

”The storied self: deconstructing the constructivist teacher.”

Paper for the Fourth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, to be held May 14 to 17, 2008

The storied self: deconstructing the constructivist teacher

Janice Kathleen Jones, University of Southern Queensland

Abstract:

Writing as research supports a teacher-researcher’s inquiry into and articulation of her experiences, philosophies and practices of pedagogy. She uses auto-ethnographic and narrative inquiry as a lens through which she explores place, time, space, and inter-personal and intra-personal relationships in the contexts of her role as a university educator of pre-service teachers, and during her practitioner research in an alternative community school with an entirely play-based curriculum. Reflexive inquiry has the potential to transform her personal philosophy and practice of pedagogy. While there is a growing body of research into the use of reflexive practice as a pedagogical tool, few researchers have documented the impact upon pedagogy of narrative inquiry into the third space created by an educator's transition between traditional and non-traditional educational places. This paper documents the process of research and a preliminary analysis of a bricolage co-constructed by the researcher and the school community. The multiple voices of that narrative are situated in space and place, providing a crystallized lens through which the teacher-researcher's personal pedagogies are interrogated during the research process, with the potential to transform her philosophy and practice of teaching.

Introduction

This auto-ethnographic exploration into my identity and practice as a teacher takes place in the wider context of global questioning about the purposes, practices (Barone & Eisner, 1997) and effectiveness of formal education (Gardner, 2000; Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006). It is important in the context of a continuing debate at global, national, state and school level, concerning the competencies pre-service teachers need to acquire (Schon, 1987) in order to succeed in their professional duties. That broader context is reflected in the epistemological and ontological challenges I have confronted as a self-perceived constructivist teacher as I explore the third space that exists, positionally and philosophically, between my participation in these two contexts (Bhabha, 1997; Bolatagici, 2004; Collins, 2002): as facilitator in a non-traditional community primary school where the curriculum emerges from children's play, and as lecturer and program coordinator in a university faculty of education with a focus on pre-service teacher education. The tension created by my changing understandings as I move in and between these two epistemologies has challenged my beliefs in the purposes and practices of education.

In the opening section of this paper I map the places and spaces of this study, metaphorically and epistemologically, before exploring the social, political and theoretical underpinnings of the study. Narratives extracted from a bricolage of referential material gathered during the study are used to cast light on the research journey, and on my emerging understandings in the third space created by my inquiry. Narratives are presented in italic font, with my commentary in regular font.

Places and Spaces in the Study

This paper documents my experience as teacher and researcher in the troubled and troubling third space that exists philosophically and metaphorically in and between two places, and documents the impact of narrative inquiry upon my professional identity and practice as a teacher educator. The study context was a Reggio-inspired rural Australian community primary school that opened in January 2006 with 20 students and two

facilitators. As participant researcher I engaged with the community during the lifespan of the school, from planning in November 2005 until February 2008 when the school (named The Magic Gardens School for anonymity of participants) was closed down despite strong objections by 13 families. The school was given full accreditation in 2006, but its license to operate was withdrawn just 6 months later. Eight families continue to meet as they are now homeschooling their children, with academic and pedagogical support from the original facilitators John and Meg (names changed for anonymity) and myself. My professional context is a university faculty of education where I am program coordinator and educator of pre-service teachers for primary schooling. The faculty encourages students to adopt constructivist and student centred pedagogies, but delivery of the program as in all flexible delivery environments requires pre-prepared content, delivered and assessed within a 13 week cycle.

The school's Reggio Emilia inspired philosophy emphasized practitioner research, the environment, peers and the community as teachers, and respected the child as initiator of the curriculum, with facilitators and parents (Figure 1) supporting childrens' projects as described by New, (2003). Where traditional schools have a pre-planned curriculum with lessons planned ahead of time, in the study context the curriculum emerged from the child (New, 1993), with support from. Children's learning was meticulously recorded by facilitators John and Meg and visiting experts. Children moved freely indoors and out and parents spent many hours at the school teaching and supporting their own and others' children (Figure 1). Children's games evolved and continued over days rather than being confined to lessons or recess time. Figure 2 shows children creating a shop in the sandpit. This game continued for a week, and then changed as the burying of toys in the sand resulted in a new idea. The children generated a script and filmed their own story about an archeological dig (Figure 2) with older peers creating authoritative documentary commentary, background music and visual effects. The quality of learning was directly related to the intense focus of the children upon their interests, and the ability of adults to trust children to find a pace and focus that suited them, rather than imposing adult agendas and timelines.



Figure 1: A child leads a drama story with a parent helper



Figure 2: Children move freely between indoors and outdoors environments

As participant researcher my sense of identification and engagement with the community of parents and their children changed during the course of the study, from a desire for neutrality at the outset (Figure 3) I became immersed in the community, and as the school was placed under threat I became an advocate of play-based learning and parental involvement in children's education. In figure 3 the balance of power and agency of the community of parents (grey circles) and myself as facilitator (transparent circles) is represented by the size of circles. Abandoning the role of impartial observer and interested outsider, I became a champion of the school before parents took on a greater ownership of the community resources and their children's education.

