Chapter One: Introduction

It is professional development day at an institute of higher education. “Engaging students in learning” flashes in bold letters on the front screen as a troop of lecturers, tutors and teachers take their place among the round tables like stalwart Arthurian knights, a little prickly, but not yet fully armoured. The plenary speaker is on stage, armed with PowerPoint and considerable enthusiasm. She presses the remote and a set of questions roll up.

Presenter: So I thought we might begin by getting you to talk in groups about how you go about getting students involved in their learning, and I want you to identify three things that you think are key.

A conversation ensues at the back table between Marie¹, Anita, Kaya, Sam and Linda².

Kaya: Well aside from the obvious stuff like meaty assignments and interesting activities, what do we think? Not that every group is willing to engage, no matter how interesting the course. There’s always a couple of students who spend most of the class with their heads on the desk. So try and keep them awake?

Sam (laughing): Yeah I get that too. Some of my students don’t understand much of what I’m saying, although I try to slow down. And others want a career in public relations, so they’re not that interested in the critical side of media studies, at least, not in a critical way, if you know what I mean. So having enough language and being interested in different ideas is key, even if you don’t agree. I don’t mind that, it gets things going a bit. Although I do think that expressing a different point of view is very hard for some of our students, even if they think it, they’re reluctant to say it out loud.

¹ All persons referred to in this thesis have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity unless otherwise indicated.
² I have referred to myself in the third person in this opening scenario in order to foreground the institutional approach to professional development and its constraining effects on conversation, rather than my particular contributions to the day.
Marie: I teach accountancy which people usually think of as really boring but I try to find ways to make it fun. For the major assignment, I have students do a financial plan for a new business that they want to set up, so they can choose the business, the area and stuff, but they’ve got a fixed budget to work with, and they have to cost it all out and estimate the operational costs and come up with a projected income. It’s actually a very complex assignment. I give them some good and bad examples of business plans and get them in groups to think about which ones they think would succeed and why, and we have a bit of a guessing game to get the ball rolling. Then we look at some real cases of failed businesses and they have to really look closely at the plans and think about what might have happened to each business and why.

Kaya: You’ve just changed my view of accountancy! But it’s not just down to us, it does depend on students’ willingness and interest in the subject. I teach statistics and some students just sit up the back and it’s hard to get a peep out of them. The main assignment is a research report on pepsi-cola versus coca-cola sales where they represent their findings in their choice of form. And we work on little examples of similar kinds of things and I get them to analyse the trends and think about what kinds of graphs and charts would work best and why, but some of them come to class and they haven’t even attempted the tasks, and they just sit there waiting for the answers.

Sam: Yeah, I have students who just want you to feed them; they’re really not there for the experience. So I think student willingness, because I can’t do much if they’re not willing.

Linda: I know how that feels. I had my first mixed group of local and international students last semester, and there was a group of locals, mixed guys and gals, who created this incredible tension in the room right from day one. They flat out refused to get into groups with the international students, and I just left it at that, because I didn’t want to get their backs up. But when I was chatting with them, a bit later on, I found out they were pretty prickly about not getting into uni and having to be in what they thought was a language class. The second week things weren’t much better, but I was able to get the more friendly locals to mix with the international students for a
discussion on intercultural communication. The reading was pretty simplistic, but I gave them some questions about the writer’s assumptions and whether they rang true with their experience. It wasn’t going too bad until I asked people to share their ideas, and then Sandy, one of the prickly locals, came right out with the statement that ‘Anyone who comes here and doesn’t support the Australian way of life and Australian values should go back to where they came from’.

**Anita:** What did you do?

**Linda:** Honestly, I was just thinking on my feet. But, you know, what I did notice, that there was so much energy in the room that she had actually generated. And there was a lot to explore in her comment, and I really wanted to get people thinking.

**Anita:** You didn’t say anything about how racist it was?

**Linda:** No. I just thought that would have shut things down. But I did stop everyone yelling out in response and asked them to listen to Sandy. And that actually worked! Then I asked Sandy what she meant by the Australian way of life and Australian values. Anyway, it turned out she was from Cronulla and her brother had been at the Cronulla riots\(^3\), and she had some very strong feelings about that. And when the other students starting putting forward their views, they picked up on that and they were quite thoughtful in their responses and it just opened up this opportunity because everyone was really interested. So we talked about things like what are the values of your country and how do you know that is the case and whether people always act in accordance with their values and what that means. And after that class, even though it was still difficult to keep some of the students on track, there was a genuine change in

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\(^3\) The Cronulla Riots occurred on 11th December 2005. They involved clashes between large numbers of Anglo-Celtic Australians from the seaside suburb and groups of “Middle Eastern” youth, in response to an alleged attack on three lifeguards by a “Middle Eastern gang”. It was reported that the youths were harassing a group of local girls and the lifeguards intervened. Both incidents were widely and provocatively reported in the media.
dynamics, and people were more willing to open up and become involved, and it actually became a really great class.

**Maria:** Why do you think that was?

*It is at this stage that the presenter calls them back together and asks for feedback.*

**Presenter:** So let’s hear from this table. What did you come up with?

**Daniel** (The appointed table spokesperson): Well, we thought creating relevant assignments, you know, ones that make the students think about a key concept or apply a theoretical perspective. Um, we also thought, and it’s pretty obvious though – making interesting lessons, with activities where students do something with the knowledge. I mean, obviously, sometimes you have to explain stuff. The other thing we thought was really important was having clear criteria for assessments that students understand. So giving them samples of previous assignments and getting them to mark them, that kind of thing.

**Presenter:** That’s great. Has anyone got anything to add to that? How about this table? (Nodding at the table on the far side of the room) What did you think?

**Maya:** Well, we talked about group work and how getting students involved in sharing ideas and batting off each other really helps them to learn. And, if they don’t have much language, they feel less put upon sharing ideas in groups, so it helps to get the more nervous ones talking. I try to mix strong students with weak students. But sometimes it’s hard. We just recently started getting local students in our courses, and that can cause tension because some of them don’t want to work with the international students. And I don’t mean that the local students are stronger, often they’re not, but it can be really tricky with the dynamics.

**Presenter:** Yep. Absolutely. Group work and getting students used to sharing ideas with each other is really important, especially for learners who feel nervous for all
kinds of reasons. I was just wondering, did anyone have any ideas or examples of group activities that they do that they found worked really well?

_Ideas are shared about this, while the presenter jots notes on the board. Then Greg, one of the academic English teachers, raises his hand._

**Greg:** Can I make a comment? All that’s been said so far is great as far as it goes. But you can have the best activity and assignments and you can get students in the supposed best groups, and sometimes it just doesn’t work, and it’s not just down to the activity or the relevance. There’s the learner’s background and expectations, and whether or not they really want to be doing what they’re doing or if they’re just here because it is what their parents want. And we talk to them about this stuff and one of our assignments is about getting them to reflect on their background and how it relates to their preferred ways of learning. So in that sense, we’ve ticked all the boxes but…

_For the first time everyone in the room looks genuinely engaged._

**Greg:** What I mean is, we teach international students, and even though every learner is different, and it’s not good to generalise, it is my experience that, sometimes, especially if you have a class of predominantly young Chinese students, trying to get them to actively engage in their learning can feel like drawing teeth.

_Vigorous nods of agreement from tables all around the room._

**Greg:** And it is much more of a drain in those classes because you can try and try to get people involved and go around to every group, and ask questions and do everything we’ve been talking about and sometimes it just doesn’t work. I mean, it’s interesting because when you have more of a mix, when there are a few Thai or Indonesian or Middle Eastern students, it makes a difference, you can break things up more, you can kind of shift that cultural wall, and you get something to work with. So I guess my question is, how does where you are coming from relate to that? Because we are continually trying to be learner centred, but what about when the learner
doesn’t want it? I’m not blaming the students, I understand the cultural reasons and the learning experiences behind it, but it’s very hard to shift, and trying to shift it can be exhausting. Ask anyone here. And sometimes, quite honestly, I just give up.

*The presenter smiles and shifts her feet on the podium.*

**Presenter:** I don’t know what to say. I have experiences with mixed cohorts of international and local students, but I haven’t faced that kind of situation. Shifting some of those barriers that you’re talking about, like you said, is going to take time and persistence.

*Val, one of the teachers at the next table, puts up her hand.*

**Val:** But we only have five-week courses. Actually, four and a half weeks, if you factor in the exams and orientation day. And then it rolls on into the next course and you might not get the same students again.

**Greg nods.**

**Greg:** Time is the very thing that we really don’t have, and the students I’m talking about are really focused on the assessments, but in that way of wanting to be told what they need to do to pass them. And I just feel that the way that we do things feeds into that.

*On this note, the presenter calls everyone’s attention to the next PowerPoint slide.*

**Presenter:** I know that this is a bit of a mixed audience here. Some of you are from English language teaching and academic preparation, and others are from a range of subject areas, so maybe it would be best to move on to the next part of the session and I’ll get you back in groups to talk about the kinds of assignments you have and how you think they stimulate engagement.
Further discussions take place, although none seem as avid as the first. At the close of the session, on her way out of the room, Linda meets her Head of Department, Jill.

**Linda:** What did you think?

**Jill:** Well, I don’t disagree, in theory, with what she was saying or rather trying to get us to say, but that’s as far as it went.

**Personal and Theoretical Context of the Research**

The above scenario is a re-creation of a professional development day that I attended in 2008. I begin this thesis with it as it is indicative of the approach to professional development taken by the institution at which I worked for the best part of a decade. One of my colleagues described it as performative (Butler, 1990), in that they felt that the non-teaching management assumed that the teaching staff could be taught to ‘do learner-centred teaching’ in line with their performance-oriented goals; underlying this assumption was a mistaken understanding of learner-centred teaching as unproblematically do-able for both students and teachers. According to another experienced colleague, the top-down agenda-driven approach deterred her from ever attending sessions that she felt were akin to being taught to “suck eggs”. For most of us, these professional development sessions were ambivalent experiences, in which we had some chance to share our concerns and experiences, even if we had little opportunity to really build upon them, with the latter inducing a great deal of frustration.

This thesis springs from my experiences of professional development, and of teaching and forming relationships in this institutional context. Its genesis, as such, is deeply personal. The questions that guide it have arisen from my desire to resist the performative and compliance seeking forces (Robertson, 2002; Watty, 2003; McWilliam, 2002) that marked the culture of the school and shaped its approaches to
the teaching staff and their professional development. I seek to trouble conceptions of the teaching and learning relationship that underpin learner-centred approaches to teaching and academic development in higher education (Barnett, 2000; Boud, 2006; Clegg, 2005; Peseta, 2005). Despite their recognition of the teacher and the importance of the teacher’s approach to the students and subject (Prosser, Trigwell, & Waterhouse, 1999; Prosser, Martin, Trigwell, Ramsden, & Luecktenhausen, 2005; Prosser, Martin, Trigwell, & Middleton, 2008) within learner-centred approaches, this relationship is implicitly conceived in terms of conventional understandings of cognition, in which the body is reduced to a form of transport for the head (Robinson, 2006). This leaves out of view the tacit, multi-sensory and relational dimensions of pedagogy and thus any serious consideration of the importance of the forces that arise within these dimensions to student engagement. The decision to focus on this felt sensory domain, though, was not theoretical. It arose from my experience of the discordant effects of the school culture on myself and my pedagogy, and the palpable need that grew for experiences that would reinvigorate my pedagogical practice.

Theoretically, this thesis and its focus and methods are aligned with approaches to teacher education and professional development that conceive of all teaching as fundamentally anchored in relationships (Beattie, 2009; Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Kane, 2007; Korthagen, 2001; Loughran, 2006, 2007, p. 6). In this literature, teaching and learning are viewed as interwoven at every level of sensory engagement, with good teaching dependent upon becoming responsive to the dynamic and contextualised nature of pedagogy, and sensitive to learners as students and people. Exploring the different ways in which exceptional teachers engender relationships in the classroom and their importance to students’ learning is a major aim of this research. Two case studies of outstanding teacher educators thus provide the basis for explorations of the research questions. Furthermore, by exploring pedagogy as a multi-sensory and relational phenomenon, the thesis contributes to more complex understandings of pedagogy and challenges “the tyranny of talk” which dominates educational research, especially in the tertiary sector (Mackinnon, 2002).
The Context of the Investigation

The specific context of the case studies grew from an inquiry into quality teaching in teacher education that was being conducted within the Faculty of Education at one of the major universities in Sydney, NSW (Anderson, Ewing, & Gibson, 2007). In that inquiry, a group of teacher educators set out to jointly explore their pedagogies using a model of quality teaching developed and endorsed by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET NSW, 2003). The model itself is widely used within faculty courses as a guide for understanding and reflecting on the elements of quality teaching with pre-service teachers.

While this study came under the umbrella of this inquiry, its purpose was rather different, as its personal genesis and theoretical connections suggest. It set out to explore what can be learned from the experiences of teachers about what engenders and sustains a commitment to an empowering pedagogy. The idea of an empowering pedagogy derives from Cummins’ (n.d.) notion of empowerment as the collaborative creation of power. It is preferred over notions of quality pedagogy, or even transformative pedagogy, because it puts the kinds of relationships that the pedagogy brings into being as central to empowerment and, concordantly, to deep learning experiences.

The rationale for the case studies was fourfold: to be able to experience the pedagogy created by the participating teacher educators firsthand and to reflect on its underpinnings with them; and furthermore to create a forum where participating pre-service teachers could share reflections on their experiences of this pedagogy, and draw connections with their own experiences. While the DET model (NSW, 2003) was drawn on as a reference for quality indicators with participants, the intent was to look beyond these elements to the forces that brought them into being. In this regard, quality frameworks like the DET NSW model may be looked upon as a useful guide for identifying the presence of quality teaching elements in practice and generating discussions around their immediate enabling conditions. However, such models can
also be likened to special occasion snapshots: while people are smiling happily into the camera, the shot reveals little of the forces and experiences that brought them to such a moment in their lives.

With this rationale in mind, the questions that have guided the case studies are:

1. What can be learned from the journeys of teachers about what engenders and sustains a commitment to an empowering pedagogy?

2. What does an empowering pedagogy feel like?

3. What makes such feelings possible?

In keeping with the focus on the affective dimensions of pedagogy and professional development, an arts-informed approach to narrative inquiry was adopted throughout the research process. This combined approach was selected because it underscores the importance of both creativity and care in conducting research and its representation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 2007; Eisner, 1998; Richardson, 2005). In doing so, it offers an alternative to research within the Western rationalist and empirical traditions, which tends to explore and represent the phenomenal world in terms of discrete categories. This tendency can obscure the vital dimensions of experience, along with any sense of its felt qualities and their importance. Because arts-informed approaches employ creative, multi-sensory ways of knowing and representing, they can enable the aesthetic qualities and rhythms that infuse living experience to become more palpable in both the sharing of experiences and their representation. As it is these vital dimensions of pedagogy that this thesis sets out to explore, an arts-informed approach was selected.

Narrative inquiry was adopted as the major method as it revolves around the sharing and reconstruction of participants’ experiences. Such sharing depends on the creation of relationships founded in trust, authenticity and mutual respect between participants.
and the researcher. The creation of relationships of this kind is not only an overarching aim, but also an enabling condition of the method.

Narrative inquiry fits with the focus, aims and assumptions of this research because it departs from a relational view of being and knowing. It sees meaning as co-created in interaction between people and thus sets the kinds of relationships engendered between participants as central to and shaping of the conduct and quality of the research. This approach fits with the assumption of a universal interrelatedness (Sumsion, 1997) as at the heart of being and knowing which guides this thesis. It also fits with the ethics of care that guides the approach to participants and their experiences. Furthermore, the sharing and reconstruction of participants’ experiences in a co-operative forum allows for ongoing opportunities for holistic professional development.

This potential for professional development of the holistic kind fits with another major aim of the research: to encourage the reader to connect more deeply with their own pedagogy and explore its connection to the forces that matter and make a difference in their lives (Beattie, 2009, p. 16). The adoption of arts-informed narrative inquiry helped me to work towards this purpose. It enabled me to reconnect with my own creativity, and reflect on the importance of that connection to my personal and professional development. I hope that the creative representation of participants’ experiences similarly helps to engender in readers a heightened sense of the importance of the creative forces that infuse empowering pedagogy. While these stories cannot provide a definitive model for practice, they may serve as sources of inspiration, energy and hope.

This first chapter has provided an introduction to the purpose of this thesis and outlined its methodological approach. It has provided a theoretical justification for the approach adopted, in terms of its appropriateness to the focus and concerns of the research. In the second chapter, my personal journey into the teaching profession and the forces and encounters that were experienced as formative are represented in a

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4 An explanation of this perspective and its difference from existing knowledge paradigms is provided in Chapter four.
storied form. In keeping with the very different nature of the experiences that marked the early and mid stages of my teaching career and that of the later stage, the story is divided into two parts. The first part is told in the first person as it reflects the development of a sense of self that was experienced as formative in the life-enhancing sense. The second part is presented in the third person as it reflects experiences of diminishment that resulted in the undermining of a life-enhancing sense of self. This story precedes the literature review in order to emphasise the generative importance of experience in learning and inquiry.

Chapters Three and Four provide the theoretical basis of this thesis with an exploration of the relevant literature. The third chapter begins with a discussion of work across disciplinary fields which highlights the embodied multi-sensory nature of experience, and the co-creative nature of learning. It explores the links between ecological perspectives on perception and education, and research in neuroscience, philosophy, and developmental psychology. The research discussed in this section of the review was selected because it allows creativity to be seen as a relational force rather than a purely individual quality. Drawing the selected work together enables a view of creativity as a universal potential to emerge: one that can transform the tacit realm of experience and the relations between people. This section of the review is then followed by a discussion of literature on creativity that highlights its importance to student engagement. Current thinking on the nature of student engagement is situated within the confluence of these ideas and appraised accordingly. Following this, dominant conceptions of learning in higher education and their influence on approaches to academic development are critiqued in the light of research that emphasises the importance of relationships in pedagogy.

In the fourth chapter, the assumptions about the nature of being and knowing that underpin the conduct of the research are discussed. In keeping with the thrust of the thesis, existing research paradigms are critiqued as still operating within conventional binaries that obscure the relational nature of being. The research methods, conduct of the research and methods of analysis are then outlined. A rationale is provided in this section for the selection of the case study teacher educators that fits with the focus on
the affective dimensions of pedagogy. While both teachers were chosen on the basis of consistently excellent student evaluations, the many students’ comments on these evaluations which revealed experiences of highly charged positive affect (Appendix H, pp. 69-76; Appendix O, pp. 134-150) were a major deciding factor in the selection. Following on from the discussion of methods, a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind the particular storied form that was chosen to represent the research and its findings is given.

Chapter Five contains the research story, The Art of the Possible, which is presented in two parts. This creative story draws on the style of magical realism to represent the case studies of two exceptional teacher educators. The subsequent chapter returns to the theoretical approach, exploring the major themes that emerge from the research and relating them to the guiding questions. Chapter Seven explores the themes that emerge from pre-service teachers’ experiences of teaching and learning in relation to relevant theory and participants’ personal metaphors. Finally, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for teacher education and approaches to teaching and learning in the tertiary sector.

Through combining a range of creative and theoretical approaches in this thesis, I have sought to bring to life my pedagogical stance. This stance recognises the importance of the embodied and affective dimensions of teaching and learning and the potential that resides in the energies generated between people. It acknowledges and strives to illuminate the interdependence of the personal and professional realms of experience and development.
Chapter Two: Journeys in Life and Learning

Part One: Movement

Preface

Undertaking this research is, for me, part of a much larger journey; one that emerges out of my experiences of more than twenty years of teaching and travelling, both in Australia and overseas. Its more immediate catalyst emerged from the shock at the self I was becoming after five years of teaching in a large cold-blooded tertiary institution in Australia. This was a self that was disenchanted and stuck; whose esteem and confidence had been eroded, not only in reaction to the machinations of a profoundly dysfunctional school management but, equally, as an effect of a crisis in my personal life. As I have come to learn in ever more profound ways, it is in relation to these intimate experiences and the forces at work within them that this research can be understood. As Brew’s (2001) work highlights, researchers experience their research in different ways. This is a phenomenon which speaks volumes of the nature of the research that people do, and the motivations that drive them. In her terms and mine, this thesis fits into a “journey variation” (Brew, 2001, p. 279), in which the data are encountered “holistically” and the “underlying questions posed…dovetail with the researcher’s life”.

This research journey was motivated by my desire to transform the stuck, powerless and increasingly fearful self I had become into someone more mindful, responsive and careful. The genesis of this impulse was first and foremost bodily. It arose out of the making of my breath, that most basic of bodily processes through which we connect to the living world, untenably difficult. The circumstances that converged to give rise to this ‘unhinging’ are represented in the second part of my story. I have written this in the third person and presented it in the form of a recollection on the way to work. The
aim is to capture the professional and personal forces that, over a period of some five years, lead up to the crisis, and to evoke their felt experience.

The first part of my story begins with a short prose story of a young woman who embarks on an adventure that takes her into lands where the spiritual and magical dimensions of life are alive in the world and can be felt in the everyday doings of so-called ordinary people. It tells of how encounters with these peoples and their lands affects her; how it sparks her imagination and gives rise to a profound sense of the connection between all things.

This prose story springs from my experience of walking in the Greater Himalayan Ranges for ninety-seven days in the summer of 1993. Conor, my husband, and myself, along with two friends, our horseman, Haneef and his four horses, Tiku, Lilu, Kalu and Titu, walked from the Kulu Valley in India to Padum in Zanskar, and on to the great Gompa at Lamayuru. Captured by the land and its rhythms, we took the old shepherd’s trail to Alchi, were invited for dinner and dancing at a monastery party in Skiu, and followed the footsteps of the Gaddhi flocks to the high pastures where white wolves still roam. This story is juxtaposed against how it felt to return to the ‘real’ world of rampant competition, where so-called achievement is primarily conceived of and measured in individual terms, and the carving up of all dimensions of life into measureable categories is encouraged to ensure their differentiation and easy management.

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5 A pseudonym has been provided for our horseman.
In the Lands of the Mountain Gods

A very long time ago, a rather rambunctious girl set off on a journey through a land that bore no resemblance to any of her known worlds. And for that she thanked every Goddess yet to come. Walking with her four companions, three horses, and a giddy teenaged mule, she passed right out of the clock-timed world into a land of shifting stone. Every crevice and cranny, each bruise of granite, chafed with the flesh of ancient gods; as if they had convened and conversed, crossed paths and genes and made camp for forever, their giant bones braced in earth. The only way to explain the aching of millennia that pulsed in every dusty step; its long making so uncut by machination her heart swelled and broke.

Days became weeks, weeks became months, and time forgotten, as the girl and her companions incarnated the bones of forgotten gods, every footfall a fleshi ng of marrow and dirt. Great purple rifts verged shoulder to shoulder, all past yearnings mere kinks in the razored corpulence of earth. From the rumblings of old rock and thin air flowed the almost lands, just beyond human reach. All pinded up and indigod, ruby cut and gold veined; seams of colours and textures in quickening scrawl. A flicker of stardust shot across time and leapt into the world.

At the making of camp, the girl fossicked for stones and the scales of serpents, sifting the crusts that rouged into sand. She lathered her body in milk-green rivers, uncoiled on islands of dream-bearing stones, and followed the tales of fish down faraway streams, their promises of winter and its crystal icing melting in her sun-worn hand. Afternoons stretched across charred orange cliffs, igniting the tussles of sagebrush and wild rose, and whisked the rubbings of time into the lavender dusk. Gathering around Haneef’s stove, the girl and her companions drank a broth of cumin, pepper and deepening violet, warmed by the blankets of horses and the glow of galaxies passing above.

They heard laughter in the bellies of ancient monasteries, in the deep umbilical twists whose rhythms bore life long before the making of science. The echoes of some
forgotten chord still chortling in the rafters, slung among the silver cups, aging biscuits, and rumblings of ornery ghosts. Neither kept in check by dust, nor the chanting of eager young monks, whose wanton stoking of the kindling fire filled the room with a lusty blaze. The heat set the kettle trembling, its blackened body scorched right through, till the last sticky puffs of caramel bore cup after cup of sweet smoked tea. The bouquet of sugar and ardour shook them up rope ladders into windy courtyards filled with trinkets, blessings, and the whirring of children. Bursts of laughter winked up at a great silent eye.

The first fall of snow came with a lone white wolf, and a woman whose plaits would not lay quiet under her caul. It turned out the lady had a penchant for dancing unknown dances with strangers; their quick twirls upstaging the beat of the one-man drum. Before the passing of soup and blessing of beer, the girl played jacks made from sheep toe bones with a clutch of tiny children, who tossed and squealed and taught her harvest songs. She sang and drank, linked arms and clapped, laughing and spinning and tilling the earth with some old invisible scythe. Their reaping and reeling drew brief summer sketches and deep winter stretches, a warm basting of breath and the uncanny reach of hand in hand.

One hot white day, they camped in the nape of a mountain, home to a monk steeped in old earth tones, face flecked with dragon scale, and the secret folds of time. He wound them through a vale of tamarisk willow into a garden of serpent stones, spider streams, and pink water roses. Two sprawling puppies dozed at their knees. High on the ridge, beyond the lacings of rock and water, stood the library, light streaming through the far wall of glass. Sheaths of songs tied up with heart strings spilled from the cabinets. Their silent hums smelling of sun and water and pink flower dogs. The secret song of every rock, feather, and forgotten chord of dust drifting eastwards towards the day.

The girl fell far into the future, into the known world, barely cut but fluorescent. No hope of flying dragons, bar those on the boil. Just thick days of grey and bland accruements, the heralds of the new empress, gourd rattling with numbers and a pouch of daggers, hungry for a back. The tools of choice in the days of counting and cutting.
The breaking of earth, bone, and heart to hasten the strip mining of songs. Get busy, get cracking, get on with it. No time for thinking about the point. The girl felt the grey in her bones, head bleeding under the colourless lights. The bodies piled up in classrooms, limbs marked with desultory numbers. No dancing feet or swinging arms, just the cold chafing whirr of people-machines. Back in the mountains, winter had come. Men and women cocooned themselves in bone white clay, and began singing back the light.

Not So Good Beginnings

I first began to teach in a small English language college in the late 1980s. There were seven teachers, including the Director of Studies. I was fresh out of a TESOL certificate but had completed a Bachelor of Arts some four long years before. It was going to be a Bachelor of Education in English Literature, History and TESOL, but I discontinued with permission with half a practicum and three months to go. A shattered heart from a departed boyfriend and a final dismal practicum proved a clinching combination. I recall the latter as akin to the proverbial visit to the Colosseum. My serially absent co-operating teacher confined our contact to an occasional nod in the corridor, and a five-minute quickstep at the beginning of class, before gliding out the door.

The boys rocking away on the seats at the back of the room of the year nine English class found me easy prey. Smelling the raw hurt and growing hesitation in my clunky steps, they made ready to pounce. There was a drama lesson that went sadly awry, with the back seat boys morphing into fly-by bombers. They dipped and zoomed and pounded into the backsides of the ‘elephants’ circling around the waterhole. This improvisational enactment of animal carnage was not part of the original plan. I had intended to get students to imagine a scene from the novel they were reading, but instead the lesson ended with us all feeling bruised. Albeit, in this at least there was life; worse by far was the determined indifference to every activity I tried. I can see my
resolve dwindling in the face of their resolute boredom, my confidence ebbing at each
renewal of resistance, face flinching unhappily and body backing away. I am sure that
I looked longingly from doorway to clock, and had to work hard to keep my feet from
running out the door. I had just enough determination not to do so. While I had some
understanding of the ways in which my own feelings and fears, and the waning
enthusiasm that accompanied them, infused not just my words, but equally my body, I
had less of a clue of its effects on the experience of my practicum class. Nor was I
able, at that particular very early juncture in my life, to withstand their dogged
unresponsiveness and its effects on me. Even had I the knowledge, I had not the
necessary heart to be able to lighten the air and get their bodies and minds in synch. It
was my not my first inkling that teaching, or at least teaching of the kind that makes
something of a difference, requires as much emotional energy and awareness as it does
understanding of the subject and its pedagogic possibilities, but it was my first
experience of teaching without any emotional reserves, in indifferent circumstances,
where students were habitually disengaged. It was my first, but not, unfortunately, my
last.

**Encounters Abroad: Movement and the Animated Life**

In February 1985, I followed the departed boyfriend to Europe, albeit taking the
unbeaten path; via local train from Hong Kong to Guangzhou, winding up through the
centre of China to Beijing and the Siberian train. There was a slow boat along a narrow
slip of the River Pearl to the dragon bone spines of Yangzhou. The grey shrouding of
the vessel giving way to a strangely endearing interior; a mix of sparseness and
chipped gaiety, much like the landscape gleaned through the mist. Even slower buses
took me along dirt roads into villages of mud and block, unpaved and walled with
adobe, where from hand-painted billboards, men in khaki caps stamped with the cold
smiling face of Mao grinned salaciously at bottles of local beer. The tunes of chicken
squawk and mice scurry accompanied the morning beating of feet on stone, caught in
the timeless cycle of each wearing the other fleshless and thin. From the rumblings of
tin-pot trolleys came the nascent aroma of things handmade – doughs of wheat and rice palmed into soft buns or quick rolled and cut into unruly tresses. Amid these oases of metal and meal, people feasted on rolls, oozing marshmallow, and thick porridgy soup, beefed up with onion slivers, baby sprouts, and waterfalls of sticky noodle.

On the back of such breakfasts, I ventured into landscapes of clay-moulded paddies and bizarre limestone monoliths; a barnacly mixture of frowning rock and mottled pink, encrusted with stubbles of ginger moss. Unmoved by these furrowed giants, an ancient banyan unfurled its greying tentacles and splayed its great shoulders in a simple gesture of shelter – an unexpected offering of respite from the impending storm that struck at the bottom of the path, before the hill named for the moon. Barraged by the sudden rush of rivulets, this once limestone bulwark opened its crescent heart and it pounded anew. In the cups of thorny outcrops, puddles bloomed, abuzz with the antics of love-drunk dragonflies, their young crimson bodies quivering with the intensity of a hope that endures less than a nick in a wet afternoon. A fleeting gash of sun conjured a land so long and mysterious in its makings, in its wistful twistings of earth, that it must have been torn from the wings of a thousand earth-weary dragons and raised up sharp and uncompromising by some dour love-smitten troll.

The return journey took me into hamlets of red blocks, knit tight into nests for people and their herds, all wood-stoked and snuggled close to keep out the frost. A lone stall offered a lunch of lettuce broth and cakey rice, and the unwavering attention of a growing scrum of children, bodies painted with swadges of earth. They had gathered in the space of two spoons and were inching steadily forward, their faces agog with astonishment at the sight of my alien self. Unnerved by their unabashed scrutiny, I did the only thing I could think of to break up the glare; I pulled a face, sucking in my cheeks and puckering up my mouth like a greedy sweetlip. This brought on a cavalcade of giggles and a volley of lip-twisting and brow-creasing between spoonfuls of broth. My parting gift was a rendition of the piggy face, long ago perfected by my friend Vikki, involving a tricky flaring of nostrils and twisting up with thumbs, whilst simultaneously pulling the eyebrows down. Not an easy feat to be sure, and difficult to

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*A sweetlip is a variety of fish from the snapper family.*
imitate without practice, as my eager entourage soon found. They followed in the shaky wake of my bike, barefoot and beaming, half slipping and sliding in the mud, before doubling back at the upcoming road and the advancing downhill.

Before me, the said hill awaited, along with a young man who was waving frantically at me from the other side. There ensued some failed attempts at conversation, with me using up my Mandarin with the first ‘nihow ma’, and him swallowing so many vowels that all that was left was a blancmange of consonants. As his initial excitement gave way to disappointment, it dawned on me that there are other ways of talking. Squiggling words in the air, I pointed to his satchel, at which he smiled, the light of pen and paper dawning on him too. He wrote that he was a student, an English major. He had learned the language from his Chinese teachers who had learned it from theirs and so on for generations; but none of them – as far as he could recollect – had heard it spoken by an English speaker. That was the problem in a nutshell; he knew the language, and knew it well, well enough to know a lovely word like recollect, a gathering up of thoughts as if they were a bunch of peonies, but not so as to bring them to bloom.

Straining mouth and ears till the light began to falter, we shuffled pen and paper, meaning and sound, back and forth; he writing sentences for me to say aloud, and then repeating. There was much sounding of sounds, before syllables, and then syllables into words, before moving on to little clusters of verse. It was hard work with the vowels and their combinations, whose strange vocal formations proved gluggy in the mouth. I wrote them down in his book; the sounds made by vowels, alone and in combination, demonstrating their tricky habits of changing around in different words. Not knowing the phonetic table, this was done through taking familiar words and drawing the sound – with an ‘oo’ as in chook and look, becoming two fat ‘o’s heavy with eyelashes, and the ‘ow’ as in ‘shower’, tower, and flour, drawn like the mouth of someone who had stepped on a bindi.

Perhaps this was the origin of my later faith in the power of drilling for beginning speakers; of the chanting of words and their soundings, their syllables and rhythms in
cluster, going backwards first, then forwards, in unison, then in pairs, one at a time, before going around the circle, working words and their rhythms into the tongue, their shapes into the muscles of the mouth. It may too have been the source of an inability to see the relevance of rote learning the phonetic table, and a preference for depicting vowel sounds through their ‘looks’ and sounds in familiar words, a preference that gave rise to some strangely picaresque and occasionally ludicrous motifs. Like my long time favourite “ooh err” as in sewer, involving a mouth pursed in surprise then turned up in disgust at the sight of some unsavoury deed. It may also have been the first planting of a desire to teach English to international students that took five more years to come to fruition.

The Long Road Home

It took three years to get from China back to Australia and I was edgy at the thought of return. The many encounters with peoples in banged up buses and barges, in steamy laundromats and crowded noodle stalls, in forlorn bars and by the banks of holy rivers – in all the nooks and crannies that make up the spontaneously knowable world – moved me in the fullest of senses. Some long and awkward, some brief and intense, and some, so unique and unexpected, they cannot be fathomed in mere mortal words.

Still, all good things must come to an end, as the saying goes. But before our return to a world that was even then surreptitiously on its way to whipping time like cream into ever increasing states of coagulated efficiency, like every traveller who came ashore on the island of Gili Trawangan in days gone by, my no longer departed boyfriend and I stayed for a month with one of the local sea gypsy clans. Each afternoon on the cusp of the ebbing tide, the women of our family, along with their neighbouring companions, saddled up with baskets and children and set out to urchin fish. Crouching at the reef’s edge, they plucked the prickly nests from the shallows, while

7 Gili Trawangan is a very small island off the coast of Lombok, Indonesia. In the late 1980s, the island did not have electricity or any manner of down or upmarket resorts. All accommodation and food were provided by local fisher families.
the children fossicked in nearby pools, gathering garlands of watergrapes and glow-weed, and the craggy ends of Neptune’s beard. The older ones kept an eye on the toddlers while the women plucked away, and the afternoon turned pink, taken alternately by surprise then delight at the random warblings of age and youth, air and water. We partook vicariously of these afternoon outings, occasionally joining for a quick chasing game. There was usually some communal creation involving the arranging of oddly-shaped shells and old urchin spines into an assortment of underworld castles; a loose and roundabout undertaking whose mysterious workings were woven loosely together, with a deep inclination to share.

My reluctance to return grew with a night in Kuta en route back home. The discordant loudness of the throngs of Australians who talked incessantly and listened little, who walked without making room, felt abrasive and harsh. There was a man intent on filming a funeral against the wishes of the deceased’s family “cause he’d paid the bloody tout”, and another who, after making the owner of the restaurant turn his television over to the Aussie rules, bragged loudly “that [he] had walked all the way from Legian to Kuta, and nothing happened”. According to his mate, Jeffo, Indonesia was a dangerous place, where you were hard put incidentally to get a “real” steak. The icing on the cake was to come later in the evening at a wine bar, where a group of young Australians engaged in a beer-spitting competition. This is not to suggest that such behaviour is uniquely Australian, nor all defining thereof, but to me there was a familiar undertone of defiant hostility that stuck out in the unassuming hospitality of Bali, and showed up a lack of something curiously vital.

I had grown up in a working-class family on its way up to the middle, in the white, white, clan-like heartland of the Shire\(^8\), amid avid footballers and cricketers and persons, including family, who declared Australia “the best country on earth”, as if there must needs be a competition. That most of the aforementioned persons had rarely

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\(^8\) The Shire is short for the Sutherland Shire, which was a predominantly white working-class area at the time of my youth. It has a reputation for insularity and prejudice against non-Anglo descent Australians. This reputation was further entrenched when the Cronulla riots broke out between gangs of Anglo-Australians from the shire and Lebanese youths in 2005.
set foot over Tom Ugly’s Bridge⁹, much less left our fatal shores was no deterrent. I had witnessed, too regularly, enraged parents spilling violence from the sidelines at the soccer matches of seven year olds, urging them to “run him down for god’s sake” or to “c’mon you, girl”. From an early age, I found such displays unfathomable, and grew up feeling completely estranged from a culture that more than sometimes bordered on thinly veiled bullying; where being good at sport was tantamount to a necessity, and being good at something necessitated winning.

In this world, school afforded an escape from the humdrum of bland competition. It was a place where you could get lost in the magic of gases and the mysteries of the bodies of frogs. Learning was a portal of infinite proportions; a voyage of discovery of the seas, whether fashioned into mermaids’ tresses and siren song by lonely old sailors, or home to a diminishing array of extraordinary fish. In German, the audiotapes of “Der Mann, die Frau, und der Junge” were spiced up with the adventures of wayward grandmothers, who would sometimes feature in the little plays that we made up and staged. In history, we listened to The War of the Worlds so as to feel firsthand how propaganda worked through the garnering of fear. English took us into the lands of The Chrysalids (Wyndham, 1955) and The Hobbit (Tolkien, 1975), and the landscapes of Elliot and Coleridge. We saw how Xanadu did float and knew the pull of demon lovers, just like Kubla Khan (Coleridge, 1912). We performed Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra and fell apart laughing in the midst of Rinse the Blood off my Toga (Wayne, Shuster, & Adams, 1983). And in maths, we puzzled over proofs of calculus and three-dimensional geometry, and heard talk of imaginary numbers, as if there were any other kinds.

At home, I spent my weekends, or as many as I could get away with, closeted away, making my way through the school’s collection of books. I went out detecting with the Three Investigators (Arden, 1969, 1970; Arthur, 1964, 1965), and looked out for Narguns in the nearby bush, disguised as rocks like the old one in The Nargun and the Stars (Wrightson, 1975). I wished I had a weirdstone like those children from

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⁹ Tom Ugly’s Bridge links the Sutherland and St. George Shires of Sydney. When I was growing up, it was the only bridge that linked the Shire to the rest of Sydney.
Brisingamen (Garner, 1965) or the wizardly power and hard-won wisdom of Ged from the far lands of Earthsea (Le Guin, 1971). The truth was that I had discovered that I felt much more at home when I was away from it than I ever did within it. And this feeling of never quite belonging- of never quite wanting to belong to the grafted ungraceful strands of a culture that had taken violent root – may have been mixed up in the decision to teach students from overseas.

Better Beginnings

Like most things in my life, my teaching career started out in reverse, or back to front, or topsy turvy, in as much as I began working somewhere I felt I wanted to be, and ended up, more than a decade later, being somewhere I really did not. Not being much drawn to large rule-governed institutions, on completion of my TESOL certificate, the year following the long road home, I declined a position at one of the largest ESL colleges in the city, opting instead for one of the very smallest. There was an original staff of seven, not counting the owner and receptionist. I took the job there, in the same way that I take flats, find my animals and embark on trips into unknown places with unknown peoples – on the basis of instant like, and a feeling of something being intrinsically right. The teachers’ desks were strung lengthways along floor to ceiling windows with views from Bondi Beach to Botany Bay, as if what you could see on a daily basis really did matter. Up front, the Director of Studies told me that they had few resources; the syllabus was still in the process of being developed and we would be creating many of our lessons from scratch. But, there was a shelf in the throes of becoming full, just budding with materials and activities for listening and reading, writing and speaking, and the Director of Studies wheeled out a wooden box overflowing with pictures of places, peoples, mysterious beasts and other unknown things, that she marked as most definitely borrowable.

I thus started out my teaching life, and was to continue it for a long time, in places that felt and acted as if people belonged; where ideas were shared along with jokes, where
voices were regularly lent for early morning tape making, and the focus was on students as people as much as learners, rather than on the devising of tests and the endless thinking up of ways of reporting thereon. This is not to say that assessments were not done, nor done regularly, but they were most often formative and based on the language covered in class, with a view to seeing what should be revisited, albeit in different clothes. It was a place where professional development was not some perfunctory tick-a-box exercise, but rather where experts in areas of language learning from pronunciation to grammar teaching not only gave workshops, but came to work with us in class, and supported us one-on-one.

Of course, it wasn’t perfect, especially early on. There were hiccoughs with my activities, which could have been better thought out, and this in turn caused problems with the pacing of lessons. I began labouring the presentation of new language in some misguided efforts to ensure students all got the point. This was exacerbated by the fact that the cloze exercises accompanying the tapes were too challenging, until I learned from a more experienced colleague that it was better to put the missing words at the bottom of the page to offer the students some clues. Then, there were those awkward explanations, due to my lack of grammatical knowledge. I could see this lack writ large on my students’ faces when my explanations were more murky than clear.

My early experiences taught me that every class, like every learner, is unique. But this was a different type of teaching from the non-breathing mantras of courses and books – much more subtle and elusive, more immediately and intrinsically charged with ambivalence and energy, or, on some terrible occasions, their desolate want. There was more to the experience of the classroom than persons and their identities, a more-to-ness that defies reduction to individual positioning or difference, cultural preference or the subtle or not so subtle traversings of power (Foucault, 1994).

This more-to-ness was bound up with the collective interweavings of our beings in process and their expressions: their movements in time and space and the qualities they exuded, knowingly or not, as well as how all these rhythmic meetings and mixings and/or mis-timings and missings of bodies composed a tacit inter-subjective realm: the
felt realm of classroom life. This shadowy, shifting world pulsed through our words and beyond; through the pores of our skin, into our eye-winks and nods, fashioning our intakes and outtakes of breath. It manifested in displays and lapses of attention and attentiveness, in open stances and judgemental postures, in the elusive non-rational domain of porous, leaking flesh. It was in this world that the particular unfolding of activities and interactions either came to varying degrees of life or shrivelled up and died. It was in this world that, as a teacher, the lessons and activities you had planned either took off and went along more or less smoothly or went to hell in a box.

Fortunately, for the most part, my students were forgiving and patient; they not only accepted my occasional stumbles, but did so with empathy – that beautiful wordless grace. There were the odd puzzled glances that raised a question or two, and let me know, if I did not already, that there was something amiss. Sometimes, though, I had the uncomfortable feeling that someone might just have a better explanation, but did not want to offer it so as not to show me up. A something that makes me realise how loudly our hidden fears whisper. Not that I wasn’t aware of my fears and their whisperings; my worry of making mistakes and looking irredeemably foolish, of losing my students’ confidence along with my own. It was just that, like most beginning teachers, I was not then able to put these fears into coherent words, to have them out in the open and admitted, so that I might come more openly to recognise them for what they were: an ever-present dimension of feeling your way with your class as a teacher.

That both my students and colleagues were willing to go along with me on that somewhat bumpy starting-out ride as a teacher gave me a most generous and undervalued thing: the confidence to continue. It was something I greatly appreciated, and it strengthened my desire to learn more about what I was doing and how I might do it better.

What I am also certain of is that there was a different sense of time that pervaded the late nineteen eighties and early nineties, which was integral to generating an atmosphere of intimacy. There was a manifest feeling of not only having time, but of
having the freedom to take time in learning. We could go back again as often as needed, as often as students wanted, to revisit some tricky bit of grammar and have another go at the perfect past or the third conditional. This flowed alongside having the time to get to know each other, and a setting that encouraged this possibility. Our staffroom adjoined the students’ common room, and was separated only by a door, neither security coded or guarded, and more often open than closed. When it was closed, our students knew when it was appropriate to knock. Those were also the days before smoking bans, and those of us who partook of the filthy habit would sit in the common room, nattering away with students similarly inclined. If no ready topic came to mind, there was always something happening outside to comment on, courtesy of the floor to ceiling windows that walled two-thirds of the room.

This having time and taking of time helped to knit us together socially. There were frequent school picnics that started in the early morning and stretched to late afternoon. Teachers, students and one of the two administrative staff would troop out at least twice a term, cars loaded up with bread and sausages, volleyballs and nets, and a number of cunning student helpers who got to ride in the car, while the rest caught the bus to the beach at Bondi, or Bronte, or Coogee. These expeditions were staple fare, as were class excursions – from walks in the Blue Mountains and ferries to Manly, to afternoon trips to the nearby library or to the local supermarket to devise a list of weekly vittles when the shopping theme came round. Like those spontaneous encounters on the side of the dirt road in a misty pinnacled land, each outing courted opportunities for being together differently. We could all laugh as Moon Wook or Teresa, Bennie Lin or Linda hit the ball out or missed the blighter completely in those lawless, sloppy games of volleyball. I did not then realise the importance of this having and making of time for creating a sense of belonging, experiencing it instead as normal and integral to how we went about our days. Those were indeed the days before the corporate taking over of the TESOL industry and the making of the fast and furious world of edu-business by getting us all to get right down to it.
With time and practice, and the help of more experienced colleagues, my teaching improved. I became better able to tweak my lessons, design practice activities, and sequence them from most supported to least. After working out, with the help of Michael Swan (1980), the intricacies of the future tense, I followed up my whiteboard drawings of a readily recognisable student thinking about the coming week with an information gap activity, adapted from Penny Ur (1988). Making two different sets of the student’s weekly plans, so that missing bits of information could be exchanged in pairs, I saw to it that s/he had plans with everyone from the class, thinking of likely or, the often more amusing, unlikely things for each person to be involved in.

The inclusion of students’ likes and dislikes, their stories and hobbies, their little quirks and imagined lives to present new language and to practise it – whether in taped conversations or comic-strip type stories – began as a way of getting students involved. And it soon became clear that people really got a great kick out of starring in pictures and stories, of hearing their badly copied voices in taped conversations, and appearing in dubious situations in made-up games. Working the students into encounters with each other thus became an integral part of my classes. The comic-strip stories, with their cartoon renderings of students in profile or caught head on, seemed to especially amuse. Maybe it was because they weren’t a great likeness, but drawn with just enough of an inkling – whether it be a pair of peculiar shaped glasses, a tell-tale haircut or a pony tail, or some stand out item of clothing – to just give away who it was. As students progressed through the levels, along with myself, they turned up in phrasal verb stories, composed of imaginary conversations at the Karaoke bar or at a classmate’s cocktail party.

During these first years of teaching, the learning curve was steep with much time spent on learning not just grammar but the best ways to explain it. Then, there was the time put into creating new activities and finding resources that offered more than your run of the mill. Every discovery of activities that worked from the treasury of grammar
games of Ur (1988), and Rinvolutri (1984), to the much loved storytellings of Morgan and Rinvolutri (1983), and the drama of Maley and Duff (1982) padded out the curriculum drawers and helped grow another repertoire for me. Each new activity sparked further ideas and increased my confidence to create more of my own. For our “supernatural” theme week with a mid-intermediate class, I made a board game on magic, myths and superstitions, which included a bit of sneaky second conditional revision, with cards made beginning with “what would you do if?” and ending with an assortment of spine-chilling possibilities. The main board squares were spiked with silly diversions, like “bitten by a vampire miss a go” or “found a silver bullet” move on two squares, while the rest asked for tales and descriptions of ghosts or vampires, witches or werewolves, or an unknown enchanted creature from the student’s hometown.

**Enthusiasm, Energy and the Importance of Relationships**

In the course of this telling and reliving of my early teaching journey, a flood of semi-cobwebbed yet surprisingly fresh encounters emerged alongside fond memories of students and colleagues that cannot all be retold. But what struck me most clearly was that my own enthusiasm and energy for teaching in those early years owed much to the communal culture of the school. This included my committed and collaborative colleagues, who were also my friends, and for whom sharing ideas and lessons was more than a matter of course, it was a matter of pleasure. The departure of the first director of studies and the arrival of the second increased these qualities two-fold. While the original director had been professionally helpful and friendly, she liked to keep a grip on the reins, and rarely sought our input into the school and its workings.

The arrival of Barry, at the end of my first year, marked a new turn in the culture of the school. From the beginning, our ideas were not just welcomed, but invited, discussed, and then acted upon. In the first month, Barry met with each person to sound out areas of interest and strength and to encourage input on whatever we thought might improve
the school. This included ideas about what we could do to improve the curriculum and add to the experiences of our students, as well as our own professional knowledge. Over the following months, in turn and turn about, each teacher was given an initial two week long teaching hiatus, to be topped up with further non-teaching days at times opportune, and a modest but workable budget to gather new materials and resources. A comprehensive syllabus for each level was discussed and devised.

Inviting input and recognising, not just your work, but the effort and energy that went into it, was a standout quality of Barry’s. At every turn of events, he supported his staff, not just in words, but in their much more tenuous follow-through. This came in many forms. There was the continual improvement of our equipment and access to it. There was the arrival of a language lab, and then a class set of computers, followed by training for those who were interested. In the days before Windows, Barry, a self-professed computer geek, spent many long weeks setting up an MSDOS system for the school. With equal parts humour and patience, he showed the uninitiated how to navigate the system so that we could make storyboards and practise quizzes, vocabulary games and grammar revision to go with each of our themes. Access to the little things such as whiteboard markers and transparencies, previously doled out like gold dust, became available with somewhat more ease. And when there occurred a major hiccough – a difficulty that needed firm but delicate hands – Barry’s proved both strong and supple.

**Embodied Tensions and the Limits of Discussion**

This hiccough grew out of changes in the demographic of the student body and their particular and unpredictable encounters. Our students were predominantly from South-East Asia and China, with the substantial majority hailing from Korea and Japan. At the time in question, there was a predominance of Korean students in the school, with a larger than usual proportion of Korean males, aged somewhere from their mid twenties to late thirties. That quite a number of this cohort had evangelical leanings
was not new, but what was, was their fervour. Equally new was the increasing number of Indonesian students, with at least as many young women as men. Stemming from middle and upwards class backgrounds, most had already completed a university degree.

Unfortunately, the mixing of a number of the most zealous of the Korean men (Min Su, Cheung Ho, Dong, Du Young and Sam) with a group of independent Indonesian females (Suzie, Mandi, Rukiah and Dewi) in our upper intermediate class created cultural and sexual tensions the like of which had not as yet been seen. Things came to a head in one of their regular mid-morning classes with my colleague Michael. The ostensible catalyst had been a difference of viewpoints around a discussion on alternative education and the Summer Hill School based on a unit in *Heinemann Integrated Skills* (Hopwood & Rushton, 1992, pp. 40-42). On the subject of discipline, the Indonesian women were against punishment of any corporeal kind. Cheung Ho, Dong and Min Su pointedly disagreed, seeing physical punishment as a suitable deterrent for “wrong” behaviour and instilling respect, when a child, for example, disobeyed. Suzie thought slapping was more about instilling fear than respect, and recounted an experience from her own school days. On this point, Dong disagreed and hijacked the floor to preach the need for control. When Mandi tried to interrupt his one man show, Min Su made a beeline towards her, yelling, “You shut up now!” Michael, who was tired of asking Dong and Min Su to hear another point of view, told them both in terms of no uncertainty that they needed to leave the room and cool off.

This showdown had been looming for some time, and it was a situation we were all well aware of, Barry included. We had discussed how to best approach the tensions building between the two groups and its primary cause: the domineering demeanour and inflexible views of a small but persistent group of very conservative men. Because we only had one class per level, there was no shifting sideways to be done, so it was agreed to keep any members of the two groups well apart in all classes that they shared. We would also move ahead to the theme on culture and go heavy on those lessons that got people discussing cultural differences in a positive way. This is not to
say that our classes were not already founded on just such views, but rather that this foundation had now met a different kind of challenge.

In the end, all our interventions and tactful reminders of the importance of respecting difference had little effect. A dynamic had erupted that was not going to be heeded by anybody’s words. Following very quickly on the heels of the incident in Michael’s class, the men in question set about to turn the Korean students against the rest of the school. The upshot was a letter to the director signed by one third of the Korean population of the school. The letter complained of the school’s discrimination and a lack of respect for Koreans and their culture. Michael had been particularly implicated in the complaint.

Barry’s response was calm and swift. He spoke first with the staff, in the owner’s presence, about the letter and its contents and discussed what we thought might be the best response. We thought that the Koreans in question had confused respect with submission and that the difference between them needed to be made clear. It was not a question of nationality, as such, but rather of the characteristics of a small group of men of that nationality, and their evangelical zeal. This zeal and its undemocratic tendencies was not only not welcomed by the Indonesian women, in particular, but, and this was the crux of the matter, they would not be silenced either, as other students were want to be. That we all sensed some sublimation of other tensions and frustrations on the part of the men in the light of their overtly physical stand-overs was something that would not be spoken of outside the workplace.

Barry followed up by meeting with the letter’s said authors. He arranged a number of sessions with a counsellor from outside the school; a Korean who had lived in Australia for some time. He also met with the Indonesian women before conciliatory meetings between both groups were arranged. A little later still, there was a school barbecue at which it was decided to form a basketball team. Barry had talked Min Su and Dong and two Indonesian students into drumming up students and heading the try-outs. There were a number of colleges in the local area whose next competition we could join. While these measures and their upshot did not immediately mend the
relationships between the writers of the letter and the teaching staff, they did a great
deal to lessen the tensions in the school and to deepen our trust in Barry and his
approach to taking care of things.

This incident made apparent not only one of the greatest difficulties that we faced
collectively, but also that I faced personally in my young professional life; how to
bring in and open up students who are not only accustomed to, but also believe in and
insist on, a power hierarchy and the imposition of cultural, gender and/or age based
deferece, as well as a “correct” point of view. The incident outlined above was an
extreme case of behaviours that I had witnessed in some classes. I had seen certain
men, not usually the young ones, nor for that matter the much older, but those of an in-
between age, turning the young women in the group into secretaries, and then leaving
them out in the cold. Or there was the problem of people, both women and men, going
along with ideas and viewpoints they did not believe in so as not to rock the boat. Not
that going along with multiple viewpoints isn’t to be encouraged but rather that, in
these contexts, it reflected an unspoken relational asymmetry. This asymmetry not
only felt discordant but kept people silent, leaving their something to say flickering
wordlessly across their faces. It was not just the behaviours themselves that made
classes of this kind particularly difficult, but their diminishing aura in the face of a
deeply off-putting mantel of superiority carved into postures and tones. What was
particularly distressing was that the overbearing demeanours of one or more of such
people could have such disproportionately dampening effects.

I took the usual critical approaches to these issues by trying to foster discussion and
increase reflection on values, roles and assumptions of all kinds. I encouraged this
through the lesson content I chose as well as taking moments as they arrived. That I
was aided and abetted in these endeavours by many of the increasingly brave young
women themselves and quite a large number of differently thinking young men did
much to help things along, creating a balance of viewpoints and thus a more palpable
symmetry in the classroom. But it was not just the explicit attention to such issues that
helped to make something of a difference over time. On their own, these overt gestures
would have mattered little without the many other things that brought us together: the
excursions and barbecues, the gatherings with students at our homes and theirs, the
sing-a-longs in karaoke bars, the cartoon drawings and picture stories, the role plays
and games, the class project work; all of those things that make possible, but do not
guarantee, convivial space.

Professional Development and Project Work

Of all my classes in my first school, my favourite was my last. With this group of
students, I travelled all the way from pre-intermediate up to advanced. There was
Terri, a champion rugby player, as gentle as he was broad, and Mariko, a beach-loving
would-be designer, both from Japan. Then there was Hendry and Suzie, two good-
humoured talkers from Indonesia. There was Hyun Hyun and Ju Hee, our future
Korean George Michael, who started out all serious before he found his smile, and his
female would be Molly Meldrum to name just a few. More so than usual, this group
really blossomed, with everyone almost jumping out of their skins to join in with each
other and try whatever was on offer. With the arrival of William, a young man from
the ‘skirts’ of Jakarta, one of the most serially funny persons I have ever met, it
became almost impossible to be together for more than ten minutes without some
spontaneous combusting of laughter.

Over those first years of teaching I had become close to many students, but in this
class there was a togetherness much greater than any I had experienced before.
Underneath the laughter and chatter, there was a deep-grown affection that kicked in
whenever we all met, making every class a genuine joy. It was this joy that got
everyone singing “She’ll be coming round the mountain when she comes” in our
afternoon pronunciation sessions; they sang with such great abandon and gusto that
they became uproariously excited and made up silly verses of their own.

Sometime towards the middle of this third year, Barry arranged a session on project
work and how to approach it. This was something we were all keen to try, and on a
scale larger than the class posters and booklets that currently hung on our walls. To get the ball rolling, he set aside the last Friday of semester for each class to perform or otherwise go about presenting their projects. Our first class project with the aforementioned group was an MTV-style music video that contained a number of interviews with the then stars, including a rather eccentric George Michael, done up in a singlet and bandanna, whose favourite food turned out to be fish, or rather “fishee”, as our Korean-born George pronounced it. Spliced between the bizarre interviews with the selected celebrities were video clips of George and his singlet-clad boy band. There was also a rather more modest Mariko Madonna and her hip dancing crew, decked out in black t-shirts, skirts and stockings, all lip synching and gyrating away to “Like a Little Prayer” on a hidden cassette.

