Developing Teacher Knowledge through School Integrated Teacher Education: Using Poetic Representation to Support Teacher Identity

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Abstract

This paper reports on the influence of school integrated teacher education (SITE) courses on student teachers initial experiences of learning how to teach. SITE refers to the systematic incorporation of school experiences into teaching and learning within university courses. The paper explores how SITE courses can inform our understanding of how teacher identity forms and how teacher knowledge develops. Through the analysis of data from five student teachers who reflect back on their experiences of learning to teach in light of the SITE courses, the paper presents their collective voices in a poetic form to capture how they articulate their growth as teachers and their subsequent confidence in the role of teacher. Based on catalytic validity where the inquiry process directly impacts participants, the paper offers insights on how the poem influenced twenty-eight students entering the teacher education program as they engage in SITE based courses in the subsequent year of the program. Within the paper we reflect on how this poetic representation of research findings enabled a self-study process to develop for the participants and how the poem passed on a theory of teacher development that reassures and prepares the next generation of student teachers. This self-study process shows how SITE courses framed teacher knowledge for the student teachers as integrated content developed from the relationship between school context and university teacher education courses.

Introduction

> *One of the things learned*
>   *I really was worried about*
>   *I was a little bit confused*
>   *BUT*
> *I've learned to hold on to what I have inside*
> *Developing confidence*
>   *learning how I will react*

>   *being in the schools helped*
>   *we felt more connected to the kids*
>   *what they're doing*

            (Extract from poem "Confidence in becoming a teacher")

The introduction is an extract from the poetic representation of student teachers' voices presented in the findings of this paper. The poem represents the collective voices of student teachers who experienced school and university integrated teacher education courses in their initial teacher preparation courses. The paper asks, how in light of these school integrated courses can student teachers pass on their insights on becoming teachers, and how can these insights influence students entering their first school practicum experience? The paper explores how student teachers can be encouraged to engage in a self-study practice of learning how to teach through the use of poetic representation to pass on research data.

Critiques of teacher education programs include concerns of fragmentation between courses, maintenance of a theory-practice divide, and research on teaching that does not connect to the "real world" of school (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Munby *et al.*, 2001). Traditional models of teacher education reinforce and perpetuate many degrees of separation: between preparation and practice, between theory and action, between faculty members and schoolteachers, and between Education Faculties and School Districts. There have been continuous attempts to relocate teacher education within the school context, but here concerns have been raised that this approach maintains the status quo, reproduces mindless practice (Burant, 2002) and reduces professional status of teaching creating a "training" mindset (Grimmett, 1998; M. Wideen *et al.*, 1998). And while there have been many attempts to reshape teacher education programs, all too often these have met limited success and return to a more traditional approach (Russell, 2001; Tom, 1997). Innovation in teacher education programs are too often "nullified by the structural fragmentation and competing agendas that typify traditional programs of teacher education" (Wideen et al., 1998, p. 133). This paper will report the influence on student teacher learning from a project we have called school integrated teacher education (SITE). SITE has developed around a cluster of three courses, offered in the first year of a teacher education program, that develop student teachers' initial field experience in schools. The innovation described in this paper is an integrative approach to teaching course content in schools (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006). As noted by Darling-Hammond (2006) these type of courses are effective teacher education because they maintain a tight coherence and integration with coursework and school based field experiences, with pedagogies continuously linking theory and practice.

This paper will focus on the influence the integrated courses had on the way beginning student teachers became aware of their development as teachers. This integrated experience came before any formal practicum that required student teachers to take on the responsibilities of a teacher. The student teachers were in the third year of a five year degree where the first two years were taken up with lower level and upper level credits in academic courses in the university. The third year of the program was combined with five upper level academic courses and seven education courses. This program design was not by choice but in part due to the degree licensure process that had created the situation where students were taking general degree courses at

the same time as education professional degree courses. It was our opinion that this situation of too many courses, with no connection between academic and professional courses, exacerbated the recurring problems in teacher preparation, namely the separation between theory and practice, the gap between learning content in university and teaching content in schools, and the transmission of knowledge with a lack of value given to students' own personal experiences (Russell *et al.*, 2001). To address these problems instructors in three courses collaborated to create the SITE cluster of courses. Our working definition of SITE is that it refers to the systematic incorporation of school experiences into the teaching and learning of core concepts within university courses. In SITE courses, student teachers through continued participation in a school culture, gradually take responsibility for teaching episodes within a lesson, and continually reflect on shared experiences from a school context through systematic observation, active participation and joint reflection on practice. In previous writing we noted how SITE courses created a community of practice about teacher education for university instructors, student teachers, school administrators and school teachers (Hopper & Sanford, 2004; Sanford & Hopper, 2006). Specifically we documented:

1. the teaching approaches developed in school integrated teacher education courses;
2. the development of the teacher education program based on insights from the SITE courses;
3. the group dynamic processes that developed between all participants; and
4. the effect of SITE courses reported by student teachers.

