CHAPTER SIX

PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS Whose REFLECTION SHOWED SOME CHANGE

You can't just say that you want to be 'a good teacher' because that brings up a whole lot of questions. What is 'a good teacher'? What you consider is 'a good teacher' might not be what someone else considers 'a good teacher'.

(Felicity, 18/11/96, 85)

The previous chapter presented profiles of the eight student teachers whose reflection showed little consistent change during their enrolment in Guided Practice. This chapter develops profiles of the four student teachers whose reflection showed some change. These student teachers, like those profiled previously, differed considerably. All four, however, were motivated to make sense of becoming a teacher. Because motivation seemed such an important factor in promoting their reflection, it is used as an organisational framework for this chapter.

MOTIVATED TO ACHIEVE HER AMBITION: FELICITY

Felicity, like most of the student teachers profiled so far, was a school leaver from an Anglo-Australian background. Unlike the student teachers profiled previously, though, she had wanted to be an early childhood teacher for as long as she could remember. In her words: "Ever since I was a little girl it has been my sole career ambition" (March, 1993). She recalled her parents commenting:

I must have been made to be a teacher because even as a small child I would set up my blackboard on the front porch and pretend to teach the other children in our street, for as long as they could bear being 'taught'.

(March, 1993)

She wanted to teach because she found children "absolutely fascinating to watch, talk to and listen to" (March, 1993) but did not appear to be driven by a visionary goal or passionate creed (LaBoskey, 1994).

A "quietly confident person" (10/594, 63), Felicity entered the program "excited and ready to get started" (March, 1993). She was surprised by the anxiety experienced by many of her peers. Unlike them, she found it hard to imagine feeling "intimidated by small children" (1/11/93, 170) and did not feel pressured by what many other participants perceived as the idealism of their lecturers. In her view: "Teachers are people and they are going to make errors of judgement.
You don't have to be perfect to be a good teacher" (29/3/95, 255). Rather, it was more important to "realise the areas that you need improvement in and keeping working towards that" (6/11/96, 69). In many ways, Felicity's sense of destiny seemed to contribute to her sanguine approach to learning to teach.

"There's Lots Of Talking Going On In My Head"

To Felicity, experience was "the key to learning" (1/11/93, 26) for, as she explained: "You can't really know whether something works until you try it ... once you've experienced it, you won't make the same errors again" (1/11/93, 113). To gain the most from experience, she considered that you've got to have your own ideas and values and you've got to put those into practice (10/5/94, 133). She described how I'm always talking to myself. There's lots of talking going on in my head. Making sure that I feel right about it is important to me (10/5/94, 355). As well, she tried to be openminded and when introduced to new ideas would typically respond: "That's interesting. I'll keep it in mind, and see what I think about it later" (1/11/93, 152). She anticipated, though, that her views would change little and noted: "I think that my ideas will grow as I develop as a teacher, but they won't actually change; they will just fill out more" (29/3/95, 124). Her comments suggest that, like Erica (previous chapter), she valued the practical knowledge gained from experience. Unlike Erica, however, she also appeared to value and engage in reflection about that experience.

Of all the participants, Felicity's experience of learning to teach seemed the least problematic. She found none of her practicums particularly difficult. As she expressed it: "My prac. experiences have all been positive. I've never really had any trouble, or any hard decisions to make (29/3/95, 205) ... [They] always flowed along without anything exceptional happening ... There has never been a real problem" (13/10/95, 151). Why did her experience differ from the other student teachers', almost all of whom encountered at least one highly distressing practicum?

In part, her certainty that she was destined to teach may have cushioned her from the self doubt and confusion experienced by many other participants. Chance, too, was probably a factor as, fortuitously, all of her placements offered an appropriate environment for student teachers. In addition, she was highly capable, although several other participants were equally so. Felicity, herself, considered her self-containment instrumental. She explained:
I’m a very self-sufficient kind of person ... I know that lots of people need a lot more support and that they mightn’t be able to cope if they were in this situation. But I can manage by myself pretty well. (9/9/96, 242)

She attributed much of her self-containment to her commitment to self evaluation, which she considered enabled her to take responsibility for her learning. Her sanguine approach to learning to teach is evident in the following extract in which she explains that she does not find self evaluation disturbing. She noted:

One of the interesting points that came from the conference with my adviser and the cooperating teacher was that I am too critical of myself ... but I view it as being more a case of self evaluation than self criticism. My view is that there is always room for improvement, so I am always reviewing the situation to see if and how things could be done better next time. (September, 1996)

The six student teachers introduced in the following chapter, however, were also committed to self evaluation and all but one experienced a distressing practicum. Felicity differed from most of these students, though, in that she did not appear to have a passionate creed and so did not feel driven to challenge the status quo. Indeed she accepted it, as is evident from the following comment about her first school practicum. She explained: "Nothing has struck me as strange or different to what I expected. It's pretty much as I remember school. So I wasn't shocked by anything that I saw here. I expected it to be like this" (14/9/95, 113). This did not mean that she was unaware of problems, but as she pointed out: "There are good things happening as well." (14/9/95, 119) and she preferred to focus on those. Essentially, she was not a reformist and was happy to be achieving her long held ambition.