Our final class project was a trip down the south coast with that same class. The plan was three days of snorkelling, fishing, and talking, in between a great deal of eating in the pristine surrounds of Jervis Bay. The first afternoon, we headed off to Green Patch; George and Hendry were eager to catch dinner and Mariko and Terri to try their hand at snorkelling. Everyone else was sure to be found sleeping on the beach. Although it was November, the water was cold, and the snorkelers were prepared to squeeze themselves into the thick rubbery wetsuits I had brought. This was an arduous process and Mariko had ducked behind the boot for a bit of privacy. She must have just about got the thing up to her ankles, when she let out a full throttled squeal. I rushed around thinking that she had brushed skins with a big hairy spider, but it turned out, when all the clues had been weighed in, that one of the resident, beggar-boy kangaroos must have sneaked up behind her as she bent down, his cold nose colliding with her rump. It was the first time Mariko had seen a “wild” kangaroo much less been touched up by one, and it became the story of the trip. It got told and told again at the evening dinner, which George, Suzie and Hari had fixed; a feast of fat sea whelks in chilli, garlic and ginger broth, all washed down with some unknown non-vintage shiraz. And the telling didn’t end there, it came back again and again in our remaining classes, and got top billing in the collection of Jervis Bay stories that became our project from the trip.
Not So Foreign Interludes

I left my first school and professional experience in Australia in late 1992 to go back to my first love – travelling – alongside my second, the departed boyfriend, now a newly made husband. We packed most of our worldly belongings into two light feeling packs. That trip took us up and down and far and wide before coming back full circle to Sydney after some eight years. Many months were spent walking along paths where roads had not and might never be built, among peoples so close to each other and to the hues of their earth that their songs were indistinguishable.

For some time, during those years, we ran a hotel and diveshop in Honduras, and learned, quite often the hard way, how to work with people whose culture and expectations were radically different from those we were more familiar with. We began by allowing the setting up of systems and workable procedures to take precedence over learning more about our staff and how the world looked through their eyes. Not that we were unfriendly or intentionally distanced, but being first time managers, we were too focused on getting the business things ‘right’.

That the traditional hot staff lunch could not and should not be substituted with a pay off – no matter how much more efficient I thought it would make the preparation of meals – was one of the first things I would have to learn. That the lunch with its helping of chicken, pork or beef on a daily basis mattered more than the money to our staff, who could afford meat only rarely, was something I learned, but only after trying to take it away. And while I noticed the care and effort that went into the making of these lunches, I wanted that energy to go into the making of meals to be sold. Viewing the work that went into the former only as a distraction, I decided to add the going price of a daily hot meal to everyone’s pay. The staff’s resistance truly surprised me, and I tried to persuade them of the greater benefits of the money in my Western logical way. The insight that this logic was nonsensical to the growing of better relations came only after my ignorant fanning of discord. The decision to keep the staff lunches and
appoint someone to ensure their preparation followed on from some miserable days of hard self-reflection and not liking the person who came into view.

In time, I learned the language of the country and that learning and practising it in the kitchen with the cooks and the waiters while you go about the fixing of lunch and dinner is a great way to make them laugh at first and impress the hell out of them later. I discovered from learning so much of a language from the one person, what an intimate thing this learning is. When people told me that when I spoke Spanish I sounded like Lourdes, I almost vowed never to speak English again. From Lourdes and her family, I learned the Spanish of the pueblo\textsuperscript{10} and the home, of local folklore and history, of friendship and the intimate world. I learned all over again, that differences in culture and family, age and ethnicity can sometimes matter very little; that you can feel more akin in mind, temperament and spirit to someone who speaks a different language in a faraway part of the world than anyone you ever met at home.

From the Guatemalan weavers who set up their stalls on the beachside in the summer, I learned the Spanish of the campo\textsuperscript{11}. With Maria, Lupe and Carina, Sylvia, Alba and Anna, the daughters and matriarchs of the large travelling clan, I got caught up in the pleasures of voluntary teaching. Sitting crossed legged on the dock that spread out over the laguna\textsuperscript{12}, with a basket of their weavings gathered as props, we learned the words for blankets and hammocks, wall hangings, bedspreads, and shawls. We practised the names and shadings of colours, then of shapes and patterns, before combining them all in a game of haggle and sell. From Maria, Lupe and Carina, I learned much more than the Spanish of cloth and loom; I learned that there is something wonderfully calming in the spirit of cloth making and wished I could weave this calm into myself.

From these encounters, and the many more that remain untold, I learned many difficult and wonderful things, but what I did not learn was how to come back to a setting

\textsuperscript{10} Spanish for village.
\textsuperscript{11} Spanish for countryside.
\textsuperscript{12} Spanish for lagoon.
where education was increasingly focussed on marketing and formulas, and on the making of brands and the branding of peoples; where curriculum was talked of in terms of outcomes that could be known and decided in advance; where risk was to be eliminated and, alongside it, all forms of spontaneous movement. This was a world where less and less room was being made for the uncanny richness and texture of life.
Part Two: Stuckedness

Preface

This section of my story picks up in the middle of my experience of teaching Academic English and a range of Academic Literacy courses at a higher education pathway provider\(^\text{13}\). I begin in the middle as it was at this point, in the months between November 2005 and September 2006, that I woke up to find myself feeling like I could not face another day of doing the kind of teaching I was doing, at an institution which was popularly described as a “sausage factory”. This feeling was in part an outcome of the particular culture of the school and the curriculum and its features, both of which owed much to the then General Manager and her destructive approach to the staff and our collegial relationships. It was also influenced by certain tendencies among some of the international student cohort that emanated from their own formative experiences of learning and approaches to it.

While these circumstances were contributing factors, on their own they might not have been enough to make me lose enthusiasm or my sense of humour and to suffer on a daily basis from panic attacks and the fear thereof, which left me giddy, nauseous, and emotionally strained. The clinching thing proved to be a major glitch in my most significant relationship; that awkward husband, who had committed to an enterprise that required him gone seven days a week, from sunrise to well past its set. It was not his absence for that time, though, that really unhinged me. It was the thought of ten years or more of a life that required this absence, coupled with work that did not generate enough joy or sense of meaningful purpose to continue on with, whilst all the time knowing that, in this world, unless you are fortunate to have some, money must

\(^\text{13}\) A higher education pathway provider is an institution which filters students who do not have the requisite marks to enter directly into the degrees of their choice through a range of pathways into degree programmes at university. The institution that I worked for allowed those students who passed the two highest levels of the intensive Academic English programme to enter directly into a range of undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. There was also an academic pathway into which international students wanting to undertake undergraduate degrees in Media and Communication, Design, Science, Business and Engineering could enter with an IELTS score of five.
be made. What I came to realise in that year of bleakness, of utter free-floating separation from my own breath, is how deeply connected our bodies are to the immediate world around us. And just how profoundly our bodies manifest not only our own relation to our worlds, but our connection to those persons with whom that relation is most intimately bound.

Hage (Param & van Bemmel, 2008) ties the experience of hope to feeling a sense of movement, and to the capacity of a society to enable people to feel that they are going somewhere. The sensation of ‘stuckedness’ encapsulates its antithesis: that sense of feeling stuck; of experiencing little or no energising momentum. This metaphor of stuckedness evokes for me the felt experience of untenable relation that characterised that time in my life. It equally evokes the experience of work and its lack of possibilities as it became increasingly controlled and prescribed.

My teaching experience at this tertiary education provider began towards the end of the year 2000 and ended in a permanent capacity with my resignation in September 2006, although I continued on a part-time basis for some years after that. This part of my story thus harks back to my experiences teaching generic Academic Literacy courses and Academic English to international students on a full-time basis, five days a week. In those years, it was common for us to teach face-to-face between 24 and 26 hours every week, and up to 30 hours on occasion. I taught five days a week, made up of five days on the Academic English programmes that ran for four hours in the morning, and two or three two-hour classes of Academic Literacy in the afternoon. Before I was awarded permanency, I learned that one of the traps of casualisation is the need to take the work when you can get it, because you never know when there might not be any more on the way.

I have written this part of my story in the third person, so as to both acknowledge my distance from the thoughts and feelings of the then Linda and to give a sense of how I see them as fitting into and making sense within their moment in time.
**Ruminations on the Way to Work**

“Is there any milk for the coffee?” her husband asks, standing inert at the unopened fridge.

The extraordinary insistence of the everyday rolls on even as she sprawls out in a meagre attempt to stave off its coming.

“Check the fridge, there’s a little I think.”

“I’ll go get some. You want a paper?”

Rushing out as fast as he can. Always the rushing. She hates the rushing of her life. Rushing out like a thwarted child. A rushingness not of her choosing, but the constant buffeting onwardness of progress. A thick congealing progress that makes too much trivial contact important and important contact trivial. Her life has a kind of conveyor-belt feeling, where everyday gushes on with more of the same. There are days when she thinks she cannot again face teaching those same texts and questions, those same formulaic lessons on writing and reading, despite her own adaptations, without going insane. She pulls herself up, only to find herself slumping back down. Into the strained white of the sheets; a white turning sallow at the edges, before leaching out to a pokery grey. A schedule insists itself in the back of her brain. Check phone. Check texts. Check the bombard of emails at work. Her new password melting into the formidable pool of lost pets and wistful desire. The net must be secretly rent with grief thoughtlessly squashed into eight mandatory dots.

The phone rings but she doesn’t move. She is wanting the quiet adventure of walking. In the mountains, alone, except for the brushings with other walkers. And the gatherings of pleasure from the sprays of dwarf orchids pinned in lime moss. Little brooches of magic just made to light the world. She feels the softening of trees and wanting grasses in her bones, the earth whispering in her feet. She is thick with the
limpness of being stuck at a stand still when there are tree bones to touch and forests to walk and magic brooches unfastening from the earth. She wonders though if all the walking in the world will help her shake off the insistent feeling of not being able to breathe. She can feel it now that she knows what is happening; her body gulping down air in spite of her, as if its desperate intake will somehow negate this frightening grey that has taken hold of her, removing every trace of colour and laughter that had once brightened the world when she looked out from within.

The phone stops and she gets up relieved and turns on the cappuccino machine. She wonders how her nineteen-year-old self came from instant coffee to cappuccino machines. She occasionally glimpses that girl ready to stand up against mundane injustices, but not as often as she would like. More frequently, the girl looking out from the inside is usurped by this unrecognizable middle-aged woman who, despite her best intentions, ended up in this stewing cul-de-sac. Resigned to the shopping trolley world, an alien existence of sorts, where cartons and boxes are chauffeured from the shelves of the “Fresh Food people” into the hidden cool of the fridge. Words wrench her away from her reverie.

“The inconvenience store was closed so I had to go to the servo.”

This is one of her husband’s regular jokes. There is a convenience store two doors up that has taken its own evolutionary path. From a spick and span fully stacked affair under the watchful eye of the original owner to an ad hoc income source for a trio of unwary international students. On a fax sending errand, she learns that they are from India and provide a fax service, among a myriad of other things. One young man is studying medicine, another has a degree in IT. She rarely sees the third boy who she thinks might be taxiing by night and sleeping, while selling cigarettes and Gatorade, in the uncompromising glare of day. The IT graduate is from Mysore and they chat about the Maharajah’s palace and the grand bazaar. She wonders what it’s like to come from daily encounters with pyramids of powered crimson, mustard and burnt orange spice, hands alive with the rubbings of colour, to tend dead cornflake boxes under harsh
fluorescent lights. This causes her to wonder if his view of spice pyramids bears any resemblance to her own.

Her husband goes on to chart the decline and fall of the inconvenience store, from the heady days of stacked shelves and coolant to the lapsed air-conditioning and diminishing purveying of goods. Her head is now filled with the terrors of convenience stores and the terror of finding herself, should her teaching work run out, working in one. She is now almost ready for work. The husband too. The coffee thermos is in lockdown under his arm. He kisses her forehead and she wonders if she smells like butter like he does, or if the lime moss is still in her skin.

“I don’t know what time I’ll be back so don’t wait up. I have to put up some shelves at the diveshop.”

She closes the door and her feet find their own path along the well-worn route through the little park, down Deacon Street and into the square. She rarely sees her husband these days. Diving is one of his great passions and he is now a partner in a diveshop that needs building and stocking, fixing and running seven days a week. At this stage, she is sure that she will never again be able to hear the word “diveshop” without her chest clenching up like an amateur tightrope walker, trying her luck without netting underfoot.

Wanting to trick her thoughts away from her breath and its workings, she moves on to the day at hand. She hopes there is not too much of a queue at the photocopiers. She has a new idea for a class activity and photocopy queues make her late. She is supposed to copy in advance. This is an oft-cited management mantra, but new ideas don’t think themselves like accountants; they fail to follow the plan, most often arriving in the early hours of the morning before class. Being late for class is one of the seven deadly sins. The school clocks have been set five minutes fast to trick teachers into being on time. It is beyond her figuring, the mindset that not only lies behind such ideas, but actually carries them out.
The Perils of Feedback and Models

There has been no such tampering with the clocks in the actual classrooms – being late out of class is almost a fait accompli, given the rush of students armed with questions, drafts, and the desire for feedback. She finds herself and her colleagues frequently caught up in giving feedback. Feedback is one of the cornerstones of good teaching practice, although she does not like the image that the term conjures or the assumptions upon which it rests. It has a way of disregarding the intimacies that grow in the spirals of contact between people in an attempt to turn them into something more efficient and fleshless. A safe convenient packaging of what is an integral and more risky aspect of being responsive to the ideas and needs of your students and their feelings, hopes and concerns.

But perhaps it is not responsiveness or feedback, but ‘feeding’ that more aptly describes what is happening in too many classes, because she has been giving feedback on feedback on feedback on students’ writing. In the course of which a revolutionary kind of back-flip occurs, where she finds herself moving way beyond scaffolding with more than a few of her students who fail to take responsibility for their words and ideas. Instead, she finds more and more of the crafting shifted back on to her. This is a sudden epiphany; one she has been struggling with for quite some time. Not the epiphany, but the mounting weight of what has been passing as feedback, but feels more like a parasitic kind of feeding; a constant leaching of ideas and energy from her grown too thin skin. She knows on some level that there is an armour that she has taken to growing as a way of combating this feeling of leaching, as a way of backing up and away from her fear of being overwhelmed and overstretched by the needs of her students and their too short time frames for learning.

Not that she is required to give students individual feedback to the extent that she does, but she has found that this one-on-one working with people on their ideas and the writing or speaking of them is incredibly helpful, in that intimately supportive Vygotskian (1978; Wertsch, 1995) way. However, giving this kind of support not only
takes a lot of her time but also a great deal of her energy. And the kind of energy this feedback requires is a delicate and intensely focused thing. It needs the time to ask students what they want to say or mean by an idea. This requires listening very carefully and asking just the right questions to gather the sense of where students are at in the moment and might yet be going with their ideas. Still more time is needed to help students reformulate and carefully nudge their thoughts further along.

Feedback of this kind is what she enjoys giving, and she loves it when she sees her students taking it on board and running with it, so that their thinking and writing, and their awareness of it as sentient process, really takes off. She sees this when she gets them to read their sentences out loud to themselves and to each other to see how they sound, and when they hear the gaps in their own thinking and come up with better connections and forms of expression, right there in the moment, without her even saying a word. She thinks that the mere act of listening, of being attentive to students, whether in moments of success or of confusion and struggle, is vitally important; that there is an energy in that supportive presence that carries something much more significant than constructive criticism or even a helping hand. It is an energy that speaks volumes without words; that you and your ideas matter, and in that feeling of mattering helps them to become real.

But this kind of feedback can become a double-edged sword when you have more than a few of your students come to the encounter just wanting you to tell them what to say where. There are reasons, of course, for this lack of engagement, ranging from an instrumental approach to their learning, or a view of knowledge as information delivery that has been prevalent for a long time. Then there are those students who try really hard, but do not have enough language to even come close to saying the half of what they mean. And as the five week terms roll on ad infinitum, with one third of your sixty students demanding feeding rather than feedback, the balance of energy that spirals through these encounters shifts much too far out of whack. This is now leaving her feeling drained and exhausted because she sometimes cannot feel any sense of energy returned.
She knows this is as much her fault as the students’, being hard pressed to say no to people desperate for help. The problem is that a good portion of the most needy are not wanting to learn the language, but just “what to say” to move up to the next level and on to the university just beyond. Or maybe it is not that these students don’t want to learn the language, but a question of not having the time, so everything has to be sped through as quickly as you can. Then there is the fact that the courses are designed for specific markets; around what agents and clients want most to hear.

What works best by far is the idea of the “fast track” so each of their terms consists of less than five weeks. Into the second highest level of the pathway, students with a score of five in their IELTS\textsuperscript{14} writing can enter on the promise that in eight weeks they will be ready for university; that they will have become somewhat familiar with not just the culture of the country, but that of the university. And they will of course get to know a whole gamut of text types, which they will be able to read, speak and write. In practice, what frequently happens is that much time is spent preparing students for the jump through these hoops, with little left for proper engagement with language and content.

If you were a postmodern theorist you would call this phenomenon a contradiction. You might say that tensions and ambivalences of this kind are at the very heart of the experience of everyday life under late capitalism, and that we must learn to both live and thrive within them. But she suspects that those who advocate this kind of acceptance are usually well out of the most acute spheres of the phenomenon’s reach, secured somewhere in the upper ends of the system, from which vantage point it is somewhat easier to live with and preach.

\textsuperscript{14}The IELTS (International English Language Testing System), devised by the University of Cambridge, is a testing system that is recognised by Australian universities. For direct entry into most university courses, a band score of 6.5 or 7 is generally required. While the proficiency of those with a band score of five can vary considerably, those in the lower spectrum of the band tend to have, in practice, not much more than a basic facility with the language. Those who enter with a band score of 6 tend to fare much better and learn significantly more in the uppermost levels, despite the fact that, according to the research (Green, 2004), band six is the level at which students are most likely to plateau.
Dysfunctional School Culture and Curricula

She left her previous job, which she enjoyed greatly, teaching Cambridge preparation courses at a small school on the North Shores of Sydney to teach at this much bigger and better paid, but much less welcoming place. At that school, she recalls being greeted each morning with signs in the kitchen that thanked people for cleaning and invited them to share the homemade goodies that someone had baked.

This stands in stark contrast to the climate that greets her daily at this current institution – she cannot call it a school. Here the signs around the kitchen consist of chastisings of the imperative kind that almost always begin with “DO NOT”. And from the moment she stepped in the building, she could feel that things were all wrong. This was before being insulted by the then Director of Studies, who introduces her to the Programme Manager and offhandedly tells him that he hopes “she will do”. As for the staff, it seems like everyone is busy getting on with doing things they don’t believe in, but have long ago lost interest in saying so out loud.

She remembers the first course she taught at this institution; a two hour academic literacy class that came with a course book that she could not make sense of and was left wondering what it was she should teach. It read like a recipe book of how to put together an “argument” essay, complete with models and phrases. What struck her most though was that there were no readings or other resources. No places to start from in order to learn new vocabulary or to talk about ideas of any shape or kind.

Content free language teaching is what she and some of her like-minded colleagues have taken to calling it; for its way of teaching grammar and writing as if it were a formula disconnected from everything else. Not that she thinks explicit knowledge of generic features isn’t important or that samples aren’t helpful, but you need more than one so that it does not become some hard and fast model from which students’ assignments are mechanically built.
The curriculum revision of the upper levels turns content free language learning into its opposite, content heavy. In this revision, the activities, assignments, and language activities for each level are created around a series of texts on a topical issue. The problem is that the courses are now hinged on authentic texts that, even when adapted, are conceptually and grammatically too complex for the language level of half the cohort. It does not help that scant time has been allowed for finding resources and for creating activities to support different levels of language and knowledge gaps. Nor is there time for trials and revision; like everything here, the management manages in a way that ensures a lack of open discussion and advanced planning in the doing of things. The total approach is piecemeal and ad hoc, set up to be done in too short a time, to keep people anxious, disempowered, and on the run.

As the responsibility for this approach lies squarely in the hands of the newly appointed Education Manager, there is not much that can be done. W\textsuperscript{15} is someone who, from the beginning sets out to foster a climate of fear and mistrust. Her first action is to break up a team of highly motivated teachers working under the much liked Jane. Since becoming Programme Manager of Academic Literacy in 2003, with the help of her teachers, Jane set about writing a new series of courses to replace those that were so wanting in substance. All interested persons were offered special courses to develop, in line with their areas of expertise, with the assurance that they would then teach in these areas. In conjunction with one of her colleagues, Linda worked on a series of courses introducing ideas in semiotics alongside approaches to media analysis for international students studying design.

W treats Jane very badly, and within three months Jane decides to leave. Linda’s specialist courses are promptly given, without consultation, to a colleague to teach. Another colleague is left without work for a semester because she had to take two weeks off for a major operation on her teeth. These actions are the mere prelude to the intimidating tactics that become the hallmarks of W’s reign. There follows swiftly upon her arrival much “voluntary” exiting of managerial staff of the supportive and

\textsuperscript{15} I have not provided a pseudonym for this particular person as it seemed unfair to taint other people’s names so I have used a letter instead.
collaborative kind, and in their place are appointed a slew of people with the requisite attitude: one that cares more for the retention of numbers and the percentage of students passing, and is prepared to ‘tweak’ courses and assessments in such a pursuit.

In her last term of teaching before resigning, Linda has the most advanced class for three days a week. The course is designed to develop students’ critical thinking capacity in preparation for their major assignment. In the first lesson, they have a discussion on critical thinking, followed by a look at an interview with a so-called “maverick” psychologist, who claims that a democratic management style just doesn’t work. This claim is very loosely supported through the use of dubious examples. Dressed in the language of seeming neutrality, it also carries more than a whiff of the man’s stance in its manner of phrasing, right down to the choice of inclement verbs. She selects some sneakily coloured examples for them to look at together and then asks the students to look at other ideas and their logic, alongside their expression. They are quite a strong class and find lots of holes in the maverick’s reasoning and the language in which it is dressed, enough to generate an interesting discussion on how the way that we say things can make them look clever and logical, no matter how slim, slippery, or tenuous they might be. At the end of the lesson, a young Indonesian woman, who had stayed silent all through the class, comes up to Linda’s desk. She looks at her hopefully and says,

“Linda, I no understand.”

“That’s okay Suri, tell me what you don’t understand.”

“Nothing, everything. The reading, what you say, I no understand.”

Linda spends half an hour talking Suri through the key parts of the lesson. Together they look at one paragraph from the reading, and Linda asks Suri what she thinks about the maverick psychologist and his examples of companies that have ‘failed’, but Suri just shakes her head. Linda explains the problem as simply as she can, but she can see even as she is talking that it is not helpful. Suri is right, she doesn’t understand. If
she had to hazard a guess, she would say that Suri’s level of English has not yet progressed beyond pre-intermediate, but here she is in a class where everything is geared for those who are advanced. She goes back to the staffroom and recounts the story to Jens, the Program Manager. She learns that Suri entered their courses at the previous level, which she did not actually pass. However, along with eight of her fellow healthcare scholarship students, she has been pushed up on appeal into the next class.

Jens does not offer any solutions, he just smiles and says, “Let’s just see how she does this term.”

Linda walks away furious because she already knows. There is no way Suri can make it. She is not furious at Suri, nor even at Jens, although it is not he who will have to face the ramifications of these manipulations. She is furious with the workings of edu-business, and the way it glibly smooths over the difficulties that students and teachers actually face as a result of its crude machinations. The outcome of all of this is that she spends hours with Suri working on the assignment, a critical review of one of the readings. She asks Suri many carefully crafted questions, and takes her one and two word answers and helps her to flesh them out into something resembling a text.

Suri sticks in her mind as an extreme example of the kinds of issues she frequently faces, and of the lack of institutional recognition or support. Despite her own and her colleagues requests for some form of one-on-one or small group language and grammar tuition for students who desperately need it, their pleas fall on deaf ears. This ensures the failing and repeating of students, sometimes for three or more terms. This is just one of the reasons that she gets caught up in these cycles of feeding against her better judgement.
The Will towards Not Thinking

The longer Linda teaches, the more it scares her that so many people are unwilling or do not know how to really think properly. This unwillingness is not peculiar to any particular culture; it straddles all manner of divides. By properly thinking, she does not mean to think any thought in particular, but being willing to explore different options, to look at things from multiple angles. Then to turn them over and look at what lies underneath: the assumptions and premises, and what they take in as well as miss. And to go on and speculate on how this idea, whatever it is, might be seen otherwise, so as to find the most beautiful way of gathering it in. This kind of thinking takes people beyond the dull thrum of the already made, into places where thought becomes rhythm, all plump and pulsing with feeling, just like music inside every true song.

For her, this is what lies at the heart of all really good thinking and really good writing and it is something she desperately wants her students to feel. Because it is this passion for exploration and love of the journey that enables learning of the living kind. It is this love for learning, in general, that breathes life in all its hues into words and their meanings, sparking the senses, and the desires of writers and readers to follow them through. So it makes her distressed, when students insist on the mechanical way, and she fears that lately she is letting this show. But what distresses her more is the attitude of some of her colleagues that many things are just too hard for the students, as if keeping things easy will help them progress in some way. This is one of those things that is at the heart of their problems with curriculum and its bringing to life in this school.

She recalls an incident, some terms ago, but indicative of this will towards non-thinking, while waiting for the lifts to make the long trip to the final floor. Waiting with her is her colleague, Winston, and one of his students. Both she and Winston are teaching on the highest level where, in their individual presentations, students have an article to critically review. The issue at hand is the impact of cultural differences in
business settings, but she is taken aback by the conversation that ensues between Winston and his student.

“Winston, I’ve been thinking about my presentation and you know, when I first put it together I thought the article made some good points about cultural norms in business. Then I started doing my overheads, but when I was doing them, I started to think that there were some problems with some of the writer’s ideas and I started to see everything in a different way. What do you think I should do?”

“Don’t worry about it, Xiang, you’re thinking too hard. Just use what that you’ve got.”

She stands silently throughout this exchange wanting to break in and say to Winston’s student, “That’s really fantastic, tell me about the problems you see”; and to Winston, more than a few words about what on earth he was doing – closing down this young man’s budding thoughts. Among a hundred other things, it’s things like this that are making her crazy, and leading her increasingly to wonder exactly what it is that they are doing in this school. She does say something to Winston, in private, but he does not much care. When she tells him that his student was doing something really reflective by going back and thinking about the gaps in his thoughts, Winston just says, “I think you are taking it too seriously. What does it matter, it’s just a review.”

In one sense, though, to give him his due, Winston is very much right; she has begun taking things far too seriously. This seriousness did not come all at once, but has crept up on her like a shadow unseen – an accompaniment to that armour that she feels digging in. While she knows that her state of near constant panic has been stripping all humour from her insides, it is not until she finds herself giving feedback on an essay to one of her students that she realises how outwardly hard she has become. She asks him some questions about his perspective and as he does not reply, she proceeds to read the introduction, and remarks that she can’t see its relevance, in a tone that is cut off and cold. At this point, her student begins to cry. And, as she shamefully realises, these are tears from the heart of someone who has put effort into his writing, which she has just torn apart. Although she is desperately sorry and sets out to make amends, what strikes
her is her own lack of realisation; of not being able to feel in that moment how much the student had invested in what he had done. It is this incident, among a few others, including some feedback from two students who have become her good friends, that brings things to a head. While they recount that they have learned a lot about thinking and writing, they also say that they think she was a little hard on some of the students, especially those struggling to keep up with so many things.

**Analysis and the Role of the Imagination**

It is at this time that Linda realises that this is not a teaching job in which she can stay, and that she must reconnect with something she has lost or forgotten in some other way. Whether fortuitous or coincidental, she sees an advertisement for a scholarship in “Education, The Arts, and Imagination”, which she applies for, and, to her surprise, wins. What strikes her now, as it did then, is that there is something that happens in creative encounters that brings out connections of an intimate kind. This does not mean that analysis or critical thinking are not equally important, but that there are other ways to ignite thought in the body and open up more than the mind. It is to theoretical perspectives on the interrelations between bodies, affect and thinking of the generative kind that this thesis now turns.

The next chapter begins with a critique of the dominant assumptions that have informed Western ideas of being and knowing and the legacy of their founding dualisms. It then moves to a discussion of literature across disciplinary fields which emphasises the inter-subjective and multi-sensory dimensions of experience and their significance in human learning and development.
Chapter Three: Looking at Learning Ecologically: Affordances, Affect Attunement, Creativity and Enjoyment in Learning

This thesis is not just concerned with teaching and learning as is clear from the stories already told, but what enables a commitment to a pedagogy that is empowering for all people involved. It is indicative of the narrow ways in which pedagogy in higher education is currently conceived that the highly charged affective domain of teaching and learning experiences remains largely ignored. Such omissions can be viewed as emanating from the dualisms that underpin Western assumptions about being and knowing, and the ways that they have shaped theoretical paradigms in the physical and human sciences (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p. 203). This chapter turns to selected research and theory in philosophy, neuroscience, developmental psychology and quantum physics, along with work in education in order to offer an ecological account of being and knowing, and to explore its embodied and relational nature. It presents a critique of the Western dualisms that have split mind from body and individual cognition from the inter-subjective realm of affect.

Western Dualisms and their Legacy

Rational, empirical, and positivist approaches to understanding the world, alongside their ostensibly pragmatic purposes, have become increasingly valorised within the Western tradition since the Enlightenment. While such approaches have been resoundingly critiqued with the advent of postmodernism (Best & Kellner, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 1-2), their influence persists. At the heart of these dualisms is the assumption of a foundational split, with subjects separated from objects, knowers from what is known, man from woman and his connection to the
world, and theoretical knowledge and reason from the world of sensory and affective experience (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 203). That such separations have engendered a predominant logic of linear causality, applied in the name of progress, continues to be integral to the primacy of this paradigm. This is owing, in no small part, to the fundamentally quantitative and instrumental conceptions of usefulness and efficiency that underpin what constitutes progress and the ongoing demand for it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; pp. 8-9). While postmodern approaches to being and knowing and its representation (Foucault, 1972, 1994; Hall, 1997) offer important insights into the workings of power upon people and their bodies, alongside its effects on the production and dissemination of knowledge (Smith, 2005, pp. 85-103), nonetheless, they have not escaped these dualisms. Instead of objectivity, truth and universality, these postmodern approaches emphasise the radical subjectivity of being and its relativism, alongside the constructed nature of experience.

This thesis acknowledges the uniquely personal take on experiences of the world, and the ways in which persons are differentially positioned within it. At the same time, I take the view that being and meaning do not emerge solely, nor primarily, from within an individual mind, but rather are generated in embodied encounters with the world and others in it. Relations are not only engendered, they are dynamically integrated into being itself. It is from this ongoing generation of relation that meaning arises and flows through the senses into the bodies of living beings. The theoretical perspectives that underpin this conception are explained in the first and second section of the review and the resonances between them are discussed.

Each of the perspectives presented in these two sections enriches this relational view of being and knowing in its own particular way. Research in neuroscience (Damasio, 1994, 2003) posits the continuous and unconscious uptake of multi-sensory information through the body. Central to this uptake is the felt sensitivity of bodies to the affective contours of an environment. This view is consistent with and extended by ecological perspectives on perception (Gibson, 1979), which highlight its multi-sensory and unmediated nature. Ecological perspectives illuminate the importance of the relationships engendered between people and/or phenomena to the sensing of new
possibilities within an environment. The assumption of the primacy of relationships within experience, along with their emergent nature connects with a philosophical tradition that begins with James (1912/1976) and Bergson (1946/1992) and continues in the work of contemporary philosophers like Deleuze & Guattari (1987) and Massumi (2002a & b). For both James and Bergson, one of the primary qualities of experience is its movement; that sense of being as being in continuous flow. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Massumi (2002a & b) connect the sensation of movement to the emergence of new relationships and/or the experience of new possibilities in relation. For Massumi, the generation of new relationships is a manifestation of the emergence of creativity as a vital force. As a vital force, it becomes charged with affect, giving rise to the intensification of experience, and the opening up of the senses to new possibilities.

The perspectives outlined above are elucidated, at the micro-level of inter-subjective interaction, by selected research in early childhood and developmental psychology (Stern, 1985, 2010) which reveals the importance of the affective contours of an environment to learning and development. This work highlights the importance of affect attunement in the creation of enabling relationships, along with the significance of its musical, rhythmic, and vital qualities (Malloch and Trevarthen, 2009; Stern, 2010). Bohm’s (1996, 2003) work in the field of quantum physics is discussed in the second section of the review. It reveals the affectively charged nature of certain subatomic particles and their potential to transform space. A discussion of this work has been included because it suggests that the relationship between creativity as a transformative force and affect as an enabling catalyst is fundamental to the fabric of the emergence of new possibilities within the universe itself.

**Alternative Conceptions of Being and Knowing**

Conceptualisations of the dynamic and embodied nature of experience have emerged across disciplinary fields (Damasio, 1994, 2003; Edelman, 2001; Gibbs, 2006; Heft,
In branches of neuroscience (Damasio, 1994; Goswami, 2004) and physics (Bohm 1996, 2003), as well as in ecological approaches to psychology and education (Heft, 2001; van Lier, 2004), the brain is increasingly seen as “part of an integrated dynamic system devoted to the moment-by-moment embodied dynamics of everyday life” (Gibbs, 2006, p. 9), with “people’s felt experience of their bodies” viewed as underlying the generation of language and thought. Rather than being considered representations that impose order on a chaotic world, in such accounts, experience and perception arise directly, being co-adaptive features for action within an already meaningful world. These ecological perspectives set the relationship between living beings, or rather living systems and their environments, as one of mutuality and reciprocity. They stress the dynamic and embodied nature of experience and perception and its fundamentally relational nature (Heft, 2001; Gibbs, 2006, pp. 40-44; Overton, Mueller, & Newman, 2008).

Since Descartes, the assumption of the autonomous individual imbued with rational faculties which can be applied so as to discover objective knowledge about the world has dominated both understandings of and approaches to being and knowing within the physical and human sciences (Barker, 1999, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 203; Hall, 1997). This has resulted in the privileging of reason over intuition and other forms of sensory experience. It has equally led to the relegation of the body, and the experiences associated with it, to a source of bias and subjectivity, and thus an impediment to knowledge (Overton, 2008, pp. 2-3).

A century ago, the philosopher William James (1912/1976; Heft, 2001, pp. 13-57) mounted a critique of empiricist, rationalist and idealist assumptions about the relations between humans and their environments, on the basis that they falsely assume a separation between the two. For James, what such approaches “fail to recognise” is “the orderliness of experience because they...fail to take relations in experience as real aspects of the immediate experience itself” (Heft, 2001, p. 35). In the empiricist account, relations in experience are solely attributed to “habits of mind”, based on “the contingencies of past thought and action”, while the rationalists fix the supposed looseness of experience through the creation of fictitious unifying absolutes (James,
1912/1976, p. 26). The effect of both is to sacrifice the “continuous flow of the…stream” of conscious experience, which is always in flux, and turn it into a “brickbat plan of construction” (Heft, 2001, p. 174). Bergson (1946/1992) attributes this tendency to the quantitative conceptions of time that pervade the abstract intellect which reduces experience to sequences of discrete additive moments. This removes the fundamental qualitative flow of pure experience and its creativity from the picture.

James’s work has influenced contemporary philosophical thought and renewed attempts to disrupt the boundaries between subject and object and to emphasise the creative and emergent nature of being (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Massumi, 2002a & b). His critique resonates with Gibson’s (1979) critique of the dominant conceptions of perception of his time, and their separation of the senses from each other and the environment for which they were adapted. Gibson (1979) begins, like James, from the position that humans are part of the world and not separate from it. Phenomena, objects and occurrences that transpire within an environment are not only “embedded in a rich web of relations” (Heft, 2001, p. 143), but these relations are perceptible to a knower as, from an ecological perspective, living beings are part of an environment rather than imposed on it. Accordingly, each person has the capacity to directly perceive the affordances available within an environment without mediation.

**Affordances, Attunement and Inter-subjectivity**

The concept of ‘affordances’ was coined by Gibson (1979) to denote the fundamentally relational nature of the possibilities that exist within an environment and the importance of perceiving their inter-connection for bringing them into being. Affordances, in Gibson’s words, are those aspects of the environment that offer something to an organism “whether for good or for ill” (Gibson, 1979, p. 127). They pertain to the possibilities that inhere within an environment, which, as such, may or may not be sensed by persons and animals located within it. Because affordances are inherently relational, they become available to direct unmediated perception through
the feeling of attunement, which gives rise to the experiencing of resonance between organisms (Gibson, 1979; Greeno, 1999, pp. 339, 341; Heft, 2001; van Lier, 2004).

While in Gibson’s work, affordances are commonly exemplified as material objects complete with their properties for orientation or locomotion, in the original conception of Lewin and Koffka (cited in Gibson, 1979, pp. 138-140), an affordance encompasses the idea of valence as in a sensing of value or significance. The notion of affordances can, in this sense, be extended to any interaction between living beings from which an enabling relationship emerges. In the early childhood and developmental psychology literature (Bruner & Watson, 1983; Stern, 1985; Tomasello & Racokzy, 2003; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, & Moll, 2005, pp. 681-682), the attunement of the mother16 to the infant’s meaning-making attempts and her uptake and extension of them has been established as central to the infant’s development. The nature of this relationship, can, in this sense, be viewed as an affordance.

In the work of Stern (1985), in particular, such attunement and the resonance it gives rise to is conceptualised in terms of inter-subjectivity. The notion of inter-subjectivity encapsulates the qualitative and nuanced nature of the mother’s attentiveness to the infant’s thought and feeling states, and concordantly, the infant’s pre-verbal awareness of and responsiveness to particular social stimuli; most notably the mother’s face, voice, and movement. It equally highlights its co-creative and affective roots, as the notion of attunement suggests. In his research into the interpersonal dynamics between mothers and their newborn babies, Stern (1985) conceived of the idea of “affect attunement” to describe the capacity on the part of the mother to tune into the flow of meaning-making attempts, intentions, and desires of the infant and respond in ways that reflected back its felt contours in a different sensory modality. Affect attunement thus expresses a “match of internal feeling states” (Stern, 2010, p. 42), manifesting the “sharing [of] dynamic forms of vitality…across different modalities.”

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16 I have used the term ‘mother’ in preference to ‘caregiver’ not out of any gendered assumption, but because it carries with it a sense of relationship that is not present in the notion of caregiver.
The mirroring of feeling states in this way is significant as it distinguishes attunement from imitation, and affirms its multisensory and inter-subjective nature. This is an important distinction, as work in social embodiment (Niedenthal, Baraslou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2005) similarly recognises the importance of gestural synchronicities and bodily convergences in the creation of positive attitudes and even higher order responses such as empathy. However, in these accounts transpersonal bodily simultaneity is conceived of in terms of mimicry, on the basis of assumedly pre-specified mirror neuron systems. This reduces complex physiological and inter-relational processes to discrete causalities, despite evidence to the contrary (Hobson, 2002).

**Attunement, Resonance and the Experience of Shared Vitality**

The degree of attunement experienced in the relationship between the infant and the mother is of the utmost significance in the development of the child’s budding relationship to the world and phenomena within it. The capacity to tacitly pick up on her infant’s emerging desires, intentions, and meaning-making attempts emanates from the mother’s embodied sensitivity, enabling her to both tune into her child’s expressions and intentions and to actively anticipate and enhance their development and direction. Among the types of affects that can be tuned in to are what Stern refers to as “vitality affects”, which are distinguished from the “categorical affects” of joy, anger and sadness (Stern, 1985, pp. 54-55), being characterised by their dynamic and kinetic qualities.

The notion of vitality encapsulates the holistic, multi-sensory and emergent dimension of lived experience that flows through and animates people and their bodies. In Stern’s conception, vitality flows or “contours” emerge from the experience of movement, force, timing, and intention. Thus, dynamic forms of vitality are not equated with pure emotions or motivational states. They are neither direct cognitions nor acts, and are not
reducible to any particular content, although they do “colour” it. Instead, they “are the felt experience of force in movement, which carries a temporal sense of aliveness, of going somewhere.” (Stern, 2010, p. 8). Stern argues that not only do these vitality flows constitute a distinct kind of experience, but they are also the bedrock of all of our felt experiences of other persons in motion. Vitality affects are not explicable in terms of level of arousal or activation but are experienced as “dynamic shifts or patterned changes within ourselves and/or others” (Stern, 1985, p. 156). Furthermore, Stern (1985, pp. 156-157) suggests that vitality affects which arise within intersubjective encounters are ideal for tuning in to, as they are experienced in terms of amodal intensities and can reside in any behaviour. Vitality affects allow people to “be with” one another through the sense of sharing “likely inner experiences”.

Vitality affects are associated with the tone of a behaviour rather than the behaviour itself (Stern, 1985, p. 56). In the education context, this resonates with Fruscianté’s (2008) insight into the importance of “embodied sensitivity” in the generation of enabling pedagogical encounters. Highlighting its importance in responding to students’ manifestations of fear and anger, Fruscianté (2008, p. 687) sees embodied sensitivity as a way of relating that is “other than rationality” and connects it to a willingness to be with students as they negotiate the frequently difficult processes of reconstructing knowledge and identity. Arnold’s (2005, p. 59) conception of empathic intelligence as a “highly attuned awareness of self and other – both cognitively and relationally” sets the genesis of this sensitivity in its attentiveness to the contours of inter-subjective relations. She points out that a crucial feature of empathically attuned pedagogical encounters is the student’s experience of the teacher as “totally present and engaged” with them both intellectually and emotionally (Arnold, 2005, p. 59).

In his recent work, Stern (2010) links the idea of affect attunement to research on the workings of mirror neurons in the pre-frontal motor cortex (Rizzolatti, 1996; Gallese, 2001) and research on communicative musicality (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). With respect to the former, studies show that the mirror neurons fire the exact same pattern in an observer watching an intentional action, enabling the observer to virtually participate in the experience. In Stern’s eyes, this capacity to virtually experience the
experience of another sets mirror neuron systems as playing a key role in enabling empathy and identification, as work in social embodiment indicates. More importantly, research (Hobson, 2002) which compared the workings of mirror neurons in children with autism spectrum with children unaffected by the condition led to the conclusion that the matching of the “style” of an action, with style understood as encompassing its force, rhythm and direction, that is, its “vitality contours”, required a capacity for interpersonal engagement that children with the condition did not have. This supports the view that affect attunement is integral to the sharing of vitality, and that vitality itself is inherently relational.

Communicative musicality refers to “the duet of movement and sounds” that is evidenced when intentions and motives are expressed in interactional synchronicity. A study by Condon and Ogsten (1967) that observed moment to moment changes in the movement of phonemes, syllables, stresses, and beats between a speaker and listener found them to be so in tune that it was as if the vibes between them could be seen. Drawing on Byer’s (1976, cited in Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, pp. 2-4) view that “the information carried by interpersonal rhythm…is always simultaneously shared and is always about the state of the relationship”, Malloch and Trevarthen (2009, pp. 2-4) theorise that communicative musicality provides the basis of sympathy. Emanating from “the coupling of vitality dynamics between people”, communicative musicality is “composed of pulses that are formed by timing in the rhythmic sense”. This sets being with another as effectively “sharing the vitality dynamic flow” (Stern, 2010, pp. 52-53). For Stern, this has significant implications for current understandings of inter-subjectivity, as one of its fundamental underpinnings has been the idea that we possess an open mind that enables us to see others as “like me”. The phenomenon of communicative musicality, however, transforms the assumption of “like me” to “with me”. As Stern points out, this sets “the inter-subjective matrix” as a primary force in creating the material and shape of the “individual” mind, and problematises the dominant assumption of consciousness as arising from encounters between an individual mind and the social environment (Stern, 2010, pp. 52-53).
The suggested “coupling of vitality dynamics between people” and the generative power of attunement in opening up bodies to the sensing of new possibilities has important implications not only for work and research across the human sciences in general, but equally for education and educational research across all phases of life. It brings into view the crucial importance of the shared experience of vitality in learning encounters and highlights the need for better understandings of the forces that make such experiences possible. Through its focus on the felt experience of empowering pedagogies and their genesis, it is this vital terrain that this thesis sets out to explore. It is for this reason that, despite concerns around the use of student evaluations in relation to pedagogic quality (Remedios & Liebermann, 2008), the teachers selected have been chosen because they are consistently highly rated by students. More importantly, students’ comments reveal how deeply and positively affected they have been by their experiences (Appendix H, pp. 69-76; Appendix O, pp. 134-150).

**Attunement, Reciprocity and their Co-creation**

Ecological perspectives set the relations between persons and animals and their environment as one of mutuality and reciprocity (Jenkins, 2008, p. 39). Experiences of attunement and resonance suggest not only a felt sense of the coming into being of reciprocal relation, but its co-creation. At the same time, as the experiences depicted in the second part of my story make clear, not all contexts are conducive to, and some may even be actively destructive of, the emergence of relationships of reciprocity. In this sense, while I view the relations between animals and their environments as, fundamentally, one of mutuality and reciprocity, such relations are viewed as not existing in the domain of human experience in an a priori given sense, but as potentialities. In order for them to emerge, they must be engendered through the creation of reciprocal, mutually-enabling relations. For this reason, this thesis adopts the notion of an empowering pedagogy in preference to the idea of quality pedagogy. A discussion of the differences between contemporary conceptions of pedagogy and their implications is provided in a later section of the review.
In the next section, the review explores the links between the perspectives discussed thus far and work in philosophy and quantum physics which sheds light on the interconnections between the force of creativity, the sensing of possibilities, and the openings this affords for feeling the dynamic flow. It then turns to research in education which highlights the importance of creativity and the cultivation of intuition in generating a stimulating learning environment. The notion of creative dialogue and its enabling conditions is then considered in relation to different ways of knowing. The literature on engagement, a key construct in quality pedagogy in both the secondary and tertiary sector, and the assumptions upon which it is based, is problematised in the light of these perspectives.

**Philosophy Meets Neuroscience and Quantum Physics:**

**Bodies, Affect and Unfolding Virtual Domains**

Generative connections have emerged across the fields of philosophy and quantum physics which highlight the importance of affect and creative energy and its power to influence living bodies. In the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987; Massumi, 2002a), creativity is viewed as a fundamental enabling force that flows through all bodies rather than a fixed individual quality. In keeping with research in quantum physics, this force and the world it helps to generate is viewed as unfolding within planes of immanence and capture. The former are seen as virtual realms whose qualities can be felt by living beings in motion – unfolding and enfolding within this ongoing creation. In Massumi’s (2002a) account, sensations, which are ongoing and qualitative, are unconsciously registered and continuously enfolded by the body; a view supported by research in neuroscience (Damasio, 1994; Edelman, 2000; Goswami, 2004). Bodies, from this perspective, are conceived in terms of process, with the sensations experienced in transition seen as expressions of bodies in direct contact with an environment. The moving nature of living bodies and the incipience of moving experience means that both can be added to and intensified.
In its capacity to add to and intensify experience, creativity is a force that reverberates with affect (Massumi, 2002a, pp. 27-31, p. 35). In this conception, affect “is a pre-personal intensity” and a relational potential that traverses the virtual planes of emergence that unfold alongside the real equally unfolding world. Affect as intensity is filled with vibratory motion, with resonation, and it is viewed as pre-social rather than asocial, as social elements are mixed with elements belonging to different orders of becoming. Massumi (2002a, p. 26) argues that the signifying order, of which language is an integral and constitutive part, and intensity operate within different orders of connection, affording “a different connectivity”. The interrelations between levels of intensity and semiotic qualification are thus not posited as one of conformity or correspondence but of resonation or interference, amplification or dampening.

This view of affect resonates with Stern’s (1985) notion of affect attunement, with the idea of affect as intensity according with the vitality affects that arise from attunement to the contours of another’s felt experience and the mutual sensing of experience as vital flow. It suggests that creativity, as affect, is a multi-dimensional force that entails responsiveness, which enters into and is enabling of relationships where attunement is experienced.

Implicit in these accounts, as the notion of forces, intensities, and vitality suggests, is the engendering and sharing of life-enhancing energies. The notion of energy and affects and their “transmission” is, according to Brennan (2003, p. 24), both natural and originary, despite the “Western psyche” being structured so that persons conceive of affects and feelings as their own. Brennan, like Stern and Massumi, views affects as not reducible to emotions or feelings, and as incapable of being adequately understood if only conceived of as residing within individuals. She sees “transmitted affects” as emanating from within persons as well as from within the environment itself, while bodies are seen as both carriers and transformers of social and physical matters and thus as creating physiological effects. Crucially, she argues that while all affects entail the movement and conversion of energies, such energies may be either enhancing or depressing depending upon their particular qualities. She points to the transformative power of love as living attention, which is equated with the directing of positive affect.
towards the other and his/her specificity and its capacity to stimulate all kinds of growth (Brennan, 2003, p. 32). It is this kind of love, oriented and sensitive to the growth of another, that in Stern’s account underpins affect attunement.

On a much larger scale, energies and their movement through multi-dimensional and emergent space underpin Bohm’s (1980) conception of the implicate order. This conception resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of virtual planes of emergence. Bohm (1980, 2003), a quantum physicist, spent much of his life rethinking the gaps and inconsistencies existent in quantum theory. Out of this work emanated his idea of the existence of a multi-dimensional implicate order. It is from this order that the explicate order, which equates with the manifest world, emerges as a “comparatively small pattern of excitation”. According to Bohm (2003, p. 99), this “comparatively small pattern of excitation” is extracted from a plenum or sea of energy which enfolds and unfolds a multi-dimensional implicate order. Bohm’s example of an experiment with two concentric glass cylinders, glycerine and a droplet of ink, illustrates the idea. In this experiment, the space between the two cylinders is filled with glycerine, a small drop of ink is then dropped in, and the outer cylinder turned. This has the effect of drawing the droplet out so that it eventually disappears, enfolding the particles of ink into the glycerine. If the cylinder is turned in reverse, the opposite happens and the ink thread reappears and is unfolded again. In Bohm’s theory, in the same manner as the droplet of ink, all entities, beings and structures are seen as relatively stable and temporary “subtotalities” that emerge through enfoldings and unfoldings from a deeper implicate order, which is a dynamic, moving unbroken whole. His analogy of the flowing stream elucidates this:

*On this stream, one may see an ever-changing pattern of vortices, ripples, waves, splashes, etc., which evidently have no independent existence as such. Rather, they are abstracted from the flowing movement, arising and vanishing in the total process of the flow. Such transitory subsistence as may be possessed by these abstracted forms implies only a relative independence or autonomy of behaviour, rather than absolutely independent existence as ultimate substances.* (Bohm, 1980, p. 40).
In Bohm’s (2003, p. 78) theory, the “processes of matter, organic life and consciousness” are seen as flowing “from reciprocal ordering principles of enfoldment and unfoldment”. Consciousness is a “substantial process” in which our sensory experiences, nervous system, and brain are continuous with the whole of the material world. This idea resonates with relational perspectives on embodiment and consciousness (Overton, 2008, p.3), which view embodiment as “a bridge that joins broad areas of inquiry into a unified whole”. Overton (2008, p. 3) describes embodiment as encompassing not only the physical body, but “the body as a form of lived experience, actively engaged in and with the world of sociocultural and physical objects”. That is, the “body as form references a biological standpoint, the body as lived experience actively engaged references a phenomenological or psychological person standpoint, and the body actively engaged in and with the world points to a contextual, social, cultural, and environmental standpoint” (Overton, 2008, p. 3). In Overton’s account, this embodied active engagement across these multiple domains of being is relational, “as a body actively engaged in and with the world necessitates that not only cognition and learning, but all emotions and motivations and all psychological functions are co-constituted by the sociocultural and environmental context” (Overton, 2008, p. 5).

Latour (1993, cited in Overton 2008, p. 3) described this perspective as a move away from the extremes of Cartesian splits to a centre “where all objects of knowledge are represented not as pure forms, but as forms that flow into each other across fluid boundaries”. From this perspective, mind does not cause body, nor does body cause mind, nor do two entities interact; rather, mind and body are co-constituted, and as such, form indisissociable complements. Hilary Putnam (1987, p. 1, cited in Overton, 2008, p. 3) has argued from a philosophical point of view that it is not the case that the mind makes up the world, nor that the world makes up the mind, but rather that “the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world”.

In his earlier work, Bohm (1987, p. 88) introduced the idea of quantum potential as a means of conceiving subatomic particles as not simple or structureless, but as highly complex moving and affected entities. Refuting the accepted notion that their
movement was random and ambiguous, he viewed them as following a particular path. This path, though, was not put down to the conventional forces of physics, but rather “a more subtle force” called quantum potential. Quantum potential is a force that guides the movement of particles by emitting “active information” about the whole environment. It permeates all space and enables direct connections between quantum systems. Aharanov and Bohm (1959) discovered an important aspect of quantum interconnectedness; that electrons can “feel” the existence of a magnetic field even when they are moving through regions of space where the field strength is zero.

Later research (Aspect, 1982; Bell, 1964) revealed that subatomic particles at a great distance apart can communicate in ways that are similarly not explicable in terms of physical signals. While Bohm and other physicists put this down to instantaneous non-local connections, the alternative view is that they draw on subtler energies, presumed to be travelling faster than the speed of light. Not being a physicist, I have no inkling of the complex physics involved in these movements, however, what the presence of quantum potentials and their inherent capacity to feel does suggest is that energy is itself infused with affect. It further suggests that any affective charge is generative of connections/openings that can move through more than immediate space. The slash is placed between connections and openings so as to emphasise that in such conditions, connections simultaneously become openings, as new energies are felt and relations forged.

Such a view concords with Massumi’s (2002a) conception of the emergence of connections from the virtual planes into what he refers to as the “stratified world of the real”, where the virtual becomes captured, albeit not entirely, within existing orders of language and thought. When these planes converge in thresholds of emergence, they are traversed by flows and intensities that open up the bodies involved so that they are no longer “defined by the form that determines them” but instead have become “the sum total of intensive affects” experienced (Massumi, 2002a, p. 35). This space of opening is referred to as “the plane of consistency” where bodies reverberate with intensity. It is from this space of opening that non-subjugating connections and non-hierarchical thoughts are thought to emerge (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 287-289).
The philosophical and quantum perspectives so far discussed envisage bodies first and foremost as dynamic loci of interrelation. Moreover, the emergence of relations of the creative, enhancing kind is tied to vital experiences. It is for precisely this reason that Massumi sees the hope in creativity as affect as lying in its intensifying capacity, with the extent of freedom at any given time corresponding to “how intensely we are living and moving”. From the degree of “experiential depth” that becomes available as affect intensifies, there emerges a “heightened sense of belonging with other people and places” (Massumi, 2002b, p. 214).

The perspectives discussed in the next section illuminate the links between creativity as a force, the experience of aesthetic qualities and the importance of intuition in sensing new connections. These perspectives are discussed in relation to studies in education which reveal the generative nature of reasoning.

**Creativity, Connectedness and the Importance of Intuition**

Work in creativity (Csikzentmihayhli, 1997; Meill & Littleton, 2004; Shavinina & Seratonan, 2004), peace studies (Lederach, 2005), and education (Bruner, 1977; Noddings & Shore, 1984; Wong, 2007) emphasises the importance of aesthetic sensibilities and intuition as central to the capacity to both feel and create beauty from that which exists and to sense beauty in that which is immanent. Beauty, in this context, bears no relation to popular conceptions nor pre-given aesthetic criteria, but rather equates with a sensing of and search for harmony; for resonances beyond functionality and efficiency, wherein the resonance itself and the feeling of it is intimately tied to sensing the connectedness of all matter.

While intuition as a way of knowing has been denigrated within rationalist paradigms, Noddings and Shore (1984) and Bruner (1977) see intuition and its cultivation as integral to learning and knowledge creation. For Noddings and Shore (1984), intuitive knowing involves a willingness and receptivity to direct unconscious contact with phenomena through the senses. While these phenomena and the impressions and
qualities they generate are not seen as given as such, neither are they seen as totally created by consciousness; rather, they are “composed” through their “capture…in our search for understanding” (Noddings & Shore, 1984, p. 53). Bruner (1977, p. 60) views the intuitive sensing of “rightness” as of central importance to generative thinking and creative synthesis across disciplinary fields. Through the valuing and recognition of artistic intuitions and a commitment to what is felt to be beautiful and right, the capacity and willingness to depart from uniformity and “seek…expression without banality or wilful eccentricity” can be cultivated (Noddings & Shore, 1984, p. 36).

Bergson’s (1946/1992) conception of intuition adds the dimension of movement to these perspectives. Critiquing Kant’s positing of the existence of phenomena that are inaccessible to the domain of human intuition, Bergson sees this as grounded in the assumption and carving out of a static space by the insertion of figures whose properties are already determined. For Bergson, this peculiar assumption of spatiality pervades the abstract intellect and gives rise to a closing down “of the possibilities of thinking” because it departs from “the immobile” and in doing so, reduces movement to a re-ordering of immobilities. However, intuition, in Bergson’s understanding, is based in movement. It involves “a form of mental attentiveness…that the mind gives to itself” (Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002, pp. 35-36) when it strives to “substitute the ready made for what is in the process of becoming”. Intuition thus seizes movement from “its tendency towards change” and adopts “the mobile continuity of the pattern of things” (Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002, p. 35). This capacity to attend to and grasp the moving patterning of things resonates with Bruner’s intuitive sensing of rightness, in as much as in both conceptions creative synthesis is neither given nor imposed but rather emerges from an openness to and an expression of a sensed incipient relation.