In addition, the research project has reported (1) through a quasi-experimental design significant growth in student teachers confidence and aptitude to teach physical education (Hopper *et al.*, 2005; Hopper & Stogre, 2004); (2) students' capacity to work with experienced teachers to develop innovative learning experiences for children around ongoing "teacherly conversations" that sustained collaborative relationship between local schools and the university (Hopper *et al.*, 2003; Sanford & Hopper, 2005a); and (3) the tension that developed between desire to learn from experience in schools and the demands of learning content at the university (Sanford & Hopper, 2005b). The success of the project has been marked by the recognition of the SITE project by external review teams as a core innovation in the regular generalist elementary program at our institution.

The focus of this study was on how, in light of these SITE experiences, students started to learn to become a teacher, and in particular, how insights from SITE courses can inform our understanding of teacher knowledge and how it develops.

Self-study perspective and the poetic voice

We chose self-study as a frame of reference to develop this paper because we wanted to move away from simply reporting our study as an innovation. Instead we have presented students' voices of learning to teach within SITE courses in a way that could be used by other student teachers to resonate with their thinking about teaching; help them navigate the complex roles of being a student and becoming a teacher. Also, self-study is used here to focus ourselves and our colleagues on how student teachers learn teacher knowledge as a complex interaction of learning how to think as a teacher in relation to self, context, students and content. We were interested in creating for our students teachers an intentional and systematic inquiry into their forming practice as teachers. Similar to Samaras' (2002) notions of self-study and situated learning, and Loughran's (2005) notion of self-study inevitably involving others, the SITE project created time and space for a reflective, collaborative and mutually-informing community of teachers, student teachers and instructors. This community, formed around shared experience, came together to develop their practice, their understanding of practice, and ways to enrich the learning of their students.

Connecting to Dinkelman's (2003) analysis of self-study in teacher education, we advocate that self-study, though focused on self, offers an invaluable way for teachers to gain collective wisdom on teacher knowledge. Our understanding of self-study is less on the individualistic ideas of self-improvement, the innovative champion of new approaches, to the sharing of notions of re-framing "self" within intersecting communities

that seek to continually define and re-define the role of being a worthwhile teacher. As articulated by Wenger (1998) in regards to communities of practice and learning, in the SITE courses learning to teach develops from doing and knowing, in other words, *becoming* a teacher results from the practice of teaching in a context that acknowledges both university-learning and school-learning about teaching. From this understanding our research study is framed by the following questions: How do the voices of generalist student teachers who have experienced SITE courses inform our understanding of how teacher knowledge initially develops, and how do their insights allow new student teachers to study their personal sense of becoming a teacher?

This self-study perspective led us to question how we wanted to represent the findings of the study and who our audience would be. We wanted student teachers and university colleagues to engage in the type of collective dialogical learning that the SITE project allowed. We found Richardson's (2000) words to capture our feelings, "It seems foolish at best and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ends up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the author's career" (p. 924). Guided by Richardson's (1992) insights on poetic representations, we found a way of taking our research findings and creating a poem that spoke to readers at multiple levels. As Richardson argues, poetic representation offers a way of representing data as more than information; it offers a co-constructed understanding that acknowledges the interview act as a jointly constructed process between participant and researcher. In addition, she describes how knowledge within a poetic form is reflexively constructed by readers as they engaged in the poetic form purposely constructed by the researcher from the participants' words. As noted by Sparkes et al. (2003), "Poetic representations...enable us to see, feel, and analyze the familiar in new ways, inviting us to reflect on the circumstances of others and ourselves in ways that tolerate ambiguity, celebrate process and openness, and avoid premature closure" (p.169). We believe that this form of representation allowed us to present our findings in a way that colleagues and students alike, could engage in at both personal and academic levels.

Teacher knowledge and teacher education field experience

How do student teachers start to learn teacher knowledge? Drawing on Munby et al.'s (2001) use of Bruner (1985), we understand teacher knowledge as based on two fundamental modes of thought – "narrative" and "paradigmatic". As they describe, teacher knowledge relies on both modes, with propositional and research findings contributing to paradigmatic thinking, with the unique context of particular classrooms contributing to a narrative mode with anecdotes and stories. Narrative mode comes to teachers naturally, but paradigmatic thinking is less readily available and only initially developed in student teacher education.