"That Fixed That Problem"

Although Felicity encountered some minor difficulties in learning to teach, she did not see teaching itself as particularly problematic. Consequently, at first, her reflection tended to be mainly technical as exemplified in her discussion of the difficulties she experienced when implementing her first cooking activity. She recalled: "I went though the experience in my mind - thinking 'What happened? What was wrong with it? Where did it start to go wrong and why?' I went through it very methodically" (10/5/94, 61). For each difficulty, she identified a solution:

I had children picking things up ... so, okay, don't have things on the table and I won't have that problem. And I had lots of children saying 'Can I have a go? Can I have a go?' So next time, I had a bowl for each child, so that fixed that problem. (10/5/94, 63)
She explained that she found reflection about broader educational issues difficult during practicum because:

In the rush of it all, you forget to stop and figure out what you're thinking and the reasons for doing what you are doing. I always feel that I get so involved with prac ... that I don't have time to stop and reflect. It's not until after prac. has finished that I can start to do that ... But it's not that I wasn't thinking - I was thinking about planning, and things like that - but that's different to thinking about my philosophy. (10/5/94, 145)

Her distinction between technical and practical reflection, although not expressed in those terms, indicates greater understanding of reflection than was evident in the student teachers (apart from Colin) profiled in the previous chapter.

Felicity's technical reflection focused on solving problems; her practical reflection involved redefining or reframing (Schon, 1983) them. Reframing enabled her to see problems from different perspectives. After observing a teacher experiencing difficulties managing children's behaviour, for example, she referred only briefly to the effectiveness or otherwise of the management strategies used by the teacher. She then reframed the situation to focus on the teacher's perception of the problem, which led her to query the legitimacy of the teacher's expectations. As Felicity explained:

I think that she invents problems for herself half the time. Some of the things which she reprimands the children for could almost be ignored. They are not serious enough to point out to the child all the time - 'You are doing this wrong again!' (23/8/93, 299)

Likewise, when she reflected on the effectiveness of an unstructured art activity which she implemented with children accustomed to a structured curriculum, immediately after the activity she focused on strategies for minimising the ensuing noise level. When writing about this incident that evening, though, she reframed her perception, commenting:

I realise now that the type of enthusiastic response that I got is what I would like to achieve in all aspects of my teaching. What makes a good classroom anyway? A quiet, subdued classroom with children restricted from sharing ideas? Or a lively classroom where ideas are being exchanged and where children are assisting each other and working cooperatively? (September, 1995)

The contrast between her initial and written responses is interesting. It supports her earlier comment that she found reflection of other than a technical nature difficult amidst the "busyness" and immediacy of practicum. At the same time, it suggests that the time lag between technical reflection and reframing was lessening. It also indicates that the writing process, itself, might have assisted in reframing.
Unlike several student teachers from the previous chapter, Felicity persisted with reflective writing. She found "writing my ideas down difficult" (18/11/96, 163) but considered it "definitely beneficial" (18/11/96, 164). In particular, it provided "concrete evidence of what my thoughts really are" (18/11/96, 162) as opposed to "just having my thoughts floating around" (18/11/96, 161). Perhaps the tangible nature of the written form provided Felicity with a more malleable substance than "mental reflection" (18/11/96, 158) and lent itself more easily to reframing.

By the final semester of Guided Practice, Felicity's reflection had changed from mainly technical to predominantly practical, with some initial signs of critical reflection possibly beginning to emerge. She no longer evaluated cooking and art activities, for example, in terms of managing children's behaviour. Rather, she focused on broader issues such as autonomy and control. She wrote, for example:

What I have discovered about this age group [18 - 24 month olds]  
... is that it is extremely difficult not to be restrictive and controlling, especially when children tend to put everything in their mouths including paint and paste brushes. (September, 1996)

She illustrated her concern by describing a specific incident:

On Monday, I offered finger painting. I held the activity behind the fenced area so that I could limit the number of children, ensure that they were wearing a protective smock, and that their hands were washed after they had finished. But holding the activity behind the closed fence made me feel bad because it meant that I was in control of the activity. I was the one who was saying who could come in and when. Also, while the children on one side of the fence were enjoying the activity, the children on the other side ... were calling out for their turn. Making one and two year olds wait isn't really fair either, but what is the alternative? (September, 1996)

In describing the above incident in this manner, Felicity appeared to be beginning to show evidence of a developing concern with moral aspects of teaching which in turn, might have been a precursor to engaging in critical reflection. In some respects, the changes in her reflection parallel Van Manen's (1977) levels of reflection and as such might appear to support his hierarchical conceptualisation. This thesis argues, however, that the complexity of connections rather than the content of reflection provides a more useful indicator of development in reflection.
As Felicity elaborated on the incident described above, she appeared to revert to a narrower focus rather than continuing to explore broader issues. She wrote:

*I felt as though I was in a constantly revolving door - ensuring smocks were fastened, sleeves rolled up, sufficient paint was on the table and hair and hands were washed before the next child came in and the whole production started again ... Is there any possible way to offer art and craft activities with this age group, letting the children have the freedom to create and explore without the teacher having to be the control freak running from one child to the other redirecting brushes before they end up in the child’s mouth or hair and retrieving chewed up paper from babies' mouths?* (September, 1996)