In Wegerif’s study (2008) of children’s exploratory talk around ‘reasoning’ problems, he reports that solutions emerged from “the spontaneous generation of new metaphors” and new ways of seeing, rather than through explicit reasoning. Such spontaneous generation accords with Bergson and Bruner’s insights into the workings of intuition, as does its creative expression in the form of new metaphors. Wegerif (2008, p. 4) sees
the ontological basis of human beings as “not self identity but the opening of dialogue” which involves the “inter-animation of more than one voice”. Dialogue is thus not only conceived in terms of interrelation, but interrelation of the kind that is suffused with vitality, as the term “animated” suggests.

Bruner (1977) and Noddings and Shore’s (1984) conceptions of intuition, with their emphasis on its creative, multi-sensory, and receptive nature, resonates with the ecological and philosophical perspectives on being and knowing discussed thus far. Bruner’s idea of the sensing of “rightness” connects with the notion of an affordance as the generation of a reciprocal relation, while Noddings and Shore’s recognition of the importance of receptivity coheres with the view of an affordance as a potential relation, in that an affordance must be sensed to be realised. As to what makes such sensing possible, as the work of Stern (1985, 2010), Bohm (1980, 2003), Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Massumi (2002a, 2002b) and Brennan (2003) elucidate, the experience of positive affect as a force infused with responsiveness and creativity is vital to the opening up of bodies to sensing the dynamic flow and the feeling of potentialities located therein. The next part of the review brings together work that illuminates the links between education, engagements with the arts, powerful affective experiences, and the importance of activating the imagination.

Education, the Arts, and Activating the Imagination

Educational philosophers such as Dewey (1934/1958), Greene (1978, 1991, 1995, 2001) and Arendt (1993) highlight the links between affect, the sensing of beauty, and engagement with the arts as central to engendering new, non-conforming connections. Greene sees engagement with the arts as capable of transforming participation by occasioning moments of insight or “shocks of awareness” (1991, p. 27) that can alert us to new ways of imagining the world, beyond the taken for granted ways that all too frequently govern life. Creative engagements with the arts are central to mobilizing the imagination because they have the potential to arouse in people a “wide awakedness”
(Shutz, in Greene, 1978, p. 163) and a mode of being committed to ongoing reflexive action.

Ewing (2010) sees the arts in all their forms as vital resources for the engendering of pedagogies of a more transformative kind. She highlights the limited capacity of mainstream curricula to engage students from diverse backgrounds whose stories and cultures are frequently undervalued, and whose modes of expression are commonly conceived of in deficit terms. Added to this, “the radical disconnection in many schools between learning and experience” (Ewing, 2010, p. 31) only furthers their disengagement. Concurring with O’Connor (2008, cited in Ewing, 2010, p. 31), Ewing views the inclusion and engagement of young people from all backgrounds as tied to pedagogies that imagine them in terms of possibilities rather than problems. Such pedagogy envisages children as active rather than passive learners, and as actors in charge of their lives. Furthermore, it recognises the vital importance of the imagination and creativity in learning. Drawing on the work of Damasio (1994), Ewing emphasises that experiencing a pedagogy that engages the feeling brain and activates the imagination increases levels of attention and enjoyment in learning and promotes deeper understanding (Ewing, 2010, p. 31).

The importance of activating the imagination to powerful educative experiences is similarly emphasised by Wong (2007, p. 21) who sees “the imaginative sensing of possibility” and the feelings of anticipation it can generate as central to understanding the “aesthetic qualities of engaging educative experiences” because “deep engagement…requires imagination, being acted upon, spontaneity and surprise”. The relationship between activating the imagination and the sensing of possibility resonates with Stern’s (2010) conception of vitality affects. In Stern’s view, vitality affects are experiences of sharing the dynamic flow. They arise in and are engendered by encounters between people and/or with phenomena that give rise to affect attunement and the sensing of possibilities for new synthesis. Together, this work highlights the importance of activating the imagination in promoting learning of the empowering kind. It points to the importance of engendering encounters in the classroom that are
charged with positive affect, as it is the sensing of learning as possibility that opens up persons to feeling the dynamic flow.

This view is echoed by Dufficy (2005a), who emphasizes that students need to feel and believe in their teacher as a conduit for knowledge as possibility, as this is the genesis of empowerment. He sees this as enabled through ways of speaking and being wherein imagination is realized not as a privilege or added extra but as a primary constituent of the ‘real’. Inviting and enabling students to take part in the process of becoming historians, artists, scientists and mathematicians is integral to creating such learning environments, and brings opportunities for not only incorporating ideas, developing skills, and taking up stances, but also for the realizing of selves. For Dufficy, such possibilities for becoming are seen as primarily “constituted in and through talk”, and thus the talk that occurs in classrooms needs to be more deeply explored to understand the ‘nature’ of these constituting processes (2005a, p. 60). In keeping with assumptions about the multi-sensory nature of being and knowing, in this thesis, talk is seen as constituting one domain of experience. Thus, while it is important to explore the kinds of talk that occurs in classrooms, such talk needs to be considered in relation to other sensory domains that may infuse words but are not reducible to them. This may be what Dufficy (2005a) refers to as the nature of those constituting processes.

The research on classroom interaction and the dominant kinds of talk that occur in them is enlightening in this sense. Notwithstanding the considerable literature on genuine dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; Buber, 1923/1958; Brockbank & McGill, 2007; Werstch 1980, 1995) and its importance in learning, the dominant interaction pattern between teachers and students across all subjects remains that of Initiation/Response/Evaluation (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991, p. 257; Dufficy, 2005a, pp. 61-62). As Dufficy (2005a) points out, talk of this kind represents such “relentless cognitive takeover” that the possibility of real dialogue, which requires authenticity and symmetry, becomes systematically eradicated. Furthermore, the effect is to render the environment emotionally flat. As elucidated in the previous sections, the affective contours of learning encounters are of central importance to the kinds of learning and
connections that can arise in interaction. The work discussed in the next section helps to illuminate the affective contours of genuine dialogue and its possible genesis.

Creative Dialogue, Flow and Connection

According to Dufficy (2005a), the creative potential of real dialogue emerges as dependent on experiences of symmetry and authenticity in interaction. This view is supported by Bohm (1996), who sees genuine dialogue as unrealisable under conditions of asymmetry and judgement. Furthermore, for Bohm, attending to the “subtle implications” of our own “assumptive and reactive tendencies while sensing similar patterns” in others is crucial to the realisation of dialogue and its creative potential. He emphasises that this kind of attending is not driven by the intent to correct, but rather to assume and cultivate a “relaxed, non-judgemental curiosity”. It is this quality that is fundamental to awakening to the process of dialogue “as a free flow of meaning among all participants” (Bohm, 1996, p. x).

This flow is characterised as engendered through placing the sense of camaraderie among the group above adherence to any particular position. Bohm emphasises that the feeling of friendship this gives rise to is not dependent on the existence of close personal relationships but rather centred upon the emergence of common meanings, which are constantly being transformed. This enables the group to engage in a dynamic relationship without conforming to a pre-established purpose, where no speaker or content is excluded. Crucial to the possibility of genuine dialogue in this account are the generation of relationships wherein possibility is sensed and each person’s contributions are valued and explored. In keeping with ideas discussed in previous sections, this emerges as enabled by a kind of listening that is attentive to the possibilities of another’s thoughts and tuned into to their feelings; qualities that coincide with Stern’s (1985) conception of affect attunement.
According to Bohm (1996, p. xi), “going further along these lines would open up the possibility of transforming not only the relationship between people but…the very nature of the consciousness in which these relationships arise”.

Empowering Pedagogy and Transformative Learning

Bohm’s (1996, p. xi) notion of creative dialogue and its potential to change “the very nature of the consciousness in which these relationships arise” resonates with Cummins’ (n.d.) conception of transformative pedagogy as embodied in interactions between “educators and students that foster the collaborative creation of power”. For Cummins, collaborative relations of power depart from the assumption that “power is not a fixed pre-determined quantity but rather can be generated in interpersonal and intergroup relations”, and in doing so can become “additive” rather than subtractive. Within such relationships, participants become empowered in their collaborations, not only through the affirmations of their different identities, but equally through an enhanced sense of capacity to “effect change” in their lives and situations. Like Ewing (2010), Cummins (n.d) contends that the primary causes of failure among students from outside the dominant groups are rooted in the fact that classroom interactions tend to reflect and reproduce broader societal relations of power, which educators must actively endeavour to change, alongside the deficit assumptions that so often accompany them.

This thesis draws on Cummins’ (n.d.) notion of a transformative pedagogy and its relational nexus in its conception of an empowering pedagogy. The idea of an empowering pedagogy is preferred over a transformative one, so as to distinguish it from conceptions of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). It does so on the grounds that substantial transformation entails different things for different people, and that transformation is itself an ongoing journey without any necessary or definitive end. While experiences of empowering pedagogies may be integral to and even constitute transformative experiences, substantial personal transformation is seen as an inherently more complex and relatively enduring process. In this thesis, an
empowering pedagogy is viewed, in keeping with Cummins’ (n.d.) notion and the perspectives discussed thus far, as one which engenders feelings of personal and collective agency through the kinds of relationships it brings into being. While it makes no assumptions as to exactly what qualities are likely to be or should be experienced in such relationships, it assumes that they will be experienced as not only personally, but collectively, enabling.

**Transformative Learning and Different Ways of Knowing**

In this section, the concept of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) is discussed in the light of work which reveals the rationalist assumptions that underpin it and their implications for experiences of empowerment in learning. This discussion is included in the review as it reveals how deeply embedded rationalist assumptions about the nature of learning are in the conceptual repertoire of Western educational theorists, even those who are concerned with education as a transformative process. The limitations of these assumptions and approaches to pedagogy that are founded upon them have important implications for teaching and learning, particularly in higher education.

Transformative learning is envisaged as a process in which taken for granted frames of reference become transformed in ways which engender greater inclusiveness, openness, and a corresponding capacity for emotional change and reflection that makes participation in constructive discourse possible (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8). Such a conception accords with Cummins’ (n.d.) notion of the kind of intergroup relations that characterise a transformative pedagogy. However, as Belenky and Stanton (2000, p. 72) highlight, while providing “an elegant, detailed description of one important endpoint of a long developmental process”, the theory of transformative learning “does not trace the many steps people take before they can know what they know”. Nor does it take into account, in its presumption of equality, that many human relationships are asymmetrical, or that many humans have had experiences of asymmetrical
relationships which may inhibit them from participating fully in constructive discourses.

What concerns Belenky and Stanton specifically is that in learning environments which are pervaded by this assumption of equality to participate in such discourses, people may not be supported in ways that enable the development of their full potential (2000, p. 73). They highlight the importance of approaches to learning that draw upon “connected ways of knowing”, in which listening and responding to each person’s concerns enables resolutions to be reached through “conversation, storytelling, and perspective sharing” (Belenky & Stanton, 2000, p. 87). Such experiences are seen as crucial to bringing into the fold persons who may not have the confidence, resources or disposition to otherwise enter into the conversation. In Belenky and Stanton’s (2000, p. 87) account, this investment in listening to and understanding each other through drawing on empathic and imaginative resources serves as a means for “entering into another’s frame of mind”. The idea of “entering into another’s frame of mind” resonates with the idea of affect attunement as a form of communicative musicality (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, pp. 2-4). In this conception, affect attunement arises from direct experiences of “feeling with” another, a feeling with that is simultaneously a “sharing [of] the dynamic vitality flow” (Stern, 2010, pp. 52-53). This fits with Belenky and Stantons’ (2000) view that the potential that resides in the connected approach is its capacity to generate such shared experiences and the possibilities for new connections that they engender.

The ethic of care that underpins this approach is distinguished by Belenky and Stanton (2000) from understandings of morality that have been associated with the male voice in modern Western cultures. The latter understandings inform the “ethic of justice” or “rights mode”, oriented to the resolution of moral issues through what is considered to be the “individual’s impartial application of rules and principles whose hierarchy can be determined logically” (Belenky & Stanton, 2000, p. 86). Such an orientation is integral to learning approaches centred upon separate ways of knowing where the metaphor that best fits the approach is that of doubting. Separate knowers tend to “stand back” and analyse the logic of a perspective in terms of its flaws and omissions
(Belenky & Stanton, 2000, p. 86). Belenky and Stanton emphasise that while connected knowers are, like separate knowers, not adverse to taking a critical stance, what is important is whether there is a level playing field, as doubting can damage the willingness of people less confident in their capacities to develop and articulate ideas.

**Implications for Teaching and Approaches to Teacher Education**

The discussion thus far points to the importance of reciprocal relationships in realising the potential of creative dialogue, alongside the sensing of knowledge as possibility. With respect to the former, as illuminated in the first part of the review, experiences of affect attunement provide opportunities for sharing the vital flow. With regard to the latter, as the literature on creativity and the arts reveals, encounters with the arts and imaginative encounters with the subject afford opportunities for activating the imagination, which in turn, may give rise to the sensing of possibility. From an educational perspective, nurturing in teachers and students the kinds of awareness and attentive capacities that make the free flow of meaning possible emerges as crucial. As the review infers, a vital part of this nurturing in teacher education and academic development revolves around having experiences of the very same kind that engender reciprocity and open people up to the sensing of possibility. Beattie’s (2009) narrative, arts-based holistic orientation to pedagogy, along with approaches to teacher education that are founded on making the tacit dimensions of the teaching-learning relationship a site of inquiry are discussed in this section of the review as indicative of the kind of approaches that offer such opportunities. Following this, Sumsion’s (2002) study of Sarah and her journey from an exemplary early childhood teacher candidate to burnt out teacher is discussed. Sarah’s journey is presented in order to illuminate the difficulties of sustaining an empowering pedagogy in circumstances which do not accord with those of the kind that helped to engender the commitment.
In her reflections on arts-informed, narrative holistic pedagogy and its wellspring, Beattie (2009, p. 16) sees it as crucial that teachers “at all levels of education” are “connected to what they love”, and “to the source of their creativity and imaginations as well as their intellectual lives”. It is equally essential that teachers “do in their own lives what they expect and hope students will do in theirs”. Her “narrative, arts-based holistic orientation to pedagogy” is thus underpinned by five core principles that bring together content, method and relationships in ways that afford opportunities for creative exploration and inquiry, along with experiences of support and connectedness, and possibilities for the creation and re-creation of selves.

The principles that underpin this orientation are, firstly, that the approach emanates from self-directed inquiry, and involves dialogue, self-study and narrative writing through which students are able “to create and recreate themselves” and “what they know”. Secondly, the creation of “collaborative relationships and a supportive learning community” is a cornerstone of the approach. Thirdly, it involves fostering a sustained commitment to students connecting with “the source of their creativity and inspiration”, as well as their intellectual endeavours. Fourthly, the approach recognises and draws insight from the interconnections between a person’s past, present and future lives, as well as all dimensions of being: physical, aesthetic, intellectual, spiritual, moral and social. Finally, it sees education “as the process of becoming more human and of making increasingly more sophisticated connections between all aspects of self” and between self and others, self and society, and self and the universe (Beattie, 2009, pp. 15-16).

Approaches to enacting a pedagogy of teacher education (Loughran, 2006; Russell & Loughran, 2007; Kane, 2007) similarly view teaching as fundamentally connected to relationships. They highlight the need for making the problematic, tacit dimensions of pedagogy and pedagogic decision-making a site of inquiry with students. This involves articulating the thought processes and reasoning behind pedagogic decision-making in practice and bringing to light the difficult to articulate dimensions of teacher professional knowledge. It equally involves not only being able to articulate the principles of one’s pedagogic practice, but also having the courage to invite study of
those principles in action with students (Kane, 2007). The latter involves openly encouraging different perspectives on practice, alongside reflection on their implications for those avowed principles. This review sees both approaches, and combinations thereof, as integral to an empowering pedagogy of teacher education. At the same time, in view of the contextual and relational forces revealed as operating within my own personal and professional journey, it see a need for greater attention to be paid to problematic teaching and learning contexts, and for inquiry into sustaining empowering practice under such circumstances.

Sumsion’s (2002) phenomenological case study of Sarah, an early childhood teacher, reveals the relational and contextual forces at work in her professional becoming and unbecoming. In her pre-service years, Sarah emerges as someone who cares passionately about her children and her work. Her “warm engaging manner” and “her readiness to grapple with the challenges of the profession” intimate that Sarah is developing the reflexivity and resourcefulness that will enable her to overcome future challenges (Sumsion, 2002, p. 871). Her professional identity thus emerges as highly congruent with the aims of the pre-service programme, and she experiences both her teacher educators and her learning contexts as supportive. The problem with this congruence, as Sumsion sees it, is that the complexities and impacts of differing professional contexts and relationships upon herself and her pedagogical commitment are not recognised by Sarah.

The impact of such different contexts and relationships, though, becomes apparent in the changing metaphors that encapsulate Sarah’s experiences through her seven-year journey in the profession. Her first two years see an initial period of positive growth, enabled by the relationships that she forms with her children and recognition and positive feedback from parents (Sumsion, 2002, p. 876), indicated by her metaphor of the rainbow path. However, following on from this, an increasing sense of alienation and diminishment of energies in the face of colleagues who do not share her enthusiasm and are unwilling to explore and try out new ideas and practices become apparent. Significantly, as time goes by, the sense of diminishment that Sarah experiences increases to the point where “the inordinate investment of time required to
maintain [her] initiatives…coupled with the lack of collegial interest, support or stimulation, depleted her reserves of emotions and energy and exacerbated her feelings of professional isolation” (Sumson, 2002, p. 878).

By the end of her fourth year, Sarah finds herself gaining “little emotional satisfaction” from “the many expressions of appreciation and thanks she received from the families of the children in her class” (Sumson, 2002, p. 880). While Sarah’s decision to leave the profession comes a few years later, after a move to a different school and position, her metaphor of the “choking vines” “trampling all over” and “choking” her on her “rainbow path” reveal the suffocating and destructive effects of extremely discordant relationships on Sarah’s sense of agency and commitment. Sarah’s case, like my own, suggests that the creative energy needed to sustain a commitment to an empowering pedagogy is substantial and that in contexts where such energy is not only not replenished, but rather is actively depleted, such a commitment becomes difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. In this sense, the process of becoming more human and making increasing connections across all dimensions of life (Beattie, 2009, p. 16), because it is relational and inter-subjective, depends on reciprocal energies. In contexts where such energies are not forthcoming, commitment is not challenged in a conventional rational sense, it is challenged at the most fundamental level of life: its vitality.

In the next section of the review, the literature on engagement in both the secondary and tertiary sectors is explored. The reasons for turning to this literature are three-fold. Firstly, engagement has emerged as a vital element in quality learning environments, and it has become a prominent theme in learner-centred discourse in the tertiary sector. Secondly, it is from my own experiences of the limited, unproblematised understandings of engagement and the enabling conditions of engaging pedagogies that the questions that drive this thesis have grown. Thirdly, while engagement has been explored from a number of perspectives, despite the attested importance of relationships in both the classroom and school and their noted vital and affective elements, the importance of the such elements to the nature of the learning that occurs and the pedagogy that is created, remains remarkably underexplored. For this reason,
the link between engagement and the affective contours of an engaging school culture and its enabling conditions is discussed through reference to studies conducted in the NSW secondary school sector into the characteristics of schools with exceptional learning outcomes (Baxter, Sawyer, & Brock, 2007). These studies reveal the embodied and dynamic dimensions of collegial faculty relationships and the enabling energy that infuses them.

**Conceptions of Engagement and their Limitations**

One of the central indicators of quality learning environments is the presence of engagement (DET NSW, 2003). Engagement is conceptualised somewhat differently by different scholars, but can be roughly understood as a state of high involvement in a task, which is manifested in significant levels of concentration, interest and enjoyment (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003, p. 159). Both academic intensity and positive emotional response have been emphasised as dual facets of optimal engagement (Shernoff et al., 2003, p. 172). The former, characterised by concentration, interest and attention, is seen as generated through involvement in challenging and relevant activities that enable the development of “skills” towards increased levels of “mastery”. The latter entails a “sense of high competence and autonomy”, and is accompanied by increasing enjoyment, self-esteem and intrinsic motivation.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004, p. 86) note that much of the research on engagement utilises teacher and student surveys, which, while providing educators with a list of contextual factors that impact on engagement, does not enhance understandings of why and how such factors work. That the bulk of the literature examines engagement through focussing on individual behavioural and emotional responses, which are then linked to competency-based constructs such as ‘skills’ and ‘mastery’, is limiting in this regard. This is equally the case in the higher education context, where “student engagement data” are frequently shaped by their usefulness to
quality assurance mechanisms (Coates, 2005). Such notions, in line with the rationalist approaches that underpin them, implicitly assume that engagement is best understood in terms of individual cognition, leaving the significance of its affective dimensions largely unexplored. As Wong (2007, p. 198) points out, little attention has been paid to the role of non-conscious processes in cases where significant learning occurs, despite the compelling evidence to suggest that “goal-directed activity, judgement of others, self regulation and expert performance” are not nearly as under the conscious control of persons as has been assumed.

Drawing on Csikszentmihayli’s (1997) notion of flow, to capture the feel of engaging learning experiences where “performance is optimal” and the event becomes central, Wong (2007, p. 197) highlights how in such experiences self and ego disappear with the individuals involved no longer perceiving themselves as separate from the experience but integral to it. Pointing to the affective dimensions of such experiences, he points out that the language used to evoke them frequently carries a sense of feelings of letting go and simultaneously becoming more vital and energised. The former is characterised by references to being “swept away” revealing an opening up to ‘external’ influences. The latter is often characterised as inspired and inspiring. According to Wong (2007, p. 201), this is the emotion of learning at its most powerful as it captures the sense of “increased vitality” that accompanies a “growing capacity to perceive and act”.

Despite the lack of consideration of the affective dimensions of engagement in learning encounters, the importance of teacher-student relationships to student engagement is emphasised throughout the educational literature (Doecke, Howie, & Sawyer, 2006; Frank, 2006; Kesner, 2005; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006; Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson, 2006). Positive student-teacher relationships have been found to exert a direct effect on student engagement which then mediates other variables. In the secondary school context, teacher-student relationships which foster autonomy, relatedness, and competence have been reported to increase both engagement and achievement (Goodenow, 1993; Wentzel, 1998; Osterman, 2000; Zimmer-Gemmbeck, Chipeur, Hanisch, Creed, & McGregor, 2006, p.
Studies on student engagement in higher education (Bryson & Hand, 2007, p. 353) similarly emphasise the crucial importance of supportive teacher-student relationships, and associate these with fostering a greater sense of belonging. Perry (1968, p. 288), in an investigation into the intellectual and ethical development of Harvard students, found that both feeling part of a community and “reciprocal acts of recognition and confirmation” were the most important forms of support.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (2005) draw attention to the links between optimal engagement and holistic pedagogical approaches in alternative educational settings. Studies of middle schools in the United States inspired by the Montessori approach showed that the philosophy permeated the entire operation of the school, from the school setting right through to students’ relationships with teachers and fellow students. Studies of similar alternative settings (Petrosky, 2006; Quinn, Poirier, Faller, Gable, & Tonelson 2006, p. 12; Rinaldi, 2006; Wehlage & Smith, 1992) have found correlations between the relational dynamics informing the whole school orientation and the relational dynamics that emerge in classrooms between teachers and students, and students and their fellow students.

In the Australian context, research into the characteristics of schools with exceptional outcomes in the secondary sector in NSW (Sawyer, Baxter, & Brock, 2007, pp. 61-70) similarly highlights the significance of the whole school approach. While the success of the approach emerges as dependent on the creation of enabling relationships, what is most noticeable in the culture of the schools studied was, according to the researchers, the embodied dimensions of these relationships. Thus, while the commitment of staff and their focus on improving the learning experiences of students was identified as a key factor in the school’s success, Sawyer, Baxter and Brock (2007) emphasise that this approach was not reducible to words, policy, or guidelines. Rather, the approach was manifest in and enabled by the everyday embodied ways in which staff interacted with each other and their students.

These everyday interactions emerged as marked by clear signs of mutual trust, respect, and caring on the part of staff and students in the classrooms, in the staffroom, in the
playground, as well as in interactions with parents and the larger community. Also evident was a belief on the part of both students and parents that the staff were deeply committed to, and acting in the best interests of, the students. In depth knowledge of the students and their needs as learners and people was also consistently evident, as too were high expectations, not only in academic terms, but equally in terms of personal comportment and growth.

Baxter, Sawyer and Brock draw on Fish’s (1989) notion of an interpretative community as useful in explaining why certain groups of people “seem to click”. They put this down to a “corporate unanimity of practice” (2007, p. 65) that emanates from “a sense of common enterprise” that such people feel in their work rather than preconceived ideas about syllabi. They see this as accounting for the “dynamism” apparent in the faculty culture and set the origins of this dynamism in the sharing of a “common mission”. While in a professional sense, this amounts to “the teacher as artist” being “replaced by the notion of the organic faculty as the key site of intellectual and artistic work” (Baxter, Sawyer, & Brock, 2007, p. 69), in a more immediate and inter-personal sense, the teacher as artist emerges as nourished and vitalized by a dynamic culture that is oriented towards growth of all kinds. This sits very well with the observation that the teachers involved in the study spoke about their pedagogy “as if it were a logical extension of their collegiality” (Baxter, Sawyer, & Brock, 2007, p. 69).

According to Baxter, Sawyer and Brock (2007, p. 69), in schools and faculties characterized by such cultures, curriculum and pedagogy become inseparable in practice, and teachers become “transformative intellectuals” in as much as they “exercise power productively in collaboration with others” In so doing, they obtain greater control over the knowledge produced and the pedagogy they enact in their classrooms. This study draws attention to both the generative importance of relationships to engagement at every level within the school, and their vital qualities. It supports the view that dynamic and engaged schools and the energies they generate exert an influence on the pedagogy created in the classroom that cannot be captured in a rational sense.
The engagement literature primarily conceptualises teacher-related behaviours that contribute to increased engagement in terms of specific practices such as support, caring, respect and differentiation (Freebody, 2005). While this literature has created awareness of practices that enhance classroom life, this thesis offers an alternative vista on the complex, inter-relational and multi-sensory forces that constitute classroom life. It sees the identified practices as inextricable extractions cut from what I interpret as part of the larger composing of the teacher’s ‘presence’, or more accurately co-presence, as all presences emerge in conjunction with their context/s and the relationships that inform them. Envisioning the classroom space in this way offers a way of glimpsing its contingency and movement. This helps to avoid the limits of established categories and to enable a sense of the resonance between beings as a fluid permeation of space that may cut across many directional lines.

In the next section of the review, these lenses are brought to the literature on quality pedagogy and its identification in higher education. That pedagogy is currently conceived in terms of quality is viewed as indicative of the drive to render it productive in the quantifiable sense. This drive similarly infuses contemporary discourses of learner centredness, whose dichotomous, static, and unimaginative conceptions of pedagogy are critiqued, as are the pragmatic ways in which its relational dimensions are conceived. Such renderings readily support the identification, evaluation and quantification of behaviours, characteristics and practices in terms of apparently transparent outcomes, in line with the contemporary focus on productivity. These conceptions have grave consequences for how pedagogy and its underpinnings is both understood and experienced.

The Contemporary Context of Higher Education

In the sections that follow, the links between the current landscape of higher education, and the larger economic and political forces involved in constituting it are discussed. This sets the context for a critique of the assumptions that inform dominant conceptions of the nature and purposes of learning in higher education, along with the
ways in which pedagogy is envisaged. The literature selected draws attention to the dichotomous assumptions about teaching and learning that underpin dominant understandings of pedagogy in the tertiary sector, along with their neglect of the affective domain.

With the increasing commodification of higher education, according to Fromm (1978, cited in Bryson & Hand, 2007, p. 350), “education as a becoming process” has become “subservient to its having aspects”. This shift has been accompanied by reform agendas in higher education that see quality in terms of identifiable and apparently transparent goals and outcomes, including the mastery of generic skills, the acquisition of graduate attributes, and increased participation in employment (Anderson, 2006; Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2004; Invargson, 2002, pp. 19-25; Nelson, 2003, p.11, pp. 28-30; Watty, 2003, p. 216). This is illuminating in that it continues to render both teachers and students as transparently intentional, rational, and autonomous. While these reform documents and the Quality Assurance frameworks that accompany them reflect and construct notions of quality and subsequent criteria in ways that draw on different conceptions of Learner Centredness, as identified by Boud (2006, p. 21), on the whole, an over-arching reliance on the programmed learning approach is discernible in the stress on quantifiable and measurable outcomes.

As Boud (2006, p. 21) highlights, the programmed learning approach is founded on the assumption “that human beings can be efficiently programmed to learn”, and that “students should be able to demonstrate the required behaviour”. In both course design and in the classroom, this translates to organising the information in such a way that the “student cannot avoid learning”. There is a pervasive sense of control emanating from the language through which this conception is rendered, which, if translated to the classroom, would work against the possibility of genuine dialogue (Bohm, 1996). Nor could such an environment engender the vitality necessary for experiences of deep engagement, as the earlier parts of this review suggest. As Wong highlights, “powerful educative experiences” are neither explicable nor possible if learners and teachers remain locked within themselves and the reductive assumptions of a pre-given logic. Yet, within the Western tradition, ideal students continue to be imagined as rational,
intentional beings, in control of both their thoughts and actions (Wong, 2007, pp. 192-197).

Pring (2007, p. 325) similarly argues that “the language of the business world”, of audits and performance indicators, inputs, outputs, and productivity, has shifted understandings of learning from the ongoing struggle to understand and its “gradual dawning”, to the ability to perform in line with set targets. He points out that the changing of educational practice is crucially tied to the metaphors drawn upon to envisage it, as “the language which we have inherited provides the tools through which we see the world”, and in changing that language we change our perceptions (Pring, 2007, pp. 320-322).

**Quality, Efficiency and Performativity**

The reforming of the education sector and the university by regimes of quality and efficiency has given rise to a range of performative effects (Barnett, 2000, pp. 38-42; McWilliam, 2002; Deem, 2001; Watty, 2003; Williams, 2006). Barnett (2000, pp. 40-41) distinguishes between two primary kinds of performativity and their impacts. The first relates to indicators of epistemological performance and success, such as professional status and influence, which is not in itself seen as problematic. The second is more insidious, concerning the embedding of use value at the very core of knowledge and its pursuit. Within this pursuit, researchers and academics become bearers of a “strident performative ideology” and an accompanying epistemological shift from the contemplative to the pragmatic ensues. This epistemological pragmatism is rendered increasingly invisible, as it becomes embedded in new concepts and developing areas of inquiry, growing in tandem with the growth of knowledges in competition for status, funds and security.

What is more worrying, as McWilliam (2002) points out, is that this pragmatic performativity becomes articulated not just through the bodies of knowledge but equally through the bodies of knowers, integrating itself into their beings. This is not
only at the level of conceptual integration and framing but becomes simultaneously embodied in ways of acting and affecting, becoming incorporated into demeanour and disposition. According to Barnett (2000), countering the grip of this kind of performativity requires not a shying away from the anxieties and uncertainties that are the marks of living in a super-complex world, but rather entering into productive engagement with them.

With the advent of postmodernism and its impact on notions of truth and universality, these anxieties and uncertainties similarly surround knowledge and its production, alongside its values and meaning. It is not just that all concepts, categories and theories are rendered contestable, but interpretative frameworks themselves are open to dispute (Barnett, 2000, p. 75). Engaging with this condition on an epistemological level involves acknowledging the fragility and contestability of knowledge and placing this at the centre of university life. This entails adopting a more tentative approach: shifting from authoritative pronouncements to possible readings, from determinate paths to suggested ideas for action. Barnett (2000, p. 69) sets creativity and critique as core human capacities needed for engagement in a super-complex world. Such capacities are seen as equally essential to the “enlightened social self-monitoring” that is cited as a key role for the university.

This means that pedagogy in the tertiary context must relinquish the “old narrow ways of teaching” and create new modes centred on the student’s being. These modes need to engage students with the uncertainty and contestability of knowledge through creating “disturbances” in not only their minds, but also their very beings (Barnett, 2000, p. 155). At the same time, students need to become at ease with being unsettled and be enabled to engage purposively within the world. Barnett’s advocating of pedagogies focused on students’ beings and their development, so as to enable them to act meaningfully in an increasingly complex and uncertain world, represents a call for a turn towards more empowering pedagogies; ones that can engender in students a sense of purpose and agency. Nonetheless, the particular contours and shapes that such pedagogies might take remain sketchy.
This section has explored some of the dominant forces involved in shaping the tertiary education sector and the university and their impacts on knowledge and its purposes. It has discussed the issues and dilemmas that confront and inform approaches to teaching and learning in the sector. In the next section, the review explores the dominant notions that drive understandings of quality in teaching and learning in higher education in Australia.

Learner Centredness in Higher Education

The bulk of the literature in higher education constructs and identifies quality in teaching and learning through the lens of Learner Centredness. While this construct and what it entails has undergone significant transformations since coming to prominence in the 1970s (Boud, 2006, pp. 19-21), in the main, it has shifted the focus of research in higher education from the teacher and good teaching methods to the learner’s experience and the identification of approaches to learning that facilitate its enhancement. Boud (2006, pp. 19-32) identifies four major movements within Learner Centredness, with each accompanied by different assumptions about learning and the nature of learners, and thus carrying different consequences for how both Learner Centredness and good practice is conceived. These are respectively: Programmed learning, Self directed learning, Problem based learning and Work based learning. These different movements have been influenced by quite different perspectives and hence carry differing ontological and epistemological assumptions (Boud, 2006, p. 27). Programmed learning draws on notions from behavioural psychology and its linear cause and effect understandings of learning. Self-directed learning has its roots in humanistic psychology, and stresses the importance of freedom and personal choice, while Problem and Work based learning relate to constructivism, with its focus on learning processes and the importance of the learner’s construction of knowledge. As already discussed, in the tertiary sector in Australia, there is a predominant reliance on the programmed approach with its stress on measurable outcomes.
The central issue with all of these approaches, as Boud (2006, p. 29) highlights, is that while all “learner centred discourse” positions the learner as at the centre of learning, it is based upon a centre-periphery model of learning that elides the possibility of many centres and peripheries existing in dynamic constellations. Moreover, it fails to properly recognise learners as always in states of becoming. Boud points to the need to develop perspectives on learning and learning processes that are not grounded in “a simple polarity between teachers and learners” (2006, p. 29), nor in privileging the concerns of either group. Like Boud, I see the teacher/learner dichotomy as not only eliding the complex relational dynamics that undergird “powerful learning experiences” (Wong, 2007, p. 192), but also as making it difficult to conceive of these relations in ways which are able to conceptualise their importance for learning. Similarly problematic is the scant attention given to understandings of classrooms as inherently risky and unstable spaces (Albrecht-Crane, 2005), which are felt to be infused with affect.

Such conceptions make apparent that much of this educational discourse remains locked within what Sumara and Davis (2006) refer to as correspondence based theories of teaching and learning. Within such theories, that which does not readily lend itself to more apparently effable and pragmatic concepts such as ‘alignment’, ‘support’ and ‘feedback’ is either made absent or made to conform. The problem is that such categories, in their very making, reduce the complex inter-relational dimensions of experience into discrete and quantifiable practice.

Beard, Clegg and Smith (2007, p. 235) argue that “a clearer theorisation of the role of emotion in educational encounters” in the context of higher education is needed so as to more fully conceptualise the affective and embodied ‘nature’ of persons and its import for learning. Whilst in agreement with this call, in line with the perspectives on affect discussed earlier in the review (Brennan, 2003; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Massumi, 2002a), I see such theorisation as equally in need of developing understandings of experiences that are predicated upon the possibility of non-containment, of becoming open to and affected by that which is beyond the self.
The Relationship between Teaching Approaches and Student Experiences of Learning

The construct of Learner Centredness informs much of the research in the area of teaching and learning in the Australian university sector, along with understandings of quality learning experiences that are derived from it. Such understandings revolve around a concern with experiences that promote deep learning in students. In this section of the review, influential research that proposes a qualitative relationship between academics’ approach to their subject and teaching and the promotion of deep learning in students is discussed.

The work of Prosser, Martin, Trigwell, Ramsden and Lueckenhauisen (2005) posits a correlation between the different ways in which academics experience their subject, how teaching is experienced, and qualitatively different student learning outcomes. Significant convergences emerge between holistic and problematic experiences of the subject, the experience of teaching as focused around the students and student activity, and an increased incidence of deeper approaches to learning and higher quality learning outcomes among students (Prosser, Trigwell, & Waterhouse, 1999). Conversely, atomised and linear experiences of the subject correlate with teacher-centred teaching and the promotion of shallow approaches to learning.

The link between the qualitatively different experiences of academics of both their subject and teaching, and between students’ learning experiences and outcomes, sets these interrelations as not only an important site for exploration, but also suggests that this qualitative difference emerges from something generated therein that is not reducible to conventional understandings of learning and cognition. While Prosser et al. (2005) conceive of these relations as an experience, I have elected to envisage this experience in terms of a relation, as, in line with the perspectives presented in earlier sections, I see learning experiences and the affects that infuse them as pertaining to a quality of relation that arises in the course of an experience. Furthermore, the quality of relation engendered is seen as giving rise to qualitatively different experiences.
In a later paper, Prosser et al. (Prosser, Martin, Trigwell, Ramsden, & Middleton, 2008) explore the interrelations between academics’ experience of their subject, their teaching, and their research, noting that the claimed link between research and teaching has not, thus far, been substantiated empirically. Based on a survey of research active academics, they interpret this as tied to the ways in which research is experienced, theorising that those academics whose approach is “open-ended and inquiry focused” and who seek to develop and connect ideas across fields with the intention of changing the field are more likely to construct their subject holistically for their students. Thus, it is “not how active one is as a researcher” that is posited as significant but rather the nature of the activity focused upon (Prosser et al., 2008, p. 13).

Their findings resonate with research on the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990), which proposes that there is a positive connection between research and teaching when “student learning as process” is central. This work points to a nexus of interrelations between the experiences of academics of their teaching and research and the ways that they construct knowledge for and with students, and the experiences available to learners. However, the qualitative nature of these relationships and the ways they are generated in learning encounters is envisaged in distinctly rational, disembodied terms. Moreover, Prosser et al.’s research (1999, 2005, 2008) is based on academics’ accounts of their experiences, rather than students’ experiences of their pedagogic approach. This study explores this nexus of interrelations and their generation in learning encounters. As is detailed in the next section, it does so by exploring students’ experiences of the pedagogy of exceptional teacher educators. The rationale for setting the study in the field of teacher education rather than another disciplinary area is that education is the field of pedagogic knowledge, with the latter being a focus of considerable exploration, critique and construction over many years. Yet, despite the considerable research and pedagogic knowledge generated, its implications for teaching and learning in the university has been largely ignored, contributing to the dearth of more sophisticated accounts of pedagogy (Lee, 2005). Lee (2005) calls for increased attention to be paid therefore to this field in the tertiary sector.
In the next section of the review, a model of quality pedagogy developed in the NSW secondary sector is discussed (DET NSW, 2003). This model is widely used in the state of NSW as a resource for teachers in explorations of their pedagogy. It is used in the education faculty in which this study is set as a focal point for discussions of best practice with students. It was also the model drawn upon by teacher educators to explore their practice (Anderson, Gibson, & Ewing, 2007) in the larger inquiry from which this research grew. While the model is useful for identifying indicators of quality pedagogy in action, the discussion draws attention to its conceptual limitations. Because the model separates the domain of intellectual quality from that of the quality of the learning environment, it obscures the interrelations between the cultivation of deep approaches to learning and the affective dimensions of pedagogy. This, in turn, hinders any consideration of the generative forces that underpin the latter dimensions.

**Quality Pedagogy in NSW Schools:**

**A Framework for Exploring Quality in Higher Education**

The model for *Quality teaching in NSW public schools* (DET NSW, 2003) is framed around three core dimensions of quality pedagogy: intellectual quality, quality learning environment, and significance (Table 1). While the model assumes that what teachers do cannot be separated from how they do it, nonetheless, for the purposes of efficacy, these dimensions of experience are separated from each other, with the elements of intellectual quality distinguished from those that comprise quality learning environments and significance. The problem with this is that the potentially generative connections between them become more readily obscured.
Table 1: The dimensions and elements of the NSW Quality Teaching Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual quality</th>
<th>Quality learning environment</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep knowledge</td>
<td>Explicit quality criteria</td>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep understanding</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Cultural knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic knowledge</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Knowledge integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher order thinking</td>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>Inclusivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalanguage</td>
<td>Students’ self-regulation</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive communication</td>
<td>Student direction</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This concern stems from the view (Hodson, 2009) that affect is implicated across all dimensions of the model and is integral to many of the identified elements. The dimensions of intellectual quality and significance imply a connection between affect and quality learning, the latter through the elements of inclusivity and connectedness, and the former through not only the element of problematic knowledge, but implicitly in the other elements identified. Such an assertion is grounded in the view that deep understanding, substantive communication, and higher order thinking emanate from a quality of connection to the subject that is not grounded in cognition as it is envisaged within the rationalist paradigm, but rather in an expanded sense which emanates from the embodied nature of cognition.

The descriptors of each element within the three dimensions are framed around the identifiable presence in classes of particular student behaviours, lesson features, activities, and assessment tasks (DET NSW, 2003, pp. 11-15). Such a framework explicitly links the features of quality pedagogy to specific features of the curriculum, while its impact on students’ learning is operationalised in terms of desired student behaviour. That the descriptors lack reference to the felt experiences of students themselves means that the framework does not afford a view of how changes in the quality of affect influence students’ behaviour and the quality and kind of connections engendered. Similarly, the framework lacks a reference to the ways in which the
teacher, in Prosser et al.’s (2005) terms, “constructs the object of knowledge for students”. Instead, it focuses on the presence of particular features of lessons and tasks. This misses the significance of the way that the teacher brings the subject into being with the students and the connections this may open up. Thus, while this investigation draws upon the model to explore connections between the cited elements and those engagements that emerge as vital in generating and/or shifting the quality of feeling in the classroom, it equally does so with a view to bringing to light the forces that underlie these elements and help to bring them into being.

Chapter Four contains the next section of the review, and discusses the guiding assumptions about being and knowing that inform this thesis and their relationship to existing paradigms. The methodological approach of arts-informed narrative inquiry (Beattie, 2009; Cole & Knowles, 2007) is then explained, alongside its resonance with the guiding assumptions. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the methods used to gather, create and recreate the data and its analysis.
Chapter Four: The Research Journey

In this chapter, I discuss the guiding paradigm that informs the selection of methodologies and the conduct of the research throughout the study. The research is located within a paradigm that best fits its nature, purposes and assumptions. The interpretative methodologies that underpin the research process are then discussed in terms of their assumptions, purposes and appropriateness. Issues of validity, authenticity, voice and reflexivity are subsequently addressed. The context of the two case studies that comprise the investigation and their scope are then outlined. Following this, the conduct of the research and the methods used throughout the different phases are described. Finally, the iterative process of data interpretation and the decisions regarding its representation are explored in depth.

New Creative Approaches to Analysis and New Paradigm Research

From the beginning of the learning journey that is integral to this PhD, my thinking emerged through my writing and my writing gave new shape to my experiences and reflections. I wrote notes and summaries, questions and ideas, made arrows, jots and spirals, and I intermittently kept a journal. I also started writing poems. They seemed to spill out, like a sudden sluicing of debris after some forgotten storm. These poems spoke of how it felt to be back in Australia after living away for so long; of feelings of being cut adrift from other homes and more hospitable ways of living. They had to do with where I was in my life as a teacher, and how unbearably stagnant it felt. They were about becoming stuck without realizing the self-congealing, and how deadening it felt to no longer believe in what you are doing.

At the same time, these poems spoke of experiences elsewhere, of possibility, and connection. Of the desire for movement and walking in the world. I found I preferred poetry to conventional forms of reflection. In a poem, I could merge past and present,
myself with other persons, creatures, and lands. I could mix cinnamon birch with starfish blue and coax water dragon whisper from the bellies of abandoned shells. In doing so, I became aware of how in our imaginative stories of encounter and experience not only feeling and thought but self and other interweave and merge, enabling the fluidity and possibility of interrelation to be felt. This gave rise to a renewed desire to shake the conventional boundaries that guide so much research.

I have thus turned in this study to new arts-informed ways of conducting, interpreting and representing research (Beattie, 2009; Cole & Knowles, 2007; Eisner, 1998; Richardson, 2005) in keeping with these desires and concerns. This approach reflects the hope of not only revealing the workings of the social within the local and personal, but also of revealing the importance of the affective and imaginative dimensions of interpersonal and collective encounters.

The arts-informed approach to narrative inquiry necessarily draws on and requires a hermeneutic phenomenological sensibility. This means cultivating a heightened receptivity and responsiveness to the felt qualities of lived experience in all participants, myself included, throughout the research. This is in keeping with the assumption of a dynamic and unfolding interrelatedness (Bohm, 2003; Sumsion, 1997) as at the heart of being and knowing. As discussed in the following sections, while no existent Western knowledge paradigm is founded on such a view, constructivism, and in particular, an arts-informed version thereof, is the one that is most compatible.

**In Between Research Paradigms**

That a paradigm that explores “the in between” (Massumi 2002a, pp. 14-16, p. 70) and departs from an assumption of the radical inseparability of subject and object, ontologically and epistemologically, has yet to emerge (Sumsion, 1997, p. 84) is in keeping with the foundational dichotomies that structure Western knowledge. These assumptions continue despite the insistence of new constructivist and post-structuralist paradigms on the socially-constructed nature of knowledge (Barker, 1999, 2008;
Foucault, 1994; Hall, 1997) and the radical unknowability (Barnett, 2000) of the world. I say this because while both constructivism and post-structuralism frame their approaches to research in accordance with an ethics of care (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Belenky & Stanton, 2000), striving towards connecting with research participants and the deployment of methodologies and representations that seek mutual understanding and growth, neither approach departs from the assumption that being is relational in nature. Nor is knowing viewed as engendered in and through the forging of relationships.

**Tensions in Between Paradigms**

The assumption of a gap between subject and object that frames all contemporary qualitative paradigms has been a major source of tension in my journey as a researcher. For while I think that experience is, in part, socially constructed and experienced subjectively, I also feel that there is more to it than that. This more-to-ness arises from a fundamental bodily knowing that everything is connected; not in a given unchanging way, but in a dynamically unfolding one. I cannot remember not feeling this way, only being surprised that many people do not.

Thus, when I encountered the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Massumi’s (2002a) explication of it, it made immediate sense: that there is a dynamic creative force always present in the world as virtual potential, and that this creative potential is actualised in the emergence of reciprocal relations between people. It made sense that this emergence derives from a sensing of new possibilities for connection in the unfolding of relations. And that emergence must be striven for against the propensities to succumb to attenuated meanings that bring you to a stand still and make you think that what you see in front of you is as all there is to it. This made better sense when I read Bohm’s (2003) account of the implicate order, in which our apparently existent realities are only temporarily stable patterns unfolding from fluid streams of enfolded potentialities.
Universal Inter-relatedness and its Implications for Being and Knowing

Sumson (1997) writes of the difficulties she encountered in locating her research within existing qualitative paradigms. These stemmed from a similar supposition to my own; that while there is not some given transcendental reality, there is a complex interconnected universe that emerges through the interplays of dynamic energies (Sumson, 1997, p. 84). Like Sumson (1997), I see these interconnections as more comprehensible through visceral and sensory metaphors like rhythm, resonance, tension, and harmony than through striated analytic categories. This is in tune with a view of knowing as the search for more meaningful and harmonious connections (Bruner, 1986; Noddings, 1984), rather than the acquisition of pre-given facts. Sumson (1997, p. 84) uses the notions of “participatory epistemology” (Tamas, 1991) and participatory consciousness to refer to meanings of this kind. Such meanings are not seen as pure social constructions, but rather derive from fluid interactions between revealed connections and constructed meanings along “a continuum”.

Finding a Constructivism with Compatible Assumptions

As previously stated, no existent qualitative paradigm in the Western tradition sets this in-between ground of relation at the centre of being or a “participatory consciousness” at the centre of knowing (Sumson, 1997, p. 87). That said, constructivism is the paradigm that is most compatible with these beliefs, as it sees meaning as created by individuals in dialogic interaction with each other and their social contexts. Furthermore, this paradigm values the cultivation of relations grounded in an ethics of care (Christians, 2005). While these meanings are not viewed by most constructivists as deriving from direct embodied perceptions of relation, Eisner’s arts-informed constructivism (1998), and arts-informed approaches to research (Cole & Knowles, 2007) emphasise the multi-sensory and embodied nature of knowing and its importance in enabling us to feel the subtleties of form. Arts-informed approaches also
highlight the importance of aesthetic qualities to the engendering of new connections and relations.

As these assumptions are in keeping with the view of universal interrelatedness that underpins this thesis, and its intent of cultivating a multi-sensory receptivity toward phenomena, the research takes an arts-informed approach to constructivism (Eisner, 1998). This is in tune with the view that composed meanings are engendered and made sense of holistically – through affective, imaginative and cognitive engagement and the opening up of all of the senses.

It also coheres with the intentions of this research and the questions that guide it. Emerging from a crisis in my own professional journey, the research uses two case studies of exceptional teacher educators to explore what an empowering pedagogy feels like, alongside what engenders and sustains a commitment to it. It asks pre-service teachers about their experiences of this pedagogy and explores what it means for them in the context of their own journeys into the profession. The guiding questions are as follows:

1. What do the journeys of teachers reveal about how a commitment to an empowering pedagogy is engendered and sustained?

2. What does an empowering pedagogy feel like?

3. What makes such feelings possible?

**Interpretative Methodologies**

In the case studies that comprise this investigation, I have drawn on a number of interpretative methodologies on the basis of what best fits the nature of the phenomena under investigation (Stake, 2005). While an array of possible methods were brought to each encounter, what ultimately transpired was determined by a mixture of what felt right for those involved, what worked within the constraints of each specific context,
and what emerged as our relationships evolved. That said, what is common to all of the methodologies employed is a concern with illuminating the affective and aesthetic qualities of experience, and in this sense all approaches were inherently arts informed. In asking for the stories of their journeys from the participating teacher educators, and in hearing participating pre-service teachers’ stories of their journeys into the profession and through their practicum experiences, I adopted an arts-informed approach (Cole & Knowles, 2007) to narrative inquiry. This approach also informs my own story.

In my ‘descriptions’ of Robyn and Paul’s pedagogy and the presence they created in and through their engagements with the subject and their students, I combined a hermeneutic dialectic approach (van Manen, 1997) with detailed ethnographic description. So as to depict these encounters in ways that expressed their felt qualities, I implicitly turned to literary and poetic forms of writing, and, in this sense, this approach is similarly arts-informed. While I have separated these interpretative approaches out for the sake of clarity, in reality, in both my experience and participants’ re/tellings of theirs, the boundaries between these approaches were significantly more blurred.

In keeping with Eisner’s (1998) advice to employ a framework that makes identification of the significant efficient, I drew on a pedagogic model (DET NSW, 2003) designed to enable the identification of elements of quality pedagogy in the real time of a class. In the following sections, the methodologies that informed the conduct of the research, its interpretation and representation, are explored in depth so as to engender a sense of how, where and why they fit into the research process.

**Arts-Informed Research**

Cole and Knowles (2007, p. 59) describe arts-informed inquiry as “a mode and form of qualitative research that is influenced by but not based in the arts”. In as much as I have combined more conventional qualitative methodologies in my case studies with
arts-informed representations, the research may be described as arts informed, rather than unequivocally based in the arts. Yet, in as much as I strove for aesthetic resonance throughout the research process – in my encounters with participants, in my descriptions and interpretations thereof, and in the creation and re-creation of the stories that emerged – this is where the distinction between arts based and arts-informed research becomes difficult to navigate. I do not see this as a crucial issue but, nonetheless, want to highlight the limits of the distinction.

For Finley (2003, p. 290), the act of saying “I am doing art” and meaning “I am doing research” and vice versa is an act of political emancipation. In my case, it has equally been both a personal and professional one. When, at the beginning of this chapter, I described my turning to new creative forms of research as a kind of sluicing, I did not say that while this was experienced as empowering, it was not without its tensions. These tensions had nothing to do with a lack of enjoyment in art making, or a lack of feeling that everything in life from earthworm wriggle to lichen squiggle is immanently artful. Rather these tensions had, in large part, to do with the bodily impacts of five years of teaching prescribed academic English courses in untenably short five-week cycles, and a succumbing to the habituations of relentless timetables and predictable rhythms.

These effects manifested in my body in a drawing class in late 2005, in which I found myself struggling to overcome a rigidity that had leached into marrow. Shaking my arm in the hope of a loosening, I remarked to the tutor glancing hesitantly from the back, “My looking has gone all square”. She laughed, but I could see the sad, sad egg in a nest of flotsam and feel its lack of depth and resonance. A poor bald misshapen oval cast adrift in a smudge of woebegone tinder. Sadder still was this sudden feeling of having being seized, like a wire tensed between hand and eye, a clamping of seeing muscle. Up until that moment, I had not fully realised the power of everyday accretion or its tenacious clinging. Part of my progression through this research journey has been the recovery of those more immediate and visceral ways of seeing and knowing that had become inadvertently atrophied.
This arts-informed approach has thus become a means for me to reconnect with my own creativity and to draw attention to the importance of cultivating and sustaining a passionate embodied connection to people and phenomena in the world (Beattie, 2009; Finley, 2005, p. 686). It is also a means for more viscerally illuminating the challenges, difficulties and contradictions that beset both my own and participants’ endeavours to do so. Eisner (1998) points out that what makes a representational form acceptable within the research community is as much a political issue as an epistemological one. For this reason, the form of representation of this research is seen as educational in itself.

Phenomenological and Hermeneutic Dialectic Approaches

As befits the assumption of universal interrelatedness that guides the research, I subscribe to an in between position in relation to traditional and contemporary phenomenological methodologies. Unlike traditional phenomenological research, I do not take a transcendental view of being, or see living phenomena as possessing unchanging essences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 1997). Nor do I subscribe completely to the subjective view that informs contemporary hermeneutic approaches (Crotty, 1996, p. 3). Instead, I see the perception and sensing of the qualities of living, moving phenomena as indicative of the quality of the relation that emerges between things.

That this sensing might not be captured through exactly the same imagery, metaphors or concepts by all participants is not seen as problematic, but rather in keeping with the idea of meaning being composed. Thus, what I took to be significant in entering into and reflecting on inter-personal and collective encounters were experiences of resonance. I drew on understandings of resonance as emerging in both body and voice, coming through in bodily mirrorings (Stern, 1985) as much as in stated expressions of connection. These were taken to be similarly evident in confluences of tone, pitch and word, and in encounters where metaphors generated by one participant were drawn on, extended or refined by another, in a mirroring, amplifying or softening cadence.
This position is in keeping with hermeneutic phenomenological research which sees all living human relations as emerging in “the practical language of the body” (van Manen, 1997, p. 122), as much as, if not more than in words. The sensing of the qualities that emerge depends on empathic and multi-sensory ways of knowing and being; what Eisner refers to as the ability to feel “the subtleties of the social world”. Like van Manen (1997, p. xvii) and Eisner (1998, p. 68), I found such ways of knowing and the meanings composed difficult to articulate in the language of everyday thought and action, the language of the already known.

Thus, in my descriptions and interpretations of the participating teachers’ pedagogies, and of the focus group encounters, I found myself punctuating my sentences to create a rhythm to match that of the unfolding encounter, and writing in the present tense to create a sense of immediacy and movement. I turned to vernacular language to make the visceral speak, and to poetic forms so that the inaudible might be heard. Participating pre-service teachers and teacher educators similarly drew on pathic and vernacular forms, and frequently inflected their stories with rhythm and humour as a means of more fully bringing them to life. While these aesthetic forms have since been refined and recreated, they emerged originally as a natural means for illuminating the felt qualities of experience in a commensurate form (Eisner, 1991, cited in Schwandt, 1994).

**Qualities and Criteria**

Like Eisner (1998, p. 34), I see the use of pre-specified criteria as potentially blunting the finely honed sensibilities of “perceptive educational critics”. At the same time, in keeping with his advice to employ a framework that enables the perception of the significant efficient, I drew on the DET pedagogic model (DET NSW, 2003). My purpose in doing so was twofold: to identify any elements of quality pedagogy specified in the model as they emerged in the real time of class, and to explore any noticeable connections between the generation of such elements and the affective qualities experienced in particular pedagogic encounters. This also made it possible to
appraise the usefulness of the model itself, in terms of what it made visible and what it missed, and the implications of the latter for understandings of quality pedagogy. As explained in the literature review, while my research questions centre around the notion of an empowering pedagogy, existing evidence based frameworks (DET NSW, 2003, p. 3) draw upon the more impersonal and ostensibly pragmatic notion of quality.

**Narrative Inquiry**

“Narrative inquiry is an experience of the experience. It is people in relation studying with people in relation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189).

The decision to take a narrative inquiry approach to the conduct of the case studies sprung from a number of sources. As explained in the second chapter, my experience of research and its undertaking is best captured by the journey metaphor (Brew, 2001), wherein research is experienced as part of a personal journey that is empowering. This idea of research as a journey of empowerment resonates with the aims of a narrative approach. Narrative inquiry is based on the sharing and reconstruction of participants’ stories of experience. It begins from the assumption that people’s professional and personal lives are deeply intertwined. Thus, professional development is seen as a holistic endeavour that involves gaining deeper insights into our stories of experience and the assumptions that drive them. This is viewed as enhanced by the empathetic sharing of experiences, in a climate of trust, with the aim of enabling participants to reconstruct empowering stories of experience. Such an approach fits with the ethics of care and the assumption of universal interrelatedness that informs this thesis. It offers opportunities for doing research that can enhance all participants’ personal and professional development and their sense of inter-relatedness. For these reasons, a narrative approach was adopted.

