Becoming a secondary-school teacher: the challenges of making identity formation a conscious informed process

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Becoming a secondary-school teacher: The challenges of making identity formation a conscious informed process

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I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University’s rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rule requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

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Abstract

The formation of teacher identity is a critical issue for pre-service teachers as they negotiate choices about who they wish to become. Teachers need to be informed, not compliant, about the forces that shape them. Yet pre-service teachers often struggle to voice their concerns and opinions throughout their pre-service education, identifying more as students rather than teachers. In order to negotiate the dissonance between personal and professional expectations, pre-service teachers may benefit from processes that enable critical reflection. This research explores the challenges for pre-service teachers in making informed choices about their teacher identity through sustained critical reflection. The study takes as a point of departure the idea that secondary school teachers face particular issues in identifying as 'teacher' because of their prior identity as scientists, musicians, or other subject specializations. In order to make sense of their emerging identities, pre-service secondary teachers need time to explore the theories, practices and discourses integral to their work. This research tells the story of how four pre-service secondary teachers negotiated the individual and collective aspects of becoming a teacher during the final year of their teaching courses. Action research was used to allow the participants to reflect collaboratively and act upon both intuitive and pragmatic concerns about teaching. The learning journey sought ways to consciously link knowing, doing and being, within the dynamic process of becoming a secondary-school teacher. The study found that becoming a teacher involves a complex interplay of values, beliefs and assumptions that may be difficult to recognize. It also found that the emotional aspects of learning to teach are complex and challenging but often remain unconscious, particularly when time for reflection and evaluation are limited. By forming a group in which to voice concerns and insights about teaching participants became both witness and to some extent informed actor in their own development and identity formation.
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Chapter 1: Teacher identity formation in context

The purpose of this study is to engage pre-service teachers in the conscious negotiation and shaping of their initial teacher identities. By learning to reflect critically together, participants will explore who they are in relation to who they are becoming as teachers. Changes in professional and personal selves during teacher education will be viewed through the lens of informed practice. Given the well-argued proposition that people assume aspects of identity in largely unconscious ways (Austin, 2005), this research is positioned as a collective journey of discovery that aims to bridge unconscious assumptions with conscious choices about self. Pre-service teachers have limited time to critically reflect on the actions and beliefs that underpin their practices and therefore need opportunities for dialogic space together (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). This project takes up the challenge of a collaborative exploration of teacher identity in order to enhance understanding about the processes of becoming a teacher.

1.1 Research questions

The central question of this research is:

How can secondary teacher identity formation become an informed, conscious process for pre-service teachers?

Further questions embedded within this inquiry are:

- How do pre-service teachers negotiate their personal beliefs, values and assumptions in order to develop a professional teacher identity?
- What are some of the key issues that shape teacher identity formation?
- Are these issues specific to secondary teachers within the broader field of teacher identity and education?
- How does collegial reflection inform choices about knowing, being and doing as part of teacher identity formation?

Pre-service teachers may hold idealised views of the type of teacher they wish to become but struggle to realise their ideals in the rush to gain practical skills in the classroom (Vinz, 1997). This promotes a ‘conservative, survivalist mentality’ (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991, p.38) among pre-service teachers rather than the attitude of being a life-long student of teaching, as espoused by educational philosopher Dewey seventy years ago. A dilemma arises for pre-service teachers between the need to obtain starting competence in knowledge and skills, and developing the meta-cognitive awareness they need to develop as professional teachers (Graham & Phelps, 2003). As old concepts of teacherhood ‘disintegrate under contemporary social and economic pressures’ (Maclure, 1993, p.311) the identity and priorities of new teachers are particularly contested and need further investigation by teachers themselves.

Isolation and lack of time to collaborate are typical features of most teaching environments (Dinham & Scott, 2000) so that supportive practices need to be developed among teachers to counter these constraints to quality teaching. There is limited opportunity for practitioner
discourse with colleagues (Smyth, 1998). Time for reflection and professional dialogue in teacher education courses is also very limited and mostly contained to compulsory assessable tasks. A paradox exists between a managerial expectation of collaboration and reflection among teachers without the ‘real places and spaces for autonomous debate’ (Smyth, 1998, p.339). Making time to think and connect are central concerns of this study.

The pre-service phase of teaching has been characterised by Huberman (1992) as one of survival and discovery, describing the reality shock of new teachers confronting the complexity of classrooms. Many researchers emphasise the need for pre-service teachers to develop reflective strategies in order to negotiate these complexities (for example, Brooker & O'Donoghue, 1992; Day, 1999; Frid & Reid, 2003; Graham & Phelps, 2003; Mason, 2002; Moore, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). The beliefs, attitudes and habitual behaviours of pre-service teachers can cause stress during teacher education, if not examined consciously and systematically (Hatton & Smith, 1995). While a range of processes and tools such as journals, portfolios and online discussions are evident in literature concerning reflection in teacher education, it seems that the potential of collaborative, collegial reflection in shaping teacher identity requires further exploration.

1.2 Background

Systematic reflective thinking in education has been an acknowledged part of effective teaching practice since the work of John Dewey early in the 20th century (Rodgers, 2002). Secondary teacher education requires that pre-service teachers develop a range of reflective processes in order to make sense of the complexities of becoming a teacher (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2003). While reflection has been included in most teaching courses in the past twenty years it is often limited to technical concerns and performance assessment, rather than regular examination of the beliefs, attitudes and habitual behaviours that underpin the profession (Frid & Reid, 2003; Graham & Phelps, 2003; Hatton & Smith, 1995). Sustained collaborative reflection on teaching prior to employment can create opportunities to notice and question ways of being in practice (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998).

Further research into reflection on teacher identity is timely given international interest in best practice for teacher education and accreditation. The current Australian federal and state inquiries into teacher education reflect similar concerns to those in many nations globally. The National Institute of Quality Teaching and Student Learning (NIQTSL), now known as Teaching Australia, was established in 2004 with the aim of identifying and promoting nationalised teacher standards, as has occurred in many other Western countries. Notions of teacher quality, character and identity are being contested worldwide (Kompf, 2005), yet pre-service teacher voices are largely underrepresented in these discussions. By engaging pre-service teachers in research into their own determinations of teacher quality, it is possible to gain insights into the personal and individual processes of becoming a teacher within broader socio-political frameworks.

In the past decade the competence model of teaching has become the dominant discourse in initial teacher education in the US, the United Kingdom and Australia, together with the key sub-discourses of subject knowledge, class management, and assessment and reporting of pupils’ progress (Moore, 2000). Such technical aspects of teaching have been used to measure the quality of teaching, yet a multitude of studies (see for example, Adey, 1998; Borich, 1995;
Britzman, 1991; Day, 1998; Edwards, 1993; Franzak, 2002; Goodson, 2000; Harris & Anthony, 2001; Hopkins, 2003; Phelps, Graham & Kerr, 2004) view competency as an insufficient measure of the worth of teachers or the quality of their teaching. Instead, many of these researchers identify the need for further exploration and improvement of reflection and collaboration among pre-service teachers in order to broaden perceptions of teaching beyond technical competency.

Reflection and collegiality are formally recognised aspects of professional commitment by teachers in recent legislation on teaching standards (New South Wales Institute of Teachers, 2005). This has not, however, resulted in standardisation of teacher education practices that promote collaboration and reflection in future teachers. The lack of consistency across all teacher education courses has been identified as a key problem within teacher education (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002). Ramsey (2000) cited twenty Australian studies in the past two decades that have concluded that current teacher education practices are inadequate, but he says that insufficient action is being taken to effect the changes needed. Further research will inform best practice for collaborative reflection in teacher education so that pre-service teachers can meet accreditation standards as well as develop their critical thinking as professionals.

Teaching involves the whole person, including intellect, values and ways of being that go beyond professional standards criteria (Palmer, 1998). Teacher induction into the profession, initially through classroom experiences, disrupts the internal, pre-existing sense of self (Tickle, 2000), often without providing adequate processes to negotiate and affect the personal changes required to become a teacher. Educationalist Max van Manen (1991) says that novice teachers need to spend time to discover who they are and what habits they can acquire or avoid, because educational theories deal with what is common and generalisable rather than what is unique and personal. New teachers need to find a balance between internal and external locus of control for self-efficacy through reflection upon interpretive frameworks (Kelchtermans, 2005). By telling others or oneself stories of experiences and then reflecting critically upon these, self-understanding can be increased, leading to a better understanding of oneself as a teacher (Kelchtermans, 2005). The need for self-understanding as a teacher is a basic premise of this study as it applies to the pre-service participants and the facilitating teacher-researcher.