Traditionally, teacher education has developed around a set of discipline and content methods courses that are taught at a university and then transferred by student teachers into practice in a school based practicum (Tom, 1997). Early notions of teacher knowledge grew from this tradition and focused on models proposing that teacher knowledge was reflected in the difference in expertise in regards to knowing content and having experience applying it in practice. In particular, information-processing studies focused on the cognitive processes teachers use in thinking about teaching with expert-novice studies focused on unravelling the knowledge structures of each respective group (Berliner, 1986; Kagan, 1992; Wideen et al., 1998). Related to these studies but shifting the emphasis from the teacher and what they know to the relationship between teacher, student and content is the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Studies on PCK involve both what the teachers know about their subject matter and how that knowledge is translated into classroom curricular activities. PCK implies that teachers "transform their own content knowledge into pedagogical representations that connect with the prior knowledge and dispositions of the learner" (Shulman & Quinlan, 1996). Drawing on a more narrative understanding, a third area has developed around teachers' practical knowledge (also known as personal practical knowledge and experiential knowledge) shifts the focus of teacher knowledge research more into the realm of situated learning and teacher identity (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995). Based on Schön's (1983) epistemology of practice, this area relates to research within

classroom settings and highlights the complexities of interactive teaching and thinking-in-action as each student teacher learns to develop a teacher identity.

All three of these bodies of knowledge have informed our understanding of teacher education; however, teacher education programs still maintain a traditional structure locating discipline and content methods courses at the university where knowledge is transmitted to students. This structure has perennially resulted in the theory and practice gap. To address this gap teacher education programs use field experiences designed to help student teachers connect theory and practice. The terms *field-based*, *clinical*, *school-based* and *integrative* have been identified in the teacher education literature to frame the school and university relationship. *Field-based* teacher education refers to experiences in schools where student teachers learn the role of teacher and the nature of schools. *Field-based* include observations, tutoring, and participation in school activities, teaching practicums and internship, usually occurring after completing university course requirements, and sometimes with supporting seminars (Duquette, 1993; MacDonald, Mckinnon, Joyce, & Gurney, 1992; Shen, 1994; Wiseman, 1995). *Clinical* experiences are characterized by the course instructor's careful planning and stipulation of goals including microteaching, orientation visits to schools and teacher aid roles (Clarken, 1993; Metcalf, 1996). These *clinical* experiences are complemented by campus-based teacher education where theories of teaching and learning are presented and studied (Blocker & Mantle-Bromley, 1997; Metcalf, 1996). Both these terms highlight the separation between universities and schools, *field-based* centred at the school, *clinical* centred at the university. In more recent times we have seen the development of different forms of *school-based* teacher education where the responsibility of preparing teachers has largely been re-located to schools with universities playing only a minimum consultative role. For example, in the UK a consortium of schools is entitled to conduct a government endorsed training program leading to formal teacher qualifications. In the US the work of the Holmes group has led to the forming of professional development schools (PDS) forming a more collaborative approach to school-based teacher education between universities and groups of schools (Holmes-Group, 1990; Zeichner, 1992). However, in Canada there has not been a sustained movement, with some notable exceptions (Russell et al., 2001), to shift the university and school relationship.

Identified in these terms is the idea of the prospective teacher in the student role at the university learning the theory and knowledge for teaching (paradigmatic), then the prospective teacher as student-teacher in the school learning how to do, not just observe and assisting in, the practice and roles of a teacher (narrative). Instead, along with Brouwer & Korthagen, (2005) and Bullough & Gitlin (2001) we have framed the school field experience as part of an *integrative* approach to the teaching of course content. In this way the school context becomes integrated with the teaching of course content, with prospective teachers and university instructors moving back and forth from school to university as they progress through the curriculum of a course. In our integrated approach the university courses, organized around a cohort of student teachers with similar time-tables, can create field experiences in a cluster of schools that offer a shared experience for the student teachers and the instructors. The shared experiences then become part of the content of the courses, simultaneously building both narrative and paradigmatic teacher knowledge. We believe that such field experiences move beyond classroom-only placements to encompass the larger picture of teachers' complex roles within a school and its communities, and highlight the learning needs of all students (Burant, 2002; Zeichner, 1996). Such an approach we believe offers a way to learn teacher knowledge as part of a forming teacher identity within narratives of shared experiences as it informs the learning of course content and more paradigmatic ways of knowing teaching and learning.

Context of the study: Details on the SITE courses

The integrated experience under investigation took place for three cohorts of thirty students over a three year period. SITE courses included each year a Language Arts (LA) methods course, two sections of a Physical Education (PE) methods course and school based seminar classes. In SITE courses, student teachers

participated in lessons taught in local schools as a fundamental part of learning course content. In PE methods courses the university instructors taught eight of forty-four course classes to school children of different grades, with student teachers gradually taking over the teaching of two lessons in the school; in LA methods classes, classroom teachers modelled their practice in three lessons before giving student teachers an opportunity to teach their classes of children in pairs. In the seminar classes, student teachers visited the same schools five of the twelve lessons in the course as part of course requirements to observe how schools and classrooms functioned, and talked with and assisted teachers.

