Making contrasts and comparisons* (6) is a classic tactic meant to sharpen understanding by clustering and distinguishing observations. Differentiation is also needed, as in *partitioning variables*, unbundling variables that have been prematurely grouped, or simply taking a monolithic look (7). More abstract tactics include *subsuming particulars* into the general, *shuttling back and forth between first-level data and more generable categories* (8); *factoring* (9), ... *noting relationships between variables* (10); and *finding intervening variables* (11). Finally, assembling a coherent understanding of a data set is helped through *building a logical chain of evidence* (12) and *making conceptual / theoretical coherence*, typically through comparison with the referent constructs in the literature (13). (Huberman and Miles, 1998:187)

Analysis of each form of data was commenced in the same sequence as it had occurred during the study. The suggestions offered by Bogdan and Biklen (1992:154-164) for analysing data as it is being collected were used to guide this process. Each form of data was analysed and recorded



under two main headings, 'description' (what was said and done) and 'interpretation' (what appeared to be happening) for each teacher participating in the study. This format best enabled me to work with the data easily at the time and allowed me to retrieve previous accounts quickly (Merriam, 1998:97). Data collection and analysis occurred as an ongoing process throughout the study.

Throughout the inquiry, I typed each of the participant teacher's reflective journal entries and printed each teacher's reflections on a different colour paper. I then physically cut these reflections and arranged and re-arranged them individually and in the context of the reflections from other teachers in order to compare and contrast them to identify common categories and themes that were emerging. Such a process corresponds with Merriam's (1998:179-187) description of 'category construction'.

When addressing the transcribing of interview transcripts, Straus and Corbin (1990: 30) write that you need to do 'only as much as is needed'. I understood that this is not '...giving license to transcribe just a few of your first interviews...' and took my research experience into account and transcribed all materials. Each interview was audiotaped which I transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. Each teacher's interviews were printed onto different colour paper (the same colour for each teacher's journal entries and interview transcripts) and compared and contrasted to identify categories and themes. These could also be compared and contrasted against reflective journal entries to add to the 'thick description' needed to tell the teachers' stories. This process enabled '...the constant comparative method [to] discover the latent pattern in the multiple participant's words' (Glaser, 2002:2).

Each of the participant teachers' stories contributed to the overall 'story' of this inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (1999:94) emphasise the importance

of recognizing each teacher's stories and how these contribute to the 'landscape of schooling' - 'teachers working lives are shaped by stories and that these stories to live by compose teacher identity. These stories may be held to with conviction and tenacity.' However, due to the requirements of this thesis and the overwhelming quantity of data I collected, the stories of Amanda, Kate and Michael will be examined in more detail. I selected these three teachers in consultation with my supervisors. They were selected to represent each of the grade levels targeted in this inquiry and also due to the volume of data each of these teachers provided.

#### Kate

Kate is a twenty nine year old female teacher. The year 2001 marked her fifth year of teaching. Kate has taught at three primary schools in the Macarthur area in the southwest of Sydney, all on twelve-month contracts. She has furthermore taught in the Macarthur area for one year as a casual teacher thus becoming exposed to a further ten schools. During 1999 – 2000 she held a teaching position on the Isle of Mann. She has taught only infant classes in a full-time capacity by personal choice. Kate began teaching this Kindergarten class permanently at the beginning of Term 2 when the class's original teacher went on maternity leave.

#### Amanda

Amanda is a twenty three year old female teacher. The year 2001 marked her third year of teaching. Amanda has taught at two primary schools in the Macarthur area in the southwest of Sydney. Each of these schools employed her on twelve-month contracts. At the end of 2000, her contract was made permanent at the inquiry school. She has taught only infant classes. 2001 was her second consecutive year on Year 1 at the inquiry school.

### Michael

Michael is a thirty-six year old male teacher. The year 2001 marked his eleventh year of teaching. Michael has taught at two primary schools in the Macarthur area in the southwest of Sydney and one school in the Diocese of Sydney on permanent contracts. Michael has never taught as a casual teacher. Michael has taught Year One (1994) Year Two (1999, 2001), Year Three (1991), Year Four (1992, 1993, 1995, 1996) and Year Six (1997, 1998) at a full-time capacity. Michael had returned to the inquiry school in 2001 after taking leave from teaching for twelve months to hold a promotion position in the Wollongong Catholic Education Office.

### ***Relationships of Trust***

I have mentioned that I had a professional relationship with each of the participant teachers prior to the beginning of the 2001 year. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:97-98) argue that building upon relationships is the key for any educational reform strategy. They contend, 'decades of research on and experience in human relations and organization development in the business world, have shown that good relationships are not just emotionally more fulfilling. They also lead to higher productivity, improved problem-solving and better learning'. Relationships between the participant teachers and me became the key to engaging us all in improving and defining classroom practice surrounding the teaching of writing.

I believe the teachers accepted this project as I was seen to be a member of the school community. At the beginning of 2001, I had been employed by the school as a teacher for a period of three years. In this time I had conducted research within my own classroom and had communicated these results to the staff on numerous occasions and I had worked with teachers in the capacity of 'Literacy Support' teacher. Initial relationships

of trust had been established. Such relationships were valuable as the participant teachers felt 'safe' in releasing information to me in the data collection forms used in this inquiry (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992:35).

Building upon relationships is central to success. 'Any educational reform strategy that improves relationships has a chance of succeeding' (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998: 97). Good relationships are emotionally fulfilling, but also lead to higher productivity, improved problem solving and better learning (De Guess, 1997; Schorr, 1997; Rudduck, Day and Wallace, 1997). Turbill (2002:107) found that '...relationships created in a learning culture [such as the inquiry] play an important role in that setting'. She states further that 'a facilitator needs to be someone whom the group trusts ... who is available to provide the support that each individual needs at the appropriate time; and who is known to have the support of the administration'. My previous association with the school and relationship with each of the participant teachers enabled the inquiry to form a strong learning culture quickly, which in fact became the backbone of the research.

The notion of trust and the importance of maintaining trust throughout our relationship were continual throughout the inquiry. Covey (1989:178) describes trust as being 'the highest form of human motivation'. Stoll and Fink (1996:109) state that trust is one of the four basic premises for 'invitational leadership'. The teachers were invited to be participants in this inquiry and they knew that at any time they could withdraw from the project. It was therefore imperative that they found the inquiry to be worthwhile for them professionally, as it was an investment of their time, and also they felt that they could trust me. Each of the teachers put themselves 'on the line' – having me in their classroom, confiding to me as to what impacted upon their teaching, admitting to 'gaps' or needs within

their understanding of the curriculum area and allowing themselves to critique and to be critiqued.

Loughran (1997:59) identifies trust as a central feature of teacher education. He states trust between the two parties ‘...regardless of the participants’ previous learning experiences ... might genuinely be able to approach learning as a collaborative venture’. In order to maintain the trust of individual teachers throughout the inquiry, I established a ‘code of conduct’ for myself at the beginning of the inquiry that I used throughout the 2001 year. This code was designed and implemented by myself. I did not communicate this too explicitly to teachers as it was more about creating a climate conducive to trust as being the core of this collaborative venture. The following are key aspects of this code of conduct.

- I needed to be seen as a member of the school community. I did keep a teaching load on a class, and was included on the playground duty roster on the days when I was at the inquiry school.
- I devised a timetable at the beginning of each term to advise teachers when I would be in their classroom and adhered to this whenever possible.
- I was conscious not to talk to teachers about issues to do with the inquiry in the staffroom or within hearing distance of anyone else. All planning, feedback and comments from me were made to teachers with their privacy assured. The teachers did sometimes approach me in the staffroom. If this happened I responded as I had not initiated the interaction and presumed from the interaction that the teacher felt comfortable in this situation.
- I was conscious not to meet with the principal straight after being in a teacher’s classroom, particularly behind a closed door.

- I consistently aimed to communicate with the teachers about the finding of the inquiry and regularly spoke to them about the direction in which it was heading.

Such points worked towards creating an ongoing relationship of trust with each of the teachers throughout the duration of the inquiry.

The hermeneutic, dialectic process for this inquiry, previously described, relied on principles of trust. Trust was essential between us in order for the data to be collected, particularly the reflective journal entries, to be as authentic as possible. Data collected from the participants was analysed upon receipt and contributed to ‘... the emerging joint, collaborative reconstruction that emerges as the process continues’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:244). This relates to the shared interpretation developed between the participant teachers and me.

Guba and Lincoln (1989:233-250) state that the judging of a research process is threefold. They identify two parallel criteria – the ‘trustworthiness’ criteria and the ‘authenticity’ criteria – which research can be judged against along with quality and nature of the ‘...hermeneutic process’. They state that ‘...each set has utility for certain purposes...’ and emphasise that these criteria are derived from and respondent to certain situations – ‘...to each its proper and appropriate set’.

In response to the process that this inquiry went through and to Patton’s (1982; 1990) notion of ‘methodological appropriateness’, Guba and Lincoln’s (1989: 244) discussion of the ‘hermeneutic process’ as its own quality control will be discussed. Throughout the inquiry, data was collected and compared and contrasted within the ‘circle of respondents’ (Van Manen, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). This process has been previously discussed and allowed for the ‘...joint, collaborative reconstruction...’ that emerged upon constant analysis of the data

throughout the inquiry. Such a process meant that ‘...opportunities for error to go undetected and /or unchallenged are very small...’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:244). The key stakeholders in the inquiry, the participant teachers, the school principal and Literacy Education Officer, were all involved in this process therefore any secrecy with regard to findings was avoided resulting in a collaborative and open process. This interaction also ensured that my own biases and subjectivity were kept to a minimum as analysis of the data was not solely my responsibility.

Analysis of the ‘hermeneutic process’ concentrated on evaluating the methodological nature of the inquiry. However, I am aware that this is not enough alone to persuade those who wish to see explicit evidence of the credibility of the research data and its interpretations. It is for this reason that I also draw upon Guba and Lincoln’s (1989:245-150) ‘authenticity criteria’. Each component of this criteria will be discussed in reference to the inquiry.

### Fairness

Fairness refers to the extent to which different constructions and their underlying value structures are solicited and honored within the evaluation process.  
(Guba and Lincoln, 1989:245-246)

I was aware from the beginning of the inquiry that I was entering into it with my own value system according to what I believed ‘balanced writing pedagogy’ was and the way I thought writing should be taught within the school. For this reason, it was crucial that I identified the key stakeholders to this inquiry (Hoban, 2002; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Cole and Chan, 1994). Their involvement and input throughout the collection and analysis of the data ensured that interpretation was as free from my bias as possible.

Interactions with the participant teachers and the stakeholders were kept open. While the data was collected it was vital to have ‘...open negotiation

of recommendations and of the agenda for subsequent action' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:246). This negotiation needed to be explicated throughout all interactions – planning within the inquiry, implementing these plans and the evaluation of what happened as a result of these plans. This open relationship ensured that the balance of power and responsibility for the inquiry was shared amongst those who had a stake in it. The following factors were adhered to in order to ensure that this happened:

- Participants had access to their data and subsequent analysis at all times
- Participants and stakeholders were kept informed of the project direction and preliminary findings
- A fair and equal relationship was conducted and maintained amongst the researcher, participant teachers and the stakeholders (Fullan, 1995)
- A code of conduct, as previously outlined, was followed to ensure this open relationship was maintained (Loughran and Russell, 1997).



### Ontological Authenticity

This criterion refers to the extent to which individual respondent's own emic constructions are improved, matured, expanded, and elaborated, in that they now possess more information and have become more sophisticated in its use. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:248)

'Emic' constructions have been discussed throughout this chapter. The inquiry drew upon the methodology of ethnography to explore the 'emic' perspectives within the inquiry. These perspectives involved addressing the history within the school as to writing instruction, addressing school documentation such as policies surrounding literacy and the overall 'context of culture' within which these participant teachers were working.

The 'vicarious' experience of each of the participant teachers was explored to provide '...opportunity for individual respondents (stakeholders and others) to apprehend their own 'worlds' in more informed and sophisticated ways' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:248). Investigation of the teachers' individual 'learning and teaching theory' (Whitehead, 2000) developed through their own experiences as a learner and professional experiences enabled this to happen.

Such perspectives provided a basis for the development of the inquiry process. The demonstration from the participant teachers of increased knowledge and understanding as to what constitutes 'balanced writing pedagogy' is considered evidence of ontological authenticity. It is anticipated that this will become evident in later chapters.

### Educative Authenticity

Educative authenticity represents the extent to which individual respondents; understanding of and appreciation for the constructions of others outside their stakeholding group are enhanced. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:248)

Each of the participant teachers and other key stakeholders differed from each other in terms of personal and professional experiences. As such they were given the opportunity to ‘...see how different value systems evoke very different solutions to issues...’ surrounding the inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:249).

The reflective journal entries written by the participant teachers will constitute as evidence of their comprehension and understanding of differing thinking around the teaching of writing. The audit trail, provided in appendix A, will also demonstrate the process of the inquiry and the interaction of each of the participant teachers within this.

### Catalytic Authenticity

This criterion may be defined as the extent to which action is stimulated and facilitated by the evaluation processes. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:249)

The use of the action research spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11) ensured that the inquiry process was responsive to the needs of the participant teachers and other stakeholders. This process ensured that analysis and subsequent decision making was ongoing, resulting in a process of ‘active response’ between the participant teachers and the researcher.

Evidence of this criterion will be able to be found in the reflective journal entries from the participant teachers, my journal and field notes from classroom visits and within issues discussed in semi-structured interviews. The inquiry was built upon the concept of ‘shared action’ particularly evident in the relationship among us as co-researchers. Therefore,

‘...when action is jointly negotiated, it should follow that action is ‘owned’ by participants and ... more willingly carried out’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:250).

### Tactical Authenticity

...tactical authenticity refers to the degree to which stakeholders and participants are empowered to act. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:250)

The inquiry aimed to empower the teachers within their classrooms to act towards the establishment of ‘balanced writing pedagogy’. The inquiry enabled each participant teacher and stakeholder to have ‘...the opportunity to contribute inputs to the evaluation and to have a hand in shaping its focus and its strategies’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:25). The inquiry aimed to be responsive to the individual needs of each participant teacher and the needs within the ‘emic’ perspective, thus enabling the participants to be empowered. Documentation surrounding the ‘active response’ from both the participant teachers and me will be indicative of this.

The increased knowledge, understanding and subsequent classroom practice of the participant teachers with regard to their teaching of writing will also demonstrate the achievement of ‘tactical authenticity’.

## **Our Journey**

### *Action Research as a Professional Development Model for the Teaching of Writing in Early Stage One and Stage One Classrooms.*

In order to identify and address the factors that guided the participant teachers throughout this inquiry, the process they went through needs to be explored. Strauss and Corbin (1990:152-153) describe process ‘...as progressive movement, reflected in phases or stages’. The data collected in the inquiry directed the movement of the inquiry. Close analysis of this indicated some key phases within the inquiry.

#### ***Phase One: Ethnographic Study of the School and Teachers***

This inquiry began by addressing the ‘context of setting’: namely the school within which these participant teachers were working. Cole and Knowles (2000:123) write, ‘the context of setting plays a significant role in teacher development’. They identify the school setting as ‘...an integral part of the teacher’s professional knowledge landscape’.

The ethnographic aspect of this inquiry involved investigating the history of the school and looking at school and diocesan initiatives with regard to literacy practice. The professional development experiences of these individual teachers were also explored, particularly in relation to the impact of these upon their own developing understanding as demonstrated in their classroom. This relates to Anderson, Herr and Nihlen’s (1994:119) definition of ethnography where they state ‘the core of ethnography is its concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand’.

As I had become a member of this school community in 1997 with my appointment as a classroom teacher, I had some idea about school and diocesan policy with regard to literacy initiatives. In my time as a teacher and as member of the school executive, I also had a basic knowledge of the history of the school with regard to literacy instruction. I was aware of the 'tacit knowledge' I held – '... the ineffable truths ... between meanings and actions' – and was aware of the need to confirm such knowledge with other parties (Altheide and Johnson, 1998:296). This first phase in the inquiry allowed me to work with my own experiences ('etic' perspective) held within my 'tacit knowledge' and compare and contrast them with the views of the participant teachers, school principal and literacy consultant and school documentation ('emic' perspectives) in order to achieve validity.

Each of the teachers who volunteered to be part of this inquiry had a personal relationship with me. As such we entered the inquiry with 'relationships of trust' as previously described. Stringer (1996:26) identifies specific characteristics with regard to entering into relationships within an action research methodology. He writes that relationships in action research should:

- Promote feelings of equality for all people involved
- Maintain harmony
- Avoid conflicts, where possible
- Resolve conflicts that arise, openly and dialogically
- Accept people as they are, not as some people think they ought to be
- Encourage personal, cooperative relationships, rather than impersonal, competitive, conflictual, or authoritarian relationships
- Be sensitive to people's feelings

These points characterised our entry into the next phase of the inquiry.

Each teacher was asked to select five children of varying ability from their class to be 'tracked' by me throughout the year. Samples of their writing

were collected for each school term in 2001. Parental permission was obtained for each of these children, thirty in total. This worked as support data for the inquiry, adding depth to what was happening in each teacher's classroom.

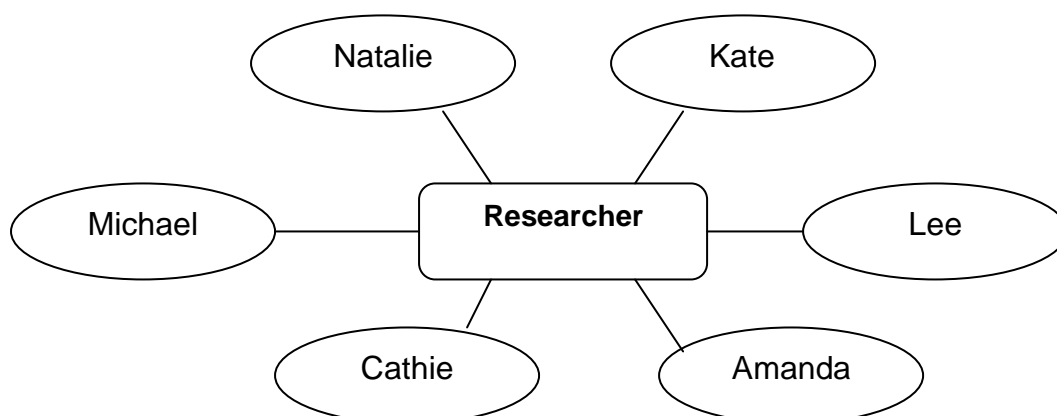
### ***Phase Two: Initial Project Aims Towards a Balanced Writing Pedagogy***

The ethnographic study enabled me to understand the background of the teaching of writing and establish a starting point to begin the development of 'balanced writing pedagogy'. The focus of the inquiry then became the Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms and the teachers and students within those classes.

During the inquiry, the teachers and I employed the 'action research spiral' (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11) in their individual classrooms where we worked on their individual teaching practice of writing. The key components of this spiral – plan, actions, observations, reflections – were observed as the teachers and I engaged in planned session of team teaching, demonstration teaching with the teachers encouraged to continually critique their own and my literacy practice with regard to teaching the writing process. Such interactions could be likened to that of a mentor/mentee relationship (Long, 2002; Boreen and Nidag, 2000; Smith and West-Burnham, 1993; Weindling and Earley, 1987; Nias, Southwork and Yeomans, 1989).

The use of action research within a controlled mentoring relationship worked on establishing a sound basis for the inquiry. Stringer (1996:109) identifies '...a support network as a key ingredient in the success of a project'. The network that we established in this phase of the inquiry was

'controlled' in the sense that each of the participant teachers worked directly and exclusively with me. My role was that of 'research facilitator' and as such '...information transfer, discussion, or interaction' occurred through me for each of the participant teachers. Such a controlled network was my way of response to the role of research as being '...to inform, to sophisticate, to assist the increase of competence and maturity, to socialize, and to liberate'. This connects with my responsibilities in getting this process started (Stake, 1995:91-92). It was also created in response to the timetable allocations of one hour per week for me to work with each of the participant teachers. This network is depicted further in figure 3.6.



**Figure 3.6 – A Controlled Network**

Throughout Term One 2001, the teachers and I concentrated on managing the practicalities of literacy practice in classroom life. This involved us in working through the content outlined in the New South Wales English K-6 Syllabus document (Board of Studies, 1998) for each specific grade, catering for individual student needs in the classroom and ensuring a 'literacy block' was in place. This was coupled with input as to what the 'experts' were saying with regard to the teaching of writing. This came from me in the form of articles and readings ('cognitive coaching') and other professional development opportunities the teachers were experiencing. Connelly and Clandinin (1988:25) emphasise the

importance of 'personal practical knowledge'. Such knowledge enables the teacher a way of '...reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation'.

It was important for me at this stage not to replace the strategies the teachers had with what I believed should be happening. Instead, it was important to consider the experiences of each teacher – their own school experiences, professional development opportunities and beliefs about how children learn to write – and work with their 'individual learning and teaching theory' (Whitehead, 2000) as a starting point. Connelly and Clandinin (1988:184) emphasise this when they write, 'practices are expressions of a teacher's personal practical knowledge and are not without meaning in the way teachers know their teaching'.

Once each of the teachers had the 'practicalities' under control they demonstrated need to then refine their own understanding and their own classroom practice. This happened in two main ways. The opportunities for 'cognitive coaching' increased with the provision of more reading material representing current thinking that I had collected. Secondly, the action research process led into extending on initial mentoring relationships – moving from a 'buddy system' to a challenging, professional relationship. Each of the teachers and I established a more complex mentoring relationship still using the guiding principles of the action research spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11), giving the teachers more opportunity to reflect upon their teaching practice. However, these occurred at different times throughout terms two and three, according to when the individual participant teachers were 'ready' to take that next step. This was not something that could be controlled by me; instead it seemed to be a natural progression in our professional relationship.



According to Acton, Smith and Kirkham (1993:71) the key role of the mentor is to give constructive feedback. They further outline five clear principles of giving constructive feedback – these are outlined below.

Mentors should take care to:

- *Be concrete and specific*  
say exactly what the mentee is doing and focus on specific behaviour
- *Refer to actions and behaviour*  
say what the mentee is doing and what can be changed. Keep it impersonal.
- *Own the feedback*  
make statements instead of general comments of praise or blame
- *Be immediate*  
be sure to give helpful feedback at the time it is needed. This is usually immediate but can also be at a planned time, a little later
- *Be understood by the receiver*  
make sure that the person receiving the feedback understands what you are saying. Use your active listening skills.

It was these principles that guided me when providing feedback to forms of data collection such as reflective journal entries, classroom visits and structured and semi-structured interviews. However, reflection of the mentor relationships between the participant teachers and myself extended upon this. The notion of me being the 'expert' began to decrease and the relationship became more equal.

The data collected on each of the teachers allowed for individual descriptive teacher case studies to be developed.

*Writing up the results of qualitative work is as much a discovery process as it is a summary of what has already been discovered. (Van Maanen, 1994:252)*

Whilst writing up each of the case studies, I encountered some problems. In an attempt to remove bias and remain as objective as possible, the flow of the case studies became stilted. After consultation with some academic colleagues it became apparent that by removing myself from the data I

had in fact lost the 'voice' of the teachers. At this point it became obvious that I was part of the data and my input was unable to be removed. I re-read the work of Guba and Lincoln (1989: 112) regarding objectivity and subjectivity. They write 'In the trade-off between objectivity and subjectivity, we have allowed ourselves to become too preoccupied with objectivity, and have overlooked the inevitable interaction between the inquirer and inquired-into, and the influence that interaction may have on the outcomes of inquiry'. Charmaz (2000: 522) supports the interaction of the 'inquirer and inquired-into' with her words, '... a constructivist approach recognizes that the categories, concepts and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher's interactions within the field and questions about the data'. In order to report what had happened, and to perform an act of member checking, the writing that I had done on teachers was given to them and time was made to meet with each teacher individually to collect their feedback and for me to be able to hear their 'voice' again.

This discovery in the research led me to consider Hogan's (1988) notion of research relationships. The relationships I had established with each of the teachers in these Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms were 'empowering'. Hogan describes these relationships as involving feelings of 'connectedness ... that are developed in situations of equality, caring and mutual purpose and intention' (Hogan, 1988:12).

Once the teachers had each reviewed their individual case study, I attempted to analyse them again. They still did not seem to flow as a logical part of the story. At this time I returned to the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1988:24) where I read, 'stories, of course, are neither seen nor told when one part is focused on in isolation from other parts. When this happens, we analyse and learn about the parts. But the unities, communities ... in the whole are not seen'. Using the methodology of

Narrative Inquiry and the first-hand accounts provided by the teachers through interviews and their reflective journal entries, I began to construct a narrative to represent each teacher's journey over the course of the year.

My constant comparative analysis of the data during periods of data collection had seen the emergence of categories and themes which did develop as the data was continually compared and contrasted. The narratives on the teachers also worked in identifying and strengthening themes and led me back to the data. When I looked at the data closely, it became evident that the data was in fact showing me a development to the action-research spiral we had been using, not just the separate teacher journeys I had been working to identify. Whilst I had responded to the direction the teachers had moved the inquiry in, I had not comprehended fully the implications of this to the action research spiral. Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994:113) state that qualitative research such as this inquiry can provide data '...that can be analysed in many different ways and provide a variety of answers, sometimes to questions the researcher did not know he or she had'. Likewise, Charmaz (1995: 32) challenges researchers to '...evaluate the fit between their initial research interests and their emerging data'. This discovery led into discovery of the third phase of this inquiry.

### ***Phase Three: Evolution of the Project***

#### ***Action Research as a Professional Development Model for the teaching of writing***

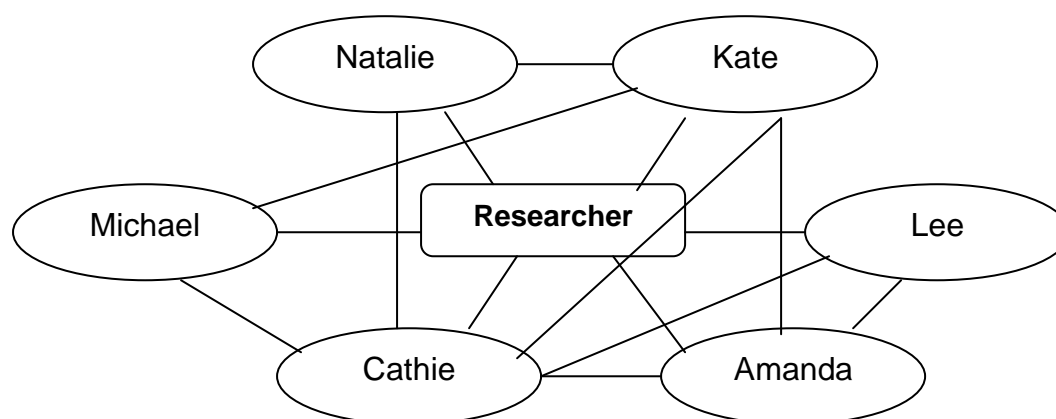
*You will build lasting relationships as you share the path with others, and you will discover the strength that comes when you walk hand in hand with friends. At times you may need to follow, and at [times] others will be called to lead, and the bridges you build together will be strong and will take you to new common ground. (Whelan, 1999:26)*

During Term Three of the 2001 school year the needs of the teachers and in fact the whole school community took the inquiry into concentrating specifically on spelling as a key part of the writing process. External factors, such as parent expectations with regard to spelling, had played a key role in impacting upon the way the participant teachers taught the writing process. Spelling had been consistently identified by the teachers, parents, school executive and community as an issue that required additional support.

Midway through Term Three the inquiry changed. The teachers had clearly become co-researchers of the inquiry. The responsibility for the direction of the inquiry was transferred to them, as they became the owners of the 'balanced writing pedagogy' that we had developed. Each of the teachers was able to articulate their understanding of their writing pedagogy and critique not only what they saw from others but from themselves as teachers.

Initially I had been the one to offer assistance to each of the participant teachers in our quest to establish 'balanced writing pedagogy'. However, as the inquiry evolved, the network amongst the participant teachers extended into grade partnerships and stage working relationships. The

teachers actively sought out others to provide information, assist with classroom tasks and acquire needed materials (Stringer, 1996:107-109). The initial 'controlled network' (represented in figure 2.6) had expanded. The participant teachers had created networks amongst themselves, sought out '...multiple opportunities for exchange, conversation and consultation', thus creating a 'linking network'. Some of these relationships I had anticipated, others were unexpected which is typical of this research paradigm (Stake, 1995:41). This network is represented in figure 3. 7.



**Figure 3.7 – A Linking Network**

Sanders (1992:1) writes that the key to research which involves observation and evaluation of teaching practice is to '...listen and respond, share information, discuss your intentions and obtain feedback, clarify expectations, provide clear and useful reports in a timely manner, and maintain an open evaluation process...' Such a list of requirements contributes to the ethical nature of the research. It enabled the teachers to take ownership of their work while at the same time involving me in regular opportunities for member checking and peer debriefing, all contributing to the clarification of the research area.

Each of the teachers demonstrated increased development of personal tools, namely reflective practice. This inquiry was categorised by '...an ongoing process of examining and refining teaching practice ... focused on the personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, societal, and/or ethical contexts associated with professional work' (Cole and Knowles, 2000:2). Reflective practice was a process used to engage teachers in thinking about their professional practice with the intent of this developing into more critical reflection. It was hoped that through reflective practice, the teachers would '...recognise the consequences of their beliefs, knowledge, and experiences on what and how they teach' (Johnson and Golombek, 2002:5). While this was used consistently throughout the inquiry, as teachers were encouraged to journal issues that arose during the inquiry and later to critique their own teaching, there became a greater depth to reflections from teachers once they had gained 'ownership' of their teaching practice.

LaBoskey (1994:29) identifies some indicators for initial levels of reflectivity. These are compiled in table 3.8. These levels of reflectivity became evident in the teachers own reflections and in turn guided the researcher in analysing the reflective practice the teachers engaged with while also providing a framework within which the teachers could be guided.

COMMONSENSE THINKER (Unreflective)	ALERT NOVICE (Reflective)
Self-orientation (attention on self and/or subject matter)	Student orientation (attention of the needs of the children)
Short-term view	Long term view
Reliance on personal experience in learning to teach (learn by doing; trial and error)	Differentiation of teacher and learner roles
Metaphor of teacher as transmitter	Metaphor of teacher as facilitator
Lack of awareness of need to learn; feeling of already knowing much from having been in classrooms as a student	Openness to learning; growth-oriented
Overly certain conclusions	Acknowledgment of need for conclusions to be tentative; need for feedback and triangulation
Broad generalisations	Means-ends thinking; awareness of teaching as a moral activity
Existing structures taken as givens	Strategic thinking Imaginative thinking
	Reasoning grounded in knowledge of self, children and subject matter

**Figure 3.8 – Levels of Reflectivity**

(LaBoskey, 1994:29)

Reflection is not easily acquired or practised (Baratz-Snowden, 1995; Gore and Zeichner, 1991, LaBoskey, 1997). From looking at the case studies presented by the participant teachers, I realized the different levels of reflective practice. Michael, a more experienced teacher had good control over reflecting on his practice through his journal entries. Amanda, a relatively new teacher, found it more difficult to be reflective on her

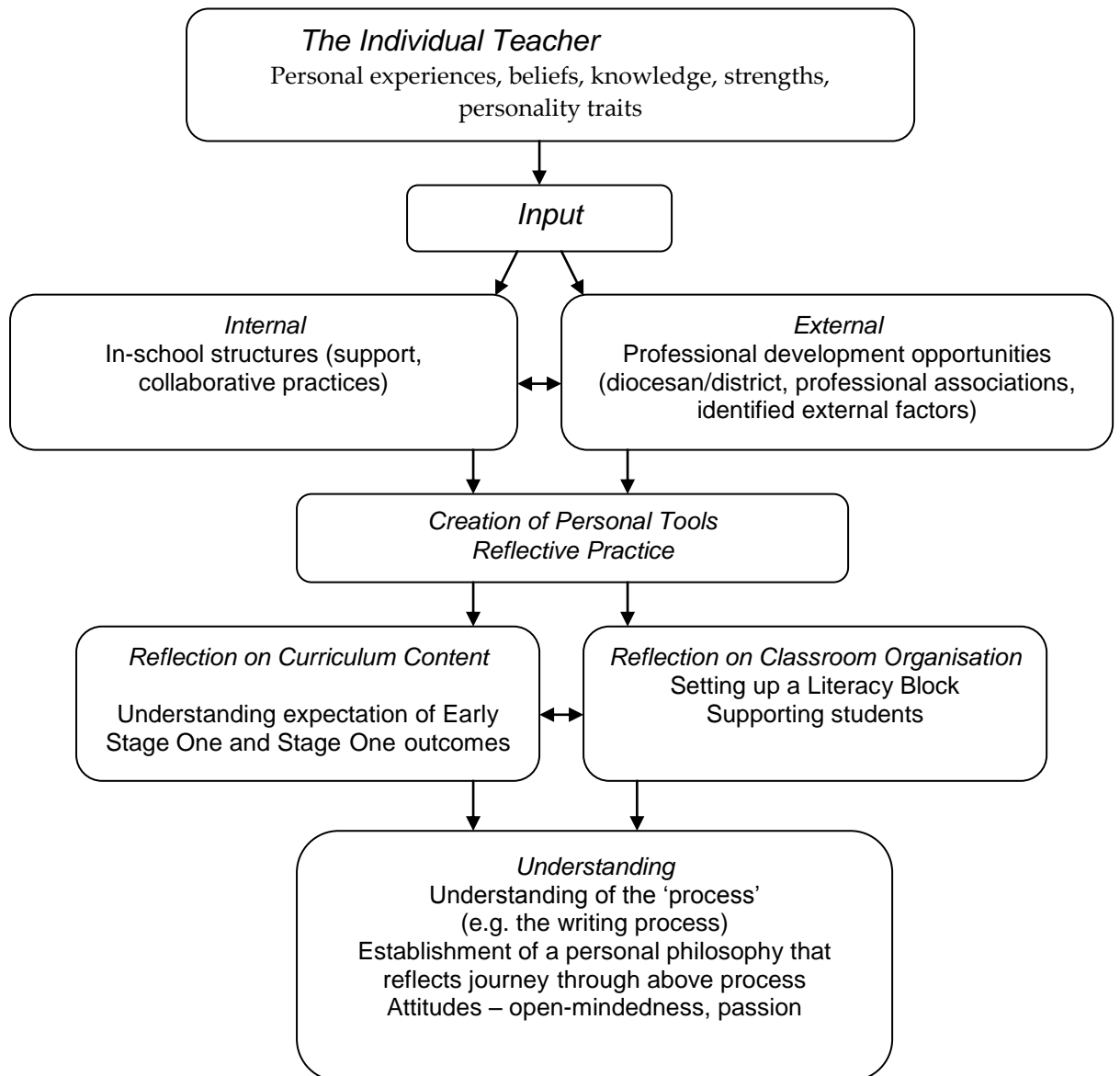
practice and used her journal more as a tool to clarify her understanding of the Stage One outcomes and associated content. It could be then proposed that reflective practice occurs as a result of the individual person's experiences and the input they receive on professional practice at a school level and external level. These contribute to reflective practice which itself occurs at two distinct levels. This relationship is outlined in Figure 3.9.

LaBoskey (1997: 161) states, 'reflective teachers tend to be guided by *passionate creeds*'. The journey of a teacher through this process establishes the passion that comes from a true understanding of the curriculum area.

The use of questioning was also used consistently to assist the participant teachers in their understanding of the writing process. This mostly took the form of researcher to teacher. The establishment of a team mentality among teachers within Early Stage One and Stage One worked to develop 'cognitive coaching' amongst team members and team members and the researcher.

I was no longer the sole 'expert'. I had become one of many. All the teachers were empowered in their understanding and description of their classroom practice in terms of the teaching of writing. A 'community of learners' had been established and true collaborative practice was in action.





**Figure 3.9 – Reflective Practice**

Figure 3.10 provides a visual representation of the process this inquiry took over 2001. Each of the phases has been incorporated within this.