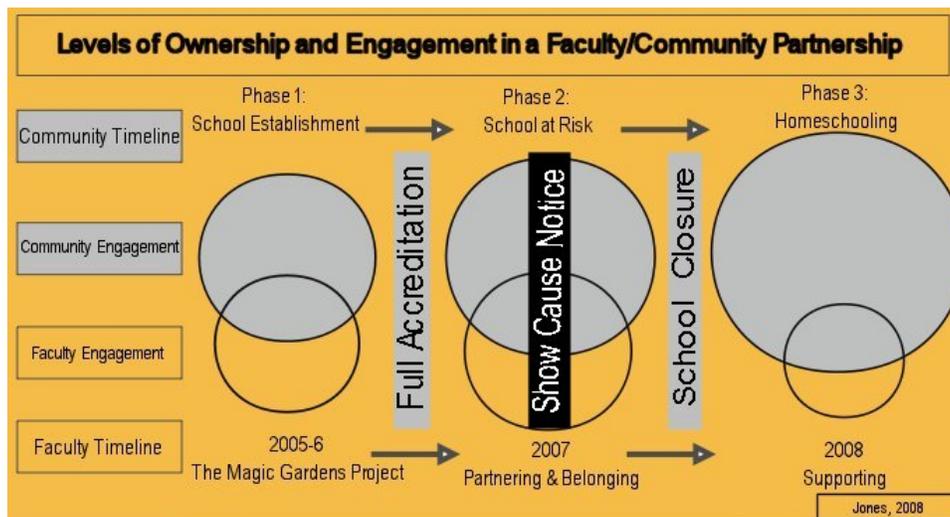


Figure 3. Levels of Ownership and Engagement in a Faculty/Community Partnership

As a result of my long term engagement and reflexive writing in this context, my philosophy and practice as an educator of teachers has changed. My relationship with the community continues, but in a supporting role.

Third Space

My positioning in and between two educational contexts has created a third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejeda, 1999) in which I have used narrative inquiry to explore my experience in and between the ontologies and epistemologies of school and university. As researcher I inhabit both places, but my inquiry in the space between potentially allows a remapping of my hybrid identity (Bolatagici, 2004) as teacher-learner-researcher.

Third space in the discourse of critical spatial theory (Simonsen, 2005) articulates the binaries of postmodernist urban space (Ross, 1983). In this study, it is a means of acknowledging and naming imagined and real spaces, places and boundaries (Soja, 2006) created by my research experience. The epistemologies and ontologies of alternative school and university contexts are places offering some degree of permanency as described by de Certeau (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). Space, however is impermanent, troubling and challenging, reflecting my shifting perspectives and in-between positioning as researcher. Moving beyond the binaries and oppositions of self and culture, embodiment (Popke, 2003; Reid, 2005; Rymhs, 2001), power and difference, I employ third space as a metaphor for my experience mediated through reflexive autoethnography (Bretag, 2006; Burnapp, 2006; Moodley, 2007).

Third space is a volatile ontology (Bhaba, (1993; 1997), for exploration of self in time, space and between contexts (Allen, 1997, 1999; Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006; Soja, 1999). This presents challenges (Kleinman & Copp, 1993) for me as a writer-researcher, as I acknowledge my agency, colonization and hegemonic control (Biesta, 2007) as teacher and researcher. That critical reflection on personal and social contexts in and between the observed and permanent, (Bhabha, 1993, p. 35) has the potential to generate new understandings that impact upon myself as agent of inquiry as shown in Figure 1, and also upon the social, political and professional contexts in which I am engaged.

Figure 4 indicates the metaphorical and conceptual framing of borders, places and spaces in this study: these real and imaged spaces in human, spatial and philosophical terms

(Watkins, 2005), allow me to map the shifting territory of my experience (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006, p. 401) across time, space, intra and interpersonal dimensions.

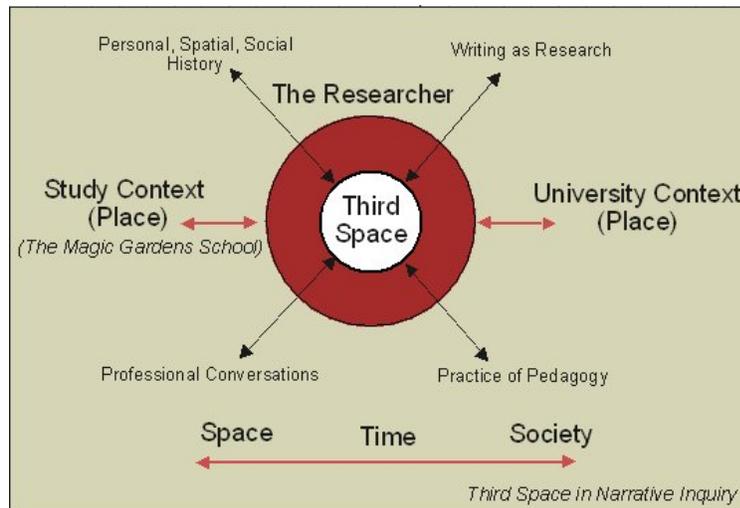


Figure 4: Third Space in the study context

In this study, the Third Space is metaphorical, relative positionally and philosophically to the two places of the study. However, it is also personal as my questioning of 30 years' teaching experience, understandings and professional and personal practice generates doubt and change that is not positional but, rather, philosophical and ontological. Borderlines, for me as third space practitioner become impermanent and permeable (Mazlish, 2003; McLennan-Dodd, 2004; Meredith, 1998; Mermin, 1997; Miller, 2005) as my role as researcher, my personal beliefs and my engagement with both community and faculty has changed.

Prior to this study, I believed my personal philosophy was libertarian (Papert & Freire, 2000), aligned with a humanist epistemology of practice that challenged borders and hegemonic practice in education. However, in the third space (Allen, 1999) I have challenged my self-image as a constructivist facilitator through reflection on and in the epistemologies (Collins, 2002) and hegemonies that define the places in this study (Morton, 2007; Rikowski, 1996). As my sense of identification with the places and epistemologies of this study has shifted, so has my critical focus and awareness of distance

and hegemony. Whereas initially I was a participant observer, I became a member of a community in political and personal terms becoming active far beyond the original scope of this study. Narratives of that experience indicate turning points for my professional growth.