A language of practice needs to be developed and utilised when learning to become a professional (Grossman, 2005) and reflective discussion can assist with this. Empathy, communication skills and collaboration are necessary aspects of teacher behaviour but are assumed as present rather than actively and systematically cultivated during teacher education. Even though teaching is relational work that involves complex communication skills within school communities, the emotional aspects of teaching are often subsumed or ignored in teacher education courses (O'Connor, 2005). Structures and processes need to be available for pre-service teachers to debrief and unpack their emotional experiences and conflicts as they arise during their initial teacher education. Such an approach would give recognition to the complexity of learning to teach. As Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000, p.23) argue:

Learning to teach and transforming one’s teaching practices, then, are not simple matters of deliberately selecting and enacting particular pedagogical strategies. They are, rather, complex matters of embodying different habits of perception, of speaking, of theorizing and of acting.
Attitudes, communication skills and perceptions conducive to working within diverse school communities cannot be developed by pre-service teachers without adequate time to notice and evaluate their interactions. While learning from experience occurs over time, it is possible to miss deeper understandings of the significance of feelings and events if there is no time made available to reflect. This study aims to create a time and place for ongoing systematic reflection, for the pre-service teachers participating in the research.

The following section discusses the broader significance of the research for teacher identity and teacher education.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study explores how participation in a non-assessable, voluntary reflective group can support pre-service teachers to take an active role in the shaping and development of their professional identity. As an extension of prior studies into collaborative reflective practice with pre-service teachers (Brooker & O'Donoghue, 1992; Franzak, 2002; Freese, 1999; Gibson, 2005; Louden, 1992), this study provides specific focus on the secondary education context. In the current climate of greater systematisation and regulation of teaching, the study is significant because it facilitates and documents a process for pre-service teachers to challenge and extend their thinking and actions, supported by ongoing collaborative evaluation and dialogue.

It is envisaged that this study will contribute to understanding of best practice in teacher education because it explores the factors that shape pre-service teachers in this important phase of identity formation. Time constraints can be a dilemma for all teaching courses since secondary teachers are required to learn a huge range of complex information and practices in a very short time, usually one year for a diploma course or two years in a combined degree. This study confronts this time shortage by providing pause for thought, a practice often overlooked in current ‘centralist reform contexts’ in education (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006).

The current focus on teacher competency, standards of accreditation and performativity (Kelchtermans, 2005) may cause knowledge and skill acquisition to be privileged in teacher education courses, rather than broader metacognitive concerns for ongoing teacher learning. A significant aspect of this research is that it engages pre-service teachers in critical evaluation of their teaching education experiences as part of the broader picture of their identity formation. Findings from this study may be a useful adjunct to understandings of effective teacher education because they originate from teaching students in relation to what is useful for them rather than current course evaluation by institutions. However, the most likely significance of the research will be the opportunities it affords each participant to view themselves critically.

1.4 Choice of action research as methodology

Given the research is focused on collaborative reflective practice to inform identity formation, action research emerged as the most appropriate methodological framework. Action research promotes informed action through reflection, within a self-critical learning community (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). Action research allows teachers to work toward improvement of their own practices through systematic, context specific strategies and structures (Sagor, 2005). Choice of action research as a methodology provides a means for ongoing inquiry into identity formation as well as giving participants experience in critical collaborative reflection to build upon in their
future teaching careers. Because action research is a ‘lived practice’ (Carson & Sumara, 1997), it provides the potential to grow and change according to the needs of the research group, rather than adhere to a pre-determined plan regardless of the needs and interests of participants.

1.5 Positioning myself as researcher: Stepping back

I began my journey as a researcher after twelve years teaching music and supervising teaching students in secondary schools. My personal interest in this project centres on my growing interest in teacher education, particularly supervision of pre-service teachers. My experiences of teacher education, firstly as a student teacher and later as a supervisor and tutor, were often frustrating for me, primarily due to lack of time, resources and appropriate professional development. My efforts at mentoring professional experience (practicum) students were mostly characterised by rushed discussion on the way to playground duty or while trying to eat lunch. I felt diminished as a supervisor by lack of time and effective processes. I wanted to know how to assist pre-service teachers to ‘think through’ their experiences in order to learn from them.

My dilemmas as a supervising teacher provided the motivation to work with pre-service teachers to examine how to transform themselves into the kinds of teachers they wish to become. Linked with this was a concern about the particular challenges of secondary school teaching. Many of the pre-service teachers I met seemed ill-prepared for their practicum, due to seemingly inadequate undergraduate preparation. The generalist subject knowledge and pedagogy required in the classroom was not available to music teachers at an undergraduate level due to a tendency to specialise on a particular instrument or musical period without having a breadth of skills and knowledge. I wanted to know what could improve this situation.

In the past fourteen years I have felt highly dissatisfied with my own and others’ attempts at supervision. Many secondary teachers in Australia have no training in supervision and yet mentor prospective teachers as an additional professional duty, without time release. Many student teachers I have supervised were unhappy with aspects of their University courses. A common perception I heard from them is that there is an emphasis on theory, with a lack of time to experience classroom teaching, and a lack of time to discuss issues together. I was keen to explore ways of incorporating the reflective discussions that I value with my own peers, into a teacher education setting, with pre-service teachers. Prior to teaching I worked in a variety of community arts and youth work settings that used collective management structures and collaborative work processes. As a result, I value opportunities to talk with others as a way of processing both personal and professional concerns. This value determined my choice of research methods because I believed that collaboration is important in education.

My choice of participatory action research was influenced by positive experiences of purposeful collegial discussion that had aided my own teacher development. I hoped that by reflecting together on practice, pre-service teachers would be able to support each other to explore the sometimes overwhelming experiences of teacher education. By engaging in collaborative reflective processes during this project, I assumed that participants could identify and examine ways of making their teacher identity formation conscious and informed by their research processes. Reflective portfolios (Frid & Reid, 2003), collaborative reflective assignments (Gibson, 2005) or other assessable means of reflection have been used in most teacher education courses since the mid 1980’s (Graham, 2001). However research into non-assessable, voluntary groups of reflective secondary teaching students did not appear to be evident in the literature. As
a participant researcher, I hoped to further examine and explore my own notions of being a
teacher in order to improve my practice and understanding of teaching and supervision.

1.6 Organisation of this thesis

Writing was an integral and ongoing part of the research process with weblink movement and
connection between emerging inquiry, written and active reflection, stories told and retold in the
light of experience. The linear form of this thesis belies the organic, interactive nature of our
action research process, such that diagrams are included in an attempt to show some of this
multidimensional interaction. At best, the chapters on methods and findings are crafted,
sequential snapshots of our reflective journeys rather than the entire story, for it would be too
long and complex for the scope of this thesis.

Chapter Two reviews the literature concerning both the conceptual and contextual landscapes
that inform this study. The first section of the chapter deals with issues of identity from the
broad perspective of teachers in general, to more specific secondary teacher identity, to the
initial phase of pre-service teaching. The second section of chapter two examines literature that
links reflective practice and action research with exploration of teaching and identity formation.

Chapter Three provides a detailed description and discussion of the overarching methodology
and particular methods used to obtain and analyse data throughout this project.

Chapter Four presents the research findings organised into key themes. This chapter divides
into two sections that parallel the structure of the previous chapter. The first section clusters
findings about teacher identity formation into broader themes. The second section of the chapter
is similarly organised with findings about how identity formation can become an informed,
aware process.

Chapter Five interprets these findings for educational significance and implications for further
research into teacher education practices.

1.7 Summary

This introductory chapter has briefly outlined the significance of collaborative research into pre-
service teacher identity in the current context of educational change and renewal. Central
questions and concerns about teacher identity formation that prompted this research have been
introduced. Drawing on these questions as the starting point to an organic process of inquiry,
readers are reminded that the journey of this action research project evolved according to the
needs and discoveries of the participants in order that they better understand themselves as
teachers. Linked to this is the assumption that better understanding or awareness informs greater
choice in future actions.

Initially the focus was to explore how and why the participants defined themselves as teachers,
through evolving collaborative reflective processes exploring teacher identity. The ways that
participants collected, communicated and adapted perceptions of their teaching selves occurred
within a mini learning community, through professional dialogue and negotiation of ongoing
experiences. It is noted that while experience is greater than efforts to represent or interpret it
(Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000) there are, however, some important insights to be gained
from the shared stories of the four participating pre-service teachers. This study endeavours to facilitate a non-assessable, voluntary discussion forum for pre-service teachers engaged in systematic reflection in order to actively construct their teacher identities.
Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter two surveys research literature that informs the central issues of this inquiry into secondary teacher identity formation. Current discourses on teacher identity inclusive of personalised interpretive frameworks represent the conceptual basis for this thesis. These will be compared with historic depictions of teacher identity still evident in educational literature and practice. Notions of moral purpose, professionalism, competence, and knowledge are key elements of teacher identity contested within the literature surveyed. The call to become critical and informed as teachers is examined in relation to positioning of reflective practices in teacher development. This review moves from broad representations of the identity of teachers to a focus on issues specific to pre-service secondary teacher identity formation.

Chapter two begins by examining ways in which notions of teacher identity are changing from fixed and normative to contested and changeable. Critiques of ‘teacher’ as a professional, as a service provider, as a technician, and as a knowledge worker are juxtaposed with the problematic moral and relational roles that teachers are expected to undertake. Aspects of identity particular to secondary school teachers are examined to reveal how specific roles are constructed and perpetuated through education and community expectations. Contentious issues in the beginning phase of becoming a teacher follow, as a further qualifying layer of identity. This section concludes with a review of theories, practices and reforms in teacher education that may influence pre-service secondary teacher identity formation.