*You will find your journey's end where you will celebrate discoveries with others in the world around you. You will have rich stories to tell of the experiences you have lived, and you will know, within your heart that this ending point marks the place of yet another beginning. (Whelan, 1999:29)*

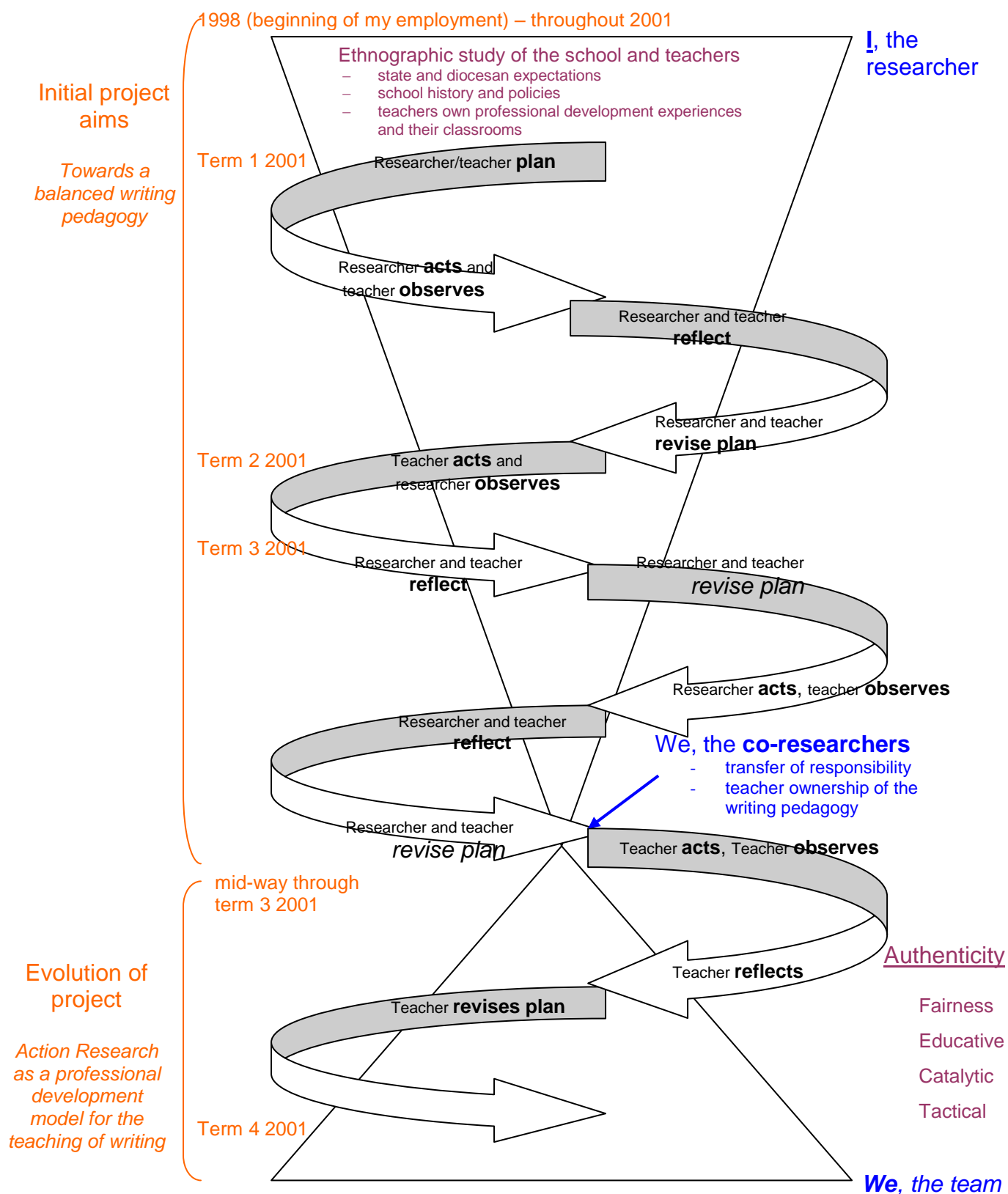


Figure 3.10 – The Inquiry Process

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# **Chapter Four**

*The Process of Moving from  
Collected Data to Descriptive  
Story with Interpretive  
Comment*

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## **Chapter Four**

### **The Process of Moving from Collected Data to Descriptive Story with Interpretive Comment**

*Teachers' stories are part of teachers' lives, and the study of their stories helps us understand the relationship between their lived experiences and their craft knowledge. (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994:122)*

This chapter aims to outline how the collected data was transformed into descriptive stories, outlining the experiences of the participant teachers over the 2001 school year. It aims to provide a process to bring together '...the web of stories – teachers' stories, stories of teachers, school stories, stories of schools ... that make up the landscape of schooling' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:94) in order to create these teacher stories of 'change'.

Reflective journal entries, interview transcripts and field notes were collected for each of the teachers throughout 2001. Such procedures are recognised and accepted within the methodologies of Action Research, Case Study, Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry. The need for 'thick description' was at the core of selection of methodologies and data collection procedures. The process of moving from the collected data into descriptive story, I decided, was the best way to represent the journey that each of the participant teachers and I travelled through during the year (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:135). The inquiry aims to depict the teachers as '... agents of change' rather than just '...objects of study' (Johnson and Golombek, 2002:1). Descriptive story was selected as it best showed how the emerging categories and themes were '...grounded in practice' (Hodder, 1998:123).

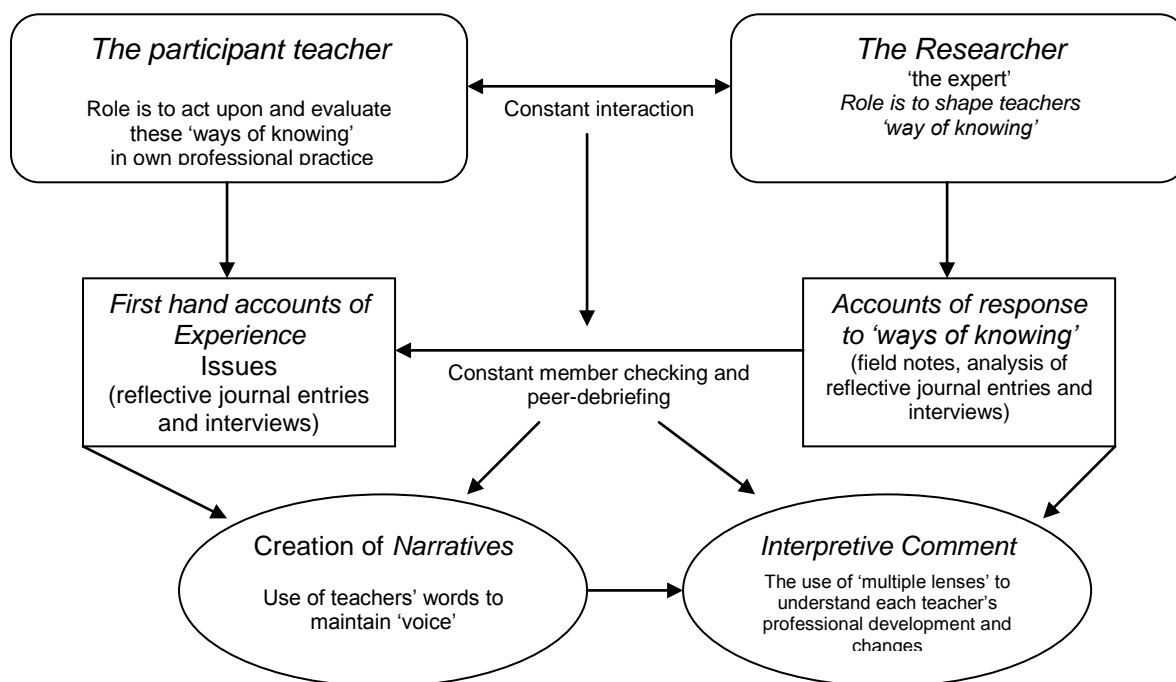
## ***Concern for ‘Voice’***

Postmodern thought encourages writers to include the ‘voice’ of those key stakeholders whom we write about (Stringer, 1996). Stringer draws upon the work of Huysens (1986) who is critical of those who develop theories by speaking for others. ‘He suggests that all groups have the right to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and to have those voices accepted as authentic and legitimate’ (Stringer, 1996:154).

The issue of ‘voice’ is important when looking at the professional development of teachers. The participant teachers are the key stakeholders of the developed theory within this inquiry. Cole and Knowles (2000:39) state,

... ‘knowing’ comes to us through so many different paths. Of course there is the valuable role of the expert, considering those theories and readings and using them, in part, to shape our own ways of knowing. But the key to my revelation is that they form only part of what our knowledge is ... our reliance on and understanding of self ... is central to everything that we do. Developing voice and a sense of self as a source of knowledge ... allowed me to come to terms with and fully experience the power of writing and narrative.

The use of narrative to tell each of the teachers’ experiences over the 2001 year supports Strauss and Corbin’s (1998:279) call for grounded theory to be ‘fluid’. The journey each of the participant teachers engaged with contributed to the development of this theory for group professional development. The participant teachers are the ‘multiple actors’ in this created group theory, therefore their individual journeys need to be explored ‘...to see if they fit, how they might fit, and how they might not fit’. It is important that the reader is able to see their individual journey comprising of individual situations and the participant teachers’ reactions to those. The ‘voice’ of each teacher is important. Figure 4.1 depicts how the ‘voice’ of each participant teacher was incorporated into a narrative.



**Figure 4.1 – Teacher ‘voice’ in construction of narrative**

Narrative texts were developed in order to give the reader a ‘feel’ for the voice of each participant teacher. When writing these narrative stories I took the role as narrator, making myself a character in the stories too. Giving the teachers ‘voice’ ensured that Stringer’s (1996:36) ‘inclusion’ principle of action research was maintained with the teachers’ own words being used to tell their stories of professional change. Interpretations were developed to build upon these narratives to further illustrate to the reader what was happening within the professional practice of each participant teacher. Strauss and Corbin (1998:274) assert: ‘...interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study’. This chapter aims to describe how the interpretations were sought for each of the participant teachers while at the same time acknowledging my own responsibility for ‘...interpreting what is observed, heard or read’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1994:275).

## **The Notion of ‘Multiple Lenses’**

The process of selecting appropriate and relevant research design has been explored in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to describe the movement from the collected ‘data’ to ‘field texts’ employing strategies such as ‘storying stories’ and ‘re-storying’ – typical to the Narrative Inquiry methodology (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). This process sees ‘stories’ as a way of recording the experiences of the participant teachers within his/her ‘voice’, using his/her own words. The development of supporting interpretive comment provides me with a way to write about these experiences emphasising the process the participant teachers moved through. This technique views the participant teachers and my own experiences through ‘multiple lenses’ and then uses the views highlighted by these lenses to write descriptive stories with interpretive comment.

The process the teachers experienced during the inquiry needs to be concisely conveyed to the reader, in order to best represent the emergence of categories and themes. This supports Strauss and Corbin’s (1990:147) notion that ‘...process must be accounted for to a degree sufficient to give the reader a sense of the flow of events that occur within the passage of time’. In the analysis of this process, I am aiming to describe the data clearly, identify what is typical and atypical within each participant teacher’s story, bring to light differences, relationships and other patterns existent in the data and answer the guiding research questions for the inquiry (Charles and Mertler, 2002:179).

The key forms of data collection used in this inquiry revolve around text, namely ‘first person accounts of experience’ (Merriam, 1998:157). The participant teachers were encouraged to develop written texts in the form of reflective journal entries responding to issues that arose throughout the



inquiry. The participant teachers and I regularly engaged in dialogue through structured and semi-structured interviews. After these times of dialogue, I transcribed these into a written text. Throughout the duration of the inquiry, I made field notes with subsequent interpretations, another form of written text. Visual texts in the form of video, photographs and copies of students' writing samples were also collected to add to these written and verbal texts. It was imperative to this inquiry that these texts were looked at through 'multiple lenses' to ensure 'thick description' and accuracy and depth in their analysis.

Strauss and Corbin (1990:153) identify that when addressing process, it is important '...to spell out the conditions and corresponding actions that move the process forward; identify turning points; and show how the outcome of reaching, or not reaching those turning points plays into the conditions affecting the next set of actions taken to move the process forward'. It was these words that inspired the development of 'multiple lenses' with which to view and develop the 'data' into 'field texts' to clearly represent the 'thick description' compiled on each of the participant teachers.

Viewing the data through these 'multiple lenses' involved:

- Immersing myself in the written texts (transcripts of structured and semi-structured interviews and reflective journal entries) to lead to a process of *active response*
- Acknowledging the *context* in which these forms of data were collected;
- Identifying *moments of change* in the collected data where changes to teaching practice were occurring
- Paying attention to the *language* used by the participant teachers and me

- Identifying the *narrative processes* used by the teachers as storytellers.

Analysing the data through these ‘multiple lenses’ aligns with the ethical issues of interpretive research such as this inquiry. All the data are looked at in many different ways to ensure that my personal bias is removed as much as possible from the interpretation as the data are analysed again and again in different ways. The notion of ‘re-storying’ was essential as the participant teachers were provided with draft after draft for them to respond to, to ensure accuracy in representation and interpretation. The personal and professional ethical principles of honesty and fairness guided me through this analysis (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990:253).

### ***Active response***

The lens of ‘active response’ was vital as it worked with the methodological principles of Action Research. The action research spiral identifies reflection and revision of the plan as key guiding principles (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11). Therefore, in order to satisfy these principles, it was essential that collected data were analysed upon receipt. Upon collection of each piece of data, I analysed this in terms of what was working and what was not in order to best respond to the process each of the teachers were moving through. This analysis was then presented back to the participant teachers to ensure accuracy in interpretation.

In order to make an ‘active response’ to the data that I had collected I endeavoured to follow the process of the interaction between each participant teacher and me. Firstly, audiotapes of interviews were listened to more than once. This was to ensure accuracy with my transcriptions and to also listen to what the participant teacher was saying in order to respond with a consequent direction. Reflective journal entries were also

treated the same way. These were read and re-read in order to 'listen' to what the teacher was saying and to respond with an appropriate direction. Table 4.2 is an example of this lens in action.

Example	Interpretive Comment
<p>'Another area I need support with is being able to get plenty of ideas for what the children can write about. In Infants I believe you need lots of ideas to keep the children interested and on task. On the other hand, in Primary, it may take a week to complete one writing sample. In Year 1 we really need a new idea each day – I find this hard sometimes because I don't like to repeat myself.'</p> <p>Lee (RJ - 30.7.01)</p>	<p>The participant teachers were all given readings from Calkins (1986) to which they responded (RJ-2.7.01). In Lee's response she picked up on Calkins' idea of getting younger children to draw a picture before beginning to write as a form of planning. I reminded Lee of this strategy after she had given me her Reflective Journal entry from which this extract was taken. She agreed that such a strategy was useful for free-choice or more creative type writing where the children could describe the picture they had drawn during their writing time. This was a strategy we addressed in following classroom visits (CV – 1.8.01; 16.8.01)</p>

**Figure 4.2 – The lens of active response**

Through this process I was able to reconnect with the participant teachers by responding to issues they presented. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:157) write that 'planning data-collection sessions in light of what you find in previous observation' is one way to include analysis within the data-collection period. Subsequent action on these issues supports Action Research where 'actions must derive from the people who are the targets of any suggested action' (Stringer, 1996:122).

Example	Interpretive Comment
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>CV – 3.5.01 Lee</b></p> <p>Time started: 9:35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint writing a description text linking with HSIE 'Transport' unit</li> <li>- Lee writes, getting ideas from the children, emphasis is on the structure of more difficult text</li> <li>- Poster is used as visual stimulus, some students may need an actual model to work from</li> <li>- Some children appear to be distracted at the back of the floor area – follow up on how to engage these children</li> </ul> <p>9:50</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children begin independent writing task</li> <li>- Lee roves around the room, teaching 'on the run'</li> <li>- Lee has identified some errors made by the children, individual teaching given to those children</li> <li>- Some children finding it difficult to get started on own text</li> </ul> <p>10:08</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lee gathers children together who are having difficulty getting started and helps them begin their text in a 'guided writing' format</li> </ul> <p>10:10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some children appear to be finishing – need to think about what to do for those children</li> </ul> <p>10:20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lee asks the children to proofread with a partner</li> </ul> <p>10:25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharing time, 3 children share their writing to the class, selected by Lee</li> </ul> <p>Time finished: 10:30</p>	<p>This extract from my field notes is representative of the notes I took during classroom visits. As I was often busy with the writing block myself - talking to the teacher, doing demonstration or team teaching or working with children - my aim with field notes was to document times, what happened and consequent areas to follow up with that particular teacher. Interpretive comments were written after the visit had occurred.</p> <p>In this extract I have indicated some follow-up areas. I have identified some children not being engaged during times of joint writing. I followed this up on the next visit (CV – 10.5.01) where I worked with Lee on an active model of joint writing where the children wrote along with me during the joint writing time. This also assisted with getting those children started who found it difficult in this visit.</p> <p>These field notes also assisted me in identifying Lee's organisation of guided writing time as an area to follow up on. I was able to work with her on grouping children together who were experiencing similar difficulty and teaching them together rather than individual teaching. We also worked on putting those children who found it difficult to get started in a guided writing group at the beginning of each independent writing time for ten minutes to make sure they were on task.</p>

**Table 4.3 – 'Action' from field notes**

Table 4.3 provides a sample from my field notes and demonstrates how I guided my 'active response' for each of the participant teachers. When I was in their classrooms, I kept a log of what happened and noted any areas I wanted to investigate further with the teachers. After my visit I would share these notes with the participant teacher to ensure that I had recorded what was happening accurately and identified an appropriate area of need. Subsequent 'active response' was delved into in following classroom visits and explored further with semi-structured interviews after the visit.

## **Context**

*One of the lessons of qualitative research is that all educational practices are context bound. (Anderson, Herr, Nihlen, 1994:43)*

The ethnographic principles that began this inquiry aim to illustrate the context within which these teachers were working. Hodder (1998:122) states, 'the notion of context is always relevant when different sets of data are being compared and where a primary question is whether the different examples are comparable, whether the apparent similarities are real.'

Halliday (1985) identifies the concepts of 'context of situation' and 'context of culture' as impacting on what is told, when it is told and how it is told.

The 'context of situation' is determined by the immediate social situation the participant is put in. In this inquiry it relates to the social situation prevalent between the participant teachers and myself during times of data collection. The necessity of describing each of the different contexts was acknowledged as the 'field texts' were developed to describe '...that things are done similarly, that people respond to similar situations ...within the context similar events or things have similar meaning' (Hodder, 1998:123).

When addressing the 'context of situation' in my analysis of the data collected I asked myself the following questions:

- What is the participant telling me?
- How did he/she tell me?
- What is the text telling me? For example: the questions that are responded to; the questions that are asked; the types of questions asked; where the questions occur in the response; the examples that were used; and the length of the response.
- What isn't said in the text?
- What interaction does the participant teacher want from me? For example: has the participant teacher asked me a question?  
Identified an area of need or follow-up?

Example	Interpretive Comment
<p>Parent Teacher Interviews were held at the beginning of the first term. After this I asked Lee to reflect upon the feedback she received from the parents.</p> <p>'Parents varied in general comments – From handwriting to spelling. Some did not understand text structure. Automatically went to words circled and highlighted by me. Very interested in punctuation. Not so informed re – process.. Had to focus and explain why we plan writing – What Good writers do (chart) proofreading (chart) actually had a sample of both to reinforce the process .. Very interested in 'desk dictionary' ... I had to extend and expand that child should use Macquarie dictionary also ...' (RJ – 16.2.01)</p>	<p>From this reflective journal entry it became clear to me that there were a number of aspects that the parents, as key stakeholders, challenged Lee about. She told me this by using short incomplete sentences, and non-conventional punctuation – not typical of her writing style in other entries. Lee's use of '.' or '...' was interpreted by me as an area requiring additional support. While Lee was doing these things she seemed to want support in developing her understanding of why she was doing this in order to convey it articulately to parents. While Lee asked no direct questions of me, she indicated a number of areas to work on in subsequent visits.</p>

**Table 4.4 – 'Context of situation'**

The 'context of culture' refers to the social, political, cultural, historical and structural conditions which the participants draw upon (Halliday, 1985).

The notion of culture as playing a significant role in teacher development is widely acknowledged (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 38-40; Cole and Knowles, 2000:123; Stringer, 1996:77). Previous discussion of 'etic' and 'emic' perspectives (Merriam, 1998:157) describes the working cultures within this inquiry school.

When addressing the 'context of culture' in my analysis of the data collected, I asked myself the following questions:

- How does this relate to previous experiences of the participant teacher?
- Where has this idea come from?
- From what position is the participant teacher taking this?
- Why has the participant teacher accepted / resisted / challenged this notion?
- What impact has our mentor/mentee relationship played on this data?

Table 4.5 demonstrates the analysis of 'context of culture' with some of the collected data.

Example	Interpretive Comment
<p>When Michael reflected on his memories of learning to write as a student he wrote, <i>'my immediate reaction is to remember Year 4 (1974!!)...'</i> He then goes on to reflect on writing compositions, Michael writes, <i>'...these were then given a mark (out of 10? Out of 100?) with various comments. I can't remember any one-to-one feedback about writing, or the writing process'</i>. He summed up his memories of learning to write with the following reflection, <i>'...at times I remember thinking 'what is the point of doing this?' ... they seemed to be separate lessons – not in context (as we attempt to do now)'</i>. (RJ-5.2.01)</p>	<p>This excerpt from Michael's reflective journal outlines some aspects of his own experience as a student. Michael has identified a specific year as being influential on his own learning. As he has described it he has consistently interwoven aspects of his current teaching practice that are different to his own experience – one-to-one feedback, writing as a process, and writing as being taught in context.</p>

Kate frequently mentioned in her interactions with me how much teaching has changed (SSI – 2.5.01; 10.5.01; 16.5.01). Kate recognised the changes that have occurred around the teaching of writing both in her experiences as a student and as a teacher - ‘...it was so much different to today ... things have changed drastically even since I began teaching’. (RJ – 2.5.01)	Kate demonstrated qualities of confusion and frustration when addressing change in education. She addresses many of our interactions in the first half of the inquiry from this position. This position resulted in Kate having difficulty initially in moving beyond her frustration towards investigating the idea of ‘balanced writing pedagogy’.
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**Table 4.5 – ‘Context of culture’**

## ***Moments of Change***

‘Change’ within the teachers was central to the emerging categories and themes within this inquiry. Strauss and Corbin (1990:148-150) describe change as ‘a happening’, ‘an event denoting a difference in something’, ‘change in conditions ... brings about a corresponding change in action’. They describe ‘process’ as a ‘...way of accounting for or explaining change’.

Strauss and Corbin (1990:150) identify ‘properties’ of change that ‘...give it form, shape, and character’. These properties are compiled below.

<i>Properties</i>	<i>Dimensional Ranges</i>
Rate	Fast – slow
Occurrence	Planned – unplanned
Shape	Orderly – random Progressive – nonprogressive
Direction	Forward – backward Upward – downward
Scope	Wide – narrow
Degree of impact	Great – small
Degree of control	High - low

**Figure 4.6 - The Shape and Form of Change**

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990:150)



Discussion of the phases this inquiry went through is evidence of some key 'moments' indicating 'change' within the participant teachers. These moments were a mixture of the radical, the commonplace, the unexpected, times of confusion and self-questioning, and 'moments' when a teacher appeared to be stuck. The data was looked at in terms of 'turning points' the teachers made which impacted upon their teaching practice.

Kate's journey throughout 2001 is explored below in table 4.7, according to some of the key 'moments of change' she experienced.

Example	Interpretive Comment
Kate commented, <i>'I have not used anything I learnt at uni in my classroom! How terrible is that?'</i> (I – 14.5.01) After this comment I probed further by asking Kate where did she get her ideas for the classroom. Kate responded by saying <i>'... I see other teachers using different things ... if I think it is a good idea and it looks like it's working I use it'</i> . (I – 14.5.01)	Initially Kate demonstrated an eclectic approach to teaching writing. She incorporated 'good ideas' (Hoffman, 1988) she'd collected throughout her teaching career with little understanding towards their theoretical basis – why she did what she did.
Kate expressed her concern about the pressures and demands placed on teachers. She stated that many teachers are <i>'...in overdrive ... having to keep up with all the changes in education'</i> (I – 14.5.01).	This comment was indicative of how Kate herself was feeling in the early stages of the inquiry.
Kate wrote, <i>'I am a very confident teacher of writing who thrives on modelling and passing onto the children everything I know ... it [teaching writing] has become my passion'</i> (RJ – 30.7.01).	This indicated a turning point for Kate. At this stage she became confident with her teaching of writing. She was able to articulate more readily why she was teaching the way she was and began to incorporate aspects of modelling and explicit teaching.

<p>Kate commented '<i>...the way I used to teach writing has changed so much in the last six months ...</i>'. She states further '<i>I believe that teaching writing is so important and if we can teach our children about the writing process and instil in them sound literacy practices when they are young and like sponges, they will continue to thrive through their school years</i>'. (RJ – 3.12.01)</p>	<p>Kate has acknowledged the changes she has gone through in order to develop 'balanced writing pedagogy'. She has used the 'language' of writing in her mention of teaching children about the writing process.</p>
<p>Kate discussed how her attitudes to what the children can do in Kindergarten had changed (I – 12.11.01). She said, '<i>If you had've [sic] said to me at the beginning of Term 2 'Your kids will be proofreading by the end of Term 3' I wouldn't have believed you! It's so amazing to teach this wonderful writing strategy to 5 and 6 year olds ...</i>' She adds, '<i>I would never have thought a five year old could proofread so well. But it happens in my classroom and its [sic] brilliant!</i>'</p>	<p>Earlier in the inquiry Kate expressed concern about children being pushed too much in these early years. At times Kate had appeared to be resistant to the direction of the inquiry for this reason. Further analysis indicated that she had been the one that was uncomfortable about the direction because of the challenges it presented to her own teaching. Once she had accepted and moved with these challenges and the children demonstrated increased literacy skills Kate acknowledged the change in her attitudes.</p>
<p>Kate stated, '<i>I have learned how much the teaching [of] writing has changed ... the way children learn to write and the links with reading are wonderful. Reading and writing should be taught and learnt as one, not two separate skills ...</i>'. (SSI – 5.12.01)</p>	<p>Kate has again made reference to change in education. In this example it is referred to in a positive light with the benefits of 'balanced writing pedagogy' acknowledged. Kate has also demonstrated increasing knowledge and awareness of how children learn to write by talking about the reciprocal gains of reading and writing.</p>
<p>Kate thought it was vital for teachers '<i>... to be kept informed of any changes in current teaching practices</i>' (I – 12.11.01).</p>	<p>At the beginning of the inquiry Kate expressed her concern about the changes in education and how she felt teachers were in 'overdrive' keeping up with them. Here, she acknowledges that it is important to keep up with them to improve one's own teaching practice.</p>

'...all I can think is that I have done the best job I know how' (RJ – 10.12.01)	Kate has reflected upon the year in a positive way, acknowledging that she has taught the children to the best of her capabilities.
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**Table 4.7 – Kate's 'moments of change'**

These 'moments' highlight 'Kate's' development of her teaching practice. She has '...lived out, rethought, restoried and relived' her professional practice (Rose, 1999:49). 'Kate's' journey is indicative of what Strauss and Corbin (1990:151) refer to as a 'set of conditions' which '...can set off a chain reaction leading to a change in context, and a corresponding change in action ... for managing, controlling, or handling the phenomenon...'

## ***Language***

Language is central to the analysis of collected data as it is 'more than a means of communication about reality: it is a tool for constructing reality' (Campbell, 1996:263). Language helps us construct 'our sense of selves, our subjectivity' (Richardson, 1994:518). For this inquiry it was important to look at language as text and language as a social purpose. When looking at language as text, as a means of communication, the content was addressed, the 'people, situations, and ideas that speakers mean their words to convey' (Riessman, 1993:21). When looking at language as a social process, the way the language shapes the social relationship between the teachers, the students and other stakeholders was focused on in a way as to explore their knowledge and understanding around their own teaching practice with regard to their teaching of writing. Looking at language helped me understand what the guiding factors were in each participant teacher's practice. Close analysis of the language used enabled me to see how the participant teacher 'speaks of herself [himself] before we speak of her [him]' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992:27-28).

The language of the teachers was addressed in terms of what was said, how it was said, and what remains unsaid. These features impacted on my interpretation of collected data.

‘What was said’ includes the following:

- Word groupings or phrases indicating the relationship between self and teaching practice
- Frequently used words
- Words that assumed common understandings, uncontested ‘knowledge’ or signalled a request for understanding (e.g. you know)
- Words that made space for thought (e.g. uhm)
- Vocabulary associated with the teaching of writing
- Words linking with the key research questions
- Words participant teachers used to talk about their own teaching practice and influences upon it.

Some key points of Amanda’s journey throughout 2001 is explored in table 4.8 in terms of ‘what [she] said’ in her reflective journal entries and structured and semi-structured interviews.

Example	Interpretive Comment
Amanda’s memories of learning to write were centred on getting things right. (RJ – 5.2.01)	Amanda made frequent mention to the need to teach students the strategies of writing. Words such as ‘structure’, ‘strategies’, ‘planning’, and ‘content’ appeared frequently throughout all forms of data.
Amanda commented that, ‘...it wasn’t until I actually started teaching that I got to put my theory into practice’ (SSI – 19.2.01)	Amanda has claimed ownership of her theory surrounding literacy practices.
Amanda was asked to reflect on something that she did well in their teaching of writing. Amanda began this reflection by stating ‘Not much!’ (RJ – 30.7.01)	This is an example of Amanda’s dissatisfaction towards her own ability. She continually strove to teach the students the mechanics of writing.

This journal entry was concluded with Amanda stating ' <i>... there are no other areas I need assistance with</i> ' (RJ – 30.7.01).	This is in contrast to her opening of this entry.
When asked to respond to the final question ' <i>what could you have done to make it better?</i> ' Amanda's first response is ' <i>I'm not sure</i> '. (E – 1.11.01)	Amanda has demonstrated a request for understanding in terms of evaluating her teaching practice.
Amanda commented that ' <i>... overall, I'm slowly learning...</i> ' (RJ – 10.12.01)	Amanda has described the developments in her own teaching practice.
<i>'I still need to pick up on strategies that the students need ... the children need to use the quickest way to find out how to spell a word ...'</i> (RJ – 10.12.01)	Amanda has again made reference to the need to teach students the strategies of writing. She has emphasised the need for spelling strategies in this comment.

**Table 4.8 – What Amanda said**

'How it was said' included analysis of the language according to the following structural features:

- Active and passive voice;
- Speech functions (questions, commands, statements, exclamations);
- The use of personal pronouns by participant teachers - 'we', 'I', 'you';
- Occurrence of internal dialogue to indicate personal relationship to the experience;
- Metaphors, similes, analogies demonstrating connections made.

Table 4.9 demonstrates some examples of the analysis of these structural features.

<b>Example</b>	<b>Interpretive Comment</b>
Natalie reported, ' <i>I feel comfortable about my literacy practices. I like the structure of my literacy block and I will keep it the same for next year's Kindergarten. I feel that I have incorporated all aspects of literacy equally</i> ' (SSI – 5.12.01)	Natalie has demonstrated ownership of her literacy teaching practice with her consistent use of the personal pronoun 'I'.

Lee wrote in her Reflective Journal – <i>'I believe there should be consistency and to get this there needs to be ongoing and open communication. It's great to share literacy ideas amongst each other ... We have discussed concerns with each other, concerns about teaching literacy and concerns with children'</i> (RJ – 3.12.01)	Lee has reflected upon connections she's made in terms of the pedagogy belonging to the team. Internal dialogue – 'I believe' – is indicative of her personal relationship to the experience. This excerpt demonstrates the teacher ownership of the balanced writing pedagogy developed.
Natalie wrote in her Reflective Journal – <i>'The Stage One team have been communicative and open about their literacy practices. We have worked collaboratively ...'</i> (RJ – 3.12.01)	Natalie has clearly located herself as a member of this team, demonstrating her personal relationship and the ownership of the pedagogy being with this team through her use of 'we'. She has also made reference to the nature of this relationship through words such as 'communicative', 'open' and 'collaboratively'.

**Table 4.9 – 'How it was said'**

Elements of 'what was unsaid' that was taken into account include:

- Aspects left uncompleted
- Avoidance of specific tasks
- Opportunities of minimal risk-taking

Table 4.10 provides some examples of 'what was unsaid' upon analysis of the data.

Example	Interpretive Comment
Natalie didn't reflect on her memories of schooling because she couldn't remember anything significant	All the elements of 'what was unsaid' are evident in this example. Natalie displayed frustration and embarrassment in her interactions with me regarding this task. She was both frustrated and embarrassed because she didn't have any memories to recount. I offered to work through this with her, but she avoided doing so.
Kate submitted her grade partner's statement of organisation rather than developing her own	This was demonstrative of the minimal risk-taking Kate was prepared to take at the beginning of the inquiry.

**Table 4.10 – 'What was unsaid'**

## ***Narrative Processes***

Rosenthal (1993:69) suggests that there are four narrative processes or 'styles of presentation', namely stories, description, argumentation and theorising. The narrative processes of 'story' and 'description' have been drawn upon in order to tell of the journey each participant teacher experienced throughout 2001.

This inquiry demonstrated that in order to identify the narrative processes, I had to first understand the position of the teachers, become familiar with their personal experiences, understand their voices and bring all this together to create their stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1999:94) state that when considering people's stories the components previously mentioned are important - 'People may have mixed feelings about their teaching, be critical of people and institutional policies and representatives, take issue and debate with their colleagues ... their stories to live by, may, in fact, be lived by'. Johnson and Golombek (2002:1) reinforce this notion by arguing '...what teachers know about

teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come’.

The meaning these teachers gave to their teaching practice was continually constructed and reconstructed. This construction and reconstruction occurred within, and was made visible, through their physical implementation, reflection on and discussion about their teaching practice. The teachers were living their teaching practice, or their ‘individual theory of learning and teaching’ (Whitehead, 2000) through what they did in their classrooms. As they discussed these practices with me (structured and semi-structured interviews) and reflected upon these practices (reflective journals) they relived, reconstructed and reinterpreted their story. The culmination of these creates a story reflecting experience and is constitutive of experience.

The teachers were guided in their reflective journal entries according to the needs that arose through previous interactions.

Semi-structured interviews usually arose in response to something that had happened in a participant teacher’s classroom or in response to something they had written in their reflective journal.

Analysis of each form of data was commenced in the same sequence as it had occurred during the study. Each form of data was analysed and recorded under two main headings, ‘description’ (what was said and done) and ‘interpretation’ (what was happening) for each teacher participating in the study. At each stage of the analysis, I returned the ‘description’ and ‘interpretation’ to the teachers. I asked them to respond to this, using the following questions as a guide.



- Does what I have written make sense to you?
- Is the description an accurate account of what happened from your perspective?
- Have I omitted anything that you would like included?
- Do you agree with my interpretations?
- Is there anything here you would like to discuss further?

The teachers often discussed these summaries with me in light of what had happened in their classroom and what they should do in response to this. They did often offer extension to my interpretations, particularly in light of their increased knowledge of the students. Overall few changes were made to the accounts of what actually happened. The teachers were happy with what they read.

When I encouraged teachers to reflect on their own experiences, they did at times apologise for the memories they had to offer.

Some teachers were concerned about what they were writing and whether it was what I wanted. Table 4.11 provides examples demonstrating the teachers seeking confirmation with their reflective journal entries.

Example	Interpretive Comment
When Kate was asked to reflect on what children need to be good writers (RJ – 21.5.01) Kate began her journal entry by writing ' <i>How old?? Kinder?</i> '	This comment from Kate demonstrates her quest to understand the content for the grade level that she was teaching. This was a constant theme in the inquiry as she desired to understand the content, the practicalities of what she had to teach, more so than building upon her own understanding and pedagogy.

Kate attempted to write this but ' <i>...I made a few boo-boos and wasn't happy with what I had written so I started again</i> ' (RJ – 11.5.01)	Kate desired to 'get it right' throughout the inquiry. She wasn't a risk-taker in the early stages, which is demonstrated through this comment.
When giving her reflective journal to me Cathie had written ' <i>Sorry it's so late Lisa</i> ' (RJ – 31.5.01)	This was written on an entry that Cathie had decided to write herself. It wasn't based on a theme or issue I had asked her to respond to.

**Table 4.11 – Confirmation in reflective journal entries**

Once I had written up each draft of the individual descriptive stories, they were given to the teachers. They were encouraged to make changes to these as they saw necessary in order to compile a narrative that best illustrated their experiences. Overall, they were surprised and overwhelmed at the quantity of data they had provided over the course of their 2001 journey.

## **From 'Multiple Lenses' to Descriptive Story with Interpretive Comment**

The use of these 'multiple lenses' provides one way of moving from the collected data to descriptive story with supporting interpretive comment while being consistent and faithful to the methodologies incorporated within the research design of this inquiry.

Each of the lenses added depth to the data, adding to the 'thick description' assisting to '...describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness' (Van Manen, 1990:11) that was required to tell and interpret these teachers' stories. The notion of 'multiple lenses' is representative of the depth and multiple perspectives evident in the data. The lenses of 'active response', 'context', 'moments of change', 'language' and 'narrative processes' support these multiple perspectives.

The 'multiple lenses' enabled stories to be constructed. The data collected on these participant teachers showed different facets that came together to create their stories. It was my task when representing these stories within my own text to address these different facets and explore how these stories were developed, composed, sustained and changed. The 'multiple lenses' provided me with a way of analysing and cross-analysing the data to create the most accurate representation and interpretation of the stories from the participant teachers as possible. Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to this process as a 'sophisticated level of consensus'.

The development of appropriate and relevant research design enabled the inquiry to respond to the guiding questions and those that the research process itself raised. This allowed for the collection of data from the teachers, that was comprehensive and rich. This enabled the experiences of each of the participant teachers to be recorded. The use of the devised

'multiple lenses' then allowed me to analyse these data with depth and compile 'thick descriptions' to support the final phase, the writing of descriptive stories with interpretive comment.

Descriptive stories, I believe, were the best way to clearly demonstrate the process each teacher went through. Johnson and Golombek (2002:2) write,

...it is necessary to gather descriptive accounts of how teachers come to know their knowledge, how they use that knowledge within the contexts where they teach, and how they make sense of and reconfigure their classroom practices in and over time.

I wrote the stories as if I were the narrator, making myself a character with the participant teacher in each story. Doing this reduced the strength of my own voice within the teacher's stories, yet acknowledged our interactions.

The descriptive stories that follow will tell the story of the process that the participant teachers experienced throughout the inquiry. These stories will demonstrate the conversion of 'data' into 'field text' with the use of the teachers' own words collected within their reflective journal entries and interview transcripts. These texts will be pieced together with the records collected in the form of researcher field notes. These stories have been 're-storied' many times, with the completion of many drafts all of which have been given to the individual participant teachers for their perusal and comment. The descriptive stories included are in fact '...jointly constructed as teachers re-story their experience' (Johnson and Golombek, 2002:3). At times the story will be interrupted with interpretive comment, providing researcher insight from the use of the 'multiple lenses'. These '... interpretations based on teacher's stories' (Johnson and Golombek, 2002:3) will demonstrate the emergence of categories and themes illustrating the change that occurred within these teachers.

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# Chapter Five

## **Teacher Stories**

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## Chapter Five

### Teacher Stories

This section presents the stories of three participant teachers over the 2001 school year. The stories of Kate, a Kindergarten teacher, Amanda, a Year One teacher, and Michael, a Year Two teacher, are presented. Each of these journeys is captured in descriptive story, which is presented in the left hand column. Interpretive comment made by me the researcher will run parallel to this story in the right hand column. These descriptive stories with interpretive comment have been developed from analysing and cross-analysing the data with the 'multiple lenses' described in chapter four, 'Moving from Collected Data to Descriptive Story with Interpretive Comment'. These lenses involved:

- Immersing myself in the written texts (transcripts of structured and semi-structured interviews and reflective journal entries) to lead to a process of *active response*
- Acknowledging the *context* in which these forms of data were collected;
- Identifying *moments of change* in the collected data where changes to teaching practice were occurring
- Paying attention to the *language* used by the participant teachers and me
- Identifying the *narrative processes* used by the teachers as storytellers.