Narratives of Experience

From the outset, my engagement in an alternative educational context has confronted and challenging my ideas of what a school looks like, and how research is done:

The town recedes as I drive under large gum trees and along by scrubby dry fields, finally turning into a dusty open field dotted with trees. Across the woodland is a low hut – little more than a shed with a breeze block building stretching behind it. Can this be the school?! (Fieldnotes. First visit to the school: 13th November 2005, para 1)

Now, as I review a wealth of referential material gathered during the study, my recursive exploration of narratives allows threads of meaning to evolve, connecting across time, place and space, allowing me to identify emerging themes that are the basis of my research study.

Professional conversations (Atherton, 2005; Kim, 2006) with facilitators, parents and students have challenged my self-belief as a libertarian practitioner and a constructivist teacher (Edwards, Gandini, and Nimmo, 1994; Holly and Kasten, 2001; Peel, 2005; Schon, 1987). A key theme emerging in writings and conversations is whether (Holly & Kasten, 2001), and how far my self-perception as a libertarian practitioner is accurate, and the degree to which my practice is grounded in the philosophies of Dewey (Dewey, 1897, 1916, 1991) and Freire (Papert & Freire, 2000). This recursive exploration has been accompanied by a growing critical sensibility: as an active agent in an alternative school community I accept the implications for my personal identity, philosophy of education and political awareness (Warnick, 2007, p. 54) that participation brings. Freire's call, not to end but to radically change the ways in which we engage in education (Papert & Freire, 2000 para.5) and Meier's (2000 para.19) cry for schools that offer an

alternative to hierarchical ‘dystopia of the insect colony’ align with the philosophy and practice of the Magic Gardens School, and inform my own philosophy and practice of pedagogy.

As I re-read the narrative of my first visit to the school the distancing effects of time and space allow critical detachment and empathy for myself. The narratives are moments in time allowing an insight into my changing identity and the illusions and misunderstanding that are common to participatory research (Holly & Kasten, 2001): like a carved Russian doll, each layer of narrative offers an image of the researcher identity that is a nested representation, each subtly different from the last, held inside a larger and more recent self-construct created by self-as-observer.

The process of recursive writing generates understandings and perceptions of self that shift across time and space, shimmering across and through the layers of narrative. My first fieldnotes capture the early researcher in her formal dress (in both the physical and psychological senses) as I/she tries to make a good impression on her first visit to the school.

I feel like an alien from another world with my purposeful approach and time-driven schedules, my quiet business-style dress and low dress court shoes, my carefully brushed hair held back in its pins and those purposefully selected ‘discreet’ earrings. My energy level is high, I feel that it jangles against the slow calm relaxed manner of those around me. (Fieldnotes: 13th November 2005: First visit to the school, para 6)

The parents were confused that I was asking them to sign documents signaling their agreement to take part in the study. My discomfort at this collision of cultures, at finding myself representing the rule-bound culture and processes of a university in this non-traditional community context, where trust and openness were underpinning philosophies, clearly marks the borders of the study in my perception. My fieldnotes indicate that I considered parents as visitors to the school, as my previous experience had always positioned parents in that role. However, in this community, power structures were different: here parents *were* the school.

... these are not 'passive' parents, but they seem to accept my participation with confidence and a belief in what I am doing...I wonder if this is because they are already involved in a shared process....it is I who am the outsider. (ibid, para 5)

My engagement in a community school was often confronting: I swiftly discovered that I was ill at ease in a play-based ontology, which made me uncomfortably aware of my dependency upon the power and control vested in the teacher role. In this environment without hierarchies or teacher led curriculum frameworks, the students, learning facilitators, parents, peers and the natural environment (Spaggiari & Rinaldi, 1996) co-constructed the curriculum. The child, facilitator and parents were active agents (Turner and Krechevsky, 2003) for meaningful and community-embedded learning (Stager, 2002 para.11). The free flowing nature of the school made it difficult for me to communicate with and direct or engage students as I would normally do as a teacher, and this cast new light on my acceptance of traditional ontologies, and how far they permeated my practice of teaching. I arrived at the school with plans that I would inspire the children to create a Magic Garden for the arts, with sculptures, spaces for dramatic play, water features, and paintings. I imagined the children would

...gravitate to me and wish to plan the garden, designing how it would look. That did not happen. Instead, I realized that I would have to allow the children to plant where they wanted, and to negotiate with individuals where this seemed unwise, so that we worked and learned together. I keep hearing my voice on film sounding patronising – talking to the 'little people' in a tone that so clearly models my expectations and wishes for what I hope they will do. I give up in embarrassment, mortified to find my own agendas so visibly exposed by the children and by the school. Suddenly I discover I am not a constructivist teacher at all. I am a teacher who relies upon charisma and verve to make classes fun. Most of what I do best is the teacher leading – a bravura performance that has the students engaged and laughing, bright eyed. It fits firmly in the tradition of the 19th century (Blog 29.04.06, para 1-2)

My acknowledgement that the children did not want to take time to plan a garden, but would prefer simply to plant flowers in the unprepared bushland was the beginning of my respect for the child's view of the world (Stager, 2002) and the child's processes of

learning (Hunter & Sonter, 2003). My early endeavours to engage the children in play-based learning were clumsy, and far from the skilled interventions I observed as facilitators and parents came alongside individual children as they played in a seamless indoor/outdoor environment (New, 2003) without disrupting the flow or dynamic between children. As the above vignette suggests, without my accustomed role as leader, I felt lost. This awareness challenged my beliefs about my practice of pedagogy, and the reality of my practice.