Because she seemed to be searching for a specific answer, her question might be considered a "How to ?" response rather than the 'Why?' response which LaBoskey (1994) asserts is typical of more reflective student teachers. This impression is reinforced as Felicity continued:

*I spoke to my cooperating teacher about these issues of being controlling and restrictive ... One of the alternatives she recommended was to double up on the activity. When offering activities that are likely to capture the interest of many children, it is easier to have two staff members and two areas set up for the activity so that waiting time is greatly reduced.* (September 1996)

Alternatively, she might be better portrayed as a student teacher who was beginning to appreciate the problematic nature of teaching and its inherent complexities. Without encouragement from her cooperating teacher to continue to explore these complexities, however, she appeared to find reflection on broader issues difficult to sustain.

The above excerpts support Felicity's view that "I've become more inclined to be reflective of everything I do" (18/11/96, 153) during her enrolment in Guided Practice. Her long held ambition to teach, her commitment to self evaluation, and her emphasis on learning from experience appeared important contributing factors. When compared to Erica's and Kel's (previous chapter) lack of commitment, the positive influence which her commitment to teaching had on her reflection is marked. It could be argued, however, that her commitment to teaching simultaneously constrained her reflection. Perhaps because becoming a teacher had been a childhood dream, she tended to see teaching as relatively unproblematic. Her lack of a passionate creed and her acceptance of the status quo resulted in her reflection involving mainly problem solving. In contrast, Kristy (below) was motivated to change the
status quo. Her profile highlights the impact of her passionate creed on her reflection.

**MOTIVATED TO SEARCH FOR WAYS TO MAKE TEACHING FUN: KRISTY**

Kristy was from an Anglo/Greek-Australian background and English was her first language. She entered the program as a school leaver. Unlike Fiona (and in common with several student teachers from the previous chapter), she had reservations about whether she wanted to teach. As a high school student she had undertaken work experience in a preschool and "came away thinking 'No, I don't want to be a teacher'" (2/11/93, 149). Her mother had died during Kristy's final year at school and Kristy considered that her mother's wish that she become an early childhood teacher had probably influenced her decision to enrol in the program.

Like Erica (previous chapter), Kristy spoke frequently of her doubts about wanting to teach. While Erica was torn between her enjoyment of teaching swimming and her reluctance to enter a relatively low status profession, Kristy was concerned about reconciling her dislike "of the idea of being a teacher" (13/5/94, 28) with her growing realisation "that there is so much that I could do as a teacher" (2/11/93, 122). She recalled that most of her own teachers "seemed to hate their jobs" (20/11/95, 130) and was adamant that she "didn't want to be like them" (20/11/93, 131). If she were to teach, she was determined "to find a way of making it fun for me as a teacher and for the children" (13/10/94, 73). Throughout much of her enrolment in the program Kristy worked as a children's clown, a job she loved because "I don't have to be serious - I can have fun!" (7/9/95, 226).

When she entered the program Kristy had envisaged that teaching would hold few opportunities for fun. She imagined "standing up in front of a blackboard" (13/10/94, 305) and "having to teach and they [would] have to learn what I teach" (13/5/94, 28). This view was reinforced by field visits early in the program to a preschool where "the teacher emphasised work ... before play" (20/11/955, 188). Kristy "wasn't happy" (29/3/95, 300) with this situation but "didn't think very much about it" (29/3/95, 317) and "put [it] completely out of my mind" (20/11/95, 21). Her comments suggest that she engaged in relatively little reflection in the early stages of the program.
Her second practicum, in a very formal school setting, involved much "sitting and watching" (13/5/94, 119). This provided "a lot of time to think" (13/5/94, 120) and enabled her "to imagine my own class and the ways that I would teach" (May, 1994). She began to "develop really firm ideas about what I believe about teaching" (13/5/94, 98) and saw her "philosophy beginning to emerge" (May, 1994). For the first time, "the thought of being a teacher was becoming exciting" (May, 1994).

"I Like Your Ideas - They're Fun!"

Kristy was excited most by the possibility of "doing away with the distinctions between work and play" (13/5/94, 130). She described making biscuits with children "because 'B' was the letter of the week" (13/5/94, 134) and concluded:

They learnt the letter 'B' much better that way rather than just tracing it in their book. They were learning but it was fun. I enjoyed it as well ...

The children gave me so many responses that I could extend upon, and that made it really fun. (13/5/94, 138)

She was thrilled by children's reactions and describing how "one child came up to me and said 'I like your ideas - they're fun!'" (13/5/94, 67). This encouraged her to think that "what I was doing was really worthwhile" (13/5/94, 68). Subsequently, she "planned some of my lessons especially to see how the children would react and interacted with them in different ways to see how they responded" (13/5/94, 291). Her ultimate aim was "to see how I saw myself as a teacher, and to see what I responded to as a teacher" (13/5/94, 293). In effect, this second practicum marked the emergence of Kristy's inquiry approach to teaching which was to characterise the remainder of her time in the program.