At the end of each of these descriptive stories with interpretive comment a summary of each teacher will be provided in light of the research questions that guided this inquiry.

- How has writing been taught within Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms over the past ten years at the inquiry school?

- What structures, activities, processes and people partnerships can be identified within Early Stage One / Stage One teachers' professional development experiences?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these professional development experiences and the professional growth of teachers in the teaching of writing?

The first research question will not be addressed in these individual teacher summaries as it relates more to the ethnographic dimension, the 'context of situation' of the inquiry. This has been described in the background to the inquiry in Chapter One and will be explored more fully at the end of the chapter. Each individual teacher's understanding of the writing process throughout the course of the inquiry will be investigated within the individual teacher summaries.

To conclude this chapter, the guiding research questions will be addressed again, in the context of all three teacher's professional journeys. This will allow the three stories to be compared and contrasted as to their similarities and differences to identify common threads in their engagement with action research as a professional development model in our search for 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

## Kate's 2001 Professional Journey

### Descriptive Story

*In 2001 Kate was twenty-nine years of age and in her fifth year of teaching. Kate had only taught infant students through personal choice. She had taught at a number of different schools either on a casual/supply basis and had held three twelve-month contracts. Kate had also taught for one year on the Isle of Mann.*

*Kate was employed at the end of Term 1, 2001 to take a Kindergarten class at the inquiry school. The class's original teacher had gone on maternity leave. This previous teacher had established some initial routines and Kate began her contract within this structure. Kate had taught some days on this class throughout Term 1 on a casual/supply basis, so she had had some exposure to the students and classroom structure prior to beginning Term 2. Kate initially worked within the classroom routines established by the class's original teacher.*

### Interpretive Comment

The 'context of situation' that Kate entered into was pre-determined by the previous teacher. In our initial interactions, Kate demonstrated no real understanding of why the classroom and opportunities for literacy teaching were organised the way they were, or how she could re-organise them to fit with her own beliefs about how children best learn literacy practices.

\* \* \* \*





**Figure 5.1 - The Classroom Layout**

\* \* \* \*

*From the beginning of Kate's contract at this school, I she was very aware of the 'context of culture' within the school. Other teachers working within Early Stage One and Stage One informed her of the inquiry project and the Principal spoke to her about the direction the school was moving in with regard to literacy practice. Kate approached Lisa, the researcher, about becoming involved in the inquiry. (SSI – 6.4.01)*

*At this time Lisa approached the Principal of this school and requested time to support Kate in her classroom, specifically with the teaching of writing.*

It became apparent to me that Kate felt it was important to be seen to 'keep up' with this immediate social situation. At this early stage I felt this could be attributed to the fact that Kate was only on contract and wanted it renewed the following year, or to Kate's eagerness to learn about current practice. Kate was keen to join all the other Stage One teachers and be included in this inquiry and approached me about this towards the end of Term 1 when she was appointed to take the maternity leave position (SSI –

*The Principal made allowances within the school timetable that allowed Lisa to work with Kate in her classroom for an hour per week each week of each term for the remainder of the year. Additional release time was also provided for Kate to meet with Lisa to discuss the teaching of writing and what was happening in her classroom. Lisa also encouraged Kate to keep a reflective journal, which she asked her to share with her. Through this medium she was able to explore issues that arose and keep a record of her beliefs and attitudes towards writing throughout the year.*

6.4.01).

\* \* \* \*

*Kate and Lisa spent some time initially exploring Kate's pre-existing teacher beliefs. They began their interactions by talking about Kate's own learning experiences concerning writing. Kate began her school career as a Kindergarten student in 1978. Kate's memories of how she learnt to write included such things as: creative writing lessons; very directed tasks; an emphasis on correct spelling and grammar; writing different drafts with the 'good copy' being marked by the teacher; and opportunities to write independently maybe once or twice per week. (RJ – 2.5.01)*

It was important to explore Kate's pre-existing teacher beliefs in order to establish from what perspective she was coming (her own 'context of culture'). This enabled me to find a starting point to begin working with Kate in order to develop a 'balanced writing pedagogy' within the lens of 'active response'. Poetter (1997:13) emphasises the importance of understanding where we came from as learners. He states, 'these foundations are the roots of the thoughts and actions played out' by teachers.

Kate's identified experiences of her own learning experiences can be incorporated within aspects of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s ages described by Turbill (2002). This gave me an initial insight into what Whitehead (2000) refers to as her 'individual learning and teaching theory' of which experiences as a learner plays a crucial role. It is important to understand this as Whitehead (2000) argues teachers draw upon such experiences when teaching such processes, particularly if they don't understand what constitutes 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

\* \* \* \*

*Kate was very aware of the changes that had occurred in the teaching profession, since she had been a student and within her five-year teaching career. At times, this was a point of frustration for Kate when she talked to Lisa and wrote in her journal that she felt as though the changes had occurred before she'd had the opportunity to fully understand the first occurrence, let alone the change! Kate said to Lisa 'when I was at school it was so much different to today ... things have changed*

Analysis of the 'I think' included by Kate in her journal entry (RJ – 7.5.01) led me to consider what she was really saying. I interpreted it as words that made space for thought, as it seemed a natural phrase in the dialogue we shared. I also considered it to be a call for 'active response', a signal of request for understanding. As she had identified that aspects of reading instruction had been covered in her professional development experiences, I went through both running records and

*drastically even since I began teaching' (RJ-2.5.01).*

*Kate and Lisa explored Kate's University training. Kate stated, 'I have not used anything I have learnt at uni ... how terrible is that!' (I – 14.5.01) Kate's memories of learning about language and the writing process at university included '...lots of different theories ... but limited practical experience' (I – 14.5.01).*

*Between the years 1996 and 1998, Kate had received other forms of professional development from the education system with whom she was employed. In-servicing that she has been provided with has been at the discretion of the various school principals she has worked for. Kate commented that such in-servicing was '... limited ... the in-servicing was based on running records and guided reading. I think' (RJ – 7.5.01). Kate stated, 'I have not been involved in any in-servicing really since 1998' (SSI – 6.4.01). Kate did not recall receiving significant support as a recent graduate specifically in the area of literacy (SSI – 6.4.01).*

guided reading as a way to consolidate these experiences, build upon our professional relationship and provide a starting point for our interactions.

The language used by Kate in these reflections gives some insight into her attitude towards her professional development experiences – 'terrible', 'lots of different theories', 'limited practical experience', 'limited' opportunities. Such comments clearly indicate her random and disjointed exposure to professional development. Classroom observations showed that this was reflected in her classroom approach to teaching writing where she had no real purpose or understanding of what classroom teaching practices she employed.

\* \* \* \*

*In 2001 Kate had the opportunity to attend one day of the Good First Year Teaching program. She commented to Lisa that she ‘...learnt lots about how to now teach kids how to read, write and spell’ (I – 14.5.01). However, Kate was unable to continue with this professional development program for two main reasons. Firstly, her employment status was that of a three-term contract, not a permanent staff member. Secondly, the course had begun at the beginning of first term and was full and unable to take any more applicants.*

This is in contrast to Kate’s previous comments on professional development. The language she has used to describe her experience is positive. Her use of ‘now teach’ suggests that she is aware of the changes that have occurred and has attained some strategies to support such change of teaching practice in her own classroom. This then guided our interactions in her classroom as we began to explore the literacy block already put in place in her classroom by the previous teacher.

\* \* \* \*

*Initially Kate demonstrated frustration and confusion with the teaching profession and the expectations put on teachers from key ‘stakeholders’ – namely policy (from both the diocesan Catholic Education Office and individual schools), syllabus documents, school expectations, principal leadership and parents. She felt that teachers were ‘...in overdrive ... having to keep up with all the changes in education’ (I – 14.5.01). She was also concerned with the demands current literacy trends placed on children - ‘I think the children are made to learn so much so soon. Their little minds must be on constant overload*

Cole and Knowles (2000:89) describe teachers as ‘...typically lone adults working behind closed doors striving to meet the multiple and pressing demands of modern-day classrooms and schools’. This description matches the reflections offered by Kate in these early interactions.

Kate has again expressed knowledge of and a concern with the pressures from the stakeholders within the school context. She again expresses her frustration with the expectations

*and in constant overdrive to help them absorb all they have to' (I – 14.5.01). At this time, Kate reflected on the changes she had seen as a Kindergarten teacher over the five years of her experience. She had seen Kindergarten as a time to teach the children to socialize through play, learn to tie their shoelaces and have nap-time after lunch. This was in contrast to this Kindergarten class she had entered into. She was expected to teach the students to read and write from the beginning of the year, with less time available to teach the above-mentioned. (I – 14.5.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*When Kate began teaching this Kindergarten class she spent literally hours printing, laminating and compiling 'word rings' for each student in her class. These rings were made up of a collection of high frequency words (one per card) that she wanted her students to be able to read and spell automatically. The students were encouraged to use these as a tool during classroom writing times. This 'word ring' was also sent home for the students to practise reading the words for homework. When Lisa questioned her further about why she had introduced it to this classroom, she responded by saying, 'I've done it before and it's worked' (SSI – 16.5.01). She*

placed on teachers. Her use of 'overdrive' is indicative of her interpretation of change within schools. She also expresses frustration with the demands of current literacy trends on the children. She draws upon her own experience of being a Kindergarten teacher to demonstrate such change.

Kate's approach to teaching literacy in her classroom was quite eclectic. Hoffman (1998) suggests teachers often draw upon 'good ideas' as a response to puzzles they encounter in the classroom. However, it is important that teachers move to understanding of the solutions to these puzzles to ensure that these 'good ideas' are the best response to them. Kate's justification for a 'good idea' in this case is 'I've done it before and it's worked'. Such a comment suggests that at this time that Kate did not have a clear understanding of how these 'good ideas' related

*recounted a story to Lisa about when she was teaching an entry class on the Isle of Man. This was the first year these children had attended school. Kate phoned her parents in Australia and asked them to send her the word rings that she had made for her Australian Kindergarten class the year before. (SSI – 16.5.01)*

to the writing process and her teaching of it.

Kate believed that these tools were what enabled her to teach children how to read and write. This became particularly evident through her narrative recount of her experience on the Isle of Mann. When questioned further on the use of these tools it became apparent that Kate was unable to articulate any further benefits other than they have worked before. (SSI – 16.5.01)

\* \* \* \*



**Figure 5.2 - Kate's Word wall**

\* \* \* \*

*The guiding principles of the action research spiral (Kemmins and McTaggart, 1988:11) directed Kate and Lisa when working together in her classroom towards 'balanced writing pedagogy'. They established and engaged in a mentoring relationship. To begin with, Lisa used sessions to demonstrate teaching literacy episodes, encouraging Kate to critique her teaching. The focus during this time were the 'mechanics' of her literacy block; ensuring routines were in place and children were exposed to times of modelled, guided and independent writing instruction. Lisa asked Kate to think about two main things; firstly, what she was doing and secondly, why she was doing it. This assisted Kate and Lisa in creating dialogue about the writing process and the teaching of it. (CV – 10.5.01; 16.5.01; 17.5.01; 23.5.01; 30.5.01; 6.6.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*Once a literacy block had been established, Kate and Lisa then engaged in team teaching. During these times, opportunities were provided to critique each other. They focused on the two guiding questions Kate had initially used (what the teacher was doing and why the teacher was doing that) and added a further component of issues that arose*

The action research process worked as a meaningful professional development experience for Kate. The value in the experience was that it was continual and learning was both expected and supported. (Calhoun, 2002) Such a process was in contrast to previous professional development experiences described by Kate.

The challenge for me over this time was to move Kate from 'good ideas' into sound literacy practices through this process of 'active response'.

Other members of the school community were called upon to work with Kate. I was very conscious of not creating a 'clone' of myself with Kate (Smith, 1993). I was aware of her adoption of 'good ideas' and didn't want her to adopt my teaching as more of these 'good ideas'.



*that they needed to address further. (CV – 13.6.01; 20.6.01; 4.7.01; 1.8.01; 15.8.01; 29.8.01; 12.9.01)*

*Lisa created opportunities where Kate was able to view other teachers teaching writing. (SP - 14.8.01) This then allowed for additional models for Kate to draw upon when considering what constitutes 'balanced writing pedagogy'. It also worked to extend the mentoring relationships throughout the school, creating a network amongst the staff.*

*\* \* \* \**

*Kate and Lisa concentrated on establishing 'sound literacy practices' in this Kindergarten classroom. To begin with, they worked on managing the practicalities in Kate's classroom, which essentially involved establishing and maintaining a literacy block with purposeful episodes. They engaged in constant dialogue aiming to bring together Kate's own learning experiences, Kate's university training, any professional development she'd been exposed to and her 'good ideas' that she'd collected throughout her teaching career. Kate and Lisa continued to work within the initial framework set up by this Kindergarten class's original teacher in order for*

*This process can be likened to 'cognitive coaching' which assisted Kate in developing her understanding of what to do when teaching children literacy skills, and to reinforce why she was doing these things in order to achieve 'balanced writing pedagogy'. This practice also worked to build upon Kate's vocabulary to describe the writing process.*

*minimal disruption for the students. Kate made some changes to this structure as she discovered and developed ways to teach literacy that came about through her increasing understanding. Within the routines or 'episodes' that had been established to create a literacy block, Kate and Lisa then worked together on creating shared understandings as to the value of these to the writing process.*

*Lisa provided Kate with 'readings' to support what they were doing in Kate's classroom. Lisa collected 'readings' from journals, books, and newspapers that were informative of the writing process and indicative of current thinking about how children learn literacy practices. Such 'readings' worked to support 'episodes' they had maintained and introduced in Kate's literacy block, assist Kate in her use of 'good ideas' in her literacy classrooms, and addressed any issues that they identified that Kate required further support with.*

Kate made a number of connections with the readings that I presented her with. She responded to the reading from Calkins (1986) about the specific implications this had for her as a Kindergarten teacher. Kate was presented with readings from the work of Graves (1994) and Murray (1982). Kate responded to theseby saying that she recognised their names from her University studies.

● \* \* \*

*As Term 2 progressed, Kate was beginning to feel more confident with her own teaching in the area of writing. This was demonstrated through her keenness to 'educate' one set of key-stakeholders about these Kindergarten children's literacy education. She had found that parents noticed how different the Literacy classroom was now in comparison to when these Kindergarten parents were at school. She found that many of the parents' questions were centred on what they could do at home to assist their children. In response to this, Kate opened her classroom to the parents so they were able to come and experience the same writing block as their child. Each day three different parents came into the classroom to view the writing block and to be of assistance to Kate. (CV – 2.5.01; 9.5.01; 16.5.01; 23.5.01; 30.5.01; 6.6.01; 13.6.01)*

*Towards the end of Term 2, when many parents had experienced the classroom writing block, Kate encouraged the children to do some writing homework each night as well as reading their home-reader. Kate commented on this in her reflective journal by writing, 'the children read every night. Why shouldn't they write? It's just as important!' (RJ – 21.5.01) Kate stressed to the parents the*

Kate's description of her satisfaction with her parent visits demonstrated a key 'moment' in her teaching practice. She felt in control of her teaching of writing and was prepared to begin to demonstrate to others what she was doing in her classroom with these Kindergarten children.

Kate's comment that writing is 'just as important' to reading demonstrated to me a key point in Kate's understanding of the writing process. The teaching of writing had become just as important as the teaching of reading and she had changed her teaching practice to reflect this. Her need to reinforce the importance of the teaching of writing to the parents and the children through its inclusion as a homework activity is indicative of this 'moment' of change and discovery to Kate's classroom practice.

need for ‘...the children [to write] the same way we do in class at home’ (RJ – 21.5.01). As the majority of the parents had viewed the students writing in the classroom at least once, Kate felt confident this would happen (SSI – 23.5.01).

\* \* \* \*

*Lisa encouraged Kate to reflect on what children need to be good writers. Kate stated that she held a number of beliefs. Lisa summarised these beliefs in the order that Kate mentioned them in her subsequent journal entry.*

- *Children need to understand the purpose of their writing*  
said, ‘they need to understand that writing conveys a message.’ (RJ – 21.5.01)
- *Children need to be able to spell*  
Kate said, ‘A good writer is someone who experiments and takes risks with their writing and spelling. Children should be able to spell most high frequency words correctly after being immersed in them every day. I think knowing these helps when writing as they are not stopping to spell every word – only the ones they don’t know.’ (RJ – 21.5.01)
- *Children need to be able to read*  
Kate said, ‘This is not so important, but good for them to be able to read their own writing’. (RJ – 21.5.01)

In these reflections Kate has concentrated on a number of strategies needed by the students. Kate has begun to incorporate her developing knowledge of the writing process. She has also likened much her beliefs of what students need to be good writers, to what is outlined in the New South Wales English Syllabus Document (Board of Studies, 1998) for Early Stage One students.

*Kate also listed a number of things that she did to assist these beliefs in her classroom.*

- *Explicit teaching of spelling patterns / rules*
- *Giving children the opportunity to write every day*
- *Teaching children how to write - forming of letters, on the line etc (modelling)*
- *Having children write about a given topic and topics of their own choice*
- *Daily Guided Reading and Writing and Joint Writing*
- *Daily Letter and Word ID*
- *Daily print walks*
- *Teaching about what makes a good writer – eg punctuation, full stops etc*

*(RJ – 21.5.01)*

*These items were listed in the order given by Kate in her response.*

Kate has used the language emphasised within the assessment requirements for the Good First Year Teaching Program. A component of this assessment requires students to identify letters and high frequency words.

\* \* \* \*



**Figure 5.3 - Kate's library that she incorporated into her Literacy Block**

\* \* \* \*

*The mentoring relationship that Lisa had initially established with Kate grew and developed. They talked often about the way children learn literacy practices and Kate would often approach Lisa outside of timetabled times to talk more about specific students, how she could support them, and ways she could improve her practice further.*

The mentoring relationship that I had initially established with Kate grew and developed throughout the course of this year. Initially Kate had seen me as the expert – someone to help her get her classroom organised and tell her what to do. However, as the year went on and Kate's understanding of what she was doing and why she was doing it increased, Kate very much developed ownership of the 'balanced writing pedagogy'. She no longer taught 'good ideas'; she taught what she believed best enabled children to learn literacy practices.

\* \* \* \*

*Kate became more aware of what constituted 'good writing' from her students. She became alert and looked for indicators of what the children were doing that demonstrated sound literacy practices. Lisa asked her to reflect upon what student characteristics showed evidence of student interest in writing tasks. Kate was able to identify a number of features.*

- *Student willingness to start writing tasks*

*Kate said, 'the children seem interested in writing tasks as they are always keen to begin their stories. I wouldn't say all of them are like this but the majority are.'* (RJ – 18.6.01)

- *The increasing length of the students texts*

*Kate said, 'they are writing much more than they used to and are attempting words they previously wouldn't have.'* (RJ – 18.6.01)

- *Students increasing knowledge of how 'language' works*

*Kate said, 'they are interested in how you spell words and how to write them. For example they are beginning to find little words in big words (both during reading and writing sessions).'* (RJ – 18.6.01)

- *The children are successful when engaging in writing tasks*

From this stage, Kate's reflective journal entries became more positive. Her entries became celebrations of her achievements rather than accounts of what she was doing.

Such change in her entries supports Cazden, Diamondstone, and Naso's (1988) report that reflecting upon one's own teaching practice can help teachers 'recalibrate' their pedagogy and their own understanding of what they do and why they do it. While I had been assisting Kate in her classroom to achieve 'balanced writing pedagogy', it was vital that Kate understood the value in doing this and it became part of her pedagogy rather than just another 'good idea' she had adopted throughout her professional journey.

*Kate said, 'when they succeed they are even more interested!! They are also writing interesting stories which is pleasing!' (RJ – 18.6.01)*

*Throughout 2001 Kate's attitude towards teaching, particularly within literacy, moved through some significant shifts. She demonstrated confidence and conviction when she spoke about how to teach children to write. She wrote, 'I am a very confident teacher of writing who thrives on modeling and passing onto the children everything I know ... it [teaching writing] has become my passion' (RJ – 30.7.01).*

Kate had demonstrated ownership and pride over her teaching practice.

\* \* \* \*

*Kate was able to identify features within her daily writing instruction that she saw as strengths.*

- *Modelled writing*

*Kate said, 'I feel that I am a great model for the children every day when I write whether it be literacy, RE or any other KLA'. (RJ – 30.7.01)*

- *Proofreading*

*Kate said, '... they should feel confident in their own ability and know that if they make a mistake it's OK. Just so long as they get it right next time or the time after. They want to get it right too!' (RJ – 30.7.01)*

Kate has identified episodes within her classroom literacy block in this reflection. She has commented on the value of each of these to the students. There was no mention here of Kate's word rings and word wall – the tools Kate had previously attributed to her success in teaching the students how to read and write. (SSI – 16.5.01; CV – 9.5.01; 16.5.01; 23.5.01; 30.5.01)



- *Teaching of spelling – including patterns, rime and analogy, high frequency and utility words*

*Kate said, 'I do have high expectations when it comes to writing and spelling but I think that's the way it should be'. (RJ – 30.7.01)*

- *Teaching in an enthusiastic, motivated way*

*Kate said, 'I have never taught children who are so keen and motivated to write!' (RJ – 30.7.01)*

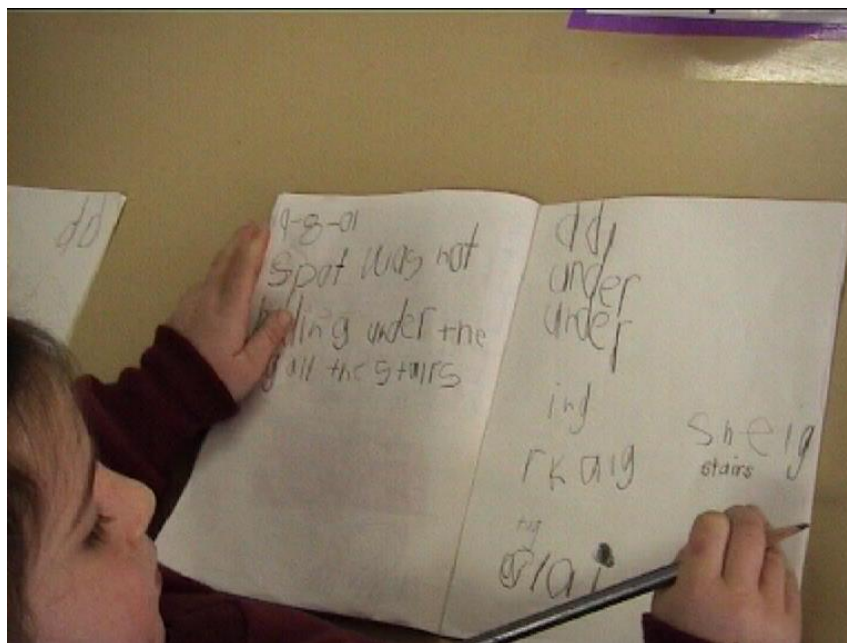
- *Promoting risk taking, success in the children, encouraging them*

*Kate said, 'I believe that if I foster a non-threatening, high expectation environment the children will succeed in what I want them to learn'. (RJ – 30.7.01)*

- *Individual conferencing*

*Kate said, 'I need to see every child's book every day while I'm walking around the room. I try to pick up on one thing to teach every child every day.' (RJ – 30.7.01)*

\* \* \* \*



**Figure 5.4 - Student engaging in independent writing**

*Kate no longer looked to Lisa as the expert; instead they were colleagues working on a shared understanding of 'balanced writing pedagogy'. In order to reflect his change, Lisa moved away from demonstration and team teaching with Kate (unless she asked her specifically for something) and encouraged Kate to begin to critique her own teaching. To do this Lisa gave her a guiding proforma, which can be found in Appendix F. The questions on this proforma asked Kate to consider:*

- *What did you do in your writing block?*
- *What was good about it?*
- *What did the children learn?*

These questions worked as an extension of the previous questions we had used to guide our critiques. I felt it was important for Kate to consider the impact of what she was doing in her teaching on the children. It was also important to direct Kate to the constant challenge of refining her teaching practice in order to best teach the writing process. These questions assisted Kate in becoming as described by Poetter (1997:7) '...reflective, thoughtful learners empowered to shape and change ...

- *What could you have done to make it better?*

*Kate gave a number of her writing block critiques to Lisa (E – 17.10.01; 31.10.01; 21.11.01). They worked together to follow up any issues that arose from these in consequent semi-structured interviews and classroom visits.*

\* \* \* \*

*Kate described working with Lisa in the professional development model that evolved throughout this inquiry as 'ongoing', 'challenging' and 'thought provoking' (RJ – 7.5.01; 21.5.01; 10.12.01). Kate wrote in her journal '... I have put all I have learned into practice this year. All strategies, suggestions or new ideas have been implemented in some way, shape or form. It has been great learning new ideas this year and its [sic] been rewarding implementing them and seeing the great results'. She claimed, '... due to the ongoing professional development I believe that the children are working beyond what I thought they would.' (RJ – 10.12.01)*

because they know and understand better'.

Throughout the year Kate was encouraged to articulate a purpose for every episode she included in her writing block. She was encouraged to try new ideas, change and adapt episodes as the children developed and open her classroom to various 'stakeholders' in the school, such as me as the researcher, parents and other Early Stage One / Stage One teachers. Kate's claim that she has 'implemented' all 'strategies, suggestions or new ideas' is indicative of the change in Kate's teaching practice and her understanding of this.

The language Kate has used to describe this change is positive. She has referred to the change as being 'great' and 'rewarding'.

\* \* \* \*

*At the end of 2001 Kate acknowledged the changes her writing practice had gone through over the course of the year. She writes, ‘...the way I used to teach writing has changed so much in the last six months ...’ (RJ – 3.12.01)*

In our later interactions, Kate was always keen to show me writing completed by her students. She frequently relayed stories to me about what the children were now doing, compared to what they were doing earlier in the year. Kate would often use these samples to talk to me about the strategies that she was using at different times throughout the year, why she used that strategy and if she had Kindergarten again, what she would do next time.

\* \* \* \*

'Tara' and 'Marissa' were both students in Kate's class. Whilst it is expected that these Kindergarten students would demonstrate development in their writing ability over the course of the year, samples taken from these students clearly demonstrated the teaching that was occurring from Kate within her classroom on the writing process. These were two children that Kate talked to me about frequently. Samples from each of these children are provided below along with comment about what Kate was doing with them in the classroom.

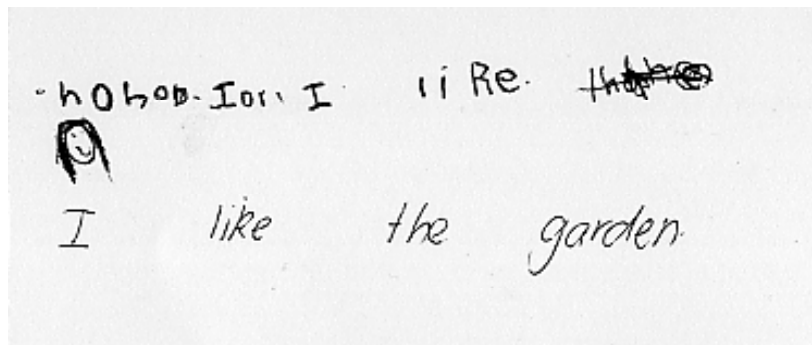


Figure 5.5 - 'Tara' – beginning of Term 2, 2001

Figure 5.5 is indicative of Kate's teaching of writing at the beginning of the year. Kate would allow the children time to 'write' and then she would go around the room and scribe each child's sentence. The children were encouraged to use their word rings and the word wall to help them spell the words they needed. At this time there was no modelled writing or spelling opportunities provided for the children.

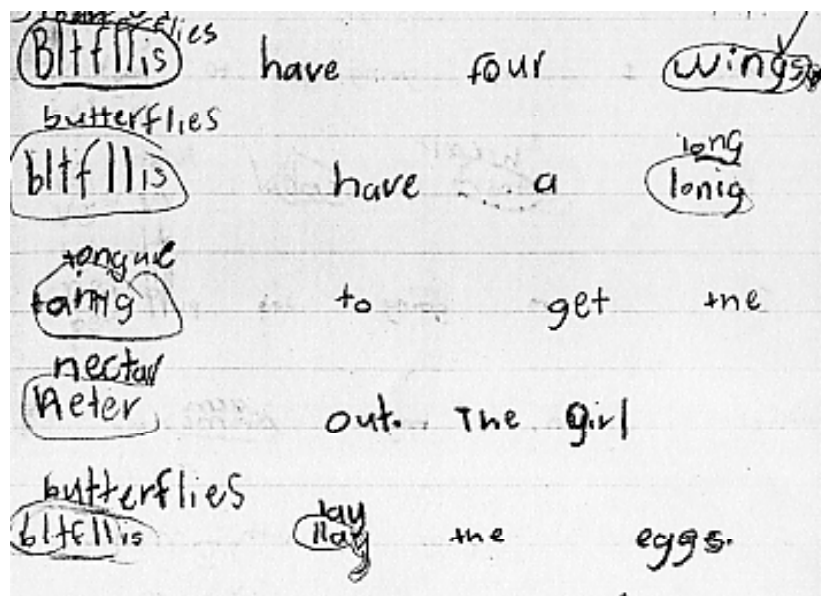


Figure 5.6 - 'Tara' – beginning of Term 4

Figure 5.6 demonstrates the changes in the way Kate taught the students to write. She has linked the writing experience with a reading experience where she shared with the children a factual text about butterflies. She then asked the children to write some sentences about what they knew about butterflies. There is clear evidence that Kate has incorporated proofreading into her writing instruction as 'Tara' has detected and corrected errors within her writing.

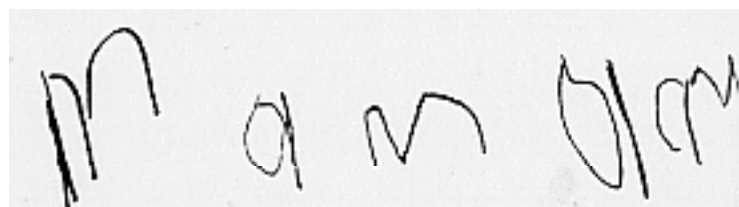


Figure 5.7 - 'Marissa' – beginning of Term 2, 2001

Figure 5.7 is evidence again of Kate's teaching of writing at the beginning of Term 2; free choice with little direction from her as the teacher. 'Marissa' seems to have used this time to experiment with the writing of

the letter 'm' and 'a'. No specific teaching from Kate was evident on this sample.

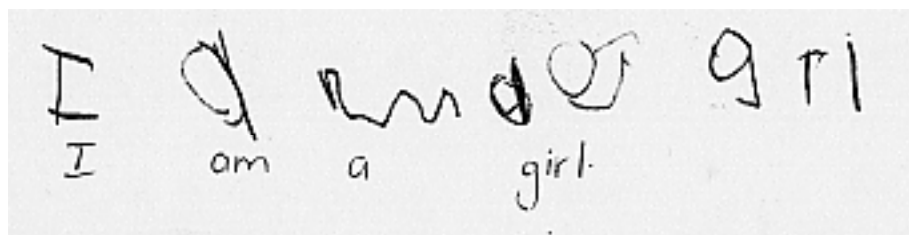


Figure 5.8 - 'Marissa' – end of Term 2, 2001

Towards the later stage of this term, Kate felt it was important that the children produced something that others could read. Figure 5.8 is evidence of Kate's writing purpose for the students. Her teaching strategy for 'Marissa' was to have her dictate a sentence, which Kate would scribe, then 'Marissa' would copy it.

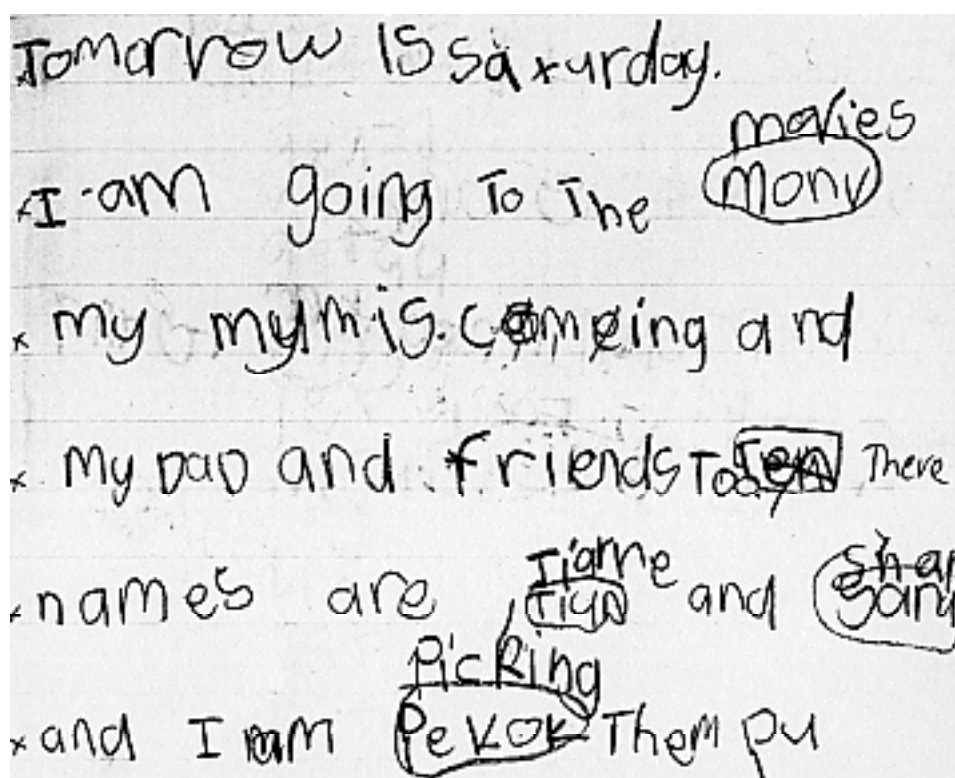


Figure 5.9 - 'Marissa' – Term 4, 2001

Figure 5.9 demonstrates significant change in the way Kate taught the children about the writing process. 'Tomorrow is Saturday. I am going' was modelled with the children – Kate wrote it on the board while the children wrote it in their books. This was an episode called 'active joint writing' that Kate and I worked on (CV – 7.11.01; 21.11.01; SSI – 8.11.01; I – 12.11.01). This involved Kate having a clear focus (one main thing) that she wanted the children to learn during this time. The children then became 'active' during this process by sitting at their tables and writing with Kate as they engaged in dialogue with her about the writing process. This strategy was intended to enable Kate to teach the children about the planned writing focus while they were actually doing it. Thus resulting in the focus being taught while the children were engaged in doing it themselves. At this stage of Kindergarten, the children seem to need to 'be doing' not just 'listening and watching'. This sample also indicates that the children had control over the spelling of high frequency words and used proofreading as a strategy to detect and correct unfamiliar words they used in their writing. This sample demonstrates the modelled, guided and independent instruction that occurred during 'Marissa's' engagement with the writing process.

\* \* \* \*



*Initially Kate was concerned about the pressures placed on teachers with regard to changes in the teaching profession. Once Kate felt comfortable and in control of literacy developments and her teaching of literacy practices, her attitudes changed. Kate said to Lisa that she thought it was vital for teachers '... to be kept informed of any changes in current teaching practices' (I – 12.11.01).*

\* \* \* \*

*Kate had also expressed concern with the pressure placed on children to learn literacy practices. She described them as being in 'constant overload' and 'constant overdrive' and felt that they were made to learn too much too soon (I – 14.5.01). However, at the end of this inquiry she was excited about what the children can do. Kate said, 'If you had've [sic] said to me at the beginning of Term 2 'Your kids will be proofreading by the end of Term 3' I wouldn't have believed you! ... I would never have thought a five year old could proofread so well. But it happens in my classroom and its [sic] brilliant!' (I – 12.11.01)*

This is very much in contrast to Kate's initial frustration that teachers were in 'overdrive' keeping up with such changes. This comment from Kate does also appear to be quite passive with Kate having the expectation that she should be 'kept informed'.

This clearly demonstrates Kate's change in attitude as to children and literacy practices. The following extracts from Kate's collected data, not included within the text of the narrative, are testament to this.

*'I believe that teaching writing is so important and if we can teach our children about the writing process and instill [sic] in them sound literacy practices when they are young and like sponges, they will continue to thrive through their school years'*  
(RJ – 3.12.01)

*'I have learned how much the teaching [of] writing has changed ... the way children learn to write and the links with reading are wonderful. Reading and writing should be taught and learnt as one, not two separate skills ...'*

(SSI – 5.12.01)

Analysis of the language used by Kate in these two extracts is evidence of her changing practice. She has conveyed ownership of these changes to her practice through her use of the pronoun 'I' – 'I believe...' 'I have learned'. The way she speaks about her teaching is positive; she has used words such as 'important', 'wonderful', 'thrive'. Kate has also demonstrated connections she has made about the writing process and how to teach it. She has referred to teaching 'about the writing process', in contrast to her previous 'good ideas' to teach children to read and write. She mentions, 'sound literacy practices' and the reciprocal gains of reading and writing; all evidence of connections she has made. Kate has demonstrated the value of

understanding what she is doing and why she is doing it in her classroom practice. She has acknowledged changes to what Whitehead (2000) refers to as her individual learning and teaching theory.

\* \* \* \*

*Kate's concluding entry in her reflective journal was, '...all I can think is that I have done the best job I know how' (RJ – 10.12.01).*

Such a comment is evidence of Kate's satisfaction with her professional development journey over 2001 and also in her own teaching ability and ownership of her teaching practice.

\* \* \* \*

## ***Interpretive Summary – Kate***

### Kate's Understanding of the Writing Process

Kate was not able to articulate the writing process at the beginning of the inquiry. She understood that language was made up of reading and writing but didn't make the connections between them until later in the inquiry.