Instructors in these courses met every two weeks as part of a research group committed to integrating their courses in schools. The group consisted of two research assistants, four instructors who taught the courses, including two researchers. Each meeting had an agenda that allowed discussion on events in schools as well as plans to develop the project; in addition, minutes of each meeting were recorded. Members of the group became very involved in the story of each other's courses; they shared stories about student teachers they taught and developed common insights about teaching practice at the university and in the schools. Frequently, larger program issues were discussed; frustrations were noted and progress reflected upon. Discussion focused on insights about how the existing program supported or conflicted with the SITE courses, and on the complexities of the politics involved in trying to develop SITE courses. For example, unlike the PE classes, in the Language Arts classes schoolteachers themselves were being observed teaching by the student teachers rather than the university instructors – a vulnerable position. Initially, this proved stressful, and some teachers declined to be involved, but over time the teachers learned to draw on the student teachers to contribute to their lessons.

Staff and principals from schools in the SITE project met three times a year with the research team. This relationship fostered trust and support that allowed the teachers to reframe their work with student teachers from one of inconvenience to one of benefit. In fact, prior to working with the SITE project one school had not had a student teacher for 3 years because they were "too much work." Within two years of working with the SITE project the principal noted with pride at a SITE meeting "I just realized, right now we have 17 student teachers in our school."

As noted by Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Korthagen *et al.*, (2006) about fundamental principles for teacher education practice, the field experiences in the SITE courses allowed a range of learning for the student teachers with tasks and assignments designed that developed student teachers' (1) capacity to read the context of the school (i.e., observation assignments, child case studies, assist teachers), (2) interpret theory in practice (i.e. observe university instructors teach lessons modelled at the university), and (3) construct lessons in relation to the children they were working with in the schools (education philosophies, lesson resources, units, yearly overviews and assessment strategies). In particular, the student teachers learned from creating lessons based on course materials which they then taught to their peers, reflected on with their peers, and then re-taught to children in the school. In all the tasks and assignments, student teachers worked in pairs or small groups, they connected on a course listserv around course topics/experiences, and they planned and reflected on their teaching experiences. Across the three courses, a common practice was to help students unpack their previous assumptions regarding LA and PE, teaching and learning, and the role of the teacher as they developed a teacher identity based on learning from experience (narrated) and connecting back to theory (propositional ideas).

Research Methodology: Poetic representation

Agreeing with Gergen and Gergen (2002), we advocate that the way qualitative researchers reveal "the results of the inquiry" and initiate a relationship with those who are exposed to the "findings" is a critical part of how qualitative research can inform and transform the context of research. Traditionally, qualitative research in teacher education has relied on the realist tale. As described by Van Maanen (1988) the realist tale seeks to map the social landscape and create an overview of the social phenomenon under investigation. This

can be a productive way of inviting readers to recognize and understand with some familiarity a social context, but this method only offers the author's interpretation of data. With tightly edited quotes, woven around scholarly developed themes, the realist tale offers a text without the presence of an author, a sort of authoritative account representing the voice of "others". Such an account reports the research findings; however, the data only offers an outsider's point of view, a reasonable perspective given the data. Within this paper we have elected to represent the core of the coded data from graduating student teachers in the form of poem, followed by beginning student teachers' responses to the poem presented in a more traditional realist account. The authors wrote to poems using only the participants' actual words from their interviews. Participants' phases were woven together based on the thematic analysis of the data but limited to the words taken directly from the participants' transcripts (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Prendergast, 2006; Richardson, 1992). Though the poem is the authors' representation of the data, more of the task of interpreting the data is given over to the reader with the words of the participants pieced together as whole, creating a more participative role for the reader to co-create meaning with the text.

The poetic form, through the use of spaces, word emphasis, positioning on the page, line breaks, metaphor and imagery, creates a structure that engages the reader in the text in a way that is different from more formal academic writing of data findings. Researchers have noted how the poetic form draws the reader into the world of the participants, asking the reader to construct meaning with their own understandings within the spaces provided by the poem (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes *et al.*, 2003). The work of the poem is situated within the person as reader as well as connected to the social world of the participants. Also, as noted by Richardson (1992), the poetic form can more closely represent the way we speak, with pauses, hesitations, repetition and tone, than traditional edited quotes of a realist tale, creating a more aesthetic feel, emotional sense of the participants' voices.

These insights led us to use poetic representations as a way for student teachers to engage in a reflexive process with the data. We used the poem with the student teachers to analyze their own ideas about becoming a teacher, extending the inter-action with the data (Richardson, 1992; Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes et al., 2003). The research study took on a form of critical reflection for the participants whose words created the poem and for novice student teachers who subsequently read the poem, creating what Lather (1991, 1993) and Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) call catalytic validity. In other words the inquiry developed insights through the inquiry process that directly impacted participants as they gained more self-awareness, self-understanding and self-determination through the research process. The validity of the poetic representation is not so much that it represents an external world, but more that it resonates with the participants in a way that "re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization'" (Lather, 1986, p. 67).