In the third section of this chapter, there is specific focus on ways the literature has defined and positioned reflective practices in the negotiation of teacher identities. Gaps in knowledge and prior research into teacher identity signal the motivation for this research project through a range of questions emerging from the literature. The chapter concludes with a summary of opinions from various researchers, concerning the need for teacher voices to be valued and engaged in dialogue from the beginning of teaching, in order to build a responsive, capable teaching profession.

2.1 Teacher identity

Notions of teacher identity are complex, changeable and contested among many stakeholders, from pre-service teachers, regulatory agencies, researchers, educators and classroom practitioners. In the past decade, representations in literature on what it means to be a teacher show a shift of emphasis from prior sociological perspectives of adopting roles and behaviours to more problematic notions. Teacher identity in recent research literature encompasses more changeable, contextual ideas of teachers that privilege self-agency and ongoing construction of identity. However, accreditation of teachers worldwide is still based on their ability to fulfil mandatory criteria of good teaching from governing bodies, rather than personally determined aspects of good practice (Loughran, 2005). Teachers are required to negotiate ongoing changes to their professional roles and behaviours in a climate of rapid change, requiring acts of personal interpretation in response to institutional requirements (Essohn, Johnson & Vinson, 2002). The survey of literature in this section examines the current contest between traditional and contemporary views of teacher identity.
Teacher accreditation through competency checklists places emphasis on what must be done to be a teacher, an approach based on traditional occupational descriptors and fixed identity markers (Kelchtermans, 2005). This traditional, technical approach to teacher identity is criticised by many teacher educators (Beattie, 1995; Britzman, 1991; Graham & Phelps, 2003; Klette, 2000; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998) because personalised aspects of 'who am I while teaching?' are ignored or subsumed by the need to conform to standards of practice. However Ramsey (2005), a founder of Teaching Australia, the national teaching institute, defends competency frameworks as a means to promote and improve professionalism among teachers by providing a national set of standards and accreditation. It is paradoxical that Ramsey argues the most important thing teachers can offer is what they have inside (Ramsey, 2005), because the standards stated by the institute emphasise competencies rather than personal development and knowledge. Contentious aspects such as reflection are noted and will be analysed in relation to current literature later in the chapter. Suffice to highlight here, the complex interplay of personal and professional identities is evident as central to arguments concerning teacher quality and identity formation.

Another way of expressing this complexity between the personal and professional in representations of teacher identity has emerged in Finland through the work of teacher educator Lauriala (2005). She argues that conflicting perspectives on what is important in becoming a teacher are created by tensions between the expected (ought) behaviours and the actual (conscious and subconscious) self when teaching. This view of identity concurs with other recent educational research (Britzman, 1991; Frid & Reid, 2003; Husu, Patrikaninen & Toom, 2005) that acknowledges multiple selves within constructed identities. The socio-cognitive framework of identity proposed by Lauriala gives support to the idea of teachers exploring and, to some extent, having the opportunity to shape their own teacher identities. This perspective acknowledges self-agency in defining teacher identities rather than just adopting a prescribed role.

The differences in theoretical perspectives underpinning identity are based on varied understandings and emphases on ‘self’ over the past fifty years. Modernist identity theories of the mid 20th century viewed self as central and fixed, so that becoming a teacher was a process of socialisation, adopting roles (Lortie, 1975) rather than personal transformation. In more recent depictions, identity is an ongoing construction, formed through interaction with changing contexts (du Gay, 2000; Frid & Reid, 2003). These contrasting interpretations of identity underpin differences between technicist, managerial definitions of good teaching and definitions arising from within the profession (Klette, 2000; Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Instrumentalist views of teachers continue to emphasise checklists of knowledge and skills needed for the job. However, the counterclaim is that teacher identity is a social construct to be interpreted personally by the individual becoming a teacher (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995).

Critical theorists provide another perspective on teacher identity formation through ongoing questioning of normative teaching culture and practice (Borich, 1995). The political issues of power and privilege that arise in critical theories about identity (du Gay, 2000) have generated questions for educational researchers in relation to teaching. Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000) argue that ‘acceptable’ and ‘other’ identities are sorted and produced through schooling so that conforming to expectations is often a powerful force in forming teacher identities. These changes to self in order to become acceptable as a teacher are also referred to as strategic compliance (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). Key questions from a critical perspective, in the sorting
of identities, are ‘who decides what is acceptable?’ and ‘why?’ (Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). These views are in marked contrast to views of teaching thirty years ago. Lortie (1975) used the term ‘apprenticeship of observation’ to describe the ways that new teachers adopted the practices of experienced teachers. This apprenticeship was primarily concerned with strategies of ‘how to’ rather than a need to interrogate practices. In the past two decades, however, critical theorists have argued that teacher identity formation is far more problematic, concerning ways that power is enacted between stakeholders in education (Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998).

Historically, becoming a teacher was viewed by sociologists as a secondary layer of identity (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995), added to the existing sense of self that formed through socialisation when growing up. Nias (1997) makes a distinction between the ‘core self’ or original identity, and the ‘situational self’ that responds to a role such as teacher, taken on in a particular context. A challenge to this role-playing view of identity formation is provided by several researchers (Britzman, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Franzak, 2002; Goodson & Walker, 1991) who argue that teacher identity is formed through negotiation between personal values, beliefs and the requirements of regulatory professional bodies. An extension of this idea is that to teach is to express self (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). This view firmly positions understanding of self in relation to others at the centre of constructing a teacher identity, and provides a useful focus for the next section of literature reviewed.

2.1.1 Self-understanding in teachers

Self-understanding in teachers is a construct in literature on teacher identity that originated with the work of Dewey (Dewey, 1938) but has now developed into a multitude of forms with varied emphasis. Understanding ‘who I am’ as a teacher is highly influential on the kind of teacher someone becomes (Khamis, 2000). As Britzman argues:

> The practice of teaching, because it is concocted from relations with others and occurs in structures that are not of one’s own making is, first and foremost, an uncertain experience that one must learn to interpret and make significant (Britzman, 2003, p.23)

Here Britzman points to the fact that uncertainty about identity in the practice of teaching needs to be acknowledged, a view shared by du Gay (2000) who suggests this dynamic is a reflection of post-modern concerns about fluid and changeable identities. The emotional landscape of teaching, including relationships with others and self, is now recognised as an important part of being a teacher (Palmer, 1998). This being the case, it is posited that the moral, emotional and political dimensions of teacher identity challenge views of teachers based on technical determinants of quality alone.

In Kelchtermans’ (2005) view, self-understanding equals both processes and product for teachers, with improved self-understanding enabling better teaching. He produced a model of teacher identity in which the aspects are highly contextual, interactive and dependant on a capacity for self-understanding. The five components are self-image (descriptive), self-esteem (evaluative), task perception (normative), job motivation (conative) and expectations of self in future situations (futuristic). The model is similar to Laurialas’ (2005) cognitive model of teacher identity, but adds concerns of job motivation and task perception as shaping forces for teachers. Notions of motivation, self-image and self-esteem are subjective, drawn from the internal emotional realms of a person. But the terms Kelchtermans attaches to these,
‘description’ and ‘evaluation’, provide a means for teachers to externalise emotions, to think about the origins and influence of these feelings. As a proponent of reflective practices for teachers, Kelchtermans argues that self-understanding moves beyond examination of the self towards enacting this knowledge in teaching practice.

The relational aspects of teachers’ work, the ability to relate to others successfully is central to teaching, but not specifically taught to pre-service teachers (Grossman, 2005). While social workers and priests gain specific experience in fostering and managing relationships prior to employment, Grossman (2005) noted in her comparison of these vocations that emphasis on relationships is usually absent in teacher education. Indeed, Grossman (2005) was concerned that teachers are expected to know how to relate to a vast range of people in school communities with very little preparation or practice. The relational aspect of teachers’ work has also been referred to as ‘pedagogical tact’ or intentional thoughtful human communication (van Manen, 1998). A problematic moral agenda is evident here, in that van Manen assumes teachers are able to know what is beneficial or thoughtful in interactions with students. However, his view concurs with that of Grossman (2005) and Kelchtermans (2005) in that self-understanding is crucial for teachers in order to negotiate the relational aspects of their work.

Self-understanding by teachers develops within a collective context of what it means to be a teacher but awareness of possibilities within teacher identity may be constrained by popular stereotypes and metaphors (Borich, 1995). Stereotypes work to fix notions of identity through shared social beliefs about the role of teachers in specific historical and institutional sites (Mayer, 1999). According to Barty (2004) the broader discourse of collective teacher identity is highly influential on personal identity because of the ways that stereotypes permeate understandings of teaching. New teachers often perpetuate stereotypes of teachers in order for them to become part of the group. In other words, they try to become what they think is expected of them as teachers.