Kate recognised herself throughout the inquiry as being a teacher who loved teaching children to write. She identified herself early on in the inquiry as being a stronger teacher of writing than reading (SSI – 6.4.01), later she claimed teaching writing had become her 'passion' (RJ – 30.7.01). However, when asked to articulate how she taught writing in her classroom she attempted to write it but re-drafted her journal entry because she wasn't happy with it (RJ – 11.5.01). This demonstrated to me that while Kate has a personal gift with writing and a passion to teach it, she doesn't have the language or understanding to talk about the actual writing process. Kate seemed to be aware of this need and identified it as an area she needed support with (I – 14.5.01).

At the beginning of the inquiry it became obvious to me that Kate's approach to teaching children to engage with the writing process was disjointed and eclectic. Kate had adopted 'good ideas' (I – 14.5.01) randomly without any real understanding of their value in the writing process. This was an area that needed much 'active response' in our interactions.

Kate was concerned primarily with the 'content' that needed to be taught to her Kindergarten students. Kate's quest to understand the 'Kindergarten' component of literacy could also be seen to demonstrate her restricted knowledge at this time of the development of the writing process. Her

interpretations from the Calkins (1986) reading were interpreted as how it could assist her as a Kindergarten teacher, not necessarily a teacher of the writing process. One could interpret Kate's understanding of the writing process at this stage as a grade by grade development rather than a continuous process throughout all the school years determined by individual students' developmental abilities. Kate was able to identify some characteristics of the writing process however, immediately supported them with examples related to content. For example, Kate identified a good writer as '...someone who experiments and takes risks ...' then immediately supports this with 'children should be able to spell most high frequency words...' (RJ – 21.5.01).

Kate demonstrated an increased understanding of the writing process throughout the duration of the inquiry. This increased understanding became particularly evident through her own evaluations of her writing block. While her concern for content was still apparent, her teaching demonstrated many aspects of the writing process. Writing and reading were taught together and the episodes within her literacy block became more cohesive and purposeful. (E – 17.10.01; 31.10.01; 21.11.01) Kate was able to articulate these links. She stated, '... reading and writing should be taught and learnt as one, not two separate skills...' (SSI – 5.12.01)

At the end of this school year, Kate was aware that the way that she taught children how to write had changed significantly throughout the course of the year. At this time, she recognised the importance of teaching children about the various components of the writing process. (RJ – 3.12.01) Kate expressed an understanding that teaching the children writing strategies rather than specific content was more beneficial. She was able to provide the example of proofreading as a writing strategy. (I – 12.11.01)

### Professional Development Experiences and their Impact

This section aims to identify and review the structures, activities, processes and people partnerships identified within Kate's professional development experiences.

The Literacy Education Officer from the Wollongong Catholic Education Office described the in-servicing program offered by the Wollongong Catholic Education Office between the period of 1995 to 1998 as being 'limited' (I - 10.1.01). She described such opportunities as being school based and at the request of the principal. Kate supported these comments with her own reflections of her professional development experiences during this time.

In 1995 Kate was a beginning teacher. She recalls limited support offered to her in the way of professional development with literacy. School based opportunities that were provided concentrated on aspects of reading – Running Records and guided reading sessions. The concentration on reading was a trend identified by the Literacy Education Officer (I – 10.1.01) and the Principal of the inquiry school (I - 7.2.01) who both described reading processes being prioritised within the diocese at this time. This was attributed to two main factors. Firstly the presence of Reading Recovery in the diocese prioritised the need for teachers to be familiar with guided reading as this episode is seen to best support Reading Recovery students within the mainstream classroom. Running Records were also widely acknowledged as a useful tool in assessing individual students' reading progress. Secondly, teachers generally felt more comfortable learning about reading and how to teach children to read. This notion is supported in the literature by theorists such as Turbill (2002) who has described writing as the 'poorer cousin' of reading.

Kate has acknowledged the development of the diocesan Good First Teaching Program as being beneficial. She did access one five-hour session of this program. However, she was not able to fully access this program due to her employment status and the lack of availability of positions within the course. Both these issues need to be reviewed in order for this program to be a true 'systemic approach' as described by the Literacy Education Officer (I – 10.1.01).

Kate worked with the researcher throughout Terms Two, Three and Four. A total of twenty-three hours was provided for classroom support with the researcher working in her classroom followed by frequent opportunities to discuss any issues that may have arisen. Kate described this form of professional development as 'ongoing', 'challenging' and 'thought provoking' (RJ – 7.5.01; 21.5.01; 10.12.01). These comments support Poetter's (1997:6) description of action research as promoting 'the role of teachers as theory makers because of their intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the classroom leading to teachers taking on new roles as the driving forces for change in schools'.

Kate recognised the parents of her Kindergarten students as integral stakeholders in her classroom literacy program. Whilst initially this seemed to be an issue bringing about stress for Kate, she did listen to their responses and react in a positive way, encouraging the break down of barriers by welcoming them into her classroom and educating them on current practices. This was indicative of a key 'moment' for Kate as she began to understand and take ownership of current literacy trends and their impact on classroom practice.

### Impact of these experiences on Kate's teaching of writing

The section reviews the impact of the previously discussed professional development experiences with regard to Kate's professional growth in the teaching of writing.

The notion of 'change' is a consistent theme throughout Kate's interactions with the researcher. Kate discussed change in terms of her own experiences as a student and as a teacher (RJ – 2.5.01; I – 14.5.01; SSI – 2.5.01; 10.5.01; 16.5.01). She also demonstrated some resistance to the change that she was faced with. This resistance became evident through her apprehension about the direction of the program; her belief at the time was that Kindergarten children were made to '...learn so much so soon' (I – 14.5.01). This resistance to change seemed to stem from Kate's feelings of exclusion from appropriate professional development opportunities resulting in her minimal understanding about current literacy practice. She seemed positive about opportunities she had had (i.e. the one day of the Good First Year Teaching program) but felt as though she was being left behind by not being included in further sessions (SSI – 23.5.01). Kate expressed it was vital for teachers '...to be kept informed of any changes in current teaching practices' (I – 12.11.01).

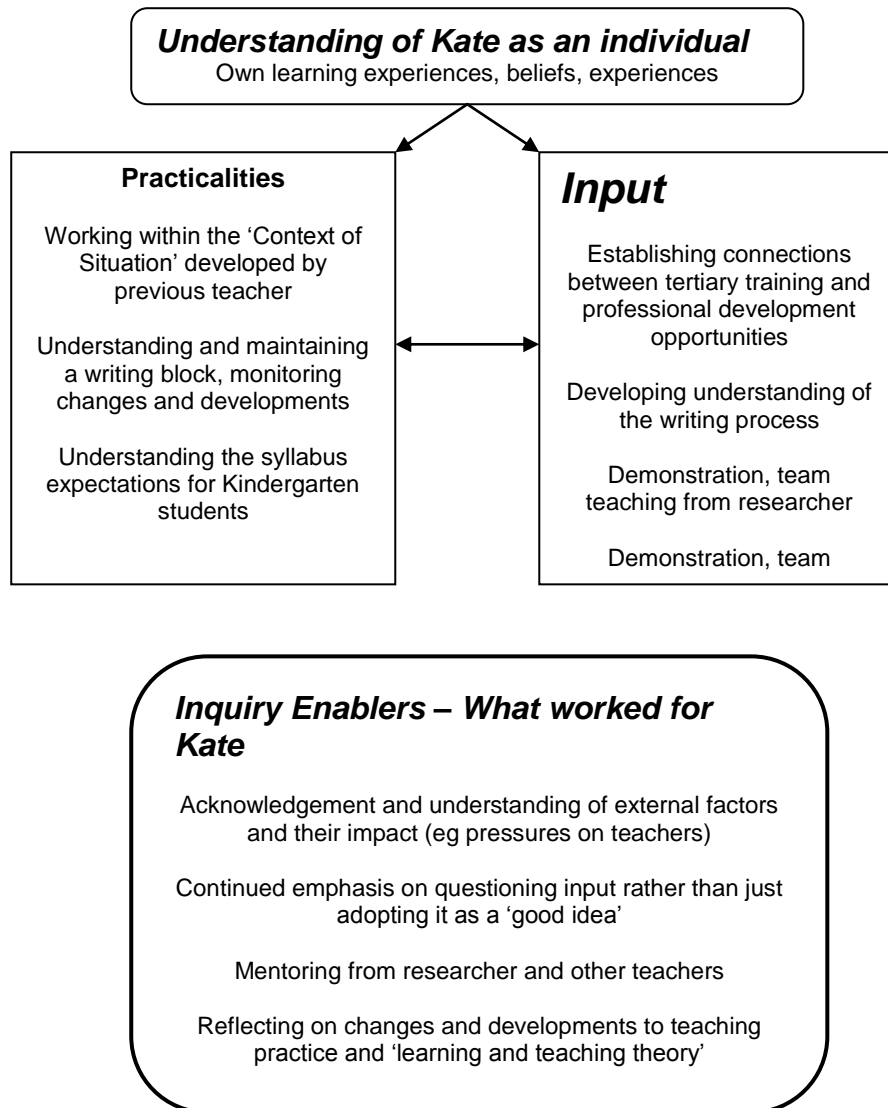
Professional development experiences described by Kate from 1995 to 1998 seemed to have provided little support for her classroom literacy practices. Such experiences were isolated, infrequent and not always relevant to the needs Kate was experiencing at that particular time.

Kate held the diocesan initiative 'Good First Year Teaching' in high esteem. Her one-day experience of this course worked to 'kick-start' her professional development in literacy. However, her restricted access to the program resulted in minimal professional growth regarding the teaching of writing from this avenue.



Kate found the professional development experiences offered through this inquiry project to be beneficial. The opportunity for dialogue with me and other members of the Early Stage One / Stage One team enabled her to articulate her understanding of the writing process.

Figure 5.9 provides a model of the professional development journey experienced by Kate over the 2001 school year. This model has resulted from Kate's guidance by me through the inquiry process, which is a response to the developing in-school professional development model developed through investigation of the literature (figure 2.8) and supporting methodologies for the inquiry (figure 3.1). It demonstrates what worked for Kate in moving her forward in her understanding of what constitutes 'balanced writing pedagogy' and her teaching of this in her Kindergarten classroom.



**Figure 5.9 - Professional Development Model based on Kate's Professional Journey**

## ***Amanda's 2001 Professional Journey***

### **Descriptive Story**

*In 200,1 Amanda was twenty-three years old and was entering her third year of teaching. The inquiry school marked her second school of employment. Both these schools were located in the Macarthur area in the southwest of Sydney. Amanda had only taught infant classes; 2001 was her second consecutive year on Year 1.*

*Amanda became a member of the teaching staff at the inquiry school in 2000. She had been employed on a twelve-month contract. During this year Amanda and Lisa (the researcher) taught next door to each other, where they shared resources and supervision duties. Amanda taught Year One and Lisa taught Year Two. Throughout the year they attempted to do some across the stage teaching together, particularly within Science and Technology and Human Society and its Culture (HSIE) curriculum areas. At the end of the year when Amanda's contract had been made permanent, Lisa approached her to be a part of the 'balanced writing pedagogy'*

### **Interpretive Comment**

Amanda was a relatively new teacher. Whilst she had had experience within two schools, she hadn't to this point had experience with a variety of grade levels. Poetter (1997:3) warns that inexperienced teachers are '...often lacking the experiences that might help them make connections with ideas and practices' in professional development experiences.

Amanda was keen to be involved in the inquiry. She had had the experience of having me in her classroom prior to the inquiry, supporting her literacy teaching and associated classroom management. As such, the professional relationship between us had been established. Cole and Knowles (2000:95) emphasise that professional development to improve teaching practice needs to be '...relational and practical'. Both these components were in place within the working relationship Amanda and I had established.

*inquiry the following year. Amanda agreed to be involved.*

\* \* \* \*

*Throughout 2000, Amanda and Lisa had completed the diocesan 'Good First Year Teaching' course together. This program was aimed at Year One teachers. This was the first continuous form of professional development that Amanda had been involved in apart from University studies. When reflecting on this experience Amanda stated that it '... was invaluable. It has virtually taught me everything I need to know about the episodes that need to be taught in Year One literacy' (SSI – 19.2.01).*

*Amanda explained that this diocesan professional development experience was made more meaningful to her teaching as it was valued within the school setting. The principal outlined her support for this professional development experience when interviewed by Lisa (I – 7.2.01). A key part of this support was through the provision of release from classroom teaching to attend course workshops. Support was also given through providing a budget to purchase required equipment and to build on classroom libraries. In-school structures also allowed for teachers to be provided*

The language used by Amanda when describing her experience of the 'Good First Year Teaching' program is very positive. Amanda's phrase 'virtually taught me everything I need to know' is clear evidence of the influence this program has had on her literacy teaching practice.

The 'context of situation' within the school has supported the implementation of the program. Amanda makes reference to the provision of time, resources and support from the school leadership – all of which are qualities recognised within the qualities of successful professional development (Hoban, 2002; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Darling-Hamilton, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Fullan, 1991; Stallings, 1989).

*with additional release time to assist them with completing assessments on students. Amanda acknowledged these support structures. (SSI – 7.2.01)*

*At the beginning of the inquiry it became obvious to Lisa that Amanda had the mechanics of a literacy block under control due to her involvement in the 'Good First Year Teaching' program.*

It became obvious to me that while Amanda had 'episodes' in action to support her reading and writing classroom, she found it difficult to articulate their purposes and links to the reading and writing processes. On the surface level it appeared she was in control of her literacy teaching practice, however she still didn't demonstrate an articulate understanding of what the writing process was and why she incorporated the 'episodes' she did to teach and support that process.

\* \* \* \*

*In order to ascertain what Amanda's own learning experiences were with literacy practices, Lisa asked her to reflect on her personal school experience. Amanda attended Primary School between the years of 1983 and 1989. She was educated within the Catholic Education system on the South Coast of New South Wales. When Amanda reflected on her memories of learning to write (RJ – 5.2.01), she recalled the following strategies employed by her teachers:*

- *Daily writing, usually recounts or narrative texts*
- *Writing was often done in pairs and read out to the class*
- *Writing was marked with a red pen – Amanda said 'there was always red circles or crosses in my work because it didn't make sense' (RJ – 5.2.01).*

*In this reflection, Amanda also said, 'I hated writing because I didn't ever know what to write about'. She also said, 'I remember being a good speller. I rote learned my 'spelling list' every week' (RJ – 5.2.01).*

When Amanda reflected upon her own memories of learning to write at school she expressed frustration with not knowing what to write about and the way her work was marked (RJ – 5.2.01). The importance Amanda placed on the students being guided according to 'genre and structure' is evidence of Amanda's experiences as a learner guiding what Whitehead (2000) refers to as her 'individual learning and teaching theory'.

Amanda has likened her experiences to some of the content 'jargon' that is used to talk about writing within New South Wales Syllabus documents (1998). Amanda has talked about her daily writing in terms of defining it against two of the text types, or genres, that appear in the syllabus document (1998).

\* \* \* \*

*Amanda attended the University of Wollongong between the years of 1996 and 1998 to complete her Bachelor of Teaching Degree. In 1999, Amanda began studying for her Bachelor of Education degree at a part time capacity with Charles Sturt University, Bathurst campus. She completed this degree at the end of 2000.*

*Amanda mentioned completing Language subjects I, II and III while completing her Bachelor of Teaching degree. She discussed with Lisa her dissatisfaction with these subjects at the time. She felt as though ‘...I didn’t really understand or learn anything from these subjects’ (SSI – 19.2.01). This is in contrast to what Amanda goes on to say when she talks about what happened when she began teaching within the Wollongong Catholic Diocese in 1999 at a casual level. From this time, Amanda states that she began to make links between her studies and what needs to happen in the classroom. She commented that, ‘...it wasn’t until I actually started teaching that I got to put my theory into practice’ (SSI – 19.2.01).*

*Amanda recalled being offered support as a beginning teacher. She described to Lisa how she met with an appointed*

University programs ensure that teachers are qualified for the classroom (Stronge, 2002: 107). However, the literature acknowledges the importance of teacher education being ongoing through professional development experiences (Turbill, 2002; Whitehead, 2000, 1998; Danielson, 1996; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Mevarech, 1995; Elliott, 1991)

Amanda has discovered this on-going nature of teacher learning when she talks about putting her ‘theory into practice’. She has claimed ownership of her theory surrounding literacy practices. Amanda’s description of this process can be likened to Fullan’s (1991) ‘teacher as learner model’ and the notion of teaching as a ‘craft’ (Hoban, 2002; Huberman, 1992).

*person from the diocesan Catholic Education Office and other beginning teachers approximately three times per term. This was an opportunity to discuss any issues or problems the beginning teachers were having. During these times, Amanda does not recall any significant input or support specifically aimed at assisting the teachers with their classroom literacy instruction. (SSI – 19.2.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*As the inquiry school classified Amanda as a 'beginning teacher' in 2000, she received support from Lisa through the re-structured 'Literacy Support' program. Amanda and Lisa had worked together on establishing a literacy block, the development of programs to support students who were deemed to be 'at-risk', and Lisa assisted Amanda with implementation and conduction of assessment of students in Literacy. She mentioned the benefits that had come from the in-school Literacy Support time allocations; she stated that this time has '... assisted in extending these episodes and focussing [sic] on what needs to be specifically taught in each episode ... the strategies that are needed...' She described further how allocation of this time has enabled the Good First Year*

The professional working relationship established in 2000 between us has been described. During 2000 we concentrated on the 'practical' nature of teaching (Cole and Knowles, 2000:95). This is what Amanda believed would continue with her involvement in the inquiry project in 2001.

It became obvious at this time that Amanda's drive for teacher learning was driven by her desire for this practical, content-based input. Darling-Hammond (1997:106-107) writes about the need for students to have '...substantial coaching to support their progress'. The areas



*Teaching program to continue at its original intensity within the school. (SSI – 19.2.01)*

Amanda wanted to address were not unlike this. She wanted to know what she had to do, when she had to do it rather than why and how it supported the writing process.

\* \* \* \*

*When asked what Amanda saw her role as within the Stage One group with regard to literacy practice, she identified five key points.*

- *‘To ensure the children are shown and put into practice the strategies needed for reading and writing’ (SSI – 7.2.01)*
- *‘To support the children on Reading Recovery and to follow up their progress’ (SSI – 7.2.01)*
- *‘To follow up the literacy block that was taught in Kindergarten’ (SSI – 7.2.01)*
- *‘Implementing the Good First Teaching Program in my classroom’ (SSI – 7.2.01)*
- *‘Catering for the various levels of ability in my class’ (SSI – 7.2.01)*

Amanda has identified some significant factors within the school that she anticipated would impact upon her teaching. Her experiences teaching Year One the year before has impacted upon these ideas. She has made reference to Reading Recovery and ‘Good First Year Teaching’ – two programs that have a high profile and high level of priority within the inquiry school. The establishment of a Literacy Block is also a focus at the inquiry school and Amanda has made reference to this in terms of carrying on the students’ experience of this from Kindergarten. At this stage, Amanda has made reference to addressing the priorities within the inquiry school and content the students needed to be taught. She has made no reference to collaborative planning and

working with the other teachers within Early Stage One and Stage One to this point, nor has she identified the need to extend her own knowledge through professional development opportunities within literacy.

\* \* \* \*

*At the beginning of the year, Amanda didn't feel that the children knew where their writing ability lay in comparison to others. Amanda wrote in her reflective journal '... the children really don't know if they write well or not' (RJ – 16.2.01).*

After discussing this entry with Amanda it became apparent that the bigger issue for Amanda was with her determining whether or not the students were writing well. She found it important to compare and contrast her students with the other year one class and the New South Wales English Work Samples document (Board of Studies, 1998). (SSI – 19.2.01) It became increasingly obvious to me at this point that Amanda was not a risk-taker herself and found the assessment of her students an onerous task.

\* \* \* \*

*From early in Term 1 Amanda included joint deconstructions as a regular occurrence in her writing block. Her purpose was to model to the children how to proofread a text. However, Amanda expressed her concern that they weren't carrying these proofreading skills over to their own writing. She states, '...they do not understand the importance of taking responsibility for their own writing. They insist on bringing their writing unchecked to me, I constantly send them away and show them what to do, but they still bring it back to me with errors...' (RJ – 16.2.01) Amanda was aware of modelled, guided and independent practice within literacy, however expressed the need for support in bringing such practices together.*

Amanda's main concern was with doing things correctly and teaching the necessary content from syllabus documents for these children. She was concerned mainly with managing the practicalities of her classroom. My challenge became to move her from teaching the mechanics of a literacy block to understanding the purpose beginning each of the episodes she taught in relation to the reading and writing processes.

This was done with the future intention of working with Amanda to contrast and compare these qualities against her classroom practice. Such a process, I believed, would assist in her understanding and articulation of episodes and their relationship to the reading and writing processes.

\* \* \* \*

*For the first eight weeks of Term 1, Lisa worked with Amanda to assist her with the establishment of a daily literacy block and its episodes. During this time Amanda and Lisa engaged in constant dialogue. Dialogue was also encouraged among grade partners and the whole Early Stage One/Stage One team. As Amanda had completed the 'Good First Year Teaching' Program, she began the year by incorporating its guiding principles into her classroom. As Amanda and Lisa had worked together the year before, they eased into their working relationship early into the term. Lisa provided suggestions, demonstration teaching and team teaching in Amanda's classroom where necessary or asked for. Such times were accommodated for in a school timetable that allowed Lisa a block of one-hour to work with Amanda in her classroom each week.*

During times of demonstration and team teaching, I encouraged Amanda to critique me in terms of describing what I was doing but also addressing why she thought I was doing that. Danielson (1996:106) writes, 'beginning teachers need to cultivate the skill of accurate reflection ... with experience teachers become more discerning and can evaluate their successes as well as their errors'. The guiding focus areas I provided Amanda with were used in order to develop her reflection skills. At this stage I hoped that while she was critiquing me, the skills that were being developed would assist her in looking at her own teaching the same way.

\* \* \* \*

*Towards the end of Term 1, Lisa asked Amanda to describe her current classroom literacy block, paying particular attention to how writing was taught. Amanda responded to this task with the following reflective journal entry.*

*Journal / Daily Writing – Mon/Wed/Fri*

*The students are allowed to write for 15 mins about any[thing] they wish. On certain days, student [sic] will be directed as to what they write about. A teaching focus is given.*

*Handwriting – Tues/Thurs (20 – 30 mins)*

*A letter will be taught in each lesson in terms 1 and 2. Terms 3 and 4 – different words/concepts will be taught once a week eg days of the week, seasons etc.*

*Independent Writing*

*Text types, looking at punctuation or poetry etc with a specific teaching focus. (Modelled / Joint Construction / Independent) 20 mins*

*Guided Writing*

*Four students will be withdrawn to assist with their writing strategies.*

Amanda has demonstrated use of some of the language associated to the underlying beliefs of ‘balanced writing pedagogy’ – ‘modeling’, ‘independently’, ‘continuous texts’, ‘guided writing’. However, these are referred to within the context of a writing strategy being taught.

The need for ‘active response’ to address these ‘episodes’ in terms of their relationship to the writing process rather than strategies became apparent.

*They will be supported in their own writing, while the rest of the class are writing independently at their desks (10 – 15 mins)*

#### *Computer*

*In terms 3 and 4, students will be given the opportunity to publish their stories on the computer, to display around the room.*

#### *Independent Groups (15 mins each day)*

*Story starters – students are given a sentence to start a story. They are to make up the rest of the story themselves.*

*Writing centre – students are allowed to write letters, invitations, recipes, lunch orders etc. (RJ – 26.3.01)*

*Amanda also provided Lisa with a copy of her classroom English Statement of Organisation that was included in her classroom-teaching program. The purpose of this document is to outline the daily Literacy block.*

*\* \* \* \**

*Observations Lisa made showed that Amanda's Literacy block remained fairly consistent (to the abovementioned description) throughout the year (CV –*

*Amanda demonstrated little change within her classroom throughout the year. Her classroom literacy block remained*

3.5.01; 17.5.01; 30.5.01; 7.6.01; 21.6.01; 5.7.01; 15.8.01; 12.9.01; 26.9.01; 31.10.01; 7.11.01). In each of these cases the episodes described by Amanda (RJ – 26.3.01) were apparent, the only noted variation being their order. Amanda did not introduce or withdraw any episodes.

\* \* \* \*

Amanda appeared to be in control of her literacy block and Lisa re-directed her to an issue that she had previously identified (RJ – 16.2.01; SSI – 19.2.01). Lisa asked Amanda to reflect on what children needed to be good writers. In order for children to be good writers Amanda stated that she held the following beliefs:

- Children need to be taught writing strategies  
Amanda said, 'they need to be taught 'strategies' and to be able to do the 'thinking' on their own' (RJ – 21.5.01)
- Children need to be exposed to modelled writing episodes  
Amanda said, 'they need to see joint / modelled writing to know how to construct their own text' (RJ – 21.5.01)
- Children need to be taught spelling strategies  
Amanda said, 'they need to know

fairly consistent throughout the year. Classroom observations showed that minimal changes to her teaching practice were evident within her classroom teaching of writing.

Amanda's reflections were demonstrating some change. In this journal entry (RJ – 21.5.01) Amanda is using more language associated with the writing process. Amanda has also demonstrated an improved understanding of what constitutes 'good' writing. These qualities are however still bound within the skills and strategies – the 'content' – the children need when writing in Year One.

*the quickest way to find a word, eg dictionary, have-a-go, look around the room etc' (RJ – 21.5.01)*

- *Children need to be exposed to modelled proofreading*

*Amanda said, 'they need to be shown how to proofread their own writing through joint deconstruction' (RJ – 21.5.01)*

*Amanda at this time has appeared to demonstrate knowledge of the importance of modelling to the children aspects of the writing process. (CV – 3.5.01; 30.5.01; 14.6.01; 1.8.01)*

*When asked how she assisted these beliefs in her classroom, Amanda responded that she did this through the inclusion of:*

- *Modelling text as a class*
- *Giving them a structured sentence as a class and letting them go and finish independently*
- *Provide dictionaries and environmental print*
- *Have continuous texts up around the room*
- *Guided writing in small groups with a focus*
- *Overlearning incorrect words*
- *Prompting – does it look right?*

It became apparent to me through Amanda's reflections and observations made in her classroom, that such times of modeling were used to talk about skills and strategies the students needed to spell or construct a text within a given genre.



*Can you say it like that? etc*

*(RJ – 21.5.01)*

*These items were listed in the order given  
by Amanda in her response.*

\* \* \* \*

*Amanda reflected on the students’  
interest in the writing tasks given to them  
in the classroom. Amanda responded by  
saying that the following features  
contributed to student interest:*

- *The students are given adequate  
support in the lead-up to  
independent writing*

*Amanda said, ‘... they are guided  
before independent writing  
as to the genre and  
structure’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

- *The students are given time for  
free choice writing*

*Amanda said, ‘during journal  
writing they are given the freedom  
to write whatever they please for  
10 – 15 mins’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

- *There is variety in the texts the  
children are exposed to*

*Amanda said, ‘they are exposed  
to a range of texts ...’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

\* \* \* \*

Amanda has again drawn upon  
the importance she places on  
scaffolding the students according  
to specific skills and strategies  
they need. Guidance according to  
‘genre and structure’ allows little  
time for the students to explore  
the text within the writing process.

The incorporation of ‘free choice  
writing’ into the journal-writing  
episode conveys the importance  
Amanda places on this episode.

*Amanda identified that the following student characteristics showed evidence of student interest in writing tasks:*

- *Student improvement in writing tasks*

*Amanda said, ‘... their writing has improved dramatically since the beginning of the year, which shows me they are enthusiastic and eager to learn ... they are also taking responsibility for their own writing and are beginning to proofread to correct errors. This shows they are eager to improve their spelling and experiment with punctuation’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

- *Student engagement during writing tasks*

*Amanda said, ‘... they settle straight down to work ... they are constantly writing more and always looking to extend their work’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*When asked to identify a personal strength in her teaching of writing Amanda began this reflection in her journal by stating ‘Not much!’ (RJ – 30.7.01) Amanda then went on in her reflective journal entry to outline the following features of her teaching of writing as what she does well:*

The language used by Amanda to describe the children’s attitudes to writing is positive. She mentions the following in reference to the children: ‘improved dramatically’, ‘constant’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘eager’, ‘taking responsibility’, ‘experiment’. The words that Amanda has used in her reflection about the children and their writing is in positive contrast to previous descriptions. (RJ – 16.2.01)

As with all the participant teachers, our direction at this time appeared to go ‘stale’ and needed an overhaul. I used this opportunity to ask each of the teachers to reflect upon something that they do well in their teaching of writing.

- *Consistent teaching instructions*  
Amanda said, 'I encourage the children to use their practise [sic] page at all times, in all KLAs in all writing tasks' (RJ – 30.7.01)
- *Teaching of spelling strategies*  
Amanda said, 'As you know ... my children know many spelling patterns and are able to draw on these when they come across a 'tricky' word ... I am now teaching them the strategies they need when spelling unfamiliar words' (RJ – 30.7.01)

*This journal entry was concluded with Amanda stating '... there are no other areas I need assistance with' (RJ – 30.7.01).*

I interpreted Amanda's statement of 'not much!' as an example of Amanda's dissatisfaction and frustration toward her own level of understanding of the writing process. She continually strove to teach the students the mechanics of writing.

Amanda has identified specific content areas as her strengths and area for support. She has made mention of skills students need to be able to write as opposed to strategies specific to the writing process.

Amanda's conclusion to this entry is in stark contrast to her opening.

\* \* \* \*

*Amanda identified the teaching of writing structure as an area she needs support with. She said, 'I am sometimes unsure when to teach paragraphing. I don't know if the children will get confused' (RJ – 30.7.01).*

I interpreted this as a signal or request for understanding and followed this up with active response in subsequent classroom visits where we worked on using the guided writing episode to cater for different ability groupings within the classroom. (CV – 1.8.01; 29.8.01; 12.9.01)

\* \* \* \*

*Parents were one set of key stakeholders that Amanda identified and was aware of from the beginning of this year. In the early stages of the year Amanda invited the parents to come and assist in the classroom during parts of the Literacy block. She invited parents to come and hear children read their home readers and to assist her with conferencing during whole class writing times. Amanda trained these parents on what 'prompts' to use with the children when they were engaged in these reading and writing times (CV – 14.2.01; 28.2.01). She did this to ensure that the language used by both her and the parents was consistent so the children didn't become confused. She also talked to the parents about the spelling strategies she would direct the children to use. Amanda identified the strategies of stretching out words, hearing and recording sounds, using environmental print and building on what is known through analogy. (SSI – 21.2.01) Amanda commented on this in her reflective journal by writing, '...the parents seem happy with the strategies the children are learning in class...' but added the concerns of the parents that '...they [the children] are unable to use these strategies unless they are prompted' (RJ – 16.2.01).*

Amanda has placed considerable importance on 'stakeholders' throughout her reflections and interactions with me over the 2001 school year.

Parents were identified as a group demanding particular attention. Amanda's inclusion of parents in her classroom is indicative of confidence in what was happening in her room. She felt no anxiety over this inclusion (SSI – 8.3.01).

Amanda's training of the parents focused on specific skills and strategies they could reinforce. The spelling strategies identified by Amanda are consistent with those mentioned in both Good First Year Teaching and Reading Recovery.

Amanda has demonstrated a change in her organisation of homework from her previous year on Year One. Her inclusion of writing homework as well as reading demonstrates her acknowledgement of the importance of both language modes.

*Amanda felt that the parents seemed to be consistently concerned with homework and what the children should be doing at home. Throughout Amanda's previous year teaching Year One, she had set reading homework each evening through a levelled home-reading program. In 2001 Amanda continued to set a home-reading program and added nightly writing homework. She asked that the children write in a journal for fifteen minutes each night as a time to practise their writing skills. The parents were instructed not to correct this writing for spelling accuracy. The parents overall seemed happy for their children to engage in this writing homework. However as time went on, many parents began to '... have difficulty getting their children to write at home, even if it's just one sentence ...' (RJ – 16.2.01). When Amanda questioned the parents about this their response was that 'they struggle to find things to write about because the children may have already written about it in class' (RJ – 16.2.01). Amanda responded to this concern by sending home a list of writing ideas for this task. However, this was a problem that continued. Midway through the year Amanda wrote in her reflective journal '... the parents are constantly*

The difficulty the students experienced with their writing homework demonstrated to me their unfamiliarity with the writing process. The expectation that a minimum of one sentence per night is not conducive to this process of planning, drafting and redrafting and publishing.

Discussions with Amanda (SSI – 29.8.01) after this reflective journal entry (RJ-18.6.01) demonstrated that writing done in the classroom and at home were very different. It became apparent that there were no links or continuity with writing tasks completed in these two contexts. By way of 'active response' to this, I suggested making this link with the students completing their writing homework in their class writing book therefore giving them the option of browsing through previous work for inspiration or completing a piece already started. Amanda tried this approach with some success.

*coming to me saying that their child won't write at home and that they just want to play. They have no problems with reading, as they are eager to read. They say they write a lot at school and don't want to write at home' (RJ – 18.6.01). As time went on Amanda became increasingly aware of the need to educate parents on how writing is currently taught and how to best support their children through this process. (SSI – 29.8.01)*

*Amanda found that from the beginning of the school year, parents repeatedly inquired about the use of spelling lists in the classroom. Amanda stated, '... they want to see spelling lists and letter cluster families ... they feel rote learning will help them' (SSI – 8.3.01). The need to educate the parents about the teaching of spelling also became apparent.*

Amanda had previously explored spelling strategies with the parents and this was reinforced with the students in the classroom (SSI – 21.2.01) Amanda had recalled 'rote learning' her spelling list each week when she was a student (RJ – 5.2.01), however her non-inclusion of a spelling list in her classroom demonstrated that this component of her 'individual learning and teaching theory' (Whitehead, 2000) was not directed by her own experiences as a learner.

\* \* \* \*

*The inclusion of the Reading Recovery program within the inquiry school for Year One students was another stakeholder that Amanda identified and was increasingly aware of.*

*For Amanda, the considerations of this stakeholder meant that she had to support this program within her classroom. This included addressing the support a Reading Recovery student requires within the classroom literacy program. Whilst students are engaged in the Reading Recovery program, they will be withdrawn from the classroom daily by a Reading Recovery teacher for a thirty-minute session. Amanda then needed to ensure that communication about this student's progress is open between the Reading Recovery teacher and herself. Amanda also needed to ensure that the student is supported through appropriate guided reading and writing sessions within the classroom literacy block both during their time on the Reading Recovery program and after.*

Amanda's previous year on Year One at the inquiry school made her aware of the expectations from the school and the Reading Recovery teachers regarding the support required for students involved with this program. Amanda strived to support these students to a high level within her classroom.

Amanda expanded her mentoring network amongst the staff to include the two Reading Recovery teachers. She frequently met with them to discuss students from her class who were involved in the program. She sought advice from the Reading Recovery teachers about what skills and strategies she needed to teach these students. This mentoring network was very influential on Amanda's teaching throughout the year. She took on the advice given to her without exploring further the relationship of these to the writing process.

\* \* \* \*

*Amanda identified such issues as a guiding force in her literacy teaching. When reflecting on her role within the Early Stage One / Stage One group with regard to literacy practice Amanda stated that her role was to ‘... support the children on Reading Recovery and to follow-up their progress’ (RJ – 3.12.01). Amanda expanded on this when she reflected on how closely she and the Reading Recovery teachers had worked throughout the year. She said, ‘I have worked closely with the reading recovery teachers to discuss particular students and their progress with regards to monitoring’ (RJ – 3.12.01). Amanda concluded this Reflective Journal entry by writing ‘... I feel Year 1 is a vital year for the students especially with the Reading Recovery program’ (RJ – 3.12.01).*

\* \* \* \*

*Amanda reflected on what she had learned about herself as a teacher of writing. Amanda commented that ‘... overall, I’m slowly learning...’ (RJ – 10.12.01)*

The ‘context of culture’ of the school promoted the Reading Recovery program and support for this within the school. This has impacted on Amanda and her classroom teaching of literacy practices.

Amanda’s conclusion to her reflective journal entry has reinforced the Reading Recovery program as a guiding force in her classroom teaching.

This phrase is indicative of Amanda’s personal relationship to the experience. She has used this phrase to describe her developments within her own teaching practice and has acknowledged the ‘learning’ she has gone through. Her use of ‘slowly’ indicates to me that the year has been a professional



challenge for her, as she has had to really evaluate her own teaching in terms of the writing process. I also interpreted this statement as Amanda's acknowledgement that professional learning is an ongoing process.

\* \* \* \*

*Writing strategies were something that Amanda repeatedly isolated during the inquiry as an area she was concerned with. She frequently mentioned the need to teach children spelling strategies and her concern for teaching content (text types, text structure) was a common theme. In Amanda's final reflections she mentioned that 'I still need to pick up on strategies that the students need ... the children need to use the quickest way to find out how to spell a word ...' (RJ – 10.12.01)*

Amanda made frequent mention to the need to teach students the skills and strategies of writing. Words such as 'structure', 'strategies', 'planning' and 'content' appeared frequently throughout all forms of data over the course of the year.

In this last excerpt from her reflective journal, she has again made reference to the need to teach students the strategies of writing. She has emphasised the need for spelling strategies in this comment, an area we had spent considerable time on throughout the year.

## ***Interpretive Summary – Amanda***

### **Amanda's Understanding of the Writing Process**

Amanda was not able to articulate the writing process at the beginning of the inquiry. She understood that language was made up of reading and writing but seemed to be only beginning to make the connections between the processes later in the inquiry. These connections were demonstrated through Amanda's mixing of reading and writing episodes within her Literacy Block and her justification of this to me in terms of the reciprocal gains (Clay, 1998). (CV – 21.6.01; 15.8.01; 26.9.01; 31.10.01; E- 29.10.01; 30.10.01; 10.12.01)

Amanda's drive to teach the content these Year One students needed seemed to override her need to understand the writing process and how to best teach it. Amanda was very clear about the pre-writing phase. She regularly assisted the students in planning their writing and offered significant support with this. The students were aware of her expectations for both the format and content of their writings at all times. Amanda taught the students proofreading skills in the form of text deconstruction. This is part of the drafting phase. However, the need for the students to enter into and explore other aspects of the writing process (such as redrafting) weren't focused on.