In qualitative research, poetic representations are created to "make the worlds of others accessible to the reader" (Sparkes, 2002, p. 107), to make the worlds of each participant more accessible to all participants. Our process was to use the participants' repeated points, underlying themes, and sentences that summed up their meaning, to reorganize these lines, while invoking literary devices to make their meaning clearer in a poetic form. The transcripts were made available for the participants to read and confirm. The poem was recognized by each participant as capturing how they felt about the experience of the SITE courses. Even though it was constructed from extracts from each of their transcripts, each participant felt that the whole poem resonated with their experiences of learning to teach. Richardson (1992) argues that "Poetry is thus a practical and powerful method for analyzing social worlds" (p. 108) because the poems allow the reader to see and feel the world of the participant more closely. The poetic form reduces a transcript to a condensed but crafted form which allows readers to access their own thoughts and connect to others' experiences (Madill & Hopper, 2007). Furthermore, the poetic representations allow the reader to search for further meaning between the lines and the structure of the poem; therefore, multiple readings can occur and no single truth needs to exist (Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes et al., 2003). Such a promise seemed like an ideal way to draw colleagues and other

student teachers into a lived sense of SITE courses for both the student teachers in the study and future students.

Analysis

The data for this study was collected through interviews with five student teachers following their initial practicum and then again a year later as they finished their teacher education program. Each student generated transcripts in the range of 3000 to 6000 words. The student teachers were select because they were willing to be interviewed, had experienced three SITE based courses, represented a diversity of academic achievements and spanned two years of the SITE courses. They were asked questions that focused on identifying how they learned, differences in the SITE experience from their typical preparation in the program and how those differences influenced their development as a teacher. Three researchers (including two instructors of the students) and a research assistant analyzed the student teachers' interviews focusing on ideas arising from their comments about their development as teachers. Analysis using qualitative software NUD*IST Vivo (Bazeley & Richards, 2000) and paper/pencil memoing created coding used to develop initial data sets. These were integrated and synthesized into a meaningful "data library" for the research program. The research team then examined data sets, comparing coding and checking for agreement and reflecting on personal meaning making in relation to the SITE project.

As reported in other papers, these student teachers confirmed the recurring themes from the study of community, relationship and confidence (Hopper & Sanford, 2005). Focused on the organizing theme of "confidence" in becoming a teacher, patterns of meaning were represented as key words and sentences from the participants' transcripts. These extracts were identified by the researchers and then arranged into a poem to represent the voices of the participants, offering a thematic play-back of their insights edited purposefully by the authors to engage the reader emotionally with participants' reflections on becoming a teacher. The poem was read and revised by each researcher and then shared with colleagues and students for responses; minor changes were made. The poem should be read as a co-constructed representation of becoming a teacher. The researchers have selected the participants' words but the words are only what the participants have said when asked about the SITE courses. There is no claim that this representation is more authentic than any other genre of research, however the poetic form invites the reader to read between the lines, to get a feel for how the participants reflected on the SITE courses and their development as teachers. The visual representation of the poem at times emphasizes the "I" of the participant and then the text slides across the page to emphasize the "we" or the shared experience and then shifts back and forth between the person and social contexts of their learning at the school and the university.

Findings:

CONFIDENCE in becoming a teaching: Things I think I learned

One of the things learned
    I really was worried about
    I was a little bit confused
                  BUT
I was holding on to what I have inside
    I thought that's okay
         that's just who I am
that's not going to change
    I *am* more expressive
     more open
     more willing to explore

        that *has* changed   Being in the classroom

having a chance to see what really
                                                                                            works

                    go with what I feel

I've learned to hold on to what I have inside
Developing confidence
        learning how I will react   being in the schools helped
                                                            we felt more connected to the kids
                                                                            what they're doing

I felt uncomfortable at first   being in the schools helped
                                                                            knowing what it's like
                                                                        being in other classrooms
                                                                            in other schools
                                                            so we knew the general routine
                                                                            what goes on

I've grown immensely as a teacher
        started out as someone with no experience
                                        at all
now able to go to a classroom
        feel comfortable
I know how to take care of the curriculum
I know how to manage kids
        I really felt like
                I was a student teacher
                I was practicing, developing
                        Now
I could be a teacher
        I was a teacher in the schools
                I am a teacher
I've learned the necessary tools
        to continue to develop   SITE courses   helpful
                                                                        Oh absolutely,
                                                                    more than anything,
                                                        just feeling comfortable being there

                        more and more
                I can take over as a teacher now
                                                            Just walking into a classroom feeling
                                                                            comfortable
                                                                            being there

                the first time I went to teach PE
                    I was just terrified of them
                            I don't know why.
                I don't know why I was so terrified.
                    I wasn't terrified of the kids

                                                                    just of the whole school
                                                                the teachers at the school.