As the preceding discussion makes clear, for narrative inquirers, the story is the foundational element of human experience. Like Clandinin and Connelly (1990, p. 63), though, I see people as always “walking in the midst of stories”, with no definite
beginning or certain path. This view of always being in the middle of stories informed the conduct of the research throughout the entire process. In encounters with the participating pre-service teachers in focus groups, and with teacher educators in interviews, our conversations began “in the middle”. While they often departed from a guiding question, their course generally spiralled; circling back and forth, round and about from story to story to question, and back to story, giving rise to, over time, what Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 63) call “a nested set of stories”. In the ongoing sharing of experiences around the research questions, participants’ stories and their significance gradually emerged. These were often stories of teaching and learning, of particular encounters and events that both meant something for and told something of the individual. These then became not just a jumping off point for other stories, but points of contact through them. While for Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the traces of these nested stories become woven into the body of our work, in my experience, through our living and writing of them, these stories become woven into our bodies as well. If they did not, it is unlikely that they could be written with any connective force.

As the research unfolded, I interpreted and recreated these stories in ways that both illuminated our experiences and related them to “the bigger stories” of the social, personal, and temporal contexts within which and through which they moved. Sharing these storied versions with participants and inviting their input provided opportunities for the deepening of understandings, as well as for the generation of new connections and increasing participation (Appendix D, E, G, L, & M). It is hoped that they equally helped participants to re-imagine “their professional lives” and to steer away from measures grounded in “initiative, control, and urgent problem solving” towards “stories to live by; negotiation, improvisation, imagination, and possibility” (Clandinin & Connolly, 1998, p. 162).
Alternatives to traditional validity: community consensus, authenticity, trustworthiness, voice and reflexivity

Community consensus

Valid knowledge within the constructivist paradigm arises out of interpretative consensus among the participants involved (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In order to ensure a consensual representation, throughout the research process, copies of the transcripts and the themes that emerged from our discussions as well as the initial storying of our experiences were sent to those involved for further comment and reflection. I similarly sent all participants each retelling, and invited any further inclusions, subtractions or revisions they would like to make. Participants’ responses are included in the appendices (Appendix D, E, G, L, & M).

Authenticity

Authenticity, resistance and ethical relationship are three criteria viewed as relevant to the evaluation of constructivist phenomenological research. Authenticity is composed of ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical dimensions (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207) as well as fairness. Educative and ontological authenticity are reflected in the extent to which the research raises the level of awareness of both the participants involved and those who come into contact with it. Catalytic and tactical authenticity become evident through the extent to which the research incites participants to action and, when appropriate, involves the researcher in training them for relevant forms of action. Fairness emerges through the balanced and respectful inclusion of all participants’ voices (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207).

So as to meet the dimensions of authenticity appropriate to my research – fairness, educative, ontological and catalytic authenticity – I created storyings in which all
participants spoke in their own voices in dialogue with each other. While these voices were not verbatim representations, but rather creatively informed renditions of participants’ stories and the qualities that informed them, I strove in these texts to convey a sense of the person through their voice, through being sensitive to the nuances of each person’s ways of speaking and the metaphors that informed and framed their tellings. In sharing each retelling and inviting contributions from participants, ontological and catalytic authenticity were addressed. Ontological and catalytic authenticity are also evident in participants’ experience of the research (Appendix D, E, G, L, & M).

Resistance and Resonance

The criteria of resistance is reflected in the extent to which the writing is “deliberately transgressive” (Richardson, 1997, cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 208). By composing experimental texts such as poems and in creatively rendering our stories, this work problematises traditional notions of truth and validity. At the same time, these creative forms and the restorying of them helped to engender and renew relationships between the research participants. In doing so, they realise another form of transgression (Richardson, 2005). Similarly, through my nebulous yearning and searching for forms that gave voice to these stories of experience, I was able to realize and reaffirm a creative relationship to my work – one for which I had been unconsciously starving.

Ultimately, whether these representations succeed depends on the engendering of resonance in the participants involved. It also depends on the responses of the wider audience of practitioners, researchers, parents and tertiary educators to whom the research might speak. As both the pre-service teachers and teacher educators involved expressed feelings of resonance with the representations created, I see the research as meeting the criteria of not only transgression but equally of resonance, at least among the immediate community of participants.
While Richardson (2005) does not herself propose resonance as an explicit and complimentary criteria to transgression, in her recasting of the process of validation as crystallization rather than triangulation, resonance comes through as integral to the success of transgressive texts. Her account speaks of the transgressive text as a multiple layering of meanings which enables both those “chunks of energy/elements of truth, feeling, connection” and the “processes of research that flow” (cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 208) to come through, as well as the living human currents or resonances that are engendered in real time to become palpable. The transgressive text thus emerges as a rhythmic composition wherein the qualities and synergies, the pulses and waves of emerging human relations, are made visceral. It is this yearning viscerality and the resonance it engenders that brings it to life.

**Ethics**

For Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 209), the creation of ethical relationships among participants is illuminated through the treatment of standpoint and voice, the presence of critical reflexivity, the extent of reciprocity that emerges between participants in the course of the research, and the extent to which the research text embodies “a profound regard” for the ways in which research can “contribute to human flourishing”.

A central concern of my research has been to cultivate relationships with participants throughout the research process that are in keeping with an ethics of care (Belenky & Stanton, 2000; Christians, 2005). I sought to honour people’s standpoints and voices through inviting them to share their experiences of not only the teacher educator’s pedagogy, but their own journeys into the profession. In doing so, I did not seek to control or determine the course of our discussions but stood back to allow their insights to emerge in the stream of conversation. A similar approach informed my conversations with the participating teacher educators. In seeking participants’ experience of the research process itself and my presence as researcher, I simultaneously endeavoured to honour their perspectives and add a further window into the extent of reciprocity that emerged in the process.
Excerpts from conversations with the participating pre-service teachers in the first case study in response to their experience of the research process, the group, and myself are included in appendix D. These stand alongside the emails between us as indicators of the relationships that were forged among all members of the group and their experience of the research. In the second case study, the research took a different course, resulting in fewer meetings with participating pre-service teachers. As in the first case study, I invited participants in these meetings to share their experiences and stood back from the discussions.

In order to encourage further participation, reciprocity and equality in our relationships, as well as to ensure a fair treatment of standpoint and voice, I sent all participants in both case studies my initial storyings and then each subsequent restorying of their experiences and invited their comments and critiques (Appendix D, E, G, L, & M). I similarly sent the participating teacher educators successive versions of these stories and invited their comments and further contributions. Through the ongoing sharing and invitation to contribute further insights and the questions these provoked, each retelling was not only further enriched, but the process helped to ensure the trustworthiness and integrity of the final representations.

That said, neither voice, reflexivity, nor postmodern representations themselves are unproblematic. An array of issues surrounds these terms and the uses to which they are put. These issues bring to the fore the complexities and ambivalences that surround researcher and participant relations to each other, the research, and representations thereof. For Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 209), one of the chief reasons that voice is such a “multi-layered problem” is because it has different meanings for different researchers. Hertz (1997, pp. xi-xii) sees voice as a site of struggle which involves the author in deciding how to present themselves, whilst at the same time representing the accounts of other participants and their versions of self.

For Kamler (1991), the notion of voice carries the idea that our voices are expressions of our experiences, rather than being situated creations that emerge in the flow of interaction, whilst simultaneously bearing traces of our personal encounters with the social. For these reasons, Kamler prefers the notion of story to voice. In keeping with
this distinction, in this investigation I have drawn on the notion of story in reference to both my own and participants’ tellings of their experience. At the same time, I see the resonances that emerged and enfolded into the process of creating these tellings as indicative of something more fundamental. In those places where the rhythms and qualities felt by participants increasingly converge, where embodied experiences and insights merge, these stories bear more than the traces of our personal encounters, they express their confluences; the spontaneous forging of a domain of common feeling that cannot be quite captured in words but which manifests in the cadences among them. This is not to suggest that this domain once forged remains ever present, but rather that it is always, in some sense, potentially available.

**Reflexivity**

Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe reflexivity as the way in which the self as inquirer and respondent is consciously experienced and the showing of this process in research. One of the primary issues surrounding reflexivity relates to the difficulty of locating the self within the text, because, as Richardson (2005) points out, notwithstanding best intentions, in our writing we suppress as much as reveal differing aspects of ourselves. That said, as Geertz (1988, cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210) has shown, “the authorial voice is rarely genuinely absent or even hidden”, coming through in the qualities that infuse and move the writing; in the very qualities that constitute the experience of its writtenness (Brodkey, 1996), in the aforementioned cadences and rhythms of the work. How these speak for and of the self and its relation to the research and all participants involved is a different question.

While Guba and Lincoln speak of this showing in terms which denote the researcher’s conscious effort to bring in this experience, like Richardson (2005), I see this process as revelatory as much as demonstrable. This is because writing is as much a reiterative process of discovery as it is a deliberate working and reworking of the research story, a discovery of not only the subject, but equally the self. Thus, the aforementioned qualities of the writing and its writtenness necessarily exceed the
reflexive capacity of the researcher to locate herself at any given time, presuming that she could do so. Each working and reworking, every retelling is temporally unique, informed by the momentary interrelation between the researcher, her work, and the self or selves that are both consciously and unconsciously present and/or immanent at any particular moment. These forces and the interrelations created among them simultaneously feed the text and its movement, whilst being at the same time dispersed and interwoven into its body.

In saying this, I see and have experienced these weavings and relations as more than cognitions of the rationally knowable kind. They have been experienced as embodied, affective, imaginative yearnings towards metaphors and connections, ideas and understandings whose emergence is in many senses always arriving. The writing of this research has been experienced as a creating that involves a merging and emerging of selves and work. This process entails a spiralling and co-mingling of writing as expression; the creation of something not yet known, whilst through this expression a spontaneous knowing erupts, a knowing akin to reflexivity in action. In the spiralling back and forth from expression to this knowing, another kind of reflexivity comes to the fore, a reflexivity that sees the relations instantiated between the self and the work as telling a number of possible stories. These stories include but are not reducible to either my researcher self or any other selves, and their contingent and never actually static socially situated locations.

Reinharz (1997, p. 5) sees the many selves that we bring to the research process as falling into three over-arching categories: the research based self, the brought self, and the situationally created self. For Reinharz, being reflexive means that each of these selves needs to be interrogated in terms of the ways in which they shape the research and its representations, with a view to revealing the binary assumptions, contradictions and ambivalences at work in both our lives and our work. We need to interrogate not only how these binaries and contradictions inform the identities we forge in the undertaking of the research and through our writing but equally in our encounters with participants, in terms of “who we become to them, in the process of becoming to ourselves” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210).
Whilst in agreement with Reinharz in spirit, I see this interrogative process as imbued with a will towards reflexivity that is founded on the assumption that it is possible to explicitly show our selves in these ways. I see this notion as problematic for the reasons outlined previously: that the selves that we bring and create are not definitely separable and enter into our work in ways that are not reducible to our socially contingent positionings. The supposition that we can reveal the workings of our own subjectivities is both predicated upon and constitutive of a closure. It asks that we separate ourselves out of the fluidity and specificity of the living moment of writing ourselves in and take the self that has been written as equal to the self in writing. At the same time, in line with the assumption of the dichotomy that underpins it, it assumes that reflexivity is best cultivated and revealed individually.

In the context of narrative inquiry, the movement of stories back and forth between researcher and participants, and the revealing and enfoldling of new insights and responses, tensions and resonances with each new telling, opens up opportunities for a different kind of reflexivity which D’Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez (2007, p. 79) identify as relational. Emanating from the field of social work, relational reflexivity is envisaged as pertaining to those encounters between practitioners and clients, wherein “the knowledge constructed by practitioners is shared with clients and discussed openly between them”. In the field of qualitative research, then, reflexivity can be described as becoming relational when the knowledge that we construct about participants and their experiences is shared and discussed openly with them.

Through situating the research in the context of my own professional journey, in exhuming the personal experiences and values that I have consciously experienced as formative – experiences played out in an array of contexts, shot through with differing possibilities and constraints – I have endeavoured to address conventional understandings of reflexivity, whilst being conscious of their limitations. Similarly, in asking for participants’ experience of the research process and myself as researcher and folding these into the narratives, I have endeavoured to more fully reveal ambivalences in the different selves and the ways they shape the research process, as well as to reveal and to strengthen the relational reflexivity of the work.
**Case Studies**

According to Stake (2005, p. 443), a case study is not a methodology, but a decision about what will be studied. While the case selection and guiding questions are usually driven by the researcher’s interests, the methods deployed need to be able to transform complex meanings into a succinct form. They also need to provide sufficiently rich narrative so as to enable readers to enter vicariously into the case and come to their own conclusions. This means that thick descriptions of the specificities of the case and its “issues, contexts, and interpretations” (Stake, 2005, p. 450) need to be developed and refined. So as to gather the material to create her descriptions, the case study researcher needs to become a kind of bricoleur; gathering her data through a variety of means, from multiple sources, on the basis of both what best fits her questions and what comes to hand (Stake, 2005).

As case study research depends on the continuous gathering and interpretation of data (Stake, 2005, p. 450), the researcher needs to spend a considerable amount of time on site so that she can enter into intimate contact with the workings of the case, which she is continuously describing, reflecting upon and revising. It is this persistent attention to detail that is fundamental to enhancing the reader’s understanding of the case. As explained in the subsequent sections, this iterative process involved not only the ongoing refinement of my own understandings through the continual gathering and interpretation of data from multiple sources, but also its refinement in response to feedback from participants. This seeking of convergence of descriptions and interpretations from multiple sources is central to engendering credibility. While Stake uses the notion of triangulation to encapsulate the process of seeking interpretative convergence, the notion of crystallization (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) is preferred in this study. This is because the idea of the crystal suggests that our interpretations of the world do not neatly intersect in a balanced three-sided figure, being complex, dynamic, and non-linear.
Case Selection

My interest in exploring the pedagogy of outstanding tertiary educators grew out of my own professional journey, as presented in a previous chapter. The decision to undertake case studies of outstanding teacher educators at the University of Sydney was fortuitous. Having transferred from the University of Tasmania to the University of Sydney one year into my research degree, I had the opportunity to embed my interest in the role of affect in significant learning experiences within a faculty investigation into quality pedagogy. The faculty inquiry involved a number of senior teacher educators in co-explorations of pedagogy, using the DET pedagogic model (DET NSW, 2003) as a guide. The intricacies of this model and its strengths and limitations were discussed in the previous chapter, as was my decision to use it as a reference point in my descriptions and interpretations of the participating teacher educators’ classes. In keeping with the questions that guided this study, my focus was the qualities experienced in pedagogic encounters in the real time of class and their enabling conditions. The two teacher educators who participated in the case studies, Robyn and Paul, chose not to use a pseudonym. Their real names have been kept in accordance with their wishes. All participating pre-service teachers in the Masters of Teaching focus groups elected their own pseudonyms. All pre-service teachers from the second case study were provided with pseudonyms by myself.

Ethics Approval

Because my research came under the umbrella of an existing project, I was not required to seek a separate ethics approval. Instead, ethics modification was sought and obtained (Appendix A). As the second case study teacher educator, Paul, was not a member of the original project, a further modification was later sought and obtained (Appendix B).
Participant Selection

Participating Teacher Educators

The participating teachers in the two cases studies were selected on the basis of faculty recommendations, consistently outstanding student evaluations, and the receipt of numerous teaching excellence awards. In an initial meeting with the acting Dean of the faculty in November 2007, Robyn and Paul were identified as teachers whom students rated most highly and whose classes they consistently enjoy. Robyn, the participating teacher educator in the first case study, teaches creative arts pedagogy for primary education. She has received two teaching excellence awards, and in her most recent student evaluations, she received average scores of 4.8 and above out of a total of 5 points in every area of evaluation (Appendix H). For the year four special elective course ‘Integrating the Creative Arts across the Curriculum’, Robyn achieved unprecedented scores of 5 on three areas, and received a formal letter from the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning acknowledging her outstanding evaluations and exemplary work.

Paul, the participating teacher educator in the second case study, specialises in designing learning for culturally diverse classrooms in the primary sector (Dufficy, 2005b). At the time of the study, he was teaching a number of first and second semester courses, as well as designing, teaching and co-ordinating a year three ‘Teaching English in Multi-lingual Classrooms’ elective and a special year four TESOL elective. Paul has received two teaching excellence awards. In his most recent student evaluations, he received scores of 4.8 out of 5 in almost all areas (Appendix O). While Robyn and Paul’s scores are in themselves exemplary, on their own, they offer little insight as to why they might rate so highly. Much more insight is to be gleaned from the abundance of students’ comments that accompany these evaluations. (Examples are provided in Appendix H & O). What stands out in these comments, in relation to both the teachers and their courses, is students’ experience of positive affect; whether in the expression of great enjoyment in the classes themselves, or in the

17 The Robyn of this case study was not my supervisor who shares the same name.
expression of great affection for and trust in the respective teacher. As the focus of this investigation is on the affective dimensions of pedagogy and their importance to students’ learning experiences, it was primarily due to the very positive nature of their students’ comments that Paul and Robyn were selected for this study.

Notwithstanding the issues that scholars (Griffin, 2004; Remedios & Lieberman, 2008, pp. 91-95) have raised around the use of student evaluations as a guide to teaching excellence, consistently high student evaluations that are accompanied by many expressions of enthusiasm for the subject and the teacher are fundamental to the selection of candidates for a study that is concerned with the affective dimensions of quality pedagogy. They are equally fundamental to an investigation that seeks to elucidate students’ experiences in greater depth.

**Making Contact with Participating Teacher Educators**

The process of making contact with teacher educators was somewhat different in the two case studies. Robyn, who was involved in the quality teaching initiative (Anderson, Gibson, & Ewing, 2007), came to know about my research via the acting Dean. She expressed an interest in being involved and we arranged to meet up to discuss the possibilities. A preliminary meeting was held on 2nd April 2008 where we discussed the research and its purposes, how it might be best conducted, including when and where it would be best to video, providing that Robyn was amenable to this form of data gathering. I made it clear that if at any time she felt uncomfortable with the videotaping or myself in the room, she only had to advise me and I would stop or leave immediately. Robyn not only agreed to the use of video, but kindly offered the use of her camera. She also suggested that I contact the Masters of Teaching students via email before the semester started so as to begin the process of finding interested participants for the focus groups. From the beginning of the project, Robyn was generous, supportive and helpful.
In the case of Paul, who was not part of the quality teaching project, I initially contacted him via email in October 2008. In this email, I outlined the research and the reasons for his selection, as well as inviting him to meet and discuss the project further. Paul responded by email and we arranged to meet in his office. In this meeting, after I explained the research and its purposes, Paul asked me about my background and interest in this particular project. It was a question of the “who are you, where are you coming from” kind. Initially, I had the impression that Paul was somewhat wary or possibly reluctant to participate. This feeling lessened as I shared some of my story with him and the way it has shaped my research.

We then discussed what the research might involve as per the participant information sheet. I added that the actual methods depended on what worked for those involved, as research, for me, is something that unfolds between people, which is subject to all the contingencies of real life. I let him know that if he had any suggestions or recommendations that I would very much welcome his input. I also let him know that any time he felt uncomfortable or would like me to turn the camera off and/or leave the room, all he needed to do was to advise me. Paul agreed to participate in the research and to the use of video. Before the semester began, a schedule of classes for me to attend was worked out on the basis of Paul’s recommendations and what suited my time commitments. It was decided that I would come to the Wednesday morning third year elective ‘Teaching English in Multi-lingual Classrooms’ and the fourth year special TESOL course, held on Tuesday mornings. We agreed that I would not video the first classes of the semester, and that Paul would introduce me in that session and I could explain my project and invite interested participants. Like Robyn, Paul was helpful, supportive and generous from the beginning.

The cultivation of reciprocal relations is both a central concern of this investigation and my own professional journey. Such cultivation requires a willingness to invite input from participants, and to equally reflect on the extent to which my own presence as a researcher affords experiences of symmetry. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 189) state, “relationship is key to what narrative enquirers do”. In both cases, I sought to engender relational symmetry through inviting Robyn and Paul’s input from the
beginning. At the same time, I was aware of how much this symmetry is not only reflected in words but also through my own embodied presence. From the outset, I sought to be mindfully attentive to creating a non-intrusive presence and to be considerate of Robyn and Paul’s time. This is not to say that this is not part of my normal striving, but rather that I consciously endeavoured to heighten this awareness in body as much as in words.

That said, in my initial discussions with Robyn and Paul, I was conscious of the complexities involved in cultivating symmetry, in as much as I was conscious of being a novice researcher myself, involved in research with people who were much more experienced, and this made me feel somewhat nervous. This was due to my own sense of myself as learning how to do research whilst being in the process of conducting it, and the persistent niggling doubt as to whether I was doing it the “right way”. Despite knowing that there is no right way as such, still I could not help feeling that I might be doing it better. This wondering is a significant dimension of becoming a researcher for me, and integral to my experience of the research process itself. It is something I feel obliged to share with participants, not in a tell me how to do it way, but by way of setting the process as an exploration of experience, for myself as much as for them. Ironically, it is not until the process is almost complete that my understandings of what “better” might look and feel like, as well as how it might be encouraged, emerge.

### Research Methods

In keeping with the nature of case study research, a variety of research methods informed the exploration in its phases of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. Videotaping was a primary method of data gathering in both case studies. It was deemed the most suitable method for an experiential study of pedagogy, as it allows for iterative explorations of the teacher’s pedagogy. It also enables the embodied presence of the teacher and the class – their interactions, rhythms and expressions and the nuances they are comprised of, as well as the pedagogy that together these help to create – to become visible and to be carefully reviewed. The videotaping of classes
was accompanied by ethnographic descriptions of the pedagogy in terms of its felt qualities, as well as its manifest dimensions. Classes were described in the moment, at the end of the class, and further detail was subsequently added as the video-tapes were viewed and reviewed.

Focus groups were used to garner participating pre-service teachers’ experiences of Robyn and Paul and their pedagogy. Focus sessions were held with participating pre-service teachers in both case studies. In the first case study, these occurred over a number of months. In the second, they took place over a period of weeks. A number of participants in the first case study also emailed their reflections on a regular basis. In addition, informal interviews were held with the two teacher educators on a number of occasions during the data gathering, interpretation, and representation phases.

While in my initial proposal, I had envisaged the investigation as a co-inquiry involving participants’ contributions throughout all phases of the process, this proved difficult to achieve. Constraints of finding suitable times to meet and the already demanding study, work and family commitments that the pre-service teachers faced reduced the amount of time that they could happily afford to give. A further factor that needs to be acknowledged was my own novice status as a researcher, and the fact that I was very much conscious of not wanting to impinge on participants’ time by continually asking for more. That said, in the first case study, to the very significant extent that the focus groups became a forum for all participants to share their experiences and reflections on Robyn’s pedagogy, and their own personal and professional stories and experiences of practicum, all those involved felt that a cooperative and reciprocal space had been created (Appendix D).

In the second case study, the process unfolded somewhat differently, with pre-service teachers volunteering to participate in focus groups much later in the process. Aside from the timing, a further issue pertained to the smaller number of participants involved and their already established relationships with each other. That said, as with the first case study, to the extent that participants experienced a reciprocal and cooperative sharing of experiences and insights within their discussions, a genuine sense of collaborative inquiry was experienced (Appendix M).
Receptive Participation Not Participant Observation

In traditional research terminology, the use of video recordings as a means for making detailed ethnographic and phenomenological descriptions is seen as a kind of delayed or mediated participant observation. However, I did not enter into the room in the spirit of an objective observer with prescriptive criteria to tick, but rather as an informed and receptive participant and peripheral member of the group (Adler & Adler, 1987, in Angrosino, 2005, p. 733). My intent was not to suppress my own affective responses to the unfolding moment but rather to become more mindfully attentive to them and their genesis, alongside the extent to which they seemed to be mirrored in the responses of other persons in the class. In saying this, I consciously strove to embody a tactful presence in all classes, in order to enhance the pedagogy unfolding in the room.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were selected in preference to individual interviews with participating pre-service teachers. This was on the basis that the latter “strip away the critical interactional dynamics” which are integral to the ongoing creation of social practice and collective meaning making (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 902). At the same time, focus groups offer those involved a forum for personal and professional reflection and growth, which is in keeping with the intent of narrative inquiry.

While questions were prepared each week (Appendix C) and emailed to participants for their reflection prior to discussion, I treated them as a catalyst to initiate discussion and invite further insights, rather than a script to be followed. This was in keeping with wanting to engender a genuine dialogic space where participants could reflect on and respond to their own and each other’s experiences and insights as they arose. This required me to let go of control over the flow of discussion whilst listening attentively for moments where responsive questions on my part might generate further insights.
Taking this approach enabled the emergence of questions that were shaped around participants’ experiences, a feature which, in turn, enabled the discussions to flow.

The Recruitment of Focus Groups: Case Study One

In both case studies, participants in the focus groups were recruited on a strictly voluntary basis. This was to ensure the recruitment of participants with whose experience the research focus resonated. This was seen as increasing the likelihood of such persons being willing to explore their experiences in depth and generate further insights. A general email was sent to pre-service teachers enrolled in the Masters of Teaching primary strand prior to the commencement of semester two 2008. This was in order to garner and get to know interested participants before the semester began, in keeping with the focus on relationships that is a cornerstone of the narrative inquiry approach. The email briefly outlined the research and invited responses from interested participants. Four interested persons – Clara, Antony, Sasha and Mandy – responded promptly to this email (Appendix E). A meeting was arranged in a campus coffee shop to discuss the research before the semester started. At this meeting, I learned not only that everyone had prior experiences of teaching, but that it was these experiences that had sparked their interest in exploring the affective dimensions of learning. In that meeting, I invited questions and explained the intent of the research as best as I could, sharing my questions as they stood at the time, and my understanding of affect as distinct from emotion. I explained that I saw research as a journey, and that I did not have any answers in mind only starting points for exploration, which I would be happy to revise and rethink in response to insights and suggestions from them (MTeach, Meeting One notes, Appendix C).

At this first meeting we agreed to meet on a weekly basis over the coming four weeks to share our experiences of Robyn’s class. I asked participants’ permission to record our sessions on audiotape, to which everyone agreed. A classroom was arranged for our weekly meetings, as while the nearby coffee house with its comfy chairs and inviting smells was more informal, the noise and competition for seating made it a less
than suitable venue. Information sheets were provided and consent forms were signed. I was careful to stress that participants had the freedom to withdraw at any time.

Before the second week of the sessions, Mandy withdrew from the group due to time pressures. At the same time, another Masters of Teaching candidate, Emma, joined the group for the second session. A total of seven focus sessions were held with Clara, Antony, Emma and Sasha. Four sessions took place over the four weeks of their classes with Robyn. Two more sessions were held in the week following on from their practicum experiences, and a further follow-up session was held in March 2009. Most sessions ran for between 40-50 minutes, aside from the session following the practicum, which ran for over 2 hours.

The Recruitment of Focus Groups: Case Study Two

In keeping with the different nature of Paul and Robyn’s courses and the way the research unfolded in each case, the recruitment of participants differed in the case of Paul. After my success in recruiting participants via email in the first case study, I asked Paul whether it might be helpful to recruit students undertaking his courses in the same way. He suggested that it might be less formal and more personal to recruit in person, given that his classes were much smaller elective groups. Thus, in the first class of the first semester 2009, Paul introduced me to his fourth and third year elective classes respectively. I briefly explained the research and what it would involve before asking if anyone would like to participate. In giving this explanation, I made it clear that participation was voluntary and that people were free to withdraw at any time. Participant information sheets along with my email and contact details were provided to all students in these courses. I also advised the class that beginning the following week, I would be video-recording with Paul’s permission, and added that should anyone feel uncomfortable at any time to please let me know. In week four, three students from the third year class – Sean, Ben and Maggie – expressed an interest in participating in the focus groups. The following day, two students from the fourth year group, Jen and Lucy, volunteered. Unlike the participants in the first case study,
the participants in each of these groups were not only classmates, but had already established friendships.

Although I had originally planned to conduct focus groups at the end of each class and gather participants’ immediate and ongoing reflections, due to the lack of initial response, I was unable to follow this plan. Instead, three focus group sessions were held in weeks 4 and 6. The first session was held in week 4, with two students from the fourth year special elective course; Jen and Lucy. The second session was held with three students from the third year group – Sean, Ben and Maggie – in the same week. A further follow-up session was held with Sean and Maggie in week 6. Each discussion was approximately 40 minutes in length. With the participants’ permission, the discussions were recorded on an audiotape then transcribed. In the first meeting of both groups, the purpose of the research was explained, information sheets were provided, and ethics consent forms were signed.

In this case study, the timing of the formation of the focus groups affected the nature of the sessions as, instead of becoming a forum for ongoing exploration, they provided more distilled accounts of participants’ experiences of Paul and his classes. That said, in their telling of these experiences, the personal stories and professional experiences of participants emerged.

**Informal interviews**

Interviews with the participating teacher educators afford a space for them to articulate their perspectives on their pedagogy and its location within their own personal and professional journey. As Chase (2005, p. 660) highlights, interviewees are not imbued with the answers to the researcher’s questions, but rather are “narrators with stories to tell” of their own lives and in their own voices. Thus, while a number of interview questions were prepared in view of the research focus, each interview was envisaged and unfolded as a shared dialogue, in which through listening and responding to Robyn and Paul’s stories and their reflections upon them, new insights and
understandings emerged. Cultivating a conducive conversation space was of utmost importance to me, so I sought to listen attentively to the perspectives and experiences of the participating teacher educators and to respond mindfully to them.

While in my proposal I had planned to hold interviews with participating teachers on a regular basis, this turned out to be both unrealistic and unnecessary. In total, three interviews were conducted with Robyn and Paul. The initial interviews were arranged after I had gathered the data from all other sources. This gave me the opportunity to draw on the themes emerging from the data. The first interview with Robyn was held in her office and was recorded on an audiotape. The interview with Paul was held in an informal setting, in an upstairs common room, and was recorded on an audiotape. The questions that guided these interviews are included in Appendix F and I. Both were later transcribed.

The second interviews were held after I had sent both Robyn and Paul my first interpretations. I wanted to gather their responses to these interpretations, along with further thoughts on both pedagogy and pre-service teacher education. I also wanted to gather some secondary data on their teaching, which they kindly shared, in the form of course evaluations. The third interviews were held after I had explored the secondary data and examined the earlier interviews for places where further probing might lead to deeper insights. These interviews were much more akin to conversations and were not recorded. However, I made notes on the insights shared immediately afterwards.

Data Gathering: Methods, Rationale and Issues

Video-taping, Ethnographic and Phenomenological Description

A large amount of research data was gathered on video, as it afforded a means for exploring those difficult to articulate dimensions of classroom life that are not reducible to words. Video-recordings bring to light the embodied dimensions of pedagogy that are frequently overlooked in teaching and learning studies. They enable
the looks and gestures, movements and rhythms of teachers and students to be explored, as well as the extent of their resonance. This is particularly important to exploring the felt dimensions of pedagogy and its enabling conditions. As such, it befits the research focus and enables more nuanced analysis in relation to the guiding questions.

It needs to be acknowledged that video, like photography and other visual media, enables us to see and tell particular stories about what is captured in real time, but it does not enable us to tell them all (Angrosini, 2005, p. 742). Throughout the recording process, I had to make decisions about not only what to focus on as the class unfolded, but equally the manner in which each encounter was framed. These instantaneous decisions resulted in the creation of particular frames, wherein certain dimensions of each encounter became prominent. In reviewing the recordings, I noticed that I frequently focused the camera on Robyn and Paul and their movements, with a considerable proportion of close-ups. While this was in keeping with the research focus, it did perhaps tend to accord this dimension too much prominence. At the same time, it reinforced what work in evolutionary biology highlights (Fridlund, 1994; McNeill, 2005): that is, the importance of human faces in the inter-generation of affective meanings. A further factor was that in order to be as unobtrusive as possible, I located myself at the back of the class, and this made it more difficult to focus on the responses of students. Nonetheless, numerous encounters between the teacher educators and the students – individual, small group and whole class – were videoed. These recordings brought both the teachers’ movements and the students’ embodied responses into view.

A different amount of video-footage was gathered in the two case studies, in accordance with the differing lengths of the courses. A total of four hours of video-recordings were made of Robyn’s classes, out of a possible eight hours. These included three one-hour lectures and a one-hour workshop. In Paul’s case, a combined total of eight two-hour classes were recorded. These recordings captured four classes from each of the elective courses. Ethnographic descriptions of Paul’s first seminar
and Robyn’s first lecture were written in real time. These detailed the way the class unfolded, the tasks and interactions that constituted it, as well as its felt rhythms.

The tasks that students engaged in were also described in terms of their pedagogic features. The embodied ways that students responded to these tasks and each other were also noted. These descriptions were simultaneously interpreted in relation to any elements of the DET pedagogic model (NSW, 2003) that became manifest. Whole class, small group, and one-on-one encounters between the students and the teacher, as well as among students, were described in terms of the kinds of talk that arose and its apparent effects on the flow of the session. The embodied responses of those involved were also noted, as was the emergence of apparent interpersonal flows. Roughly put, an interpersonal flow manifests a visible sign of resonance engendered between persons in interaction with each other. In this sense, it fits with Stern’s (1985, 2010) notion of bodily mirroring.

Thus, the ways in which Robyn and Paul engendered a presence through their individual looks, gestures, qualities of voice and movement, ways of sitting and walking, as well as of approaching a group and engaging with individual students were described in terms of their visible and palpable qualities. The responses of students in different kinds of encounter were similarly described. At the same time, the various activities that students engaged in were noted in terms of both their pedagogical features and their affective impacts on the students involved. That is, the visible and palpable signs of the extent of engagement and enjoyment, collaborative dialogue and enabling group relations within each activity were described.

The same method was used to review the videotaped classes. Ethnographic descriptions of each recorded lesson were made with the features of each encounter detailed in the terms outlined above. At the same time, I made notes after each session concerning what rose to the surface of my consciousness in relation to Robyn and Paul’s pedagogy and the students’ responses to it, and the kind of climate that together they created.
Focus groups: Conduct of Meetings and Emerging Interpretative Frames

Case Study One

In the case study of Robyn, I emailed guiding questions each week for participants to reflect on before the discussion (Appendix C). These questions were used as springboards for exploration and, in each meeting, while insights and experiences connected with these questions tumbled out in the flow of the conversation, they did so in holistic and generative ways. They emerged in response to the sharing of a personal or professional experience from another participant, or as part of a story involving a class activity.

As one of the purposes of narrative inquiry is the reconstruction of the stories that we tell ourselves and each other, as our discussions progressed, I emailed all participants copies of the transcribed data and asked for their comments on them. I asked if they noticed any recurring metaphors, or if any particular images or words sprang to mind. In the fourth and fifth meetings, participants shared and discussed the personal metaphors they saw as emerging from their contributions to the discussions.

The fifth and sixth meetings were held after participants had completed their practicum. As not everyone could make the same time, two different meetings were held. In these meetings, participants shared their experiences of practicum and their reflections on the affective dimensions of their practice. In the sharing of these experiences, the particular difficulties and complexities of each person’s pre-service journey and the confluences between them emerged. These personal metaphors proved very useful in interpreting the dominant themes that emerged from participants’ beginning journeys into the teaching profession. They enabled important underlying themes to be revealed in relation to the overarching question that informs this study: What can we learn from the journeys of teachers about how a commitment to an empowering pedagogy is engendered and sustained?
Case Study Two

In the second case study, because of the different circumstances of the group formation, more general questions were asked concerning participants’ experiences of Paul’s classes. In the case of the fourth year focus group discussion, I had the opportunity to email the guiding questions to the two participants one week in advance. As in the first case study, these questions were used as a springboard for conversation around participants’ experiences of Paul’s classes, with experiences and insights emerging in the course of the discussion without much prompting from me. As the discussion unfolded, Jen and Lucy also spoke of their experiences of pre-service teaching and the issues and complexities that surrounded it.

As the third year focus group participants, Sean, Maggie and Ben, approached me in week 5 wanting to conduct the discussion on that same day, I was unable to email the guiding questions in advance. However, this seemed to make little difference to the quality of the discussion, which generated a great deal of sharing of experiences and insights, many of which illuminated the focal questions of what an empowering pedagogy feels like and what makes it possible, without much prompting from me. This was largely due to the synergy generated between participants, which became manifest in the ways that the conversation gathered momentum as Ben’s sharing of experience generated not only further sharing from both Maggie and Dave, but a palpable eagerness to do so (Appendix K). I arranged a second meeting with Sean, Ben and Maggie to gain further insights into those aspects of their experience that emerged as significant in the first discussion. Ben was unable to attend, but I met with Sean and Maggie for a follow-up session in week 6. In this session, I sought further details of their journeys into the profession and how they thought this shaped them as teachers.

Relationships and Participant Synergy

Clandinin and Connelly (1990, p. 3, cited in Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 267) describe friendship as implying a sharing; one wherein the spheres of experience of those
involved interpenetrate. They see collaborative research as involving a kind of relationship akin to friendship. In the course of the focus group discussions with the three different focus groups, I felt to varying degrees a generation of this kind of friendship.

In the first case study, due to the participants’ keen interest in the research focus and its connection to their own professional experiences, a very strong sense of friendship of the kind described by Clandinin and Connolly (1990, p. 3, cited in Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 267) was generated within the group. As stated earlier, none of the participants had met each other before, so there was also a genuine sense of discovery in relation to each participant and their stories. These factors made the building of this friendship possible and encouraged its exploratory shape.

In the second case study, the focus groups took a less ideal course. Although I had informal chats with many of the participating pre-service teachers in Paul’s classes, there was less willingness to participate in the research. While I can only speculate on the reasons for this, in the discussions with Sean, Maggie and Ben, it emerged that many of their friends and acquaintances had dropped out of their education degrees due to a lack of time, combined with financial pressures and inflexible course arrangements (Appendix P). These time pressures may have been a contributing factor, given that the cohort were younger in age than the MTeach participants and less likely to have a reserve of financial resources. In addition, the age difference between the students in the Bachelor of Education courses and those in the Master of Teaching may have also played a part. It is possible that students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education course had less experience and were less comfortable with discussing the affective dimensions of their experiences with a relative stranger. The fact that interested participants from Paul’s classes approached me as an already formed group, consisting of persons in established friendships, suggests that this may have been the case.

Notwithstanding these differences in context and initial relationships among members of the focus groups in the case study of Paul, I did feel a sense of friendship generated between these students and myself. While my contact with Sean, Maggie and Ben was
limited and in no way realises the depth and sharing that informs their relationships with each other, there was a sense of intimacy and connection that I felt arose from listening and attending to their sharing of experiences. This is not the intimacy that comes from long-term relationships, but rather an intimacy that is lived in the moment as a consequence of being open to it (Bohm, 2003).

I felt a similar sense of deep friendship informing the discussion with Lucy and Jen, but not the same level of synergy. Although the discussion flowed, it was to a lesser extent than that between Ben, Maggie and Sean. I sensed that this might not only be related to the smaller number of participants, but also to the striking closeness that emerged in both Jen and Lucy’s experiences and their telling of it. While this closeness was enabling in the sense that it was grounded in an already established trust, wherein both Jen and Lucy felt able to speak candidly with each other in my presence, in another sense, it afforded less possibility for generative differences in perspective to emerge.

The Interpretative Process

The data gathered from the video-recordings, focus group discussions and interviews with Robyn and Paul underwent continuous interpretation. At the same time, this interpretation continued to emerge in and through its writing. For me, as for Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p. 967), writing is in and of itself a way of knowing; a means through which new insights, interpretations, and synthesis may emerge. It is equally a way of recreating that knowing so that new understandings, resonances, viewpoints and critiques may be both offered and invited.

The following paragraphs offer a detailed description of the ways in which this ongoing interpretative process unfolded in these case studies. The real time written descriptions of Robyn’s first lecture and of Paul’s year three multilingual elective and the year four special elective course were broadly interpreted in the light of the case study questions, so as to bring to the fore any notable qualities that emerged in their
pedagogic encounters and their possible genesis. The descriptions were explored for tendencies that pertained to Robyn and Paul’s words and their intonations, the kinds of tasks that they engaged students in and students’ responses. Furthermore, they were explored in terms of patterns arising in relation to Robyn and Paul’s embodied presence: their ways of moving and speaking, the particular qualities and rhythms of voice, their ways of looking and sitting, and the apparent effects of the whole on the students themselves. Manifest signs of engagement and enjoyment that were noted in students, both in the undertaking of the tasks themselves and the discussions that followed, were observed. Moreover, manifestations of elements from the DET (NSW, 2003) model, such as engagement, substantive communication, problematic knowledge, higher order thinking, and inclusivity were also noted.

Further analyses involved a deeper examination of the pedagogic features of the tasks in light of the ways they led into and built on previous tasks, fitted with the aims of the specific lesson, and supported the broader aims and assessments of the particular course. Descriptions of the ways that Paul and Robyn brought each activity into the learning space with the class were also interpreted. The video-recordings of Robyn and Paul’s classes were explored in the same way, with particular attention given to Paul and Robyn’s embodied presence and students’ embodied responses. These descriptions were then viewed and reviewed in tandem with the video-recordings as a way of deepening my understanding of the pedagogy created within the class, the qualities that infused it, and the ways that it came into being. Representative examples of encounters whose features illuminate the research questions were highlighted, and selected episodes from the video-tapes were reviewed and transcribed.

Whilst transcribing the focus group discussions, I noted the key concepts and metaphors that participants drew on in telling their experiences of Robyn and Paul and their pedagogies. I particularly noted those episodes where the discussion intensified; where the sharing of perspectives gathered momentum and the sharing of one experience gave rise to a palpable desire to add to the insights offered or to offer another view. I felt that such intensifications were signs of vital resonance and/or dissonance, and needed to be considered as such. After transcription, I reread each
transcript, and listened again to the recordings. I highlighted those contributions which related to the three case study questions and then looked across the transcripts for resonances between participants’ accounts of their experience, and any common metaphors and themes that recurred in their stories.

The patterns emerging from these analyses were then examined alongside my own interpretations in relation to the questions of what an empowering pedagogy feels like and its genesis. Resonances between my experience of the various dimensions of Robyn and Paul’s pedagogy and those of the participating pre-service teachers were highlighted. The interviews with Paul and Robyn were transcribed and interpreted in the light of the research questions. At the same time, the themes that emerged in relation to each question were explored in terms of their underlying confluences. Resonances between their reflections and those of other participants and myself were identified. These formed the basis for the initial storyings of the findings from the two case studies.

In the case of Robyn, this storying took the form of a collaging of excerpts from the focus group discussions, in which the experiences of different participants were woven together around the themes that emerged (Hodson, 2009). Interspersed among these themes were a number of issues that were experienced by participants as pivotal. In creating this storying, I sought to evoke the feelings that characterised participants’ experiences of Robyn’s pedagogy through mirroring these sensations in the rhythm of the story. I also sought to create a text that embodied the sense of movement and energy that infused the focus group discussions and to make palpable those sites of confluence and dissonance that emerged as the discussions unfolded.

In the case of Paul, I created a series of vignettes (Appendix N) to illuminate the themes and metaphors that recurred in participants’ discussions of their experience of Paul’s pedagogy and its impacts upon them (Ely, 2007, pp. 585-586). While the vignettes were crafted from the stories of each individual participant, the themes and metaphors that particular people gave voice to were not viewed as solely indicative of their experience. As Clandinin and Connolly (2007) point out, in dialogue the experiences and voices of people interpenetrate. For this reason, each participant’s
vignette was created to be read in dialogue in order to allow these confluences to emerge.

In creating each vignette, I drew together contributions from the person that unfolded over the course of the entire discussion. The contributions did not therefore necessarily follow the chronological order in which they appeared in the actual discussions. This decision was made on the grounds that in this approach, questions of thematic integrity take precedence over those of chronological accuracy. That said, the vignettes were crafted so that the unique ‘voice’ that each participant brought to the research remained intact, although I took out many of the “you knows”, “ums” and “hmms” and other features of live talk that are integral and vital dimensions of an unfolding discussion but are less significant to a written narrative form.

In keeping with the purposes of narrative inquiry, I explored each person’s stories for any recurring metaphors or themes, and any transformations that occurred within their tellings. These fell into a number of interrelated domains: those that pertained to the participants’ guiding interpretative frameworks and influenced their ways of relating to and reading their own experiences, and those that illuminated their responses and ways of reacting to difficult and challenging situations. I did not initially share my interpretations with participants but rather sought theirs through inviting them to reflect on their own contributions. In the data analysis, the metaphors generated in discussion with the Masters of Teaching pre-service teachers guided the analysis of their experiences in relation to the question of the engendering and sustaining of a commitment to an empowering pedagogy.

The final creative representation of the case studies takes the form of a story that allows the research process and the findings that emerge from it to be experienced in a holistic, multi-sensory way. The story is entitled *The Art of the Possible*. It takes representative selections from the classes of Paul and Robyn and discussions that arose between participating pre-service teachers around their experiences and places them in a semi-fictionalised setting. The story is presented in two parts. The first part represents the stories that constitute the case study of Paul. The second part represents the stories that make up Robyn’s case study. In composing these stories, I have
endeavoured to authentically represent the views, feelings and interactions between all persons involved, myself included. That said, the final story is a creative representation of the research and the process and encounters that constituted it. As such, changes have been made to more fully illuminate the qualities experienced in encounters between people, and their enabling or dampening origins and effects.

In recreating the story of the research, I was inspired by works of magical realism (Allende, 1986; Fuentes, 1973; Garcia Marquez, 1963, 1982). In its contemporary form, magical realism emerged as a response to colonialism and the consuming scientific rationality it helped to create and normalise. It departs from the premise that the magical co-exists with the real and the ordinary, comprehensible dimensions of everyday life (Warnes, 2009; Zamora & Faris, 1995, pp. 5-7). Magical realism offers an alternative to modern understandings and representations of an objective real, determined by a deductive, causal logic. By presenting the magical and the real as co-existent, “the denaturalization of the real and the naturalization of the marvellous” is made possible (Chiampi, 1980, p. 205).

The magical dimensions of being within this tradition encompass the religious and the sacred, not in the formal, institutionalized sense commonly known to the West, nor in opposition to the logic of causality, but as an alternative mode of knowing that departs from participation. Tambiah (1990, pp. 109-110) views participation as emanating from a view of the person as in tune with and part of their social environments. Participatory ways of knowing invoke the language of solidarity and holism, and see expressive action as emerging from and manifesting inter-subjective understandings, a view very much in keeping with the assumptions that guide this thesis. Unlike modern imaginings of the real, where time is envisaged as a chronological progression, time and space are viewed as continuums.

According to Jameson (1981, p. 91, cited in Warnes, 2009, pp. 33-35), modern narratives construct a lifeworld where “the new rhythms of measurable time, and the new secular and disenchanted world” of commodities renders ‘older’ forms of participation archaic. This kind of realism promotes the eradication of “non-productive beliefs and behaviours.”
The response of magical realism to modern narratives and their causal disenchanting logic is not one of fantasy. Instead, they offer an alternative real, by recuperating the magical in everyday life. This means drawing upon non-Western knowledge systems that “privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, and tradition over innovation” (Zamora & Farris, 1995, p. 3). Such features make magical realism ideal for exploring and transgressing boundaries of all kinds, as it enables the fusion of possible worlds and systems, and frequently situates itself on the liminal territory between them, where transformation and metamorphosis occur (Zamora & Farris, 1995, p. 6).

The final storying of this thesis draws on the magical realist tradition, shifting between real and possible worlds, the latter of which are populated by marvellous creatures whose presence is unaccounted for and presented as unremarkable. Similarly, the storying does not adhere to a chronological unfolding of time, but rather begins from a contingent moment in the research process, in order to move away from a causal linear logic towards a participatory one.

The decision to create the final representation in such a way emerged, in one sense, spontaneously, as an integral aspect of the research journey. In another way, it emerged as an antidote to research that nullifies possibility and vitality. It also emerged as part of my own personal recuperation of the magical, not only as an integral and necessary part of ordinary life that I had unwittingly lost, but equally as an essential part of pedagogy of the kind that has the potential to empower and transform. In speaking of the magical, I am referring to the opening up of new possibilities for being, knowing, and experiencing. I see these possibilities as best conceived from within the magical dimension, as they are engendered through participation and are not reducible to causal notions of action.

From the vantage of the realist paradigm, the magical elements of the storying may be seen as adding something fictitious to the research story and its findings. However, in keeping with the faith-based elements of magical realism, I see this as granting “access to an appreciation of participatory realities” (Warnes, 2009, p. 12) and the apprehending “of realities beyond the reach of rational truth”. In another sense, I see
these elements as enabling more authentic representations of my own and other participants’ felt experience of Robyn and Paul’s pedagogies, through accentuating the presence of the qualities of the sensory world and the possibilities it can open up.

In the final storying, I have recreated elements from the first classes given by Robyn and Paul. I selected these classes as they were not videoed, but rather recreated instead from my notes and participating pre-service teachers’ reflections. The books that comprise the story are organized around the notion of an interlude; this is in keeping with a non-chronological approach to time, and a concern with the in-betweenness of reality.

*The Art of the Possible* begins with a selection of poems which I wrote at the outset of this research and which, looking back from the vantage of now, speak to me of the personal and social consequences that flow from the severing of the magical from the real, and the importance of its recuperation.
Chapter Five

The Art of the Possible

∞
Songs for the Snow Leopard

1.

Like all NEW MOTHERS the snow leopard is AFRAID
of not sustaining life
in this blue asphalt of a world so resolutely dying
of its own non rhythm,
conceived in the great annihilation of results
driven –insane by the cold supine inanity of the rationalist's gaze.
She is just a cat after all
of the wild sort
whose heart will one day stop.

2.

There are no cruel months, just a stateless cruelty
the institutional marrow of men rotting through days,
leached of vigour, weaned of succour,
their cruel mouths startle such stamina to pain
such pleasure this power bringing over again
renewed, reborn, reignited and slain
the furtive cycles of cower and maim

3.

Is there to be no saving of beauty and its tenuous markings,
no spilling letters nor errant lines
no place for the crafting of blemishes into a flickering paleness,
so gravelly and wanton,
so milkteeth fine.
Her leopard eyes once all blueness and anticipation,
ground into blankness
before the blade, when all carved up and counted, her dead spots won’t fade.

So resplendent this capacity to skin the being’s being into nothingness,
while longing millennia upon millennia to radiate life,
to quell the bone coldness and ingest the sublime shock of light,
to temper the refrain of the terminally righteous
and sing up a world of flesh,
red-blooded and warm enough to resist
the growing puddles of shopping carts, bills,
and extraordinary resignation.

4.

The arc of infinite regression strides alongside its frailer brethren,
Sister Could Be abandoned on the murderous ride.
The grinding fast track to safety,
where questions without answers no longer abide.
No time for stopping or laughter, no time for the joy of explore.
Just the hint of a quivering impossibility that
such relentlessness bleaches all...

5.

Still the snow leopard is a wonder,
being of a passing world,
leaving this passing world,
the rare grief of beauty
Blue as a wild cat,
eye on the horizon.
Linda is lost in a building. Not really a building, more of an edifice; a frightening agglomeration of walls and spaces, impossible to navigate as a whole. Made up of schoolrooms and offices and the odd bit of railyard, with tracks running out into empty, all forlorn and useless, left out in limbo all on their own.

She is becoming ever more stuck in this warren that leads into rooms without windows, too poky and boxlike for the spreading of arms. Inside these rooms lurk the remnants of flotsam; the lint of teddy bear blankets, a doll with hair of rusted blonde, a tiger-eye marble and dishevelled tea set, and a stubbed tree finger that may have once passed as a wand. The tip is gnarled and despondent, as if all the magic has been chewed up or sucked out in times long since gone.

She is reluctantly looking for the school in which she is teaching, and is worried that she has taken another wrong turn. She takes the entrance one up from the usual, and finds herself in an office of sorts. The furniture is set in rows facing inwards, as if to keep all looking out in. The receptionist is brisk and efficient, but the directions she gives only lead Linda further away. She can see the school and its foyer, although not the classrooms, which are confined to the basement where some lengths have been gone to ensure that no outburst of colour or sparkle will mar the latest application of near impenetrable grey. She opens the first door in this long-winded corridor and blinks.

Interlude the First

She has entered a classroom of sorts, neither square nor rectangular, but folding out from within, like the ivory spiral of a nautilus shell. Landscapes glide like surfers
along the translucent walls. In the folds of the ceiling, crystals are spinning a light akin to a crisp autumn morn, and the chairs, which curve round in a horseshoe, look cool and inviting, all frocked up in tree blues and summer green, and rippling with the bark of wandering starfish.

The room is apparently empty, aside from the warm whisper of tea. Then the door twitches and a green beetle comes through in a flit. Behind him, more creatures follow, flopping into the chairs, which, to Linda’s delight, mould themselves into a perfect fit. In come three red faced squirrels and two young hippopotami, a trio of pink speckled water dragons and one anteater who makes up for a lacking in numbers with a bedazzle of violet quills. The beetle settles next to an aardvark with a bushy amber tail that he – is it a he? – seems to be strumming. The strains of silver leaf and wild earth fill the room. Quills and pencils or the aardvark equivalent are pulled from pouches, packs and hidden sacks. Beyond the near wall of windows, as fluid and timeless as a great whale’s eye, the silhouettes of purple mountains grow ever more clear.

A quiet rustling, cups bustling moves along the outside corridor. The squirrels, who are sitting close by, jump up to take the brimming box from the arms of the teacher, a blue-eyed human, or so it seems, although there is something about him; a twinkling that quickens in skin that makes him seem more than most. He smiles at his chattering, clattering horde.

“Help yourself to tea and biscuits. There’s plenty there. Green tea, blue tea, rosebud too, for those who like the floral. There’s coffee, if you need something stronger. Don’t be shy now!”

The trio of waterdragons approach the box. Gathering up a cup in her fine crimson webbing, the tallest of the three exclaims, “Oh, you bought Grin Grans!” She looks at the packet and grins, “With double chocolate cream too!”
Laughter bounces over chairs into the far pockets of air. “Go for it. I left the first packet unguarded at the back of the fridge, but when I looked this morning, there was just one lonely biscuit. The family, of course, denies everything.”

Crackles of laughter and cellophane.

The teacher picks up a small stool and places himself just off to the left of the centre of the ring. He opens a folder of papers tucked into orderly sleeves, and waits for the first round of crumbs to settle.

“So welcome to our TESOL, short for teaching Evergreen to speakers of other languages, special elective,” he says, looking up with a bit of a grin.

“I’m Paul, so you can call me Paul. We’re going to all be together for two semesters and I want you to think of this class as kind of a family. So help yourself to Grin Grans and make yourself a tea whenever you want.” His arm motions to the collection of goodies, floating around the right curve of wall.

“I’m just going to pass around these little white cards for you to write your names on, and I want you to bring them to class every week. I’m a bit slow on learning names you see, and there’s a prize to see who can hold onto her card the longest. The all time record so far has been seven weeks. See if you can beat it,” he says, handing a card to the almond-eyed anteater, with a nod and a grin.

She plucks a great purple quill from her back and writes “Antoinette”

The squirrels dip their brush tails in their respective pots.

Samuel**  Suki! Zachary@home
The hippos flutter their lashes and on one card after the other names appear:

**Hermione**

then

**Horace**

The water dragons etch their names with the fine tips of their tails:

**Whelan, Weiko, Wanda**

The aardvark, who prides himself on being first in the Evergreen dictionary, scribbles his name with the end of his nose moving fast:

**Arnie**

The beetle kicks up one of his formidable legs and scribes **B for Bertie**

into the thick of the page.

“Oh by the way, everyone, we have some creatures of the human kind from the land that they think of as real, so I’d like you to make them especially welcome. So give it up for Lucy and Jen.”

There is a hearty clapping of tails, paws and fins.
“And this is Linda. She is interested in teaching in learning, or as we think of it, how we make the possible real. I’ll let her tell so that you can hear it from the horse’s mouth so to speak.”

Linda smiles and goes on to outline the bones of her project, hoping that she’s added just the right amount of flesh. Bertie smiles, along with the squirrels. The aardvark nods, the waterdragons wink, and the hippopotami grin. Paul hasn’t stopped smiling and it appears to be having a snowball effect.

“Just to get the ball rolling,” he begins, settling himself into his small portable seat, “I was wondering what possessed you to take this course? So maybe if everyone would like to say a few words about why you’re here and what you’re hoping to take away.”

The reddest of the squirrels is up first. “Hi. I’m Zachary. I’m a sea swimming squirrel and I grew up in a river patch between the clusters of leapfrogs and winged tuna, and everyone spoke Riverrock from birth except me, so I know what it’s like to feel sort of different, and I want to learn how to help little creatures to speak Evergreen so that they don’t grow up feeling like they’re on the outside, like me.”

“What river patch was that?” Paul ventures, smiling. “I heard that they speak quite a bit of Fishling in those parts. Was that one of the languages you heard?”

“Yeah, nearly all of the tuna speak it and some of the wartfrogs. I only speak a little.”

“That must be amazing, it’s very hard to get the bubbles right.” Paul pops his lips in demonstration and does such a bad imitation that it makes everyone laugh. “I have a long history of failed language learning, you see, so I’m amazed at what you creatures can do. What about you Samuel, what made you want to do this course, did you grow up in a river patch too?”
“No. I grew up near the black pools and there were lots of refugee billabees and I want to know more about the kinds of things that can help creatures who’ve had a very rough ride.”

“I don’t know a lot myself about the culture of billabees,” Paul says, with a slight shake of the head. From his top pocket, he pulls out a pair of mischievous specs that have a habit of hiding whenever they can. He pops them at the ready down on the desk.