To Kristy, "having fun" (13/10/94, 65; 20/11/95, 110) and learning were integral, hence her concern during her two school practicums when she found "lessons very boring and very monotonous" (13/10/94, 65). She considered that "the children were so bored with their boring writing and boring maths books ... [that] they weren't learning" (13/5/94, 34). She worried about the impact of boredom on her own learning, as well as the children's learning, and commented: "If I did lessons like that, I'd get bored as a teacher, and I wouldn't be developing myself and the children wouldn't be learning" (13/10/94, 75). She was puzzled as to why her cooperating teachers should teach in such a way when they, too, "seemed bored with the stencils and the workbooks" (13/5/94, 139). One teacher explained that "she would have loved to have drama with the children, but that there was never enough time" (13/5/94, 152). Kristy assumed that this meant that "she didn't consider drama to be an important part of the curriculum. It's only something they do if they have time - it's only a 'fun' activity, not a learning activity" (13/5/94, 153)
although she acknowledged that "maybe they're not her priorities, but the priorities of the school" (13/5/94, 157). Nevertheless, she was determined not to emulate her cooperating teachers' approach and, in this sense, differed from Felicity who was more accepting of the status quo.

Kristy's commitment to her passionate creed was evident in her refusal to use stencils to teach phonics. She pointed out: "I wasn't learning anything from that at all and neither were they. I wasn't getting any insight into the children, apart from how well they could colour in. I wasn't developing my ideas" (13/10/94, 169).

Instead, she focused on challenging open-ended activities which provided incidental opportunities for children to learn their sounds. She recalled:

We'd been doing the sound 'Y' so I put out some materials and they made yachts. Then they tried to work out how to make them float. They really enjoyed doing something different and I really enjoyed seeing what each individual child came up with. When Bill [cooperating teacher] asked me whether I was going to explain to them how to do it, I didn't like to say 'No, I don't like the way you do that'. So I said 'No, I want to see how the children experiment'. That happened with a lot of things. He wanted me to give them direct instructions and I'd have to keep saying 'I want them to experiment'. I sort of had to learn how to agree, but to disagree. I listened to his opinions, but I still had my own opinions.

(13/10/94, 127)

Her sense of empowerment, which seemed to come "from developing my own ideas about how I'd like to be as a teacher" (13/10/94, 307) contrasted sharply to Josephine's (previous chapter) perception of powerlessness. While Josephine seemed to see reflection as a protective shield, Kristy saw it as a tool for growth.

Kristy placed considerable emphasis on reflection as a means of "trying to develop my ideas" (13/10/94, 190). She explained, for example, that at the beginning of her third practicum she knew that "I didn't like stencils very much, but by the end of the prac. I had reasons for why I didn't like them" (13/10/94, 190). During the following semester break she "spent a lot of time thinking about why I didn't like what was happening, and how I would do it differently, and why I would do them differently" (13/10/94, 201). As a result, she commented, "I think I'm answering my own questions" (13/10/94, 193). Some of her initial ideas about teaching had changed substantially as a result of this process of inquiry. As she expressed it: "When I look back over the time that I've been doing the course, I often think 'Did I really say that? Did I really think that?'" (13/10/94, 340).

Rereading interview transcripts and her reflective writing seemed to assist her to clarify and refine her ideas. In her final interview, for example, as she
looked over her previous representations of herself as teacher, she pointed out: "But when I say 'fun', I don't mean 'fun' as in just having a nice time, but in enjoying the learning" (20/11/95, 151). Her comment demonstrated the value of access to longitudinal records of professional development in encouraging reflection and the power of revisiting previous writing (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Kristy also found the relaxation sessions helpful in promoting reflection. Indeed, she continued to use the strategies introduced, commenting:

After relaxing, I became very reflective. I found thinking easier. If I was stuck on an assignment, I'd do some relaxation and found that I was able to think of new ideas that I hadn't been able to think of before. My ideas flowed more. It was all coming to me after I was relaxed. (29/3/95, 89)

After the second session, Kristy vividly recalled her own first class teacher, "Mrs Wilson, an 'old-witch' teacher" (15/3/95, 202), sending her back to Kindergarten for a day as a punishment for talking. She had "a wonderful time because Mrs Paris, the Kindergarten teacher, was my favourite teacher. She let us play. She made learning fun" (15/3/95, 197). Months later, Kristy returned to this memory, asking: "Now, I wonder why I was talking too much in first class. Was I bored?" (20/11/95, 172). Her focus on this memory is interesting. It suggests that her ideal of learning through fun originated, at least in part, from her own early childhood experiences and that relaxation sessions might have assisted in illuminating hitherto unrecognised connections.