I had the impression that I would be a good teacher
        I derived validation
        from the marks in class

        I still had that mind set. . . .
                high achiever kind of thing

didn't take very long to figure out
         I had to be competent
          learn the things
          I needed to learn
        much more important
     was to take those things and apply them

                    when we started to go into
                     little PE classes
               all the time
                a light was going on in my head
              oh yeah…
               we are supposed to be doing this...
              oh yeah…
                 this is what we learned.
                     actually seeing it
                 an environment that was safe

I wasn't the centre
         of the teaching show

                     was a safe place to start
                      having the things
                     that would prove me
                    to be a good teacher

                 how to be involved in the school with
                        the staff
                     everyday running
                      of the school

I think being flexible is huge

                   you really have to be flexible
                   because of the programs
                      for the kids

I remember
  I had a breakthrough
      teaching our PE dance lesson.
There was a point when I caught myself,
I was teaching,
  watching the cute little things
      wondering if they were getting it,
then realizing…they were learning.
     It was really quite neat.
I knew the routine of the lesson so well
  I could actually focus my attention
              on the kids!
It seems so selfish
  when you realize how much time
      I've been thinking about myself!

       So many things I'm learning…

We felt the poem reflected how student teachers in the SITE courses experienced two identities, a student identity focused on more paradigmatic university course content and theoretical notions of learning to teach and a teacher identity which was more narrative, personal and based on school practical knowledge of being a teacher. The shifting in-between student and teacher identity allowed the students in SITE courses to gain

confidence in their ability to be teachers as they interpreted content from university courses. The integrated nature of this situated way of learning created teacher knowledge that was located both in the university courses and the school experience incorporated in the courses. To pass on this learning and to see if the poem evoked similar responses from student teachers engaged in SITE courses before their first practicum, the poem was used with the subsequent new intake of students in the following year.

Encouraging self-study for beginning student teachers

In this next section a realist account is presented from a summary of the responses to the poem from students in the following year of the program. The poem was introduced as insights from graduating student teachers who had experienced similar SITE based courses. The responses from these students, before their first practicum, speaks to the catalytic validity of the poem and its capacity to connect to the social world that the students were experiencing, evoking a range of responses and connecting the parts they knew into a whole they could understand and believe in. The students generated responses to the poem on an electronic listserv as part of the student teaching seminar. They were invited to participate in the listserv at any time during the term. Their participation was expected on issues that they found interesting. Their responses were not graded.

For the class of 28 students approximately 2000 words of electronic e-mail data combined together with comments made in class was analyzed into three categories of responses using basic coding practices in the Nvivo software. The instructors in the class confirmed that these categories represented how they felt the students in class and on the listserv read and reacted to the poem.

Connecting and identifying with peers

Hearing the poem immediately caused the students to respond in a self-reflective manner as they found connection with their graduating colleagues:

> When reading the poem I felt like I was reading my own thoughts.
> Poem is very comforting to me because it allows me to know that there are other people going
> through the same thing I am.

The poem seemed to allow the students to believe they would become the teacher they imagined. It reassured them that the stressful situation they were experiencing with too many courses and the daunting task of leading a class as a teacher was part of a progression. As one student said,

> We have to teach the lessons…be able to observe the children to see if the lesson is effective, if
> they are understanding it or do we need to explain it in another way. When we are so nervous at
> first, it is more difficult to do this, but this poem is comforting, it reassures us that we will eventually
> gain confidence, lose that nervousness and feel competent teaching.

Fear of failure

The poem allowed the students to voice for the first time publicly their fear of failure. This fear manifested itself in several ways.

Letting go of being a "successful" student; as determined by grades

Many students re-stated the poem saying that they needed to step out of "needing to get A's mindset," as one student said, "I could really relate to it entirely. The part that really hit home was the 'I still had that mind set... high achiever kind of thing.'" Disrupting the student idea of being successful was a major realization for all the students.

Worried about having something of value to offer as a teacher to students

As students moved from the university student mindset and an external value of their success they were confronted by the fear of not being able to teach, as one said "My biggest concern is that I will have something of value to offer to the students." Another said "before hearing the poem I was questioning my capabilities of taking part in this profession." Or as a third one said "I was a really shy and timid child. And that part of who I am is still inside me somewhere. The idea of walking into a school as if I have something to offer is terribly unnerving to me." Letting out these self-doubts seemed to strengthen the students' commitments and sense of social support from the class. Agreeing with each other, students voiced the

growing confidence of the group captured in the poem. One student admitted "It is just this underlying fear of failure that hinders me. But now that I've expressed this to all of you, I have no excuses. I am accountable. 'And I'm going get it done.'"