“But after you do your internship with STARTTS, in the second semester you will be working with a refugee, and helping them learn Evergreen, which is not just a great experience but a chance to learn more about the cultures of creatures firsthand.”

“Suki?” Paul smiles at the third squirrel, who looks a little flummoxed. “You know you can always say ‘pass’ or ‘the same as him’ if you want to.”

Suki smiles back. “Same as Sammy. I grew up in the inner forest and I worked on a programme tutoring newly arrived billabees and I want to learn more about them, so I can include them in a regular class.”

“Yes, feeling included is very important. Don’t worry, we’ll be doing lots in this course to help you with that.” He turns to the first waterdragon. “And you Weiko?”

“You got rave reviews from the fourth year creatures. They all loved this class. Plus, they said there were Grin Grans.” The rest of the creatures nod at this, laughing again.

“Ahh, yeah. It’s kind of like a home away from home here, only but you don’t always get Grin Grans at home, at least not for long anyway.” He smiles at the smallest of the waterdragons. “And you, Wanda?”

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18 In Paul’s fourth year TESOL elective, all students worked with a refugee in the second semester, after participating in a special programme with STARTTS (NSW service for the treatment and rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors).
“On my first prac, I was at a learning shelter at the foothills of the purple mountains and there were some bluefeathers who had just arrived and they were very withdrawn, so I want to know how to help draw them out.”

After Bertie finishes his story, and the comments and questions are, for this moment done, Paul picks up the folder at the heart of the desk.

“Okay, so what are we up to? Oh, yes, we just need to do a little bit of housekeeping, so that everyone knows what’s coming, right from the start. Don’t worry though, I’ve got all the assignments and lots of examples up on the blog.”

He searches his pocket for the glasses again, then spies them edging towards the far end of the desk.

“Just tap into any window that takes your fancy and register on it. I’ve put lots of clips of lessons from my classes with little creatures and there are extra readings and other tit bits that I’d like you to vote on, in terms of how useful you find them, and, of course, just to keep you enthralled.”

The glasses make their way back to his pocket without ruffling his grin.

“Now, to the nitty gritty. This course is designed to be as pragmatic as possible, so all of the three tasks are going to be really useful for your own teaching and helping creatures from diverse niches and backgrounds to learn. So the first one’s a grammar task.”

A noticeable flicker of worry crosses the faces of every creature in the room.

Hermione pipes up, “I’m not confident with grammar. I never learned it in Hippograph.”

There are nods of “same as her” among the creatures.
“Because I wasn’t here last semester, maybe you could tell me just a little bit now about what you did grammar-wise then?” Paul says with a grin.

“We did stuff on verb groups and noun groups, but I don’t really get it, to be honest, and some other stuff on text types, like you know the features of forest narratives and other kinds of stuff,” Hermione says.

“Okay, I’ll just write this down,” Paul says, taking out his errant glasses again. “What other things did you cover, or would you like to do some more of?” He looks slowly around. “I’m going to give you a little quiz to take away and bring in next week so that we can work on your areas of need.”

“We haven’t done much traditional grammar really,” Antoinette says quietly. “And I know that quite a few of us never did it as school, so all that tense stuff, I don’t really get.”

“Or passives,” Arnie adds. “I know they exist, but I don’t really know how you use them or what’s the difference between active and passive.”

“Great, that helps.” Paul smiles. “Um you know, when you’re talking about a process, like for example, how whimsy is extracted from whimsywood, or like in human science when you describe what you did in an experiment, except you don’t say, ‘First of all I put some sugar in the water and then I heated it’, instead you take yourself or the person out of the picture, so you say ‘the water was heated’ as if it kind of magically heated itself, without you, which may after all be possible.”

There is more laughter at this.

“Or like when the creature council sends you a notice saying that ‘the hoof pathways will be widened’, you notice how they leave themselves about of the picture, to weasel out of taking the responsibility for it.” The look on his face is only half joking.
“Apologies to the weasels, of course. That’s how we use the passive. It’s a tricky tense, it’s often used to trick us.”

The waterdragons smile and the squirrels half nod at this, not yet fully sure.

“Don’t worry about it,” Paul says, taking this in. “You’ll get to love grammar. I promise you. Especially because we’re going to do it all together, working with little creatures’ texts. Never do grammar alone, if you can help it. That’s my view.”

Bertie pokes Arnie with a swift pincer, just as Paul reaches the lone of ‘alone’, and Arnie let’s out an involuntary hoot.

“So for your first task,” Paul continues, smiling at Bertie, then Arnie, “you’ll be looking at a sample of writing from a creature whose mother tongue is not Evergreen, and diagnosing her needs. And starting from next week, we’ll be looking at samples of little creature’s writing and thinking about that. So there’ll be plenty of practice all the way through.”

Paul looks around smiling again.

“The second task links up with the first one, and you are gonna be – did I say gonna?, I do sometimes slip into these things, it’s how human creatures speak where I come from.” He smiles at Zac, who is looking a little distracted.

“So, do creatures speak like that in Riverpatch, Zac? Is there a Riverrock or Fishling equivalent of gonna?”

Zac nods. “Yeah, we have all kinds of gonnas in Riverrock. It’s a very playful language. All the young squirrels in Riverpatch, when they’re talking it sounds like some kind of water rap, you know what I mean?”

Paul nods. “What about Fishling?”
“Oh no, it’s much more serious. Even when the little fishes, if they say something like ‘goin’ darting out now’, the older ones give them a flick of the disapproving fin.”

“It’s the same in Hippograph,” Horace says, nodding at Zac. “As in Fishling I mean. When we were younger we used to say things like ‘I’m gonna get mudded up this arvo’, and if there was an adult in earshot, it’d be like ‘Whoa? What did you say?’”

Everyone laughs at the thought of hippos getting mudded, and Paul pauses for a few moments, waiting to see if anyone wants to chime in.

“Yeah. It’s interesting, the when’s and how’s and who-with’s of saying things. Like I use ‘gonna’, but not usually when I’m talking to you. And it is something that we need to be thinking about, and talking about with our little creatures.”

His look this time is of someone so engrossed in the present, that he’s forgotten which turning he was about to take.

“Sorry, where were we again?” he says, picking up the folder and taking a peek. “Oh yes, the second task! This one involves designing some worksheets on an aspect of Evergreen grammar that you’ve identified in your creature’s writing as an area of need.”

Paul puts down the folder and looks at the creatures again, pausing for emphasis.

“Now, when I say worksheets, I don’t mean those dusty old exercises that you might have experienced when you were a critter, I mean something much funner.”

The look that accompanies his smile is so earnest and thoughtful that it draws the group further in.

“Because making it fun really gets little creatures motivated to learn,” he says, opening out both his hands. “It’s like they forgot to worry, because they just want to join in.”
And we’ve got plenty of examples for everyone to try. And we can all think about how we could adapt them for all kinds of things.”

He gestures to the image that is now projected on one of the portals of the curving wall. It looks like a medieval village, complete with haystacks and farmhouses and creatures of a kind not found in this hall.

“One of the things that I’m going to show you is how to base your fun grammar ‘work’ around a novel and introduce it using PowerGlide, which is a bit like PowerPoint only less clunky,” he says, smiling again. “And I’ll show you some of the things I did with classes on Rowan of Rim. Do you know it?”

There are nods of assent from most of the creatures, although Bertie looks a little less sure.

“So, just to take you through an example of what we did,” he looks up at the ceiling and the light-making crystals grow suitably dim, “before we read the story, I showed the little critters this picture of a medieval village, inhabited by some creatures from times past, and then we showed them this.”

On the screen now flashes an image of a cityscape, fast and modern, with creatures zipping by on wind-powered buses and air-blown tracks snaking into the trees.

“So we had a conversation about what might be the differences between life in those times and now. And we talked about transport and I asked them some questions to get them thinking about changes in energy, those kinds of things. Then we did an activity, which we’ll do next time, to help them to get to know all the main characters, before the story began. We had picture cards to match with descriptions which contained little clues, so that it was all well supported but still required some puzzling through.”

“What made you choose Rowan of Rim, Paul?” Weiko asks, becoming intrigued.
“Well, it’s a fantasy story.” Paul smiles, looking at Weiko. “So little creatures get transported into this imaginary world. Of course, we all know here that the imaginary is really possible, that when it’s on the verge of kicking in, we can feel it prickling our furs, hides and skins.”

Linda feels a prickling passing through those strangely permeable membranes; that assortment of hides, furs and skins. Horace, who has been looking rather nervous, now manages a pretty good grin.

“So fantasy is great for little critters, and there are lots of ways we can get them hooked on the story, before it even begins,” Paul says, arms beckoning inwards, as if embracing the closest pocket of air.

“So the trick is to design tasks that get them wondering and curious and I’m going to show you how I introduced Rowan of Rim.”

“Paul,” Arnie ventures, “do we choose the novel?”

“Yes. Something that would be suitable for, say, a class of year fours or threes. Don’t worry, we’ll talk about the kinds of books you could do, and where you might find them. The premier’s little creatures book awards is a great place to start.”

Noticing the looks of uncertainty, Paul adds, “I’ll put the link up on the blog.”

“So that just leaves the third assignment which is the funnest one. You need to design some games around grammar, and we’ll look at some examples later today and I’ve brought some forever-growing leaf bark in an assortment of colours to get you started.” He gestures at the table where a pile of feather light papers, in shades of colour Linda has never before seen, fan themselves out in greeting.
“Oh and there’s a little in class assignment which we’re all going to mark. You need to choose a short section from the story you’re going to use for the second task to read to the class.”

At this, the creatures again look a little apprehensive, although on the faces of some there is a faint hint of keen.

“Have any of you guys ever been read to at school?” Paul asks, taking out his glasses again.

Nods from the waterdragons and the squirrels, Arnie and Bertie shake their heads, Horace looks unsure and Hermione smiles a yes.

“What did you think?”

“We had a teacher who read us The Hobbit,” Zac says. “And I can still remember Gollum’s voice, ‘Oh yes, precious, we can.’”

“Exactly!” Paul says, grinning at Zac. “It’s all about the voices. They really help get the little ones in, and they also give them a really important clue about who is talking to whom. So you really have to work on the voices, so that when you read, we’re going to hear each character shining through.”

He rubs his hands and looks round the room.

“Okay, so let’s have some fun. But before we do, does anyone have any more questions? No? Look, just interrupt me any time if you want to.”

By this stage it seems that everyone is hungry again. The hippos have opened a second packet of Glim Grams and are passing them round the half-circle again.
“Go for it,” Paul says, to the tunes of crackling paper. “They’re good, aren’t they? There’s chocolate-coated forest berry buttons too. I don’t eat them myself,” he adds with a winking grin.

“Oh yes! Now part of being an ESL teacher is cultivating a curiosity about language in your little critters, so that they’ll want to get involved. So this activity is designed to do that. It’s called ancestry in our class.” He holds up a piece of paper, divided in three.

“So the first column is where you write down your ancestry. So you know if your grandmother comes from the wildwoods that’s okay, but you know if your great-great-great aunt hails from the giant’s glen, well that could be stretching it.”

“What about a great-great uncle?” Sammy asks, with a grin.

Paul grins back, shaking his head.

“The second column is for languages spoken and the third one for languages written, and this is how it works. You write down your own ancestry and then share with the creatures on either side.” His arms open out as he gathers in Arnie, Suki and Jen.

“When you’re doing this activity with critters of course, you can use it for question practice and model that beforehand or you can do it a bit more freely, like we’re doing it now.”

As Paul finishes speaking, the buzz of activity begins. The anteater passes out quills among his group and a getting to know you and your family chatter ensues. There is growing animation, of the eyebrows lifting, tails bobbing kind, to the hum of which Paul draws three columns with a flick of the finger on the glass board.

As the buzz begins to lessen, Paul claps his hands. “Okay, so is everyone ready to hear the histories we have in this class? Suki, why don’t you start?”
“Well, for ancestry, we’ve got West Sea swimming squirrel, Riverrock, Pink waterdragon, Purple tongued parrot and Easternplains hippo. Languages spoken: um Evergreen, Riverrock, a little Fishling, Hippograph, Dragonstammer and a smattering of Parroting. Languages written: Hippograph, Dragonstammer and Evergreen.”

She laughs at the way she has forgotten herself. “Oh, and I can write Riverrock too. Not much Parroting or Fishling, I’m afraid.”

“Great. I’ll just write these up. When we’ve finished, I’ll get you all to decide which ones you’d like to hear and to see written. I’ve got to say, I really want to hear some Parroting, it’s not much spoken around these parts.”

Their ancestries shared, Linda is treated to the silvery tones of Rainbowforest finch, the brashness of Marsh badger, and the perplexity of Parroting. When written, Rainbowforest finch turns into a song of movement and colour, with plenty of commas and verbs on the go. Nouns disappear, as soon as spoken, leaving only a slight record of movement. This flightiness is in direct contrast to Marsh badger that looks and sounds as if it is about the building of things.

Paul looks around smiling. “So if you had someone whose background was Rainbowforest finch, what do you imagine might be some of the challenges if she were, say, trying to learn badger?”

Whelan the waterdragon ventures, “Well, in Rainbowforest finch, there’s the punctuation for one thing. Like the sentences don’t really end. But Marsh badger is much more uniform; there are sentences and they finish, so bringing that to the creature’s attention would be important.”

“Yes, definitely. What do other creatures think? What about you, Arnie, do you want to add anything?”

“Well, I don’t know, I’m not very up on grammar.”
“It doesn’t matter, none of us are.”

“But I think in Rainbowforest finch, verbs and time are very different. I mean, everything just keeps going on and that’s completely different from Badger where time and action is more linear. I don’t know if that makes sense.”

“Yes it does. So we’d have to think about how we could best involve our young creatures in recognising and becoming able to…umm…what am I trying to say…to be aware of these differences and to speak with confidence in both. And I’m hoping that you’ll come away from this course chock full of ideas and activities for doing just that.”

“Can I ask a question, Paul?” Zac inquires.

“Sure, fire away.”

“Well, I was just wondering, you know, I learned to speak Riverrock at home from my parents, but I never learned how to write in it and I found it really hard learning to read and write in Evergreen, so for those little creatures who come speaking their mother tongue but are not able to read and write in it, does it make a difference?”

“I think you’re suggesting that it does. What do other creatures think?”

“I remember from last semester that being literate in your mother tongue really helps in your second one; it’s something that you can transfer across,” Whelan chimes in.

“What about if it’s really different? Like the example we had before between Rainbowforest finch and that Badger language? Sorry I forget the exact name,” Arnie offers, as more laughter follows in the wake of ‘that Badger language’.

Zac turns to Arnie. “Actually, I hadn’t thought about that, but maybe you’re right. Maybe it depends on how close the tongue is to your own. What do you think, Paul?”
“These are all really good points, really good,” Paul says, looking from Arnie to Zac, then feels in his pocket for his glasses, popping them on in readiness for when the next activity begins.

“And in the next session, we’re going to be doing an activity based around issues in the field such as the one you just raised. Because your excellent question has been researched quite a bit and there are some interesting things that have been found,” Paul says, brushing his hand towards himself across the desk as if gathering this information in.

“And that might help us to better understand our learners and the challenges they face. On this issue, I think that what Whelan said fits with the current view. But when we do the activity next lesson, you can have a think about it and decide for yourselves.”

He looks around again at creatures from over the rim of his glasses.

“Okay, so I think that it’s time for another game. You’re gonna love this. Now, I’m going to give you an envelope and in it are the names of fourteen different creature tongues, and they’re not just the common garden ones either – not that there’s anything common about Garden gossip at all, but you know what I mean.”

This makes Bertie grin.

“And then there are fourteen quotes written in the fourteen different tongues, and I think you can guess what you have to do. We’ll work in pairs this time, and you can see if you can nut them all out. Then I’ll put up the tongues on one side of the board and we’ll have some mix and match.”

Paul gets up from his chair, smiles, and says, “Okay, go.”

Linda is paired with Hermione the hippo, who, it turns out, knows quite a bit about some of the tongues of the creatures south of the bank and this helps them to nut out a
good few. Neither of them has a clue of how Singing seastar sounds, though, let alone how it looks. They hazard a guess on the script that looks like stars tumbling into a waterfall.

When everyone is as done as they can be, Paul turns to the first group and says, “So how many would you like to lock in?”

“Nine. We think we’ve worked out nine for sure.”

“So shall we lock in nine? Are you sure? Okay then. Now, I’m gonna to have to trust you all on this when we get down to the nitty gritty of the count. So what about your group, Antoinette? How many do you guys want to lock in?”

After everyone has ‘locked in’, the scripts are matched to their respective tongues to sounds of surprise and triumph, and the occasional groan. Paul asks about the thinking that lead to their choices, and this sparks a discussion of similarities and differences, in alphabets and shapes, in rights and lefts, and ups and downs. There is talk about what these differences might mean for creatures learning Evergreen.

“Does anyone have anything that they’d like to add?” Paul asks, before moving on.

“I want to know, Paul, about the Singing seastar, what does it say?” Antoinette ventures.

“Well, Singing seastar is not one of my strengths, but I have cheated a bit and have the translation. It’s called \textit{Earth Incantations} and it goes like this:
“If you could open your ears and attune your eyes, you might feel the seastar twinkle, turning cartwheels across the dew tips of the grass, and touch the falling tear slips, disappearing in the soft nicks of time, as it moves and teases, brushes and squeezes, unfastening the edges of the future breezing past”.

“Singing seastar is words dancing,” Wanda says, enchanted.

“I think so too,” Paul smiles. “Has anyone ever heard it sung?”

Shakes of the head.

“I think it’s pretty rare,” Bertie says, shyly. “They only speak it in the singing sea, which is shrinking every year.”

A flicker of sadness briefly touches every skin. Paul pauses for some moments and then smiles again.

“Now, I want you to step out of your student shoes and have a think about the design of the tasks we’ve just done in terms of pedagogy; bearing in mind the CHEAP principles that we’ve talked about before: challenge, handover, engagement and assisted performance. Does someone want to brave a comment?”

Horace looks up. “I really enjoyed that, I mean, it was fun, just trying to work out what tongue goes with what script.”
“So, what made it enjoyable for you?”

Antoinette chimes in, “Well, there was genuine challenge, I mean none of us had heard of – let alone seen – maybe a third of those scripts, so we had to draw on our knowledge, each other’s knowledge to try to figure it out, and that, that made it fun.”

Paul nods, and looks slowly around at the creatures again. “Any other comments you’d like to make?”

“It works on all levels,” Jen offers. “I mean, it’s handed over for us to do, and we’re all working on it because we really don’t know the answers. So it’s not mechanical, there’s something to wonder about, but also we have clues from our different backgrounds, so it’s challenging, but there’s assisted performance too, and I think that this is what makes it so engaging. And the way that you make us want to do it, you know, by bigging it up.”

Paul grins at Jen’s description, to which he is about to add, when he sees that Arnie is wanting to speak. He catches himself in the act of this saying and says, “Sorry Arnie, do you have something you want to add?”

“It’s genuinely inclusive,” Arnie chimes in. “I mean you had such a good selection of tongues that no matter what your background, you could contribute something so, yeah, it works.”

Paul nods at Arnie, and winks.

“Yes, and that’s really important. Thanks for that, Arnie, I told him to say that before class. No I didn’t, we didn’t, plan it, I mean.”

This joke takes a few moments to catch, so the bout of laughter that follows is just a little delayed.
“Seriously though, it’s set up so that creatures who come from backgrounds other than Evergreen can draw on their knowledges and we play it in a way that celebrates them.”

“Okay, so, last thing for today. As you can see I’ve got a whole bunch of self-sticking plastic and rainbow markers of every green, blue, red, pink and skyripple shimmer imaginable so you can make some marks on the featherleaf bark. Just to start you off, I’m going to show you a few games that you can make with the old snakes and ladders. Has everyone played this game?” he says, revealing the game board on the front side of the large sheet.

Nods all round.

“How did you play it, Sammy?”

“When we were little creatures, we used to play lots of board games, you know, with grandma squirrel, like squirr-abbles, and I remember playing a game like this, only it wasn’t snakes and ladders, it was trails and trees.”

“I hadn’t thought of that,” Paul says, nodding at Sammy. “That’s a great idea, you could make a board that it fits with the backgrounds of your little creatures, so it doesn’t have to be snakes and ladders. What other versions did you all play?”

“Where I grew up, in the Sacred savannah, among the golden-eyed tigers, empathic elephants and shape-shifting gazelles, the game is called Baobab barbs and Jackalberryfruit,” Arnie says. “We go down the baobabs, which, as legend has it, were uprooted and planted upside down into the earth by the ancient Savannah gods because of their insatiable jealousy of the mantles of other trees. And we go up the Jackalberry, because its flowers give off a luscious creamy scent and all the plains creatures go gaga for the fruit. We aardvarks are particularly fond of them. They turn a deep purple colour when fully ripe, and, as you can see, if you eat enough of them, their nectar seeps permanently into our quills.”19

“I never knew that, Arnie, about the Baobabs, I mean. It’s a great story.” Wanda waves her tail enthusiastically. “You could get your critters to tell the stories behind their own special ways of playing snakes and ladders, which would make it more interesting too, don’t you think so, Paul?”

“Absolutely!” He looks at Wanda, then around the group again. “And you could make a revision game of the past tense, using some of the sentences from their stories. And no matter how you decide to play it, the little creatures love it. They really do.”

Paul picks up another game board lying on the table nearby. “I’ll just show you a couple that I’ve made. You can use them if you’ve had a big night at the trough. I mean, let’s face it, all of us are – well – kind of human. So if you’re feeling a little bit pink, you could give them a bit of grammar revision as you warm up.”

He moves around the room showing a board of lime-coloured snakes and fire red ladders, glossed up with coloured stars that shimmer and wink. There is a matching set of winking star cards.

“Say, for example, you’ve been doing the past tense, you can put coloured dots on your squares and make sets of matching dot cards. Then you could take some sentences from the book you’ve been reading or something else that you’ve recently done and the little creatures have to decide if the sentence is correct. Or you could write sentences in the present tense on the cards and then have them change it into the past. Or you could recycle some vocabulary from the novel you’re doing and make multiple choice cards.”

“Could you give us an example?” Weiko asks.

“Yep,” Paul says, moving over so the glassboard can illustrate as he explains.
“So, say you were doing Eric the Viking Eagle and in it Eric is turned to stone by a fire serpent and you want to revise this. You could say Eric’s eagles were turned to stone by A, B or C, and give an answer for each.”

A, B and C appear on the glass.

“A really good tip is to make C a silly one like ‘Ronald McDonald’, you know that big red nosed clown that goes for the burgers back in real? Not that we eat that stuff here.”

The creatures start to laugh as the face of a clown with a red bulb of a nose appears next to C.

“It not only gives them a laugh, it helps to build confidence, because it’s just clearly so wrong. I don’t know how many times I’ve done that one and while you’re walking around and you can hear them squeal with real delight, ‘Ha! Ronald McDonald, that’s silly! It can’t be that!’”

He moves back to the table laden with markers, star and dot stickers and sheets of bright paper, among other things.

“Anyways, there’s all kinds of stuff, so just help yourself and get started, and I’ll leave the samples here so you can take a closer look, and just come up and grab me if you have anything to ask.”

There is shuffling and laughter as the creatures come up and select their boards of colour, sparkles and ruffles and anything that might catch a little critter’s eye. Paul takes a back seat and watches, as each creature becomes engrossed in making their games and time in the real sense passes quickly by.
Interlude Two

Linda finds herself back in the building again. Only this time she feels that she is getting closer to her class. She is on her way up the stairs when she hears the malevolent tones of the former Education Director ricocheting up the hall. Not wanting to be caught within her sight, let alone reach, Linda missteps and ends up in a bit of a panic in another of those stairwells with many same looking doors. She chooses the one at the end this time, because it is an impossible shade of meandering green. She opens it and goes in.

She sees that she is back in the land of the possible again, with a new group of creatures who have their name cards already out. Paul is strolling around casually, offering up new cards to incoming creatures should there needs be. He smiles in passing at the sea dragon named Sheba, then Pontip, the purple-maned parrot; grins at two golden-eyed tigers, Tawar and Tomas, and four spot-changing leopards, Leo, Lila, Lourdes and Lenny, who are near impossible to tell apart just by looking at due to their love of their own special tricks. He nods at Ti Wan and Tamineh, two teleporting toucans, who can pop in and out, just as they please, before coming back past the three human creatures, Maggie, Sean and Ben.

“I know what we’ll do while we’re waiting for everyone to arrive,” he says, heading back to the sideboard and picking up a set of laminated cards. “I’ve made up some norm cards, from the discussions we had in the first class.” He moves around passing them out.

“So this is like a culmination of the guidelines for having productive conversations that came up in each different group.” He looks up from the card in his hand and smiles. “So the first one’s active listening, and that covers a whole bunch of things. I guess if you’re an active listener then the rest pretty much follows.”
He looks around at the creatures, who are looking around at each other as if their bodies are present but the rest of them has not quite arrived.

Paul picks up his stool and shifts sideways, leaving a bit of a pause, before going back to talking them through the rest of the norms.

Two inimitable impala, Iranie and Ito, bounce into the room. Iranie turns to Paul and says, “Sorry we’re late,” with just a hint of cheek in her grin.

“That’s alright,” Paul says smiling. “It’s good timing.” He hands them each a norm card, and turns around to look at the glassboard.

“We’re just getting down to the outcomes for today.” He points up to the green words that have just appeared on the board. “So, I hope by the end of this session that we’ll have an increased sensitivity to classroom talk. So that’s one of the outcomes, so I want you to leave here at what time?”

“Twelve o’clock,” interjects the cheeky impala, and laughter follows in her stride.

“She comes late,” Paul turns around to grin at the class, “and she’s already gone. Spot on though. Twelve o’clock it is.” He shakes his head laughingly at Iranie before returning to the outcomes waving at him from the board.

This time Linda has come with her videotape, so that she can capture the possible in its human form, and allow it to be differently heard, felt and seen. The text, as Linda heard it in her very real dream is to be found in Appendix Q.

She turns off the tape just before the class ends, at the point where the talk about talking has lead Lenny to think of something else again.

“Can I ask a question?” Lenny ventures. “It’s not exactly related, but I was wondering, how do we make the possible real?”
“That’s a good question,” Paul looks at the creatures thoughtfully. “And off the top of my head I’d say you have to imagine it first, see it in your mind’s eye, and feel it in your belly, before you can hold it in your hand.” His fingers curl up into a cup as if something has gathered in there.

“And it really helps to plan for it, and to work on coming up with the kind of activities that might just get us over that invisible line. At the same time, you know, always be prepared to not go with your plan if a better possibility comes along.”

“This might be a naïve question,” Maggie says as a preface, “but what is ‘the possible’ exactly?”

“No such thing as naïve questions, remember, that was norm number four,” Paul laughs, and Maggie joins in. “What do other creatures think?”

“I think it’s like when you put up those photographs of famous linguists, you know, before we talked about time in osprey speak, so we could see those creatures who understand the grammar and significance of dragon tongue and warthog sniffle. So it’s not just learning a language, it’s learning about the mysteries and magic of language and how you could become like someone who can finally get frightened field mice to giggle,” Ito says, and there follows much nodding.

“I think that could be a part of it,” Paul says, with a musing nod. “Any other thoughts?”

“I think it’s like you forget where you are because suddenly you’re more interested in where you could be,” Sean offers. “And you don’t know, you don’t know beforehand where that’s going to be, but that’s not important, because what’s important is that the joy of creating has gotten hold of you.”

As this class ends, Sean, a student visitor from the land of the real, doesn’t so much walk as glide up to Linda, introduce himself and say,
“I’m happy to talk to you about your project, and I have a couple of friends that want to come too. Could we meet up after lunch, say, on the edge of the evergreen fields, would that suit you?”

“Absolutely,” Linda says, delighted. “See you there around about two.”

At just on two o’clock, a group of fledgling teachers arrives and she introduces herself to Maggie, Ben, Lucy and Jen. They find a spot on the evergreen fields under the shade of a Jackalberry tree. Once everyone is comfortable, Linda tells them a little about herself and why she is interested in teaching and learning and what she means by affect. She asks about their experiences of Paul and his classes and what stands out for them.

“I think for me, based on what we’ve read about,” Ben says, kicking things off, “and what we’ve been told as the best ways to go about teaching, Paul does embody that. I find him, I don’t know, not personable, because I don’t know that much about him, but he’s very approachable.”

“He has a lot of warmth,” Sean says, joining in. “I remember last year we had a few lectures with him and I really liked what he said,” Sean says, picking up Ben’s thread. “He was soft, he was engaging, and he was explaining things like he wanted you to understand.”

From the way Sean’s emphasis falls, it’s clear that this kind of explaining doesn’t always occur.

“He wasn’t trying to throw a whole bunch of information at you, he was trying to invite you into whatever he was talking about. He has a very inviting personality.” Sean looks around at the group to see if anyone has something to add.
“Even before the semester begins, emails were sent out wishing people a happy Eid, acknowledging different cultural celebrations and really making sure that everyone knew what was going on.”

He pauses again before continuing on.

“So it really seemed like he cared and then when I got into class, he did, like you say,” Sean looks at Ben, “he embodied it. You get a lot of teachers who don’t walk what they talk, especially in the real university. I know they’re restricted by the context but they don’t seem to be able to tweak it.”

The image of tweaking gets a smile from Maggie and a half raised eyebrow from Ben.

“They can tell you the best theories on how to engage kids and teach, and I say kids because the opportunities in the real for experiencing the possible like this are few and far between.”

Sean’s certain tone is echoed in the faces of Maggie, Jen, Lucy and Ben.

“So while they’re doing it, they’re just hypocritical,” he says, referring back to those teachers again. “So authenticity and genuineness and truth is the strongest thing for me by far.”

“I think coming into a classroom,” Lucy says, “you have your things that are going on and you try not to bring it with you, but if you have teachers that are shut off, or don’t care, or are condescending in the way they talk to you, it can make you bring those emotions in. We have a teacher who is very, very condescending to primary teachers and it brings out all of these different emotions in us.”

“You just can’t be bothered,” Jen continues. “We had this subject this morning and you just don’t want to listen if the lecturer has that attitude.”

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20 Eid is a three-day Islamic holiday which celebrates the end of Ramadan.
More nods of agreement from Maggie, Sean and Ben.

“So the way you approach your learning, you start to think what you’re saying is not relevant to me because you don’t care about us,” Lucy adds. “I mean this person doesn’t specifically know our situation, she teaches at the high school and there’s a whole lot of us primary people in there that are just kind of disregarded. It’s like we’ve been written off, so if we’re not relevant to them, then our feeling is…”

“That it’s not relevant to us,” Jen says, completing Lucy’s thought.

“In direct contrast to that,” Sean’s nod to Lucy says common experience, “as soon as you see someone who is happy and peaceful and content, who has that nature, like Paul, you think well that is someone worth listening to because that’s how I want to be in my life, so I’ll listen to them because they’ll probably help me get there. Whereas this other person might know all this information, but you can keep the information, because it’s no good, it hasn’t helped you get anywhere.”

There is a pause as Sean gathers his breath. “And that actually makes me think that as a teacher, you’ve got to have the right theory, not, you know, behaviourism and punish and reward.” At the mention of this arcane theory, everyone laughs.

“But if you’re exposed to the theory then I think you have to learn how to genuinely be that, and model the change you want to see,” Sean continues, in a more thoughtful tone.

“When you go to Paul’s class,” Lucy continues, “you feel like you’re actually relevant, because he interacts with each creature and wants to know all of our thoughts and you start to think that it’s relevant, because I’m relevant in the class.”

On each ‘relevant’, her emphasis grows.
“And when he asks you to share your input, he doesn’t do it in a way that puts you on the spot,” Jen says, thinking with Lucy again. “Paul asks if you feel you have anything to say about it, but if you’re not sure, you’re not forced to and it just makes you feel better.”

“It’s like you said,” Lucy muses, nodding at Sean. “It’s when a teacher cares and is in tune with what’s going on with someone.”

“He waits until we’re all ready as well,” Jen continues. “He puts out all the tea and coffee and stuff and waits until everyone gets settled and then starts…”

“So you feel that you have the chance to sit down and have five minutes to get the talking out of your system or eat or whatever,” Lucy adds.

“It’s a mutual respect kind of thing,” Jen says, and Sean nods his head. “And it’s there all the way through, in the way he runs the class and it makes me feel more like I’m almost a teacher, and we’re more equal.”

“So how does he do that?” Linda asks, looking from Lucy to Jen.

“Well,” Lucy says, thinking again, “because we’re doing primary teaching, other teachers in other classes will make us do every single activity as if we were a primary class.”

“But Paul’s more sort of showing us,” Jen says, nodding at Lucy.

“Like here’s what I did and here’s how it worked,” Lucy adds. “But it feels like I’m learning as a teacher, as an equal not, as I often feel in other courses, sitting there like a kid.”

“You’re right!” Jen says, turning to face Lucy. “I hadn’t thought about that. But he shows us what he does in his class, he lets us have a go at it just to see what it would
be like, but he doesn’t say let’s check the answers, did you get this right? Because we’re not primary kids and other teachers often do that.”

A new idea clearly strikes Maggie, who has been looking thoughtful throughout this exchange.

“I think it’s a very democratic classroom which is exactly what he talks about. So the tasks that he sets are underpinned by the values of all students, not just English or Evergreen speakers, so students whose first language isn’t English are still as valuable and still as able to learn and I think he uses that in our class too.”

Maggie continues, backed by a chorus of agreeing sounds.

“He sometimes chooses creatures to speak, he makes sure that the quieter ones get a chance to say things. Like Jen said, we have the names on the desk and he sometimes picks people out.”

“But you don’t have to speak if you don’t want to,” Jen adds, emphasising the choice.

“And normally in a class you have people who are full on…um…dominant,” Lucy adds a new stream to this growing track, “and then everyone else just sits there. But in Paul’s class it’s different because you still have the same people there, but everyone opens up; we don’t always open up like that. I think that’s when we flip into the possible again.”

“In Paul’s classroom I think that everyone feels like they’re their own person,” Jen says, picking up Lucy’s theme, “and that they don’t have to be quiet and not say anything because someone else is taking over.”

“The thing is that you don’t see him thinking about that, it just sort of happens,” Lucy adds, her fingers tickling the air in an embellishing of the happening sort. “Just like the way you move from the real to the possible, with him.”
“That’s why I think with him that authenticity,” Ben says, drawing together this rambling strand, “that authenticity is a good term, because he doesn’t talk so much about what you should do, he just does it himself.”

He smiles at Lucy and nods before continuing on.

“I find it very hard to connect to lecturers who will constantly talk about what you should be doing, and will constantly refer to the NSW quality teaching framework, whereas, I can see in Paul’s classes, just the way that he presents himself and the way he carries them out, that’s how I would like to be. And if I can make it look so easy like he does and still be getting the work done and have everyone learning, I’d be stoked.21”

Everyone laughs, not just at Ben’s colourful way of describing things, but at his cheerful breezy tone, which leans more towards exasperation as he says,

“Like when I talk about how he embodies what he says, he talks about handover a lot, about giving students the responsibilities to take on a particular role, and he lets you do that in his tute, he lets you experience what he is talking about, which is exactly what you don’t do in most of the other tutes and that’s a real stand out, it’s such a bonus.”

“Like you said,” Sean continues, nodding at Ben, “he gives it to the students to create the knowledge, he doesn’t tell anybody the knowledge. He goes, here’s the activity, experience the activity, create this knowledge amongst yourselves, share that knowledge and then you know you can internalise it in your own way. He’s not telling us how to internalise it either.”

“And he gives you the tools, doesn’t he, to be able to do it?” Maggie interjects, prompting Sean.

21 Stoked is a colloquial expression for absolutely delighted. It was the word that Ben used to express his feelings and for this reason I have not changed it.
“He gives you the tools,” Sean nods, following Maggie’s lead. “Like the activities in his tutes, they’re not just experiential, they’re really engaging. You know, I’ve looked around and everyone just loves doing them and it’s almost like I feel like I’m in school again, and I actually love learning and you realise that you can just love doing something, just the process itself.”

He smiles, hitting a little high note on the ‘itself’.

“Then if you think about it as a teacher, how often can you give a kid a process that is meaningful, so that beyond the goal, the actual activity itself is really engaging but it has meaning so you can combine the two and then you reflect on it so that you understand the meaning afterwards.”

Ben looks at Sean. “It’s part of experiencing that handover again.”

“And it’s embodied into the tasks too, this kind of democratic belief.” Maggie goes on to recount quite a few. She really liked the one where people shared their ancestries and how everyone was included in each phase of the task. “It was like you’re talking to the person next to you, and finding out where they come from, and it’s just so much more interesting. And you know there were like fourteen different languages just in our class.”

Sean nods, and when Maggie has finished, turns tack just a little again.

“I think that equality, it’s in the way that he puts his beliefs out there too for you to assess them. He lets you question anything really, because nothing is absolute in his class, is it? There’s no absolute, there’s not even like a resolution.”

“There’s even no end to his sentences really, he just goes along slowly, without a full stop,” Ben says, moving his hand gently through the air.
“Maybe when I was thinking of authenticity with Paul, it’s that he doesn’t seem to be guarded at all,” Sean says, coming back to this theme. “And in taking a risk, he’s willing to put himself out there, not so much as to tell us his life story, but he doesn’t seem to be too concerned with maintaining this professional superior image.”

“And that’s what I like!” The conviction with which Ben utters this makes everyone laugh.

“It’s like this is my truth and I’m happy with that and if you can see that and if little creatures can see that,” Sean continues, making a funny face at Ben, “then apart from the fact that they learn to accept themselves and accept their own mistakes, it’s so much more conducive for them to take risks. Paul takes risks, he accepts himself, you take a risk, he accepts you, you take a risk, you do something wrong you accept it, you do something right, you make progress, and you accept that too.”

More nods of agreement, and a cheeky grin from Ben, who is amused by Sean’s merry go round of risk and acceptance.

“And it really is conducive to people being able to express themselves,” Sean says with emphasis. “You feel like you can put yourself out there and take risks and it’s really motivating because you’re not worried, because you can’t fail when there is no failing, there’s only learning and making mistakes and that’s good.”

There is comradely laughter as Sean points out jokingly that Ben has a lunch crumb stuck to his chin. Ben wipes it off, amid jokes of being caught on video. Linda assures him that she only has the audio turned on.

Maggie comes back to Ben’s earlier thought as the laughter subsides.

“The way he talks, it is much slower, much more kind of purposeful, so there’s lots of pausing and letting people reflect and there’s no hands, or paws, or wings in my class because there’s just these really natural pauses where people and creatures can talk. So
it is very conducive to letting you in. Like you say,” she looks over at Ben, “there’s no end to his sentences, like they just kind of stop, very gently.”

“It gives you a chance to interject if you want to but, you know, if not, I’ll move on,” Ben adds, making a rolling motion with his hands.

“You can tell from his textbook,” Maggie says, riding a convergent stream, “the way it’s written, it’s like talking to somebody and he’s got real examples of kids and critters and you can just see by their names that they don’t speak English or Evergreen and you just know straightaway that it’s really him.”

“Yeah, even though it is Dr. Paul Dufficy, he’s just an ordinary bloke,” Ben says, with an emphatic grin, “and that’s what I like!”

“I want to know what he’s done in his life to develop those qualities,” Sean says, bringing the conversation closer to home.

“Because while I think university can help you to become this sort of person, I think it takes more than that. When I look at him and Ben, he’s the same, he said to me, that’s pretty much a very good model of how I’d like to be.” He pauses, and his tone becomes more quietly intense.

“But I don’t think that I’m self-assured enough, or that strong in myself and comfortable enough with who I am yet, but I have started actively seeking stuff out to try and become stronger and more comfortable in myself and accepting.”

A thoughtful silence descends.

“It is very difficult, I think,” Sean continues, “to be willing to take risks and to be open, to be non-judgemental, and it is not something that I think comes from a course at uni so I would interested in finding out what kind of life experiences are required.”
The sun is moving further into the west and everyone becomes conscious of the time in the way that marks their return to the real.

“We’ve got a class to go to,” Maggie says, standing up.

“You know, that was interesting,” Sean says, getting up too. “Some of the things that we were talking about, I hadn’t thought of them like that before, in that much deeper way.”

Interlude Three

Like the pre-service teachers, Sean, Maggie, Ben, Lucy and Jen, Linda is interested in how Paul became the teacher he is and what has most influenced him. This is the question she asks as they settle in with a coffee on the fading red chairs in the staff common room.

“I remember when I first decided to be a primary school teacher, I was travelling in Japan, and it just kind of came to me that I’d like to work with kids. I started visualising teaching them how to make paper planes for some reason,” he says, laughing.

“But with regard to what influenced my teaching, I’d have to say the students, they’ve been my biggest influence; just interacting with them, relating to them, getting to know them, they’ve really sustained me.”

Linda nods, not just at what Paul says, but at its resonance with the experiences of Lucy and Ben, Sean, Maggie and Jen.
“Then there are those people who become your heroes, because what they say just makes so much sense. People like Leo Van Lier and Jerome Bruner, and you keep going back to them, again and again.”

Paul leans back in the chair and pauses before picking up on this thread again.

“And Vygotsky of course.”

He tells Linda how early on in his university teaching career, one of his students acquainted him with Vygotsky, and from that time on he was hooked. This hooking grew even stronger when he had kids, because he was thinking about how he could bring them in contact with things in ways that made them interested and curious, and wanting to explore.

“And that made me really realise how important growing confidence is,” he says, with quiet emphasis, “for adults as well as for kids. And how to grow confidence and curiosity together, you have to engage that positive affect.”

This makes Linda recall her own young life and how every child in her street always wanted to go to the beach with her neighbour, big Peter, because everyone had such a good time. There would be rides on the big surfboard or jumping together over the waves, followed by a double icecream with chocolate coating from the forty different flavours store in the Cronulla arcade.

“That’s why making things fun and having a sense of humour, and encouraging it in your students is so important,” Paul adds, leaning back into the chair. “And, as I get older, I guess I’ve learned to flatten out the ego, because I do want my students to be the best they possibly can.”

“So how do you go about making that in the classroom?” Linda asks, wanting to get to what might lie beyond what she has seen.
“I recently worked at a primary school where restitution was the philosophy,” he says, opening out his palms again. “So in the classroom, we were trying to meet the kids’ needs. And along with the need for power and love, and belonging and freedom, fun is a big need, but as well as meeting their needs, I want to build a group sense too.”

Linda nods, thinking about the importance of that belongingness.

“So in my tertiary classrooms here, I want to see that people’s needs are met. And for me, that comes back to those CHEAP principles of challenge, handover, engagement and assisted performance and the importance of looping content and method,” he says, gathering momentum. “If I’m going to encourage my students to engage in conversations with kids in their classrooms, then I have to make the attempt to engage in conversations here and reflect upon that with them. Likewise, if I’m going to suggest to them that the principles of handover and challenge and engagement and assisted performance are important in classrooms, then I have to do those principles.”

It is at this point that the recurring notion of authenticity pops into Linda’s head.

“One of the reasons why I think that handover is such a good principle for young teachers to have is that it allows kids to better meet those needs that are really quite diverse in a classroom. So I have to do that in my class in order for them to get a sense of what it feels like and then to begin to see the potential of what it can be like in a classroom.”

“I think you’ve just hit on what I was wanting to talk about next,” Linda says, laughing.

“I didn’t mind read these before,” Paul says, laughing too.

“I was thinking that you put a lot of emphasis on designing learning and designing tasks for diverse students, and I was going to ask what you think are the crucial elements of that, but I think that’s what you’ve been saying.”
“And, of course, you have to plan for it,” Paul says, nodding his head. “So I always do a lesson plan because I visualise the lesson prior to giving it so that I can see how the class can run, given the space that we’ve been given and the technological constraints, and all that factors into how I can create spaces within that classroom for various things to get done. And hopefully the young people I’ve worked with can reflect on the actual processes as well as the content.”

“When I’m videoing, I really notice what you do, how you move, where you sit, how you move in and sit down,” Linda says, thinking that it sounds strange when she says it like that. “So I was wondering, what other elements of that kind might be integral to creating those spaces, do you think?”

“That’s a hard one.” Paul turns towards the window and pauses for a few moments to think. “I’m trying to think about what I do consciously, that’s quite close to the surface.” He turns and looks back.

“I do consciously monitor how I talk to people generally. I try to make sure that there’s a relationship of bodies in space that’s symmetrical if possible, because I want them to experience a symmetrical conversation with someone who is their teacher. And the room design is the best combination I can come up with for the kinds of conversations and the kinds of tasks we’re going to do.” He looks out the window, thinking again. “And I try to make sure that people don’t sit alone, and that they have comfortable chairs, and those kinds of things.”

“Something that really stood out for me was the way that you smile at everyone from beginning to end,” Linda says, smiling.

Paul laughs again, whether in surprise or part embarrassment Linda is not sure. “When I reflect back on that, I see it as part of creating a classroom that’s got the greatest potential for making contact, which is very limited in many ways. And that goes with making sure that names are always out and I don’t blow that, and even when I learn most of them, I still get everyone to put out their cards because there’s some I
still haven’t learned and we’re all in the same boat. And it’s interesting because there are always students who don’t know each other’s names as I found out recently.”

“And that makes me wonder about what you notice about their responses and how you respond,” Linda says, thinking of a couple of students whose demeanour and looks are always very serious.

“You come across those kids, who are, maybe, the lonely kid or the kid that’s a little bit over the top and is consequently having difficulty with his friends and you take on these little projects and you try to work with them in that project way.”

“In ways that are kind of encouraging?”

Paul nods. “Yeah, you know, I make a particular effort to see how they’re going and greet them and try to talk to them when I get a chance during the group work, those kinds of things. It’s hard to do much beyond that because you’ve just got them for two hours every week and it’s a little bit hard to get an understanding of whether your hunch is right. But it’s a fairly safe class and I think that helps.”

Linda nods in agreement.

“I’m sure there are variations,” Paul says, “but I don’t think anyone feels nervous and I remember feeling nervous in some of the seminars I used to attend as a student, just because of the pressure or the nature of the interaction or because you think that you don’t know the stuff as well as other people.”

“That comes across very clearly in the videos I think,” Linda says, having watched them at length. “That you are very conscious of how students might feel in those situations and that you find ways to lower the stakes, by giving them time to think more and encouraging other people to add their views in, and having that option to pass.”
Paul smiles as Linda continues with her little stream of thought.

“And you do things in that way, that you’re not expecting them to be expert, so it’s like with learning grammar, they’ve got a chance to grapple with it, and they can get that sense of ongoing achievement.”

“And, you know, I work with that in mind,” Paul says. “But it’s a difficult balance because you’re still wanting people to get good at something, but with grammar, people have tortured histories or something and so they are very conscious of what they perceive to be a lack of knowledge and understanding and so what I try to do in that particular instance is to help them enjoy it more, believe it or not.”

They both laugh at the Ripley’s ending of this.

“So I try to make it fun,” Paul continues with a grin. “And we just approach it as an ongoing thing, to give that idea that you don’t have to be an expert, you just have to engage with it really and have that curious mind about language I guess.”

“The young people that I spoke with liked that you allowed them that space to grapple with ideas,” Linda says, feeding students’ experiences in, “and how you embodied what you said. They said you were authentic, which they don’t often experience.”

“Yes. I think that there is quite a bit of inauthenticity of different kinds,” Paul says, thinking through the world of the window again. “There’s the petty kind when teachers don’t want to say that something is wrong, which is more understandable, although I think you can disagree and explain a different point of view without undermining people.”

Linda nods, agreeing, thinking that it’s all in the tricky how to’s of what people do.

“Then there’s the inauthenticity where you don’t admit to not knowing, and I remember when I started out as a teacher, I was very conscious of not being an expert
in the subject at first. But I think you have to be honest and open with students and show them that it’s okay to not know, and I think that helps them to become more comfortable with that in themselves and to take that attitude of ‘Okay, I don’t know about this, but I can find out’.”

Paul looks out the window, thinking again. “It’s about cultivating that curiosity and openness to learning and that whole maybe-ness of the world.”

Linda is again thinking of the how to’s and is reminded of Sean’s question about those qualities of calmness and lack of judgement and how Paul developed them. She puts this to Paul, who laughs and tells her that he has never been driven by the thought of a career or goal achievement, but rather by doing what he enjoys and what matters to him. A big health scare a few years back really crystallised this for him.

“And I get great satisfaction out of the education of young people, and that’s why I really do enjoy teaching, and because I find it very creative, and I hope that my young students can see that, because if that sustains you, then you’ve got a sustaining career,” he adds, smiling at Linda before he glances back towards the window, looking thoughtful again.

**Interlude Four**

It is now two weeks after Linda’s first meeting with Sean and Maggie, Ben, Lucy and Jen. She wants to hear more about their experiences of Paul, and their own teaching, so she arranges to meet up once again.

Almost unanimously, except for Maggie, there are bleak tales to tell. Lucy’s teacher was controlling, and insisted that she followed her well trodden path. If Lucy deviated and the lesson went really well, her teacher responded with a put down. When the kids were excited, they were “too noisy”, so she had to take over and bring them in line. Jen
found her teacher better, but distant and felt that he didn’t care about her or what she did. Sean had a really poor model of quality teaching, which he said went through the whole school, and made him wonder “Where’s the alignment?” This experience did little to shift his belief in the need for some kind of reward and punishment, despite being philosophically far away.

Maggie alone had a stand out practicum, with a co-operating teacher whom she described as “the best”. She reassured Maggie after a disastrous art lesson, set off by her forgetting “one little thing”. Telling Maggie not to worry, she said, “It happens sometimes.” When Maggie was nervous about teaching fractions, she “was so helpful”, and kept telling Maggie, “You’re going to be great”. So Maggie “learned fractions” and “taught it like a brilliant person the next day!”

What really impresses Maggie is that “she ran such a calm, peaceful and such a loving classroom, but got so much done at the same time”. Maggie puts this down to the fact that the “kids knew that she cared about them, and when things were not going so well, she let the kids have a bad day.” For Maggie, “that was so powerful, because sometimes I have a bad day. And if the kids were having a bad day, they were allowed to sit in the classroom with her at lunch break, which you’re not really supposed to do, but she would let them sit down and do some work quietly at lunch time, and she would just give them alternatives”.

For Maggie being able to see “behind what they were doing” because “she knew all of them so well” just “empowered her [co-operating teacher] so much”. It helped her to know “what people were doing, and who was going to work well together” and “what child was going to react in what way.”

These qualities of caring and calm acceptance of mistakes remind Sean of Paul, and this leads him to say, “Maybe the most important thing I can do in teaching is to be a compassionate, caring model of a human, who is motivated to teach, to be genuinely those qualities. Because if a kid’s coming into contact with people who embody that,
like Paul embodies what he says, it not only gives you hope, it also gives you something you would like to be.”

Jen and Lucy agree that Paul and his way of teaching has inspired them in big and small ways. Lucy likes how her class has been “a little kind of family unit…very relaxed and open for anyone to share”, which is how she wants her classes to be, with kids feeling “free to ask anything.”

And while Maggie admits that “whenever they’re teaching us stuff”, she is quite often thinking that “that’s not going to work”, after having had “the most fantastic prac ever”, she is “a little bit on the opposite side now”. Nonetheless, she emphasises, along with Sean, Jen and Lucy, that pre-service teachers really “need the reality check” and much more frequent “acknowledgement that things might not work”. She just found the “practicality of [her] prac teacher really much more useful for when you’re starting out rather than all the really high theory.”

Interlude Five

It is now some months later, more than six to be exact, and Linda has caught up with Paul a number of times. She has given him unedited copies of the videos she shot in the land of the possible and the stories that she has made from them. He has given her his last semester’s evaluations from the human creatures he teaches in the real. She doesn’t bring her tape recorder along to this meeting, because it doesn’t feel like the right thing. It’s like turning a conversation into something more stilted for the sake of having the exact wording of things.

She goes up to his room for a chat and sees that he’s in the middle of packing his things. He tells her that he is leaving to go back overseas and to take up teaching English classes again.
He smiles, and gestures her in.

“Thanks for those videos by the way,” he says, as Linda takes a seat on the guest lounge, an Indonesian day-bed, surrounded by shelves of books and pictures, and fond knickknacks from different parts of the world. “I found them really helpful for my teaching.”

“I hope it wasn’t too much of an ordeal,” Linda says, both conscious and grateful of how generous Paul has been.

Paul shakes his head. “In fact, I just gave my last lecture today to the incoming students, and I think that was the first and last thing that I said, that it’s relationships that are the key to teaching and learning.”

“It’s very sad for the students that you’re leaving,” Linda says, because it is true.

“Just reading through those course evaluations and seeing students’ comments, it stands out not just that they feel like they’ve been really developed professionally, but have enjoyed being there so much too.” She looks at Paul, wondering. “What ones stood out for you?”

“There were a couple,” he says, “but one I particularly remember is, ‘I wanted to be there because he did’. It struck me what that says about being present for your students. The other one I liked is, ‘I have to buy a laminator!’”

Linda laughs, thinking that while she was in Paul’s class she had been thinking just the same thing. “I remember the first time we had a conversation, I asked you about what influenced you as a teacher, and if there was anything in particular that you thought had helped you to develop those calm non-judgemental qualities. Have you thought anymore about that?”
“The biggest one was having children for me. It really made me think, in a way that was so much more mindful, about how you talk and interact with kids, because they’re not just learning things about the world with you, you’re disposing them towards it.”

“Yes,” Linda says, in an ambivalent tone, having not only gleaned it from her readings, but more so from watching her friends with their very young children, and seeing them weave themselves into the making of others, quite often without being aware.

“And at the same time as we were having our first child, it just happened that I started working at this school out in Sydney’s West. It was a real rough and tumble school near a local housing estate, but the teachers there all really cared and I remember that we worked very hard to build a sense of family in the school.”

“How did you do that?” Linda asks.

“We brought the kids in on it,” he says, looking out the window and back. “And I think that’s fundamental. We got them doing lots of fun activities and working together on things, and we talked to them about it, about the value of working together and having good relationships and they really understood that and they valued it too. But it wasn’t just me, it was everyone involved at the school.”

The fondness of this memory inflects Paul’s words, and reminds Linda of the first school she really taught at out in Bondi, and her colleagues and students and the monthly barbeques and the feeling of friendship that ran right through that school.

“And then we were talking one day in the staffroom, and it occurred to us that most of the kids had never been swimming, so we decided to make every Friday in summer a fun swimming day. No formal lessons or races, just a chance for the kids and teachers, all in together, to muck around in the pool. And the kids really looked forward to that, and they really appreciated it too.”
He smiles at the memory again.

“And after the first week, we went out and bought sunscreen, because most of the kids didn’t have any to bring, and I remember putting it on my kids’ faces, and the other teachers doing the same thing.”

Paul’s hands spread sunscreen over the cheeks of thin air.

“And just thinking about it, that’s what care is, taking the trouble to find out what someone’s missed out on, and putting sunscreen on their face.” Paul pauses, in the midst of this memory, as another springs into view.

“There was one little boy who I’ll never forget. He came in the same uniform every day but he still came and he always had a lunch box that his mother had made. And I remember thinking at the time, she has gone to the trouble of making that, and that really struck a chord with me for some reason.”

Linda nods at Paul to go on.

“So, I think I was really lucky, starting out in that school and when my colleagues found out that I was going to be a father, one of them crocheted me a blanket, and another gave me a rattle, and, funnily enough, I still have them both. And it just felt like I was being initiated into their family, at the same time we were beginning ours.”

He laughs as another thought pops into his head. “And it was funny because sometimes we’d get student teachers, and they often came with these preconceived ideas about what the class would be like because of where we were, you could just see it in the way they approached the kids, like they were expecting them to misbehave. But what was remarkable was the way the kids didn’t respond to that; they went about doing things as we always did them, and it struck me that the kids were so much more mature than quite a lot of those teachers in so many ways.”
“So how does it strike you, the direction in which education is now heading?” Linda asks, trying to stop her own disappointment coming through.

“What really concerns me is that parents seem to be taking the dominant pedagogy of the school now, that one that is centred on competition and individual achievement, and they’re bringing it into the home. So you’ve got parents who are razzing their kids about not knowing this and having to do that, and they’re killing all those opportunities for fun and connection.”

Paul shakes his head in exasperation.

“And it should be the other way around. We should be taking the pedagogy of the home, of family, of families of the kind where care and fun and learning all go hand in hand and be bringing that into the school.”

“I agree,” Linda says, “but I’m still wondering why that seems such a hard thing to get people to want to do.”

“I don’t know,” Paul says, in almost resigned kind of way. “But I went to the sports clinic yesterday and the receptionist was just so aggressive before I’d even opened my mouth and it struck me, because I’ve spent a lot of time in Indonesia and Thailand, how differently the Thais and Indonesians occupy space. They seem to move through it more carefully and softly, much more attentively than we do.

Paul’s tone becomes more gentle as his words move along. Linda nods in agreement; she has had similar thoughts and experiences too.

“And that’s one of the reasons why I’m leaving the faculty, because I want to be in a place where people really care about human development,” Paul says, with emphasis.

“There are quite a few people here who are much more focused on their particular research interest and progressing their career path, which is very often not related to facilitating the professional development of our upcoming teachers. And for that you
need tutors and lecturers who have practical as well as theoretical knowledge, who have experience with engaging pedagogies and can really articulate that and reflect on it with pre-service teachers in open and collegial ways.”

Linda nods, hoping that in her own small way, that this is what she has been adding to.

“And there are quite a lot of tutors who don’t know how to do this,” Paul continues. “They do a degree, and then they do honours and then it’s on to a PhD. Then they become lecturers with no sustained experience of teaching in a classroom, and I just think it would be really good for some staff to actually go back and teach again in schools.”