The early narratives reveal an implicit belief that I would distance myself from the community as I moved into the data analysis stage of the study. My proposed engagement with the community school was defined as a community project during which students would create a garden for the arts. This swiftly emerged as an adult agenda and a manifestation of my reliance on the teacher role. The term *project* allowed me to position the participatory context as separate to myself, implied a defined timeline, and a safe distance in both metaphorical and political senses, between the potentially disturbing participatory experience and my professional practice. Instead, the relationships, professional conversations and reflexive practices that evolved during the study have become the engine room that drives my professional practice, challenging and inspiring me and the pre-service teachers with whom I work to reconsider our beliefs and practices as teachers. I have learned the skill of meticulous listening and recording of observations, and of making timely interventions that initiate the child in deeper exploration (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennett, 1971): both essential skills for a facilitator in a play-based context, but which are neglected in favour of curriculum planning and strategies for behaviour management in teacher's professional practice.

In the university context, the rhetoric of planning encourages pre-service teachers to adopt constructivist and child-centred pedagogies, yet its emphasis is upon detailed planning of lessons and units of learning experiences to meet state curriculum standards. Therefore, very few courses model the constructivist, student-centred and communitarian philosophies and practices they seek to encourage in pre-service teachers. Not

surprisingly, pre-service teacher focus group feedback indicates a perceived disjoint between theory and practice.

In schools and universities implicit and explicit power structures (Lingard, Rawolle, & Taylor, 2005) are embodied in the physical environment. Thus, student and parent access to physical and virtual classrooms is less than that of teachers or administrators, and the teacher's voice rather than student or parental voice predominates. This hegemony remains unchanged since the early 20th century, with learners still positioned as recipient of experiences pre-planned by the school and the state as teachers provide scaffolded opportunities for children to acquire appropriate knowledge and understandings. In formal schooling parents divorced from their positions as initiators of the child's education.

As my participatory research and reflexive inquiry evolved, personal agendas of which I had previously been unaware emerged. My journaling generated themes of conflict and discovery that led me to consider how far I relied upon the hegemonic controls available to the teacher in order to bolster my self-perception that I was an inspiring and constructivist teacher:

...I found myself wandering around feeling rather lost as I had no classroom and couldn't entertain the kids or capture their attention as easily as in a normal school: they didn't need me – they were already busy learning!...I had come to the school with adult agendas – that children don't normally build or create gardens much less gardens for the arts. That I was not starting from an honest position. (Fieldnotes: 11.04.06, para 11)

This caused me to re-evaluate how teaching and learning was managed in my professional context, and to question my practice of pedagogy:

...I simply can't 'lecture' in the way I did – and I keep 'pulling myself up' in front of the class as I notice what I'm doing. I have to talk to the students about it but they don't seem to mind – in fact they are extremely engaged in the whole idea...(Fieldnotes: 11.04.06, para 21)

my initial intention to create and film a community environmental arts project were replaced by a shift in research focus to the personal, epistemological and ontological meanings generated by my participatory engagement in the community.

Exploring the duality of my role as agent and subject of research, I sought a holistic exploration beyond the dualities of self and other, through narrative exploration in the third space of my experience. Initially, my reflections were captured in the form of weblogs, but as I struggled to find the right voice for expression of this personal and professional experience in a public platform, the awareness that I was adapting the narrative, crafting a voice to please an imaginary audience made it imperative that I return to more traditional methods of journaling:

For the last few months I have been aware of 'writing for the other', and found myself adjusting the phrasing, crafting and polishing my writing rather than simply letting the words flow. That awareness of turning inwards but writing outwards hit me most strongly during my meeting with Jerry and Robyn this week. It helped me to see that writing is one of my ways of 'knowing': it is another form of deep conversation and thinking.

(Reflection: 30.05.06, para 1)

I had become aware that the authorial voice of the blogs hinted at shared values with an audience hidden in the wings. In contrast, my private reflections were stylistically uneven, shifting between the mundane and the poetic in tone and content. From this point, I decided to stop using a published blog in favour of journaling:

... the words flying from keyboard to screen, the voice speaking through the words. It is a revelatory experience, as I come to hear my own thoughts forming in the words as they form on screen. There are no breaks, no editing, no guards against revealing too much.

(Reflection: 30.05.06, para 3)

This recursive reflection led to an awareness that I needed to change the study focus, recognizing the community's shared ownership of the processes and products of the study. Note, all names are changed for anonymity.

Only when I came to write this did I become conscious that John [school facilitator] is seeking responses from me – that as a respected 'other' my validation of the shared

understandings that he and Meg [school facilitator] had evolved over some years has real meaning . These conversations are both political and personal and I am acutely aware that how I respond is vitally important to John and Meg. During this visit it became clear that there was more to the Magic Gardens Project than the creation of a garden, and the filming and analysis of film. I have come to think that it is about my journey as an educator...but I'm now coming to understand that this is not simply my journey: it is others' journey and story too...(Fieldnotes: 11.04.06, para 26)

Until this point, some four months into the study, I had not considered that my participation in the study went beyond my engagement with the students, but in writing about the lengthy political and philosophical conversations that John and Meg as school facilitators sought to engage me in I realized that they were seeking my acknowledgement and my acceptance of the philosophies and practices of the school. This brought a deeper understanding: this was not a project but a partnership, and those long conversations were an important part of the study. Despite this acknowledgement of the importance of the shared journey, it took more reflection and a further two visits to the school for me to experience the insight that totally derailed my initial research plans: *The revelation that the real story is not about creating a garden, and not even about the school – but that my experience in this situation is in itself the subject of the study....(Reflection 30.05.06)*

As a result of this realization, I accepted a greater degree of personal engagement with the community, embracing the blurring of borderlines that had previously marked my identity as researcher-facilitator-learner (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, &Tejeda, 1999).