As well, Kristy valued reflective writing. She found that "writing makes your thoughts a lot clearer. You think about things and you read about what you thought. And you think 'Why did I think that way?' Writing is definitely beneficial. (20/11/95, 282). Writing enabled Kristy to engage in a conversation with herself about her development as a teacher and about how she might make teaching and learning fun. Indeed, almost all of her reflective writing focused on the importance of fun and learning through play for both children and teacher. During her fourth practicum, for example, she wrote:

The children were asked to play a game called 'Sleepy Lions', where they have to lie on the mat quietly. This is used as a transition activity while other children are packing away. I lay down on the mat with the children. They laughed at me and asked me what I was doing. I said that I was playing 'Sleepy Lions'. They all laughed and said that teachers can't play 'Sleepy Lions' ... (August, 1995)
Kristy returned to this incident in a later interview, commenting:

When the children said that teachers aren't allowed to play games,
I stopped and thought about what being a teacher means. It can be
really confusing. I'd prefer to be called something other than a
teacher. I just want to be someone who extends and challenges and
develops children. (7/9/95, 212)

A similar comment two months later - "It's really challenging to think of new ways
of making learning enjoyable and learning experiences more valuable" (20/11/95,
236) - also highlights the appropriateness of conceptualising reflection as a
search for meaning.

The above excerpts illustrate how Kristy's determination to make learning and
teaching fun had become a passionate credo which permeated her thoughts
about teaching and provided both the impetus for and content of her
reflection (LaBoskey, 1994). Her passionate credo had a positive impact on
her commitment to teaching as well as her reflection. Yet, like Felicity's
commitment to teaching, it simultaneously seemed to limit her reflection. In
particular, it appeared to distract her from consideration of other important
issues. There was little sense of moving beyond issues directly connected
with self to broader concerns. In addition, although her passionate credo
undoubtedly contributed to her wholeheartedness about teaching and to her
sense of responsibility as a teacher, it might have had an adverse effect on
her openmindedness. There was little evidence, for example, that she
questioned the appropriateness of her ideas or was "able to hear thinking that
may be contrary to" her own (Loughran, 1996, p.5). As Dewey reminds us, all
three qualities are important. For these reasons, Kristy was included in this
cluster of student teachers whose reflection showed some consistent change
in reflection rather than those in the following chapter who showed
considerable consistent change.

So far, this chapter has focused on how a commitment to teaching can
enhance (and simultaneously constrain) reflection. Genni's profile (below)
illustrates the effect of commitment to reflection.

**MOTIVATED TO JUSTIFY HER DECISION TO BECOME A TEACHER:
GENNI**

Genni's family migrated to Australia from The Philippines when she was in
her early years of high school. She spoke English fluently, but with a strong
accent. She lived with her family in a low socio-economic suburb and, as the
eldest daughter, took considerable responsibility for her younger siblings. The first in her family to attend University, Genni entered the program as a 22 year old. She had previously completed a TAFE Associate Diploma in an area unrelated to early childhood and although her qualification held "the prospect of a job with good money" (30/3/93, 87), it involved "sitting behind a desk and not much opportunity for mixing with people" (30/3/93, 91). Concerned about "getting stuck in a rut and trapped" (18/10/94, 72), she decided to become an early childhood teacher.

"Why Would You Want To Spend Four Years Learning About Children Playing?"

From the time she enrolled in the program, Genni found a strong need to "be able to justify why I'm doing early childhood" (27/7/95, 108). She resented uninformed comments from friends: "Babysitting! I can't believe that you go to Uni. to learn babysitting!" (18/10/94, 203); and from customers in the supermarket in which she worked who asked: "Why would you want to spend four years learning about children playing?" (26/5/93, 172). These comments caused her to become "so worked up and defensive" (18/10/94, 206) and although she was convinced "that there is so much more to it than what most people think" (18/10/94, 208), she found it "really hard to find the ideas to justify what I'm doing" (27/7/95, 110). She attributed her difficulty to two main factors. She referred to society's general lack of respect for young children, noting: "This is a really hard course because you are learning to respect people who adults don't normally respect" (26/5/93, 219); and to cultural differences between her own upbringing and ideas introduced in the program. As Genni explained:

The way my parents have raised me is that I have to respect them and listen to what they say. And I thought that because my siblings are younger than me, they should respect me and listen to what I say. (26/5/93, 141)

She found differing attitudes to issues such as authority and self-determination particularly puzzling but was determined to reconcile these differences, clarify her beliefs and learn to articulate them in a manner which would engender more respect for her decision.

It was clear from the way Genni spoke of her struggle to achieve these goals that she valued reflection. During her first year in the program, for example, she referred to: "having these conflicting views in my mind and tossing them around" (26/5/93, 227); "putting myself in the children's position and seeing how I'd react" (27/10/93, 370); and "trying desperately to make sure that the way I treat children is consistent with what I believe" (27/10/93, B61). She raised many
questions, including: "Where is the right place for discipline to be administered? Who has the power to exercise it? And who has the duty to reinforce it?" (October, 1993). Realising, however, that there were no simple answers to these questions, she commented: "This is an inquiry which I do not expect ... to answer overnight. I merely stand back and play with arguments in my head, trying desperately to understand, but cannot" (October, 1993). As she began to explore these questions she engaged in practical and, increasingly, critical reflection.