“I was going to ask you for your ideas about what you thought the faculty could do to better help the professional development of teachers,” Linda says, laughing, “but I think that’s what you’re telling me.”

Paul laughs too. “Well, there are a couple of other things. I remember Dorothy, one of my mentors, telling me to be wary of credentialism and she was right. I think that there are a lot of teachers out there who would make excellent teacher educators because they have the practical knowledge and the experience, but they’re kept out because they don’t have PhDs. But a lot of our research students aren’t looking at teaching and learning or the professional development of teachers, they’re doing something strategic in policy or the history of education, and I just think it really takes away from giving new teachers the kinds of supports that they need.”

Linda nods, thinking back to her most recent conversations with Sean, Maggie and Jen, and Lucy and Ben.

“Don’t get me wrong,” he continues. “There are people here who care about students, you can tell by the way that they talk, but I think that we need to be leading that more, putting the students and their development at the centre of our work. I think they do that much better in social work, and I wonder just why that is.”
On this too, Linda agrees. She has been to more seminars in social work than education, because she has found them more concerned with human development and the enhancing thereof. She also likes the collegial feeling that permeates the room, making it easier to talk among strangers, who seem less bent on outdoing each other with their achievements. This is a difference in attitude that you pick up on the minute you walk into a room.

“And that reminds me of the first time that we spoke, and I remember you talked about how you worked at ‘flattening out the ego’ in your classes, and I wanted to know more about what made you conscious of that as being important,” Linda says.

Paul sits back and pauses, then leans forward again. “I think that when you are a young person, you don’t think so much about your life trajectory.” He smiles in that maybe, maybe not way.

“But when you have kids, you’re not just thinking about your trajectory but theirs, and how you want them to feel that they can be all they can be. And how you want to open them up to all kinds of possibilities.”

His hands emphasise this opening out.

“And I feel the same way about my students in my primary and tertiary classes, so I’m thinking about how I can empower them to get there. And I just find that play, that being playful, is a really important way of actualising this, because it makes things more enjoyable and less threatening and it’s not about being right, wrong or otherwise, it’s about the experience.”

“And I guess that sense of play that you work with comes into how you respond in the moment,” Linda says, in her sometimes longwinded way. “Have you got any insights on how you’ve developed that?”
“I really am genuinely being myself in class with the students,” he says, looking thoughtful again. “But I suppose I have worked on cultivating that too. Like I said, I am mindful of what I say and how I say it and I’ve really worked at being present for students and listening to them, and responding as honestly as I can.”

He pauses for a moment to think.

“I mean being honest without being evaluative or authoritarian, and responding honestly to their questions is extremely important, and they really value it too.”

Linda’s look says that she agrees.

“And I think that really planning for class helps to feed into that,” he says. “So I spend a lot of time making sure that the ‘handover’ part of each task does scaffold participation and engagement, so that they have the opportunity to come up with some interesting thoughts for you to respond to.”

Linda tells Paul how much she has learned from being in his class, and how it has made her aware again of so many things. She has been reminded of how the tasks and their nature feed into the making of relationships of many different kinds, beyond the topic at hand.

Paul nods, and looks thoughtful again.

“Just on that note, I do try to allow spaces for us to talk about things as they come up, because when students ask questions that show their interests, I like to follow up on that as much as I can.”

Linda nods, and he continues along.

“It’s like bringing in the Tim Tams and liquorice bullets, along with the tea,” Paul says. “It’s about trying to make it feel more like a family. And you know it’s funny
because students always comment on that, and I don’t think it’s about the food because I notice how students will start taking over that responsibility by bringing in their own food to share.”

On this too Linda agrees; she has had numerous classes where food and its bringing have become staple fare.

“I feel like that on the special elective,” Paul continues, “more than with any other class, because there are limited numbers and we have those refugee placements and learn grammar together while eating Tim Tams that we really get a chance to get to know each other. And I think that helps to make different things possible.”

Linda has written a poem of her experience of Paul and his class, and it is with this poem that this section ends.
Spiralling Kites

How do you respond?
How can you not?
Smile, laugh, pepper the lesson with little jokes,
Loop them in and out, back and through,
What is the nature of the work that they do?

He says, “You ever notice how people use Yeah”
Yeah really?
Yep.
Yep too. Laughter.
And yes. If I say do you want me to do that?
My wife says YES. Big letters. Assertive.
Not yeah, moving along maybe, take your time okay.
Ever notice that?
That’s getting sensitive to language.
Sensitive to words and their undulations.
Their canny knack of carrying a tune.
Sensitive to people and their story bodies.
Sensitive to the stories their voices might someday tell.
Smiling at a Cormac McCarthy in the making.

He says: having children made me think in that truly thoughtful way-
in the hope of getting them moving,
and coming to hear the whispers of trees.
In the hope of summers of grasses and greenings,
and the songs of crickets chirruping air.

I read them Lord of the Rings every night over a year.
You have to work on the voices. Frodo, Bilbo and Gandalf the Grey. And Gollum too.
Everyone loves Gollum’s voice, ‘oh yes precious, they do.’
We went to see the movie together as a family,
And my grown up kids said, great film dad, but they got the voices wrong.
They didn’t make them sound like you do.
When I thought of becoming a teacher, I imagined showing kids how to make paper planes and fly them like kites. It’s more than wonderful to be a kite-flyer: to feel something glide and weave and dance in the air. To marvel at the endless streaming of life.

Not words really, but the tunes of spiralling kites.
Linda is feeling a little nervous, this is her first research experience and she wants to do it right, in an open, exploratory way. She is off to meet a group of pre-service teachers for the first time. From their enthusiastic response to her email, she gets the feeling that they are really committed to teaching, and they are keen to participate in her research too. They have arranged to meet in a coffee shop on campus. Linda tells them that she will be wearing a bright green jumper. It is June 2008, and winter is on the cusp of settling in.

In dribs and drabs, they arrive. Mandy first, then Antony, Clara and Sasha. It turns out that everyone has experiences of teaching, among other things. Mandy tells her that she has a Bachelor’s degree in Art History and Ancient Cultures and got interested in teaching children after working in Japan teaching English to both adults and kids.

“It was great. You know, your email really hit a chord with my experiences,” Mandy says, smiling at Linda and unclasping her hands.

“I’m a Buddhist, you see, and in Buddhism, it’s not just the feelings you have, but the ones you breathe in that are totally integral to who you are in that moment, you know what I mean?”

“Absolutely,” Linda says, thinking of those times when the only thing she could think of was her own disintegrating breath.

“Like when I’m anxious or when kids are anxious, their breathing changes and it’s really hard to concentrate and do things well. And if you’re anxious, your anxiety can spread to the children as well.”
Linda asks Mandy about where she has been teaching, and she tells her that she’s working at an ESL school where the curriculum is prescribed and oriented to exams. She says that it’s hard, but she tries to make things as much fun for the students as she can.

“And you know what I noticed,” Mandy says, laughing but sad at the same time. “When they do get a chance to have some fun, they go mad. Like rabbits sprung out of a cage.”

Linda tells Mandy she has intimate knowledge of this too, not the mad rabbits, but the experience of working with prescriptive curriculums, and losing that sense of fun too.

“And it really is awful,” Mandy says, “because it’s so important in a learning environment for students to feel comfortable and happy. And it’s a Buddhist thing that when people are laughing, it’s a sign of good relationships and it helps to create them too.”

Antony arrives and there are greetings and introductions and then Linda asks if there is anything that they would like to know.

“I was just wondering,” Antony says, in a friendly tone, “your email says that you’re exploring the role of affect. So I was wondering what you mean by affect exactly?”

“Me too,” Linda laughs. “I’m still trying to understand it myself! I’m trying to look not so much at what happens in class in terms of individual feelings, but more as kind of the feelings that people experience in conversations and in the doing of different kinds of activities, and what makes those feelings possible, you know what I mean.”

“Like the classroom climate, the way the class feels.”

Linda nods. “Yeah, and how it is created between people, and how the teacher does what she does, and how that feeds into it too.”
“I get it,” Antony says, looking from Mandy to Linda. “I’ve been doing a lot of teaching lately, and I was just thinking how much energy, like emotional energy, you need, and you need to keep giving to get that kind of feeling going in your class.”

Mandy nods in agreement. “It’s like the kids pick up on your energy, on the qualities in your energy and I notice if I’m feeling sick or a little bit off, it really rubs off on them.”

At the point of rubbing, Antony laughs.

“Sorry, I was just thinking while you were saying that,” he says. “Because it’s true that kids really pick up on the energy that you’re giving out, so I have this thing where before I go into class, like if I’ve had a bad day, I give myself a sort of emotional enema just to clear out any negative energy that might be hanging around.”

Linda and Mandy laugh, as do Sasha and Clara who have just arrived on the tail end of Antony explaining his cure.

“And I was thinking about energy in another way too,” Mandy says, moving along. “Because when I’m teaching, I find there’s so much energy, you need to really listen to the kids so you can work out where they’re coming from, and give them just what they need, right when they need it.”

Everyone nods at Mandy and her description, which is truly spot on.

“And that responding is just so important,” Antony says. “Kids really notice it, although adults do too…”

He stops, letting his thought trail off.
“You expect adults to be more understanding,” Sasha says, jumping in. “But then maybe…” She trails off for a minute, then comes back again. “You’re right that responsiveness matters for adults too.”

Now that everyone is here, they work out a day for weekly meetings over the upcoming weeks.

“So before these meetings, what should we be thinking about?” Sasha asks.

Linda laughs, not knowing exactly what to say. “I want to keep it open, but I’ll email you some questions before and after your classes with Robyn for you to think about before we meet.”

She smiles and pauses for a minute to gather up just the right words.

“I’m wanting to get a sense of how you feel in class, and your experiences of different activities, and Robyn herself.”

“I was just thinking,” Antony says. “How do you know what people are feeling, you know what I mean, how do you tell?”

“Well,” Linda says, looking at Antony with a somewhat self-conscious smile. “There’s that sense that you get from people’s faces and expressions, from whether they’re laughing and involved and interested, you know what I mean?”

Sasha is nodding, eager to speak. “Like with kids, when they like you and they feel they can trust you, they’ll run up to you and do things to be close to you. They’ll ask you questions, all that kind of stuff.”

“That’s just made me think,” Clara chimes in. “I do some volunteer work at this after hour childcare centre in Newtown, and there was this little kid who was in my group
last year, and he has Asperger’s syndrome and you know how kids who have it tend to develop certain routines or patterns that they get really obsessive about?”

Everyone nods.

“Well Scotty’s thing was making signs. He’d make them according to themes like food or animals, and he would use letters of the alphabet too. Like one day, he was making signs with foods starting with J, so he wanted a picture of jelly. So I started keeping a look out for pictures that fitted with his themes, and he’d get so excited when I gave them to him. Anyway, this year he was in my group again, and he came straight up to me and asked if I had a picture for him, because I’m the only one who helps him with his signs.”

“That’s something, that he remembered you,” Sasha says. “Because I’ve worked with kids that have autism too.”

Sasha looks at Mandy, Antony and myself, and then goes on to explain about her experiences as a teacher’s aide with children with autism spectrum. She recalls how her main teacher became annoyed with her for not doing things according to plan, after Sasha had created an activity for her group which they clearly enjoyed.

“I’ve heard similar things from new teachers out in schools,” Mandy says. “Some people have told me that you can get sent to a school and the culture can be very overbearing and you are just expected to teach in this certain way, and it just makes it very hard, especially when you know other ways are better.”

There is some concerned discussion of the potluck that is teaching in schools between Mandy, Antony, Sasha and Clara.

“So everyone has some experiences of teaching, then?” Linda says, as their discussion comes to an end. “What things really stand out for you?”
“I went overseas for a while,” Clara says. “And I was in Chile, travelling and learning Spanish, and I did some volunteer work at a school called ‘Crearte’ which was for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. And it was amazing because all the learning was based around the kids getting involved in really creative things.”

Sounds of pleasant surprise from Sasha, Antony and Mandy accompany Clara’s telling of her story thus far.

“The unit I worked on revolved around creating a play, researching it, writing it, practising it, designing the props, all those kinds of things, and then putting it on. In another unit, they used dance. So, with a dance teacher the kids choreographed a story, and they designed the costumes and helped to make them and all those kinds of things. It was such a great experience, and it really made me want to become a teacher.”

“We don’t do enough of that kind of thing here, do we?” Sasha says, to a chorus of nods. “And I just don’t understand it, because creativity is central to learning; it’s central to everything.”

It feels as if they could keep talking for ages, as everyone is eager to share stories of experiences, both bad and good, without reserve or hesitation, and from the beginning, Linda feels that easy affinity sparking between members of this group.

**Interlude Two**

The students are streaming into the lecture theatre, taking up a front, middle or back position on the pews. Some students look keen, others less so, or perhaps they are tired. It is early and it is winter after all. It is the first lecture of the four-week series for Masters of Teaching students in Creative Arts pedagogy. Robyn, the lecturer, arrives, arms full of posters, paintings, andarty looking things. She runs up the stairs to the

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22 ‘Crearte’ is Spanish for ‘creating yourself’.
back of the lecture theatre to check on the slide machine, then runs back and sorts her stash of drawings, overheads, and arty looking things into piles. The stalls are now filling with people, conversation, and the aroma of coffee.

At just on three minutes past nine, Robyn moves close to the front row, and then across a little to the left, so as to look at as many of the hundred or so faces of students as she possibly can.

“Hello everyone, my name’s Robyn Gibson, and you’re going to be seeing me regularly for the next four weeks as we delve into the visual arts together.” She smiles and crosses the floor, looking up into the rows behind.

“Now, I want you to bear in mind that it’s not four weeks to turn you into a Picasso.”

A wave of laughter ripples through the aisles. “It’s four weeks where we’re going to connect you to your creative potential.”

This time the ripples of laughter have a touch of nervous twinge.

“So for the next four weeks, I want you to re-engage that feeling of fun and excitement and enthusiasm that you’re going to experience with a primary class when you mention the word ‘ART’.”

Robyn smiles and moves back into the centre of the room, looking around at the stalls, making contact again with as many of the hundred and something faces as she can.

“So, I don’t want this to be a painful experience for any of you and I know,” she looks into the faces of the group of attentive young women squeezed along the front row, “I know that some of you are sitting here and you might be saying, ‘Oh please don’t ask me to draw anything!’”
She nods as a wave of nodding breaks out in the stalls, accompanied by more ripples of laughter and nerves.

“And there’s a reason for that, for why some of you have lost your confidence and you’re thinking, ‘Oh God, I’m not artistic, I’m not talented, so for the next four weeks what I want you most to realise and to experience is that art is something that you can enjoy.”

Linda looks around the room and sees that Robyn has captured people’s attention, as a nebulous ripple of near relief spreads through the aisles.

“And just to let you know right from the outset, we’ve only got four weeks unfortunately and it’s not enough time, so we’ve got to make the most of it.” Robyn walks up the left hand side stairs to make eye contact with the students sitting up at the back.

“So we’re going to be learning about art, but,” she smiles, stressing the ‘but’, “it’s going to be interactive, you’re going to be moving, and getting together and doing things, and in the workshops it’s going to be hands on and you’re going to experiment and you’re going to just enjoy the whole process.”

Another wave of nervous laughter ripples through the room.

“Now, we’ve just got a little bit of housekeeping to do,” Robyn says, and begins talking the group through their assignments. The main assignment is a portfolio collection of the creative work that they do in the course.

“This is going to be the start of a resource for you that you can add to.” Robyn goes on to read a thank you email from Kelly, a former student, for her wonderful resource. Kelly relates how her portfolio became the envy of the teachers’ staffroom after a fabulous lesson on Cubist portraits. Her co-operating teacher tells of how Kelly’s
example of one that she’d done got the children all excited and helped to make it more fun.

“So into your portfolio goes everything that we do here. There are no ten thousand word essays on Cubism, but you might get to do a surprise version of a Cubist portrait or two.”

Robyn crosses the room again to look into the faces of those sitting on the right hand side, dancing up energy in her stride.

She looks to the left and says in a slower, even paced tone. “A lot of you may have brought into this room a whole lot of baggage about art. Some of you may have done it for the HSC, some of you may have dumped it after you saw the person sitting next to you do a better drawing than you, or maybe your parents said, ‘What are you going to do with art? Why don’t you do economics or extension maths?’”

A number of girls in the second last row are starting to grin at the ‘better drawing’, while the boys at the back on the far right let out a grunt of amusement as Robyn reaches the ‘con’ in economics.

“So we’re just going to start doing a bit of unpacking and sharing of our ideas and experience. So form a group with the people closest to you.” She stretches out her arms, gathering up groups across the first three rows.

“And here is the question I’d like you to think about,” she says, writing the question in large letters on the board.

“What is art?”

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23 The HSC is short for the Higher School Certificate. It is an externally examined state-wide exam taken in the final year of high school in the state of New South Wales. It is on the basis of these results that students are offered or denied entry to courses at university.
She turns back to look her group in the eyes again.

“And when I say think about, I mean like jotting down whatever pops into your head.”
She holds up a large piece of paper in her right hand. “And I want you to put your names down on this, so pass it around.”

There is instant commotion, as an iridescent beetle wings across the room.

In less than a winking of its eye, the entire class has shifted again into a room that looks akin to a music hall in a forest. Large, round and cavernous. The walls are covered in drawings, paintings, and other works of hand and brush. There are reds, greens and blues, silver, tangerine and lemon hues. Robyn smiles, gathering up the paper of names, now full of the signatures of otherworldly creatures who have ever so nonchalantly joined in the group.

“We’re in the realm of the possible again, so discuss your ideas with the creatures beside you,” Robyn says, amid greetings around the hall. The waterdragons wave their tails, the mountain butterflies flutter their crimson scrolled wings, and a pair of land-faring dolphins flip themselves over and land on their feet.

As the buzz settles, Robyn moves back to the front again.

“Okay, so, I’m just going to call out a couple of names from my list here and two of you brave and bedazzling folks are going to be our scribes. Could Clara and Phillip come down the front?”

There is laughter in the stalls, whistling from the emerald-bearded whipperoolls, and clapping from the sprinting penguins as Phillip sprints down the front in less than a blink.

Robyn gently takes Clara and positions her near the first board of glass, Phillip on the second.
“Okay, so, what have we got?” Robyn’s wondering gaze moves around the hall.

“Visual art is expression, it’s critique, it’s my garden.”

There are sounds of ‘Oohh’ at the ‘my garden’ from the windsurfing snails.

“How are we going, scribes? My garden, did you get that?” Robyn says, turning to look at the group in the middle aisle. “What about you folks?”

“Um, visual art can be abstract, or representative, and it’s everywhere,” squeaks a blue-breasted bandicoot waving his nose like a pointer.

“Everywhere, I like that. Another one?”

“We said, ‘political, evocative, beautiful, and fun’.”

“Great.” Robyn pauses, giving the scribes some time to get the words down. She moves through the side aisle into the centre and then turns her attention the middle rows.

“Okay, what about you guys?”

“It’s experimental, aesthetic and tactile.”

Five minutes on and there are two lists of concepts as long as the forest floor. Robyn moves further sideways to look out over the entire hall.

“Now, let me just say this to you folks,” Robyn says, moving into the centre again. “When you are in your art class of twenty-seven year one little creatures and they’re having a visual arts experience, what does your class look like?”
There are instant responses from all around. “Messy,” from a pink-crested creature at the back.

“Noisy,” from a girl in the front row.

“Full of paints, papers and feathers,” from a crooning cockatoo.

Robyn nods. “Yes, they’re having fun. Yes it’s very creative and spontaneous, and it takes a lot of organisation,” she says, looking slowly up and down at as many faces as she can, pausing at a ‘lot’.

“But if you do it well, it will be one of the most brilliant lessons and you’ll remember it and your little critters will remember it and they’ll go home to mum and dad and they’ll talk about it, and they’ll show them what they’ve made.”

This sparking into the future sends shivers around the room.

“Let me ask you this, if you went home, how many of you think that mum and dad, in that box of treasures that they have stashed up in the attic or in that old tree in the forest, has a drawing or an artwork of yours? Show of paws, hands and fins?”

Limbs go up all over the room.

“Now leave your paw up if you think that mum and dad have kept one of your maths tests?”

The ripple of laughter that accompanies the lack of showing of limbs is strangely freeing.

“Why is that do you think?”
“Because it’s emotional, because it’s something of you,” one of the critters down the front offers.

“Yes,” Robyn nods, smiling into the face of a blue-breasted bandicoot whistling at the back.

“And this is how powerful visual art is, so it’s not going to take very much to engage your class, because it is so enjoyable, it is fundamental.” The force of her words causes the soft-hearted lions in the front row to blink.

“And for those of you who’ve lost confidence,” she says, tone softening, “that’s what we’ll be doing, getting you to reconnect, to enjoy art once again.”

Turning back to the two scribes who are still listening from the glass wall, she says, “Okay, let’s give these folks a big hand.”

Clara and Phillip head back to their seats to the beat of hands, fins and wings.

“Now let’s try a different question.” Robyn looks at the question on the glass wall and adds the word ‘education’.

“Okay now, form a buzz group of three and then let’s hear what you think about visual arts education and what it is.”

A buzz grows while Robyn moves around the room, stopping in to chat. When it recedes, new scribes are called, and another list of words gathers on the board. Up goes ‘teaching skills and techniques’, and Robyn tells them how they’ll learn more about that in the lecture the following week. Then follows ‘therapy’, which Robyn says they’ll get to feel firsthand when working with clay. The mere mention of the word ‘clay’ gets the mud-hopping crabs’ pincers clattering away.
One of the waterdragons says ‘unpacking’, and Robyn moves in, asking what he means. He says it’s like when you look at some roaming rock art or a beehive cathedral from the long ago past, and how it tells a story of that time in its own way. This makes a girl up the front say that she feels that’s true of all the curriculum, from literature to music, to maths. Robyn nods emphatically and says, “And that’s one of the most wonderful things about being a primary school teacher, you’re not forced to divide things up into this and that; you can teach the whole creature, and embed that creativity in everything you do.”

She turns back to the glassboard and waves at the scribes. “Okay, let’s give these guys a hand.”

Applause fills the room.

“Now, this time I want you to turn to the critter next to you and share an art experience that you’ve had. It could be something positive, or it could be negative. It could be from high school or when you were a little critter, but try to think about what makes it stick in your mind.”

A companionable buzz grows as stories are eagerly shared, and Robyn moves up and down, listening, nodding and prompting, and gathering insights on her way around.

As the buzz ebbs, she looks up and says, “Okay now I want each pair to get together with the pair sitting beside you. But,” she adds, pausing for emphasis, and her voice comes out with a little kick, “you’re not going to tell your own story to your pair, you’re going to tell your partner’s story. Horrible or fantastic, its telling is down to you.”

The buzz grows again filled with sounds of hush and surprise, as Robyn works her way around again from the other side. Just on its wane, she moves into the centre and claps her hands.
“We’re kind of running out of time, so I’ve asked a couple of groups to select a tale that they think the rest of us really should hear. But if anyone else has a story they want to share, there’ll be time to listen before the end.”

Robyn looks at the group in the centre front.

“And the creature who owns the story is going to tell it, so can the storyteller stand up and speak in your biggest of big voices.”

A young woman with blonde hair pulled back in a pony stands up and turns to face the waiting hall.

“When I was in year five, I did sewing and textiles and we were making these dolls, and I remember how I embroidered this doll on the front with all these little flowers,” she says, making stitches in the air. “And a few months ago I gave it to my two-year-old daughter who just loves it.”

Ooohhhs of delight swish round the hall.

The young woman continues, “I couldn’t draw flowers, I couldn’t paint flowers, but I learned how to stitch them, and I guess, and I hadn’t thought about it this way before, but that’s making art.”

Robyn looks up towards the middle rows and says, “This group here, can you tell us your tale?”

Another young woman stands up. “My first art experience was in pre-school and I still remember it. My teacher came over and said ‘Do you want to do a painting now?’ and I said ‘No!’ and she said, ‘You can just sit in the naughty chair then.’ And then I think that she forgot about me, because I sat there for half an hour!”

Gasps of horror, outrage, and a shiver of something akin passes through skins.
As she sits down, Robyn nods towards the pink preying mantas, front legs up and slouched at the back. Standing on his hind legs, he says, “I don’t remember art in primary school, but in high school, I chose to do art up to year ten, because I was a bit of a lazy boots, and I thought art was a bludge subject. Anyway, for my major work, I did this painting and it was so bad that I burnt it.”

The mantas scratches his chin to the sounds of surprise.

“But I kept a little piece of it, just one corner and I carry it in my pencil box.” He holds up what looks like a large block of wood. “Just as a reminder.”

He sits down again, leaving the story up in the air.

“Thank you.” Robyn smiles at the mantas, and then looks across towards a young woman in the centre of the hall. “And this group?”

“I went to an exhibition of contemporary indigenous art a few years ago, and it was unusual because they used a lot of colour, and I was at a time in my life where I had no direction, where I really didn’t know where I was going and this one piece just blew me away.”

A shudder runs through the note in her ‘blew’ as she opens up the air with her hands.

“It represented this waterhole in these incredible colours and there were all these lines coming out from the waterhole in all the different directions that the people who belonged to this land went. And I just looked at it, and it was the first time that a painting moved me to tears.”

A flash of this feeling infuses the hall.

The young woman grins at the faces around her. “And now I have that painting on my wall.”
Some gasps of wonder at this presumed end.

“Not the original though, just a copy!”

“Nice ending,” Robyn says, laughing. “Okay, does anyone have any other stories they would like to share?”

People and creatures get up and more stories of woe and delight enter the hall. When the sharing is finished, Robyn walks slowly back into the centre front again. “Before we go, I just want to read you this.”

She touches the glass wall and an image of what looks like a hat appears. She picks up her book and begins:

“Once when I was six years old I saw a beautiful picture in a book about a primeval forest called True Stories. The eyes of the creatures around the room light up.

Robyn continues. “It showed a boa constrictor swallowing an animal…I then reflected deeply on my adventures in the jungle and in turn succeeded in making my first drawing.” Robyn gestures towards the image.

“I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups and asked them if my drawing frightened them. They answered: ‘Why would anyone be frightened of a hat?’” Robyn touches the glass wall again and a second image appears. This one shows a boa-constrictor swallowing an elephant.

Robyn continues to read. “My drawing did not represent a hat. It was supposed to be a boa-constrictor digesting an elephant. So I made another drawing of the inside of the boa-constrictor to enable the grown-ups to understand. They always need explanations. [It] looked like this,” Robyn gestures towards the second image.

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24 This excerpt is taken from *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
“The grown-ups then advised me to give up my drawings of boa-constrictors…and to devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. Thus it was that I give up a magnificent career as a painter at the age of six… I had been disappointed by the lack of success of my drawing[s]. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves and it is rather tedious for children to have to explain things to them time and again.”

**Interlude Three**

Linda meets her group of teachers each Tuesday in one of the rooms, upstairs in the new education building at it stands in the real. The room seems grey, square, and somehow uninspiring after the halls filled with colour, where the creations of creatures working alone and together speak from the walls. Linda wonders why classrooms in the real are often so grey, bland and cell like. Is it because the presence of colour or a hint of the flavours of people might distract from the ‘business’ of learning at hand, or is it just that bizarre way in which economic efficiency can’t help but look forlorn?

The group arrives together, breaking off her reverie. It is great to see how energised everyone looks, as they sit round in the best circle they can, amid the rows of desks. There are smiles and greetings and slurpings of tea and coffee and some almost mischievous looks. Mandy has emailed to say she can no longer come to their meetings due to working commitments, but another interested teacher, Emma, has joined the group.

“How is everyone enjoying the art classes?” Linda asks, rolling the ball.

“How, really good,” Emma says, smiling.

There are nods and echoes of ‘great’ from the rest of the group.
“Robyn’s lectures are just fantastic!” Clara says. “She actually gets people to come up the front and participate, which normally doesn’t happen in lectures. Normally you can just switch off, but Robyn just gets everyone involved.”

“It made everyone pay attention even more,” Emma adds. “Like I was thinking, ‘Oh maybe I’ll be called up.’ And you know she got a lot of feedback from those questions, with everyone contributing.”

“I was one of the ones who was called up,” Clara says, laughing. “And I broke the chalk!”

“When you guys first went up,” Antony says, “I felt nervous for you…I was like ‘oh no’, when people were calling out those really difficult to spell words.”

It is Sasha’s chuckle not just at Antony’s words, but his expression, that sets Clara, Emma and Linda off too.

“But for me actually, at the beginning of class, even before everything started, I was just sitting beside Nicky, and I was telling her about how I was nervous about the class itself,” Antony continues, after a short intake of breath, “just talking about my own art skills, because I’m not a good artist. Like when I draw pictures on the board, I draw stick figures; it’s a joke, and the kids always say, ‘Oh that’s so bad!’”

There is more laughter of the sympathetic kind to fill in Antony’s pause.

“But I felt that Robyn, I felt that she made something change for me in the class.”

A note of conviction changes Antony’s voice. “I felt that she addressed that fear immediately when she was talking about how everyone has some skill in art and people have just lost their confidence and I was thinking – that’s me!!”

Antony’s fervent ending makes everyone laugh.
“And then she identified other people and people shared their stories and I felt more comfortable...after that point. So that was a big change for me. It was a big thing, probably the biggest thing.”

“I was nervous about drawing as well,” Clara says, looking at Antony. “But having worked at the aftercare centre, where we do a lot of craft activities, I found that I can be creative, I don’t have to draw like an expert, just help the kids develop their own skills. We did this day called box construction, and they came up with the most creative things and I didn’t have to make a box, because their creativity is just amazing!”

“So that notion, that definition, which got drummed into me from schooldays that if you can’t paint, if you can’t draw except stick figures, then forget it, you’re not artistic, is just so wrong!!” Emma says emphatically.

“And that’s part of what comforted me,” Antony says. “Because we talked about it and I thought, ‘Oh wait a second, yeah, there are some other things that I’ve done which I don’t suck at but normally I don’t think about them as art’, whereas drawing, I think, ‘Oh, I just suck at this.’”

Antony’s humorous descriptions of his talents and lack thereof bring on a chorus of chuckles again.

Linda looks round the group, who have now fallen silent for the first time. “So how was the workshop?”

“Great fun!” says Emma, amid echoes of agreement from Sasha, Clara and Antony.

“She got everyone involved again,” Clara says. “It was really a relaxed fun atmosphere. I almost felt like I was a child, and there was everything that it brought up.”
Sasha leans forward to see everyone better. “I think it did bring up just that sense of joy you get when you do something fun in school but seeing the value behind it, like as a teacher, as well as a student, and having both ends of that, I think Robyn did that so well.”

“How did she do that?” Linda asks.

“Well, like Clara said before, she just got everyone involved,” Sasha says, looping back to the beginning. “She had us do a Pictionary kind of game, where we were divided into groups of four and we were each given some letters of the alphabet and everyone had to draw a Pictionary-style picture of a word that described a quality art teacher and, you know, you could be very imaginative.”

“What letter did you have?” Emma asks.

“Mine was T, so I had thoughtful, and I drew a person’s head with a thought bubble,” Sasha says, her hands drawing a bubble around her head.

“And then, I drew a full glass,” Sasha smiles, using her hands again. “And people went in all different directions, but the feeling in the room was amazing, because everyone was so involved, and it was so much fun. And we had a little competition at the end to see which team could guess each other’s words. But then, just to step back and go ‘oh yeah we’re doing like arts pedagogy’, and just looking at it from a teacher’s perspective, it was thrilling to see everyone engaged like that.”

“I think Robyn’s great,” Emma continues. “She comes across as really professional.”

Linda asks what professional means to Emma, and Emma says that Robyn is well prepared, and her lessons give them the experience as well as a model of what creative art teachers can do. She adds that Robyn clearly knows her subject and wants them to come to know it too, unlike other lecturers who just stand up the front and tell them what they should do.
“I got that sense too,” Antony says. “I felt like the atmosphere was very comfortable, and friendly and engaging, but she still had an air of she knows what she’s talking about.”

“She’s got an air of authority,” Sasha says. “For me that comes through.”

“But it’s still like equal,” Antony adds. “So I feel like I can learn something.”

Emma looks around the group. “I think she really tapped into our emotional side, because it was quite confronting for a lot of us. You know, I was thinking, ‘Are we going to have to draw and paint from day one? Because I’m checking out if we do!’”

Emma laughs at her own expression, and Clara, Sasha and Antony join in.

“But, she made it okay,” Sasha says, as the chuckles dim. “She made it okay to say like I’ve had terrible experience of art, and this is what happened.”

“She was tapping into our emotional side again,” Emma says, with a grin.

“I wish we had longer for the workshops,” Clara says, thinking out aloud. “It’s not a very long course, it’s only four weeks.”

This is something on which everyone fervently agrees. Emma says that she’d like extra workshops and that she’d be prepared to come in on her weekends, because her background is in business and all that she is comfortable with is paper and pens. She would like to learn how to design more of those activities that foster children’s creativity in all its different modes.

“I think that’s kind of wonderful in a way because you’re going to be discovering that with all your kids,” Sasha says, smiling at Emma, who is not quite convinced.
“And I want that,” Emma says, in an emphatic tone. “But I would like to know more because I want to take some of the theory about differentiating your activities based on the different types of learners that you’ve got.”

“I totally agree with you,” Antony says, nodding at Emma. “Even though at the beginning I said that I was nervous and after the first class I felt better, and then after the first workshop I felt nervous again because now I know that there’s a whole lot out there so I’m excited, but I feel like there’s a lot for me to learn.”

“That’s why I’d like to have weekend workshops,” Emma says, again. “And I’d pay anything just to come and work with materials and eat my lunch in that art room upstairs and feel comfortable, because I feel really uncomfortable there. There are high stools, there is paint everywhere, and there are all these models scattered around the walls of the room.”

Emma begins to laugh at how she has described things, and Clara, Antony and Sasha join in.

“I don’t have that much experience either,” Clara says, in her gentle voice. “But when I was at aftercare, the supervisor said to me, ‘You do the face painting today’ and I freaked out and I said I can’t do that because I’d never done it before. Anyway, I did it and one of the kids, a seven year old, said he wanted a skull and…and on the spot I said, ‘Can you draw it for me?’ So he drew it with a crayon and I just copied what he had drawn.”

“Great idea!” Emma says, although her tone gives away her uncertainty still.

“And when the next student came along, I’d loosened up a bit, and she wanted a dragon, so I got her to draw it for me and then I realised that they weren’t actually as critical as I thought, and you know they really loved what I drew, but it’s like overcoming that hurdle in yourself,” Clara says, as their second conversation draws to an end.
Interlude Four

Linda meets up with her group the following Tuesday and the first thing she notices is the mix of anxiety and anticipation rolling off them. Everyone is getting ready for their upcoming practicum. There have been pre-visits, and now wonderings of what to do are, first and foremost, in everybody’s minds.

“I’m a bit concerned actually,” Antony says to Linda and Clara. Sasha and Emma are yet to arrive. “When I asked my co-operating teacher about what she had planned, she really didn’t give me much information, so I feel like it’s much harder to prepare.”

“Yeah, I’m the same,” Clara says, nodding. “On my visit, I felt really comfortable with the kids, and that I’d feel comfortable teaching them, but just what to teach, that’s what I’d like to know.”

Sasha arrives in time to catch Clara’s concerns.

“So ask him!”

“I did!”

“He wasn’t forthcoming then?”

“He was very…” Clara pauses, looking for the right word. “He had to leave at quarter past three and so the whole day just went by, and then at the break, I said I need some guidance about what to plan, so he said he’d try and get ready for next week.”

More talk ensues around their upcoming prac. At the first lull in the conversation, Linda says, “It’s great that you’re all really excited.”
“And nervous too!” Sasha says, and the looks on their faces say that Antony and Clara agree.

“I had a really good experience yesterday on my visit,” Clara says, changing tack.

“We were doing creative writing and my co-operating teacher was working with a student named Jack, so I was wandering around chatting to the kids, and this boy, Andy, had his head on the table. So I went up and introduced myself and said, ‘What do you want to write about today?’ And he said, ‘I’m not going to write anything.’ So I asked if I could take a look at what he’d written before and on the first page he had a picture of himself with a sad kind of face. Then he told me that he had just moved from another school.”

Clara’s face saddens too.

“It just showed how sad he felt and how he missed his friends,” she says, before her tone hardens a bit. “But my co-operating teacher said that he was lazy because he didn’t want to do his work, and when I saw that, I thought well of course he is, he’s emotional, he doesn’t feel like he belongs!”

Sasha and Antony nod their heads.

“And he was telling me that he didn’t really have any friends, and when I was asking him about what he liked doing, he started colouring in his fingernails and I said why don’t you write about colouring in your fingernails? And then all of sudden it was like his hand was a spider going across the page, and I felt that I had connected with him on that emotional level.”

“That might be the first step for him to start feeling more comfortable in this environment,” Antony adds, looking up at the door and mouthing ‘hello’ to Emma who has just arrived. There are more greetings and catch-ups on practicum news, before a new silence falls.
“When I was listening to the discussions that we had last week,” Linda says, looking around, “one of the things I noticed was you were talking about feeling nervous. And I was wondering whether you think that a lot of other people felt the same way?”

“In the art workshop last week, I felt there was quite a bit of anxiety around drawing,” Sasha says. “And reflecting on your questions, I wrote that I felt happy that I’d gotten to see a different side of some people, who are quite willing to do anything, willing to get up in class, but who would then kind of cower a little bit and go, ‘Oh my god, I’m making a mess of it!’”

“I think it’s competitive people, or people who like to be in control. It’s a prelude to the possibility that you might not appear as competent or as clever as you do in other subjects,” Emma says, taking a different view. “So it’s not that you actually mean it, I think it’s just a shield.”

“I have never really experienced that before in this class, or I’m too naïve to think that that’s what’s going on,” Sasha says, and it is clear from their nods that Clara and Antony agree.

“I think this course has great people,” Emma says, responding to Sasha’s tone. “And that we’re all quite privileged to be here, but I think by nature we have to be somewhat competitive to actually be in this course.”

“Oh I disagree!” This is Sasha’s exclamation, but Antony and Clara’s faces indicate the same. “Why do you think that?”

“I think to actually go through the HSC, to qualify, to get an undergraduate degree, and then want to go and do a masters and have a change of career, I think there is a certain implied confidence in your own abilities, I don’t mean competitive, in a pejorative way,” Emma says, clarifying her view.
“I feel most of us, especially those of us over thirty, we’ve been on a pretty long journey to get here,” Sasha says with such feeling it is clear she is speaking from within. “And we’ve made this decision, and it’s a pretty life-affirming thing to say this is what I want to be doing. I don’t know how that relates to what you said,” Sasha finishes, half laughing at losing track of her thought.

“I think it’s parallel, but I don’t mean competitive in a negative way,” Emma says, realising that the word itself is imbued with unpleasant connotations for Sasha, Clara and Antony. “I don’t mean competitive as in against somebody else.”

“That’s what I thought you meant,” Sasha says, more softly, and Emma shakes her head.

Emma tells them that from her experience in business, that competitive impetus is part and parcel of what people do. Sasha comments that this is what frames how Emma sees things and her readings of other people too.

“I think when I’ve expressed anxiety or nervousness about things, it’s been genuine in terms of I don’t feel good about doing this,” Antony says, in a deliberative tone. “And I think a lot of it relates back to previous experiences, like when Robyn was going through the different stages of art, I saw okay, I think I’m in this stage right now.”

“You sort of knew it,” Emma says in a way that indicates she feels the same.

“That’s right, I could see it!” Antony’s voice becomes more intense. “But it was nice how she showed that progression, because you can see what stage you’re at and what you need to progress to the next stage, because I thought all my birds have a human face.”

Antony’s reference to one of the key principles in children’s drawing and its stages makes everyone laugh.
“That’s why I need to be a little more realistic,” he adds with a grin.

“I really liked the way that Robyn described it in the lecture,” Clara says, coming back to the original tack. “She wasn’t judgmental, I think she did it really well.”

“And she said that it’s not your fault,” Emma says, continuing on Clara’s tack. “That whoever was teaching you at that time should have helped. And she showed us, look at this seven year old and look at this seven year old, and look at the difference that comes from the teacher taking a child and helping them learn the skills. It was like when she divided the page into quarters with us in the portrait workshop, and showed us this is where your ears sit and your nose and your eyebrows and she really got us all doing stuff.”

From the faces of Clara, Sasha and Antony, it is clear that they feel this way too.

“Did you talk about the activity where she had a student put the glove on and close their eyes and guess which people were who from touching their face?” Emma asks.

“No,” Linda says. “What did you think about that?”

“I wrote something down,” Sasha says, looking at her notes. “I just think that any experience that can be applied to the classroom is just so incredibly worthwhile and that was something that gave you an activity that you could use from kindergarten or even pre-school. I also thought that it aimed to get across this idea that art is tactile and that it requires skill in all senses of the word, so it was good, but I went for people’s hair straight away, because I felt quite conscious of touching them, and I don’t like people touching my face very much.”

As she says this, Sasha’s hands go to pat her cheeks.

“And I felt quite conscious of invading space, even though it was about relationships and creating trust. I think it really worked on a lot of different levels, that activity.”
“It was the same situation when we were actually sketching,” Clara says, joining in. “The person that I was drawing I don’t know very well, and it was interesting because it’s only been this term that we’ve started talking, but it was just weird, it was like okay now I’m drawing you. But then I started looking at her face, and now I’m looking at people’s faces in a different way.” She finishes with a laugh.

“I actually thought the drawing part was really good, although it did trigger a lot of things in me when we started it, like, I can’t do it, but then I kind of relaxed into it and it was okay,” Emma says. “It was great having that structure.”

“How did you feel?” Emma asks Antony, who has been listening thoughtfully throughout this latest tack.

“Again, I was a little nervous, but after going through the workshop I felt the same thing too,” he says, nodding at Clara. “And now I look at people and I look at the shape of the face and even in the science class later on that day I started sketching.” He laughs. “I shouldn’t say who.”

The thought of who it could be gets them all laughing again.

“But I was like, I’m going to see if I can actually do this and I thought, ‘Hey that’s not bad!’” Antony continues, looking at his imaginary drawing. “And that really made me excited, it made me want to actually give it a shot, which is probably what we want to be doing.”

“Yes,” Sasha says, nodding. “And I thought that Robyn, she does make you feel very comfortable, she acknowledges that we’re going to be a bit anxious about it, she recognizes our feelings, and I think it’s so important to do that in any sort of relationship.”

“I hated that exercise though,” Emma says, referring back to the touching faces with gloves.
“First of all I didn’t want to have my face touched and I didn’t want to be the feeler and I didn’t want to put on that grotty pair of surgical gloves touched by a lot of other people.”

“You’re going to have to get used to that because there’s a lot of snot that goes on in classrooms,” Sasha says, laughing, as Antony and Clara join in.

“And I don’t have a problem with that!” Emma says, emphatically. “I’ve got a child so snot doesn’t worry me. It’s just I think as adults, there’s more of a resistance to touching and feeling and sharing.”

“You’re probably right,” Linda says, thinking about that resistance and how it is shaped.

“I was worried about that experience,” Emma says, in a more even tone. “And I was so relieved that everybody was laughing along with the people out the front, because I was thinking that they were quite relieved that they weren’t out there. So I feel like it would be more effective to do that exercise in another way. You could do something with people’s faces in photographs.”

“I agree with you to some extent,” Sasha says. “But I think that the sort of activity you’re talking about has more of a specific art related purpose, whereas I thought that Robyn’s activity transcended that into a relational kind of thing between people.”

“I think the touching was really just to show their different faces and different characteristics,” Emma says, unconvinced.

“I definitely thought it went beyond that,” Sasha says, and Antony nods with her.

“Yeah I thought it went beyond,” Clara says, nodding too. “It was like when she was saying with art you’ve got to have the object in front of you for kids to draw.” She
looks at Emma. “But I also thought it was more that, there was the interaction it involved.”

“It was cutting down some barriers too,” Sasha says, offering a different angle. “Some people in the class actually have a barrier to doing art.”

“What I read into it and what I wrote down was that it was a very intimate activity and it showed that there was trust in the class.” Antony comes back to relationships again.

“I think that you take a risk in setting up activities like that,” Linda says. “And if students are uncomfortable, you give them the option to back out. But that’s how I read it too.” She looks at Sasha, Clara and Antony, “I think it’s about the relational thing and establishing intimacy.”

“But do you need that to sketch somebody’s face?” Emma asks.

“I don’t think that was the main purpose of it though,” Sasha responds.

“But do you need a relationship within an arts subject?” Emma asks again.

“Well, do you think in terms of doing art that relationships within the class play a role?” Linda asks Emma, trying to find the right wording for what it is that she means.

“No.”

“I think the relationship within the group does,” Antony says, looking at Emma. “If you’re going to be showing art, there’s a certain amount of trust that you want to feel with each other, so you can say hey look at what I’ve done here! And I guess to a certain degree if you don’t feel comfortable, then the amount of expressiveness and the amount of ideas and risks that you’re willing to take probably decrease.”
“I don’t care,” Emma says, emphatically. “I think a positive vibe amongst the students is really important. I don’t think the relationships amongst the students are that important, but I think the class has to be positively attuned to the fact that we’re all in this class and we’re all trying to learn something and take it on in a very open way. And I think that provides a sharing; whether that’s about relationships or not I’m not sure.”

Emma pauses for a moment, but the tone of her voice reveals that she has more to say and everyone waits for her to continue again.

“It’s just about being open to a learning experience for me, and you know you’re going to share, and I don’t feel that I’m going to be judged in any of my classes, I just say what I say, and it’s the same in the art class.”

Her tone waivers somewhat.

“I mean I found the name montage25 absolutely difficult to do. For six days, I just thought and thought about it, didn’t know what to do. I think that it took me two days before I got the E, and then on the last day one of the letters, the A, became something else.”

“That’s the process, isn’t it? That’s good,” Sasha says, supportively.

“Yes,” Emma nods. “But as a personal experience, I don’t think it was about sharing or my relationships with any of the other students or because of any relation or vibe in the room or because of the teacher,” she says emphatically. “I mean I shared the montage in the coffee shop and burst into tears.”

As she is saying this, she becomes teary again.

25 The first assignment in the creative arts portfolio was for each student to use the letters of their first name to create a name montage, in any style, with any materials, but in a way that spoke of them both visually and verbally.
“I think it’s really interesting listening to you, Emma,” Sasha says, very gently. “And I really appreciate you being so open because there’s such a variety of experiences.”

Emma looks at Sasha and smiles.

“I’m really teary now too, because I think it’s pretty powerful what happened to you,” Sasha says. “And I think that is only going to help your development and growth in arts and in teaching.”

“Oh, I’m getting teary now too,” Clara says, bringing on laughs of relief.

“It’s interesting,” Linda says, looking at Emma. “In doing this research, I don’t think that there’s any one set of emotions or experience. It can be different for every person, so taking that into account as a teacher is part of the challenge, I think.”

“Yeah,” Emma says. “Individual experiences are very interesting if you’re an art teacher. Because it’s quite a fundamental thing, art; it’s not an analytical thing, although there’s the technical side, but your immediate impression of the subject is that it’s not a fact based…” she says, looking for the words to convey precisely what she means.

“It’s more subjective?” Sasha offers.

“It’s more subjective,” Emma nods. “It’s about interpretation, and I think Robyn teaches that quite well.”

“I liked what she did with the name montages in our workshop,” Sasha says. “She said, ‘Okay, open your name montage and put it out on the table’, and once again, I just come back to relationships, but I really enjoyed looking at what other people had done.”
From the enthusiastic looks on the faces of Antony, Emma and Clara, it is clear that Sasha’s sentiment is shared.

“And it was great,” Sasha goes on. “I was more than enthusiastic to share mine, I was like ‘yeah, this is that, this is that’, telling people about how it related to me.”

There is more talk around the montage and how it was such a great activity for generating conversation and arousing curiosity.

Linda asks what other things they noticed in the portrait workshop and the way that Robyn brought them in. Antony says that he remembers Robyn playing music, but he was so focused on his drawing that he remembers little from thereon in. Clara says that she remembers Robyn coming around a lot and that she asked her for help because she “had no idea where to start with the nose”. So Robyn drew half for her, so Clara could go on from there. Emma agrees that it was great, because Robyn just kept coming around and around, and if you asked for help she kept on coming back.

“She was like really invisible but really there” is the most fitting way that Emma can find to describe Robyn’s way of coming around.

Sasha adds that she likes how Robyn doesn’t “take up too much space and that there’s no distinction between her and us, so it’s all very much collaborative.”

“I do remember that there was a lot of laughing,” Antony says, as his memory comes back. “In our class during the sketching, people would smile bigger and then the one drawing would say ‘Oh no! Don’t do that! Where’s your serious face?’”

Antony’s voices make everyone laugh.

“You know, I was thinking last night how useful this is for us, getting together and sharing ideas,” Emma says, as the conversation draws to an end. “Not just the conversations together, but the questions that you send us to reflect upon. It’s really
made me think about things much more deeply, about what’s going on in an activity and how the way the teacher does things affects people too.”

“Yeah,” Clara says. “It’s really helped with my reflections for other subjects too. Just thinking about our emotions, and kids’ emotions, and the whole feeling thing that is always going on in a classroom; we just don’t really get much chance to think about that in this very open kind of way.”

“Hmmm,” Antony says, joining in. “We do do reflection in other subjects, but like you say, I think this helps you to focus in on things in another way, and I like that we can just talk and let our thoughts bubble up without having to worry about what we are going to say.”

There is laughter at Antony’s “do do” before Linda says how much she is learning from and enjoying being involved with this too. Seeing Robyn and hearing their thoughts and reflections feeds back into her own practice too.

The Fifth Interlude

Before their final meeting and just before the beginning of prac, Linda catches up with Clara, Emma, Antony and Sasha again. They discuss how much they’re learning in Robyn’s classes, and how they’d like to learn so much more. Antony tells them about making a turtle in the workshop on clay, and how people said “Gee, that’s a great car.” This makes him feel awful so he crumples it up and begins again. By then he is feeling flustered because there is no more time, but then Robyn tells him not to worry and that he can stay and work on it until he feels that he has done his best. This makes him feel much better about working with clay. Sasha says that she loved that workshop because Robyn gave them the freedom to play. Emma, though, says she would have liked more
instruction, because she wants to learn more about techniques so she can take those skills into the classroom and help her children with similar things.

There is unanimous agreement on wanting more experience designing lessons that integrate learning through the arts. Emma tells them about her kindy class who were going the art gallery for the first time. They’d been reading a book about a group of mice who get locked in one night and end up wandering around describing the different pictures that they see. Emma is really excited and wants to learn more about activities and resources of this kind, as well as how to choose great books for children. Antony tells the story of how he chose a book for his assignment based on the attraction of colour and because it had his name on the first page; he also related where this idea came from. On his last visit to his class, one of the little girls picks out *Charlie and Lola* in reading time, and when he asks her why she picked it, she says without hesitation, because Lola’s my name!

Some days before this session, Linda has emailed everyone a copy of the conversations they’ve had thus far to reflect on, if they have some time. She asks them to note down any words or images that come to mind when they look back on their own contributions. Emma’s word is ‘barriers’ as she thinks she has some to work through. Antony’s is ‘nervous’ at first, but because of his way of cheerfully soldiering on ‘optimistic perseverance’ better fits. Clara’s word is ‘responsiveness’ because it shines in her stories, each and every one, and while Sasha is stumped initially and cannot think of hers, Linda suggests ‘journeys’, because Sasha has spoken of coming to teaching and her own learning in that process way, and of her personal journey and the intertwining of the two.
For four weeks Linda has visited Robyn’s lectures and workshops and been delighted by Robyn and the many engaging activities and the energy that she brings to each class. There are activities for getting students interested and thinking about composition and meanings in works of art of all kinds, including body sculpture and guessing games, with lots of movement of bodies and minds. In the workshops, there have been portraits, montages and working with clay, with surprising twists in the process to keep people engaged. She meets up with Robyn some weeks after the course ends, after hearing Clara, Antony, Sasha and Emma’s thoughts on what they have felt and learned.

They meet in Robyn’s office, which is decorated with collages and prints, reminding Linda of the land of the possible again. Robyn has left the door open and invites Linda in. They chat about Spain and Barcelona, as Robyn is off on a break very soon. Linda says how much she loves Spain: its culture and language and the way that art and passion is out and about on the streets every day.

Coming back to the present, Linda asks Robyn about what drives her pedagogy. For Robyn the word that best fits is creativity. She thinks that creativity is not confined to the arts, or any one thing, but instead flows into all things, including teaching.

“I really hope that I demonstrate to my teachers ways that engage students and give them real experiences that motivate and excite them and get them involved in their own learning,” she says, in a quickening tone. “But I do find that challenging in a mass lecture situation and that’s why I try to come up with new ways to get students moving and to make it interactive, so it becomes a creative experience.”

Linda nods, thinking of how much vitality Robyn exudes in her class. “I notice too, that you always have a range of activities that set people up to see things from different perspectives, in different ways.”
“I think that I’m very aware as a teacher that people learn in different ways and that they need diversity, and sometimes I’m just on my feet thinking, ‘Is there another way to do this that might get people involved, that might grab their attention’, because in a lecture it’s very easy for people to float off.”

Robyn leans further in.

“So that’s why I’m continually trying to shift them out of their comfort zone, so that one minute you’re an individual thinking, then in a pair, then turning to the people behind, so that they’re not complacent but being challenged in all kinds of ways.”

“And I think that in quite a few of those activities that you captured the child’s perspective on things too,” Linda says, thinking of Robyn’s stories of Tim and his drawing of a much loved Buzz Lightyear, whom he kept close by in his pencil case, and the Batman series of Adrian’s, a child who zoomed around the supermarket in a mask and a cape.

“I try to get them to look back on the baggage they bring with them from their own experiences and to put on those shoes again,” Robyn says, nodding her head. “And there is that idea of empathy when they’re putting themselves into someone else’s shoes, or their own shoes, because those shoes are much smaller, because it’s a long time ago.” Her hands move closer together intimating that shrink.

“And it’s interesting in terms of children’s art because they’re adults, and they might think, ‘Oh that’s really cute’ or ‘That’s really funny’, but then it’s getting them to understand the reasoning why a child might be doing it in this way, by relating it back to them and saying, ‘If I asked you to draw a scene right now, there’d be some of you who would want to draw a smiley sun.’”

They both laugh, and Linda recalls Antony and Emma’s evocations of this.
Together they look at some selections from the videos of Robyn’s lectures and workshops too\(^\text{26}\) in relation to the quality pedagogy document\(^\text{27}\) and the elements of it that come into view. There is the ‘scene’ where Robyn tells the story of the relief teacher who asks the students to draw their family on a piece of paper the size of a card and the meaning that sends. She compares Tim’s drawing of this with that of his much loved Buzz Lightyear. From the silence and the attentive faces, it is clear that everyone is really engaged, and Robyn’s energy and movements keep feeding into this. Of these movements, Robyn says that she’s very conscious of wanting to attend to more than the front, so she finds herself continually moving up and down, across the room, shifting her focus and that of the students too.

They look at a scene from the second lecture where Robyn has a fresh set of pictures up on the board, having explained the principles of children’s drawing to the group. She gets them in pairs to decide which principle is being applied. Clear signs of engagement come through from the buzz that grows to the stories their bodies tell, from the drawing of pen lines to the waving of arms. Inclusiveness shines in the way this buzz spreads, with everyone talking to someone nearby. There are creased brows and eyebrows raised and arms moving in explanation, in a deeper thinking of why. In the whole group sharing, these signs of higher order thinking and substantive communication become clearer, as much more thoughtful reasoning appears. The rights and the wrongs are not the ultimate point, as Robyn’s responses make very clear. She smiles and laughs and says, “Oh, this one’s a tricky one,” lessening the fear.

Linda mentions the activity in the first lecture where students shared their experiences and how she felt that really helped, not just to ease the nervousness, but in generating feelings of belongingness among the group. Robyn says that when that activity works, it works really well, and it works when students are honest and have significant stories to tell. When that happens, you get a bonding among them that is genuinely “heartfelt”. She tells Linda that sometimes though, and more often with the first years,

\(^{26}\) The video story which was based on these selections is included in Appendix P.
\(^{27}\) This refers to the DET NSW (2003) model of the three dimensions of quality pedagogy and the elements they are composed of.
the stories are more superficial, because many are in shock and are not yet sure of whether they really want a teaching career. But the Masters of Teaching students have already “decided that teaching is what they want to do, and they are very focused and committed and passionate about it”, and that comes through strongly in these classes too.

Robyn tells Linda how the sharing of stories flows into the first workshop, where they play the Pictionary game, which gives them a chance to be very creative and have lots of fun too.

“And that activity says not just that this is important, but that we can also have a good time, and learning doesn’t need to be deathly dull and boring, it should be fun.”

Robyn’s face changes from drawn out to smiling in emphasis.

“And the thing that I want them to take from that game is, ‘Yes, I could use it with any question in a classroom’, but that it doesn’t matter that you feel, ‘Ooh, I can’t draw’, because you’re working in a group, and they’re giving you support and suggestions. Then, it’s made into a game where there’s a little competition between teams, which I think helps to bring the group together for the next series of workshops too.”

They look at the portraiture workshop that follows the lecture on the stages of children’s drawings, where people are learning face drawing skills and techniques. From the very beginning, their montages are out on display and Linda remarks how interested and excited everyone is, as conversations take place around the displays. Robyn comments that this is another activity that always works really well and can be adapted to classrooms in so many forms. It also stands on its own as a means for gathering information of a diagnostic kind, about people’s backgrounds and their likes, but in a very engaging, creative way.