Professional conversations with the community of parents and facilitators have included discussions on the non-traditional educational philosophies and practice including John Holt's writings (1984; 2004; 2003), with an ongoing critique of the merits and practices of formal versus home schooling (Neuman & Aviram, 2003). My longstanding beliefs in the importance of flow in creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, 2000, 2004) and holistic education (Eisner, 1979, 1991) have been confirmed through our shared reflections on the

Reggio Emilia (Gandini, 1998; Katz & Cesarone, 1994), Montessori (Ely & Matias, 2002) and Steiner philosophies (Gilman, 1984; Gilman & Gilman, 1984). Parents would take away journal articles and arrive bringing books to share with myself, John and Meg. Those epistemologies began to transit across the borders of my research: they now support my ongoing professional conversations with academic peers, informing and challenging my epistemology of practice in pre-service teacher education. My longterm engagement in the school community has given me a new understanding of the value of learning communities (Laudan, 2003) and of the importance of parents and peers in children's learning.

Theory and Methodology

Narrative inquiry (Richardson, 2000), allows educators' personal, socio-cultural and historical frameworks to be explored in multiple dimensions, as described by Ellis (2004), potentially becoming a powerful tool for professional development (Danaher, Danaher, & Moriarty, 2003). My narrative inquiry in the troubled space between professional contexts has the potential to transform my philosophy and practice of teaching in and between the real and imagined worlds of formal and non-traditional educational places (Barone and Eisner, 1997; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Clandinin and Connelly, 1995), and to support my lifelong learning (Bassett, 2006).

Narrative inquiry supports professional development, through reflexive writing on and for personal learning (Riley & Roach, 2006; Schon, 1987). This involves descriptions of the human condition that are both aesthetic and analytical (Alvermann, 2000 para.1) hence this approach does not lend itself to the strategic or scientific viewpoint (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996), instead requiring the researcher's deep engagement with the subject. Hence my experience in and between contexts allows a multiplicity of combinations and transitions of my learning between paradigms (Hannula, 2001). Multiple voiced auto-ethnographic narrative (Alvermann, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McGinn, Shields, Manley-Casimir, Grundy, & Fenton, 2005) allows the formation of a crystallized lens through which my personal pedagogies are reflected and explored across temporal and spatial dimensions (McGinn et al., 2005, p. 553).

The integrity of this study relies upon the rigorous honesty with which the data are explored during the research process (Alvermann, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Riessman, 1993; Rymhs, 2001). As researcher, a critical awareness of my individual and shared experience (Lieberman, 1999) as agent of subject of research (Archer, 2002; Holly & Kasten, 2001; Riecken, Strong-Wilson, Conibear, Michel, & Riecken, 2004) and an acknowledgement of the multiple masks and representations of researcher and researched (Richardson, 2000) is critical to the processes of encoding and decoding text (Holly & Kasten, 2001; Holt, 2003; Wolf, 1999). My agency in and between contexts requires deep exploration (Jarzabowski, 2001, p. 123), revisiting, re-annotating and re-interpreting of the narratives produced during the study. This aspect of my research journey is ongoing, and will culminate in 2009, with the submission of my doctoral thesis.

Rather than using a linear approach, where coding and analysis of narrative may invalidate understandings (van Manen, 1988) I am engaged in deep exploration of multidimensional personal and social meanings (Butz & Besio, 2004), layers of culture and hybrid identities of researched-researcher (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). Hence revisiting of narratives and my interpretations of them has become part of the authentication process and reality testing with school facilitators, parents and research supervisors as modelled by Besio & Butz (2004) supports the integrity of resulting narratives and understandings (see Table 2) .

For integrity checking against self-perceived changes in my practice of teaching as an outcome of reflexive narrative inquiry I will refer to feedback gathered from 4 focus groups of university pre-service teachers during 2007 and 2008. Focus group questions gathered student feedback on their perceptions of my philosophy and practice of pedagogy and its impact upon their beliefs and practices as future teachers. Transcripts of focus group discussions will thus allow checks and balances against understandings emerging from my analysis of narratives (Riecken et al., 2004 para.1) as modeled in tables 1 – 3.

Acknowledging issues of representation (Hayano, 1979) means ensuring multiple voices of researcher and participants are authentically articulated, as described by Rymhs (2001) and Tomaselli *et al.* (2005). Therefore, ongoing professional conversations with school facilitators and my research supervisors support my deconstruction and reporting of data (Alvermann, 2000; Dressel & Langreiter, 2003). All publications from this research have been shared with stakeholders, with whom I intend to co-author papers in future.