In Weeks’ (1990) definition of identity, he places emphasis on the influence of the collective by naming identity as identification with the commonalities of a particular group through shared values. However, van Manen (1999) argues that individual creativity is required to join the teaching profession. He claims that the adoption of certain behaviours and core values in becoming a teacher is balanced by the unique contribution of each pre-service teacher. In this way, individuals may explore possibilities of self-as-teacher beyond the dictates of normative stereotypes.

Although use of stereotypes may operate to fix teacher identity into socially familiar behaviours, metaphors expand the possibilities of identity through use of creative imagination and self-expression (Beattie, 1995; Denilico, 2005). Metaphors commonly describe complex aspects of teacher identity and behaviour through collectively understood images and because metaphors represent broader conceptual understandings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) they can influence identity formation, even on an unconscious level. Metaphors may not only describe but also shape the ways that teachers view their professional identities and are viewed by others (Denilico, 2005). Metaphors are also a useful tool for expressing self-understanding as teachers since a single image may depict a vast range of feelings and experiences.

Metaphors in educational literature are therefore useful indicators of how teacher perceptions are constructed. The *Australian National Statement on Teaching Standards* (Australian College
humorous, often visual ways to express aspects of self as teacher that are hard to describe. However, unexamined use of metaphors may also work to maintain stereotypes of teachers and constrain self-understanding about teacher identity formation.

2.1.2 Changing demands on teachers

Changing demands on teachers may have a powerful effect on the identity formation of future teachers. Fullan (1993) argues that all teachers need to embrace change as part of their ongoing professional landscape. Rapid changes in teaching contexts such as the need for teachers to actively engage with changing school cultures (Borich, 1995) is an example of these changing demands. While this monitoring of changes is evident in research since the 1980’s, the pace of change has escalated. Day (2000) claims that changes in educational expectations, roles, responsibilities and accountability shape the working lives of teachers worldwide more than they ever have previously. The ‘framework of certainties’ (Ramsey, 2000) through which teachers have operated and been educated in the past are being challenged by rapid technological and social change. Demands on teachers have increased greatly in recent years due to a broader variety of students and an expectation that teachers can cater for the individual learning needs of each student (Henniger, 2004). Formation of teaching identity now involves the negotiation of escalating demands and pressures of current classrooms and schools.

A recent study by Esson, Johnson and Vinson (2002) of public school teachers in New South Wales highlighted that teachers are now required to assume greater community and social welfare responsibilities than in the prior centuries, without adequate education to do so. Concerns of content and pedagogy are sometimes subsumed by the need to counsel and communicate with students in response to growing social diversity and disconnection (Grossman, 2005). Preparedness for change through ongoing learning may assist teachers to maintain currency of knowledge in the face of escalating change and greater expectations placed upon the teaching profession (Fullan, 1993). The breadth of professional learning now required by teachers as a result of these issues is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but is symptomatic of increasing professional and personal demands on teachers.

Ability to cope with change is an aspect of teacher identity that will be central to future teacher professionalism (Fullan, 1993). This view suggests that an educational environment characterised by change but controlled by conservative systems is bound to be stressful for teachers. Additionally, the capacity for teachers to deal with change, learn from it and help students learn from it will be critical for the future development of societies. Consequently, Fullan calls for teachers to become ‘change agents, rather than victims of change’ (1993, p.ix). Teachers will need to interpret changes to the social issues confronting schools in relation to their own beliefs in order to cope with change effectively (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p.x).

In a study of school culture, Borich (1995) noted that any sense of empowerment as teachers was subject to rapid change in contextual factors. He found that school culture was a powerful determinant of teacher self-efficacy, due to factors such as school leadership, central ethos, traditions, and sense of community. Broad perceptions of teachers by the profession are changing, from ‘holders of knowledge’ to practitioners able to exercise their own discretionary judgement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). Teachers are able to be more active as agents in their practice by exercising their critical judgement (Tickle, 2000). Again, self-examination and understanding emerge as constructs central to negotiating conservative cultural conditions.
coupled with rapid change in teaching. While educational environments are characterised by change (Hargreaves, 1994), it seems that adapting to change is an increasingly important characteristic for teachers because of the rapid acceleration of changes to teachers’ work.

2.2 Teachers’ work

Changes in the characteristics and expectations of teacher workplaces and conditions are having a significant impact on the ways teachers view themselves (Klette, 2000). Taken further, Britzman (1991) proposes that teachers are shaped by their work. She views teachers’ work as a complex interaction of social relationships within particular contexts. This is in contrast to traditional instrumental views of teachers’ work as a means of enacting strategies, techniques and the curriculum. However, issues of competency and accountability in teaching are contentious, particularly in respect to perceived teacher performance and accreditation (Frid & Reid, 2003). The context of increased regulation and imposed standards on teachers that was described in Chapter 1 is further explored here in relation to changing work expectations.

Teachers’ work now extends beyond the intellectual realms of knowledge transmission to the negotiation of complex relational issues involving moral and ethical concerns (Day, Fernandez, Trond, Hauge & Moller, 2000). The following section examines three problematic aspects of teachers’ work that impact upon teacher identity formation, globalisation, moral agendas and time constraints.

Globalisation and improvements in information technology are changing the knowledge base and ongoing learning requirements of all professionals, causing changes to the ways teachers view themselves and the profession (Hargreaves, 1994). As discussed in Chapter 1, control of information and decision-making is becoming more centralised and prescriptive worldwide so that teaching must involve a process of continuous learning (Winter, 1998, p.56). Linked with globalisation is increased accountability and monitoring of teachers’ performance in influencing student outcomes.

Increasing governmental concern over whether the adults of tomorrow will be well equipped to compete in a global economy have drawn schools into the arena of accountability. The perceived failure of schools to produce responsible, literate and skilled citizens has also diminished the traditional support, respect and trust accorded to teachers by parents and the public at large (Day, Fernandez, Trond, Hauge & Moller, 2000, p.1).

At the 2005 ISATT (International Study Association of Teachers and Teaching) conference presenters from many countries cited increased pressures for teachers to perform and be accountable as factors detrimental to teacher self-efficacy and confidence. Kelchtermans (2005) who constructs these pressures as ‘performativity’, claims that this is now the dominant discourse in educational policy and practice. He criticised current emphasis on measurable teaching outcomes as a reductionist trend that neglects powerful personal elements of commitment and job satisfaction that in turn lead to ‘good’ teaching. In other words, he and others at the conference argued that the personal and professional identities of teachers are integrally linked. Sites of teachers’ work are not only institutional but also deeply personal, beyond working conditions to factors that shape and change the very identity of teachers.

Notions of teacher quality and character, integral to identity, are being contested worldwide, creating moral dilemmas for teachers in their work practices (Kompf, 2005). Being a teacher
carries ethical considerations of knowing what to do in changing circumstances with children (van Manen, 1991). While professional judgement and responsibility are common to many professions, the addition of ‘moral purpose’ creates a value-laden landscape in the workplace for teachers, one that is not evident or manifests differently in many other professions. Students may model themselves on the values and behaviours of teachers (Fenstermacher, 2004) making values and beliefs a contentious but important part of teacher identity that begs ongoing examination.

The moral purpose of teaching is problematic because it is often not clearly stated and is subject to differences in beliefs and values. Notions of moral purpose inform teacher identity on both conscious and unconscious levels (Lauriala, 2005). A number of perspectives from various educationalists (Fenstermacher, 2004; Fullan, 1993; Kelchtermans, 2005; van Manen, 1991) indicate that moral issues for teachers are contentious, particularly if they remain unexamined. Fullan (1993) links moral purpose with social justice and equity claiming that teachers’ work needs to make a difference for students regardless of background in order to prepare them for change in their lives. He argues that social awareness and a clear set of values in relation to classroom practice are on the moral agenda for new teachers to adopt or adapt. Fenstermacher (2004) goes further by arguing that teachers should foster moral or virtuous conduct among students. This is a problematic claim because it implies that teachers need to know what is virtuous and moral in order to do so. Apart from schools with a religious or a philosophical underpinning, values and ethos may be implicit and unexamined rather than explicit in school cultures (Borich, 1995).

When teaching is referred to as a ‘vocation’ or a ‘calling’ (Beattie, 1995; Franzak, 2002; Jones, 2003; Palmer, 1998), moral attributes are ascribed. In Canada, a moral agenda is explicitly mandated in recent teaching standards criteria of Ontario province. Kompf (2005) critiqued this document to conclude that this agenda seemed to be set by conservative Christian politicians who developed the standards based on biblical tenets such as goodness, honesty, virtue and faith, without acknowledging their problematic potential. Kompf was concerned that teachers may not be able to meet these criteria as well as fulfil their other professional obligations. Kompf was particularly concerned for pre-service teachers who may possess arguably similar competencies, but must adjust aspects of their character to suit their employers. This example illustrates that teachers’ workplaces are sites of contested or enacted values about teacher character that require critical examination. Teachers must position themselves within a variety of moral agendas within their work contexts and match these with their own inner values and beliefs (Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998).