Anxious about making mistakes in a teacher's class

The integrated nature of the courses allowed students to shift from the student role, address self-doubts and confront the worries about the unfamiliar role of teacher. As one student stated, "the part of the poem that spoke to being terrified of the school and the teachers really struck a chord with me." This worry seemed to be something that every student harboured as the examples of responses below show.

> Sponsor teacher…I feel paralyzed by the notion that he will judge me, will not understand that deep beneath the surface, beneath my imperfections, I have a love for the students I have not yet even met, and a passion for helping them learn and grow.
> Even in the school observations I was fairly nervous. I was worried that I would make mistakes and that the teachers might not approve.

From student to teacher mindset

The poem acted as conduit for the situated learning happening in the SITE courses. This situated learning allowed the students to observe, negotiate and take part in the role of teacher. The work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) on situated learning articulates this process well, indicating that the preparing of professional teachers at the university focuses learning on the practice of being a student rather than on lived experiences of being a teacher. As their theory of legitimate peripheral practice indicates, learning to become a teacher is not the reception of factual knowledge or information, but rather the legitimate participation in a community of practice focused on the learning of children.

All the students indicated that the poem confirmed how their SITE experiences shifted their lived sense of being a student to a new experience of being a teacher. One student commented,

> I also can relate to the part about selfishness. When I first started, I was all excited for myself. The observations were for my benefit and I thought that it was really good for me. It was. But over time, I am consistently more excited for the students I am helping than for myself.

It is the excitement of actually working with children that allowed the students to identify with their colleagues' voices in the poem. As one student said, "opportunity to work with the children individually has been the most influential because it has made me more confident and conscience of my teaching abilities." As another said, "the classroom environment is where we feel more connected to the children and with what they are doing. Being in the classrooms has been extremely helpful and I have learnt more there than from any lectures that I have sat through." The contrast with the way university frames learning and the way the SITE courses encouraged learning was apparent in these comments.

However, the critical shift identified by the poem for many students was that the SITE courses allowed them opportunities to voluntarily teach children. The following two responses to the poem highlight this:

> I'm currently working with an ESL student in a resource room classroom…The highlight of my week is when I can teach her a few new words and then she comes back the next week and remembers what the words were, can even comprehend their meanings. Not too shabby considering she's only been in the country a couple of months.
> We ended up teaching a class for her [teacher] over reading break because we really wanted to give the students a chance to experience a really involved PE class. The lesson went really well and the kids seemed to have a great time. It's just kind of funny after looking at the poem again, to realize that we taught the class because we wanted to, not because we had to for marks…genuinely liking to help the kids succeed and have fun!

This notion of "we taught the class because we wanted to, not because we had to for marks" implies a fundamental move in the way the students understood their learning of teacher knowledge. In this way the poem as a whole spoke to the students in starting to promote a kind of self-study of the way they were learning, a valuing of each others experiences. As Dinkelman (2003) describes self-study, it is a "reflection

rooted in a shared context, characterized by common experiences stemming from participation in a mutually constructed set of teacher education activities" (p. 14).

The notions of flexibility, comfort, learning from mistakes, "not being at the centre of the teaching show" and focused on child learning allowed students to articulate how they were coming to understand teacher knowledge from a kind of "virtual" experience of being a teacher that the integrated courses offered them. As one student said, "I was able to try out my own teaching approaches with students and their response was incredible. It felt very empowering and gratifying." Another student summarized her notion of teacher knowledge developing in the temporary role of teacher saying that the poem captured how she was learning the "ability to exist comfortably in a teaching position, while balancing the required curriculum with the personal things that I bring to the class, and with the individual situations that each student brings to the class." Her comment seemed to embody the notion of pedagogical content knowledge described by Shulman (1986).

Conclusion: Poetic representation for developing teacher knowledge through self-study

As teachers we are living contradictions: we develop personal living theories about teaching that continually nudge us to question our actions, motives, and beliefs (Whitehead, 1993). The poetic form allows these contradictions to be expressed, reflected upon and connected to the challenges of becoming a teacher. The poem that developed from a three year study of student teachers resonated with the new student teachers who were experiencing the SITE courses for the first time. The poem allowed them to recognize a shared, situated and social experience of learning to teach, to grasp a complex understanding of teacher knowledge. Self-study begins with self-reflection, but must involve community – a caring community where we can openly examine our actions in relation to our practice (LaBoskey, 2004). The poem offers a conduit of self-reflection from one reflective community of students to the next, from one teacher group to one "teacher to be" group, as such the poetic form offers exciting self-study practice for connecting one year of students to the next. As noted by Hawkey (1995), Nettle (1988), Samaras and Shelly (1998) and Hopper (1997), the use of one set of more experienced student teachers to mentor another group of new student teachers has great potential to develop the teacher profession as situated and personal notions of learning to teach are acknowledged and combined with disciplined based knowledge. We construct our own theories not through learning others' ideas on theories but through our own realization of these ideas from a dialogical reflection with others and adaptation to emergent circumstances (Clarke *et al.*, 2005). The poem created the dialogical space for self-study reflection to start for the beginning student teachers, as it allowed the graduating student teachers to frame their lived theories of becoming a teacher. The poem represented typical events that were simplified but at the same time much more fully perceived by the readers; it allowed a sense of belonging to the process of becoming a teacher. For the starting student teachers, the poem offered a transition from theory-driven definitions of teacher knowledge to practical accounts of teacher knowledge, one that they immediately recognized.