Table 1: Criteria for Reflexive Research for Teacher Development

The study meets Holly and Kasten’s (2001) criteria for reflexive research:

Criterion	This Research
“...uses a problem solving approach to improve social conditions”	I have engaged closely with the school community to find a means of representing the emergent curriculum for evaluation by government agencies unfamiliar with Reggio Emilia approaches, supporting the school community in its battle to retain full accreditation as an independent school despite attempts to close the school.
“...involves an ethical commitment to improving society (to make it more just)”	There is a shared focus with participants on facilitating deep student learning in the community, university and traditional school contexts.
“...improving ourselves (that we may become more conscious of our responsibility as members of a democratic society)”	I share with the school community and pre-service teachers a belief in democratic education, and the rights of the child, and exchange professional knowledge with parents and facilitators for our mutual growth.
“...improving our lives together	The study supports shared ownership and

(building community)”	facilitation of an emergent curriculum, support for a community of parents and children in running and continuing as a school, and it supports teacher professional development for lifelong learning through pre-service teacher engagement in the study.
-----------------------	--

Note: Adapted from Holly and Kasten (2001, p. 30)

Table 2: Criteria for Research in a Naturalistic Paradigm

The study meets the criteria for naturalistic research (Lincoln and Guba, (1985)Erlandson *et al.*, (1993):

Quantitative Term	Naturalistic Term	In this Study
internal validity	credibility	Length of engagement Multiple sources of reference materials Ongoing member checks and co-construction of data for analysis
external validity	transferability	Crystallized representation of views and voices Authentication with stakeholders through co-construction and co-analysis of data
reliability	dependability	Member checking by community and supervisors
objectivity	confirmability	Member checking with community and supervisors Reflexive audit for accuracy of representation Cross checking of understandings against multiple data sources

Adapted from Erlandson *et al.*, (1993, pp. 67-68) and Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 300)

The main referential materials from which critical incidents and narratives have been extracted for in-depth reflexive analysis include: early blogs and my reflexive journal maintained over the years of the study, fieldnotes gathered on visits to the school and

daily running records maintained by facilitators. A further layer of data that may be used for cross-referencing and integrity checking against understandings emerging from my narrative auto-ethnographic exploration in the third space, will include transcriptions of audio recorded pre-service teacher feedback gathered during focus group discussions, examples of pupil and facilitator’s creative work, and film gathered during the study.

Vignettes will be selected on the basis of their relevance to emerging themes during the narrative exploration and revisiting of earlier reflections. Emerging concepts indicated by images and metaphors or repeating stylistic features of writing will be explored through recursive narrative. This requires a holistic approach to the vignettes, with the use of writing layered upon writing, rather than through the use of coding or database-driven analysis. The resulting understandings will be presented in thesis format, with narrative vignettes from which key understandings emerge, marked out from reflexive and discursive writing by textual formatting devices.

Table 3: Analysis of Data

Source of Data	Positioning in the Study	Process of Analysis
Observations	Field notes gathered by researcher on each visit. Anecdotal and running records created by the community of parents, school facilitators, and students. Reflections by researcher Vignettes	Narrative exploration of texts Selection of vignettes for further exploration Discussion of implications and perceptions of vignettes by researcher, school community (students and adults), and supervisors. Exploration through reflexive writing of vignettes by researcher
Documents	Examples of pupils’ work. Art work and creative writing produced by researcher during the study.	Selection of key elements by date or content for integrity checking against vignettes.

Digital Film	Gathered by researcher and students.	Not transcribed for this study. Films selected for integrity checking by date where required to illuminate vignettes.
Digital Audio	Gathered by an academic colleague at the university during focus groups with pre-service teachers.	Transcribed audio used for and integrity checking of researcher understandings. Transcription completed by research assistant. Researcher selects key themes to modify or support emerging understandings.

Running records of student learning and teacher interventions have been maintained by myself and the alternative school community. My narrative reflections on these texts will form the core of data from which themes and vignettes will be extracted for deeper analysis. Where a vignette illuminates critical experiences impacting upon my changing perceptions and practices, it will become the focus of recursive writing.

Outcomes and Significance of the Study

Narrative inquiry engages in the shifting territory of human experience and shared understandings: hence it is not possible to predict the specific outcomes that may emerge from the study. The complexity and potential meanings which a socially-storied lens brings to the analysis of data (Roth Wolff-Michael & Breuer, 2003; Schon, 1987, 1991; Smith, 2005; van Manen, 1988), and the dynamic nature of the third space mean that the research focus may be adjusted during ongoing inquiry and reflection.

Engagement in participatory research has already had a powerful impact upon my beliefs and practice of pedagogy. Experience of an emergent and play-based curriculum has brought a re-examination of my self-belief as a constructivist educator. My practice of pedagogy as a teacher-educator is changing as a result of reflection in and on practice, and will continue to change during this study. That emerging reflexive awareness is

shared with peers as we reconsider our epistemologies and ontologies of practice. Narrative inquiry has become a powerful resource for professional development, as I am challenged and in turn, I invite those with whom I work, to challenge and reconsider our beliefs and practices as educators.

Since the start of this study, student feedback on my teaching has been more positive than in previous years. This may reflect the new understandings and critical awareness that this study is bringing to my philosophy and practice of pedagogy. A recent student evaluation of my teaching placed student satisfaction at “5 out of 5” (Temmerman, 2007). I hope that focus groups will provide feedback on how and why students perceive my teaching so positively, and my ongoing in-depth reflection during the next phase of this study will continue to inform and enhance my practice of pedagogy and to influence pre-service teachers with whom I work. Importantly, the understandings emerging from this study encourage me to question the most fundamental tenets of teacher preparation and curriculum development: in my role as program coordinator energetic questioning of the purposes, processes and hegemonic practices of education will continue to inform my leadership for decision making and program planning.