Amanda's memories of learning to write were centred on getting things right. (RJ – 5.2.01) She also made reference to not knowing what to write about. Her reflections on her year one students also followed this theme. She was consistently concerned about the structure and layout of the students' writing and their control with writing skills such as spelling and punctuation. In all observed classroom visits, Amanda ensured that the students always had a clear topic to write about and engaged in extensive planning with them. Amanda's teaching seemed to be guided by her own

frustrations with writing experiences rather than a real understanding of the writing process. Amanda's experiences as a writer were prevailing influences on her 'individual learning and teaching theory' (Whitehead, 2000).

The students wrote daily with a given focus. Amanda marked these pieces of writing in consultation with the students. It was interesting to observe that Amanda always corrected students' work with pencil and never with the 'red pen' (RJ – 5.2.01) she remembered. The only opportunities given for free-choice writing was in the journal-writing episode. Amanda did not mark these pieces of writing.

#### Professional Development Experiences and their Impact

This section aims to identify and review the structures, activities, processes and people partnerships identified within Amanda's professional development experiences.

Amanda had worked with the researcher through the 'Literacy Support' allocation in 2000 when she was in her second year of teaching. At this time she also undertook the Good First Year Teaching Program. She identified that both these forms of professional development supported each other well. (SSI – 19.2.01).

Amanda held the Good First Year Teaching Program in high esteem. In initial contact with the researcher she claimed that this form of professional development '... was invaluable. It has virtually taught me everything I need to know about the episodes that need to be taught in Year One literacy' (SSI – 19.2.01). This form of professional development gave Amanda the structure that she personally needed to shape her Literacy program around. It gave her an outline of episodes to include, strategies

to teach during these episodes and how long to teach each episode for.  
(SSI – 21.2.01)

Amanda worked with the researcher throughout all four terms in 2001. A total of twenty-six hours was provided for classroom support with the researcher working in her classroom followed by frequent opportunities to discuss any issues that may have arisen.

Amanda valued the professional development that was offered as in-school support through the 'Literacy Support' program. She made reference to this as being supportive to the Good First Year Teaching Program. She was aware, as were all the teachers, of the importance the school placed in this program through the appointment of a support person to ensure the program principles were being adhered to in all classrooms (SSI-19.2.01).

Amanda established strong professional relationships with the Reading Recovery teachers in the school. She used their recommendations within her teaching, particularly with regard to supporting those students who were currently on or had experienced the Reading Recovery program. Throughout the duration of the year Amanda was consistently conscious of providing for these students the best support for the Reading Recovery program.

#### Impact of these experiences on Amanda's teaching of writing

The section reviews the impact of the previously discussed professional development experiences with regard to Amanda's professional growth in the teaching of writing.

Amanda can be positioned in Stronge's (2002: 10) category of a 'novice' teacher. He writes that '...novice teachers often hesitate to deviate from a

plan'. Amanda's interpretation of the 'Good First Year Teaching' program and Reading Recovery is evidence of this point.

The Good First Year Teaching Program was very influential in Amanda's teaching of writing. This form of professional development provided her with a framework, an outline of episodes to include within the classroom literacy block, in order to teach students how to write. Amanda had a very systematic approach to this. She taught each of the episodes daily, usually in the same sequence. At a surface level, it appeared that Amanda had an excellent understanding of how students learn to read and write. However, as Amanda was probed to articulate these understandings throughout the inquiry it became increasingly evident that these episodes were included because it gave her the structure she needed to teach reading and writing. In her interactions with me, she did not seem to have a real understanding of the part each of these episodes played in teaching students about the reading and writing processes.

The language that Amanda used to talk about her own teaching practice and influences upon it were content based - 'strategies', 'focus' and 'genre'. Such words can be attributed to the New South Wales syllabus document (Board of Studies, 1998), the 'Good First Year Teaching' course content and jargon associated with the Reading Recovery program.

Amanda's teaching of Literacy was very much guided by external factors. She was very aware of the Reading Recovery program and the support she was required to give to these students within her classroom. Parental attitudes and expectations were also key factors in her teaching. Amanda felt that her classroom teaching in Literacy was accountable to both these external factors (SSI-7.2.01; 21.2.01; RJ-16.2.01; 18.6.01; 3.12.01).

Amanda's story is quite different to those presented by other participant teachers. As Amanda was the least experienced of the teachers, the question is posed as to whether professional experience is another variable in the success of professional development opportunities.

Reading Recovery was an external factor to Amanda's classroom practice that attracted much of her attention throughout the year. Reading Recovery is an intervention program developed by Clay (1979, 1993). It is a program designed to meet the needs of some 20% of students who have not learned to read and write adequately in classroom programs (Clay, 1993:1). This program targets these 'at risk' students in Year One of their schooling. Needless to say, the inclusion of a student on this program causes much consideration for the student's teacher and parents alike.

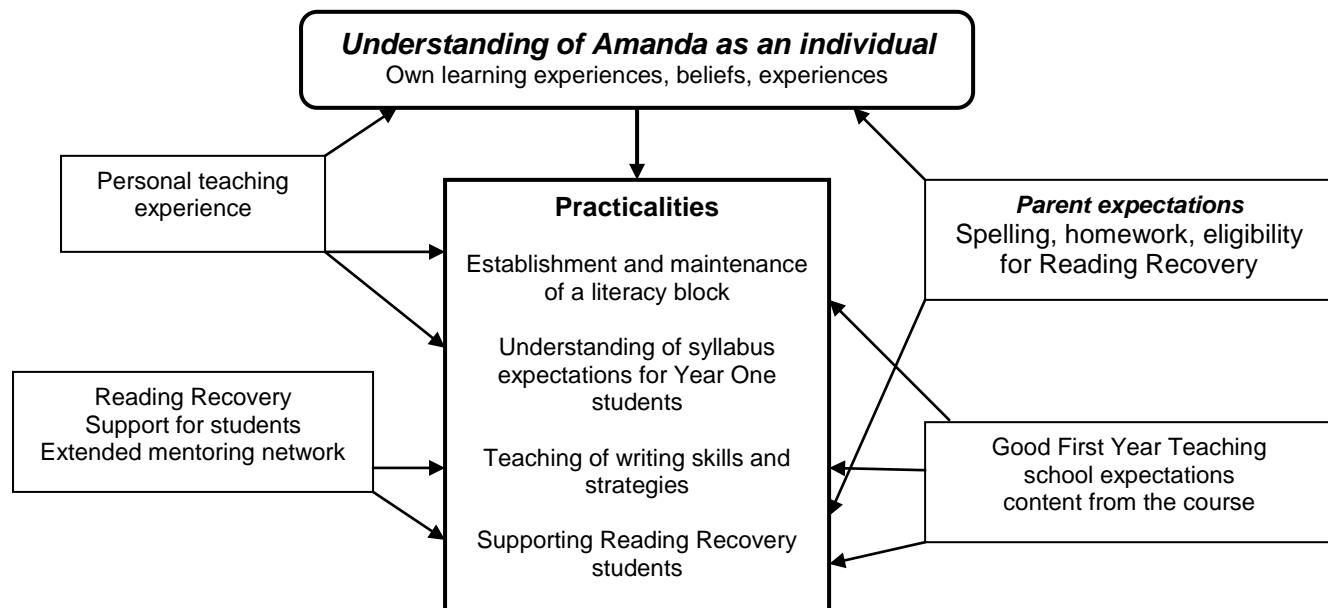
The inclusion of their child on the Reading Recovery program is of importance for parents of Year 1 students. However, not all children who have literacy problems can be accepted into the program due to the needs of the specific cohort of students, funding and time available to the program. This school places considerable emphasis on the benefits of the Reading Recovery program with the employment of two Reading Recovery teachers, each working at a 0.6 teaching load. In Amanda's reflections from feedback from parents in parent-teacher interviews (RJ – 16.2.01), she mentioned that the majority of parents questioned their child's eligibility for the Reading Recovery program.

Amanda has acknowledged herself as a learner who is 'slowly learning' (RJ – 10.12.01). Such a comment supports the placement of Amanda's journey throughout 2001 as being in what Strauss and Corbin (1990:139-140) refer to as a 'state of transition'. Over the course of the year, Amanda's story has demonstrated that '...some change has occurred or is occurring in the basic conditions...' Amanda's story demonstrates the

occurrence of change to her literacy teaching practice to a lesser extent to that of other participant teachers. Her story has not demonstrated the clear teacher change that Michael and Kate both demonstrated.

'Intervening conditions' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:140) can be identified that impacted on Amanda's journey throughout the 2001 school year. Strauss and Corbin (1990:140) state that to establish what these are the '...analyst must ... trace back and try to determine what conditions are causing this particular variation'. To do this I returned to the 'multiple lenses' discussed in chapter four and again immersed myself in the collected data and field texts to identify what these 'intervening conditions' were. I also compared and contrasted Amanda's story with those of the other participant teachers.

The breaking up of Amanda's story into 'respective pieces' according to analysis of '...incidents, events, happenings ...' revealed the interplay of 'intervening conditions'. Amanda's limited experience as a teacher, the expectations of parents and the expectations of the Good First Year Teaching Program and Reading Recovery have all impacted on Amanda's professional development. Figure 5.10 provides a model of the professional development journey experienced by Amanda over the 2001 school year. This journey is categorised by her individual teacher experiences and her concern for the practicalities of teaching writing in the classroom. It aims to highlight the role the 'intervening conditions' had on her professional development experience.



**Figure 5.10 - Amanda's Professional Development Journey**



## *Michael's 2001 Professional Journey*

### **Descriptive Story**

*Michael is a thirty-six year old male teacher; 2001 marked his eleventh year of teaching. Michael and Lisa had worked together in 1999 when they were grade partners on Year Two. During this year 'Michael 'was involved in Lisa's honours thesis entitled 'An examination of proofreading as a strategy for spelling development in a Year Two classroom' (Kervin, 1999). Michael and Lisa worked closely this year with frequent visits to each other's classrooms to observe literacy practice and Michael replicated the proofreading sequence that was devised through this research in Lisa's classroom in his Year Two class. Michael and Lisa engaged in regular sessions of peer debriefing and member checking throughout the year. Michael proofread the thesis outlining this research before its submission in order to correct errors of fact or interpretation so that the information in the study would be as accurate as possible. (Kervin, 1999: 89-90) The idea of working together in a research capacity was familiar to both Michael and Lisa. When Lisa approached Michael at the end of 2000 to be involved in this new project he agreed immediately.*

### **Interpretive Comment**

Michael had a lot of experience that he brought with him to the inquiry. Stronge (2002:9) suggests that it can take between five to eight years to become a 'master' of teaching. Michael being in his eleventh year suggests that he is at this 'master' level according to this definition.

Michael's involvement in a previous research project meant that he was aware of the process involved from the beginning and moved into the 'research routine' with ease.

*1999 was Michael's first year at the inquiry school. Prior to becoming a member of staff at the inquiry school, Michael had taught at one primary school in the Macarthur area in the southwest of Sydney and one school in the Diocese of Sydney all on permanent contracts. Michael had taught Year One (1994) Year Two (1999, 2001), Year Three (1991), Year Four (1992, 1993, 1995, 1996) and Year Six (1997, 1998) in a full-time capacity. Michael had never taught as a casual teacher.*

*Michael's appointment in 1999 at the inquiry school was at a Coordinator Two level. This involved him being released from classroom teaching one day per week to work on his areas of responsibility, which included curriculum (Numeracy and Mathematics) and management of the school. In 1999, he was released from face-to-face teaching for coordinator duties one day per week. In 2001, Numeracy became a priority area at the inquiry school and Michael took on 'Numeracy Support' within the school. With this increased role, Michael was released from face-to-face teaching two days per week.*

Stronge (2002:9) acknowledges that teacher experience affects teacher effectiveness. Stronge writes, 'experienced teachers ... have attained expertise through real-life experiences, classroom practice and time'. Michael has had experience at other schools and has taught most primary grades.

This 'context of situation' impacted on Michael as a teacher. He was profiled as a model teacher in Numeracy and as such had significant responsibility placed upon him within his 'Numeracy Support' role. His withdrawal from the classroom for this role also impacted upon his teaching. His class, in fact had two teachers. Michael needed to be very organised and the time he had within his class was 'precious'. He had a significant amount of programmed work to work to do with the children within these timeslots.

*In 2000, Michael was seconded to the Wollongong Catholic Education Office to work as a primary curriculum consultant in Religious Education for a period of twelve months. During this time, his teaching position at the inquiry school was filled by a twelve month teaching contract, holding his teaching and coordinator position open for his return in 2001.*

\* \* \* \*

*The early stages of 2001 were a period of adjustment for Michael. He spoke to Lisa about the challenges he was experiencing in adjusting to classroom 'life' coming from an office position and also the challenges associated with being away from the school for a year. (SSI – 8.2.01)*

*Michael brought to the classroom his previous experiences and personal interests. Michael had a number of interests that he shared enthusiastically with the staff; he is a musician and enjoys teaching the music component of the Creative and Practical Arts syllabus. Other teachers often sought assistance from him in this curriculum area. Michael also had an extensive collection and great knowledge of children's literature. He often shared his collection with other*

Michael had a lot to deal with in the beginning stages of this year. He had to fit back into school life and manage his classroom and executive responsibilities. During this time, his qualities of a 'master' of teaching became evident (Stronge, 2002).

Connelly and Clandinin (1988: 363) make reference to individual teachers having 'personal practical knowledge'. Such knowledge refers to that 'knowledge which is experiential, embodied and based on the narrative of experience'. Michael demonstrated the range of the personal knowledge he brings to the classroom – world experience, children's literature, music and Numeracy.

*teachers and Lisa frequently heard him offering advice to teachers about text selection for use in their classrooms.*

*Teaching was not Michael's first career. Prior to studying Education, Michael studied accountancy and was employed as an accountant/clerk for six years (1983 – 1989) in four different companies. Michael attended University from 1983 to 1986 both at a part time and full time capacity completing studies in this field.*

\* \* \* \*

*Michael was able to clearly identify all the input he'd received from both his University training and Professional Development he'd been involved in during his teaching career. When Lisa asked him about these, he was able to present them chronologically and in doing so clearly evaluated each of these experiences according to their impact and influence upon him professionally.*

*In 1990 Michael graduated from the University of Sydney with a Diploma of Education (Primary Education). Michael recalled at this time his lecturers telling the students enrolled in this degree that they would be on a steep learning curve for the first five years of their career as they would not have had the same level*

Michael demonstrated the narrative processes of story and description in his interactions with me. When he was asked about something he was able to recount stories, usually in chronological order, to clearly depict his position. This is an example of how Michael has used his previous educational experiences to construct what he knows about teaching through his studies. (Johnson and Golombek, 2002)

Michael's ability to list and evaluate his previous professional development experiences demonstrated that he was a reflective practitioner who

*of input with regard to teaching practice that those studying full education degrees would have. During the course of study to attain this he recalls studying Language subjects and a subject called 'Variation in Children's Learning Background'. He recalled that these were '...not greatly helpful!' (SSI – 19.2.01) Michael began teaching at a full time capacity in 1991.*

*Michael was a member of PETA (Primary English Teachers Association) from 1991 to 1996. As a member of this organisation he received regular editions of their publication PENS and copies of books concentrating on aspects of Literacy Practice. Michael said that the '...books and PENS were always practical...' (SSI – 19.2.01)*

*In 1996 and 1997, Michael was involved in 'Primary Reading' in-servicing organised and run by the Literacy Education Officer from the Wollongong Catholic Education Office. In 1996 Michael recalls this in-servicing addressing '...guided reading, running records, critical literacy, assisting at risk readers' which he reflects was '...very helpful ... I still use some of the info!' (SSI – 19.2.01). In 1997 this in-servicing was built upon to include '... matching*

*'continually evaluated' experiences he was exposed to in order to use this knowledge to best support his students. (Darling-Hammond, 1997:298)*

Michael created opportunities to extend his knowledge through membership to professional associations and also by completing further studies. Again, he has displayed his reflective qualities by evaluating these experiences as to their value for him professionally.

Michael has used language to describe these experiences, which gives insight into what the constructs are for meaningful professional development for him personally. He has used words such as 'practical', 'very helpful', and 'info'. These words can be interpreted as aspects of professional development that Michael finds beneficial.

*texts to children, running records, serial reading ‘ all of which Michael reflected was ‘very helpful’ (SSI – 19.2.01).*

*In 1997 Michael studied for and completed a Certificate of Special Education at the University of Wollongong. He said this was ‘moderately helpful’ as it looked at providing for students with special needs in Literacy. (D – 19.2.01) In 2000 Michael entered into postgraduate studies within Religious Education.*

*Michael was aware of the diocesan Good First Year Teaching Program however, he had not been involved in any of its in-servicing opportunities.*

*Michael acknowledged that his previous Professional Development experiences were predominantly with reading.*

\* \* \* \*

*Michael attended Primary School between the years of 1970 and 1976. He was educated within the Catholic school system in western Sydney, attending two schools in this area. Michael reflected on his memories of learning to write (RJ – 5.2.01) and he wrote, ‘my immediate reaction is to remember Year 4 (1974!!)...’ He recalled the following memories about writing instruction:*

Michael was aware of the ‘context of situation’ in which he worked. He displayed an interest in and awareness of what other teachers were doing and directions within the school.

Michael supplied a lot of detail to accompany his personal school reflections. It was interesting to note that he was making connections between ‘then’ and ‘now’, something that none of the other participant teachers had done. He talks about his literacy lessons not being taught ‘in context ... as we attempt to do

- *Formal, structured lessons*  
Michael said, ‘...lessons were very structured, very formal. I remember various grammar tasks e.g. clauses, phrases, adverbial clauses, present participle, past participle, comparative, superlative (etc etc)’ (RJ – 5.2.01)
- *Emphasis on mastery of grammar*  
Michael said, ‘...we were ‘taught’ the rule (i.e. it was written on the board, I’m fairly sure that we copied it down) and then we would complete various exercises (no doubt to demonstrate our ‘mastery’ of the particular aspect that had been ‘taught’)...’ (RJ – 5.2.01)
- *Writing tasks were ‘compositions’*  
Michael said, ‘the majority of writing tasks that we did (from what I can remember) were to write a ‘composition’ on a given topic e.g. My Life as a Tennis Ball... I don’t recall the variety of text types, except for writing a letter – but even that was taught in a very structured way ...’ (RJ – 5.2.01)

now’ (RJ – 5.2.01). He also talks about the tasks that he did and the fact that they didn’t fit into the ‘writing process’. From the beginning Michael is aware that writing is a process and it’s this process that needs to be taught in the classroom. These reflections demonstrated to me that Michael has worked through his memories and evaluated them according to where they ‘fit into’ his current thinking about literacy teaching practice.

Michael’s experiences as a learner fitted into Turbill’s (2002) description of the 60s where writing was concerned with production and encoding and the 70s where writing was more of a creative exercise.

Michael has used language contained within the current New South Wales English Syllabus (Board of Studies, 1998) to discuss his experiences. His discussion of ‘text types’ is an example of this.

Michael consistently compares and contrasts his experiences with

- Writing tasks were given a mark*  
*When reflecting on writing compositions Michael said, ‘... these were then given a mark (out of 10? Out of 100?) with various comments. I can’t remember any one-to-one feedback about writing, or the writing process’ (RJ – 5.2.01)*

his understanding of the writing process. He challenges the notion of copying rules and completing exercises as evidence of ‘mastery’ of skills. He doesn’t recall any one-to-one feedback about his writing nor does he recall spelling being taught within the context of writing.
- Occasional modelling*  
*Michael said, ‘I do recall the occasional modelling (not joint construction though) but it is something that occurred...’ (RJ – 5.2.01)*

Michael’s ability to describe and challenge his own experiences provides evidence of reflective practice, which would have had an impact upon his ‘individual learning and teaching theory’ (Whitehead, 2000).
- Spelling and Comprehension tasks in isolation from writing tasks*  
*With regard to spelling Michael said, ‘I also remember spelling rules, spelling tests, writing sentences with the spelling word, dictionary meanings etc’ (RJ – 5.2.01)*  
*With regard to comprehension tasks Michael said, ‘I also recall doing a fair bit of comprehension ... I can’t be certain, but we may even have had text books for completing various exercises...’ (RJ – 5.2.01)*  
*Michael sums these tasks up by*



*saying, 'At times I remember thinking 'what is the point of doing this?' regarding certain grammar rules and exercises ... they seemed to be separate lessons – not in context (as we attempt to do now)' (RJ – 5.2.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*Michael's previous experiences had seen him do additional study in supporting students with needs in literacy. Towards the beginning of the inquiry Michael made some observations about the students in his class. He reports '...the majority of children felt they were making progress...' however, the students agreed with areas of improvement indicated by Michael such as '...proofreading for meaning, checking punctuation...' (RJ – 19.3.01).*

*Michael identified some disinterest amongst his students with regard to writing tasks. He writes, '...two or three boys seemed relatively disinterested ... they are more interested in Maths...' Michael reports that he '...discussed with them [that] writing is important to communicate...' (RJ – 19.3.01). Getting these students interested in literacy tasks was a goal that Michael set for himself. (SSI – 19.2.01; SSI – 2.5.01)*

\* \* \* \*

Michael's awareness of individual student needs became particularly apparent to me as our very early interactions were centred on accommodating for these. Michael had an acute sense of awareness of all his students and seemed to be aware of their needs very early in term one.

Writing for meaning and for a purpose seemed to categorise Michael's teaching of writing. He was aware of the importance of these two aspects to the writing process. (SSI – 19.2.01; SSI – 2.5.01)

*For the first eight weeks of Term 1, Michael and Lisa worked together on the establishment of a daily literacy block and its episodes. The school timetable allowed Lisa a block of one hour each week to work with Michael. During this time and in times external to this one-hour visit, Michael and Lisa engaged in continuous dialogue. Dialogue was also encouraged between Michael and his grade partner and the whole Early Stage One/Stage One team. Lisa provided suggestions, demonstration teaching and team teaching during classroom visits as requested by Michael. Focus areas during this time were mainly centred on the modelling of the writing process and catering for specific student needs throughout the literacy block. (CV – 14.2.01; 21.2.01; 28.2.01; 8.3.01; 15.3.01; 29.3.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*Towards the end of Term 1 Lisa asked Michael to describe his current classroom literacy block, paying particular attention to how writing was taught. Michael responded in his reflective journal by writing:*

*'My daily writing block (at the moment) usually begins with some form of modelling / explanation /*

*As Michael and I had worked together before on refining classroom practice, we entered into this relationship with ease. Team-teaching dominated our interactions as this best suited our professional relationship. Michael felt very comfortable from the beginning with having his teaching viewed and critiqued by me. He also felt comfortable critiquing my teaching and entering into dialogue with me about this.*

The language used by Michael in this journal entry gives some valuable insights into his understanding of the teaching of writing. Michael's first paragraph states 'at the moment'; this suggests that Michael is aware that the structure of his block can change according to the needs of his students and in response to

*joint construction. (I say usually because there are times when the children are working on an 'extended' piece of writing and the commencement of the writing block may entail ensuring that the children know what stage they are up to).*

*I aim for quality (extended) independent writing time of at least 30 – 40 minutes. At the moment the children usually seek clarification of spelling words during this independent writing time, but I am going to encourage (from Term 3) sustained writing time with an emphasis on writing with a sustained period of proofreading, checking spelling etc.*

*I also include a period for proofreading – independent and peer. At times the period of proofreading can be 'eaten up' by independent writing time -> yet some proofreading occurs in this time anyway -> so all is not lost when this happens!*

*I also cater on a 'needs basis' for handwriting, spelling, grammar etc*

his teaching. Michael has also used a lot of vocabulary that is associated with writing. He has used terms such as 'daily', 'modelling', 'stage', 'independent', 'sustained', 'proofreading', 'peer' which all indicate understanding of the stages incorporated in the writing process. He has clearly incorporated elements of modelled, guided and independent practice, which is what current literature, calls for to create 'balanced writing pedagogy' (The Ministry of Education, 1995; Cambourne and Turbill, 1994; Graves, 1994; Murray, 1982; Walshe, 1981).

*– not so much whole class, but individualised or peer -> encourage children to ask others (with my guidance) to share the spelling of a word etc that I have shown them.’ (RJ – 26.3.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*Previous reference has been made to Michael’s involvement with Lisa’s 1999 honours inquiry regarding proofreading as a spelling strategy. Michael used the knowledge that he had gained during this project when he began teaching this Year Two class in 2001. He wrote, ‘...since 1999 (my previous year on Year 2) I have noticed that I commenced the year with the inclusion of proofreading as an episode...’ (RJ – 11.6.01).*

Michael acknowledges the continual development and change to his literacy practice in his narrative interactions with me. Throughout the inquiry he regularly sought clarification, asked advice from me and other teachers, and tested new ideas in his classroom. Michael’s classroom was a context where change and new ideas were encouraged. While he had routines in place, these were flexible and responsive to Michael’s reflective practice on his teaching and developing understanding.

\* \* \* \*

*Michael and Lisa spoke about the role of each Early Stage One / Stage One teacher with regard to literacy practice (SSI – 2.5.01). Michael followed up this discussion with an additional Reflective Journal entry (RJ – 3.5.01). In this he outlined his role within the Early Stage One / Stage One team in clear points*

During this discussion it became apparent that Michael had a systematic and directed approach to his role as a Year Two teacher within this Stage team. Michael demonstrated his teaching experience and his understanding of his role as being a ‘team

which are presented below:

- *Continue (as far as possible) the practices from when children were in K and Year 1*
- *Utilise literacy support time allocated to me as productively as possible*
- *Guide/teach/expose children to multi strategy approaches in reading and writing*
- *Provide links for children so that literacy can have a purpose and context, and not be seen in isolation*
- *Monitor and support children from Reading Recovery (last year)*
- *Continue to improve my own teaching – so that ultimately the children benefit from my improved practices! (RJ – 3.5.01)*

player' within the stage. He wasn't concerned so much with the content that needed to be taught in each grade level (as the other participant teachers were) instead, he was concerned that the teaching of the writing process throughout those early years was cohesive and consistent. (SSI – 2.5.01)

The consistent use of the pronoun 'we' reinforces Michael's concept of himself as being a team-player (SSI – 2.5.01) within this shared 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

Michael's final point is again indicative of his reflective practice. Whilst he was a strong literacy teacher, he acknowledged that his learning was ongoing and necessary for his professional development.

\* \* \* \*

*Michael indicated some key stakeholders with his Year Two students. Michael identified the parents of these Year Two students as key stakeholders. At the conclusion of Michael's Term One parent-teacher interviews he made the following observations:*

Michael made some significant connections at the conclusion on his Term One parent-teacher interviews. Michael had made the association between his experiences of being taught how to write at school as being similar

- *'The majority of parents were concentrating on capital letters and full stops, spelling and handwriting' (RJ – 16.2.01)*
- *'There was no mention at all of text types ... and very little reference to using paragraphs' (RJ – 16.2.01)*
- *'Some parents asked about the possibility of spelling lists as a way to improve their child's spelling...' (RJ – 16.2.01)*

to the experiences of this Year Two parent group. He explored these further by making the connection that the expectation that the parents had of these Year Two children matched up with the expectations their teachers had of them (SSI -19.2.01).

*During these Term One parent-teacher interviews Michael became aware of the need to educate parents about aspects of the writing process. He used the parent-teacher interviews as an opportunity to do this. Michael reports that he talked to the parents about strategies the students could use to enhance their text – he writes '...the idea of making the writing 'make sense' was emphasised ...in discussion with myself ... in the context of proofreading and re-reading' (RJ – 16.2.01). Michael also addressed the issue of spelling lists in these meetings by suggesting '...that sometimes a list is more 'stressful' – stress to learn them and do extra homework and the stress on the 'spelling test' day'. He also addresses spelling lists as not being meaningful by saying,*

*‘...not all the children incorporate these words in their daily spelling – they can often revert back to the incorrect spelling...’ (RJ – 16.2.01).*

\* \* \* \*

*Michael also identified (RJ – 3.5.01) Reading Recovery as being a key stakeholder. He identified this program as having an impact on his teaching. Eight of his children had been through the Reading Recovery program the previous year and there was a diocesan and school expectation that Michael would provide for these students a heightened level of support to ensure their continued progress. This was something that was of concern for him, and we frequently spoke about how best to incorporate these students into guided writing sessions within the classroom.*

Michael did not change his teaching of writing to fit with the Reading Recovery program. Instead, he looked at how Reading Recovery fitted in with his own beliefs about the teaching of writing. In our frequent discussions about supporting these children, Michael made it clear that he wanted to support these children within his teaching of the writing process. He acknowledged the importance of modelled, guided and independent practices and as such decided to incorporate these students into more guided practice in order to support them. This fitted within his teaching philosophy and the way he organised his classroom.

\* \* \* \*

*Lisa asked Michael mid-way through Term Two if there was a particular area of teaching writing that he needed support with. He identified organisation as being a key issue. Michael explained this by saying ‘... I find that in the beginning of a writing session I can roam and spend time with individual children ... but there always comes a point when the line develops and I end up having my attention taken away from the children who are still writing...’ (SSI - 20.6.01)*

*Michael and Lisa, through following class visits, further explored this issue. Guided writing sessions, utilisation of school general assistant during writing times, exposure of students to the variety of spelling strategies at their disposal and explicit demonstrations of independent proofreading were explored as possible ways to alleviate ‘the line’ at the end of writing times. (CV – 4.7.01; 15.8.01; 29.8.01; 12.9.01)*

Michael was a confident and experienced teacher, however he was consistently prepared to identify areas he wanted support with or wanted to explore further.

\* \* \* \*



*Field notes taken by Lisa throughout the year indicated that Michael's literacy block did change. One of the main changes was with the structure of the Literacy block, with episodes occurring in different orders. For example (CV – 22.3.01; 6.6.01; 15.8.01) Michael often incorporated his shared reading episode before joint and independent writing if it was to be used as a stimulus. Alternatively, the episode of shared reading was sometimes moved to the end of the literacy block, or even into another Key Learning Area if the experience was deemed by Michael to be more relevant at that time. (CV – 2.5.01; 4.7.01; 25.10.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*Lisa and Michael had many discussions about what constituted 'good writing'. Michael identified a number of factors namely cohesive text, an interesting piece of writing, evidence of spelling attempts and evidence of re-reading and corrections. (SSI – 16.5.01) Michael then reflected on what children needed in the classroom to be good writers. In order for children to be good writers, Michael stated that he held the following beliefs:*

- *Children need to be confident*  
*Michael said, 'they need*

These observations are consistent with Michael's previous comments about his beliefs around the teaching of writing. He has demonstrated the flexible nature of the episodes within his literacy block and how he adapts and changes this to suit with the writing task according to its purpose.

Michael has identified aspects of the writing process in his discussion of what constitutes 'good writing'.

Michael acknowledges the role of the modes of language and mentions that students need to be able to read what they write. Such a comment demonstrates awareness of the reciprocal gains of reading and writing.

He has mentioned the importance

*confidence ... especially to take risks. ' (RJ – 21.5.01)*

- *Children need strategies to write*  
*Michael said, 'children need ability / skills / strategies ... eg spelling, punctuation, grammar...' (RJ – 21.5.01)*
- *Children need a purpose to write*  
*Michael said, 'children need something to write about ... ie a meaningful / relevant purpose...' (RJ – 21.5.01)*
- *Children need a vocabulary*  
*Michael said that children need '...knowledge of words' (RJ – 21.5.01)*
- *Children need to be able to read*  
*Michael identified 'reading ability' as a key feature of a child's writing ability (RJ – 21.5.01). In a discussion prior to this journal entry (SSI – 16.5.01) Michael had mentioned that there seemed to be a correlation between a child's reading ability and their writing ability.*
- *Children need 'to know that their writing is valued' (RJ – 21.5.01)*

*When asked how he assisted these beliefs in his classroom, Michael responded that he did this by doing the following things:*

of having a classroom conducive to the writing process (SSI – 16.5.01). He extends this with his discussion of the students needing to feel confident enough to take risks, thus highlighting the need for a supportive writing classroom. He also states that students need to feel their writing is valued. This is something that Michael explores again in the inquiry. (E – 25.11.01)

The importance of writing for a purpose fits within the interpretation of the 1990s where Turbill (2002) describes writing as having a social purpose.

Michael has acknowledged that students need strategies to write. He makes reference to spelling, punctuation, grammar and a writing vocabulary.

The language used by Michael within this list is very positive and supports his understanding of the writing process and the necessary classroom environment to support

- *Encourage children*
- *Praise their efforts*
- *Provide meaningful / relevant / integrated topics for writing*
- *Provide scaffolding for children*
- *Model the writing process*
- *Expose children to more than one strategy (eg for spelling)*
- *Reinforce / build upon children's knowledge of words*
- *Provide 1:1 individual teaching*
- *Have guided writing groups*
- *Try to remember it's not always serious – let them have some fun!*

*(RJ – 21.5.01)*

These items were listed in the order given by Michael in his response.

\* \* \* \*

*Michael also reflected on the students' interest in planned classroom writing tasks. Michael responded by saying that the following student characteristics showed evidence of student interest:*

- *Changing levels of student interest with different writing tasks*

*Michael said, 'there is a wide variety of interest in writing tasks – some are very interested, some are moderately interested, some can be disinterested at times. Yet even the 'disinterested' children can be interested at varying times...' (RJ – 18.6.01)*

this. His use of words such as 'encourage', 'praise', 'meaningful', 'model', 'build upon', 'individual' and 'fun' are evidence of this.

These comments are again evidence of Michael's sense of awareness of the students in his classroom.

*This variety of levels in student interest was one of the key points addressed by Michael when he focused on the given readings from Lucy Calkins (1986). In her description of Year Two writers she referred to the varying levels of both student ability and interest. Michael spoke about having made the same observations in his own class. However, he added the variant of the students interpretation of how meaningful the piece of writing was; their understanding of the purpose 'why they were doing it'; as a factor that seemed to impact upon both their interest and ability. (SSI – 2.7.01)*

- *The quantity and quality written by the students*

*Michael said, '...even the disinterested students can be interested at varying times. How do I know this? Usually by the quantity the children write (especially if they don't tend to write copious amounts), the quality of their writing (if their spelling is more 'accurate' than usual, or their proofreading is more accurate)...' (RJ – 18.6.01)*

- *Students recognition that their writing is 'good'*

Michael always responded in some way to me after I had given him 'readings' in the form of excerpts from books, journal articles, web sites. His response to these was most often in the form of 'retrospective recall' where he would talk to me over a cup of coffee, or approach me on the playground to talk about what he'd read and what it meant for him as a teacher. These times of dialogue were accounts of 'Michael's narrative process. He likens his experiences as a teacher, and the students he has known, to these 'cognitive coaching' opportunities. Such times of dialogue would demonstrate the connections that Michael was making in his ever-increasing understanding of the writing process. Such times were a real inspiration for me and provided the motivation I needed to push all the participant teachers forward in the creation of a shared 'balanced writing pedagogy'.

*Michael said this is evident through ‘...their enthusiasm or pride to share their writing with me or someone else (eg can I go and show ... [teacher]... my writing)...’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

- *Students are engaged during writing tasks*

*Michael said, ‘I also know that children are interested in writing when they are on task and not easily distracted by an ‘external stimulus’...’ (RJ – 18.6.01)*

\* \* \* \*

*Lisa asked Michael to reflect on something that he does well in his teaching of writing. Michael responded to this task in his reflective journal where he wrote, ‘one thing that I think I do well in my teaching of writing is linking reading and writing – especially regarding literature’ (RJ – 30.7.01)*

*During class visits, Michael consistently demonstrated his love of quality children’s literature. He has built up a considerable personal collection of books from authors such as Duncan Ball, Paul Jennings, Roald Dahl and J. K. Rowling that he makes available to the students in his class. He reads aloud to his class*

To this point, I was conscious that the participant teachers and I had all been working on improving and developing their classroom literacy practices. It became apparent to me that their relationships with me were beginning to go a little ‘stale’ and the initial mentoring relationships that we’d developed were beginning to fizzle. After reading all the written text over and over, I realised I hadn’t asked each of the teacher’s what they thought they did well in their classrooms. This was done as a way of affirming good classroom practice and revamping our relationships.

*at least twice per day (SSI – 19.2.01) and regularly uses such texts as a stimulus for writing tasks (CV – 21.2.01; 22.3.01; 23.5.01; 13.6.01; 15.8.01; 26.9.01; E-20.11.01).*

*Michael believes that the key to success with literature is to ensure writing tasks are 'in context' to another curriculum area. Michael explained this by saying 'I attempt to make writing 'in context' (to something else) – not just writing for the sake of writing...' (RJ – 30.7.01).*

These were things that I had noted Michael did well in my field notes. However, it was a time of affirmation for Michael to verbalise these things and have me acknowledge them. It also gave me a basis for which to extend mentoring relationships. I knew what Michael felt comfortable within his classroom practice so I was able to suggest to other teachers that they visit Michael's classroom to see what he's doing with children's literature or integrating his literacy block with other Key Learning Areas. Creating these opportunities for teachers to visit other classrooms expanded and strengthened the mentoring relationship. The teachers began to not just work exclusively with me, but to seek out each other to discuss issues and work to solve their classroom dilemmas.

\* \* \* \*

To this point, Michael had engaged in limited times of demonstration teaching from me, but used team teaching more often as it seemed to best suit Michael's needs and worked within the strong professional relationship we had developed over the years. Michael spoke to me regularly about literacy episodes in his classroom, what worked and what didn't, and frequently asked me for suggestions. In response to this need, I developed a proforma to assist Michael in critiquing his teaching in a more formalised way. Michael completed a number of these evaluations, some of which are compiled below along with anecdotal comments from field notes and observations and suggested directions from myself.

Michael had demonstrated a high level of reflective practice in his reflective journals and his interactions with me from the beginning of the inquiry. When immersing myself in Michael's written texts (reflective journal entries, my field notes, transcripts), I was faced with the challenge of how to move him along even further in his understanding and teaching of the writing process.

I developed four key questions for Michael to use to explore and critique his teaching of writing.

- What did you do?
- What was good about it?
- What did the children learn?
- What could you have done to make it better?