The SITE project created a situated learning space that allowed the students to enter the teaching profession through an already formed community of practice of teaching and learning to teach. This community had developed over time from a relationship formed between the university instructors and the schoolteachers/administrators. This relationship had developed a trusting and supportive attitude between university and school that allowed students to enter schools as an asset and not a burden to the school community (Hopper& Sanford, 2005). From this context the school experiences, systematically integrated into the university courses, allowed a "narrative" mode of thinking to frame teacher knowledge as the students learned to interpret and apply a more "paradigmatic" mode of thinking about teaching from the university to the context of the teaching children in schools.

Drawing on the information-processing studies, models of teachers' professional development illustrate how novice teachers mature in their thinking about teaching as they develop teacher identities (Berliner, 1986;

Kagan, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, J., & Moon, B., 1998). A synthesis of these models reveals three general phases for student teachers: (1) a struggle to think about themselves as teachers and having concerns as to whether they can lead a class and take on the responsibilities of a teacher; (2) a move from a focus on themselves to concerns about managing pupils, learning classroom procedures, planning lessons and presenting information clearly; and (3) attendance to children's actual learning because they have developed procedural skills that have become automatic, focusing more on whether they have helped children learn. The poem captures each of these levels as the graduating student teachers reflected back on their learning in the SITE courses. In capturing their reflection, the poem passes on a theory of teacher development to the next generation of student teachers as noted earlier by the student teachers' responses to the poem. The poem also highlights how student teachers, if their learning is integrated and gradually introduced to the context of teaching in a school, are able to operate, at times, at the most developed levels as noted by a student teacher before her first practicum in the last verse of the poem, "I knew the routine of the lesson so well I could actually focus my attention on the kids." The importance of the capacity of student teachers to focus on children's actual learning before they enter their first practicum cannot be overstated. SITE courses allow the student teachers to build up confidence in their capacity to take on the managerial role of teacher as they attend to lesson planning and classroom procedures.

Teacher knowledge developed within the SITE courses models the ideas advocated in pedagogical content knowledge. SITE courses allowed combined school-based "narrative" knowledge and university-based "paradigmatic" knowledge as integrated content translated from classroom events. Student teachers are highly interested and motivated to learn this integrated content. By working through a series of tasks and assignments designed to prepare them to take responsibility for the productive learning environment of the children, they feel comfortable to examine their preconceptions of teaching as they learn to recognize child learning and effective teaching behaviour. The nature of the SITE courses allows student teachers to start developing teacher knowledge as they learn to translate subject-matter into classroom curricular activities for diverse learners.

Munby et al.'s (2001) review summarizes the tensions within the field of teacher education research. Ideas consistent with constructivist accounts of learning are injected into courses with little attention to how these ideas are taught or the wider considerations of the program that makes the entire learning experience of the student. This problem is further compounded because teacher knowledge is theoretical and at the same time practical, but only realized in practice, as they note, "that part can only be learned in practice, the very setting over which teacher educators have little direct control (pp. 895-896).

The SITE project allowed, through negotiation and collaboration with teachers, for actual lessons in schools to become the content of the course for student teachers, not for schools to be the place in which to blindly transfer content of university courses. Though some school practices were not in line with what was taught at the university the students were allowed to question these for what they were in a context, not simply practices the university tells you to avoid.

The complexity of learning to teach, the contradictions in how students are taught in teacher education programs and the critical role that practical experience in school has on students learning to teach, needs to be addressed more explicitly by teacher education programs. This means that the manner in which university courses are developed, implemented and assessed requires continuous re-design to enable situated and integrated learning of teacher knowledge in contexts of productive learning both in schools and within programs of teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Munby et al., 2001; Sarason, 1997). We believe that SITE courses offer the type of integrated content that can inspire such re-designing. As the poem simply reminds us,

SITE courses helpful

Oh absolutely,
more than anything,
just feeling comfortable being there

more and more
I can take over as a teacher now

Just walking into a classroom feeling
comfortable
being there

Notes on Contributors
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