Moral agency is required in most aspects of teaching work. Bullough and Gitlin (1995) maintain that teachers engage in ‘interpretive acts’ that are uncertain, contextual and sometimes conflictual because of tensions in the values and beliefs that shape moral agency. For instance, teachers must enact the values of their school system whether that matches their personal belief system or not. However, some research (Connell, 1985, cited in Borich, 1995) indicates that many teachers still view their work in simplistic terms, with limited commitment of time and emotional involvement, and little concern for critical analysis of work practices. A range of competing discourses on morality within communities needs to be negotiated by teachers in order to understand and engage fully with their work (Palmer, 1998).
Time constraints are the third aspect of teacher workplaces that emerged as influential on teacher identity and development in the literature. According to Day (2000), the task of changing work practices and attitudes among teachers is very challenging because of a need to restructure the space, time and opportunity to reflect. He claims that lack of time causes teachers to be reactive rather than proactive, with problems of discontinuity. Teacher development is constrained if teachers are unable to spend time evaluating and integrating effective practice. Day et al (2000) advocate more research to integrate theoretical debates with practitioner perspectives through an investment of time spent with teachers. He asserts that time is needed for teachers to understand their practice in relation to history, situation, personhood, professionalism and disposition to change. In most of the literature surveyed for this study, lack of time to respond to change featured as an over-arching constraint to promoting professionalism, reflection and positive regard for identity among teachers.

### 2.2.1 Teaching as a profession

The professional status of teachers is highly influential on teacher identity because teachers have not always been recognised as professionals and so face shifting goalposts in regards to professional practice. While some occupations are traditionally viewed as professions (such as medicine, law and accountancy), other practice-based professions such as teaching and nursing have struggled for recognition as a profession (Taylor, 2000). Debates on professionalism raise questions about teacher identity and behaviours perceived as professional. According to the criteria of the Australian Council of Professions (cited in Ramsey, 2000, p. 95), Ramsey noted that currently teaching is not a true profession because it is not self-regulated, with few or no further education requirements. Structures and practices that characterise other professions are not evident in teaching (Ramsey, 2000). A paradox emerges whereby the very changes aimed at professionalising teachers such as teaching standards, may also be undermining teacher autonomy (Kelchtermans, 2005).

Problematic aspects of teacher professionalism may have a dramatic impact on teacher identities because the worldwide call for professionalism in teachers’ work is being manifest as a call for competence (Day, 2000). The recent establishment of state and federal teaching accreditation bodies in Australia follows similar global trends that aim to promote and safeguard professional standards for teachers. Day et al (2006) argue that raising and sustaining standards of teaching is important yet requires critical engagement by teachers so as not to become part of ‘centralist reform contexts’. He stresses the need to understand tensions between social structures in education and the individual agency of teachers.

Problems with the status of teachers emerged from the history and development of teaching services, because of differences in the status of particular professions (Hargreaves, 1994). Teaching, like nursing, is perceived as a service profession, its members expected to work in the best interests of every-one, with the government providing resources (Hanlon, 1998). Therefore common perceptions of teachers are problematic and value laden because teachers are expected to give ‘useful and skilled service’ (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002, p.309). Hanlon (1998) claims that status and wages are often lower for service professions because they provide services to the community without financial profit. He claims that the low status and income of teachers is both a symptom and a cause of a loss of professionalism among teachers that in turn impacts upon teacher identity in the community.
Recurring themes resulting from the perceived loss of teacher professionalism were identified in The Vinson Report (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002). These issues are also evident in a wide range of literature on teaching from Europe, America and Canada, suggesting that teachers are facing similar problems in many countries. Decreasing respect for teachers shown by parents, students, media and governments is cited as a major indicator of eroded professional status. Salary inequities in relation to other professions are another indication of low status. The 2002 study (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002) linked inadequate funding to deteriorating property maintenance and work environments of teachers, claiming that they are symptomatic of overall lack of support for the professional conduct of teachers' work.

The term ‘reprofessionalisation’ is often used to describe strategies that will enable teachers to reclaim their professional standing in order to construct more positive, empowering notions of identity (Day, Fernandez, Trond, Hauge & Moller, 2000; Smyth, 1998). Under representation of teacher voices in debates on educational reform are symptomatic of a lack of professional teacher autonomy worldwide (Day, 2000; Smyth, 1998). A contradiction currently exists between the work expected of teachers and the lack of autonomy they experience in the workplace (Ramsey, 2000). A degree of control over issues of professional practice and standards are essential in order for teachers to reprofessionalise themselves (Day, 2000).

Teacher control over specialised knowledge is another vital but problematic aspect of teacher professionalism (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002). More than a decade ago Glasser (1993) expressed concern at overly prescriptive schooling systems that strip teachers of the means of independent decision making in their practice. Recent expansion of standardised testing in Australia and the United States (Henniger, 2004) suggest that this situation has worsened rather than improved for teachers. Autonomous decision-making links with quality in teaching because it is essential to the process of improvement among teachers (Glasser, 1993). Teacher competency is under question because teachers have limited control and choice of the specialised knowledge they teach (Day, 2000) so that their competency and autonomy as professionals is undermined.

Discourses of competency

In the past decade the competence model of teaching has become the dominant discourse in initial teacher education in America, the United Kingdom and Australia. Moore (2000) dissects teacher competence into key sub-discourses of subject knowledge, class management, and assessment and reporting of pupils’ progress. Such technical aspects of teaching have been used to measure the quality of teaching, yet a multitude of studies (Adey, 1998; Borich, 1995; Britzman, 1991; Day, 1998; Edwards, 1993; Franzak, 2002; Goodson, 2000; Harris & Anthony, 2001; Hopkins, 2003; Phelps, Graham & Kerr, 2004; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998) view competency as an insufficient measure of the worth of teachers or the quality of their teaching. Instead, many of these researchers identify the need for further exploration and improvement of reflection and collaboration among pre-service teachers in order to broaden perceptions of teaching beyond technical competency. The background and problematic aspects of this discourse are discussed in the following section with reference to international and national research in relation to teacher identity.

The competence discourse underpins the recent establishment of professional institutes for teachers at State and Federal levels in Australia. These bodies are charged with the task of
quantifying and monitoring standards of quality among teachers. As noted previously, *Teaching Australia* has the agenda of establishing nationwide teaching standards. This is further evidence that teaching in Australia faces greater regulation and monitoring in the future. While a National Project on Quality Teaching and Learning created a framework of thirty-two competencies in 1996, the Institutes represent a legislative mechanism to make these standards applicable nationally, as has already been enacted in several other Western nations. An examination of teacher accreditation systems in Australia, Canada, America and England, concluded that increased accountability might be politically driven rather than educationally valid (Ramsey, 2000). Goodson (2000) concurs, noting that political and administrative perspectives on quality teaching that list ‘instrumental’ or technical skills, may disregard the importance of teachers’ voices in the development of relevant professional knowledge.

Competency lists that focus on standards of professional practice are useful to educational administrators to assess teachers for accreditation and promotion but they may not ensure improved teaching practice (Ramsey 2000). Gore (2005) argues that teachers need to be involved in the process of determining the quality of their pedagogy. To this end, Gore and Ladwig designed a Quality Teaching framework for New South Wales public schools (Gore, 2005). By providing clear pedagogical frameworks for planning and assessing learning, Gore (2005) claims that institutional indicators for teacher quality such as qualifications and experience will be less important than observable teaching practice. While the Quality Teaching framework is yet to prove that it is more than another measurement strategy for competence, it does provide teachers with a way to actively shape their future practice. As a major reform, literature is not conclusive about the influence of this framework on teacher identity so far.

Broader definitions of teacher quality that encompass greater reflexivity and professional dialogue are needed (Moore, 2000). Some aspects of good teaching can not be quantified, so Moore (2000) is concerned that generic lists may privilege some areas of competence over others, disregarding different educational contexts and qualities particular to individual teachers. The limitations of language to adequately describe aspects of good teaching can, in his opinion, lead to the suppression of creativity in teaching activity, resulting in conformity and lack of authentic responses to particular situations. As previously noted, critics of the competence agenda claim that checklists in current teaching standards documents can undermine teacher professionalism by being used to compare the performances of students, teachers and schools in order to lay blame, rather than analysing the complexities of situations. A discourse of competence needs to be tempered by concerns about normative structures that fail to acknowledge teacher creativity and autonomy (Helsby, 2000; Kelchtermans, 2005; Tickle, 2000).

A National Statement from the teaching profession on teaching standards in Australia came to similar conclusions. The statement was prepared by a large group of teachers from diverse work contexts in 2003 in order to provide a forum to respond to government directives on teaching (Australian College of Educators, 2003). This group of teachers emphasised that it was important to ensure that teaching standards did not enforce standardisation that could strip teachers of their individuality. At a recent international conference of teachers, Kelchtermans (2005) reiterated this concern about ‘performativity’, saying that a paradox existed between the hunt for educational quality through standards that may actually undermine teacher autonomy and self-efficacy. A key point emerges here that teachers need to actively engage in
representations of teacher quality in order to include critical and creative aspects of themselves in response to instrumentalist agendas.