These questions were developed from listening to the dialogue between us. He would frequently share classroom narratives with me and when I listened to the dialogue these were the questions that I seemed to be consistently asking him, encouraging him to explore why he was doing what he did in the classroom.

Writing block completed 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2001

**What did you do?**

After watching the Mission Video re Eddie and Lyn telling their stories, we discussed the video and listed various points on the board.  
Children were asked to write about either Eddie's story or Lyn's story.

**What was good about it?**

It linked to another experience (watching the video) and there was scaffolding for the children (listing responses on the board).

**What did the children learn?**

Children are learning / consolidating that 'writing' time is for writing (not proofreading) and they are making better use of their practice area.

This gives me more time to 'roam' and work with individual children.

**What could you have done to make it better?**

Better modelling / joint construction of the first paragraph would have helped the 3 or 4 children who were slow and unsure where and how to start (even though verbal instructions were given)

E – 22.10.01

**Figure 5.11 – Evaluation from Michael**

Michael has provided an example of his ability to link the writing task with another curriculum area (RJ – 30.7.01). He has drawn this writing task from a lesson used in the teaching of his Religious Education lesson.

Michael had previously identified organisation of the students during writing times as an area that he wanted to improve (RJ – 30.7.01). This evaluation shows his development of this area in that he outlines what has worked to encourage the students to write for a more extended time and concentrate on proofreading at the end of this writing time. Classroom visits have demonstrated to me Michael's consistent inclusion of a proofreading episode for at least ten minutes at the conclusion of an



extended writing time varying between thirty to forty minutes (CV – 15.8.01; 29.8.01; 12.9.01; 25.10.01; 1.11.01; 8.11.01; 21.11.01).

Michael has mentioned the way that he supports his class in writing through scaffolding. The pre-writing component of the writing process is evident through firstly providing a writing stimulus, in this case the video. Michael has then followed this with a discussion, referred by Calkins (1986) as verbal rehearsing. The act of making a written list of points to support the previous two processes further adds to the level of scaffold provided. The written list also acts as a spelling resource for the students as they begin to construct their own independent texts. Michael has made clear his incorporation of this aspect of the writing process within his classroom writing instruction.

In this evaluation, Michael has identified a group of three to four children who had difficulty beginning this writing task. I suggested to Michael that he include these students in a guided writing session for ten to fifteen minutes at the beginning of the extend writing time re-employing strategies such as verbal rehearsal (Calkins, 1986) and planning, leading to the construction of the first part of their writing to get them started. While this would take up some of Michael's 'roaming' time, it would ensure that these students started their writing promptly with a clear direction of where to go next. Michael employed this strategy with success (CV - 15.8.01; 29.8.01; 12.9.01; 25.10.01; 1.11.01; 8.11.01; 21.11.01).

Writing block completed 30<sup>th</sup> October 2001

**What did you do?**

After discussing why people celebrate (yesterday in RE as an intro into RE unit) and linking in to the HSIE unit (taught by Bernie) [executive release teacher] I asked the children to choose their favourite celebration and to describe/write as many reasons why they chose that particular celebration.

**What was good about it?**

- All the children were able to 'succeed' because they could:
  - name a favourite celebration
  - write why it was their favourite celebration
- More children are using the writing time productively ie using their practice page (not coming to me when they need a word)

**What did the children learn?**

I hope they are learning to write about a particular topic in greater depth, and not choose more than one celebration and just write one thing about each.

I also hope that they are consolidating the 'process' of writing ideas, then proofreading.

**What could you have done to make it better?**

Provide more 1:1 individual teaching (I probably only got to 2/3 of the class) – but the routines are definitely improving.

I may need to re evaluate a guided writing group.

E – 30.10.01

**Figure 5.12 – Evaluation from Michael**

Michael identified his inclusion of 1:1 individual teaching as a feature of his teaching that enables his students to be 'good writers'. This gives him time to teach students' strategies and skills that they have shown an individual need to learn. (RJ – 21.5.01) In this evaluation, Michael has made reference to only reaching two thirds of the class at this level. However, in a class of thirty-one (31) this is a commendable achievement!

Michael has explicitly mentioned the writing process. He has referred to it as a process the children need to learn in order to become proficient

writers. He has demonstrated knowledge of the writing process through his expectations of the students to redraft – ‘...writing ideas, then proofreading’ (E-30.10.01). Observations I made whilst visiting this class showed that the more ‘able’ students were continually led through (CV – 12.9.01; 25.10.01; 8.11.01). Michael would guide the students to write then proofread, expand on ideas by adding more information then proofread and so on.

At the end of this evaluation, Michael has made reference to the possibility of re-evaluating a guided writing group. Michael has grouped the students together in ability groups for guided writing times. These groups either met with himself, the school general assistant or me to complete the daily writing task. Such interactions I have observed on numerous occasions (CV – 29.3.01; 2.5.01; 23.5.01; 13.6.01; 4.7.01; 15.8.01; 12.9.01; 25.10.01). While this is an effective use of personnel, I did suggest to Michael that students who demonstrate like needs during a writing session could be pulled together and taught together rather than Michael teaching that skill over and over. Teaching writing skills and strategies in small group or whole class as needs arose became evident in the classroom (CV -1.11.01; 8.11.01; 21.11.01).

Michael has also made reference to the improvements he has made to the organisation of the students during his writing block. He mentions his differentiation of writing time and proofreading time.

Writing block completed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001

**What did you do?**

We had free choice writing time (due to organisation constraints – as you are quite familiar with!)

**What was good about it?**

All children (except one) were actively engaged in the writing process. The 'except one' child – though writing – seemed very distracted.

It was also good having 2 extra groups – Cathy's group and yours.

**What did the children learn?**

Children are learning to engage in the process of writing. Again, this can be a consolidation for many children.

Those children who I got to see individually were (hopefully)

- learning spelling patterns
- reinforcing spelling patterns
- learning that they are good writers!

**What could you have done to make it better?**

Helping / assisting children to improve their proofreading skills.

E – 8.11.01

**Figure 5.13 – Evaluation from Michael**

Michael's role in the school in 2001 means that he has three uninterrupted days with his Year Two class. However, schools are busy places and timetable changes do randomly occur. This evaluation was completed on a day where his writing block coincided with his first contact with his class for the day and my scheduled classroom visit.

This evaluation was important to me as Michael identified the issue of time that confronted him as one that I could relate to. Throughout the whole of the inquiry Michael treated me as a fellow teacher not a researcher that came into his classroom each week.

Michael stated in a previous Reflective Journal entry (RJ – 21.5.01) that a characteristic of his teaching is to ‘...try to remember it’s [writing] not always serious – let them have some fun! In this evaluation Michael has allowed the students ‘free choice writing’ which is a deviation from his usual efforts to link the writing task with another curriculum area (RJ – 30.7.01). While in his evaluation he passed this off as being a result of ‘organisation constraints’ (E – 8.11.01) he has previously justified ‘fun’ writing times. The fact that all but one child was engaged is evidence alone of it being a meaningful and effective writing task (CV – 8.11.01).

Michael broke the class up into three key writing groups for this session. The first group was the students who have difficulty in getting started; these students worked with the General Assistant for the writing block. The second group was students who were displaying consistent needs with spelling strategies; these students worked with Michael for twenty minutes of the writing block, allowing Michael to ‘roam’ for the remaining time. The third group was the five students I have tracked through the collection of writing samples (WS – 5.4.01; 3.7.01; 27.9.01; 13.12.01) from the beginning of the year; these students range in abilities and worked in a guided writing group with me.

Writing block completed 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001

**What did you do?**

Writing about school photos today (seems an obvious choice!)

**What was good about it?**

The most satisfying thing during the writing block was that I took an extended period of time to listen to Aaron share with me a story that he has been writing for the last 5 days!!!

**What did the children learn?**

- That I take the time to listen to and value their writing
- Reinforcing the elements of writing, proofreading, using a dictionary etc.

**What could you have done to make it better?**

It was 'rushed' in the sense that, because I gave Aaron so much time, I had less time to give individual instruction during the writing block.

(However, the benefit will be Aaron's increased self esteem and confidence – hopefully)

E – 15.11.01

**Figure 5.14 – Evaluation from Michael**

Michael has demonstrated his ability to link writing tasks with events that are within his students' experiences. The students had just had their school photographs taken, therefore it was an experience they all had knowledge of.

Michael has demonstrated his understanding that students need to see that their writing has an audience. Michael's example of taking time with Aaron is testament to this. Aaron is a student who has experienced difficulty in many areas of literacy. Michael is aware of this and responsive to his needs. The time Michael spent with Aaron would work to boost Aaron's self esteem and confidence as a writer, as Michael identified.

Writing block completed 20<sup>th</sup> November 2001

**What did you do?**

We completed 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' so the children wrote about why they liked the book and what their favourite part (or parts) was (were).

**What was good about it?**

- Linking to a book that the whole class enjoyed
- A great deal of freedom for the children – there was a lot of material to choose from.
- Children showing continued improvement in writing (structure and grammar), spelling and proofreading.

**What did the children learn?**

- Their teacher values their writing
- Their teacher gives positive feedback.
- (I hope) they are learning that they already possess a variety of strategies that they can employ in the writing process.

**What could you have done to make it better?**

Not getting interrupted about half way through the writing block (I was called out of class) – although many of the samples of writing didn't appear unduly affected by my absence from the class.

(Being able to finish the last 15 minutes of the block in class was still important)

E – 20.11.01

**Figure 5.15 – Evaluation from Michael**

This evaluation shows Michael putting into practice his beliefs about how children best learn to write. He has recognised that the students are attacking this task from a range of abilities; hence he has designed the task to be open in the fact that it caters for these varying abilities. Michael referred to this as giving the students 'freedom'. Michael has also acknowledged that the students have knowledge of the writing process and of the skills and strategies involved in constructing a text. This writing block was an opportunity for the students to show both themselves and Michael what skills and strategies they had control over.

Michael has also demonstrated his keenness to link reading and writing – something he has previously identified as a personal teaching strength. He has also provided an example of how he incorporates literature he sees as being ‘quality’ into other episodes within the Literacy block.

This evaluation also works to illustrate the disruptions to the classroom as a result of Michael’s coordinator duties - an issue previously identified by Michael (SSI – 8.2.01; 2.7.01). Michael was able to begin and conclude this writing block, however, he expresses his dissatisfaction at the interruption that caused him to miss the middle section. In his evaluation of this writing block Michael alludes to the fact that this interruption may have been more disruptive for him than it was for the students. Such an observation becomes apparent through his anecdotal comment about the student’s writing not seeming to be adversely affected.

These writing block evaluations demonstrate clearly Michael’s continually developing reflective practice. Michael was in fact an alert novice as described by LaBoskey (1994:29).

\* \* \* \*



*From the beginning of the inquiry, Michael was aware of the 'paradoxes' that exist in the teaching of Literacy. In initial discussions Michael mentions such a paradox as '...simultaneously concentrating on a particular aspect [like] spelling yet at the same time remember that children are writing a whole piece...' (SSI – 8.2.01). Michael acknowledged such paradoxes as a 'challenge' to teaching literacy throughout the year (SSI – 8.2.01; 16.5.01 SP- 28.8.01). In his final reflective journal entry he stated that these paradoxes were something that teachers had to '...be prepared to live with' (RJ – 10.12.01). Throughout the course of the year Michael identified classroom stories around these paradoxes highlighting the difficulties for himself as a teacher of the writing process and also for the students learning about the writing process. He referred to it as a consistent move between the bigger picture and the details within it, likening it to understanding a piece of sheet music. (SSI – 2.5.01; 2.7.01)*

Michael's description of these paradoxes is evidence of his professional development journey throughout 2001.

Michael has used language like 'simultaneously', 'challenge', 'live with' over the course of the year in his discussion of this. He has moved from explaining the paradoxes (RJ – 8.2.01), to looking at the challenges these pose to him as a teacher (SSI – 8.2.01; 16.5.01; SP – 28.8.01), to acceptance (RJ – 10.12.01). This demonstrates 'moments of change' within Michael's understanding of the writing process and subsequent teaching practice.

Michael's analogy of the sheet music is evidence of a narrative process he has employed as a storyteller. He feels confident with a piece of sheet music as it fits within his 'personal practical knowledge' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985) thus making connections between old and new knowledge.

\* \* \* \*

*Michael was asked to reflect on what he had learned about himself as a teacher of writing. Michael identified three key features he'd learnt about the teaching of writing.*

*Firstly, Michael identified the need for the teacher to be a writer. Michael explored this by saying, 'I have learned that it is important (for me) to actually be a writer first, in order to be a teacher of writing. Whilst I might not use the same text types as I teach, I must believe that writing in itself is purposeful. And, as a writer, I therefore know that writing is purposeful' (RJ – 10.12.01).*

*Secondly, Michael believes it is important for the teacher to understand the writing process. Michael explored this by saying, 'As a teacher of writing I need to understand how to write. It is very easy as a (reasonably) proficient writer to forget that the children are learning about, experimenting with and learning to write. I therefore need to understand the various components of writing, as well as the 'totality' or 'finished product' (RJ – 10.12.01). Michael identified a key feature of teaching writing as being able '...to try to get into the child's head ...*

In these reflections Michael has used much of the language associated with the writing process and the fundamental beliefs of many theorists in this area (Calkins, 1986; Murray, 1982; Walshe, 1981).

Michael has clearly acknowledged the importance of the teacher also being a learner and the need for continued professional development. This supports the 'teacher as learner' model of professional development presented by Fullan (1991).

Michael has acknowledged the importance of understanding the writing process in order to best teach it.

*walk in their shoes and try to understand something about them as a writer...' (RJ – 10.12.01). This is difficult to do unless the teacher themselves understands the writing process and can articulate the stages in such a process.*

*Michael also expressed a need for the teacher to value all writing produced by students. Michael explains this further by saying, 'I need to value the writing that children produce (even if it is not aesthetically pleasing to me) – and this can be challenging!' (RJ – 10.12.01)*

*Michael believes '...it is important to nurture the children as writers' (RJ – 10.12.01). Michael explains this in further discussion by saying '... I don't feel comfortable starting with what they can't do ... I begin with what they can do and then build on that...' (SSI – 11.12.01).*

*Michael identified another key feature of this professional development opportunity as that of reflective practice. He stated that it is important to be '...reflective of my own practice ... and being prepared to take on other ideas...' He continues by saying that this is important in order for himself as a teacher '... to do the best by the children*

*in the class...’ (RJ 10.12.01).*

*Reflective practice was identified by Michael to be of benefit to him personally, but he also thought it would be beneficial to the students. He writes, ‘...maybe we can encourage the children to be reflective about their own ‘growth’ into proficient writers ... they might articulate the skills that they believe they have mastered ... they might share a piece of work that they are proud of ... they might tell us what they think is important in writing...’ (RJ – 10.12.01). Such a process is not unlike the one that I guided each of the case study teachers through.*

\* \* \* \*

*Michael felt that it was important to tell the rest of the school community the discoveries that he had made throughout the inquiry. He felt that the project should be continued – he writes, ‘we need to continue what we are doing’. Furthermore he writes that literacy practices between stages need more exposure. He explains this by saying, ‘...we may need to have more exposure of literacy practices that take place in K-2 (or K-3) with the middle / upper primary grades and vice versa! ... I’m sure that they are doing great things too...’ (RJ – 10.12.01).*

Michael’s use of ‘we need’ demonstrates the shared ownership of the inquiry. The call for ‘balanced writing pedagogy’ has become a ‘shared vision’ (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Fullan, 1982).

Michael also makes reference to the network or ‘learning community’ established within the Early Stage One and Stage One team and calls for these networks to be extended throughout the school. These comments are

responsive to the contexts of collaboration, mentoring and learning developed throughout the inquiry.

\* \* \* \*

*Michael concluded his final reflective journal entry by writing 'Thanks for helping me to be a better teacher of writing – my students are the also the better for it' (RJ 10.12.01).*

Michael has concluded this experience with the use of positive language. He has again acknowledged himself as a learner and that as a process that is continual throughout his career. He states he is a 'better' teacher, thus suggesting there is still room for further growth.

\* \* \* \*

*Michael attributed the in-school professional development he'd received throughout 2001 as being '... professionally formative and inspirational'. He made particular reference to the collaborative relationship between himself as a classroom teacher and myself as the researcher. He made reference to 'having a professional, well informed and supportive practitioner ...who is quite comfortable in letting herself by observed and critiqued...' as being a benefit to the professional development experience (RJ – 10.12.01). Further discussion about this revealed that Michael found having the opportunity to be critiqued by a colleague and for him to get the opportunity to observe and*

The language used by Michael in this journal entry underpins aspects of the professional development experience, which assisted him throughout the year. He mentions 'collaborative relationship', 'professional', 'well-informed', 'supportive practitioner', 'observed and critiqued' as key components of the devised in-school professional development model.

Michael also makes reference to the need for the school culture and context to be supportive of the process. His discussion of 'territorial rights' has been

*critique that same person was of advantage. Michael saw this as a way of breaking down barriers and 'territorial rights' that often inhibit teachers from moving forward in their teaching practice.*

important to the in-school model of professional development. Michael and I discussed this frequently as Michael had adopted a similar approach throughout the year within his role of 'Numeracy Support' as I had within 'Literacy Support'. Michael was also working within teachers' classrooms (a different cohort to those that this inquiry drew upon), assisting them with their Numeracy classroom practice. He was finding the acceptance of teachers to this process the main challenge within this role. The relationship of trust and respect that we developed working together overcame this barrier.

\* \* \* \*

## ***Interpretive Summary – Michael***

### Michael's Understanding of the Writing Process

Michael demonstrated an awareness of the writing process from the beginning of the inquiry. He was able to compare and contrast his own experiences, and those of many of the parents, and of his student groups with his beliefs and understandings about how children learn to write.

Michael communicated his awareness of the links between reading and writing and their reciprocal gains (Clay, 1998:10-11). He frequently mentioned the benefits of teaching reading and writing together, not as two isolated areas.

Michael had a clear literacy block in operation in his classroom from the beginning of the year. This block was made up of episodes pertaining to both reading and writing. Michael recognised that this block did change according to the needs of the students. When he was asked to describe his writing block he began by saying '...at the moment...' Such a comment alludes to Michael's openness to change and trying new ideas. In fact, Michael's constant drive to continually improve his literacy block is evident throughout the inquiry. Discussions Michael and I engaged in were consistently centred on ways he could improve his Literacy Block (SSI – 19.2.01; 2.5.01; 20.6.01; 12.9.01; 22.11.01).

Michael saw himself as a writer and a continual learner within the writing process. He was able to identify the factors that contributed to his writing, which in turn would assist the students he was teaching. (RJ – 10.12.01) Michael's personal interest and 'personal practical knowledge' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) in this curriculum area assisted with his understanding of both the reading and writing processes.

### Professional Development Experiences and their Impact

This section aims to identify and review the structures, activities, processes and people partnerships identified within Michael's professional development experiences.

Michael is an experienced classroom teacher with expertise in many curriculum areas. He is a musician and has an informed knowledge of the music components of the Creative and Practical Arts Syllabus. He has been recognised at a diocesan level for his knowledge of and commitment to Religious Education. His coordinator position within the inquiry school sees him overseeing Mathematics and Numeracy; this area of expertise is evident from his previous employment history and also within this educational setting. Michael has also engaged in previous research work with me within Literacy. From working with Michael, it is obvious that he is a very skilled practitioner who actively seeks opportunities to extend his professional knowledge in curriculum areas.

Michael has described diocesan professional development experiences he has been involved with as being primarily concerned with the teaching of reading. This trend was also identified by the Literacy Education Officer (I – 10.1.01) and the inquiry school Principal (7.2.01) when speaking about professional development initiatives prior to the Good First Year Teaching Program. Michael identified these experiences as being 'very helpful', the knowledge he gained from these he still used in his classroom (SSI – 19.2.01).

Michael has engaged in study additional to his initial teacher training. This additional study is evidence of Michael's quest for knowledge and understanding. Such additional study would have assisted Michael's skills of questioning, analysis and reflection on his own teaching practice.



Michael has sought opportunities for Professional Development outside what was offered by the Education system through personal professional memberships. Michael mentioned his membership to a professional organisation, the Primary English Teachers Association. This provided him with additional literature on aspects of both the reading and writing processes.

Michael has demonstrated a willingness to establish mentoring type relationships with his involvement in two research projects. His readiness to be involved in projects and his openness to working with another person is evidence of Michael's willingness to establish people partnerships to assist with his professional development. He mentioned the value of the professional development experience of 'observing' and 'critiquing' within this type of relationship (RJ- 10.12.01; SSI – 11.12.01).

Michael and I worked together in each term of the 2001 school year. A total of twenty-five hours was provided for classroom support with me working in his classroom followed by frequent opportunities to discuss any issues that may have arisen. Michael described this form of professional development as being 'professionally formative and inspirational' (RJ – 10.12.01).

Michael received no exposure to the Good First Year Teaching Program. He was aware of it at a school level as a result of its profile amongst staff. (SSI – 2.5.01)

#### Impact of these experiences on Michael's teaching of writing

The section reviews the impact of the previously discussed professional development experiences with regard to Michael's professional growth in the teaching of writing.

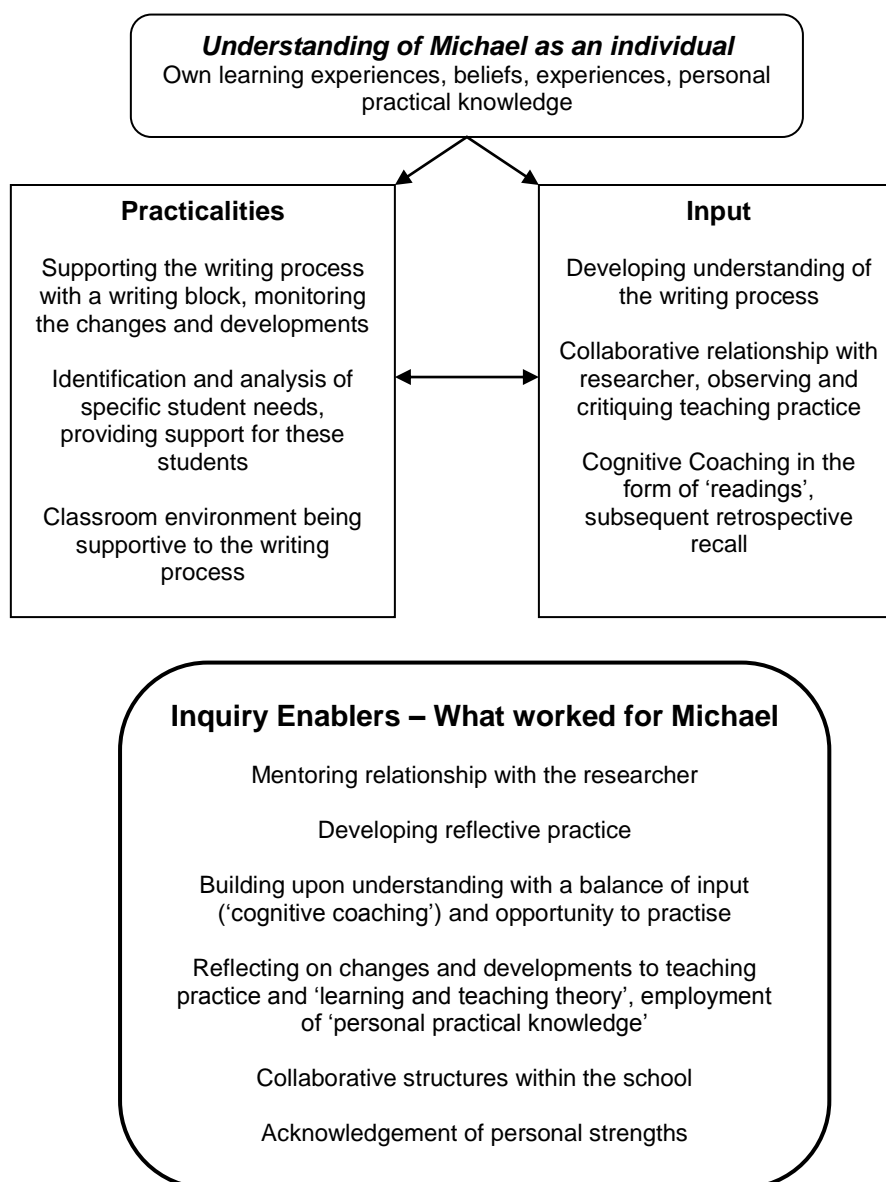
Michael frequently made reference to the 'paradoxes' within the teaching of writing (SSI – 8.2.01; 16.5.01; SP – 28.8.01; RJ – 10.12.01). His recognition and understanding of these paradoxes is evidence of his knowledge of the curriculum area. Michael's continual professional reading, questioning amongst established people partnerships and reflections on his own teaching practice supported the growth of his articulation of these 'paradoxes'.

Michael had a number of personal tools that he used to enhance his professional growth. Michael readily engaged in reflective practice with regard to his teaching of writing. He was continually looking at what he had done and ways to improve this for the benefit of his students. The mentoring process between us was used frequently. Michael often initiated and engaged in discussions with me; continually seeking understanding and ways he could improve his teaching instruction. At the same time, Michael was aware of his teaching strengths.

Analysis of Michael's final journal entry (RJ – 10.12.01) provides insight into what aspects of the professional development experience were of value to him professionally throughout the inquiry. He mentions 'collaborative relationship', 'professional', 'well-informed', 'supportive practitioner', 'observed and critiqued' as key components of the devised in-school professional development model. Michael also makes reference to the need for the school culture and context to be supportive of the process. His discussion of 'territorial rights' has often flavoured the in-school model of professional development. The relationship of trust and respect that we developed working together overcame this barrier.

Figure 5.16 provides a model of the professional development journey experienced by Michael over the 2001 school year. This model has

resulted from Michael's guidance by me through the inquiry process, which is a response to the developing in-school professional development model developed through investigation of the literature (figure 2.8) and supporting methodologies for the inquiry (figure 3.1). It demonstrates what worked for Michael in moving him forward in his understanding of what constitutes 'balanced writing pedagogy' and his teaching of this in his Year Two classroom.



**Figure 5.16 – Michael's Professional Development Journey**

## **Bringing the Teacher Stories together in light of the Research Questions**

The stories of the professional journeys of Kate, Amanda and Michael over the 2001 school year have been described and interpreted. This next section aims to bring these stories together in respect to the guiding research questions that framed the inquiry.

### ***Action Research as a Professional Development Model for the Teaching of Writing in Early Stage One / Stage One Classrooms***

The main aim of this inquiry was to investigate the use of the guiding principles of action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11) - plan, act, observe, reflect and revise - to guide these participant teachers in their teaching of writing. It was anticipated at the beginning of the inquiry that such a process would assist the teachers in refining and evaluating their teaching practice to bring about 'balanced writing pedagogy' in these first years at school. Three guiding questions were addressed throughout the inquiry with regard to this focus:

- How has writing been taught within Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms over the past ten (10) years at the inquiry school?
- What structures, activities, processes and people partnerships can be identified within Early Stage One / Stage One teachers professional development experiences?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these professional development experiences and the professional growth of teachers in the teaching of writing?

Each of the three teacher journeys previously described will be brought together under the context of each research question in order to clearly

identify what the data indicated with regard to these teachers' professional development experiences.

***How has writing been taught within Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms over the past ten (10) years at the inquiry school?***

The ethnographic aspect of this inquiry addressing the school and its teachers responded to this question. (Merriam, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Burns, 1997; Van Manen, 1990; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) This occurred both before and during the data collection conducted on the participant teachers for the inquiry. The knowledge of the school principal, the diocesan Literacy Education Officer and I was drawn upon to investigate and reproduce the history of writing instruction within the school. The inclusion of these perspectives was representative of the 'working cultures' within the school – both 'etic' and 'emic' (Merriam, 1998:157). As I had been a member of the school teaching community since 1997, I was aware of the priorities and initiatives of the school concerning Literacy. Within my time of employment I had worked at an executive level with both Literacy and Numeracy being my areas of responsibility. My role within the 'Literacy Support' title had also built up my knowledge within this question area. My close interactions with the school Principal and the Literacy Education Officer from the Catholic Education Office and their extensive knowledge of the literacy curriculum area within the diocese and the inquiry school enabled me to delve further back into the history of writing instruction within the school.

The inquiry school opened in 1990. From its inception, it had had three principals with the current principal being employed from 1996. In the school's early years it attracted many young, beginning teachers. Whilst

the English KLA was always taught in classrooms, it was left to the discretion of individual teachers and the guiding syllabus documents (Board of Studies, 1994, 1998). Since it was a new school, there was no shortage of issues and priorities needing attention, curriculum whilst valued was not worked with extensively. (I – 10.1.01; 7.2.01; D – 12.00)

Literacy became a priority within the school with the appointment of the current principal in 1996. Literacy was a curriculum area that was prioritised by this principal, as it was an area of personal interest and expertise. Resulting from this, the leadership of the school directed the teaching staff into addressing their literacy practice in terms of current thinking. In the early stages, the Principal and Assistant Principal worked together to prioritise literacy amongst the staff with time being given to it in staff meetings and staff development days. (I – 7.2.01)

In 1998, the Literacy Education Officer from the Wollongong Catholic Education Office was invited to work with the staff on educating them about current practices. At this time, input was given into assessment procedures and classroom organisation in terms of literacy blocks. (I – 10.1.01; 7.2.01) Whilst writing was included in the literacy block structure, most of this professional development time was given to the teaching and assessment of reading. This was indicative of the outline provided by the Literacy Education Officer (I – 10.1.01) and reflections from the participant teachers (Michael – SSI – 19.2.01; Kate - RJ – 7.5.01; SSI – 6.4.01).

In 1999, the Kindergarten teachers at that time (neither of whom were involved in this inquiry) were amongst the first cohort to work through the Good First Year Teaching Program aimed at Kindergarten teachers. Their participation in this course heightened their awareness of the expectations around literacy learning and teaching within the diocese. (I – 7.2.01)

In 2000 the Year One teachers and I worked through the Good First Year Teaching Program aimed at Year One teachers. This year also saw for the first time, stage meetings during staff meeting times to work with the teachers on their understandings within literacy. These meetings were initially set up to facilitate communication amongst stage groups and to also address the different priority areas within the school – Kindergarten to Year Three addressed Literacy teaching while Years Four to Six addressed the Learning Technologies project also running in the school at this time. (I – 7.2.01) During that year I began to work within the ‘Literacy Support’ role and began restructuring the program, moving from withdrawal of children to supporting the teachers’ classroom practice in literacy. Throughout this time, it became evident to me that the teaching of writing across the school was disjointed. There wasn’t a whole school approach and there were very distinct differences among different teachers (even within the same grade). Writing in many classrooms, was being taught in a very formulaic way. Teachers were responding directly to the text types outlined in the English K-6 Syllabus (1998) and teaching children the formulae for the specific text type being taught at that time. There was very little creativity or differences apparent among the children’s work. Student work samples followed the text type structures outlined in the English K-6 Syllabus (Board of Studies, 1998) and was usually assessed according to those criteria. This was something that I noticed in my classroom as well as others that I visited in my ‘Literacy Support’ role.

I was frustrated that there didn’t seem to be any real response to the needs of teachers for professional development opportunities with the teaching of writing. It had been ‘tacked on’ to many literacy in-services and professional development opportunities to that point with reading always having the more emphasis and time. Writing really was ‘the poor cousin to reading’ as described by Turbill (2002).

***What structures, activities, processes and people partnerships can be identified within Early Stage One / Stage One teachers professional development experiences?***

The literature addresses activities, processes and people partnerships associated with 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' professional development experiences. The professional development experiences identified and explored by the participant teachers will be discussed and reference made to support literature.

The professional experiences of each of the participant teachers varied. All the teachers had received tertiary training in education and had all been involved in professional development opportunities to varying extents throughout their time of employment as teachers.

The participant teachers were all at different levels of teaching experience ranging from eleven years to three years. The professional development experiences outlined by each teacher showed considerable variation, which is indicative of Connors' (1991:78) notion of professional development being a 'complex' process resulting from teachers having '...different professional needs in differing educational contexts and at different stages of their careers'. For example Michael throughout his eleven years in the profession had completed post-graduate study, attended different diocesan professional development courses, and had held a professional membership in the Primary English Teachers' Association. Kate on the other hand, in her five years' experience on contracts and casual basis, had been involved with isolated and disjointed diocesan professional development opportunities. Professional



development experiences for each of these participant teachers was reliant on their time of experience within the profession, schools of employment and their personal seeking out of such opportunities. (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Brumfit, 1985)

The participant teachers were all able to outline their tertiary training including specific subjects they undertook in literacy. Whitehead (1989, 2000, 2001) described that a teacher's tertiary training impacts upon their knowledge about learning. Knowledge received at a tertiary level is acknowledged as being 'abstract' knowledge (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000:38). The challenge for teachers is to explore this knowledge through their teaching practice to develop a 'learning and teaching theory' (Whitehead, 2001, 2000). Michael demonstrated that he had reflected upon and sifted through these experiences with his chronological and analytical recount of his experiences (SSI – 19.2.01). Amanda stated '...it wasn't until I actually started teaching that I got to put my theory into practice' (SSI – 19.2.01). These two participant teachers demonstrated their development of an 'embodied theory of practice' making links between their tertiary training and classroom practice.

The professional development opportunities the participant teachers had been involved with in literacy prior to the inquiry were consistent with the description given by the Literacy Education Officer (I – 10.1.01). Michael was the only participant teacher who had created additional opportunities for development through additional study and a professional membership.

In-school support structures operated prior to the inquiry and could be identified by the teachers. In 2000, the teachers were grouped according to stages for the first time for staff meetings. Literacy had been identified as a focus area during that year for teachers in Kindergarten to Year Three. Teachers in Years Four to Six were involved in a Learning

Technologies project. This time was used to discuss areas of need and provide professional input with these identified areas. The supervision of classroom programs had been conducted in a collaborative way since 1998. Teachers were placed in groups and encouraged to share their programs with the group members as form of supervision. An executive staff member was positioned with each group and completed a checklist during this time to be filed for accountability purposes. These collaborative structures and processes gave the teachers forums where they were encouraged to talk about what they were doing and why. (Edwards-Groves, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Nevo, 1995; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Fullan, 1991; Elliott, 1991; Tickell, 1990; Marsh, 1988)

The changed 'Literacy Support' role developed people partnerships among us as I worked with teachers in their classroom on their particular needs. (Lefever-Davis and Heller, 2003; Nieto, 2001; Barth, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) I had worked with Natalie, Lee, Amanda, Cathie and Michael within the 'Literacy Support' role prior to the inquiry year. During this time, I had assisted them with supporting students with needs in literacy. I had worked in their classrooms with their children and as such these teachers were comfortable and used to having me in their classrooms. These partnerships were collaborative in nature.

Four of the six participant teachers had been trained through the Good First Year Teaching Program. This impact of this diocesan professional development structure is acknowledged throughout the inquiry. Natalie, Cathie and Amanda had done this program prior to the inquiry. Lee completed the program throughout 2001 at the same time as participating in the inquiry. All the participant teachers were aware of the program. Tickell (1990) identified that professional development at a system level is

usually made up of ‘...strong emphasis on longer-term, system wide planning to ensure completion of major government initiatives’. The Good First Teaching initiative can be seen to be in response to the system needs overall with regard to supporting the Reading Recovery program and as such was developed ‘...as one component in a systematic approach to improving literacy teaching and students’ literacy outcomes in diocesan primary schools’ (Catholic Education Office: Diocese of Wollongong 2001:1). It fits within Guskey and Huberman’s (1995) definition of an ‘institutional’ model of professional development. In such professional development, the importance of both the provision of opportunities and organisation within the system according to time, resources and presentation in which professional development opportunities are offered are important (Fullan, 1991).

The people partnerships between the participant teachers and the Literacy Education Officer also need to be acknowledged within the Good First Year Teaching professional development experience. The Literacy Education Officer was the provider of ‘expert knowledge’ (Danielson, 1996; Elliot, 1991)

The participant teachers throughout the course of the inquiry identified these structures, activities, processes and people partnerships. As such, they can be identified as impacting upon their professional growth in the teaching of writing.

***What has been the impact of these professional development experiences upon their professional growth in the teaching of writing?***

The narrative processes used by the teachers in interactions with me as the researcher enabled them to describe and evaluate the professional development experiences they had been exposed to. (Johnson and Golombek, 2002; Whitehead, 2000; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Rosenthal, 1993)

Minimal professional growth in the teaching of literacy was reported from these teachers with regard to their pre-service training at a tertiary level. Each of the teachers reflected upon their tertiary experiences and evaluated these through their narrative processes. Kate reflected, 'I have not used anything I have learnt at uni ... how terrible is that!' (I – 14.5.01) Kate's memories of learning about language and the writing process at university included '...lots of different theories ... but limited practical experience' (I – 14.5.01). Amanda discussed with me her dissatisfaction with the literacy subjects she completed at university. She felt as though '...I didn't really understand or learn anything from these subjects' (SSI – 19.2.01). However, Amanda stated, '...it wasn't until I actually started teaching that I got to put my theory into practice' (SSI – 19.2.01). These comments from Amanda seem to conflict with each other, thus suggesting that teachers need to actively seek links between their tertiary training and classroom practice. Michael described his undergraduate experiences of literacy as being '...not greatly helpful!' (SSI – 19.2.01).

Both Michael and Kate made reference to professional development opportunities they had been exposed to since their employment as teachers within this diocese. Experiences that they both identified were

predominantly focused on the teaching of reading and as such, had little impact upon their professional growth in the teaching of writing. Kate's use of 'I think' (RJ – 7.5.01) when recounting diocesan professional development experiences is evidence of their impact upon her professionally.

The participant teachers all held the Good First Year Teaching Program in high esteem. This can be seen as a result of the profile it had within the 'context of culture', specifically the working cultures, in which they were employed (Cole and Knowles, 2000:123; Merriam, 1998:157; Stringer, 1996:77; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 38-40; Halliday, 1985). Michael is evidence of this as he had not attended any part of the course, yet was still aware of what the course was and its aims. Amanda described her experience with Good First Year Teaching as being '... invaluable. It has virtually taught me everything I need to know about the episodes that need to be taught in Year One literacy' (SSI – 19.2.01). Kate attended this course for one day and reported that she '...learnt lots about how to now teach kids how to read, write and spell' (I – 14.5.01). As such, this was a professional development experience that impacted upon the professional growth of these teachers with regard to their literacy teaching.