Throughout her enrolment in Guided Practice, she continued to strive to understand and appreciate diverse views. As she put it:

> Everyone has differences and different approaches ... I couldn't honestly say that because Nancy [cooperating teacher] hasn't always done what the University says is appropriate then she is a bad teacher ... In reality, it's not that simple. (19/9/95, 440)

Here, her openmindedness is evident. Wholeheartedness and responsibility, other qualities emphasised by Dewey, were also apparent in her search to make sense of her decision to teach. Likewise, her attempts to "merge ideas together" (19/9/95, 285) so as "to develop my own ideas ...even though they come from other people I want to reshape and remould them to suit me" (27/7/95, 81), reminiscent of Schon's (1983;1987) notion of reframing, demonstrated her efforts to construct meaning about being a teacher. In these respects, and in her commitment to reflection, she differed considerably from most of the student teachers in the previous chapter.

Despite her determination to make sense of teaching and justify her decision to become a teacher, Genni experienced considerable confusion. Note, for example, her response to the following incident, from her first practicum, when she "planned an activity around making koala masks" (27/10/93, 180). When one child "pasted all over his mask and stuck eyes and noses everywhere" (27/10/93,184), her initial reaction was to intervene because "he was using too many eyes and noses" (27/10/93, 185). But she "stepped back and thought 'I'm supposed to be child-centred. He should be able to do what he wants. He is a free agent and that is his interpretation' " (27/10/93, 186). After reflecting further she reached a different conclusion, explaining:

> I realised later that I had just accepted what had happened at face value. I realised that he wasn't a free agent - that he knew that he had to do the activity, and that he just wanted to get it over and done with and move on. (27/10/93, 217)

Genni then asked herself: "So to be child-centred [a tenet of the program], do I say 'He is being a free agent, and this is his way of being creative' or do I say 'He's
bored?" (27/10/93, 220). To this point, Genni's reasoning was relatively easy to follow. Her concluding comment, though, was confusing. She explained: "I talked with the teacher about this later and she reinforced what I had been thinking. She said 'Whatever they do is right. You can't correct them', so I was glad that I reacted how I did" (27/10/93, 188). This conclusion seemed at odds with her apparent realisation that the compulsory nature of the activity might have an adverse impact on the child's motivation. Sustained reflection, in this instance, and indeed many others, did not appear to enhance understanding. Why?

The most likely explanation appears to be that she might have found reasoning and sustaining arguments a conceptually difficult task. She also seemed to have difficulty communicating her ideas. Indeed, many of her comments throughout the three years in which she was enrolled in the program indicated a combination of communication and conceptual difficulties. At various stages of the program, for example, she remarked:

- I think I'm getting more out of this course than I'm showing (26/5/93, 14);
- The theory ... has just bombarded me. I felt that I had so much in my head that I just didn't know what to pluck out where (18/10/94, 77);
- I sometimes think that my interpretation is misinterpreted by other people (18/10/94, 86);
- Sometimes my tutors give me good marks ... because I think they know what I want to say, but realise that I have trouble actually saying it. (27/7/95, 309)

Despite her undoubted willingness to engage in reflection, these difficulties appeared to limit her ability to demonstrate evidence of considerable development in her reflection.

Yet Genni was one of the few participants to engage frequently in critical reflection. In the following extract, she mentions three children from different backgrounds and with differing literacy skills with whom she worked on her third practicum. She refers to: "Jai Pai who comes from China and has only been in Australia since the beginning of last year. She is a very good reader" (17/10/94, 102); Sarah "who is older than Jai Pai but can't read nearly as well" (17/10/95, 104); and Tony, who was receiving "special support" (17/10/95, 213) for his reading difficulties but was "doing very well ... and developing at a much faster rate than Sarah" (17/10/95, 214). Genni noted that Tony's parents, like Jai Pai's, "because of their beliefs about education [were] providing ... a lot of stimulation at home" (17/10/95, 140) but that Sarah's parents "don't seem to assist her to extend her learning" (17/10/95, 142). She was concerned that "even though Sarah really needs special support, testing has shown that she does not qualify for it" (17/10/95,
Because eligibility criteria took into account only current proficiency and not children's backgrounds, Genni predicted that "a lot of children who need more support end up falling further and further behind" (17/10/95, 146). She was one of the few student teachers in the study who considered the implications of policy for perpetuating disadvantage and inequality. As such, she seemed more insightful about issues relating to social equity and justice than any of the student teachers (except Colin) profiled so far. Moreover, as is evident in the above example, she gradually became more proficient at explaining the reasoning behind her concerns and her conclusions. Her analytical and communication difficulties continued to be a major concern, however, and after failing several units, she eventually decided to discontinue her enrolment.

In summary, Genni entered the program strongly motivated to reflect. She was determined to find ways to justify her decision to teach. Her motivation contributed to her commitment to reflection, and seemingly because of this commitment, her reflection showed some development. Following considerable effort on her behalf, for example, she was able to present arguments a little more clearly. Although this might have been the result of improved communication skills, it also suggested some development in her analytical skills.

At the same time, her tendency to view reflection primarily as an analytical process seemed to constrain her reflection. It is possible that she might have found a less analytical, language-dependent medium for reflection more useful. Interestingly, she declined the invitation to attend relaxation and visualisation sessions, explaining that "it's just not my thing" (27/7/95, 29). Likewise when representing her ideas, she always used sentence form rather than the mindmaps or drawings used by several of the other participants. In terms of her own criteria of mastering reasoned explanation and argument to convince others of the validity of her decisions, she had not been particularly successful. Her profile highlights the limitations of conceptualising reflection solely as analytical thought.