Another approach for overcoming the limitations of a ‘technicist’ approach to quality teaching is to broaden the definitions of competency (Frid & Reid, 2000). Tension in pre-service education programs between the development of students as professionals and the demands of a program that must ensure ‘technical competency’ prompted Frid and Reid (2000) to strongly critique this discourse. As a result, they redesigned their course assessment so that it would involve students in active construction of their teacher identity at a pre-service level. They asked their student teachers to create professional portfolios as a means to ‘use their knowledge, skills, flexibility, insight, commitment and initiative in the construction of a teaching ‘self’ for public scrutiny’ (Frid & Reid, 2003, p.1). Frid and Reid (2003) argued that this process allowed for multiple interpretations of self as teacher through collecting evidence of teacher competence. This literature suggests that a useful strategy for teachers wanting their voices to be heard in the competency debate is to contribute to more inclusive definitions of teacher competence.

2.2.3 Professional knowledge

A contentious element of the teacher quality and standards agenda is the professional knowledge required of teachers. Because the need to continue with studies and professional learning is not mandated for Australian teachers (Ramsey, 2000), there is concern about the types of knowledge required of teachers for initial accreditation. Professional knowledge may be divided between know-how and know-that, with sources that may be experiential, cultural (from social groups) and formal or theoretical (Burns & Bulman, 2000). While more detailed examination of professional knowledge within secondary teaching is discussed later, this section will examine general issues of teacher knowledge that influence the identity and professional practices of teachers.

Winter (1998) maintains that professional work cannot be simply a process of expert prescription, but must be a process of continuous learning. However, professionals of all kinds are being faced with situations in which the tasks they are required to perform no longer bear any relationship to their initial training (Smyth, 1987, p.2). Smyth encourages teachers to take the view that knowledge is problematic and negotiated, rather than the traditional instrumental view of knowledge. Clearly, professional learning is a contentious area of professional behaviour for teachers requiring them to regularly update and keep their knowledge base current.

When knowledge is viewed as problematic, debatable and subject to change, then the ways teachers are educated and the ways they view themselves are also subject to change (Tickle, 2000). The idea of ‘teacher as researcher’ is proposed by Tickle (2000) as a means of changing and developing values about worthwhile knowledge through ongoing scrutiny and inquiry. He argues that collaborative research by teachers, educational researchers and policy makers can identify and build upon professional knowledge in order to improve teacher effectiveness. Tickle (2000) views educational research as an important aspect of teacher professionalism because it promotes self-knowledge and questioning among teachers. He claims that current notions of teacher effectiveness may be based on ‘selectively ascribed knowledge, using ideologically prescribed pedagogical methods’ (Tickle, 2000, p.15) that are narrow and should be regularly scrutinised by practising teachers.
Definitions of professional knowledge are problematic because some researchers refer to subject knowledge, some to inner knowing, and some attempt to describe a range of other ways of knowing as a teacher. It is also difficult to describe expert performance because expert professionals operate from 'a deep understanding of the total situation' (Benner, 1984, p.32). Mason (2002) talks about teacher knowledge in terms of resonance, the things that feel, look or sound right according to what is already known. Someone may say, 'I can see that', and in these instances of resonance, they are saying that they identify with what is being said or shown. In other words, it agrees with their core beliefs or knowledge base in some way. A certain amount of professional knowledge can be imparted through formal education involving the skills and knowledge required to perform tasks. Mason asserts that the more intuitive basis for professional judgment, referred to by van Manen (1991) as 'pedagogical tact' develops over time, through experience, generating a range of possible responses for teachers to choose from in various situations.

In summation, debates about teacher knowledge are highly influential on teacher identity because knowledge and learning are central to teaching and the ways teachers see themselves. The theoretical political and economic agendas that shape educational practice foster different viewpoints about the purpose and nature of knowledge (Hargreaves, 1994). These agendas determine the types of teacher knowledge that are valued. Notions of teacher professionalism that require self-knowledge and reflection are challenging traditional models of competence that privilege technical knowledge (Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Recent research tends to favour the idea of teachers being active in the construction and deconstruction of knowledge, rather than mere transmitters of traditionally valued knowledge. Attitudes towards knowledge are central to the perceptions teachers have of themselves, and their purpose within education systems.

Moving from broad concerns of teacher identity, concerning teachers of all student age groups, the following discussion will narrow the scope to the particular context of secondary school teachers.

### 2.3 Secondary teaching context

Secondary teaching has specific characteristics and contextual features that shape the identities of teachers choosing to work in this field. A sustained search of literature suggests that the secondary context is less represented in literature on teacher identity than research on generic teaching or primary school teaching contexts. The following section examines a range of perceptions about secondary teachers external to and from within the profession. There are key differences in the way that secondary teachers are perceived due to educational requirements, community attitudes, working conditions and performance expectations (Dinham & Scott, 2000). The following discussion will also explore issues of background, subject knowledge, collective identity and individuality that researchers identify as highly influential on the ways secondary teachers operate and perceive themselves.

#### 2.3.1 Comparison with primary teachers

Primary school teachers are generalists, teaching all learning areas while secondary teachers usually specialise in a subject area. Whereas primary teachers begin their education courses
having decided to become teachers, secondary school teachers often pursue undergraduate studies in their field of expertise and then add on teacher qualifications (Ramsey, 2000). Because of this educational background, secondary teacher identity is partly defined by subject specialisation (Siskin, 1994). Dinham and Scott (2000) found that parents and community perceive secondary school teachers differently because they are not required to provide the level of nurturing and life-skill training expected of primary school teachers. A roundtable session by members of the Australian College of Educators (2004) noted that there is a distinction between the level of discipline knowledge required of primary and secondary teachers, so that a different emphasis is placed on specific knowledge attainment and generic pedagogic skills in each teacher education course.

Teachers’ perceptions of themselves are also influenced in broader social terms by differences between the age groups they teach so that teachers of senior students may be viewed with greater status because of the more highly specialised or expert knowledge required (Dinham & Scott, 2000). Linked with this is a finding by Ramsey (2000) that teachers do not have a strong shared identity as professionals. He found that they are more likely to identify with structures such as primary or secondary schools, their teaching union or subject-based collegiate. These differences between perceptions by primary and secondary school teachers, as well as their educational preparation are highly influential on the ways that secondary teachers are socialised into their profession, and therefore view themselves as teachers (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2003).

Expert knowledge is another defining characteristic of secondary teacher identity. Professional knowledge is valued according to subject specialisation in secondary schools creating a perception of ‘teacher as expert’ according to Bullough and Gitlin (1995). Most high school teachers complete their undergraduate studies with a particular specialisation in, for example, chemistry or biology, rather than the full range of subjects taught within the science faculty (Siskin, 1994). The professional isolation that can occur in secondary schools and within subject areas as a result of this emphasis on expert knowledge is termed ‘balkanisation’ by Hargreaves (1992). He has observed links between the subject area taught and ways that these teachers come to know think and believe. This implies differences to teacher identity according to subject discipline. Hargreaves (1992) says that differences in thinking prompted by subject specialisation can lead to a lack of co-operation amongst teachers from different subject areas competing for scarce resources and, in some cases, subject validity.

Siskin (1994) is concerned about the trend to privilege disciplinary knowledge above pedagogical training because content may be emphasized rather than process among teachers. While expert knowledge is perpetuated as the most important form of knowledge in secondary teacher preparation programs, Siskin (1994) argues that it will continue to cause division and difference in status between departments viewed as academic and those seen as subject specific. When Siskin explored the impact of teacher location in subject specific staff rooms she noted that informal exchanges between teachers during breaks lead teachers to form shared views on what it means to be a teacher. This informal knowledge base within staff rooms also influenced beliefs on how subjects should be taught and therefore how teachers viewed themselves since ‘intellectually and professionally, as well as socially, they inhabit quite different worlds’ (Siskin, 1994, p. 180).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.3.2 Expert practitioners

Linked to expert knowledge is the high performance expectations placed on teachers by students and the community to be expert practitioners. Secondary teachers need to maintain their specialised skills, as well as become expert teachers according to a British study (CIRME, 2004) of secondary school music teachers. The study found that because of the nature of the subject, music teachers are expected to perform and compose for public scrutiny, something not usually expected of other teachers. Tension was experienced for teachers in the study between their need for improved interpersonal and communication skills in the classroom and the need to maintain musical performance skills they had previously developed. Communication with an audience in concert was much less personal than the skilled communication with teenagers required of them in a classroom. Teachers in the study (CIRME, 2004) found that public expectations of them as professionals were judged in terms of their musical skills, yet success in the classroom required a different set of skills not provided in their teacher education. The study also found that as a result of this challenge, many music undergraduates are being put off teaching careers, or must forgo their identity as musicians in order to become teachers.