The participant teachers acknowledged the changed role of 'Literacy Support' as an impact on their professional development. One of the key impacts of this process was that teachers felt it supported the diocesan assessment expectations encapsulated within the Good First Year Teaching Program. Amanda acknowledged the support she'd received through in-school structures with the implementation of a literacy block and diocesan assessment procedures (SSI – 7.2.01).

The inquiry became a professional development experience that impacted upon these Early Stage One / Stage One teachers. The participant

teachers made comments in their reflective journals about this professional development experience.

Kate described this professional development as *'ongoing', 'challenging' and 'thought provoking'* (RJ – 7.5.01; 21.5.01; 10.12.01)

Kate has identified some key elements of the in-school professional development experience. Firstly Kate has addressed the timeframe of the experience as being ongoing. The need for a long-term time frame has been identified within the literature as a characteristic of 'successful' professional development. (Hoban, 2002; Hoffman, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Mevarech, 1995) Kate has also described the experience as being 'challenging' and 'thought provoking' which incorporates the 'teacher as learner' model, which builds upon what a teacher already knows. (Turbill, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Fullan, 1991; Stallings, 1989)

Michael made reference to *'having a professional, well informed and supportive practitioner ...who is quite comfortable in letting herself be observed and critiqued...'* as being a benefit to the professional development experience (RJ – 10.12.01)

This comment from Michael emphasises the importance of 'people partnerships' within professional development experiences. This comment challenges traditional notions of the 'presenter' and 'facilitator' often used in professional development opportunities. The professional relationship between Michael and I shared was beneficial to the professional development experience offered by this inquiry.

The data collected on each of the participant teachers demonstrates their professional journey over the 2001 school year with regard to their teaching of writing. Their own learning experiences, previous professional development experiences and pre-existing teacher beliefs have all been explored as the guiding principles of action research (Kemmis and

McTaggart, 1988:11) have been employed to develop 'balanced writing pedagogy' in these Early Stage One / Stage One classrooms.

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# **Chapter Six**

## **Bringing the Journey to a Close**

*A Grounded Theory for In-school  
Teacher Professional  
Development*

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## **Chapter Six**

### **Bringing the Journey to a Close: A Grounded Theory for In-school Teacher Professional Development**

The previous chapter has described the journeys of three participant teachers involved in this inquiry. Analysis of the collected data were interwoven into their stories in order to give them as much depth as possible and thus provide the reader with a sense of each teacher's voice and professional journey. The interpretivist/naturalistic paradigm that this inquiry drew upon was an advantage as it furnished the opportunity for unexpected outcomes to emerge. Luke (2003:91) writes that qualitative research is '...empowering, transformative and progressive'. Such a description fits with the findings of this inquiry. The emerging theory revealed how teachers can be empowered to take control of their classroom practice and associated professional understandings as they work with their teaching colleagues to create transformative, progressive and shared pedagogy.

The inquiry began with the intention of exploring and developing a 'balanced writing pedagogy' within the Early Stage One/Stage One classrooms of these participant teachers. However, during the process of data analysis, the research focus began to change. It became clear that the nature of the interactions between the participant teachers and myself, as the facilitator, was highly conducive to the development of a 'balanced writing pedagogy'. As I explored the developing teacher understandings and their respective associated classroom practices, it also became clear that there were strong relationships between these and other aspects of the school community. Thus identifying these critical interacting components and exploring how each was contingent upon each other became the major focus of the inquiry.

What emerged was a powerful theory of in-school teacher professional development outlining a professional process that I believe is more important than the content being explored, namely a 'balanced writing pedagogy'. This theory having emerged from the data can be grounded back into the data. It can therefore be referred to as a grounded theory of 'in-school teacher professional development'.

This chapter aims to explicate this in-school teacher professional development theory. The theory evolved through constant comparative analysis of the individual teacher stories through the use of the 'multiple lenses' described in chapter four. It also involved analysis of the process each of the participant teachers moved through. These respective processes were in turn guided by both the teachers' individual needs as well as the emerging themes within these needs. Equally as important to the emerging theory was an analysis of the enablers and intervening conditions that became apparent through the individual teacher stories. Throughout the analysis process, I also found myself constantly returning to the literature in the field which in turn was consistently used to shape the direction of the inquiry. Therefore, reference will be made in this chapter to the literature pertaining to professional development and teacher learning.

Before outlining the grounded theory that emerged from this inquiry, I feel it is important to revisit some key aspects of grounded theory methodology. Beginning with Glaser and Strauss (1967) much has been written about developing grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) elucidate grounded theory as the interconnection of many disparate pieces of collected evidence. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:32) state that in the development of a grounded theory

‘... the direction you will travel comes after you have been collecting the data, after you have spent time with your subjects ... you are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know ... you are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts’.

Gough and Scott (2000:342) draw upon the work of Turner (1994) in their discussion of grounded theory. They state,

...grounded theory is a method in which categories for the coding of data are derived from the data itself, and in which emphasis is placed on the discovery and elucidation of links between categories so generated.

Creswell (2002: 452) supports and extends this by defining the developed grounded theory as ‘...an abstract explanation or understanding of a process about a substantive topic grounded in the data’.

Miles (1983) reminds us that grounded theory relies on the researcher being open to what the analysis of the data is showing, using this analysis to slowly develop a coherent framework rather than imposing one from the start, and is often a response to the need for clarity and focus within the research analysis. Finally, Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasise the importance of interpretation as a way to discover concepts and relationships within data and the importance of organising these into a theoretical explanatory scheme. Charmaz (2000: 522) writes that the analysis of a developed theory ‘...tells a story about people, social processes, and situations’.

Such is the journey of this chapter as the pieces of this ‘puzzle’, namely the people, social processes and situations, are placed together in the discussion of this developed theory. What follows is a description of each of the identified contributing components that create the developed theory of in-school teacher professional development.

'Story' has been used in the previous chapters to support the development of this theory (Creswell, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These stories have served to describe the development of the theory through the process of the inquiry (Creswell, 2002: 455). Figure 6.1 presents a visual model representing the devised theory of in-school teacher professional development. Many attempts have been made to create a two dimensional representation of the interrelation between the complex components, all of which underpin this theory. Whilst each of these will be addressed starting from the outside and working in, the connectedness of these components must not be forgotten and every effort will be made to cross reference amongst these.

## The theory of In-school Teacher Professional Development

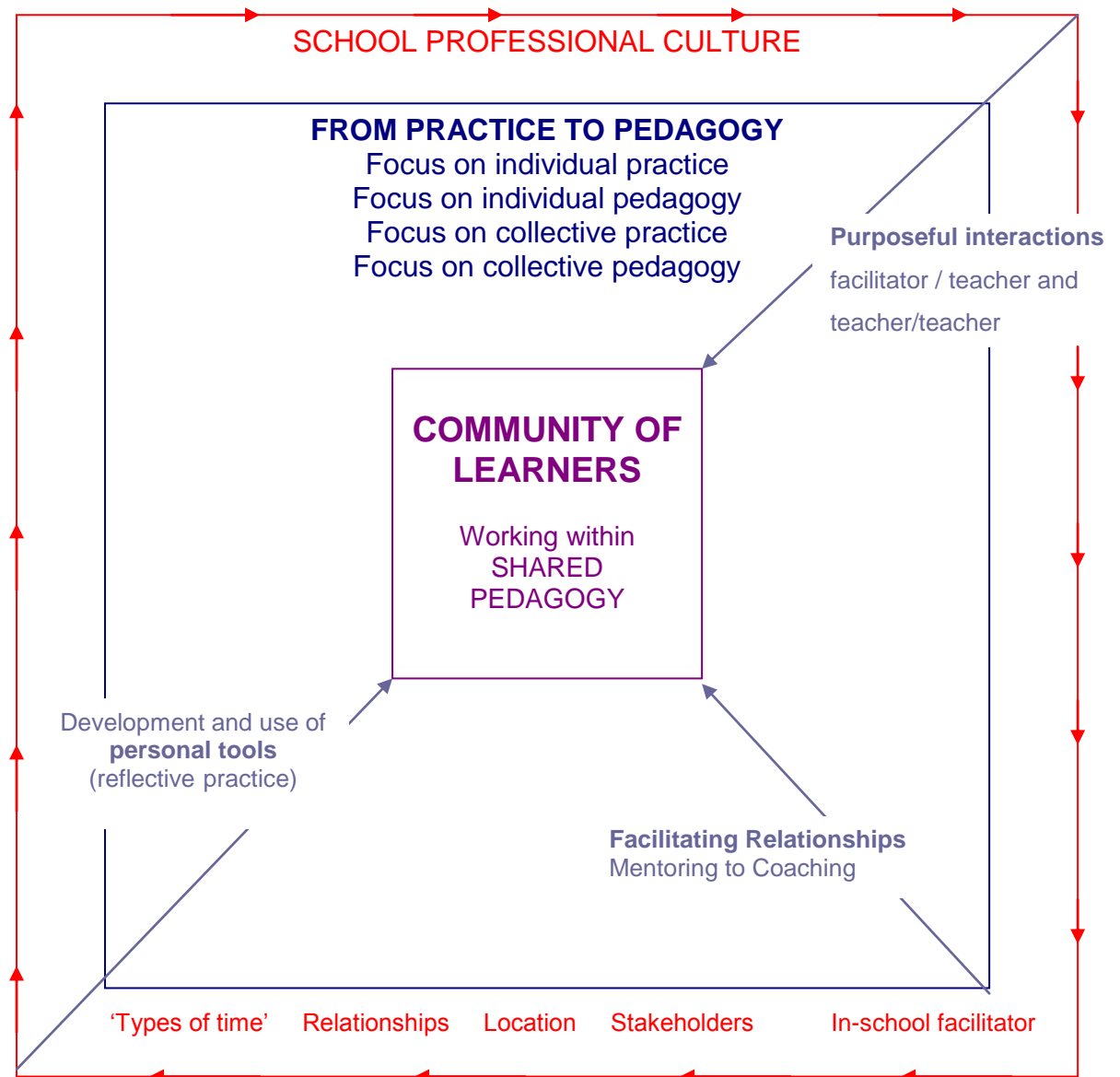


Figure 6.1 – Theory of In-school Teacher Professional Development

### ***School Professional Culture***

This inquiry did not create the professional culture that existed within the inquiry school. It did highlight, however, the critical role that the professional culture played in teacher professional learning. The Principal of the school in this study demonstrated an ability not only to recognise the potential of staff members, but to provide them with opportunities that supported them. She demonstrated awareness of the needs of the school with regard to curriculum and her appointment of staff members reflected this. The Principal and I had a personal and professional relationship where we shared common visions and passions. We had worked together prior to commencing this inquiry, establishing some of the necessary grounding. This inquiry built upon these foundations and supported and extended the professional working relationships within the school.

It is reasonable to argue therefore, that the professional culture of the school in which teachers are employed is crucial to their embrace of professional development opportunities. This inquiry demonstrated that when the participant teachers were given responsibility for their own professional decisions, were supported through the leadership of the school and acknowledged for what they bring to the identity of the profession, they became empowered. This outcome is clearly supported in the literature, which acknowledges the importance of support from the school leadership and the provision of time and resources to professional development (Hoban, 2002; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Hoffman, 1998; Darling- Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Mevarech, 1995; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Stallings, 1989).

Analysis of the data demonstrated that within the professional culture of the school, there were critical components. These were the importance of time and how that time was allocated and used, the relationships, the location of the professional development opportunity and the impact of

stakeholders, and the need for an in-school facilitator. These will all be discussed in what follows.

### Time

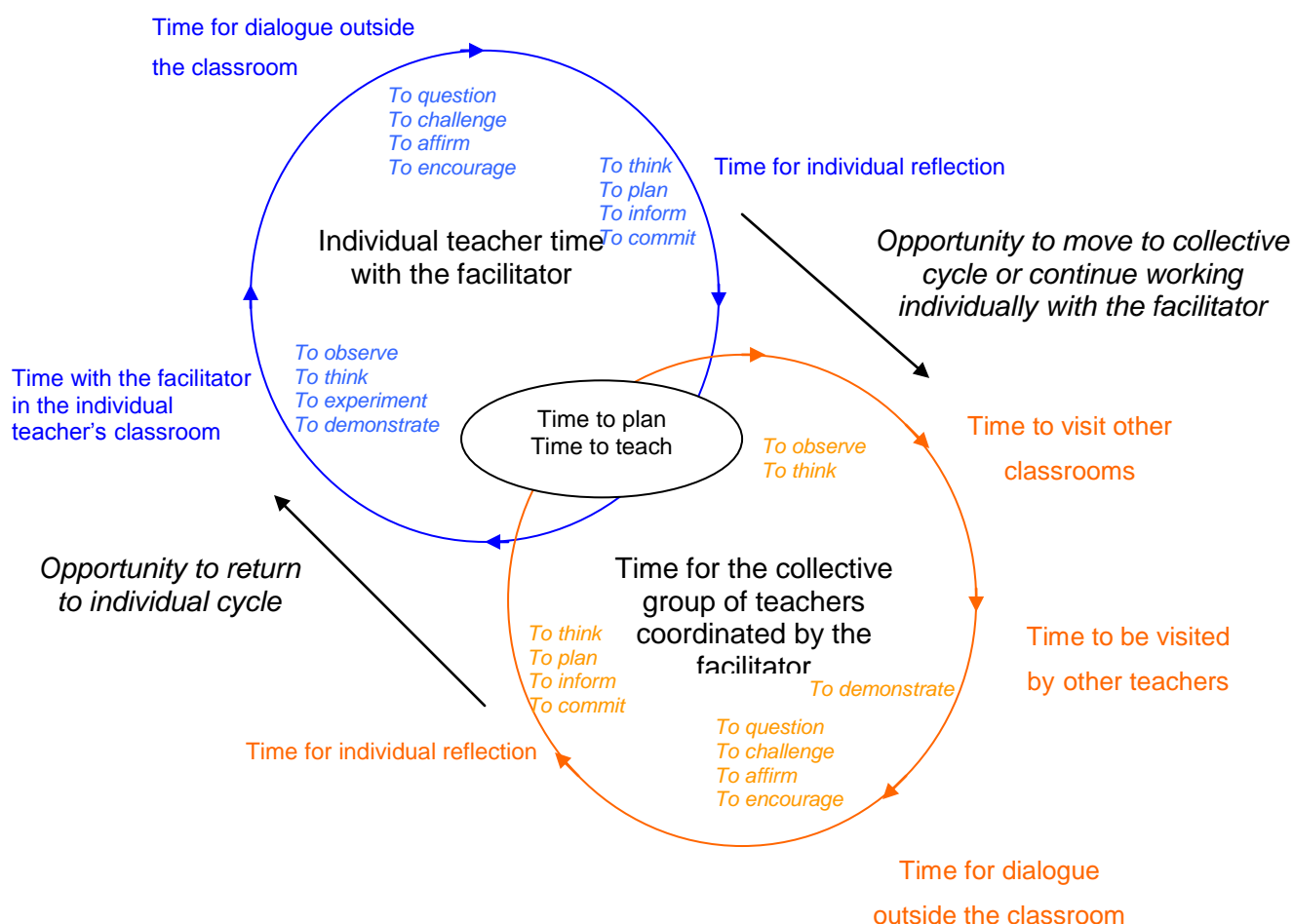
My data strongly suggests that time can be considered as 'currency' within schools. If these teachers and this school can be considered representative of most New South Wales schools, it would be valid to claim that if time is allocated to professional development initiatives, it will be deemed to be important by the teachers participating and therefore, worthy of their time. However, it is how this time is allocated and used that this inquiry found to be critical. The inquiry extended over the entire 2001 school year with a timetable devised to allow the facilitator regular entry into the classroom of each participant teacher. As such, prolonged engagement with each of the participant teachers was provided.

The importance of time is not new to the professional development literature as it has been widely acknowledged for many years (Hoban, 2002; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Hoffman, 1998; Darling- Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Mevarech, 1995; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Stallings, 1989). However, this study identified that it is the way that time is used that is critical. The study found that it is vital that time needs to be frequent, regular, scheduled and focused in order to support teacher professional development. Four key 'types of time' were identified within this grounded theory, each of which needed to be allocated in order for the individual to meet with the facilitator and for the group to meet collectively. These 'types of time' emerged from analytic procedures and I have labelled them:

1. Time to observe
2. Time for dialogue
3. Time to reflect
4. Time to demonstrate

The time needed within each of these 'types' was found to vary for individual teachers. The professional experience and intrapersonal skills of each teacher became a key consideration in the allocation of each 'type' of time. It was therefore vital that I as the facilitator considered the individual needs of each teacher as he or she moved through the professional development cycle. Thus the specific 'type of time' allocated was contingent upon the professional experience and intrapersonal skills of each of the participant teachers.

The following diagram (figure 6.2) demonstrates the different 'types of time' and how these can be allocated and used within both the individual and collective cycles within this theory.



**Figure 6.2 - Types of Time**



### Relationships

Relationships were found to be a key component to the professional culture within the school; furthermore, this understanding underpins every part of this theory. As such, the 'relationship' component of this theory will be addressed consistently throughout the discussion. The relationships amongst those involved within this professional development initiative were of paramount importance, particularly between the facilitator and the teachers involved. It can therefore be stated, that open communication between those who were engaged in this professional development enterprise were essential. The data clearly indicated that such openness allowed for a sense of connectedness to develop amongst the participants, creating in turn a community and professional support network.

Furthermore, it was found that 'trust' was a key condition in the upholding of positive relationships within the professional culture of the school. Trust needed to permeate the relationships between the teachers themselves, those involved in the leadership of the school, the facilitator and key stakeholders. Thus the development and maintenance of 'trust' was continuous throughout the inquiry and was identified as being integral to the professional development experience for each of the participant teachers.

The 'authenticity criteria' developed by Guba and Lincoln (1989:245-150) and its role within the inquiry (described in Chapter Three) was of crucial importance to the professional relationships that existed. The components of 'fairness', 'ontological authenticity', 'educative authenticity', 'catalytic authenticity' and 'tactical authenticity' drew upon the nature and quality of relationships that existed within the inquiry. As such, these in turn provided explicit evidence of the credibility of the research data and subsequent interpretations leading to this grounded theory.

### The location for Professional Development

This theory advocates that teacher professional development opportunities need to take place within the context of the individual school where teachers are employed. The inquiry operated at the 'chalk face', in the situation where support for the participant teachers was most needed and most relevant. This design provided participant teachers with support to implement and trial new ideas with professional guidance, assistance and encouragement from the in-school facilitator. As such, the findings of this inquiry challenge both the structure and location of many external professional development opportunities.

This theory of teacher professional development asserts that a 'partnership' needs to evolve between the individual teachers and the school in which they are employed. Such partnerships Connors (1991:78) reminds us optimise teacher professional development while meeting the needs of the school policy and expectations, diocesan expectations and syllabus documents. The notion of 'partnership' was clearly evident in this inquiry between the participant teachers and the facilitator. It also extended to the facilitator and Principal, facilitator and parents, and facilitator and Literacy Education Officer and amongst the individual teachers. These 'partnerships' it can be argued emerged because and were evidence of the trust that permeated all of these relationships. The Principal and other members of the school leadership team were supportive of the inquiry and demonstrated this through the provision of specific 'types of time' needed for the participant teachers to engage in the relevant professional experiences for their needs. Support also needed to be available for me as the facilitator to continue with my own professional development, to continually increase and consolidate my own understanding so I could in turn, best support the teachers. Thus, the in-school facilitator was viewed as also being a learner.

### Stakeholders' Impact

The data revealed that 'stakeholders' influenced what teachers did in their classrooms and as such needed careful consideration in other professional development opportunities. The literature recognises the importance of the key 'stakeholders' (namely, leadership, parents, policy) and the impact these 'stakeholders' have on teaching practice and the importance of receiving feedback from them, particularly in light of change in teaching practice (Hoban, 2002; Nieto, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Cole and Chan, 1994; Tickell, 1990; Barth, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Furthermore, the participant teachers highlighted the need for consideration to also be given to policy and programs adopted within the school that impacted upon their teaching practice. For instance, in this inquiry the impact of the Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1993, 1979) and the diocesan developed Good First Year Teaching Program were consistently acknowledged across the data. Each of the participant teachers acknowledged the role and influence that various 'stakeholders' had had upon their teaching practice and each identified key stakeholders that impacted upon their classroom practice. For example, all of the participant teachers identified parents as key stakeholders and the need to provide education to such stakeholders about current literacy practice was an ongoing theme (Kate – I-14.5.01; CV – 2.5.01; 9.5.01; 16.5.01; 23.5.01; 30.5.01; 6.6.01; 13.6.01; RJ –21.5.01 Amanda – SSI - 21.2.01; 8.3.01; 29.8.01 RJ 16.2.01; 18.6.01 Michael – RJ – 16.2.01).

### In-School Facilitator

The final critical component of the school professional culture was the in-school facilitator. The literature provides many examples of the incorporation of a facilitator into professional development models. However, often this is a professional who is external to the immediate school situation (Edwards-Groves, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Turbill, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Nevo, 1995;

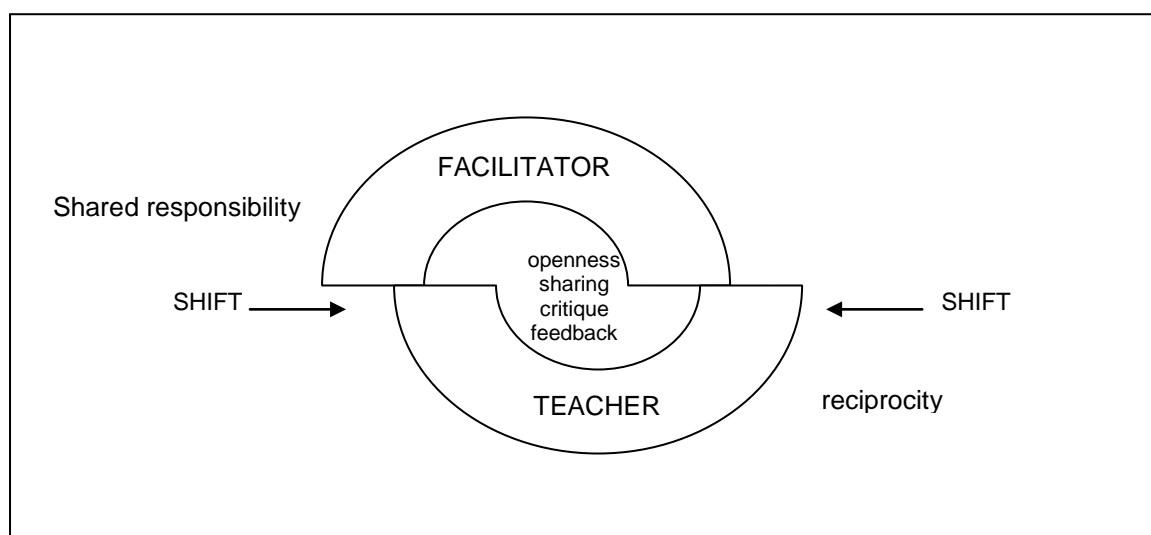
Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Fullan, 1991; Elliott, 1991; Tickell, 1990; Marsh, 1988). The role of the researcher as facilitator and the biases this may present have been acknowledged, however appeared to be beneficial in the context of this inquiry. Therefore, this theory emphasises the importance of the facilitator being a member of the staff rather than drawing upon an external professional.

There appears to be little indication in the literature as to how one best identifies the person within the school to take on this role. The teachers in this study indicated that the facilitator must have knowledge of the targeted area, be recognised as a strong classroom practitioner, and have positive relationships with the other professionals who are to be involved in the professional development opportunity. My existing and professional relationship with the school and my previous studies placed me in a good position to accept the role of in-school facilitator.

My experience as the facilitator heightened my awareness of the need for this role to be open to constant negotiation and change. The inquiry demonstrated that as professional relationships extended and networks were developed and further extended amongst the teachers, my role as the facilitator changed. As the facilitator I was the initial leader of the professional development experience however, as this evolved, the transfer of responsibility for the 'balanced writing pedagogy' moved from me to the participant teachers. As the teachers began to take greater ownership my role as facilitator had to change. This inquiry demonstrated that knowing when to 'let go' and accept a more co-learning role was critical for the facilitator to recognise and carry out. Doing this it seemed, enabled the initial hierarchy established between facilitator and teachers to dissolve as the teachers became empowered and began to take ownership of their professional learning. This process may not have occurred if professional relationships based on trust had not existed

among the participant teachers, school leadership, key stakeholders and the facilitator. As Huberman (1992) claims, taking ownership of professional experiences is critical to lasting change.

‘Reciprocity’ is a term that best describes what seemed to occur. As the facilitator and participant teachers moved towards a common goal, where the input provided from each professional was encouraged, respected and valued, reciprocity was constantly in action. This inquiry demonstrated that such give-and-take relationships supported the shared endeavour as ownership and responsibility for the initiative began to be shared. This process is represented further in figure 6.3.



**Figure 6.3 – The relationship between facilitator and teacher**

### ***Purposeful Interaction: the use of Action Research***

At this point, it is important to discuss what I have referred to in the model as purposeful interactions. These purposeful interactions underpinned the action research process that directed the professional development initiative. These purposeful interactions allowed for the participants to focus on their practice, both at the individual and collective level, and to

move towards the development of an individual and collective pedagogy. Without such purposeful interactions, the data suggests a community of learners may not have developed. These interactions could be likened to scaffolding behind the professional development enterprise.

The guiding principles of the action research spiral: plan, act, observe, reflect and revise (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:11), characterised the purposeful interactions between the participant teachers and me in my role as both facilitator and researcher. These guiding principles were constant throughout the duration of the inquiry and acted as the 'change agent', used to refine and support the teaching practice of the participant teachers while providing opportunities for professional dialogue and critique.

In this inquiry, the principles of action research also allowed for the individual needs of each participant teacher to be met. While the guiding principles of 'plan, act, observe, reflect and revise' remained the same for each teacher in this inquiry, the participant teachers were able to move through this process according to their specific needs. The 'types of time' previously described supported this process. Opportunities for demonstration and team-teaching involving the participant teachers and the facilitator were provided for in the initial stages of the inquiry. In the model represented in figure 6.1, the continuing nature of the action research cycle is highlighted by the arrow which represents the purposeful interactions between the in-school facilitator and each of the teachers and among the teachers. This in turn supports the process the inquiry moved through as outlined in figure 3.10.

The literature clearly identifies action research as a useful process for classroom teachers to engage with (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Shulman, 1992; McCutcheon and Jung, 1990; Nunan, 1989; McKernan, 1988; Kemmis and McTaggart,

1988). However, this theory of in-school teacher professional development revealed that this process alone is not enough. The exploration of this theory clearly identified the components needed in order to support and extend teachers in their use of the action research process. As a result of being involved in such a process, it was found that teachers needed to develop their own 'tools' for professional learning. These have been categorised in this theory as 'personal tools'.

### ***Personal Tools***

The participant teachers each demonstrated their own repertoire of 'personal tools' that they used both within their teaching practice and their professional learning. This theory therefore both acknowledged and developed these individual 'tools', providing specific 'types of time'. Such 'personal tools' included questioning, reflection, professional critique and articulation of practice and pedagogical understandings. Moreover, this inquiry tended to extend these through the incorporation of reflective practice as a key inquiry tool that enabled the teachers to further explore the principles of the action research process (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). As a result of this process it was found that teachers began to recalibrate and articulate their classroom practice.

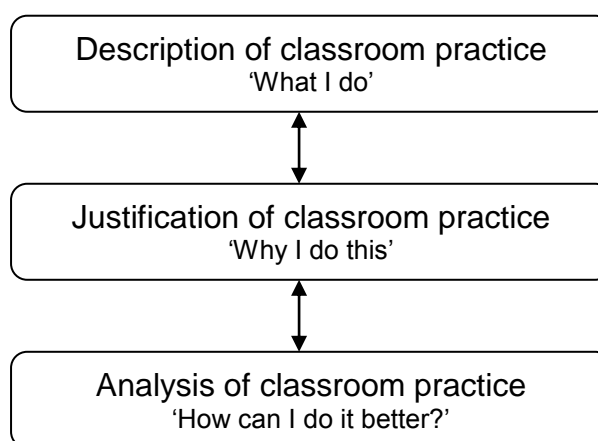
### **Reflective Practice**

Carr and Kemmis (1986:72) argue that the notion of 'professional maturity' and 'pedagogical expertise, understanding and knowledge' must be considered when developing reflective practice. In this inquiry, the notion of reflective practice was used as both a key tool for data collection as well as a tool for their professional learning. Analysis of such data demonstrated that each of the teachers tended to operate at different levels of reflective practice. However, there was evidence of development within reflective practice throughout the course of the inquiry for each

teacher. For example, all the teachers demonstrated a movement from describing what was happening to reflecting on aspects of their own teaching practice that in turn could be used to change this practice in order to best support the students in their classrooms.

‘Michael’ stated that it is important to be ‘...reflective of my own practice ... and being prepared to take on other ideas...’ He continues by saying that this is important in order for himself as a teacher ‘... to do the best by the children in the class...’ (RJ 10.12.01)

Thus it was found that teachers needed to be encouraged and supported as they moved from describing classroom practice to critically analysing their own practice as a form of self-assessment. These levels appeared to be reciprocal as the teachers demonstrated some movement between and among them. This inquiry demonstrated that reflective practice has the potential to encourage and support teachers as they reflect on their experiences as teachers as well as develop the confidence to act upon new learning gained through that reflection. Analysis of the data demonstrated that there were layers within the process of reflective practice evident from this cohort of teachers. These layers are represented in figure 6.4.



**Figure 6.4 – The Layers Within Reflective Practice**



While connections can be made between these layers of reflective practice and the action research process, this theory advocates that teachers need to be supported in their movement between these layers.

A contributing factor to this movement was the change in relationship between the in-school facilitator and the teachers and among the teachers themselves. Also, the infusion of input (namely facilitator input, additional readings, peer discussions, previous professional development experiences) to support the professional journey of the teachers was shown to be vital in assisting the process of self-reflection. Contingent upon all these factors was the effective use of time – time for reflection, and discussion and so on.

### ***From Practice to Pedagogy***

This theory of teacher professional development built upon the premise that teachers needed to be in control of their immediate classroom situation before they could engage completely with exploring and refining their respective pedagogical practices. The participant teachers demonstrated a need to focus on themselves as a teacher first before they could begin to work as a ‘learning community’ or ‘team’. Too often it seemed, in previous times, the teachers were asked to work as a ‘learning team’ with little or no understanding of what this meant. There is an ‘old adage’ that seems to be apt here – ‘know thyself’. Such a statement this inquiry found was critical to the learning development of teachers. That is, they needed to focus on themselves as individuals in the first instance and throughout the learning process they often needed to return to this point.

#### **The teachers as individuals**

It was clear that the individual participant teachers had individual needs. And so, the professional development experience needed to respond to these needs. This finding confirms Goodson’s (1992:119) concern for

professional development to include a '... focus on the teacher's life' and the establishment of a 'trading point' for interactions to occur. The participant teachers tended to bring their own personalities, their own professional journeys, their own curriculum strengths and weaknesses and their own personal tools to the professional development enterprise. The study of each participant teacher in terms of his or her own learning experiences, professional experience and pre-existing teacher beliefs enabled me as the facilitator to ascertain a meaningful starting point for each teacher and build upon this accordingly. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that in order to improve the practice of the participant teachers it was important first to understand where the teachers were coming from with regard to their lives and professional experiences, and then move to concentrate on their classroom practice.

Since the teachers were shown to be at different points in their professional development learning, the time needed varied within the various 'types of time'. Poetter (1997:3) warns us that inexperienced teachers '...often lack the experiences that might help them make connections with ideas and practices' in professional development experiences. For example, this seemed evident in the case developed on Amanda who appeared to be the least experienced of the teachers. Where as Michael, seemingly the most experienced teacher, authenticated Stronge's (2002:9) suggestion that it takes between five to eight years to become a 'master' of teaching. Michael demonstrated the use of his personal experiences within his classroom teaching, reinforcing Stronge's (2002:10) notion that 'experienced teachers ... have attained expertise through real-life experiences, classroom practice and time'.

Previous professional development opportunities needed to be investigated as this provided a way of ascertaining an individual teacher's pre-existing teaching beliefs. Once these were identified, it was found they

could be used to sculpt the professional journey to best suit the individual teacher needs.

When the participant teachers reflected upon their classroom practice they tended to bring their own experiences into the conversation through narrative recounts and reflections. Goodson (1992:116) suggests that teachers invest a lot of their 'self' in their practice. The literature is replete with the idea that the teacher's experiences and background should be acknowledged as these have played a role in shaping each individual teacher's current classroom practice (Hoban, 2002; Turbill, 2002; Whitehead, 2003, 2000, 1998; Beck and Murphy, 1996; Danielson, 1996; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1992; Huberman, 1992; Elliott, 1991).

#### Focus on practice

The literature acknowledges that it is important for professional development to address the content teachers need to know. The literature also suggests that sources of knowledge – text, courses, people - need to be made available to teachers in order to assist this professional input (Hoban, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Danielson, 1996; Brock, 1995; Huberman, 1992; Stallings, 1989; Joyce and Showers, 1988).

Managing the practicalities of the classroom was one of the first areas that required the attention of the participant teachers and subsequently became a crucial component of the theory of teacher professional development. The participant teachers identified a need in the first instance for assistance in meeting diocesan expectations; namely, setting up a literacy block, establishing routines and structures within their classrooms, supporting individual students within their classroom and to develop an understanding of what was expected of them throughout the year according to syllabus documents and school policy. It became evident that until the teachers had these areas under control they were

found it difficult to explore and refine their pedagogical understandings. Both Shulman (1992) and Darling-Hammond (1997) acknowledge such needs as they call for understanding in 'pedagogical content knowledge', that is what '...enables teachers to represent ideas so they are accessible to others' (Darling-Hammond, 1997:295). This theory acknowledges the importance of the classroom practicalities and works to set up these initial foundations early in the interactions between the participant teachers and the facilitator.

Each of the participant teachers had been exposed to a significant amount of input from their own learning experiences, tertiary training and professional development opportunities. Having someone to engage in with professional dialogue about these experiences, and particularly conflicting input areas, enabled the teachers to begin to make connections with their understanding of the curriculum under investigation. The provision of the 'types of time' enabled the facilitator to work in each of the classrooms on a weekly basis thus allowing for the exploration of these ideas within the context of a collaborative and supportive relationship.

Lee wrote, ' <i>...as the year progressed my teaching improved and so did my children's writing</i> ' (RJ – 3.12.01)
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Once the participant teachers indicated that they were in control of both management and practice, they seemed to better understand the requirements of the mandatory syllabus documents. At this point, they tended to be in a position to refine their pedagogical understandings and subsequent classroom practice. However, it became important that the professional development experience did not end at this point. Elliott (1991:104) states 'competence gets defined as a mastery of techniques rather than a mastery of the self in the service of the professional values it professes'. Data analysis showed that while after the focus on practice, the classroom 'mechanics' seemed to be in place, for true ownership and

understanding to occur the teachers needed the 'wisdom to realise educational values in concrete forms of action' (Elliott, 1991:105). It can be suggested that the need to move from a focus on practice to a focus on pedagogy was necessary to continue the professional growth of the teachers and in turn the development of a learning community within the school context.

### Focus on Pedagogy

The next of the phase in the move from practice to pedagogy became a focus on pedagogy itself. Pedagogy defined as 'the art and science of teaching' (James, 1899/2001 as cited by Luke, 2003:91) requires that not only the practical nature of teaching is explored – the art – but also the reasons behind why specific things are done and their relationship to current thinking – the science. Luke (2003:87) emphasises the need for '...intellectual and critical depth in pedagogy'. The participant teachers demonstrated that it was crucial that teachers were encouraged to articulate why they were doing what they are doing and, to be able to articulate the associated benefits of this to the learners in their classroom. Both the change in relationships and provision of 'input' seemed to enable the teachers to explore and assess other alternatives from an informed viewpoint. The outcomes of this inquiry exemplified the importance of the interconnection of teacher beliefs with their classroom practice through the provision of 'types of time' for these interactions to occur.

This theory found that by focusing on pedagogy through drawing upon the professional relationships between the facilitator and the participant teachers a climate of openness and professional critique developed. Within this climate, the reciprocal nature of these relationships were drawn upon as the pedagogy behind the practice was explored and sometimes challenged. Such change from a focus on practice to pedagogy required a change in relationship between the facilitator and the participant teachers.

These changes will be explored further in the discussion of the transition from mentoring to coaching.

### From Individual to Collective

As stated before, it was found that teachers needed to firstly engage in an individual focus with the facilitator. It has been argued that this individual focus on practice then pedagogy equipped each teacher with the confidence to begin to share their informed insights and as a result, collective understandings began to be developed.

The collective nature of the theory allowed for the collaboration amongst those with an interest in the inquiry. For example, the focus on developing collective practice and pedagogy involved the facilitator, the participant teachers, those in leadership positions within the school and other key stakeholders such as parents and diocesan personnel. The initial focus on individual practice then pedagogy with the classroom practitioners positioned the teachers so they could begin to argue their beliefs and challenge conflicting positions in an informed way. It is reasonable to argue that such opportunities could not have occurred without being allocated valuable time.

### ***Facilitating Relationships***

Initially, the professional development enterprise had a strong 'mentoring' basis. As time went by this began to change to more of a 'coaching' focus. The process of moving from mentoring to coaching was encapsulated in the changing focus of practice to pedagogy within both the individual and collective cycles. This process is further outlined below.

### Mentor Relationships

The literature tends to define mentoring as a supportive relationship where two people work together towards the attainment of more 'holistic' goals.