The final profile presented in this chapter returns to the notion of the importance of a supportive learning environment in fostering reflection. It traces the development of a timid and insecure learner, who as she gained in
confidence, moved away from an epistemological perspective of received knowing to construct her own understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

MOTIVATED BY FINDING INNER STRENGTH: MARCELLE

Marcelle, who was Aboriginal but spoke English as her first language, described herself as "very shy ... and insecure in a lot of ways" (12/5/94, 526) when she entered the program as a 20 year old school leaver. Some years previously, at the age of 16, she had left school because, as she put:

I just wasn’t motivated. I had a lot of problems at home and I felt that being at school was a burden to my parents, and that it would be better if I went out and worked so that I could help them out financially.

(28/3/94, 169)

While working in a fruit shop she met her future fiancee who had also left school early. She decided that "one of us had better get some qualifications" (28/3/94, 175) and, when circumstances at home improved, returned to school, planning to eventually become a nurse. She had enjoyed working as an assistant in a nursing home but became very upset when "one of the patients whom I was really close to died, and I realised that I couldn’t handle that ... I get too attached to people" (28/3/94, 160). She then considered primary teaching, but her mother, a teacher’s aide, dissuaded her, arguing that Marcelle would be more suited to teaching in an environment where there would be more opportunity to work with children individually. In Marcelle’s words:

Mum knows that I am such a sensitive person and she was worried about how I would cope. She explained that even if a child in my class had a problem, I would still be committed to teaching the whole class and that I wouldn’t have the time to spend with the one child who really needed help. So she guided me towards early childhood.

(28/3/94, 118)

In many respects, Marcelle resembled Kathleen, profiled in the previous chapter. Both regarded themselves as vulnerable; both envisaged that early childhood teaching would offer them the sheltered environment which they perceived they required; and both were to find an unexpected inner strength and sense of efficacy. In part, this came from their developing awareness of the contribution they could make as teachers, and their consequent growing commitment to teaching. For Marcelle, it also came from increasing recognition of the value of reflection. It could be argued that such a change is much more likely when the environment is perceived as supportive.

Marcelle was insecure and highly anxious when she entered the program. Initially, she worried about her practicums, explaining: "I thought that I was
going to make a lot of mistakes and get into trouble for them" (12/5/94, 99). She also worried about her academic ability, recalling: "I thought that I’d failed the assignment for Unit X, for sure. So when I got it back I didn’t open it for ages. I didn’t want to open it on the train and cry in front of everybody" (20/5/94, 114). She first began to realise that she was stronger and more able than she had thought, when to her surprise, she passed all her first year units. She commented:

I think it was because I was helping my friends so much. They were finding it really hard and I was trying to find ways to make it easier for them to understand. That made me understand things better, too.

(28/3/94, 213)

Her developing confidence appeared to both enable and motivate her to reflect. The following excerpts illustrate this reflexive relationship between her confidence and her reflection.

The extract below, from a group interview with Marcelle and Josephine (previous chapter) midway through their second year in the program, illustrates how Marcelle’s growing confidence enabled her to draw on her own experiences and to question some of the ideas presented in the program.

**Josephine:** I’ve agreed with everything that’s been said in lectures ... When I see the opposite happening from what I’ve been told, I tend to think, ‘Well, if they’d done it the way we’ve been told, it would have been better’.

**Marcelle:** Well, I didn’t agree with a lot of things in Unit X ... Just because a child mightn’t show any interest in art activities doesn’t necessarily mean that they aren’t creative. I don’t think that you should have to try to force children to join in, because there are so many other areas in which they can be creative ... I don’t think it should get to the stage where activities are no longer fun. That happened to me at school. I was really into dancing, but it got to the stage where I felt that everyone was pushing me so hard that it just wasn’t fun any more.

(12/5/94, 425)

This extract shows that Josephine had not moved far from the epistemological perspective with which she entered the program, that is “with the attitude that I don’t know anything” (12/5/94, 386) and the expectation that she would learn by “listening to what the lecturer says” (12/5/94, 387). In contrast, Marcelle was beginning to find “a lot of room to develop my ideas” (12/5/94, 361). Her growing sense of inner strength and her perception that the learning environment supported her move to become a more independent learner seemed to both assist and motivate her shift from a perspective of received knowledge towards a more empowered position of constructed knowing (Belenky et al., 1986).
"Before, I Knew That A Lot Of Things Were Important, But I Didn't Really Know What Was Important To Me"

By Marcelle's third practicum, she felt ready "to try out some of my own ideas, rather than settling into how things already are" (15/9/94, B7), again in striking contrast to Josephine. By her fourth practicum, she was surprised by "how much everything is starting to come together" (28/8/95, 105). Her ideas had developed to the extent that she now had "a philosophy" (28/8/95, 109) to guide her practice. As she pointed out: "Before, I knew that a lot of things were important, but I didn't really know what was important to me" (28/8/95, 116). She was determined "to identify any inconsistencies between my philosophy and my teaching practices" (28/8/95, 195), explaining:

I don't think that it's appropriate to have a philosophy and then to do something quite different in your teaching. If I'm not doing what I'm saying that I'd like to be doing, then that's something that I really need to work on ... I think it's really important to know what sort of a teacher you'd like to be and then do something about it. (28/8/95, 215)

The sense of inner strength conveyed in this comment contrasts markedly with her perceived vulnerability when she entered the program. Her realisation of this inner strength seemed to motivate her to become more reflective. Why, then, is she portrayed as a student teacher who showed some, rather than considerable, development in her reflection?