- Allen, R. L. (1997). *What space makes of us: Thirdspace, identity politics, and multiculturalism*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association from <http://ezproxy.usq.edu.au/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED409409&site=ehost-live>
- Allen, R. L. (1999). The socio-spatial making and marking of 'us': Toward a critical postmodern spatial theory of difference and community. *Social Identities*, 5(3), 249-278.
- Alvermann, D. E. (2000). Narrative approaches. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Archer, M. S. (2002). Realism and the problem of agency. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 5(1), 9.
- Barone, T., & Eisner, E. W. (1997). Arts-based educational research. *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*, 71 - 116.
- Besio, K., & Butz, D. (2004). Autoethnography: A limited endorsement. *Professional Geographer*, 432-438.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1993). Culture's in between. *Artforum International*, 32(1), 167.

- Bhabha, H. K. (1997). Life at the border: Hybrid identities of the present. *NPQ: New Perspectives Quarterly*, 14(1), 30.
- Biesta, G. (2007). Why "What works" Won't work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research. *Educational Theory*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Bolatagici, T. (2004). Claiming the (n)either/(n)or of 'third space': (re)presenting hybrid identity and the embodiment of mixed race. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 25(1), 75-85.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (Eds.). (1996). *Reflexive anthropologie*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Bretag, T. (2006). Developing a 'third space' interculturality using computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(4), 981-1011.
- Burnapp, D. (2006). Trajectories of adjustment of international students: U-curve, learning curve, or third space. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 81-93.
- Butz, D., & Besio, K. (2004). The value of autoethnography for field research in transcultural settings. *Professional Geographer*, 56(3), 350-360.
- Clandinin, J. D., & Connelly, M. F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry : Experience and story in qualitative research* (1 ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Collins, P. J. (2002). Habitus and the storied self: Religious faith and practice as a dynamic means of consolidating identities. *Culture and religion*, 3(2), 147-161.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). Flow and creativity. *NAMTA Journal*, 22(2), 38.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Education for the 21st century: Mapping the field of forces that shape children's lives *Education Week*, 19(32), 3.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2004). What we must accomplish in the coming decades. *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, 39(2), 8.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Bennett, S. (1971). An exploratory model of play. *American Anthropologist*, 73(1), 45-58.
- Danaher, P. A., Danaher, G., & Moriarty, B. (2003). Space invaders and pedagogical innovators: Regional educational understandings from Australian occupational travelers. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 18(3), 169.
- Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed *The School Journal*, LIV(3), 77-80.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. Retrieved 18.12.2006, from <http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/dewey.html>.
- Dewey, J. (1991). *How we think / John Dewey*. Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books.
- Dressel, G., & Langreiter, N. (2003). When "We ourselves" Become our own field of research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 4(2), 27.
- Dudgeon, P., & Fielder, J. (2006). Third spaces within tertiary places: Indigenous Australian studies. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 16(5), 396-409.
- Eisner, E. W. (1979). *The educational imagination : On the design and evaluation of school programs* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan ; Toronto : Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; New York : Maxwell Macmillan International.
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye : Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, N.Y. ; Toronto: Merrill/Macmillan Pub. Co.

- Ely, M., & Matias, B. (2002). Montessori moments: Voices from the field. from <http://www.amshq.org/research/ElyMontessoriMoments.pdf>
- Erlanson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Gandini, L. (1998). Selected resources about the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education [Electronic Version] from http://members.aol.com/oidameier/reggio/cavallo_bib.htm.
- Gardner, H. (2000). *The disciplined mind : Beyond facts and standardized tests, the K-12 education that every child deserves*. New York: Penguin.
- Gilman, R. (1984). Growing without schooling. Children may be more capable of competent self-directed learning than we give them credit for. *In Context, A Quarterly of Sustainable Human Culture*, 6(The Way Of Learning), 46.
- Gilman, R., & Gilman, D. (1984). Waldorf education: Looking into the educational system developed by Rudolf Steiner. An interview with Caroline Osthimer. *In Context, A Quarterly of Sustainable Human Culture*, 6(Summer).
- Gutierrez, K. D., Baquedano-Lopez, P., & Tejeda, C. (1999). Rethinking diversity: Hybridity and hybrid language practices in the third space. *Mind, Culture & Activity*, 6(4), 286.
- Hannula, M. (2001). Third space – a merry-go-round of opportunity [Electronic Version]. *Kiasma Magazine*. Retrieved 13 April 2007 from <http://www.kiasma.fi/index.php?id=169&FL=1&L=1>.
- Hayano, D. M. (1979). Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems, and prospects. *Human Organisation*, 38(1), 99-104.
- Holly, M. L., & Kasten, W. C. (2001). *Action research for teachers: Travelling the yellow brick road* (1st ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Holt, J. C. (1984). *How children fail*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Holt, J. C. (2004). *Instead of education : Ways to help people do things better* (1st ed.). Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications.
- Holt, N. L. (2003). Representation, legitimation, and autoethnography: An autoethnographic writing story. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(1), Article 2.
- Hunter, L., & Sonter, L. (2003). *Play in progress : Practical insights into play based curriculum*. Bulimba, Qld: Consultants at Play.
- Jarzabowski, L. (2001). Emotional labour in educational research. *Queensland Journal of Educational Research*, 17(2), 123 - 137.
- Katz, L. G., & Cesarone, B. (Eds.). (1994). *Reflections on the Reggio Emilia approach*. Urbana, Ill.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
- Kleinman, S., & Copp, M. A. (1993). *Emotions and fieldwork*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Laudan, Y. A. (2003). Towards a typology of alternative education programs, a compilation of elements from the literature Retrieved 05.05.06 2006, from <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410829>
- Liberman, K. (1999). From walkabout to mediation: Craft and ethics in field inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*(5), 47-63.