Such a relationship is often unequal where one person is seen to have more 'experience' and 'wisdom' and as such guides the other person towards the pursuit of the nominated goal. (Long, 2002; Boreen, 2000; Stringer, 1996; Acton, Smith and Kirkham, 1993; Smith and West-Burnham, 1993; Weindling and Earley, 1987; Nias, Southwork and Yeomans, 1989)

The initial relationships between the facilitator and each of the participant teachers fitted with the above description of mentoring from the literature. Furthermore, these relationships also fitted within the 'controlled network' Stake (1995) describes. Data collected on this process suggests that mentoring relationships fitting these descriptions needed to be initially established between the facilitator and the participant teachers to support the 'focus on practice' component of this professional development enterprise.

The data also suggested that established mentoring relationships between the facilitator and participant teachers needed to work from a 'people processing' rather than 'product processing' perspective. This again addresses the need for mentoring to be concerned with holistic goals. In this inquiry, addressing the individual needs of the teachers in a more controlled mentoring relationship enabled the professional development experience to cater for individual needs and as such was different for each teacher. In doing this, the importance of an open collaborative culture and a supportive climate were able to be recognised (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Weindling and Earley, 1987; Nias, Southwork and Yeomans, 1989) which seemed to support the sustainability of this theory within each of the 'types of time'. The 'context of culture' (school professional culture) within which the participant teachers were working seemed to be conducive to this. Interpersonal and communication skills were seen to be important throughout the inquiry, with opportunity provided for listening, problem

solving and reflective practice for team building. Such qualities tended to support the development and maintenance of the mentoring relationships throughout the inquiry.

Smith and West-Burnham (1993:6) assert: 'effective communication lies at the heart of effective mentoring'. Analysis of data collected from the participant teachers suggested that those entering a mentoring relationship needed to be clear about the roles, responsibilities and rights of each of the parties. These considerations became important to these mentoring relationships. What became important in this inquiry, was the need for the participant teachers, the facilitator, and identified stakeholders to feel as though they had an equal share over the professional development opportunity and a share in its vision.

The process the participant teachers moved the inquiry in suggested that initial mentoring relationships needed to be developed within a 'controlled network' (Stake, 1995). It seemed that the teachers responded to having someone to work through individually identified classroom issues with them. This mentoring relationship between the participant teachers and the facilitator, with the recognition of both strengths and weaknesses of each person appeared to be the initiator in establishing a starting point for these professional relationships and a structure for subsequent interactions and input.

<p>'Michael' made reference to 'having a professional, well informed and supportive practitioner ...who is quite comfortable in letting herself be observed and critiqued...' as being a benefit to the professional development experience (RJ – 10.12.01)</p>
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When engaging with mentoring relationships, it became necessary to ascertain how each of the participant teachers preferred to learn and build their understandings within this framework. This involved identifying where the needs for each participant teacher lie, along with identification of



their strengths. The skills of action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) – plan, act, observe, reflect, revise – enabled the mentoring relationship to develop and refine teaching practice within this particular curriculum area. In this inquiry the teachers, and the facilitator, all responded to constructive feedback about personal professional developments and the subsequent direction of the inquiry. These principles have been identified within the literature surrounding mentoring relationships (Long, 2002; Boreen, 2000; Smith, 1993; Weindling and Earley, 1987; Nias, Southwork and Yeomans, 1989).

However, as the teachers moved through this professional experience these mentoring relationships began to change. Whilst it is acknowledged that changes of relationship result from all relationships, the quality of the change and subsequent professional needs became important. As the participant teachers became more confident with their classroom practice, they demonstrated the need to expand their source of 'expert knowledge' (Danielson, 1996; Elliot, 1991) beyond the facilitator, and as such move to a 'linking network' (Stake, 1995). These teachers also demonstrated that the time taken for this occurred at different rates for individual teachers. In this inquiry the teachers sought out people partnerships within the network of teachers within the school, incorporating other professionals who could support their professional needs. At times the facilitator assisted these teachers in making these links with other professionals. However, the teachers within this inquiry demonstrated a preference to search out such partnerships themselves in response to their specific needs. Amanda for example, was consistently concerned with supporting the Reading Recovery students in her classroom throughout the inquiry; therefore her 'linking network' expanded to include the Reading Recovery teachers within the school. This inquiry demonstrated the need to extend mentoring relationships throughout the staff to ensure ownership of the process. Whilst the inquiry started off with mentoring relationships between each of

the participant teachers and the facilitator, it became vital to the sustainability and authenticity of the inquiry that relationships were encouraged and formed amongst grade partners, the targeted stage group, members of the school leadership team, other teachers within the school and other interested parties.

### Cognitive Coaching

Darling-Hammond (1997:106-107) describes a coaching relationship as 'close' and 'continual', where participants are 'motivated to succeed rather than intimidated into failure'. The changes in the relationships in this inquiry (previously alluded to) saw the need for these teachers to move from a more dependent mentoring relationship into a coaching role where the teachers were challenged and challenged each other in their quest for understanding. The changes in the participant relationships built upon the 'linking' mentoring network previously described and positioned the teachers to '...work together around a common set of understandings...' in the development of a shared pedagogical approach. As such, it can be stated that the relationship between the facilitator and the teachers changed as collective teaching practice was challenged while the teachers were supported with understanding the current thinking and refining their own, and collective, pedagogies (Hill, Hawk and Taylor, 2001).

This change in relationships seemed to occur once the teachers demonstrated control and increased confidence with their classroom practice. The movement into thinking about their teaching pedagogy seemed a natural progression –a chance to explore why they were doing what they were doing. However, it was evident that they had moved beyond the initial mentoring relationships and needed to be supported and challenged as a team in a coaching type relationship (Clarke, 1997:165).

These teachers indicated that they needed constant input targeted at their specific needs in the classroom in order to extend and refine their

understanding with regard to their teaching of writing. The provision of literature in the form of excerpts from textbooks and journal articles to support these needs was used to support their individual and sometimes collective areas of need. Such input aided discussion and assisted with the identification of further areas needing to be explored. The inclusion of input in this theory then enables the professional development opportunity to develop and refine individual teacher knowledge (Northfield and Gunstone, 1997).

Specifically, the teachers were given material to develop their understanding of the writing process and how to teach it. However, the provision of input was concerned with the ‘...development of attitudes, concerns, beliefs and perceptions’ (Baird, 1991:101) as these teachers moved from individual practitioners to a ‘team’ or ‘community’ with shared pedagogy. This process can be likened to constructivist theory where ‘...individuals construct their own understanding of experiences in a way that is influenced by ... cognition and affect, ideas and emotions, perceptions and concepts ... constructivist processes operate during reflection, leading to enhanced metacognition’ (Baird: 1991:111). This in turn gave the participant teachers a shared language to talk about their shared pedagogy.

‘Natalie’ wrote, *‘The infusion of expert knowledge with the general teachers knowledge has been very beneficial ... the collaboration has been fantastic and enhanced the children’s writing immensely with the infusion of ideas and analysis on teaching practices and strategies’* (RJ – 10.12.01)

‘Natalie’ identified the importance of ‘knowledge’ within this professional development opportunity. She referred to this within the context of building upon existing knowledge and doing so within a collaborative environment. The notion of imparting knowledge through professional development opportunities is common within the literature. Gitlin and Smyth (1989) took the position that professional development should

involve critical analysis and an action perspective. Danielson (1996:115) emphasised that professional development should be concerned with both content knowledge and development of personal pedagogy. Fullan (1991:326) stated, 'teacher education should foster the development and integration of several aspects of teacher effectiveness' with one of them being technical skill development. Hoban (2002) referred to the need for teachers to be exposed to 'knowledge sources'. This inquiry drew upon these aspects of 'expert knowledge' within the context of individual teacher classrooms, focusing on individual teacher needs (Johnson and Golombek, 2002; Elliott, 1991) through its use of 'cognitive coaching'.

A 'chain of influence' could be identified within this inquiry, which drew upon the principles of teacher-based action research (Lefever-Davis and Heller, 2003; McNiff, 2000; Cohen and Manion, 1994) combined with the changing relationships. 'Action', in this inquiry refined teaching practice through mentoring relationships, which was influenced by internal conviction, which came from increased personal and collective understanding of the curriculum area, through the provision of each of the 'types of time' within both the individual and collective cycles. Such shared understanding seemed to be the result of 'vicarious experience'; interaction with the facilitator, each other, and stakeholders. The teachers developed their own 'narrative' through experiences they have in their classrooms and key moments in their understandings of their teaching practice. (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994:34-35) The use of the 'multiple lenses' to develop the interpretive comment in the teacher stories highlighted aspects of this 'chain of influence' for the participant teachers.

### ***Community of Learners***

The theory of professional development that emerged from this inquiry built upon the belief that teachers needed to work towards establishing themselves within a community of learners. The establishment of this

community at an in-school level ensured that community members were close at hand, which in turn strengthened the opportunity for continued professional development and dialogue within the school network. Establishing a community of learners was seen to involve more than having a mentor, being a facilitator, coach or friend. However, data analysis suggested that these forms of relationship were necessary in the foundations and development of such a community. This community of learners involved actively ‘...transcending the diverse personal and work experiences of colleagues’, encouraging teachers to move beyond their comfort zone and together ‘explore new epistemologies of learning’ (McNiff, 2000:65-66). The literature highlights the increased popularity around the concept of learning communities in educational circles. The New South Wales Department of Education (2003) featured this as an issue demanding professional attention. Senge (1990) defined a learning community as

‘an organisation where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together’.

The learning community that emerged from this inquiry is well positioned with this definition.

This theory supports Covey’s (1990) notion of the importance of moving a community of learners from dependence to independence to interdependence. The stages of this inquiry described in chapter 3 and previous discussion of the move from mentoring to coaching and individual to collective, demonstrate these transitions. In this inquiry, the time taken to move through these stages was different for each participant teacher, and it is necessary to recognise this. Analysis of the participant stories in view of the ‘types of time’ demonstrated their varied movement. In the beginning, the participant teachers were dependent on the facilitator as strategies of demonstration teaching with a movement into team teaching

periods were employed. The participant teachers moved to independence through the inclusion of more team teaching and having the facilitator observe their teaching. Throughout these stages, the focus on teaching practice was investigated through a mentoring relationship between each of the participant teachers and the facilitator. Interdependence began to occur when the participant teachers took greater ownership of the project and coaching relationships evolved amongst the teachers and facilitator and other key stakeholders. Once begun, the facilitator was no longer seen as the sole 'expert' and other members from this 'community of learners' began to be viewed as stakeholders who would provide support and the critique within a collaborative and shared pedagogy.

Stoll and Fink (1996:159) remind us, 'the school as a workplace with its unique culture has an enormous capacity to support and enhance teachers' learning'. The structures that were developed and supported by the professional culture in the school can be seen as enablers which allowed the participant teachers to move forward on their professional journey. The importance of professional development initiatives being supported by the school leadership is discussed within the literature (Gebhard and Oprandy, 1999; Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Barth, 1991; Fullan, 1991).

This theory highlights the importance of recognising the role of each person in a 'community of learners'. In this inquiry, it became vital that everyone involved in the professional development model had access to each 'type of time' according to their needs, listened to what each participant had to say, that the teachers were encouraged to participate fully and that feedback was given in a thoughtful yet constructive way. The role of facilitator began with the modelling of these qualities but extended to managing such relationships amongst the participant teachers and the broader school community. This was done in the inquiry by the

facilitator listening to the needs of the teachers through constant and careful analysis of all collected data. However, it seemed that the participant teachers and the facilitator taught and learnt from each other (McNiff, 2000:65), again emphasising the reciprocal nature of these professional relationships. Such interaction amongst the participant teachers and the facilitator provided a vital context for professional development (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992:218). Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:226) remind us that the relationships between and amongst teachers are a powerful way to initiate and support 'real' change as teachers become 'more united than divided'. This inquiry seems to support such a claim.

Bolam (1993) wrote that it is important to develop a culture within schools that promotes and supports teachers as learners. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:217) state 'cultures of teaching help give meaning, support and identity to teachers and their work'. Through the development of collaborative practice and the creation of a community of learners, the onus was on teachers to be responsible for their own development and subsequent understanding of teaching practice, that is why they did what they did.

### ***Shared Pedagogy***

Movement through the described conditions of this theory resulted in the participant teachers working within shared pedagogy that they developed. Whilst this inquiry stemmed from my passion and interest levels, it became important that the developed 'balanced writing pedagogy' and associated theory of in-school teacher professional development became one of shared ownership. This inquiry showed that teachers can be empowered to make decisions, provide input, and have professional development address their individual needs. Each of the participant teachers moved

through a professional journey over the course of 2001 as they embraced some innovative and pedagogically sound teaching practices. Ownership of this process was crucial to the development of this theory of in-school professional development (Beck and Murphy, 1996:68). It seemed that empowerment of the teacher and ownership of their professional practice became critical to this form of educational change.

Darling- Hammond (1997:298) states,

‘...an occupation becomes a profession when it assumes responsibility for developing a shared knowledge base for all its members and for transmitting that knowledge through professional education...’.

As such, this theory for teacher professional development began to assist teachers in refining and articulating their individual teaching practice with regard to writing, but also to have this as a shared vision, evident in each of these Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms. The changing relationships between and among the facilitator and participant teachers in this inquiry can be seen as evidence of the development and subsequent ownership of this shared pedagogy.



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# **Chapter Seven**

## ***Theory for Future Practice***

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## **Chapter Seven**

### **From theory to practice**

The previous chapter presented the grounded theory for in-school teacher professional development. This chapter aims to explore the implications of this theory for in-school teacher professional development. Whilst I acknowledge that this theory has been developed with data collected on one bounded school site, the following implications have the potential to serve as a framework for other school sites. In order to do this, I will use the model presented in Figure 6.1 on page 315 as a 'blueprint' for developing in-school professional development.

#### ***School Professional Culture***

This theory highlights the importance of the school professional culture. Whilst it is understood that school cultures vary and the culture prevalent in this inquiry does not exist everywhere, data analysis suggested that there are some necessary components of the professional culture that need to be considered. Each of these components is explored further in the following pages.

#### **Time**

While the notion of time in professional development is widely acknowledged within the literature, the allocation of time into components to support the professional growth of teachers as they engage with professional development processes has not been widely explored. It can be concluded that the allocation of time needs to be responsive to the anticipated project outcomes, while at the same time being responsive to the reality of schools. The literature constantly reminds us that effective professional development takes time – some even argue up to five years (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998; Fullan, 1995, 1991, 1982; Hargreaves, 1995 Guskey and Huberman, 1995). However, schools often don't have

five years. They need change to occur and to occur within a deadline, most often the academic school year as in the case of the school in this study. Therefore, it is important that time is used more expediently.

The interactions of those involved in this inquiry indicated that time needs to be allocated within the school timetable to allow the facilitator to support each teacher within their respective classrooms according to their individual needs, for each 'type of time' in light of the project outcome. According to the identified 'types of time' in this theory, teachers need time to observe, dialogue, reflect and demonstrate within both an individual and collective cycle (as described in figure 6.2). Such time needs to be prioritised by the leadership of school and made available to the teachers and the facilitator through scheduled timetabling, allowing flexibility within the allocation for the needs of individual teachers.

### Relationships

The relationships between and among those involved in this theory permeate the entire professional development experience. Open communication is essential for the creation of this professional support network. Relationships built on a foundation of trust, particularly between the facilitator and each participant teacher, are imperative.

### Location for Professional Development

This inquiry provides an example of a professional development opportunity located within the school setting which provides support for classroom teachers where it is most needed for them. As such, this theory advocates that professional development is most relevant within the school setting where the teachers work. Locating the professional experience within a school setting enables the professional development experience to build upon relationships in the creation of a collegial community.

Whilst the majority of the professional development interaction in this theory occurs within teachers' classrooms, a location for dialogue and team meetings is also necessary where the teachers and the facilitator can meet together with minimal disruptions.

### External Influences

External influences impacted upon these teachers and as such the impact of nominated influences on teaching practice needs to be acknowledged within teacher professional development. In this inquiry this included the input from key stakeholders, school and diocesan policy, mandatory syllabus documents and additional programs available within the school. Teachers need to be supported with the understanding, and the management of these expectations.

### The In-School Facilitator

The employment of a facilitator already engaged with the setting proved to be advantageous in this inquiry. It can therefore be suggested that the facilitator in this theory should be a professional person located within the school who has a positive professional relationship with the teachers targeted by the project. Analysis of data from the participant teachers suggests that the facilitator needs to have knowledge of the targeted project area, be recognised within the professional culture of the school as a strong classroom practitioner, be enthusiastic and a good motivator, and have strong interpersonal and communication skills.

The nature of the reciprocal relationships in this inquiry, suggests that the facilitator needs to be also viewed as a learner, and therefore be professionally supported by the school leadership. Provision needs to be made for additional professional development and support to assist

him/her as they guide the teachers through this in-school theory. The facilitator and teachers need to be considered co-learners.

### ***Purposeful Interactions***

This inquiry provided example of the reality of schools where professional development is a response to an identified area of need, which may be determined by the school itself or key stakeholders. As such, it can be surmised that goals need to be set and an appropriate action plan put into place to support the achievement of this goal within the given timeframe. Some further considerations are outlined.

#### Identification of a Professional Development Goal

This inquiry showed an example of professional development that was responsive to the specific school in which the teachers are employed. The reality of schools needs to be considered in terms of what needs to be achieved, how much funding is available to support this, and when it needs to be completed by. With this focus in mind, a clear purpose for the teachers concerned needs to be developed prior to the introduction of any professional development.

Whilst it is often the leadership of the school that identifies the professional development focus, it is crucial that teachers agree with this decision and feel they have control over their participation in meeting this goal. Teachers need to be invited to participate in professional development, rather than being expected and made participate.

#### Working Towards this Goal

The process the participant teachers moved this professional development experience through suggests that the guiding principles of the action research spiral (plan, act, observe and reflect) alone are insufficient for

teacher professional development at both a practical and pedagogical level. Analysis of the data suggested that additional components such as professional relationships that move from mentoring to coaching, use of personal tools such as reflective practice and professional dialogue, and the provision of input from recognised sources, were essential in supporting teachers through this process. Such support enabled these teachers to consolidate and refine teaching practice according to the focus of the project.

### ***Personal Tools***

Questioning, reflection, professional critique and articulation of practice and pedagogical understandings are tools these teachers were encouraged to employ and supported with as they engaged in this theory of professional development.

These participant teachers demonstrated a need for time to reflect upon their teaching practice. The layers within reflective practice (as outlined in figure 6.4) need to be acknowledged and subsequent support given to teachers as they move through the layers of description, justification and analysis. Additionally, these participant teachers demonstrated a need to have a collegial group with which they are able to share these reflections to assist and support their professional growth.

Analysis of the data shows that time is again imperative with the need for teachers to have regular opportunities to engage in professional dialogue and critique with the facilitator, other teachers and stakeholders to establish a position for themselves within the developing community of learners.

The use of personal tools builds upon the guiding principles of action research and was dependent on the supportive relationship with the facilitator and other participating teachers.

### ***From Practice to Pedagogy***

#### Focus on the Individual

These teachers demonstrated that the focus of professional development needs to be first and foremost on the teachers as individuals. An understanding of the individual experiences of each teacher needs to be obtained by the facilitator to ensure the provided professional development opportunities begin from a meaningful starting point and best support the needs of that individual teacher. As trust between the facilitator and teachers develops and the professional relationship strengthens identifying these needs becomes easier.

#### Focus on Practice

It is reasonable to argue that support for teachers with their individual classroom practice needs to be provided which in turn addresses the teachers' identified needs, while at the same time acknowledging their personal strengths. This theory suggests that the guiding principles of the action research cycle can then be used to guide the purposeful interactions between the facilitator and each participant teacher as they focus on the immediate classroom practice needs. Such a process builds upon the professional relationship, strengthening the trust between the facilitator and participant teachers.

#### Focus on Pedagogy

In this inquiry moving the teachers from thinking about their classroom practice to their pedagogical understandings enabled the layers of reflective practice (figure 6.4) to be explored, thus exploring and refining their personal tools. Again, the importance of positive professional

relationships and open communication can be reinforced as teachers are supported through this process.

### From Individual to Collective

This inquiry process suggests that teachers need to focus on themselves as professionals and their own immediate classroom situations before they can begin to work with others as a 'learning community' or 'team'. No two teachers in this inquiry were at the same point in any professional development activity and as such have different understandings, needs and goals. A focus on each teacher at an individual level provided opportunity to explore understandings, needs and goals before expecting them to work as a team. The movement from an individual focus to a need for a collective team occurs at different rates for different teachers. Such a movement is in response to changing learning needs from the participant teacher, and is in response to the 'types of time' and the movement of the participant teacher from the individual to the collective cycles as outlined in figure 6.2 on page 318.

### ***From Mentoring to Coaching***

This theory does not encourage dependency in relationships, but rather aims to move the teachers towards independence. As such it is crucial that while teachers began working alone with the facilitator in a mentoring type relationship where the teacher is dependent upon this relationship, they needed to move through the individual to collective process so that they were working as a 'learning community' or 'team'. Once these teachers were confident with their classroom practice they needed to be challenged and extended in their pedagogy through a coaching type relationship where they are given opportunities to engage with input from knowledge sources and opportunities to discuss these with the facilitator and other teachers. The process the teachers engaged with is not just a sharing of ideas and practices, but a time to draw upon their personal tools



to critique, challenge and create an informed pedagogical understanding. This in turn needed to respond to their end needs. However, these teachers demonstrated that once they became members of the community they were keen to support each other and as such structures had to be put in place to support them to do this. Again, the allocation of the 'types of time' needed to be considered according to these needs.

### ***Community of Learners working with Shared Pedagogy***

These teachers needed to have ownership of the collective pedagogy and shared pedagogy developed, stemming from their increased individual and collective understanding and ability to articulate this. It can be concluded that this final step is a result of the professional relationships throughout the experience moving from dependent to independent at an individual level, to interdependence as a community.

It is equitable to promote the expectation that the knowledge that teachers have about the nature of learning and curriculum needs to be valued within the school. As such, teachers should be included in the development of guiding school policies enabling them to incorporate their individual and shared pedagogical understanding within these.

This theory recognises that no two teachers are at the same point with regard to their professional needs. In other words, each enters a professional learning experience with different needs and understandings. The 'one size fits all' understanding of professional development has ignored this factor and thus we read time and time again in the literature that professional development enterprises tend to show limited outcomes.

The in-school model of professional development developed in this inquiry is not a 'one size fits all model'. It allowed for the unique learning journey of these participant teachers in this school context.

## Conclusion

Throughout the course of 2001, the participant teachers and I worked on establishing and developing a 'balanced writing pedagogy' in these Early Stage One and Stage One classrooms. While this was in response to initial project aims which stemmed from the observed needs of these teachers, and indeed the school, what eventuated from our interactions was so much more.

The process of responding to the specific and individual needs of the teachers enabled the inquiry not only to use the methodology of action research but also to extend it. Components necessary to support these teachers in not only refining and developing their classroom literacy practice but to also increase their individual and subsequent shared pedagogical understandings of how best to teach children to write were identified. The grounded theory explicated in this research highlights that professional development requires a unique social interplay of professional, physical and interpersonal influences. Moreover it highlights the importance of the location in which professional development occurs and the interaction between and amongst those involved with the project – the teachers, the facilitator, school leadership, and stakeholders.

It can be surmised that teachers need to be actively engaged in their own professional learning and therefore need to be supported by their immediate professional situation, the classrooms within the school in which they work. A key finding from this inquiry was the role of action research in facilitating the process for this in-school professional development theory. Teachers need opportunities for focused reflection, support with their own teaching practice, observation and analysis of the

teaching practice of others, professional dialogue and input, and critical thinking. Teachers also need opportunities to work independently with a facilitator (preferably a member of their immediate professional community) on their classroom practice in order to give them the confidence to participate in and engage with a learning community. The analysis of the interplay of these opportunities, and the collaborative and supportive nature of the relationships that permeated these interactions, enabled an in-school theory for teacher professional development to emerge. This theory promotes that to bring about positive changes in teachers' professional practice, an investment of time must occur from the school leadership in order to support teachers as they strive towards the achievement of their learning goals and refinement of their professional practices. If professional development is integrated into everyday classroom life, and supported through the provision of time and facilitating relationships, teachers will be professionally renewed and energised.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Audit Trail

<b>Date</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>
December 2000	School 'Literacy Plan' policy devised for 2001 <b>D</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> January 2001	Interview with CEO Literacy Education Officer <b>I</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a personal reflection on memories of learning how to write (Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael, Cathie <b>CV</b>  Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>  Interview with school Principal <b>I</b>
8 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael, Cathie <b>CV</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on feedback from parents in parent-teacher interviews regarding the children's writing development (Amanda, Lee, Michael, Cathie) <b>RJ</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Case Study teachers provided list of previous professional development (Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael, Cathie) <b>D</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b> Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> February 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
28 <sup>th</sup> February 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Cathie <b>CV</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Cathie <b>CV</b>
8 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>
15 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on how teachers perceive the children's attitude towards their own writing progress (Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>
22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Michael, Cathie <b>CV</b>
26 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a description of daily writing block (Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>

28 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>
29 <sup>th</sup> March 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Michael, Cathie <b>CV</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2001	Case study teachers provided a copy of their English Statement of Organisation from their classroom program (Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael, Cathie) <b>D</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> April 2001	Collection of Term 1 writing samples from 5 children in each case study classroom <b>WS</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> April 2001	Semi-structured interview Kate <b>SSI</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>  Semi-structured interviews - Michael, Kate <b>SSI</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee, Kate <b>CV</b>  Reflective Journal entry – role within Early Stage One / Stage One team (Michael) <b>RJ</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> May 2001	Survey on school literacy program <b>S</b>
9 <sup>th</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>  Literacy Support Team planning meeting <b>I</b> and survey <b>S</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee, Kate <b>CV</b>  Semi-structured interview - Kate, Natalie, Amanda <b>SSI</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>  Semi-structured interviews - Kate, Michael, Natalie <b>SSI</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee, Kate <b>CV</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> May 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on what children need to be good writers and how teachers can assist this (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>
23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>  Semi-structured interview – Kate <b>SSI</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> May 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee, Kate <b>CV</b>
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2001	Reflective Journal entry received from Cathie <b>RJ</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee, Kate <b>CV</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on their writing block and how it's developed so far (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>

13 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee <b>CV</b>
18 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on student interest in writing tasks (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Michael) <b>RJ</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> June 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> June 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee <b>CV</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – focused on given readings from Lucy McCormick Calkins (1986) (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>  Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2001	Collection of Term 2 writing samples from 5 children in each case study classroom <b>WS</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Classroom visits – Michael, Kate, Natalie <b>CV</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Classroom visits – Amanda, Lee <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> July 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on something they do well within their teaching of writing (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> August 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Natalie, Amanda, Lee <b>CV</b>
<i><b>Term 3</b></i> <i><b>Whole school project - Spelling</b></i>	
2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2001	Meeting with CEO Education Officer: Literacy, Principal and in-school literacy coordinator (Cathie) and Principal <b>SP</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie) Year 6 teachers <b>SP</b>  Staff Meeting – spelling rationale presented <b>SP</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie) Kindergarten teachers - Kate and Natalie <b>SP</b>
15 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Videotaping of spelling 'lessons' (Natalie, Cathie, Researcher) <b>V</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> August 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie)

	Year 1 teachers - Amanda and Lee <b>SP</b>
22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2001	Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
28 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie) Year 2 teacher - Michael and Learning Centre teacher <b>SP</b>  Staff meeting and Stage meetings to write Spelling Support Statement <b>SP</b>
29 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> August 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2001	Launch of Spelling Policy and Spelling Support Statement to parents <b>SP</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie) Year 3 teachers <b>SP</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Spelling Policy and Spelling Support Statement sent home to every family <b>SP</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie) Year 4 teachers <b>SP</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b>
13 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>
18 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Staff in-servicing on the teaching of spelling strategies (demonstration lesson and assistance in own classroom from researcher and Cathie) Year 5 teachers <b>SP</b>
26 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda, Michael <b>CV</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> September 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee <b>CV</b>  Collection of Term 3 writing samples from 5 children in each case study classroom <b>WS</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> October 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Natalie <b>E</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> October 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Kate <b>E</b> Writing block evaluation received from Amanda <b>E</b> Writing block evaluation received from Natalie <b>E</b>
22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Michael <b>E</b>
24 <sup>th</sup> October 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda <b>CV</b> Semi-Structured Interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>

25 <sup>th</sup> October 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b>
29 <sup>th</sup> October 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Amanda <b>E</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> October 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Amanda <b>E</b> Writing block evaluation received from Michael <b>E</b>
31 <sup>st</sup> October 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b> Writing block evaluation received from Kate <b>E</b> Writing block evaluation received from Natalie <b>E</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> November 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b> Writing block evaluation received from Amanda <b>E</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
8 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b> Writing block evaluation received from Michael <b>E</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Individual interviews with case study teachers (Kate, Natalie, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>I</b>
15 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Michael <b>E</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Interview with the school General Assistant <b>I</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Writing block evaluation received from Michael <b>E</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> November 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b>  Writing block evaluation received from Kate <b>E</b>
22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – a reflection on the Early Stage 1/Stage 1 team throughout the year (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> December 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda <b>CV</b> Semi-structured interview – Kate <b>SSI</b> Semi-structured interview Natalie <b>SSI</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> December 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> December 2001	Case study teacher reflective journal entry – final reflections about writing practice, developments, concluding comments (Natalie, Kate, Amanda, Lee, Michael) <b>RJ</b> Writing block evaluation received from Amanda <b>E</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> December 2001	Semi-structured interview – Michael <b>SSI</b> Semi-structured interview – Amanda <b>SSI</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> December 2001	Classroom visits – Kate, Amanda <b>CV</b>
13 <sup>th</sup> December 2001	Classroom visits – Natalie, Lee, Michael <b>CV</b>  Collection of Term 4 writing samples from 5 children in each case study classroom <b>WS</b>

## **Appendix B: Information Sheet for case study teachers**

### ***Towards a Balanced Writing Pedagogy in the First Years of School***

**The purpose of this study is to get a cohesive approach/framework to the teaching of writing in Early Stage One/Stage One in our school.**

Kemmins and McTaggart (1981) refer to an action research spiral. This process is ongoing and occurs in the following steps:

1. Plan
2. Act and observe
3. Reflect
4. Revised plan
5. Act and observe
6. Reflect

These steps will guide our interactions and the collection of data for this research. It will ensure that the research is practical as we work through our queries as to how things could better work in our classrooms. This ongoing process will create the agenda and development of the research.

#### Researcher's Role:

- Organise, facilitate and participate in regular meetings with case study teachers
- To continually research literature in the area of the teaching of writing and communicate this to case study teachers
- Spend time in each classroom assisting case study teachers with the teaching of writing
- Provide regular feedback to case study teachers
- Write up and communicate the project (as it develops) for case study teachers, other staff members of our school, the Wollongong Diocese and the University of Wollongong.

#### Case Study Teachers' Role:

- To share ownership of the research
- Allow the researcher access to your classroom and teaching program
- Participate in regular meetings with researcher and other case study teachers
- Implement meeting determined 'action' in classroom
- Provide honest and open feedback and reflections towards this 'action'

Lisa Kervin, January 2001

## **Appendix C: Data Collection**

### ***Reflective Session Focuses for participant teachers***

What do you remember about learning to write when you were at school? (e.g. How were the lessons structured? What sort of tasks did you do? How often did you write?)

What professional development have you received regarding literacy and the teaching of its components.  
Comment on how effective and/or helpful you found these experiences. (You may like to consider subjects you experienced at uni, inservicing from CEO, and anything else you may have attended dealing with literacy.)

Have you ever encountered problems with the teaching of writing? What were they and how did you deal with them?

What do you see as your role within the Stage One group with regard to literacy practice?

What do children need to be good writers?

Are the children in your class interested in writing tasks? How do you know this?

Are the children in your class writing at home? Are the parents interested in this? What feedback do you get from the children and the parents?

Describe your daily writing block.

How do you implement what you learn about writing in your classroom?

What feedback did you have from parents regarding the children's writing development in recent parent teacher interviews?

Describe something you do well in your teaching of writing.

Is there an area in the teaching of writing that you would like support with?

Reflect on your writing block and how it has developed over the course of the year (i.e. inclusion of new episodes, changes in structure, what inspired these changes etc)



What problems have you encountered this year in your teaching of writing? How did you deal with them?

How has the Stage One team worked together throughout the year (with regard to literacy)?

Has consistent literacy practice operated across the Stage? How has this happened? How can we maintain such practice in future years?

What have you learned about yourself as a teacher of writing?

What have you learned about the professional practice of teaching writing?

To what extent have student learning outcomes been affected during the year as a result of this on-going professional development in the area of writing?

What do we need to tell the rest of the school community about the teaching of writing? How can we best do this?

### ***Interview Questions for Education Officer in Literacy***

What is your job description?

How long have you been employed at this capacity?

What literacy inservices were offered when you first began this job?

What is offered now?

What have been your main 'projects' during your time as literacy consultant?

How has this impacted on literacy teaching? Both reading and writing?

What are your beliefs as to how children learn to read and write?

How do professional development programs you offer reflect this?

What are your goals for the Wollongong Diocese regarding the teaching of literacy?

What have been your observations?

Has Good First Teaching been successful?

What feedback have you had?

What are the key points for successful inservicing within literacy?

***Interview Questions for school Principal***

How long have you been at this school?

How do you remember writing being taught when you first arrived?

What changes have you seen with the teaching of writing in the time you've been here?

How is writing taught now?

What forms of professional development have been used to inform teachers about how to teach writing?

In your opinion, which of these have been the most beneficial?

What impact has Good First Year Teaching had on teaching practice?

What impact has the restructuring of Literacy Support had on teaching practice?

Is literacy practice, particularly the teaching of writing, cohesive across the stages?

How do you know this?

How has this happened?

## Appendix D: Timetable

### ***Term 1 Literacy Support Timetable***

*Lisa Kervin*

*Term 1 weeks 2 – 10*

	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
8:30	1G	1S
9:30	KR	KB
	////////////////////////////////////	////////////////////////////////////
11:00	2R	2CR
12:00	Meeting time	Meeting time
	////////////////////////////////////	////////////////////////////////////

## Appendix E: School Literacy Policy

### Literacy Plan

#### Professional Development:

##### **Short Term Goal:**

To provide ongoing support and development to staff in the area of literacy.

##### **Tasks:**

Maintain and build upon existing collaborative support structures.  
Establish co-learning situations where teachers share practices and view each other teaching to set goals and provide constructive feedback.  
Devote a staff meeting to literacy development using C Sale and Reading Recovery teachers to teach behind a screen for staff.  
Utilise CEO Consultants and Advisors in developing literacy policies and implementing literacy initiatives and syllabus requirements.  
Professionally develop General Assistant in writing.  
Adapt Literacy Support teacher to work in the classroom with teachers to work on effective learning and teaching in Literacy.  
Arrange for teachers to visit other schools to observe good Learning and Teaching in Literacy.  
Ensure Kindergarten and Year 1 teachers are trained in Good First Teaching.

#### Programming and Teaching:

##### **Short Term Goal:**

To ensure quality programming structure and explicit classroom teaching for meaning is established and evolving.

##### **Tasks:**

Implement school programming policy and ensure that staff are constantly challenging themselves to produce a quality literacy program that is outcome based.  
Review literacy writing and spelling policies in a team.  
Teachers program for homework to allow for independent practice with reading and writing on continuous text.  
Review current policies to ensure consistency with current syllabus.  
Encourage teachers to bring more meaning to literacy through the integration of KLA's and components of English that would be evident in programs and classroom practices.  
Literacy Support Teacher works in classes to ensure literacy policies are implemented and consistently evident in programming, learning and teaching.  
Encourage teachers to further develop their assessment and reporting to parents and further develop talking and listening reporting.  
Ensure all children are independently constructing on continuous meaningful text daily and this is evident in programs.

#### School Structures:

##### **Short Term Goal:**

To ensure management structures, planning and procedures contribute to literacy development.

Provide stage meetings during Literacy Staff Meetings to ensure all professional development is meaningful and relates to each teacher and their students.  
Encourage and arrange for collaborative programming, sharing and evaluating their programs to allow for co-learning to occur.  
Continue to have the Review Committee monitor students having difficulties and support their teachers in implementing individualised programs.  
Literacy Support Teachers assists teachers and students in class to establish a literacy block that allows for effective learning and teaching for all students.  
Provide teachers with release to plan, assess, have collaborative visits and purchase resources.  
Further develop the profile of Reading Recovery.  
Continue to assess at Kindergarten interviews to identify the needs for the following year.  
Continue to use the General Assistant for literacy support.



## Human Resources:

### **Short Term Goal.**

Utilise personnel to assist children in class who require individual literacy support and support the teachers here.

Adapt literacy support to allow the Literacy Support Teacher to work with teachers and students in class.  
Run parent information nights to explain how literacy is taught in our school and how they can assist their child at home.

Continue to have the General Assistant work with children who have literacy problems and assist teachers in implementing individualised programs.

Utilise Kathy McCann and Catherine Sale to develop policies and run staff meeting in professional development.

Have reading recovery teachers assist classroom teachers with ex reading recovery children and provide a staff meeting at Campbelltown North Reading Recovery Centre with C Sale.

## Material Resources:

### **Short Term Goal.**

Purchase reading material to support KLA integration.

Purchase reading material to support KLA integration.

Allocate a budget to each grade to purchase reading material for home reading, guided reading, critical literacy and class library.

Review all old and new resources and have them accessioned in the Library.

Provide a representative form a book company to work with teachers in purchasing material that suits the needs of their students.

Provide staff with professional reading to inform and inspire them of new literacy practice.

Integrate Information Technology with literacy and learn from teachers in Years 4, 5 and 6 completing the IT project.

## Staffing:

### **Short Term Goal.**

To maximize the use of skilled teachers for added support to the program.

Employ teachers who have a strong understanding and commitment to quality literacy practice.

Match teachers with strong literacy practice with teachers who have had limited experience or skill in the hope that they will provide a role model to such teachers.

Continue to use the General Assistant that is trained in literacy as a support to the classroom teacher and students.

Have the Literacy Support Teacher assist teachers and students in class, two days a week.

## Appendix F: Writing Block Critique

### *Writing Block Evaluation*

Date:

Think about the writing block you have just completed.

*What did you do?*

*What was good about it?*

*What did the children learn?*

*What could you have done to make it better?*