As discussed earlier, secondary teachers identify themselves with their subject discipline, so that they call themselves a science teacher rather than just a teacher (Siskin, 1994). In her doctoral research study of 1988 Siskin noted that the high school teachers identified themselves in first introductions by their subject discipline. This identification extended to statements about practice that they qualified as true within their department rather than true across the whole school. Siskin’s research supports a view of teacher identity shaped by pedagogical specialization.

However, a study of secondary teachers in Canada (Gaudelli 1999, cited in Barty, 2004) supports an opposing perspective. Gaudelli (1999) found that individual teacher identity had greater influence on teaching style than pedagogical background. He noted a strong correlation between the ways each teacher represented and delivered course content and their own identity, as expressed in their teaching style. Demographic features of age, gender, class and background were partial indicators of identity in this study, but more qualitative individual aspects of style and personal behaviours were considered most influential upon teacher identity.

In research with eight pre-service social studies teachers, Gibson (1995, cited in Barty, 2000) drew similar conclusions to Gaudelli. Gibson found that the prior conceptions participants held of teachers strongly influenced their own teacher identity formation and style. While most of the participants held ideas about the teaching of social studies from their own time as students in this subject, they found that extended teaching practice enabled them to integrate their own style into the teaching of the subject. Instead of being a social scientist who became a teacher, these pre-service teachers were able to shape their teaching practice individually.

In summary, many gaps exist in research specific to secondary teacher identity formation. Research about primary school teachers and to a lesser extent general issues of secondary school contexts were evident in the conduct of this review however links between current identity theories with reflection by Australian secondary teachers needs further exploration. This chapter now shifts focus onto the particular phase of teacher identity that is the focus of this study, the pre-service or beginning teacher.
2.4 Pre-service teacher identities

Making teacher identity a conscious construct is challenging for pre-service teachers because identity formation is often an unconscious process (Austin, 2005). Externally ascribed views of good teaching may create dissonance with the personal qualities and pre-held beliefs of pre-service teachers (Britzman, 1991). Confronting experiences of disruption to ‘sense of self’ occur for most people in initial teacher education (Tickle, 2000). Rather than ‘a conservative survivalist mentality among novice teachers’ (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991, p. 38), the potential exists for powerful learning, provided pre-service teachers can reflect on their experiences (Henniger, 2004). This section identifies and discusses issues of context, identity, learning and voice that are particular to the pre-service phase of teaching.

The effects of prior personal histories on pre-service teacher attitudes to teaching and learning are well documented in a variety of literature. Previously held beliefs of what it is to be a teacher are open to challenge and examination during teacher education (Beattie, 1995). Beattie states that tensions in becoming a teacher manifest in the interaction between predetermined narratives or beliefs and those constructed through the story telling of ‘who we are, what we are about, and what we are to be’ (Beattie, 1995, p.42). Further tensions arise as pre-service teachers attempt to interpret expectations on them as teachers from a variety of stakeholders such as experienced teachers, parents, government agencies and students (Senese, 2005). Many roles and expectations of new teachers may be in conflict with their prior beliefs and values (Nias, 1997). As a result, the context of becoming a teacher is a ‘time when one’s past, present and future are set in dynamic tension’ (Britzman, 1991, p.31).

According to Lauriala (2005) pre-service teachers form a strategic teacher identity initially that moves towards stability by aligning with core aspects of ideal and actual selves. She also proposes that these views of self often conflict with ought self, the expectations on people becoming teachers. In Lauriala’s (2005) model, a sense of identity emerges through contest between what teachers think they ought to be, want to be and actually are, in particular contexts. This concurs with the views and activities of Pollard (2002) whose work is widely used in England for pre-service teacher education. Pollard asks students to reflect on where they see themselves at present and how they would like to become as teachers. He stresses that the ability to imagine future possible selves is an important part of forming a teacher identity.

Lauriala (2005) views teacher identity formation as continuously evolving, with situational variety, in three main areas of the self. The first area is self-concept, defined as the total sum of an individual’s beliefs about his or her own personal attributes, with stability and variability. Secondly, self-esteem is the evaluative dimension of self-concept. The third aspect of teacher identity formation defined by Lauriala (2005) is self-efficacy, the assessment of one’s capacities to attain certain goals, or to perform specific tasks. She emphasises the need to include feelings and emotions as well as cognitive concerns since teacher education is usually concerned with skills and knowledge. Day et al. (2006) also call for critical engagement with the emotive and cognitive domains of teacher selves, because they claim that this is lacking in current research. After a review of literature and a four year study of British secondary teachers, they concluded that teacher identities are neither intrinsically stable or unstable but subject to varying degrees of fragmentation. Like Lauriala, the team (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006) attributed identity formation to the interaction of personal elements, broad social conditions and changing situational factors of life and career.
An extensive study (Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992) of over eighty teacher autobiographies with varied subjects, grade level and other contextual teaching factors, found that pre-service and earlier experiences shape the way teachers begin to teach. These influences are persistent and create ‘lifelong references for teacher identity even when these grounds are shaken by later classroom experiences’ (Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992, p.151). While Raymond, Butt and Townsend cite prior experiences as highly influential on beginning teachers, they qualify this by saying that it does not stop further development. They claim that the prior histories and experiences of pre-service teachers seem to be a lens through which further development as teachers is understood.

2.4.1 Joining teaching cultures

The processes of enculturation, both formal and informal involve ‘rites of passage through which the new teacher inexorably moves’ (Manuel, 2002, p.17). These rites may have a less than positive influence on teacher efficacy, as noted by two of Manuel’s participants. They were unhappy at being ‘passive recipients of institutional values and a culture that at times was explicitly deficit’ (Manuel, 2002, p.20) in regard to the expectations and enthusiasm of colleagues for their work. Manuel identified the formal aspects of induction into teaching as university education and professional experience placements in schools. She claims that the informal aspects of enculturation are created by the views of experienced teachers, students and members of the community based on their own schooling experiences. Manuel (2002) states that informal enculturation is spoken and unspoken and therefore more difficult to recognise and negotiate. Pre-service teachers need to learn to interpret the cultural forces at work in construction of their own professional identity.

In order to improve the process of enculturation for pre-service teachers Carson (1997) proposes two key features for teacher education programs that support professional identity formation. The first of these is ample time for actual teaching experience. Many other educational researchers reiterate the importance for pre-service teachers of professional experience in classrooms. Ramsey (2000) agrees but makes a rejoinder that this alone does not ensure preparation for quality teaching. The second feature that Carson proposes is opportunities for student teachers to negotiate teaching discourses with the assistance of teacher educators. While formal mentoring of secondary teachers occurs in some institutions, it is not a systematic process in Australia. Ramsey (2000) states that systems for adequate teacher mentoring of pre-service teachers need to be researched for them to adopt appropriate professional behaviours.

2.4.2 Learning to teach

A great deal of the story of learning to teach concerns learning what not to become (Britzman, 1991, p.19).

Identifying appropriate professional behaviours amongst teachers is problematic because of the general nature of educational theories and the individual personal process of applying them authentically (van Manen, 1991). Tension therefore exists between the need for new teachers to define themselves through a set of standardised behaviours or collective identity, and the ways these interact with their ‘actual selves’ (Lauriala, 2005). An important part of learning to behave professionally according to Zeichner and Liston (1996) is to become aware of any personal
beliefs about societal issues confronting schools. In this way, pre-service teachers can begin to critically engage in the behaviours that will underpin their behaviour and attitudes as teachers.

A key paradox in becoming a teacher is that conflict can create learning, as in classroom management situations, but the conflict can be so great that it derails the pre-service teacher completely, or makes it difficult for them to learn how to teach in the midst of dealing with conflict in the classroom (Britzman, 1991). Believing that they need to control student behaviour is a source of high anxiety for most beginner teachers according to Britzman (2003). Other teacher educators (Grossman, 2005; Hanlon, 1998; Loughran, 2005; van Manen, 1991) agree that learning to negotiate the conflicts that arise in teaching due to relationships with others is a key component of constructing a teacher identity.

Apprenticeship models of becoming a teacher, prevalent thirty years ago (Lortie, 1975) and still prevalent in some teacher education contexts (Khamis, 2000) can cause problematic relationships to arise. The conformity expected by the supervising teachers may cause conflict with the pre-held values and beliefs of pre-service teachers, whether these issues remain tacit or are recognised (Jennings, 1993). The status of the pre-service teacher during practicum may be compromised because they are not only a visitor a classroom, but also a student (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). It is common for a pre-service teacher to cope with behavioural expectations of the supervising teacher and students by adopting existing teacher behaviours, a strategy called 'strategic compliance' (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). Rather than operate from their own values and beliefs about appropriate ways to behave in a classroom, Bullough and Gitlin suggest that pre-service teachers try to conform to whatever the context demands and, in so doing, may experience pain and conflict unless they are able to become aware of this process. When negotiating their new role as ‘teacher’, tension may arise between feeling empowered to act as an individual or to continue to emulate the experienced teacher. Linked with this is the challenge for pre-service teachers to inform their opinions and develop their own professional voice.