“And I really want them to reconnect with their own creativity, because then art becomes something that they can share with their class, and it’s something that kids
genuinely love.” Robyn’s voice becomes even more animated as she says, “We’ve been painting on walls a lot longer than we’ve been doing long division, so this is something that we’re meant to do, that is within all of us.”

Linda remarks how much her approach in the workshop really helped to comfort her teachers and to encourage their faith in themselves; not just by giving them a structure to work with, but by reminding them that drawing faces takes a really long time. And putting on music helped to calm them and to keep some of their fears from their minds. They watch as the students begin drawing and Robyn makes her way around, and it is clear, once again, that everyone is truly engaged. Robyn moves around quietly and then around again.

“And it’s easier to find who is having difficulty and wants that bit of help,” she says of her movements, and then smiles at the video screen. “It’s nice to see that people are smiling and laughing, while being totally focused on what they’re doing too.”

“And I like the challenge at the end of this workshop,” Robyn says as they get to the end of the tape, “when they realise that they’re going to be painting those portraits, but in pieces of four and they’re not going to be painting their own…And it’s really interesting, in the final workshop when they come back to collect their pieces and put them together because it’s such a surprise, and they love it, this chance occurrence.”

Robyn tells her that many of her students have adapted that activity for use in their classes, whether doing clocks or fruit or some other theme.

“And they always come back and tell me about it. And I think that’s because it is so step-by-step, they’re able to modify and replicate it and it’s always a success. For me, it’s really important that when they take an art activity into a classroom, it is successful, because it could easily bomb out. And that’s why I warn them up front that it takes a lot of organization and energy, as we’ve just seen.”

Linda nods in firm agreement as Robyn continues on.
“So, if I can give them examples that they can take into a classroom and try out and succeed, then they’re much more willing to branch out and try other things, because if you let them just go and do something that goes belly up, then you have them thinking, ‘That’s what I thought was going to happen and I’m not going to try that anymore’. So then it’s out with the colouring in stencils and those kinds of things.”

One other thing that stands out for Linda, as she remarks, is the way that Robyn changes things a lot, and she remembers Robyn talking about the importance of not being predictable as part of creative pedagogy.

“Yes, there is that challenge, in quite a lot of activities, that there is something unexpected, and you might be thinking it’s going down a particular route, but then it takes a different turn, like with the portraits.” She smiles, then her voice intensifies again.

“But the one thing I would hate for students to be thinking, ‘And now she’s going to say this and do that.’ I want them to be thinking, ‘Oh, are we doing this now’. It’s part of getting them out of their comfort zone in that fun, engaging way.”

Linda tells Robyn how much the students she has spoken with have really enjoyed her and her class, and the amount of experience they have gained, in comparison to other lectures where they like they’ve gained next to none. Robyn says that for her that comes down to the way she plans her teaching so that in their very limited time, students experience as much as they can. However, she admits that she does find it really exhausting, because there is so much giving going on.

“I find I am continually giving and giving, and trying to work one-on-one, and being really positive and giving lots of feedback, and trying to make those links between what we’re doing in the lecture and the workshop,” she says, her tone conveying the energy that it takes. “And then just showing how everything, from the montage to the portraits, relates to them so that they’re not just thinking, ‘Well this is something I’m just doing at university that I’m not going to ever use again’. That’s why I read that
email from Kelly about how valuable her portfolio was, so that people can start thinking about that as a resource that could be really valuable for them, rather than just another hoop to jump through.”

Linda thanks Robyn for her generosity in inviting her into her classes and giving her so much of her time. She has learned so much, not just about creative arts pedagogy, but the potential of using the arts to get students engaged in their learning in thoughtful and enjoyable ways. This same appreciation comes through in Robyn’s student evaluations, and in particular, in her year four Creative Arts special elective, where students negotiate the assessments and their weightings. Robyn says that in that course they have time to realise the full potential of the arts for learning and evaluating too, and that the students evaluate themselves and the work that they do. The course evaluation is also done in a creative way, and the feedback from all the students is that they have learned so much more from doing things this way. In every evaluation, Robyn is spoken of as supportive and responsive, while excellent, fantastic and awesome are the words through which the course is described. Everyone comments on how much their confidence in the arts and teaching has grown. One person says that if she could, she “would do it all over again”.

The Final Interlude

Five weeks later, Linda meets with her group again after their prac. From the tone of the emails, it seems that everyone is eager to share while the experience is still fresh in their minds. Unfortunately, Emma cannot make it, so Linda meets up with her on her own, and Emma tells her of her wonderful prac at the private girls’ school to which she herself had been. Her co-operating teacher is described as strict and supportive, with high expectations of Emma and the teaching she will do. Her lesson plans had to be ready, down to the finest details, so that Lilian, her co-operating teacher, could go over them with her each day. Emma says that this really helped her to learn how to plan

28 Copies of these evaluations are included in Appendix H, pp. 69-76
well and to appreciate how important that planning was to the success of the lessons that she gave. At the same time, every hour of teaching took two or more to plan, so the energy it took is paramount in Emma’s mind.

It turns out that Lilian and Emma look, dress and do things in much the same ways. Emma doesn’t find this surprising, as she feels that this is the kind of school in which she belongs. She says that she wishes more teachers had the chance to teach in such a well managed school – in a place where everyone knows what’s expected and there’s no problem with discipline or students being disinterested because those expectations of being there to learn run right through from the home to the school.

Emma’s prac experience is of the kind that is described as lucky by the pre-service teachers that Linda now knows. When she meets up with the rest of the group, Linda wonders how far such luck might go.

When Linda arrives at the appointed room, Clara is already waiting. She smiles and asks how Clara is.

“Exhausted!” Clara says, smiling back.

Linda nods in sympathy.

“I found I couldn’t stop thinking about it, and there’s so much to do, and I didn’t know when to just say, ‘Oh okay, this is sufficient,’” Clara says, laughing. “I wanted to be really creative and get them engaged, but sometimes it’s good for them to just be quietly doing work.”

“It gives them that sort of quiet focused time to regenerate,” Linda says, knowing from her own experience that it’s hard to be that upbeat for four hours straight at a time.

“Yeah. I went into prac a bit like a cowboy; all guns firing.” Clara’s image makes them both laugh. “Just wanting to get them excited all the time, so it was a relief, that change of pace.” Her tone becomes upbeat again.
“We did this song room lesson with my year one class, where they were lying down with eyes closed, listening to a piece of classical music and they were just so absorbed, but in that calm way. And then they painted what the music made them feel and it was fantastic!” Clara says, her emphasis one of sheer delight.

“We got them sitting around in a circle and sharing what the music made them feel and this one boy said, ‘Oh, it made me feel like when my grandmother died’.”

There is a knock at the door as Sasha comes in on the end of Clara’s story. There are greetings and smiles before Clara picks up her story again.

“Just closing their eyes and listening to the music got them connecting with their own feelings and helped engage them in that deeper way.”

“I had a similar experience,” Sasha says, smiling at Clara. “I did a drama literacy lesson with my group of kindys using Amy and Louis. In the story, Amy and Louis are looking up at the sky and making pictures out of the clouds. So I got them all lying down like clouds, all but four of them, on this big square of carpet which was, of course, the sky and even the most boisterous boys, who I thought would be really disruptive, were on their backs, waiting eagerly for what was coming next.”

Clara’s look follows Sasha’s mix of anticipation, trepidation and welcome surprise.

“Then I gave the four ‘zephyrs’ these pieces of rainbow cloth that I had found,” Sasha continues, “and I told them to creep quietly around the clouds, blowing over them with their cloth. And while Eric Satie was on piano, my clouds and zephyrs began floating around and it was like being in the land of the possible again.”

Linda has an image of Sasha’s cloud children moving along with the breeze.

“And I loved this activity, because like you said,” Sasha nods at Clara, “they were all so calm and engaged and open to that experience. And part of it was the music, but I
also think another part was the anticipation. There was definitely an element of ‘Oh I wonder what’s going to happen next?’”

“I just got so many tips,” Clara says in a tone of eagerness and relief. “Just from paying attention to the children, and thinking about what I could do. Like if they were struggling in creative writing, just by talking with them, you can help them come up with different ideas and I even brought in something that I had written at their age and that really helped. It was like them thinking, ‘Okay so the teacher has done this, and I can do it too’.”

“That’s a great idea,” Linda says. “It’s kind of like the name montages and the portfolio stuff that Robyn had everyone do.”

“And I think that it’s crucial in teaching to let your students get to know you as well as you knowing them,” Clara continues. “So I just dropped in little pieces of things that I liked and that worked really well.”

“It’s the same with adults too,” Linda says, nodding.

“It builds trust,” Clara says, nodding too. “And having that element of trust gets them to open up just so much more.”

“I found in my class that I got on really well with all of the kids,” Sasha says, chiming in. “Although there was this one little boy who was very tizzy, quite highly strung, so I found that a bit hard, but then I caught him lip-synching to ABBA, and that sort of melted my heart!”

The idea of lip-synching to ABBA makes Linda and Clara chuckle.

“But I was really lucky I think, because I had a great co-operating teacher who had fostered this abundance of creative energy and ability in the class so they wanted to do everything that they did really well.”
“I imagine that little kids don’t have the same kinds of walls as adults do,” Linda offers.

“Mostly,” Clara says, albeit in an ambivalent tone. “But I went in thinking that they’re all going to be full of wonder but some of them did have emotional issues that blocked their learning, which I think came from things at home.”

Sasha’s fervent nodding suggests that this is another experience from their practicum that they might have shared.

“One of the kids had an autistic sister and he’d come into the classroom wanting to control everything. He was always looking around to see who he could control or who he could provoke and I think he didn’t have control at home over anything, so he was playing it out in the classroom,” Clara says, in a way that brings home the challenges involved.

“And it was to the point where I was focussing a lot of my attention on him and then my tertiary mentor came and it was such an emotional experience! Because I started my prac being myself but my co-operating teacher kept saying, ‘You’ve got to be harder on the kids,’ and he praised me whenever I would get angry at them and send them out to time out and it was like I was unconsciously becoming like him.”

Clara’s pause is accompanied by an anxious exhalation of breath and it is here that Antony comes in and there is another round of greetings before Clara catches him up on the story that she was about to begin.

“It was like a comedy of errors, and my co-operating teacher being away on the day made everything worse. One of the kids hit another so I started rousing on him,” Clara says, shaking her head. “But my tertiary mentor was fantastic, she spent a lot of time talking to me, starting with her saying, ‘You’re just too hard on the kids, they’re not going to learn in that environment,’ and I just realised I was turning into my worst nightmare.”
“Were you conscious of that before?” Antony asks, in his softly spoken tone.

“I was half conscious of it because I was going home emotionally exhausted and I was even starting to think I don’t want to teach if I have to be like this because I can’t sustain it!” Clara says, with force.

“So after seeing the tertiary mentor, I felt terrible but better, and I went home thinking I’m not going to let this happen. So I decided that I was going to be myself because I needed to know if it could work and if my co-operating teacher ended up failing me for not being like him, I was just going to deal with it.”

“So how did that go?” Antony asks, softly again.

“The next few weeks I spent just being myself and when the supervisor came back she was amazed, and she was saying what a calming influence I had on the kids. And they were a lot more engaged, and I felt so much better because I don’t like it when they look at me and they’re scared.”

Clara laughs at this now, and Linda, Antony and Sasha join in.

“Having said that,” she continues, in a more even tone, “I’m still firm and set the boundaries, but I think there’s a way of doing it where you don’t have to be this dictator. So it was amazing experience, and now I’m feeling great about teaching but I’m angry that I didn’t get a good role model.”

“Has it made something stronger in your beliefs?” Antony asks, in a thoughtful tone.

“After experiencing that and mimicking him for a bit and then going back and saying, ‘NO, I’m one hundred percent sure that this is the way I’m going to operate!’ Does it makes it stronger because you’ve had that experience?”

“Yes!” Clara says, with real emphasis. “Because I wasn’t sure if it was going to work, and I said to my tertiary mentor when I saw her the second time that I was worried that
the kids would take advantage of me and she said not to worry about that at all because she could see that I was still firm. So, yes, it has made me stronger.”

“I got something similar out of my prac experience too,” Antony says, looking from Clara, to Sasha, to Linda, and back to Clara again. “The first day of my prac, after the pre-visits, my teacher came up to me before class, and we were sitting down and talking about things, and she said, ‘You know the kids said that you’re really nice, that’s not good.’”

The ‘no good can come of this’ tone with which Antony imbues his co-operating teacher’s words sets off laughter again.

“And I was like, what’s going on?” He says, in a mock incredulous tone. “And she was saying because they’re going to see that and they’re going to think you’re too easy.”

“That seems to be quite a common refrain,” Linda says, thinking of the stories of Lucy, Maggie, Sean, Ben and Jen.

Antony’s shake of the head says much the same. “But I had my own ideas about how I feel comfortable interacting with students, because I’ve taught that age group in Korea for three years and although it’s a different culture, I knew what I had done had worked, and I was comfortable with a certain kind of approach. And the way I came up with to describe it is ‘friendly’, because you can be friendly without being their friend.”

“That’s a good way of putting it,” Sasha says, smiling.

“But in my co-operating teacher’s mind, there was this mental block,” Antony continues, locking in his head with his hands. “Like, if you’re friendly towards the class, then you’re not being their teacher. But for me, being friendly towards them allowed me to be a better teacher because I could access their interests that she might not know about, and some of the students expressed that they felt I was actually
listening and that made a big difference, because I felt that it was reciprocated. I genuinely listened to them and they listened to me.”

He pauses and shakes his head.

“Not that I didn’t have moments where the whole class were just off the wall and I was saying, ‘Come on guys, we’ve got to get work done,’ but I think by then that they were already gone.” Antony’s smile lightens his tone, and Linda recalls Maggie’s practicum teacher’s acknowledgment that sometimes, ‘you can just have a bad day’.

“But I think like you said, you can be firm and you need to show them where the boundaries are but you don’t have to be a dictator and you don’t have to be so strict that you don’t actually hear what they’re saying to you.”

“Or so that they’re too scared to say it,” Clara adds.

“But having the different tertiary mentor to offer that other view and to give feedback was really helpful,” Antony continues, “because I found my co-operating teacher very abrupt in the way that she interacted with me. Then I noticed her interactions with other people were exactly the same way, and when my tertiary mentor came in, she took me aside and said, ‘Antony is your co-operating teacher being helpful and working out for you?’ because she spoke to my tertiary mentor in exactly the same way.”

Linda laughs not knowing what to say.

“And when I look back on it, it is an aggressive way to interact with people and it puts them into that defensive position because she approaches everything in a ‘why did you do this?’ kind of way.”

“Did you get to talk about the things she does in class?” Linda asks.
Antony dons his best incredulous look. “Oh no! She was telling me, ‘You’ve got to do it this way! THIS is the way to do it!’” He laughs before becoming serious again. “But I went in with my own ideas and my own style, because you just can’t maintain something else, it’s just too tiring right?”

An emphatic nod accompanies Clara’s echo of “It’s just too hard to sustain.”

“So I just went about it in my own way and adjusted my interactions with her and I fell into that role of asking questions and then I’d say things like ‘That’s a really great idea,’” Antony says, sounding eager but not insincere. “And I was genuine about them being a good idea. But I don’t think I would have been as submissive if it had been a more collegial relationship, even though I’m a student teacher, which was how she introduced me to the class,” he says, shaking his head. “I would have felt different if I felt like I had something to contribute to her.”

Clara and Linda and Sasha let Antony’s pause sit in the air.

“But it was a great experience in the end and I took as much as I could out of it,” he adds, in his positive way. “Not at first though! At first, I was whinging about it to my fiancé saying, ‘This is the most least co-operative person I can imagine’ and because it was one of the fears that I had, I thought ‘Oh I brought it upon myself!’”

“That’s what I was thinking too!” Clara says, laughing in a ‘what else can you do’ kind of way. “But, you know, he was actually nice to me, and he ended up telling me his whole life story and I think he was a bit lonely but that’s another thing.”

Sasha’s look is not one of surprise.

“So one-on-one he was okay, but I got my fear, because I was thinking what if my co-operating teacher is this big ogre and I got it, but I guess it’s good.”
“Yeah it is,” Antony says, in an affirming tone. “I see it as a good thing, or at least I turned it into a good thing and you know what, I’m learning what I don’t like and what’s not going to work!”

Antony’s vehement amusement gets the laughter going again.

“And I did try out a lot of her techniques but I didn’t feel comfortable, but there were things that she did that I loved and I took that too, so I’m not writing her off.”

“I had a bit of similar experience,” Sasha says. “Not with my co-operating teacher, I was lucky there, but one that like you, Clara, pulled me up and made me think.”

Everyone looks at Sasha in anticipation, waiting for her story to begin.

“There was this little boy in my class called Ben, and he was what you’d call an attention seeking kid. He didn’t listen to the others and interrupted all the time, all those very socially unaware kind of things,” she says, with a slight wring of the hands. “Of course he has a very sad story. From a broken family with a dad in prison and a mum who died when he was about three.”

Clara says poor kid with a shake of her head.

“So I was determined to help him to become more socially adept by being caring but firm, which, it turns out, is easy to say. Because about a week later, I was lying in bed talking to my husband, and it struck me how much I’d been focussing on the negatives with Ben, just telling him off for this and that and the other.” Sasha looks around, shaking her head.

“So I was just appalled with myself, but then I remembered that when I worked as a teacher’s aide with autism spectrum kids that the number one rule was to lead with praise. So then, in class, I just became really conscious of praising Ben for every positive thing that he did. And I think that helped me as well as him.”
Antony nods at Sasha to continue as she has more of her story to tell.

“In the last week, I was reading the class *The Rainbow Fish* and I had them gathered around on the floor. And then just a few minutes in, Ben began fidgeting. Then he was up on his knees saying he couldn’t see, and blocking the view of the children behind. So, of course, that got the other children squirming too.”

Linda has a vision of a carpet full of children starting to wriggle like a can of freshly opened worms and, from the looks on Antony and Clara’s faces, they are imagining the same.

“But fortunately, there was Will, sitting calmly and listening like a little angel, so I said in a voice overflowing with praise, ‘Ooh, can everyone take a look at Will? Isn’t he sitting and listening so nicely!’ And I calmly suggested that everyone just move a little to the side if they couldn’t see. Then Ben moved a little and settled back down. So I smiled at him and said, ‘Well done Ben! Good choice!’ and he smiled back.”

“It can be a real challenge!” Antony says, with a half smile, half grimace spreading over his face. “But what’s interesting is how you can get kids to change.”

“Well, starting out, I was only a few notches from impossibly idealistic,” Sasha laughs. “And then this came crashing down when it dawned that neither students nor teachers are perfect.”

Clara and Linda and Antony’s look is one of ‘on that I’d have to agree’.

“But I think I’ve learned to become more flexible and reflective in my approach,” Sasha continues, her voice softening, “not just to students and their behaviour, but to my own as well. And on the last day, Ben presented this beautiful picture that he’d drawn specially for me.”
“And just thinking about how things can change,” Clara says, picking up on this theme, “my co-operating teacher had two days off in-service training, and the substitute teacher was really calm, like I initially had aspired to be and I had this comparison and you could feel like the energy was so different in the classroom, engaged but calm. Then when my teacher came back, it was back to this chaos again.”

“And that’s a good sign,” Antony says, continuing the theme. “Not back to the chaos, but the way that kids can actually change. It means those scripts aren’t set, you can actually change. Even though if you’re building a new relationship there is so much energy and effort that you have to put in, but the benefits are all there, right?”

“And you have to let go of doing things in that controlling way. Because my co-operating teacher had to control everything,” Clara joins in. “And we’re told at uni that in quality teaching you’ve got to have substantive conversation, higher order thinking, all those kinds of things and it wasn’t occurring in his classroom, because he had to be in control.”

Her fingers retract into a fist.

“So when they started to open up he would cut them off, and if they said something that probably wasn’t exactly on track, he’d cut them down.”

Clara’s right hand unfurls and cuts through the air.

“And when they were doing the recorder classes, if they made mistakes, he’d cut them down, and so of course a lot of them started forgetting their recorders.”

“That’s so sad,” Linda says, not knowing what else to say.

“But you know, speaking to him one-on-one,” Clara says, her tone slightly bemused, “he’d always go on about how he loves the kids and maybe somewhere inside him that
was true but maybe he’s got into that habit or maybe it’s too scary to make the relationship more balanced.”

“I have a friend who has been looking at how yoga improves student learning,” Antony says, a little out of the blue. “And it made me think that one of the underlying problems for us as teachers is how do we measure student success or student learning?”

Clara and Sasha and Linda look at Antony wondering where this latest turn is going to go.

“We have those traditional measurements, and that opens up the question of what do we do?” he says, upping his pitch. “I mean what is the point of school? Are we preparing kids for high school? And is high school going to prepare them for the world? And what kinds of jobs are there in the world? And are those jobs going to be there in the future? But what is the future? So what should we be creating in our schools now?” He laughs suddenly, shaking his head. “So yeah, these are the really big questions I think.”

Antony’s questions send the conversation off on a tangent about the narrow focus of normal schooling and its lack of attention to people and their broader needs, and the futures which schools might help bring into being. Linda thinks that people are losing their connection to the land and each other in that fundamental ecological way, and that this is affecting their possibilities for connecting in more profoundly human ways. She likes Stephanie Alexander’s kitchen garden programme29 because it involves children in the nurturing, harvesting, and cooking of food. All curriculums could be so much more meaningful if they were integrated with community projects all the way through. On this more integrated approach to learning, everyone firmly agrees, it’s just that getting them going can prove difficult, or so it seems. Clara tells of a friend who

29 Stephanie Alexander is a well-known Australian chef who has been working with primary schools since 2001 in the establishment of kitchen garden programmes. More information on this project can be found at http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/about-the-program
tried to get an environmental project going at her school, and how the principal and staff were firmly against it and blocked her attempts at every turn. Worn down and defeated, Clara’s friend left teaching after eight years.

“Anyway, she gave me this book,” Clara says, holding it up in her hand. “It’s called *A Quiet Revolution* and it’s about encouraging positive values in children. And it tells you about this school in England where they focus on different values and different qualities and try to build a positive environment with the kids through encouraging honesty, truthfulness, respect and happiness, so it’s moving away from that rationalist pragmatic approach.”

“How do they do that?” Antony asks.

“They embed the values in the content, so the kids are still getting the education, but with a different slant. It’s a much more holistic way of teaching that considers the whole person and it gives them ways of dealing with life; which I think was one of big questions you had,” Clara says, smiling at Antony.

“And which there is really no education on at this point!” Antony says, smiling back.

“And when you look at the adult world and how adults interact with each other, it’s often quite dysfunctional,” Clara says, as her recent experience attests. “So you’ve got those adults in positions of power, and you’ve got those adults teaching the kids in these ways.”

There are nods of agreement of the vigorous kind.

“A lot of the problems I had on prac were to do with behaviour management, like emotional outbursts and things, so if we’re not teaching children how to deal with challenges or how to respond when they don’t get what they want, or how to treat other people, well how are they going to learn that?”
The impossibility of an answer hangs in the air.

“Some people do get taught at home and they’re fortunate, because quite a few don’t! I had one case where one child hit another and it turned into this big saga. His mum was sent a letter because he had been misbehaving for quite a while, so she came in to speak to me about it and he was there and he said to her, ‘But you told me I could hit people if they were teasing me!’”

“I only did what I was told!” Antony chimes in, in a half joking, half serious tone.

“Then there’s your co-operating teacher and the way he behaves,” Linda says, shaking her head.

“And I think people learn that stuff quite quickly,” Antony says. “And I think it’s integrated fast too, not even consciously.” He turns to Clara and says, “Just looking at how you started picking up on him, and you were kind of conscious of it, but not really, so it shows that it’s really powerful.”

Sasha, Clara and Linda agree.

“But what I do see because of that is it does mean there’s an opportunity since the kids can react so quickly to that one way of thinking, they should be able to also react to a better approach and that means there’s the possibility that we can change what’s happening.” Antony’s words pulse with positive zing.

“And just on that,” he continues. “In my year five class we were buddied with a class of year twos, and the difference between the my co-operating teacher and the year two teacher, Mrs. Stick, was astounding.”

“That’s an unfortunate name,” Clara says and everyone laughs.
“But it’s a complete misnomer because she had total control of the class, but it was in such a positive, caring way. And even though it was a little hard for me to take at first because the language and the approach seemed more suitable for the year ones than the year fives, because she was thanking people, like ‘Well thank you Mark for sitting down so quietly,’” Antony says, in a Mrs. Stick voice.

“And she was praising them for sitting up, and it was this constant positive reinforcement thing. Then, when she wanted to quieten them down or get their attention, she had all these kind of fun physical activities that she’d get them to do. So for example, if she wanted them to stop, she’d get them in groups to be a tree in the breeze, or a butterfly coming to land on a leaf.”

Antony’s fingers bounce gently in imitation of a drift.

“And they really got into it, because she had made it into this kind of game, and they loved it and they all sort of did it together in harmony. So seeing that was really useful for me,” Antony continues. “How you could use those kinds of activities to create that group environment.”

“Finally a good example!” Clara laughs.

Antony nods, laughing too. “But it really made me notice the contrast with my co-operating teacher, who had this habit of ‘shooshing’ the kids all the time. It wasn’t even like when she was giving instructions, she was shooshing them up even before the kids opened their mouths.”

Antony’s description gets Clara, Sasha and Linda laughing, while Antony continues, shaking his head.

“I caught her one time standing in the door while I was teaching, and this kid just looked up and caught her eye, there wasn’t even a peep, and she was shooshing him up
under her breath. And the worst part is I don’t even think she was conscious of it, she’d just become this serial shoosher.”

The image of a serial shoosher makes everyone laugh.

“Seriously though,” he says, “I was just thinking about how it was going to affect kids’ willingness to speak when they’re being shooshed up willy nilly, because it just conveys that idea that you’re not interested in hearing them speak.”

“And it shows how easy it is to fall into these habits without even being aware,” Sasha says. “And how you have to be so very mindful to catch yourself before it happens again.”

There are thoughtful looks now as this last conversation draws to its close, and Linda asks for people’s thoughts on the group, and their conversations and the research itself.

Antony says that he found it “totally exploratory” and there was a real sense of openness and honesty within the group. He likes that he felt he could say anything without it having to come out fully formed and that this gave him a real freedom to think without losing the flow of his thought.

“And it links back in to the classroom, and having that same free flow of ideas with your children,” Antony says, looking around the group again. “Because if they think you want a particular answer, then they’re just not going to be prepared to speak.”

Sasha agrees that it has been a really open forum and it has helped her to focus more deeply on things. She tells Linda that she really thought about their discussions when she was thinking about her interactions with Ben. Clara too has found their conversations helpful for thinking more deeply about teaching and learning, not just in regard to Robyn, but looking at her own practice too. And Linda has gained more than simply what she has learned from her research; she has renewed her hope in people and the extraordinary possibilities held within the everyday things that they do.
Chapter Six: Metaphors to Live and Learn From

Part One: Participating Teacher Educators

The guiding concern of this thesis has been to explore what can be learned from the journeys of teachers about how a commitment to an empowering pedagogy is engendered and sustained. Empowerment, as discussed in the literature review, is understood as an embodied relation to the self and others that gives rise to a sense of agency. In keeping with this notion, two case studies of exceptional teacher educators whose courses are consistently highly praised by students were presented. So as to generate a more holistic understanding of what makes a pedagogy empowering, Robyn and Paul’s classes were explored in terms of participating pre-service teachers’ experience of the qualities that arose in different pedagogic encounters, and their enabling conditions. This enabled the question of what an empowering pedagogy feels like along with what makes such feelings possible to be explored.

The themes arising from participants’ experiences were then crafted into a story form in order to allow their confluences to emerge and to reveal the underlying themes (Beattie, 2009) in a visceral, multisensory way. As Eisner (1991, p. 104) points out, a theme “is a pervasive quality” that permeates and creates unities within situations and contexts.

In this chapter, I explicate the themes arising from the stories of participants by teasing out the salient rhythms, images and metaphors (Clandinin & Connolly, 1988). These themes and the qualities that permeate them are then discussed in relation to LaBoskey’s (1994) notion of a passionate creed, alongside literature which emphasises the responsive and creative nature of an empowering pedagogy (Arnold, 2005; Sawyer, 2004; van Manen, 1997). The generation of these affective forces is enabled through an orientation to the self, others, and the world that, in this thesis, is conceived of as relational. Such an orientation manifests in a profound embodied awareness of
the interconnected nature of being and knowing, and its emergent possibilities. It equally manifests in the desire to awaken and grow this awareness in others.

Based on her research into experiences of becoming a clinical educator and the model she developed from it, McAllister (2001, p. vi, p. 91) places the development of a sense of self that is enabling of a sense of relationship with others as at the core of becoming a clinical educator. At the same time, seeking dynamic self-congruence in terms of acting and interacting in ways that are in harmony with this sense of self and of relationship to others is viewed as equally important. The elements identified within these dimensions of becoming a clinical educator, along with the dimension of a sense of agency, resonate strongly with themes that emerge from participating teacher educators and pre-service teachers’ stories. McAllister’s model (2001, p. 91) is drawn on to elucidate these themes along with their relationship to engendering and sustaining a commitment to an empowering pedagogy.

In the next section, the major themes that emerge from the stories of Paul, Robyn and myself are presented. These themes are related to those that emerge from participating pre-service teachers’ experience of the pedagogies of Robyn and Paul, before being explored in light of the literature mentioned above.

**A Sense of Agency as a Teacher and Learner: The Generation and Importance of Creative Energy**

An over-arching theme that emerges from participants’ stories concerns the generation or lack thereof of a sense of agency in their lives as teachers and learners. A number of themes that connect with this larger theme emerge from the stories of Paul, Robyn and myself. Foremost among them is a sense of teaching and learning as a profoundly relational phenomenon, being dependent on the engendering of enabling relationships between persons as well as to the subject itself. This sense, and the qualities that emerge as integral to it, come through in part in the themes that permeate participants’
reflections on their experiences as teachers and learners. At the same time, they come through in the concordant qualities that carry participants’ voices and animate their faces and bodies. In the case of the participating teacher educators, Robyn and Paul, this sense and the qualities that accompany it are conveyed most powerfully in the felt experiences of their classes.

**Paul: A Sense of Family**

In our first conversation, Paul identifies *the students* as the biggest influence on his pedagogy. He tells me, on an emphatic tone, that *just interacting with them*, getting to know them, and relating to them *is what has really sustained* him (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 1). Throughout the research process and the storying of it, a sense of teaching as being in relation permeates Paul’s stories, his pedagogic focus, and the presence he creates in and with his classes. In Paul’s eyes, this being in relation is embedded in the notion of family.

‘Family’ is the word that for Paul best describes the culture of his first school which was *a real rough and tumble [one] near a local housing estate*. For him, *what really stood out* was that *the teachers there all really cared and...worked very hard to build a sense of family* (Interview 3, March 2010, p. 1). At the whole school level, this emerges as enabled by a culture grounded in not only connecting with *the kids*, but *bringing them in* on the creation of a supportive community which, for Paul, *was* fundamental. Integral to this *bringing them in* was involving the kids in *lots of fun activities and [getting] them working together on things*. At the same time, as Paul highlights, everybody *talked to them about it, about the value of working together and having good relationships and they really understood that and they valued it too* (Interview 3, March 2010, pp. 1-2).

The collective energy of the school culture emerges as enhanced by the pro-active inclusion of students and the trust in them that this places and, likewise, engenders.
This, in turn, is integral to fostering a sense of agency and commitment to what they have created in the students. This is evident in Paul’s recollection of the responses of his kids to student teachers who approached [them] like they were expecting them to misbehave. As Paul remarks, what was remarkable was the way the kids didn’t respond to that, [but] went about doing things as we always did them, and it struck me that the kids were so much more mature than the teachers in many ways (Interview 3, March 2010, p. 1).

The creation of an empowering school culture is enabled by staff who make the school into a place where everyone feels like they belong. This comes down to everyone [being] involved (Interview 3, March 2010, p. 1) in a way that is attentive to the children’s needs as young people, as much as young learners, and in realizing the connection between the two. As Paul says, we were talking one day in the staffroom, and it occurred to us that most of the kids had never been swimming, so we decided to make every Friday in summer a fun swimming day. No formal lessons or races, just a chance for the kids and teachers, all in together, to muck around in the pool. It is this kind of attentiveness that Paul links to the meaning of care: That’s what care is, taking the trouble to find out what someone’s missed out on, and doing something about it. At the most basic level, this manifests in the staff noticing that most of the kids didn’t have any [sunscreen] to bring [so] we went out and bought [some], and I remember putting it on my kids’ faces, and the other teachers doing the same thing (Interview 3, March 2010, p.1).

**Learning Through Fun: Collaboration, Possibility and Play**

The power of fun collaborative activities in the creation of an enabling culture is a prominent theme in Paul’s reflections, not only in relation to his first school and the education of children, but also in relation to his adult students. Paul connects this power to the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and the importance in learning of combining scaffolding with play (Interview 2, June 2009, p. 2). The value of this approach crystallized even more when he had children himself. He spent a lot of time
thinking about how he could bring them in contact with things in ways that got them interested and curious and wanting to explore. It was this that made [him] really realize how important growing confidence is, for adults as well as for kids, and how to grow confidence and curiosity together, you have to engage that positive affect. Engaging this positive affect involves making things fun, and having a sense of humour, and encouraging this in your students (Interview 2, December 2009, p. 2).

In practice, this is enabled by creating openings for students to share ideas and experiences, by listening to students and tapping into their interests, and engaging them in activities that awaken their sense of curiosity and actively engage their sense of fun. This comes through in Paul’s approach to engaging students with grammar in the TESOL special elective course, which sees him endeavouring to help them enjoy it more and approach it as an ongoing thing. As he jokingly says, never do grammar alone if you can help it, that’s my view (B Ed special elective course, session 2). He views making things fun as enabling people to feel that they can be all they can be because by making things more enjoyable and less threatening, it becomes not about being right or wrong [but] about the experience (Interview 1, April 2009, pp. 7-8).

The power of this approach is borne out in participants’ experiences of Paul’s pedagogy. Alongside the relevance and meaningfulness of Paul’s courses to their professional development, the joy of their experience emerges as a prominent theme. As Sean says, the activities are [not just] experiential, they’re engaging, I’ve looked around and everyone just loves doing them [and] I feel like I’m in school again, and…I actually love learning, and [it makes] you realise that you can just love doing something, and the process (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 5). The same combination of relevance and joy manifests in the many comments made by students on their evaluations of Paul’s elective courses, in which how much they loved the activities, the course, and Paul himself is the predominant theme (Appendix O, pp. 134-150).

Paul ties the power of this approach to its capacity to meet students’ needs for belonging, power, love and fun (Maslow, 1943). Opportunities for meeting these needs are embedded in the CHEAP (Challenge, handover, engagement, assisted
performance) principles that inform the pedagogic approach he encourages, creates and reflects on with his pre-service teachers. For Paul, this *looping content with method* (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 3) is crucial. As he says:

> If I'm going to encourage my students here to engage in conversations with kids in their classrooms, then I have to make the attempt to engage in conversations with them and reflect upon that with them...Likewise, if I'm going to suggest to them that the principles of handover and challenge and so on are important in classrooms, I have to do principles of handover and challenge (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 4).

Identifying handover [as] such a good principle for young teachers to have, [because] it allows kids to better meet those needs that are really quite diverse, Paul comes back to the importance of students having the experience of this. This is so that they get a sense of what it feels like and can then begin to see the potential of what it can be like in a classroom (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 4) for themselves. Significantly, in participants’ experience of Paul’s class, having this experience of handover emerges as a powerful force. As Ben says, Paul *talks about handover a lot and he lets you experience it, and that’s exactly what you don’t get in most other tutes, and it’s such a stand out, it’s such a bonus* (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, pp. 5-6). At the same time, Paul’s looping of content with method is described by participants as central to their experience of him and his classes as authentic, which also emerges as a prominent theme. For Ben and Sean:

> What has been told to us as the best ways to go about teaching, he does embody that...he’s very approachable, he’s got an open style...A lot of warmth...he was soft, he was engaging, and he was explaining things to you like he wanted you to understand...trying to invite you in, he has a very inviting personality...you get a lot of teachers who don’t walk what they talk especially in the university...they can tell you the best theories but they just don’t seem to be able to tweak it... so authenticity and genuineness and truth is the strongest thing for me by far (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, pp. 1-2).

The importance of making things fun is not only a recurring theme in Paul’s reflections and a quality that permeates his pedagogy, it is integral to the presence that Paul generates in class. Using gentle humour, usually of the self-directed kind, Paul lowers the stakes around making a contribution in class or electing not to, and in doing
so, enhances those feelings of support, equality and inclusion that permeate participants’ experience. When asking for a contribution meets with hesitation or uncertainty, he laughingly says, *you can always pass* (B Ed Special elective Year 4, notes, p. 4). Jen experiences this as him *asking you to share your input in a way that doesn’t put you on the spot which just makes you feel better* (B Ed Year 4, Meeting 1, p. 4). As Lucy observes, *normally in a class, you have people who are dominant personalities and then everyone else just sits there, but in Paul’s class it’s different because you still have the same people there but everyone opens up* (B Ed Year 4, Meeting 1, pp. 10-11). This is attributed to *everyone feeling like they’re their own person [so] they don’t have to be quiet and not say anything because someone else is taking over either* (B Ed Year 4, Meeting 1, p. 11). For Jen, Paul *creates that atmosphere where you can laugh about your mistakes, [so] you’re not feeling bad about it* (B Ed Year 4, Meeting 1, p. 12).

While important, Paul’s capacity to create such openings in the classroom emerges as not reducible to his many years of experience as a teacher and teacher educator, and his wealth of subject and pedagogic knowledge. Equally important are the vital qualities of creativity, responsiveness, and mindfulness which he engenders in the process of bringing this knowledge into being with students in ways that challenge, support, engage and include them. The presence and interconnectedness of these qualities, along with their pedagogical importance, has been identified by numerous scholars (for example, Arnold, 2005; van Manen, 1997; Sawyer, 2004). Sawyer (2004) sees the confluence of creativity and responsiveness in the particular kind of creativity that responsive teaching requires. Responding concordantly, in the pedagogic moment, draws on a creativity that is both immediately attuned to and mindfully cognizant of the best way to meet the students’ needs and open them up to new possibilities. For Arnold (2005), this kind of attunement is integral to and enabling of empathic intelligence. Empathic intelligence manifests in the integration of an embodied sensitivity that allows the teacher to tune into the feelings of others, with a mindfulness that enables them to respond thoughtfully in the unfolding moment. While this mindfulness necessarily draws upon the teacher’s knowledge of the student’s interests,
needs, and strengths, it is not reducible to that knowledge itself. It is equally dependent on being sensitive to the opportunities and constraints inherent in the moment.

These same qualities emerge as themes in Paul’s recollections on his own development as a person and teacher. He says that becoming more mindful in [his] interactions with students is something he has learned to do as he gets older, because he wants his students to be the best they possibly can (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 2). This cultivation very much depends upon being able to flatten out the ego. As Paul explains, while he is genuinely being [himself] in class, he has worked on cultivating that too, by being mindful of what [he] says and how [he] says it. This involves work[ing] hard at being present for students and listening to them, and responding as honestly as [he] can (Interview 2, December 2009, p. 2). Elaborating on this, he refers to being honest without being evaluative or authoritarian, and responding honestly to their questions. He sees the latter as extremely important and something which students really value too (Interview 2, December 2009, p. 3). The same qualities undergird the planning for class that really helps in responding honestly (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 5). As Paul says, he spends a lot of time making sure that the handover part of each task does scaffold participation and engagement...so that [students] have the opportunity to come up with some interesting thoughts for you to respond to (Interview 2, June 2009, p. 3). These qualities also inform Paul’s seeking to find a balance between planning to create the best possible experiences, and allow[ing] spaces for [them] to talk as things come up (Interview 2, December 2009, p. 3).

Creativity, responsiveness, and mindfulness are also integral to the theme of taking time and the accompanying openings that this enables. This manifests in participants’ experiences of the invitingness and inclusiveness that permeates Paul’s classes. Sean comments on the way that Paul is not trying to throw a whole bunch of stuff at you, but rather trying to invite you in to the subject (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 2). For Maggie and Ben, even the way that he talks, much slower and more kind of purposeful, just pausing and letting people reflect…it’s very conducive to letting people in (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 13). This also comes through in his textbook, in the way that he wrote it, which for Maggie is like talking to somebody (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 12).
The qualities of creativity, responsiveness and mindfulness emerge as enabling of, and integral to, the qualities of inclusiveness, non-judgment, invitingness, equality, support, engagement, and responsiveness that participants experience as permeating Paul’s classes and the presence he creates with students (Vignettes, Appendix N, pp. 110-133). At the same time, as these qualities pertain to the tacit, multi-sensory and interpersonal domain of felt experience, I see them as more than purely personal qualities. They are, simultaneously, essential dynamic forces that move through and are actualised in the openings created between people. It is the experience of these qualities, and the enjoyment of experiencing being in this way, that emerges as central to and sustaining of Paul’s commitment to an empowering pedagogy.

In Paul’s words, he has never had a great drive for goal achievement. He cares about doing what he enjoys, which became much more clearly focused after a pretty big health scare. This really crystallized for him how important it is to do and not be afraid to do what counts for you. In Paul’s case, this is the development and empowering of young people and their capacity to care for and appreciate their world (Interview 2, June 2009, p. 2). Not only does he get great satisfaction out of the education of young people and children, but he really does enjoy teaching...because he finds it very creative, and he hopes that his young students can see that... because if that sustains you, then you’ve got a sustaining career (Interview 1, April 2009, pp. 8-9).

Telling me that he wants to be in a place where people really care about human development, Paul resigned from his position in the faculty in 2010 and headed back to Thailand to teach. He feels that in the faculty there are quite a few people much more focused on progressing their career path than facilitating the professional development of upcoming teachers. Seeing this as needing people who have experience of engaging pedagogies and can really articulate that and reflect on it with pre-service teachers in open, collegial ways (Interview 2, June 2009, p. 1), he comments on how many staff lack sustained experience of actually having been in a classroom. These concerns are compounded by his growing concern at the turn that education is taking in Australia, wherein he sees parents... taking the dominant pedagogy of the school...
that one that is centred on competition and individual achievement and bringing it into
the home. In Paul’s eyes, the pedagogy of the home and the school should be
commensurate with each other, with meeting people’s needs, for fun, for belonging,
for love and power at the heart of both (Interview 3, August 2009, p. 1).

Robyn: The Power of Creativity

In Robyn’s story, her sense of agency and the teaching presence that arises in tandem
with it emerges as strongly connected to creativity and fostering a love of it in her
students through engaging them in fun, enjoyable activities centred around the creative
arts. Robyn sees creativity as a fundamental force that flows through all things
(Interview 1, April 2008, p. 1), including teaching. She is strongly committed to
making that [passion] come through (Interview 1, September 2008 p. 1) for her
students, in ways that will get them curious and excited and involved in their own
learning (Interview 1, April 2008, p. 1) and foster its development in their own
pedagogies.

The power of enjoyable, fun activities in the generation of a sense of collective agency
is a theme that runs throughout Robyn’s recollections of her teaching journey, and it is
one that is revealed as integral to the pedagogy that she embodies not only in her
workshops, but in the lectures too. Moreover, in her stories, as in her classroom, the
connection between fun and creativity, and the potential of creative encounters of all
kinds in enabling engagement and a sense of agency of the collective kind, emerges as
a powerful theme. She is very aware...that people learn in different ways and... need
diversity and that in a lecture it’s very easy for people to float off, so often she is on
[her] feet thinking is there another way to do this...that might grab their attention?
(Interview 1, April 2008, p. 2). At the same time, she wants to get across that idea that
learning can be enjoyable, that it doesn’t have to be deadly boring (Interview 1, April
2008, p. 11).
Two related themes, detectable in both Robyn’s reflections and her practice are the importance of keeping things moving, and the power of creative activities to generate anticipation. Robyn’s classes are full of movement of all kinds, as shown in the video story (Appendix R, p. 166). There is the movement of Robyn herself as she continuously circulates around the room, up and down, from group to group. There is the movement of activities, from small group to larger group, to whole group and back again. There is the movement of ideas and emotions, and the energies they generate; from Robyn herself to students, and among students in configurations of many kinds. As Clara says, *Robyn’s lectures are just fantastic! She actually gets people to come up the front and participate, which normally doesn’t happen in lectures…Normally you can just switch off but Robyn just gets everyone involved* (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 1).

At the same time, woven through Robyn’s recollections and her pedagogy are the ways in which creative activities and the energies they engage can shift people out of their comfort zones in a non-threatening way by incorporating the element of surprise. As Robyn says:

> There is that challenge in quite a lot of the activities that there is something unexpected and you might be thinking it’s going down a particular route, but then it takes a different turn like with the portraits…because I would hate it for students to be thinking ‘and now she’s going to do this and say this’ (Interview 1, April 2008, pp. 19-20).

Participating pre-service teachers’ reflections on Robyn’s pedagogy highlight their experiences of inclusiveness, enjoyment, equality, support, engagement and responsiveness (Hodson, 2009). Responsiveness, in particular, emerges as crucial in stemming their fears around art. As Antony says, *even before everything started, I was nervous about the class itself, because I’m not a good artist, but I felt that Robyn…addressed that fear immediately* (MTeach, Meeting 2, pp. 2-3). For Emma, Robyn really tapped into [their] emotional side, making the experience of drawing much less confronting. Similarly, Sasha identifies the way that Robyn recognizes our feelings…[as] so important. In particular, Sasha likes that Robyn made it okay for them to say I’ve had this experience of art, no matter how good, bad, or horrifying (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 19).
Robyn’s consciousness of the importance of acknowledging her students’ fears and addressing them throughout her lectures and workshops comes through in the consistent embodied way that she passionately talks up the power and pleasure of engaging children with art and learning through the arts. In this way, art emerges not as a source of expert evaluation, but rather as a fount of personal and creative expression and development. As she says in the first lecture: *It’s not four weeks to turn you into a Picasso but four weeks…to connect you to your creative potential* (Lecture one notes, p. 1). Reflecting on her pedagogy, Robyn tells me that she wants to *accept what people have to say because [she] knows that a lot of students are frightened and have really been turned off art*. And she just wants them to reconnect in some way...with their creative potential...and then that’s going to come across to the students in [their] class. Telling me that we’ve been painting on cave walls longer than we’ve been doing long division, she emphasises that it’s *clearly something within us, something that we’re meant to do* (Interview 1, April 2008, p. 5).

A further theme that emerges in participants’ experiences of Robyn’s pedagogy is the importance of time; both having it and being given it, and the way in which this is integral to feeling supported and engendering confidence. Antony recalls Robyn encouraging him to take the time to stay and work on his pottery after his turtle is mistaken for a car. This really helps him to regain confidence in himself and his art, because he *was really anxious [but] she came around to [him] and said don’t worry, take your time...and [he] ended up making a tree...[and] that was really comforting because he could take the time and feel happy about what [he] had produced* (MTeach, Meeting 4, pp. 15-16).

Both Emma and Clara are similarly comforted by the way that, right from the beginning, Robyn assures them *that you’re not going to be an artist in ten minutes* (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 18), and she takes the time to come around in the workshop and be there to help them, right when they need it. This giving of time merges with the qualities of supportiveness, timing and the equality experienced in Robyn’s pedagogy, all of which are immanent in the way that she moves through space. As Emma says, *she was really invisible but like really there...really supportive...she didn’t stop, and if*
you asked for her help she came back, she came back to me three times, and she did [this] to everybody. In Sasha’s words, she doesn’t take up a lot of space…and I really like that because there’s no distinction between her and us, it’s all very much collaborative (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 18).

All of these themes make Robyn’s aim possible, which is not to push into expertise in art, but to encourage people to take the time to play, explore, and to enjoy art and creative arts pedagogy and in doing so reconnect with their creativity. This is enabled by the fun, collaborative ways that Robyn ensures that people’s experiences and concerns are acknowledged and their fears reassured, alongside the many meaningful and enjoyable pedagogic activities that she engages them with and which she knows will succeed. As Robyn sees it:

> It’s really important for them if they take an art activity into a classroom that it’s going to be successful. So if I can give them a couple of examples that they can take into a classroom and try out and succeed, then they’re much more willing to start branching out and try other things (Interview 1, April 2008, p. 18).

Nonetheless, a theme that emerges in Robyn reflections is the amount of energy that such teaching requires. Robyn sometimes finds teaching really exhausting because she is continually giving and giving, and trying to work one-on-one and [be] really positive and [give] lots of feedback (Interview 1, April 2008, pp. 20-21). While this sense of the energy that teaching demands is not evident in Paul’s story, the differing contexts of their teaching and the nature of the demands it places upon them is substantial. As Robyn says, just watching herself on video, moving up and down and around to as many groups as she can in a lecture hall, looks exhausting (Interview 1, April 2008, p. 8). This situation contrasts with Paul’s third and fourth year elective courses, each of which consists of between fifteen and twenty students who come together for two hours every week for an entire semester. In Robyn’s case, she has a total of eight hours with the Masters of Teaching students, comprised of four lectures and four workshops, with up to one hundred students in the former. The combination of increased numbers and limited time, along with the physical constraints of the
lecture room and the energy it requires to both plan for and work against the traditional format as Robyn so successfully does, are likely contributing factors.

In our conversations, Robyn’s passion for her subject and students as well as her commitment to their learning emerges in her words, voice and the energy she exudes, as does a sense of reciprocity in her relationships with them and the pleasure this brings. This is especially the case with the MTeach and final year B Ed students who have decided this is what they wanted to do...are really sort of focussed and committed....[and]they just want to get out there and try it all out and it’s just lovely working with them (Interview 1, April 2008, pp. 7-8). That said, like Paul, in Robyn’s case a sense of not being able to draw enough nourishment from the faculty culture emerges. On the most fundamental level, this is apparent in the ways in which timetabling revolves around administrative rather than pedagogic concerns. In that particular semester there are days when she has to teach more than six hours, including one lecture and four workshops, one after the other. At the same time, this sense of lack emerges in what is not said, as much as what is said. While Robyn speaks with great passion about art and creative arts pedagogy and her students, she rarely speaks of the faculty itself with the same enthusiasm.

**A Passionate Creed**

LaBoskey (1994) uses the notion of a passionate creed to describe teachers who care deeply about their subject and their students, and who desire to awaken them to their own passions, creativity and imagination, and open them up to learning as a source of wonder that offers possibilities for discovery and transformation. For Beattie (2009, p. 22), the desire “to stimulate students’ curiosity, imaginations, and creativity and to awaken each individual to the possibilities of his or her own life” are the hallmarks of a good teacher. She points out that “this kind of teaching requires not only a deep understanding and passion for the subject matter, for developing a wide array of pedagogical resources that will inspire students’ learning, but also a deep
understanding of the students themselves and an understanding of the ways that they learn”.

Similarly, Sawyer (2004, p. 13) emphasises the collaborative and emergent nature of good teaching practice, and its genesis in “the interactional and responsive creativity of a teacher working together with a unique group of students”. As emerges from the case studies of Robyn and Paul, integral to this responsive creativity is a confluent mindfulness that is sensitive to the fears, feelings and possibilities for learning and development that arise in the moment. This quality of mindfulness emerges as honed through its conscious cultivation. It involves not only working on flattening out the ego, as Paul says, but equally entails lowering the stakes around learning by making it fun, engaging and collaborative.

Resonating with Robyn and Paul’s pedagogic approach is Williams’ (1987, p. 356) emphasis on the power of creating “spaces to play”. Arising in the context of children’s literacy development, the notion highlights the importance of providing opportunities for children to “enjoy texts more by finding new roles for themselves as readers”. This revolves around creating encounters that give rise to the experience of an “adventure playground” equipped with meaningful structures that enable children to engage in more perceptive readings, and which indirectly raise their awareness of the differing elements of narrative structure. Such approaches enable children to engage with literature in ways that enhance their “enjoyment, confidence and independence”, so that they can become “equal makers of stories” rather than locked in a dependent relationship with the narrator (Williams, 1987, p. 367).

The notion of creating spaces to play and their power to engender enjoyment, along with new roles and relationships, is equally applicable to and enabling of learning encounters of all kinds, with students of all ages, as the cases of Robyn and Paul illuminate. Both planning for and responding in ways that foster the creation of such spaces is a powerful dimension of their pedagogies. This manifests in the feelings of possibility, anticipation and agency, alongside those of inclusiveness, equality and support that participating pre-service teachers experience.
At the same time, these experiences of being in reciprocal relation emerge as lending sustenance to Robyn and Paul’s passionate creeds. As Paul says, it is *the students, just interacting with them, relating to them, and getting to know them, they’ve sustained me* (Interview 1, April 2009, p. 1). For Robyn, connecting with creativity, and helping her students to connect with theirs, is crucial. That said, as is apparent from the reasons surrounding Paul’s decision to leave the faculty and Robyn’s feelings of energy depletion, sustaining such a pedagogy depends on being connected to sources of life-enhancing energy. Experiences of collegiality and of pedagogy as an extension thereof emerge as a particularly powerful source of such energy. The consequences of a sustained lack of either experience emerges most clearly in the latter part of my professional journey. It is to this change in my sense of agency as a teacher that I turn next.

**Linda: From Collegiality to Stuckedness**

A stark contrast is evident in my stories between my early teaching career and most recent teaching experiences. My initial growth as a teacher and the development of a pedagogy that was founded upon connecting with the students emerged in tandem with a developing sense of agency. This was an agency that saw me actively seeking out ideas and approaches that would engage my students in the language and the cultures and histories that spoke through it. It motivated me to create activities and lessons that invited them to share their own cultures and stories with each other and myself. It was an agency that made me not afraid to take risks or try out new approaches with my classes, and to try them again in a different guise, or with some adaptations, if they didn’t work first time around.

The origins of this developing sense of agency, as depicted in the first part of my story, did not reside so much within myself as in the enabling features of the school environment in which I worked. These included its small size and a design that was open and inviting, with a staffroom on the edge of the common room that blurred the
boundaries between teachers and students. They included a concern for creating a feeling of belonging in the school; through making school barbecues a looked forward to monthly event, and through encouraging our excursions into the world, which we gladly and regularly took. They included time being given for the creation and sharing of curricula and materials that were based around the students’ learning needs and interests, alongside a commitment to professional development on a regular basis, as a means for bringing in practitioners in the field to share their approaches, so as to grow and challenge our own practices.

The school culture was one that arose out of the desire and willingness of the staff to share their time and knowledge with each other and with the students, in order to get to know each other and to better understand how students learn and might be further encouraged to do so. Like Paul, my initial experience of pedagogy and its development emerged as an extension of the collegiality (Sawyer, Baxter, & Brock, 2007) that was at the heart of the school culture.

This sense of agency both as a teacher and a person is conspicuously absent in the second part of my story. Instead, what emerges are feelings of anger and helplessness in the face of an institutional culture whose concerns had little to do with the wellbeing of students or staff. This was accompanied by my equally diminishing sense of power to change the prescriptive, exam driven nature of the curriculum or, in the end, of having the time, energy, or inclination to do so. As my sense of agency decreased, increasingly disruptive expressions of being in untenable relationships to self, others and the world took hold of my body.

The sources of these depletions arose from a constellation of contextual and relational forces and my increasingly disempowered responses to them, which took their toll insidiously and over time. They included a dysfunctional and hierarchical workplace culture, intent on the destruction of collegiality among teachers and the institution of performance-based processes and prescriptive curricula. Coupled with very demanding teaching loads and my overprovision of feedback to students, this meant that the amount of energy expended was much greater than that returned. As significant was
the qualitative change, over time, in the energies I was capable of exuding, as the sources for their enhancement diminished. The felt effects of this experience emerge most clearly in the poems which I wrote as I began this research. While the crisis in my relationship with my partner proved the determining factor in my ultimate bodily response, what all of these forces have in common is that they pertain to the lived experience of being in relationships that had next to no sense of reciprocity. The lack of commensurate energy received lead to burn out and disintegration.

**Enhancing Relationships and their Importance to Sustaining a Sense of Self in Relation with Others**

My experience reveals that it is not only in sustaining a commitment to an empowering pedagogy that the experience of mutually enhancing relationships is vital. It is equally important to sustaining a sense of self that is nurturing of a sense of self in relation with others. McAllister’s (2001, p. 92) model of the desired dimensions of being and doing in clinical education provides a lens through which to interpret not only the forces at work within the journeys of clinical educators, but also those in the journeys of teachers more generally. Generated from the experiences of clinical educators, it affords insights into the desired qualitative elements that mark each dimension of experience on the journey to becoming a clinical educator. While clinical education has its own particular demands, the holistic and experience-based nature of the model affords insights into the interrelations between personal and professional growth in educators of all kinds.
Table 1: Dimensions and Elements of the Model of the Experience of Being a Clinical Educator (McAllister, 2001, p. 92)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension 1: A Sense of Self</th>
<th>Dimension 2: A Sense of Relationship with Others</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elements:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elements:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Having self-acceptance</td>
<td>2. Perceiving others</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Having a self-identity</td>
<td>3. Values in relation to others</td>
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<td>4. Choosing a level of control</td>
<td>4. Seeking to implement values in relation to others</td>
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<td>5. Being a life-long learner</td>
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<th>Dimension 3: A Sense of Being a Clinical Educator</th>
<th>Dimension 4: A Sense of Agency as a Clinical Educator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elements:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding of role</td>
<td>1. Perceptions of competence and capacity to act as a clinical educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Motivations for becoming a clinical educator</td>
<td>2. Creating and maintaining facilitative learning environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Desired approaches to clinical education</td>
<td>3. Designing, managing and evaluating students’ learning programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Affective aspects of being a clinical educator</td>
<td>4. Managing self</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Managing others</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dimension 5: Seeking Dynamic Self-congruence</th>
<th>Dimension 6: Growth and Development: Possible Stages and Pathways</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elements:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible Stages and Pathways</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Bringing a higher level of attention to the role</td>
<td>1. Embarking on a journey of becoming a clinical educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Drawing the selves together</td>
<td>2. Moving from novice to advanced beginner</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Striving for plan-action congruence</td>
<td>3. Developing competence in the role</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Pursuing professional artistry</td>
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<td>5. Suffering burnout</td>
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In the model (Table 1, p. 269), McAllister identifies six interrelated and interpenetrating dimensions of being and doing that characterized participants’ experiences to varying degrees. These are respectively: a sense of self, a sense of relationship with others, a sense of being a clinical educator, a sense of agency as a clinical educator, seeking dynamic self-congruence, and growth and development; with each dimension incorporating a number of distinct elements.