One reason is lack of data. Although Marcelle participated in the project for four semesters, she did not share her reflective writing or attend the relaxation sessions or the final scheduled interview. She seemed happy with the proposed arrangements which were made in close consultation with her but did not keep them, or the arrangements made subsequently, again in close collaboration with her. As cultural factors might have been a contributing factor, it seemed inappropriate to pursue further attempts to meet with her. The available data provide evidence of some development of reflection but are insufficient to support a claim of considerable development.

An additional reason for including Marcelle in the cluster of student teachers who showed some but not considerable change in reflection was that there seemed less evidence of reflection in her final practicum than in her two preceding practicums. The following extract from her final practicum, for example, hardly suggests a reflective approach.
Jennifer: Has this prac. been a learning experience for you?
Marcelle: No, not really. The only thing that I’m trying to get out of this prac. is to realise that in a few weeks I could be teaching. So I’m trying to look at what Melanie [cooperating teacher] does, and I’m trying to take in as much from her as I can. (30/10/95, 305)

Later, however, Marcelle elaborated:

Melanie and I talk a lot. She is really interested in what I’m doing ... She extends my thinking a bit more ... She’s helped me to think about why I’m doing things ... It’s really good to have someone to make you justify what you are doing. (30/10/95, 531)

It is difficult to tell from this excerpt whether Marcelle or Melanie initiated these conversations. Nor is it possible to predict whether Marcelle would have reflected without Melanie’s support.

Indeed, the same uncertainty had arisen in relation to Marcelle’s comments 18 months previously, during the group interview with Josephine. Marcelle began by alluding to the positive impact a supportive environment had on her reflection:

Marcelle: I’ve found that just talking to someone about prac ... makes me think about the type of teacher that I’d really like to be, and being able to talk about it helps me to sort out my own mind.
Josephine (to Jennifer): Yes, your questions make me think about what I’ve probably already thought about, but it seems like I didn’t know half of what I said until two seconds before I said it.
Jennifer (to Josephine): What do you mean?
Josephine: I don’t know ... the ideas just seemed to run off the top of my head. I suppose (I hope!) they came from some knowledge that I had in my head - but verbalising them brought them out.
Marcelle (to Josephine): Yeah, I agree. There was a little boy at my prac. like that, but I hadn’t really thought about the situation ... But talking about it makes me think about all the things that we are going to come across when we are teachers. (12/5/94, 282)

This extract raises several issues, including the role of discussion in bringing to the surface understandings which otherwise might not have been recognised. In conjunction with Marcelle’s comment in the previous paragraph, it also raises queries about the extent to which discussion with supportive others might be integral to her reflection. That is, would Marcelle have reflected if not encouraged to do so by critical friends (Hatton & Smith, 1995)?

While her newly found sense of inner strength appeared to motivate her to reflect perhaps, perhaps she lacked confidence in her ability to sustain reflection on her own. Alternatively, her cultural background might have
predisposed her to favour reflection through discussion with "elders" (Paterson & Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 1994), rather than as an individual undertaking. These issues would have been interesting to raise in a concluding interview, but unfortunately, as explained previously, there was no opportunity to do so.

In summary, the available data suggest that Marcelle's response to the program differed considerably from several of the student teachers introduced in the previous chapter. For them, enrolment in the program seemed an essentially disempowering experience which, in turn, hindered the development of their reflection. In contrast, Marcelle found the learning environment supportive and developed a sense of efficacy and inner strength which seemed to encourage and enable her to reflect. While her perception of a supportive environment seemed an important contributory factor, had she come to depend on that support, it might also be seen as a constraint to the further development of her reflection.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS
This chapter has presented profiles of the four student teachers whose reflection showed some consistent development during their enrolment in Guided Practice. Each of these students had a motivation to reflect. Felicity wanted to fulfil her childhood ambition to become a teacher; Kristy was determined to find ways to make teaching and learning fun; Genni needed to justify her decision to change careers; and Marcelle was motivated by her emerging sense of self-efficacy in a supportive environment which encouraged reflection. Their motivation to reflect overshadowed the potential hindrances to reflection investigated in the previous chapter. Yet, paradoxically, their motivation simultaneously seemed to constrain their reflection. For this reason, it was argued, these student teachers demonstrated some, but not considerable, consistent change in reflection.

The following chapter illustrates how, in the absence of constraints, the factors referred to in the current chapter can create a synergy which is likely to lead to considerable change in reflection.