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lingard, B., Rawolle, S., & Taylor, S. (2005). Globalizing policy sociology in education: Working with bourdieu. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(6), 759-777.
- Mazlish, B. (2003). A tale of two enclosures: Self and society as a setting for utopias. *Theory, culture and society*, 20(1), 43-60.
- McGinn, M. K., Shields, C., Manley-Casimir, M., Grundy, A. L., & Fenton, N. (2005). Living ethics: A narrative of collaboration and belonging in a research team. *Reflective Practice*, 6(4), 551-567.
- McLennan-Dodd, V. (2004). The healing land: Research methods in kalahari communities. *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies*, 18(2), 3-30.
- Meier, D. (2000). What do kids need? *Eye on Education* Retrieved 5 May, 2006, from <http://www.eyeoneducation.tv/reform/meier.html>
- Meredith, P. (1998). *Hybridity in the third space: Rethinking bi-cultural politics in aotearoa/new zealand*. Paper presented at the Te Oru Rangahau Maori Research and Development Conference
7-9 July 1998
- Mermin, E. (1997). Being where? Experiencing narratives of ethnographic film. *Visual anthropology review*, 13(1), 40-51.
- Miller, V. (2005). Intertextuality, the referential illusion and the production of a gay ghetto. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 6(1), 61-79.
- Mishook, J. J., & Kornhaber, M. L. (2006). Arts integration in an era of accountability. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 107(4), 3-11.
- Moodley, R. (2007). (re)placing multiculturalism in counselling and psychotherapy. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 35(1), 1-22.
- Morton, A. D. (2007). Unquestioned answers/unanswered questions in ipe: A rejoinder to 'non-marxist' historical materialism [Electronic Version]. *Politics*, 27 132-136. Retrieved 28 July 2007.
- Neuman, A., & Aviram, A. (2003). Homeschooling as a fundamental change in lifestyle. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 17(2/3), 132-143.
- New, R. S. (1993). Reggio emilia: Some lessons for u.S. Educators. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education*
- New, R. S. (2003). Reggio emilia: New ways to think about schooling. *Educational Leadership*, 60(7), 4.
- Papert, S., & Freire, P. (2000). Afternoon journal: The future of school part 2 [Electronic Version]. *The Future of School*. Retrieved 2000 from <http://www.papert.org/articles/freire/freirePart2.html>.
- Popke, E. J. (2003). Poststructuralist ethics: Subjectivity, responsibility and the space of community. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(3), 298-316.
- Reid, B. (2005). 'a profound edge': Performative negotiations of belfast. *Cultural Geographies*, 12(4), 485-506.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing, a method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Denzin, Norman K.

- Riecken, T., Strong-Wilson, T., Conibear, F., Michel, C., & Riecken, J. (2004). Connecting, speaking, listening: Toward an ethics of voice with/in participatory action research *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(1).
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Rikowski, G. (1996). Left alone: End time for marxist educational theory? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 17(4), 415 - 451.
- Riley, D., & Roach, M. (2006). Helping teachers grow: Toward theory and practice of an emergent curriculum model of staff development. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(5), 363-370.
- Ross, K. (Writer) (1983). Interview conducted with henri lefebvre on the situationist international. In K. Ross (Producer), *Lettrisme/Lettrist International*. France: Lettrisme/Lettrist International.
- Roth Wolff-Michael, & Breuer, F. (2003). Reflexivity and subjectivity: A possible road map for reading the special issues [Electronic Version]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2006. Retrieved 2 February 2006 from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03intro-2-e.htm>
- Rymhs, D. (2001). But the shadow of her story: Narrative unsettlement, self-inscription, and translation in pauline johnson's legends of vancouver. *SAIL: studies in American Indian literatures (Series 2)*, 13(4), 51-78.
- Schon, D. (1987, January 1998). *Educating the reflective practitioner* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Washington, D.C.
- Schon, D. (1991). *The reflective turn: Case studies in and on educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Simonsen, K. (2005). Bodies, sensations, space and time: The contribution from henri lefebvre. *Geografiska Annaler Series B: Human Geography*, 87(1), 1-14.
- Smith, C. (2005). Epistemological intimacy: A move to autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4(2), 1-7.
- Soja, E. W. (1999). Keeping space open. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 89(2), 348.
- Soja, E. W. (2006). Soja, e.W. 1989: Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical social theory. *Progress in Human Geography*, 30(6), 8.
- Spaggiari, S., & Rinaldi, C. (1996). *I cento linguaggi dei bambini : Narrativa del possibile = the hundred languages of children : Narrative of the possible / projects by children of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia*: Reggio Emilia, Italy.
- Stager, G. (2002). The best kept secret this side of italy. *District Administration - The Magazine for K12 Education Leaders* Retrieved April 9th 2006, from <http://www.districtadministration.com/page.cfm?id=172>
- Temmerman, N. (2007). Feedback on pre-service teacher course evaluation. Toowoomba.
- Tomaselli, K., McLennan-Dodd, V., & Shepperson, A. (2005). Research to do, results to sell: Enabling subjects and researchers. *Society in Transition*, 36(1), 24-37.
- van Manen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Warnick, B. R. (2007). Ethics and education forty years later. *Educational Theory*, 57(1), 53-73.
- Watkins, C. (2005). Representations of space, spatial practices and spaces of representation: An application of lefebvre's spatial triad. *Culture & Organization*, 11(3), 209-220.
- Wolf, M. (1999). Writing ethnography: The poetics and politics of culture. In R. T. McCutcheon (Ed.), *The insider/outsider problem in the study of religion : A reader*. London ; New York Cassell.