While McAllister emphasizes the holistic, permeable and interconnected nature of these dimensions and the elements they are comprised of, she sees the educator’s sense of self as the kernel from which all other dimensions spring. Consistent with research in both psychology (Rogers, 1961) and education (Grimmett & Erickson, 1988), the elements of self-awareness and self-knowledge are seen as fundamental to being able to develop empathic understandings of other people and to treat them with the kind of unconditional positive regard that Rogers viewed as vital for human growth. According to McAllister (2001, p. 107), the ability to “consistently create” these kinds of interpersonal relations depends on a great degree of self-awareness and self-monitoring. In other words, being able to understand what informs one’s own frame of reference is fundamental to understanding another’s.

Similarly, it is argued that being congruent in terms of behaviour and ways of communicating requires educators to be aware of and in control of their feelings; this enables what they say to be in harmony with what they do. Interconnections between the degree and quality of acceptance of self and that of relating to and accepting others are also highlighted (McAllister, 2001, p. 110). Self-acceptance is seen as crucial not only to the educator’s fulfilment, but equally to their capacity to foster this in others. Acceptance of self is marked by a capacity to both accept the self and still endeavour to work on personal shortcomings. A lack of defensiveness in response to feedback from others is a further aspect of self-acceptance and one that is revealed in McAllister’s participant narratives as integral to fostering positive learning relationships with others. In relation to the element of choosing a level of control, despite the significance of personal histories and dispositions, the optimal choice of relinquishing control so that students have the freedom to learn emerges as dependent
on having high levels of self-awareness and acceptance alongside trust in students. They can then take responsibility for their own learning processes.

Connections between the relation to the self and the orientation towards others also come through in McAllister’s discussion of self-identity. Having an awareness of the identities that make up one’s sense of self, in tandem with the values, goals and abilities one has, are integral to having a self-identity. At the same time, managing the impression we make upon others through the self we portray is equally important to this dimension. These interconnections are reflected in the narratives of participants in McAllister’s study, whose sense of identity emerges as linked to caring, and is rooted in the assumption of the interdependence of the self on others, rather than its independence (2001, p. 112).

The generative interconnections that emerge in this model between a sense of self and creating that sense of self in relation to others suggest a converse relationship, as the link between having self-acceptance and fostering it in others makes clear. Experiences of being with teachers, mentors or peers who have developed such senses of self, of relationship, of role, and of agency, and the qualities that are integral to them, are vital to educators at all stages of their professional journeys. What I am suggesting, on the basis of the themes that emerge from my own experience, alongside those of Paul and Robyn, is that the experience of being in generative relations with others is central to and enabling of the growth of these optimal qualities. ‘Others’ include not only people, but all animate and once animate life in various forms and forms of moving about in the world.

This is borne out, in my case, by the formative power of the many enabling experiences of teaching and learning with colleagues and students that have marked my professional journey. These experiences both nurtured and nourished my sense of self and a sense of relationship with others. They emerge as central to the development of my sense of agency, and willingness to take risks, make errors, and learn from them. These experiences of being in enhancing relationships and the enjoyment and vitality that arises from them is what ultimately spurs my journey from burnout back towards
dynamic self-congruence (McAllister, 2001, p. 92). Without having experiences of what “right relation” (R. Arnold, personal communication, July, 2008) feels like and its generative force, I would not have been able to experience myself as not being in it. Undertaking this particular research has enabled my renewal and this bears out the importance of experiencing what an empowering pedagogy feels like in terms of living energy: as full of enthusiasm and passion, patience, temperance, humour and enjoyment.

It is evident that a concern with engendering enabling relationships of all kinds underpins and permeates the pedagogies of Robyn and Paul, with the creation and experience of such relationships emerging as a source of pleasure and sustenance. The themes arising from participants’ stories of their classes reveal experiences that are congruent with this. The generation of this kind of pedagogy – of the kind that is concordant and mutually enhancing – emerges as enabled by a sense of self and sense of relationship with others that is equally congruent. This is evident in the way that in participants’ experience of Robyn and Paul’s pedagogies, what they say is experienced as in harmony with what they do. In Paul’s case, this is encapsulated in the concept of authenticity, which in participants’ experiences emerges as a prominent overarching theme. Underlying the possibility of authenticity is the cultivation of the kind of heightened self-awareness that McAllister identifies as enabling of dynamic self-congruence (McAllister, 2001, p. 91). For Paul, this heightened self-awareness is envisaged in terms of mindfulness, a quality that he has consciously sought to develop in himself, and in relation to his interactions with students.
Chapter Seven: Growing Life-enhancing Metaphors

Part Two: Participating Pre-service Teachers

In this chapter, the themes that emerge from the journeys of participating pre-service teachers are explored in relation to the guiding questions. Themes relating to the kinds of conditions, experiences and relationships that help to foster the development of a sense of self, of relationship with others, and of agency as a teacher (McAllister, 2001, p. 91) are particularly focused upon.

Participating Pre-service Teachers: Masters of Teaching

The themes that emerge from the experiences of participating pre-service teachers reveal the affordances and challenges encountered in engendering and sustaining a commitment to an empowering pedagogy. Having a relational sense of self, and seeking to behave and relate to students in ways that are in keeping with that sense, alongside the development of a sense of agency to do so, emerge as central.

In this section, the key themes that permeate the experiences of the Masters of Teaching participants (Antony, Clara, Sasha and Emma) are presented. Due to the different ways in which the two case studies unfolded, along with the constraints of time and space, the journeys of the Bachelor of Education participants are not explored in the same way. Instead, their journeys are explored for the themes that emerge from their practicum experiences.
Motivations to teach

All of the Masters of Teaching participants, except Emma, have previous experiences of teaching, and dissatisfying former careers. For Antony and Clara, it is their enjoyable experiences of teaching in a voluntary capacity that spurred them to become teachers. In Clara’s case, her road to teaching goes back to her time spent in Chile, beginning with teaching English to Javi, with whom she developed a strong bond (Clara, Development map, p. 2). Her enjoyment was such that she volunteered for theatre workshops at a place called Crearte, where involving children at risk in creative projects was seen as central to raising their self-esteem. In Antony’s case, after six months in finance, he volunteered to work at a school in Korea, and enjoyed it so much that he just knew that teaching was what he wanted to do. Sasha, too, has had experiences of working in a voluntary capacity with children with autism spectrum as a teacher’s aide. Like Antony and Clara, Sasha really enjoyed working with the children, although her relationship with the main class teacher was less reciprocal (MTeach, Meeting 1, notes, p. 2). Her sense of teaching as worthwhile in a life-enhancing way comes through in one of our meetings where she says, I feel most of us... have been on a pretty long journey to get here...and it’s a pretty life-affirming thing to say yep this is what I want to be doing. For Emma, who really loves children, after fifteen years of a career pathway in the field of business, she has finally come back to what she has always wanted to do: to foster learning and love of it in children. As is apparent from their motivations to teach, alongside their eagerness to volunteer in the research, the participants in this study are deeply committed to learning as a source of empowerment, both for themselves and for their students.

Antony: Increasing Confidence and Strengthening Commitment

Increasing confidence and strengthening commitment are the overarching themes that characterize Antony’s experiences. These are in keeping with the metaphor of optimistic persistence that he sees as best fitting his reflections (MTeach, Meeting 5, p.
Increasing confidence comes through in Antony’s experiences of Robyn’s pedagogy and its enhancement of his confidence in his own creativity. As he says, he was so nervous about the class right from the start, because he felt so bad in his art skills. Then he felt that something that changed for [him] in the first class. [He] felt that Robyn addressed that fear immediately when she started talking about how everyone has some skill in art and people have just lost their confidence (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 2). Increasing confidence similarly comes through after the portrait workshop, which made him excited, [and to] want to actually give it a shot. This sees him in the class later that day starting sketching although [he] shouldn’t say who (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 12). When during the clay workshop, his turtle is mistaken for a car and he just crumpled it back up and it was around the end of class...and he was really just anxious, it is Robyn’s coming around to him and [saying] ‘Don’t worry, take your time’ that not only helps to calm [him] down, but has him feeling quite happy about the tree...which he ended up making (MTeach, Meeting 4, pp. 15-16).

Strengthening of commitment is the major theme that emerges throughout Antony’s reflections in relation to a pedagogy that he conceptualises in terms of friendship (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 13). A finely-tuned sense of self as being in relation with others emerges as underpinning this commitment throughout Antony’s reflections. This comes through in the very first meeting in a discussion about the importance of energy and the qualities within it, where Antony observes just how much the students pick up on the qualities in the teacher’s energy and how they change in tune with the teacher. It is for this reason that he laughingly describes himself as giving himself an emotional enema before he goes to class, just to clear out any negative baggage he might be carrying (MTeach, Meeting 1, p. 1).

The growth and cultivation of Antony’s awareness of himself and mindfulness towards others emerge out of his journey and the forces that drive it. Spurred on by his disheartening experience of working in funds management, he volunteered to teach English in Korea. From then on, he just knew that teaching is what [he] want[ed] to do. Elaborating on this, Antony says of the school in Korea that it was a really small school and there was no director, so the teachers had to do it themselves...and the
environment that was created, with everyone helping each other was amazing (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 25). This experience of collegiality and the sense of joy that emerges from being in a culture where relationships are enhancing is a formative force in Antony’s professional journey and his pedagogic approach.

The importance of this experience emerges most notably in response to Antony’s first practicum, which turns out to be particularly challenging. Not only does he find himself with a co-operating teacher whom he describes as the least most co-operative person that [he] can imagine, and who interacts with everyone...in an aggressive way, but her approach right from the beginning emerges as at odds with his own. As he says, her first remark is that the kids said that you’re nice, and that’s not good...they’re going to take advantage of it, they’re going to think you’re a pushover (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 13). However, as Antony tells us:

*I had my own ideas about how I feel comfortable with interacting with students [because] I taught that age group in Korea for three years, and even though it’s a different culture, I felt that my approach worked, and the idea I came up with is friendly. You can be friendly without being their friend (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 13).

Elaborating on this, Antony says that, for [him], being friendly towards students allowed [him] to be a better teacher for them [because] [he] could access their interests that she might not know about. The relationships that Antony develops with the students in the class confirm this for him. As he says, some of them expressed to me that they felt I was actually listening, so that made a big difference, because I felt it was reciprocated. I genuinely listened to them, [and] they listened to me (MTeach, Meeting 5, pp. 13-14). This not only helps to consolidate Antony’s commitment to his pedagogy, but allows him to respond to his practicum experience in a constructive way, by seeing the experience as ultimately a good thing because [he] turned it into a good thing by learning from it what’s not going to work (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 17).

Antony’s reflections reveal a strong sense of teaching as entering into a process of learning with the students. This comes through in his response to Emma’s fears about
her lack of expertise in art and creative arts pedagogy, where Antony says that it’s an interesting thing, where teachers go out and are not exactly one hundred percent sure of how it’s going to go, but they kind of learn with the kids (MTeach, Meeting 4, p. 26). This learning with students equally involves being able to empathically see into their ways of thinking. In his response to Emma’s concerns about not knowing what a good book is for her kids, Antony tells her that was part of the process for [him]. He goes on to say that he originally chose a book by putting himself in the place of a child. This led him to pick the one that had the most interesting cover and…had his name in the title. When he went back to his practicum class, he checked with his little reading buddy by asking her about her favourite book. She tells him that she likes Lola and Charlie and when he asks why, she just says, because my name is Lola! (MTeach, Meeting 4, p. 28).

Antony’s reflections and responsiveness towards participants in the focus group reveal a sense of self and of relationship with others that mark the journey towards becoming an empowering educator. His growing sense of agency as a teacher committed to a commensurate pedagogy is evident in the way that his practicum experience with his unco-operative co-operating teacher ultimately strengthens this commitment.

The pleasure that Antony experiences in creating relationships founded upon friendship and reciprocity, both in the classroom and among colleagues in the school, emerges as nourishing the development of those senses of self, of relationship with others, and of agency, identified by McAllister (2001). This comes through in his experience of the focus group. As he says:

I just found the whole process, of just being able to speak with a group where I thought that we had something in common, [being] interested and passionate teachers really helped me to clarify things... Because hearing others and about their experiences is like.... seeing a teacher teach and maybe that teacher doesn't teach the same way that you do, and you think, okay I like that and I don't exactly agree with that, so why don’t I agree with that? But then you go back and say ‘oh that's the reason why’ because I've had this experience or this has worked for me. So I found it really helpful [being in this group] just in mak[ing] it explicit in my mind and mak[ing] it stronger (MTeach, Meeting 7, pp. 6-7).
The strengthening of Antony’s commitment to his pedagogy through sharing experiences with like-minded people is linked to opportunities for exploration and renewal. His sense of the research as being *totally exploratory* so that a lot of ideas didn’t have to come out fully formed but could just bubble up and gather energy through the group emerges as enhancing of this. For Antony, this is important because if you stop and think about it something is suppressed. He loops this back to the classroom and having that free flow of ideas, which kids won’t take up, if they think you want an answer (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 44).

The importance of sharing their teaching and learning experiences in an exploratory way is a recurring theme in Antony, Clara, Sasha and Emma’s reflections (MTeach, Meeting 8, pp. 6-10, Appendix D, pp. 30-42). Antony connects this exploratory approach to being able to question freely and in doing so to look more deeply into the foundations of things:

> The conversations that I've had here were different from the conversations that I've had with my other peers, totally different...I kind of felt like a lot of those conversations (at the coffee shop) were just on the surface, we didn't [talk about] the foundations of teaching and I don't even know if that happened here- maybe it did. But I felt like the conversations here, there was a difference, and I also felt like there was a difference between the conversations that I had with my – I wish it wasn't the case – my co-operating teacher...because I felt like in that structure, I did question but I couldn't question one hundred percent her teaching because it's her class and everything right? So in terms of exploring the pedagogy...if I had done it, it would have really improved my professional experience (MTeach, Meeting 7, pp. 9-10).

In the light of their practicum experiences, both Antony and Clara express concern about what will happen if we don’t have the opportunity to talk about our experiences like this? (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 46). Stressing how much time and thought and reflection it takes to develop really good lessons makes Antony wonder how do we keep renewing ourselves in a really pressured system (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 46).

This need for renewal and its connection to exploration and the vitality it brings resonates with Stern’s (1985) notion of an emergent sense of self, the forces that
inform it, and its fundamental role in learning and growth. Although the notion has its roots in early childhood, Stern stresses that the emergent sense of self is one that accompanies us throughout life. Emanating from primary pre-verbal experiences in infancy, this sense of self relates to the experience of the coming into being of self-organisation; not in a reductive or determinate sense, but in a full bodied one. It involves the sensing of new possibilities and the incorporation of new meanings through exploration of and in interaction with the world and the beings within it. The sensing and incorporation of new possibilities for organisation give rise to those generative vitality affects, and an accompanying sense of pleasure in the experience of learning itself.

The element of being a lifelong learner is, in McAllister’s (2001, p. 91) model, integral to a sense of self that is enabling of a sense of relationship with others. A lifelong learner is described as someone who not only knows the gaps in their knowledge and skills and seeks to address them, but who is enthusiastic about learning of all kinds and gains pleasure from enabling the learning of others and satisfaction from watching them grow. The latter emphasis on taking pleasure in learning of all kinds resonates with the experiences that underpin Stern’s emergent sense of self. It suggests that an orientation to lifelong learning is not engendered through a desire to fill skill gaps or achieve outcomes, but rather out of the pleasure of generative learning experiences. In Antony’s case, the desire for encounters of the exploratory collaborative kind, and the experiences of enjoyment, possibility and connection that they enable, emerge as integral to sustaining his commitment to an empowering pedagogy. At the same time, they enable the kinds of personal and professional growth that make continued commitment possible.

**Clara: Engendering Confidence**

While Clara’s reflections illuminate her strong sense of self in relationship to others, and the responsiveness that underpins it, developing confidence in her students’ responses emerges as an important underlying theme. Throughout her reflections and
in her responses to other members of the group, Clara’s awareness of and responsiveness to the needs, feelings and fears of her students comes through so clearly that responsiveness is her metaphor (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 46). This is exemplified in her pre-practicum visit, where she notices that Andy has *his head on the desk* during a creative writing session. Her first response is to go over and *introduce herself*, and ask if she can *look at his book*. This has him telling her how he *had just moved from another school* and that he *missed his friends*. As she is chatting to him about his likes and dislikes, she notices that he is painting his fingernails, and suggests that he write about that, which starts him writing so excitedly that *it was like his hand turned into a spider* (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 3).

Like Antony, Clara’s creative and responsive tendencies equally come through in the way in which she responds to the concerns of other participants in the group. When Emma voices her fears around her lack of confidence in her abilities to do art and to enable her students’ artistic development, Clara comments that she doesn’t *have that much experience either* and shares her experience of doing face painting at aftercare. When one boy asks her to draw a skull:

*On the spot I said can you draw it for me?...And he drew it in a simple way....and so I just copied what he had drawn and once I did that...I loosened up and then one of them wanted a dragon and then I realised that they weren’t actually as critical as I thought they were going to be, they accepted it, actually they loved it, but it’s like overcoming that psychological hurdle* (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 17).

In view of these qualities, the impact of Clara’s co-operating practicum teacher upon her and the pedagogy she desires to create emerges as incongruous. As Clara explains:

*I started out being myself and I was fine, but my co-operating teacher said ‘You’ve got to be harder on the kids’. And he started praising me whenever I would get angry at them...and then unconsciously, you spend all day with these people and you kind of pick up without even wanting to...their habits [and] their way of being* (MTeach, Meeting 5, pp. 8-9).
One way to understand Clara’s “picking up” of her co-operating teacher’s habits and demeanour is in terms of the exertion of power relations. He was going to be marking her (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 8), as she says, and they were coupled in an apprentice-like relationship. Another view is to see these admitted power relations as complicated and traversed by the realm of felt experiences, where the forces that arise between bodies operate upon each other in ways that can and often do escape fully conscious awareness. This fits with Clara’s experience of *unconsciously...pick[ing] up, without even wanting to* the habits of her co-operating teacher (MTeach, Meeting 5, pp. 8-9).

This idea of the power of the bodily meanings that emerge between people as being integrated accords with neuroscientific accounts of the body minded brain (Damasio, 1994). In Damasio’s conception, our bodies are not only the source of the meanings that arise in our brains, but they are constantly taking in, via all of the senses, input from the environment in which they move. Crucially, this input is not reducible to information or thought, but rather carries the felt or affective qualities experienced in relation to an action or interaction. According to Damasio’s (1996a) somatic marker hypothesis, this input usually escapes our conscious notice, unless its content upsets the body’s equilibrium, creating a disturbance of the bodily kind.

Clara’s *half conscious* response of *going home exhausted and...thinking ‘I don’t want to teach if I have to be like this, I can’t sustain it’* (MTeach, Meeting 5, pp. 9-10) reveals the disturbing bodily effects of her experience upon her. Arising in the context of relationships experienced as judgemental, non-democratic and non-collegial with a co-operating teacher who *wanted to control everything* (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 20), Clara’s experience highlights the importance of its converse. This is evident in Clara’s reflections on *realising that [she] was turning into her own worst nightmare* after the tertiary mentor’s observation of this class (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 9):

*I spoke to my mentor and she was just fantastic!...We spent an hour talking and she said ‘you’re just too hard on the kids’... and it was a big emotional thing. But talking to her really helped and that weekend... I decided in my head that I’m just going to use my style and try it out because I need to know if it can work with the kids*. (MTeach, Meeting 5, p. 10).
Clara’s lack of complete confidence in herself and her responsive approach is an important underlying theme evident in her reflections. As she says, *I wasn’t sure if it was going to work and I said to my university supervisor (mentor) the second time, that I was always worried that they’d take advantage of me because I do have that kindness and that warmth, but she said, ‘Oh no, don’t be worried about that, you’re doing the right thing!’* (MTTeach, Meeting 5, p. 12). Overcoming this fear is crucial to Clara developing the confidence in herself and her students to create an empowering pedagogy. At the same time, this confidence to give *being herself* a try emerges as not emanating from Clara alone, but as greatly enabled by the tertiary mentor’s support, acceptance and guidance, and the sense of agency as a teacher it helps to engender in Clara.

Like Antony, the experience of being in the focus group and sharing ideas and experiences around the affective dimensions of teaching and learning also emerges as enhancing of her development. It strengthens Clara’s confidence and willingness to take risks and open up with her peers in an enabling way. As she says:

> Being able to talk to people about what I'm teaching and relating it to the lectures and things that we've learned and your research, it's been really beneficial... It’s like a lot of those situations [where] people don't want to reveal their vulnerabilities... but actually teaching I've found, you are exposed, so sometimes with my um group of friends, I've had to come out and be honest and say something, and then they're all like “oh yeah you know” and then they start to open up a bit more... Maybe we've all got a bit of a mask or something that you've got to get through, but I think it would be beneficial to get through that more because we are so exposed (MTTeach, Meeting 7, pp. 10-11).

**Sasha: Having Confidence, Heightening Awareness**

The metaphor that emerges from Sasha’s reflections on her input into our focus group conversations is that of a journey. This is a metaphor that connects her personal and professional life in the sense that Sasha’s love of exploration and its creative nature is a driving force in both (MTTeach, Meeting 4, p. 33). It is in relation to these qualities that Sasha’s sense of agency as a teacher and learner comes through.
Throughout Sasha’s journey, her passion for art and creativity comes through as a source of engendering insights of all kinds. It emerges as engendering in her “shocks of awareness” (Greene, 1987), in the sense of its capacity to touch us in surprising ways. This is evident in Robyn’s first lecture, where Sasha shares her encounter with an abstract indigenous painting of a waterhole, with paths leading out in many directions. At a time in her life where she had no particular direction or certainty about where to go, she remembers how this was the first time that a painting moved her to tears (Lecture one, observation notes, p. 4).

Sasha’s passion for art and exploration is evident in our first meeting, where she fervently affirms how creativity is central to everything (MTeach, Meeting 1, p. 3). Her sense of its importance as an empowering force in pedagogy shines in the way that she excitedly tells us about Ken Robinson’s (2006) talk on TED and his view of how important it is to foster creativity in children (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 11). Her desire to engender this feeling in others is reflected in the way in which Sasha brings in resources for teaching the curriculum through art to our meetings. These include some lovely work samples of different styles with a really nice Cubist one (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 3) that Sasha passes around. In addition, her passion is shown in her response to Emma’s question about her love of art, where she says, I love art, but I think what I love more is wonder...I just love exploring (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 13).

This passion for exploration and the experience of creativity as a means for sustaining it is central to Sasha’s pedagogy and her commitment to it. She sees teaching as one of the most creative jobs in the world or, at least, ideally it should be (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 12). Like Antony, Clara and Emma but perhaps even more so, Sasha really loves Robyn’s classes. This is not only for the incredibly worthwhile activities…that can be applied to the classroom (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 11), but also because of the really creative way that she gets everyone involved and the feeling...that sense of joy this engenders, when you get to do something fun in school [and] see the value behind it (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 8).
This passion reverberates through Sasha’s reflections on her own practicum, where she recalls her favourite activity to which the children responded with *depth* and *interest.* Based on the story of *Amy and Louis* (Gleeson, 2006), Sasha has most of the class lying on the carpet, while the rest become zephyrs and clouds that are encouraged to blow gently over the room. What especially delights her is that even the most **boisterous boys**...were on their backs waiting eagerly for what was coming next. This reminds her of Robyn’s classes because part of what made it work so well was the **anticipation; that element of wondering what’s coming next** (Sasha, Written reflections, p. 1).

At the same time, Sasha’s practicum experience reveals the challenges that emerge in relation to sustaining her pedagogic approach, despite having a co-operating teacher who *had really developed the children’s enthusiasm* [and] *an abundance of creative ability* (Sasha, Written reflections, p. 1). A key issue for her is the pressure exerted by normative expectations of art being *pleasing* and the need for displays to *look good for parents* (Sasha, Written reflections, p. 2). When Mrs. B seeks help from Sasha’s co-operating teacher and the principal on how to finish her class’ artwork for the school’s upcoming trivia night, she is advised on how to make it more pleasing to the eye. This sparks a discussion between Sasha, her co-operating teacher and the principal, where the co-operating teacher tells her that *sometimes you just want the kids to be proud of what they create so you lead them to...conform to an idea of being aesthetically pleasing.* Sasha is disenchanted with these comments and recalls Robyn’s assertion...that children should be encouraged to embrace and value their own artistic abilities. Although in agreement, her co-operating teacher tells Sasha that *sometimes end product is the aim,* while the principal remarks that he can see that *this is something she is very much grappling with while she develops her teaching philosophy* (Sasha, Written reflections, pp. 1-2).

Sasha’s *revolutionary* stance on creativity is revealed as potentially generative of friction in contexts where normative expectations are in operation. This emerges as a dilemma for Sasha, as does finding an enabling way to respond. Her admission that accommodating a more conventional view of art is something that she is *still very*
much grappling with reveals this (Sasha, Written reflections, p. 2). At the same time, Sasha’s acknowledgement that her co-operating teacher possesses a pragmatism shaped by her own professional and life experiences that she does not yet have (Sasha, Case study, p. 4) reveals Sasha’s awareness of the need to develop in herself a pragmatism of the congruent kind; one that will enable her to accommodate different perspectives, whilst not compromising her core values. Developing this capacity to manage the differing expectations of herself and others in mutually enabling ways emerges as important to Sasha’s development of her sense of agency as an educator (McAllister, 2001, p. 91). Experiencing her co-operating teacher’s pragmatism first hand emerges as generative of her movement towards a similar path.

Like Clara and myself, the strengthening of Sasha’s commitment to an empowering pedagogy is also enabled by the realisation that she is interacting with students in a way that is incongruous with her sense of self and relationship with others. This, in turn, helps to enhance her awareness of herself in interaction with her students in a more holistic, multisensory, and dynamic way. This comes through in her story of her interactions with Ben, who displayed behaviours that indicated a lack of social awareness, finding it difficult to listen to others [and] to play fairly and co-operate (Sasha, Case study, pp. 1-2). Upon learning about Ben’s sad history, Sasha intends to promote and sustain Ben, by harnessing his enthusiasm to create an environment where everyone respects the needs of each other (Sasha, Case study, p. 2).

Nonetheless, as she is lying in bed talking over her day, with thoughts of Ben whirring around in her head, Sasha becomes conscious of how she has been focussing on Ben’s negative behaviours and has reverted to telling [him] off and calling his name in a way that makes him completely disengage. This sparks her to seek ways of behaving in relation to Ben that are congruent with her values, and has her calling to mind the number one rule in operation at her volunteer school: to always praise students for any positive thing…and never dwell on inappropriate behaviours (Sasha, Case study, p. 3). The heightened sense of awareness of herself and her responses that this incident helps to engender comes through in Sasha’s reflections on reading The Rainbow Fish (Psister, 1992). When Ben begins fidgeting and propping [himself] on his knees
blocking the view of those behind, her response is to draw attention to Will who is... listening attentively and to calmly suggest...to the class that if they can’t see on their bottoms, they should move too. When this leads to Ben’s settling down, Sasha emphatically praises him, with a Well done Ben, good choice! (Sasha, Case study, p. 5).

The strengthening of Sasha’s commitment to an empowering pedagogy is enhanced by this experience, and the way it heightens her awareness of her sense of relationship with others, and her capacity to act accordingly. This, in turn, enhances her sense of agency. As she says, ensuring students feel valued is central to preventing behaviour problems, rather than simply responding to them. For this reason it is really important to get to know what makes students tick and, in the future, she hopes to be more attuned to how [she] can address those needs in the first instance (Sasha, Case study, p. 7).

Like Clara and Antony, participating in the research has also enhanced the development of Sasha’s pedagogy, particularly in terms of her awareness of its relational base. As she says in our final meeting:

I felt…it was a really honest and open forum and...I gained so much from it in terms of my ability to reflect upon learning and teaching as well...After your conference paper that you sent out, I certainly took that on board when I was writing up my case study as well, because my case study was about relationship building and affect in the classroom, and between teacher and students and [it] was on the way that I responded verbally and also in my manner towards a student, that's why it was so incredibly valuable to have been a part of this process (MTeach, Meeting 7. pp.3-4).
Emma: Engendering Confidence

Unlike Antony, Clara, and Sasha, Emma had no previous experiences of teaching, although it turns out that being a primary school teacher is something that she has wanted to do since she was a little girl having always loved children (Emma, Name montage reflections, p. 1). Of all participants in the group, it is Emma who emerges as most concerned about lacking the requisite skills and techniques (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 15) to connect with and enable learners of different kinds, with different learning styles.

As she says, in our second meeting:

I really had no art experiences at school after year seven...I have no understanding of how to use any of the materials...that we should be taking into the classroom to foster creativity and there are so many materials other than pen and paper. And my background is business and marketing, so I can talk about print production and stuff, but I’ve got no idea how to work with anything else...[and] I would like to know something, because I want to take some of the theory...about being able to differentiate your activities in your class based on the different types of learners that you’ve got (MTeach, Meeting 2, pp. 14-15).

Like the other participants, Emma is someone who is inclined towards a responsive, inclusive and creative pedagogy. This comes through in her memories of learning and how they inform the pedagogy she wants to create. Those lessons she remembers most vividly are ones where the teacher really cared and the learning of all students mattered, not just the bright ones (Emma, Reflections 2, p. 2). It also comes through in the way that she eagerly shares her ideas for developing and adapting activities for classes. Inspired by Robyn’s name montage activity, which she sees as a very powerful tool, she tells us how it could be adapted for a unit in HSIE where you need to learn about the children in the class and get them to share about their lives. This sparks her thinking about how it could be used for getting parents involved...and even sharing that on a parent teacher night (MTeach, Meeting 3, p. 17).
While Emma does not display the same confidence in learning with her students as Sasha, Clara and Antony, her reflections on her contributions throughout the group sessions shed more light on the reasons for this. The metaphor she sees as emerging from her contributions is that of barriers, and, as she says:

> Perhaps, one of my barriers is that because I am an adult learner...I have been in management and I have been able to build up and now I’m ready to go starting this minute, so what do I need? Could I have it tomorrow? So there is a level of impatience there, because probably age and experience and the expectation you have on yourself (MTeach, Meeting 4, pp. 32-33).

The tensions related to Emma’s personal and professional boundaries become apparent in the differences of opinion concerning the meanings of various learning experiences discussed in the focus group. The face touching activity in Robyn’s first portraiture workshop is one which Emma emphatically hated because she didn’t want anyone touching her face. Sasha, Antony and Clara feel that it transcended that...and turned it into a relational thing. As Antony sees it, it was a very intimate activity that showed there was a great deal of trust in the group. This leads Emma to ask, but do you need a relationship in an arts subject?, to which Antony says, If you’re going to be showing art, there’s a certain amount of trust that you feel with each other...if you don’t feel comfortable then the amount of expressiveness and the amount of ideas and risks you are willing to take probably decrease. Emma, however, never feels judged in any of her courses, and while she thinks that a positive vibe is important, and that everyone needs to be attuned to being here to learn...whether that’s about relationships or not [she] isn’t sure. In the same breath (MTeach, Meeting 3 p. 15), Emma recounts the difficulty she experienced in doing the name montage, and how she burst into tears when she showed it to her friends in the coffee shop. As she is saying this, she becomes teary again.

In her written reflections, Emma admits that she found the name montage a hard task, and even harder to share, and she is still not sure why [she] started crying and found it really hard to stop (Emma, Reflections 3, p. 2). The name montage exercise enables a great deal of freedom of expression in both form and content, suggesting that, in
keeping with her metaphor, Emma is much more comfortable with more structured guidelines and expectations. This is evident in her response to Robyn’s clay workshop, where she feels it would have been better for her to say, ‘Today we’re all going to make...a bowl, but I’d like you to make sure that your bowl has something joined and I’d like to make sure that you’ve got something scoured...That would have been probably more educational rather than just play (MTeach, Meeting 4, pp. 17-18).

Emma’s desire for clearer boundaries in order to further confidence in her own creativity and ability to help students grow is evident in these reflections. Similar themes come through in her reflections on her approach to learning and its grounding in more analytical approaches to understanding. As she says:

\[I\text{ always tend to intellectualise...I like to get stuff, I like to analyse it. I like to understand it and really sort of synthesise it myself. I can build on everything in this course from my previous life, studies, degrees, work experience, but I can’t build on visual arts. I can’t anchor working with clay – I need some more anchor points for that, to feel confident to teach it} (MTeach, Meeting 4, pp. 24-25).\]

It is for this reason that Emma particularly liked the portraiture workshop because \[\text{then we were taught...draw your line down the page. Divide it...and I think our confidence really went up}\] (MTeach, Meeting 4, p. 19).

Emma’s reflections on her practicum experience reveal similar themes. Electing to undertake her practicum at a private girls’ school because she felt comfortable there, having attended the very same school, for Emma what is crucial in this environment is that everyone knows what’s expected and that we’re all here to learn. Similarly, the strictness of her co-operating teacher, who signs off on her lesson plans a week in advance (MTeach, Meeting 6, p. 8) is enabling for Emma, for whom these firm guidelines and high expectations constitute what it means to be professional (MTeach, Meeting 2, p. 19). Thus, while Emma is both inspired by and committed to a pedagogy centred on creativity and the generation of a “space to play” with children, this is in conflict with a sense of her role as teacher (McAllister, 2001) and of her students’ role as learners that is much more clearly defined. That her theory may be in conflict with
what she is comfortable with putting into practice emerges as a potential source of tension for Emma. This tension may feed into Emma’s need for more anchored experiences of how to go about creating those spaces so as to enable the development of her pedagogy and her confidence in it.

**A Sense of Agency: Pre-service Teachers Bachelor of Education (Primary)**

In the stories of the pre-service teachers undertaking the Bachelor of Education (Maggie, Sean, Jen, Ben and Lucy), their budding sense of agency emerges as connected to the kinds of relationships they are able to forge with their co-operating teachers and the teacher educators they come in contact with in the faculty. These stories affirm the importance of the experience of enabling professional relationships not only to foster this sense of agency, but to strengthen their commitment to an empowering pedagogy.

Themes which emerge as significant include the extent to which they experience a sense of fit between the pedagogies espoused and enacted by their co-operating teachers, and those that they have learned are the best way to go about teaching (Ben, B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 1). Other themes that emerge are the extent to which a sense of collegiality and equality is experienced within these relationships and the degree to which they feel supported and encouraged in their practice. In relation to the latter, the capacity of the co-operating teacher to be realistic about teaching and its complexities and contingencies is an important theme.

Lucy’s reflections reveal the sense of being stifled that arises from her experiences with a dominating co-operating teacher. Not only did her co-operating teacher think that she was the best kindergarten teacher that ever was, but she kept telling Lucy, this is the way to do it. Lucy found this so frustrating because she was learning things at uni that [she] wanted to try. Compounding this frustration were the difficulties that
Lucy experienced when she tried something different. As she tells us, when she started trying to do [her] own ideas [the teacher] got really funny. At the heart of her practicum teacher’s reaction, as Lucy sees it, wasn’t that there were any problems with the activities themselves, but rather, that the kids were really responding to them and that the teacher responded to that in a negative way (B Ed Year 4, Meeting 1, p. 16).

In Jen’s case, while she thinks that her co-operating teacher was a good teacher, there is no sense of them forging a relationship that enhanced her development because he didn’t really care about [her] as a person and made her feel like I was just there to take his class, not for him to actually help me be a teacher. Nonetheless, she really enjoyed her prac, albeit because of the kids not the teacher. While finding prac an intimidating enough experience without that, nonetheless she sees herself as able to sort of grow as a teacher because [she] had to come up with all these things [herself] (B Ed Year 4, Meeting 1, pp. 18-19).

There is no sense of this kind of growing in Sean’s case. He describes his practicum as a real come down to earth and his co-operating teacher as a really poor example of quality teaching, which was indicative of the whole school approach. For him, this raised the question of Where’s the alignment? While this experience is not credited as the source of his being conditioned to think...that you have to implement these poor quality teaching methods, like reward and punishment to some degree, in order to keep kids on track, detectable in Sean’s words and their resigned tone is a lack of confidence and accompanying sense of agency in adopting a more empowering approach, which his practicum experience has done nothing to shift. While Sean is against these poor quality methods, in [his] experience it’s unavoidable (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 8).

In contrast to this, the relationship that Maggie forges with her co-operating teacher is enhancing and enabling of her development. Describing her practicum teacher as the best at everything really, Maggie goes on to elaborate on how she ran such a calm, such a peaceful and such a loving classroom but got so much done at the same time. One thing that strikes Maggie in particular is how she let the kids have a bad day,
which Maggie just thought was so powerful, [because] sometimes I have a bad day. She equally notes her co-operating teacher’s response, which is to allow them to sit in the classroom with her at lunch break, which you're not really supposed to do, but she would let them sit down and do some work quietly at lunch time and she would just give them alternatives. As Maggie sees it, her co-operating teacher:

*Just saw behind things, [because] she knew them, [and] on the first day she gave me a really in depth personal history about all of them and cultural backgrounds and everything, [and] she knew who was going to work well together, what child was going react in what way and that just empowered her so much* (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 2, p. 11).

When Maggie encounters some difficulties with her own lessons, her experience of her co-operating teacher’s qualities helps her to deal positively with the situation. This in turn enhances her confidence, along with her sense of agency and professional development. As she tells us:

*I was teaching this art class and I missed this tiny little teaching point and the whole thing was a complete mess [but] my teacher was like, ‘it doesn't matter, it happens all the time’. And when I didn't know how to teach fractions, she goes this is not a problem, I'll show you how to do it. And she said to me, if you go in and you don't know how to do something, don't freak out, the reality is that you can't remember all of the syllabus, all of the time. But don’t worry, you're going to be great. And I was like ‘yeah’ and I went home, and I learned fractions that night and I taught it like a brilliant person the next day* (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, pp. 10-11).

This vote of confidence (Ben, B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 11) that her co-operating teacher gives Maggie, and her acceptance of mistakes, reminds Sean of his experience of Paul and his classes. It brings up the notion of authenticity, a key theme that draws together participants’ experience of Paul. As Sean says:

*If you go out there and things go wrong, it’s fine. Accept it if you’re not reaching the teaching standards perfectly. Keep them in sight, but be with the reality of the situation and accept the truth of you as a teacher...and let your children see you accept yourself and then they accept your mistakes, that's the only way you can start getting authenticity, you know. So maybe, when I was thinking of authenticity with Paul, it’s that he's not guarded at all...He doesn't seem to be*
too concerned with maintaining this professional superior image. It’s like, he is saying this is my truth and I’m happy with that...and if kids can see that, apart from the fact that they learn to accept themselves and accept their own mistakes, it’s so much more conducive for them to take risks. Paul takes risks, he accepts himself, you take a risk, he accepts you, you take a risk, you do something wrong, you accept it, you do something right, you make progress you accept that too. So just acknowledging and accepting the truth of the situation is really conducive to people being able to express themselves...and it’s really motivating because you’re not worried, you’re like it doesn’t matter if I make a mistake because there is no failing. You can’t fail when there is no failing, there’s only learning and making mistakes and that’s good (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1 pp. 11-12).

This theme of the power of experiencing another person’s risk-taking and self-acceptance and drawing confidence and inspiration from both is equally evident in Maggie’s experience of her practicum and her practicum teacher. This comes through in the way that her practicum experience helps Maggie to develop confidence in herself, and enhances her confidence in a more empowering pedagogy. As she puts it:

Sean and I are very, very different people...I’m much more negative and so whenever they’re teaching us staff, I’m always like ‘That’s not going to work!’ But when I went to prac, I had the most fantastic prac ever, so I’m a little bit on the opposite side now, so now I think we should pitch above the bar (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 9).

A related theme that emerges from participants’ experiences of their practicum and their courses in the faculty is that of the need for greater realism from their teacher educators about what the real constraints of teaching are going to be like instead of this continual high theory (Maggie, B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 9). This is a theme which is embedded in the notion of authenticity, in as much as taking risks and acknowledging and accepting mistakes are integral to both. As Maggie says:

I think we should pitch above the bar...but I think there’s got to be an element of – this is a reality to a degree...which is what Paul does, because he uses his own examples and he constantly says, ‘This might not work’... And I think that’s so important especially for some people who’ve never had a lot of school experience. I just felt so bad when they came back and they were like, ‘Oh the kids actually acted like this’ and this is really hard to do and there are all these constraints. [So] I just think some of that practicality is really useful for when
This theme of the need for greater realism and honesty in relation to classroom pedagogy and its situational complexities is one that resonates with Paul’s observation that pre-service teachers need tutors and lecturers who have practical as well as theoretical knowledge, and who have experience with engaging pedagogies and can really articulate that and reflect on it with pre-service teachers in open and collegial ways (Interview 2, June 2009, p. 1). Having such experiences for reflection with teacher educators is an integral part of experiencing an empowering pedagogy for themselves. Like the Masters of Teaching participants, for this group of pre-service teachers having such experiences emerges as greatly enhancing of their willingness to take risks and experiment with putting into play such pedagogies in their own classes.

A related theme, evident in participants’ reflections, is the interconnected nature of the person and their pedagogy, and the importance of feeling strong and comfortable enough in yourself to be willing to take risks and to be open, to be non-judgmental. Reflecting on Paul, and the qualities that permeate his pedagogy, makes Sean think that:

*Maybe, the most important thing I can do in teaching is to be a compassionate, peaceful, caring model of a human, who is motivated to teach…and if a kid's coming into contact with people, who embody that like Paul embodies what he says, it not only gives you hope, it also gives you something you would like to be (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 14).*

Nonetheless, as Sean acknowledges, it is very difficult…to be willing to take risks and to be open, to be non-judgmental. This makes him want to know what Paul has done in his life to develop those qualities as, at this stage, he doesn’t think that [he] is self-assured enough or as strong in himself and comfortable with who he is (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 13). Sean’s awareness of the need to strengthen his self-confidence and acceptance so as to develop those qualities that he admires in Paul resonates with McAllister’s emphasis on the importance of developing a sense of self enabling of a sense of relationship with others. Developing the elements of self-acceptance and identity, in particular, are central to Sean’s development of a sense of self that will
engender the necessary confidence to take the risks associated with creating an empowering pedagogy. At the same time, Sean thinks that *to be willing to take risks and be open and non-judgemental is not something that comes from a course at uni.* This recognition has lead Sean to turn to meditation so as to *become stronger and more comfortable in himself and accepting* (B Ed Year 3, Meeting 1, p. 20).

**Major Themes and Guiding Questions**

A number of overarching themes emerge from participants’ experiences and reflections in relation to the guiding questions. It is evident that having a sense of agency both as a teacher and person is fundamental to engendering a commitment to an empowering pedagogy. Developing this sense of agency emerges as dependent on a number of interrelated forces. One of the most important is having the experience of what an empowering pedagogy feels like first hand. The significance of this experience to pre-service teachers’ professional development is not located in its capacity to provide an all-encompassing model. Rather, it emerges as an enabling force that can engender the desire and confidence to take risks and try out new ideas.

Another important aspect of developing an empowering pedagogy is having the experience of being with teacher educators, tertiary mentors, colleagues and/or peers who have the optimal qualities identified as integral to a sense of self and sense of relationship with others, along with the heightened awareness necessary to act and interact in ways that are congruent with these qualities (McAllister, 2001, pp. 101-136). Such experiences are revealed as important in not only raising participants’ awareness of these qualities, but in enabling the development and strengthening of the same qualities in themselves.

This is apparent in the way in which the experience of being with people who have and enact self-knowledge and awareness, self-acceptance and identity, and take pleasure in learning emerges as generative of the same qualities in participants, as Sean and
Maggie’s reflections reveal. Similarly, having the experience of being with people who are oriented towards and perceptive of others as individuals; who are caring, trusting, empathetic and authentic, and are able to enact these values in their relationships not only inspires participants, but enhances the development of these qualities within themselves. As Maggie, Clara and Sean’s experiences suggest, experiences of being with teacher educators, co-operating teachers or tertiary mentors who manifest these qualities is enabling of the development of the confidence and trust in others to take the risk and try out a more empowering pedagogic approach in the classroom.

A related theme that emerges in the reflections of pre-service teachers in the MTeach programme is the importance of developing a heightened awareness of self in interaction with others (McAllister, 2001, pp. 101-136). The development of this awareness is central to being able to act in accordance with “one’s beliefs and values” (McAllister, 2001, p. 185). While all the Masters of Teaching participants emerge as having a strong sense of self and self in relationship with others, and as committed to act accordingly, in the case of Clara and Sasha, much like myself, it is the experience of acting discordantly that actually strengthens their commitment to an empowering pedagogy. In these three cases, this gives rise to the desire and subsequent taking of action to bring these dimensions into congruence.

A heightened awareness involves a deliberate monitoring capacity along with a capacity to tune into the feelings and emerging thoughts of others in the unfolding moment. McAllister (2001, p. 183) envisages a heightened awareness as a “constant awareness and monitoring of feelings, thoughts, intentions, and actions, and consequent fine-tuning of behaviours with feelings, thoughts and intentions.” This “seeking…authenticity and consistency through awareness, monitoring and adjustment” is equated with seeking dynamic self-congruence. In McAllister’s (2001) study, her participants demonstrated both cognitive and emotional forms of awareness. While on some occasions, their awareness was deliberately heightened, on others, they felt they were able to automatically tune into these feelings and thoughts, without being “deliberately attentive”, because they were able to “pick up on” and enter into the flow of things (Csikzentmihayli, 1990, cited in McAllister, 2001, p. 189).
This description of the holistic, embodied, and relational dimensions of the kind of reflective capacity that is enabling of heightened awareness resonates strongly with Arnold’s (2005, p. 59) notion of empathic intelligence, which depends on “a highly attuned awareness of self and other – both cognitively and relationally”. The latter involves the ability to tune into the feelings and thoughts of another and evokes Stern’s (1985) notion of the inter-subjective nature of affect attunement, and Malloch and Trevarthen’s (2009) idea of being with another as actually sharing the vitality flow. Cognitive awareness of the holistic and other conscious kind is enabled by the cultivation of the kind of mindfulness that allows the educator to be “totally present” for the student.

An “unexpected outcome” of McAllister’s (2001, p. 191) study was that “engagement in the research process” in the form of reflective conversations served to heighten participants’ awareness. This is consistent with the findings of this study. It is evident that the development and strengthening of the qualities that inform a sense of self and self in relationship with others, and which in turn are enabling of the capacity to seek dynamic self-congruence, are greatly enhanced, if not enabled by, the experience of being in reciprocal relationships. The importance of reciprocity in relation is implied in the theme of the need for honest and open reflection with teacher educators on their experiences of pedagogy.

This is evident in the way that having the opportunity to reflect openly on the tacit dimensions of pedagogy in conversations with teacher educators, co-operating teachers, tertiary mentors and peers, as well as in the context of pedagogical research, emerges as enhancing of pre-service teachers’ sense of confidence and agency. This need for open and honest reflection connects with another theme: that of the need for greater realism in the pre-service teachers’ university courses. Such realism helps participants’ to develop a sense of agency and the necessary confidence in themselves to take the risks that accompany trying out a more empowering pedagogic approach. Having the opportunity to reflect realistically on their experiences enables issues and difficulties to be explored, not only in the context of participants’ practice, but in view of the many other factors that can traverse the learning context. As participating pre-
service teachers’ reflections reveal, such experiences encourage deeper insights, as well as heightening awareness in a holistic way. Moreover, they afford opportunities for the renewal of the energies which are necessary to grow and strengthen a commitment to an empowering pedagogy. The sharing, articulation and reconstruction of experiences in open, non-judgemental and generative ways enables the intimate connections between the personal and professional dimensions of experience to emerge.

The themes that emerge from this study support the views espoused by educational researchers (Bullock, 2001, p. 6; Russell & Loughran, 2007; Kane, 2007), who stress the importance of ‘enacting’ a pedagogy of teacher education that makes the complex, problematic and tacit nature of teaching a site of inquiry. At the same time, they highlight the intimate relationship between professional and personal development and the vital importance of engendering and strengthening those senses of being and doing (McAllister, 2001, p. 91) that underpin the generation of empowering relationships. Participants’ metaphors provide an illuminating lens through which their personal and professional journeys and the forces at work within them can be explored in the light of these dimensions of experience.

As participants’ experience of Robyn and Paul’s classes reveal, an empowering pedagogy feels equal, supportive, inclusive, inviting, responsive and engaging. These qualities both enhance and are enabled by learning encounters of the creative kind, intelligently crafted so as to create ample spaces to play (Williams, 1987). The generation of such spaces, in turn, enables feelings of enjoyment and anticipation to arise, and in doing so, opens up students to the sensing of new possibilities for connection, giving rise to thinking of the emergent kind. Such experiences greatly enhance students’ sense of confidence in their abilities, and their willingness to take risks, both of which are integral to developing a sense of agency.
Chapter Eight: Concluding Thoughts

Professional Development of the Inspiring Kind

In late 2008, I took myself off to a university seminar out of interest. The speaker was Marnie Hughes-Warrington, an Associate Professor of History at Macquarie University and a recipient of the Prime Minister’s award for teaching excellence (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2008). The seminar was on enhancing students’ learning through creative, collaborative forms of assessment. The official description, which caught my eye, reads:

_Students use metaphor, creative research tasks and self-assessment to shape and reshape narratives about the world and about themselves, and to reflect upon their learning so that they are able to grow as historians for the rest of their lives._ (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2008).

When I arrived at the faculty hosting the event, there was a tasty spread and time to mull and mingle before Marnie took her place at the front of the room. She bypassed the podium and found a spot on the floor between the two aisles, getting as close to her audience as she could. Looking around with a smile, she opened with a story about a recent library trip. What began as a description of her browsing the books, morphed into her surfing the comments and squiggles, the underlined passages and exclamatory wiggles, and a musing on what all this graffiti might mean.

What struck me most strongly that day was not Marnie’s approach to assessment, but the curious, wondering way that Marnie looked at and engaged with things. This graffiti was not a defacement, but a mystery to be explored; one that held clues to the everyday ways that people forged connections to history and crafted new stories from old. She did, of course, show us examples of student-generated criteria for assessments, created with the help of ample supports. There were reflections, which
came in the first half of the course with feedback given as a way of encouraging new lines of thought. Final reflections came at the end, and students’ examples showed their changing understandings of history through their chosen metaphors. All of this was very helpful and in keeping with a focus on student learning as process. But this was only part of what I took away.

After her visit to the library, Marnie talked about how she spanned 13 billion years of history in her thirteen-week course. Getting across a sense of the Big Bang and the universe that it unfolded proved a considerable challenge, but this all changed with a chance encounter with pizza dough. It turns out you can sling and mould it in just the right way to get across the sense of an action that is unfathomable through what you are able to say. As her arms unfold a galaxy, I think to myself that this is something I would really love to see: the beginnings of life as it is currently known, kneaded and slung out with baker’s dough to become something other than it might possibly could have been.

**Final Thoughts on Higher Education and Empowering Pedagogy**

The above anecdote presents the conclusions to this thesis in a holistic way. As the findings of the two case studies strongly suggest, an empowering pedagogy is one that seeks to engage students’ bodies and minds in imaginative ways. The design of assignments and curriculums of this kind are more likely to engage students from diverse backgrounds (Ewing, 2010, p. 31) through creating “spaces to play” (Williams, 1987).

The findings, in turn, equally suggest that experiences of responsiveness in relationships greatly enhance the opportunities for realising the potentials of such spaces. The teachers’ responsiveness emerges, in the case studies presented here, as helping to foster the kind of receptiveness and confidence that enables new
possibilities to be sensed. Responding in the moment to students’ feelings as well as their thoughts helps to engender feelings of inclusion, support, equality, and of being invited into learning. Experiences of this kind help to grow confidence and encourage the kind of openness that enhances receptivity.

While the contemporary climate of tertiary education presents challenges to the cultivation of empowering pedagogy, it also creates opportunities. Barnett’s (2000) vision of a fitting pedagogy for the university in the age of supercomplexity is one that helps people to thrive in the face of increasing uncertainty and the contestability of knowledge of all kinds. Paradoxically, this is seen as enabled by creating “disturbances” in students’ very beings, whilst generating a sense of ease with being unsettled in order to engage purposively within the world. Central to both is the development of the capacity for creativity as well as critique (Barnett, 2000, p. 155).

The findings from both case studies suggest that creative encounters that are challenging and built around constraints of the enabling kind (Dufficy, 2005) have the potential to move people beyond their comfort zones, in a positive way, so that instead of fear and uncertainty, people are opened up to the sensing of possibility. At the same time, as the experience of Emma suggests, the degree of constraint that is experienced as enabling varies between people, possibly in relation to background and learning preferences. This may be a valuable area for future research, given the increasingly diverse student cohort in tertiary settings.

As discussed in the literature review, a pedagogy that enables people to live with and embrace uncertainty of all kinds is one that derives from a view of agency, and of being and knowing, as inter-subjective rather than purely subjective in nature. As the findings suggest, experiences of enabling relationships help to engender the confidence in and acceptance of self and others that are integral to developing a sense of agency that seeks reciprocity in relationships. At the same time, experiences of enabling relationships enhance the development of a sense of self and relationship with others that fosters a non-judgemental reflexivity. Learning experiences that engender
enjoyment because they are likely to give rise to vitality affects (Stern, 2010) emerge as a particularly powerful force in fostering these senses.

The findings from this study present a challenge to the assumptions that underpin Learner Centredness and drive conceptions of quality pedagogy in higher education. As Boud highlights (2006), Learner Centredness focuses on the students and their experiences in ways that separates them from the teacher and obscure the interrelations between them. This is apparent in the kinds of categories into which experience is carved with concepts like feedback and engagement preferred over holistic conceptions like responsiveness and enjoyment (Hodson, 2009). While the former conceptions lend themselves to more efficacious management and measurement, they encourage an avoidance of thinking of the risky spaces (Albrecht-Crane, 2005, p. 507) that teaching and learning can open up, and subsequently of seeing such sites positively in terms of potential.

Additionally, the findings from this study suggest that pedagogy in the tertiary context needs to be conceived in ways that move beyond the teacher’s focus, or even how she experiences her subject and approaches her teaching (Prosser et al., 1999, 2005, 2008), important as that may be. They suggest that pedagogy needs to be conceived much more holistically: as a manifestation of the relationships being created in the classroom, between students and teachers and to learning itself. This is consistent with research in teacher education (Beattie, 2009; Loughran, 2006; Russell & Loughran, 2007) that conceives of teaching as being in relationship.

It is, however, difficult to generalise from the findings of this study as they stem from the experiences of a small number of participants. Based on the experiences of teachers, pre-service and experienced, its applicability to other fields in tertiary education may be subject to doubt. As the majority of teachers enter the profession from a desire to make a difference in people’s lives, they are more likely to be driven by a sense of self that is connected to a sense of relationship with others than people entering other fields. It may even be argued that the development of such senses, while valuable in the humanities, are less important in other contexts. While these limitations
need to be acknowledged, nonetheless, the importance of relationships across multiple fields is very well established. Leadership studies (Astin & Astin, 2000; Birnbaum, 1992; Ferren & Stanton, 2004; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009; Neumann, 1991), along with research in innovation (Beyerlein, Beyerlein, & Kennedy, 2006, p. xiii; Lin & Beyerlein, 2006, pp. 53-80), and studies in business (Goleman, 1998; Takash, 2008) similarly highlight the central importance of relationships. In this sense, these limitations may equally be viewed as strengths, in as much as they offer insights into the qualities that enable exceptional teachers to foster enabling relationships.

**Contribution to the Field and to Practice**

This study contributes to teacher education by acting as a catalyst for thinking about practice in deeper, more holistic ways. It invites reflection upon and further exploration of the tacit dimensions of teaching and the importance of the teacher’s embodied presence in enabling learning. In particular, it invites reflection on the embodied ways in which the teacher’s senses of self and relationship to others come into play and how these affect the learning experiences of students. The findings from this study support the value of approaches to in-service development in the tertiary sector that encourage explorations of the relationships between personal and professional development in creative, collaborative ways. In addition, the experiences of participants support the view that open, non-judgemental explorations of pedagogic practice are enabling of the generation of deeper insights and increasing confidence. As narrative approaches to inquiry suggest (Sumsion, 2002), participant generated metaphors, in particular, offer a powerful interpretative lens through which participants’ narratives can be read.

Finally, this study contributes to the teaching profession by offering stories of hope to teachers, especially beginning teachers, so that they might draw encouragement from
them and the confidence to create their own stories to live by (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000).

As the writer, Ben Okri, once said:

_We live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another, we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives._ (King, 2003, p. 153, cited in Clandinin, 2006, p. 51).
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