2.4.3 Finding voice as a teacher

Britzman (1991) views representations of voice as crucial for pre-service teachers in learning to become a teacher. The poststructuralist exploration of ‘voice’ that emerged in the 1980’s, examined use of language to construct subjective discourses of self and self-improvement linked to power, knowledge and experience. According to Britzman (1991) this led to educational research on identity politics, where and how student teachers were silenced or not represented due to their inexperience as teachers. Her research found that pre-service teachers desired a time when they became recognised as teachers and so could gain the power to speak authoritatively to determine their conditions.

The second representation of ‘voice’ that Britzman (1991) explored with pre-service teachers was their construction of a ‘teaching voice’ through speaking the language of education. She found that enormous emotional pressure is created when pre-service teachers try to reconcile their use of traditional teaching language with their own way of speaking as a teacher. This second aspect of voice, the expression of worthiness and control as teacher, is viewed as central to emerging teacher identity by Britzman (Britzman, 2003). She observed that pre-service teachers would pretend that they knew what they were doing in order to get on with the job of teaching, assuming a voice of authority in order to be perceived as capable.
2.4.4 Pre-service teacher education

The term ‘teacher training’ that was common in texts until the last two decades was replaced by the term ‘teacher education’ to broaden the emphasis from skill acquisition alone. This final segment of section four examines literature pertaining to the influence of teacher education on identity and self-efficacy.

The term ‘teacher training’ represents traditional approaches to educating teachers that viewed pre-service teachers as passive consumers of the wisdom of experienced teachers, learning in isolation to master skills and techniques (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). This instrumentalist view of teacher education fails to account for the Latin root of education, *educere*, meaning to draw out and seek meaning (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). The interpretive aspects of being an educator need to be highlighted according to Bullough and Gitlin (1995). They argue that pre-service teachers need to be actively involved in making meaning and interpretation in order to become educators, rather than be viewed as passive participants in training.

Over a decade ago, Diamond (1991) proposed that the training agenda was evident in teacher education through greater accountability and externally determined quality control of new teachers. As discussed in Chapter One, conflict in approaches to teacher education between the training agenda and possibility for personal agency in teaching is currently being contested in many countries of the world. The prescriptive teaching standards documents and assessment of pre-service teachers for certification may well be another means of determining value for money in teacher education without reference to broader concerns. Factors such as varied competencies adapted for different settings and the influence of professional experience placements need to be considered in order to understand the complexity of learning to teach (Hauge, 2000).

Nearly seventy years ago Dewey (1938) introduced the concept of teachers as ongoing ‘students of teaching’, an idea reiterated by Esson et al. (2002, p.319)

The day has passed when professional accreditation upon completion of a university course entitles one to the associated privileges and responsibilities for the remainder of a professional life.

This idea underpins the notion of teachers becoming researchers of their own practice for ongoing learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), an approach that emerged worldwide in the 1980’s and continues to develop. Fullan (1993) emphasises the importance of continuous teacher education in-service, as well as pre-service, for the development of teachers. Ongoing learning requires pre-service teachers to develop metacognitive skills prior to teaching, but this is dependant on making learning processes conscious (Phelps, Graham & Kerr, 2004). In a study of pre-service teachers developing computer capability, Phelps (2002) noted that by knowing a range of strategies, and by knowing themselves as learners, the participants felt enabled to confront some of the unpredictability of teaching. Phelps (2002) further identified that metacognition was encouraged through reflection, flexible structures and an emphasis on learner-centred education.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.4.5 Tensions between practice and theory in teacher education

Britzman (2003) argues that a prevalent ‘fantasy’ about teaching is that it cannot be taught because individuals need to learn their own way. New teachers may assume that they know how to teach based on their own school experiences and observation of teachers. Britzman (2003) claims that due to this over familiarity pre-service teachers place higher value on the practical experience they gain in classroom placements. They may disregard the underpinning theory presented in their university courses as less important or even irrelevant (Britzman, 2003). A factor that may contribute to this view is that teacher education programs often underscore survival strategies in favour of instructional techniques and psychological theories (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Huberman (1992) observed that in the beginning phase of teaching, idealism gives way to pragmatism, as pre-service teachers question whether they can cope with the complex challenges of teaching. He says that teaching theories are subsumed by a need to know how to survive.

A further constraint to making links between the theory and practice of teaching is created by the range and complexity of experiences that pre-service teachers need to negotiate in their professional experience placements. Pre-service teachers may struggle to be reflective and critically minded when initially facing the physical challenge of teaching (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002). The problem according to Esson, Johnson and Vinson (2002) is a common perception among pre-service teachers that teaching theories do not represent actual practice.

Furlong and Maynard (1995) claim that copying the behaviour of supervising teachers may help pre-service teachers to ‘act’ like teachers, but they many not own the knowledge until they interact in real teaching situations. In order to embed concepts into personal teaching practice and sense of identity requires reflection and discussion (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). Furlong and Maynard also acknowledge that no pre-service teacher enters the classroom as a complete novice since they bring a range of knowledge and experiences from other contexts that may be useful in developing their knowledge of teaching. Louden (2003) counters this by saying that tacit teacher knowledge from past experience may be difficult for pre-service teachers to notice. While this knowledge is embedded in practice, lack of critical examination could hinder rather than assist pre-service teachers in development of a professional knowledge base (Louden, 1992).

Classroom management is one of the most problematic areas of professional practice and knowledge for pre-service teachers because of variations in the personal qualities of teachers (Britzman, 1991). This is reflected in the variety of approaches to classroom management in teacher education courses. An inquiry into teaching previously referred to (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002) found that management of classrooms and student behaviour was dealt differently in different institutions with lack of a comprehensive approach. Some courses provided ‘disjointed hints’ or placed minor emphasis on ‘knowledge for practice’ (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002, p.308). Linked with this were inconsistencies in the quality of teacher supervision during professional experience placements noted in this report and another formative review of Australian education by Ramsey (2000). Arguably, this key area of pre-service education was viewed as very fragmented in the literature surveyed, leaving pre-service teachers to determine their own management strategies through trial and error.
2.4.6 Issues in teacher supervision

Mentoring or ‘coaching’ is recognised as important in supporting learning for pre-service teachers (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). As experienced practitioners, supervising teachers can guide beginning teachers to discuss emerging knowledge of teaching and classrooms. A self-efficacious teacher identity is profoundly influenced by the positive or negative affiliations that pre-service teachers have with mentors or cooperating teachers (Barty, 2004). Barty concluded that though there is value in the student practicum process, teacher educators must do more to encourage pre-service teachers to experiment in finding their own unique identities. Many problems with current teacher supervision practices are evident in the following literature underpinning issues explored in this thesis.

Studies by Esson, Johnson and Vinson (2002) and Ramsey (2000) have found that supervision practices lack a systematic, consistent approach within professional placements as well as across institutions. Furlong and Miles (1995) maintain that supervising teachers need many important skills to be fostered. Their commentary is based on the British system that educates teachers to mentor pre-service teachers. Australia, however, provides very limited training in teacher mentorship (Ramsey, 2000), mostly for supervisors of primary teachers. The main skill mentors must have is to articulate their knowledge of classroom practices as well as be able to demonstrate them (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). But the interpersonal skills to assist pre-service teachers to debrief and then construct their own professional knowledge were problematic for many supervising teachers in the British study (Furlong & Maynard, 1995).

A unique approach (Vinz, 1997) for pre-service teachers to learn to make sense of contradictions inherent in teaching is to embrace uncertainty as a strength in learning rather than a weakness of their inexperience. Vinz (1997) suggests that the teacher-educators could create ways to acknowledge ambiguity and multiple, diverse realities in the classroom by also adopting a stance of ‘unknowing’ or ‘not-knowing’ rather than providing unambiguous knowledge about curriculum and practice. In this way, Vinz believes that distressing moments of ‘I fail’ that she has observed as common to beginner teachers, could be transformed into more productive learning opportunities. She notes that when knowledge and skills are presented to pre-service teachers as unproblematic, then dissonance will occur between expectations of themselves as teachers and the negotiation of knowledge required of them in classrooms.

In a study of the life cycle of teachers, Huberman (1992) found that the initial pre-service phase of teaching was characterised by extremes of emotion, with few skills in place to interpret them. Huberman (1992) says that the joy of feeling like a colleague and discovering one’s own classes and pupils is contrasted with feelings of inadequacy to cope with pupil diversity and limited resources. When professional survival relies on the ability of pre-service teachers to reconcile many pressures and contradictions within school settings, reflection has been promoted as a means to do so (Henniger, 2004). Therefore the next section of this chapter presents ways in which reflection is positioned in educational research and the negotiation of pre-service teacher identity formation.

2.5 Reflective practice for teachers

In this section, the theoretical positionings of reflective practice for teachers and teacher identity are examined. These ideas are further taken up in Chapter 3 as part of research methods.
While reflective practice is a 'popular slogan' in teacher education (Pedro, 2005) it is problematic because there is no single definition of reflective practice. Dewey defined reflection as:

\[
\text{...active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it and the consequence to which it leads' in order to undertake intelligent action (Dewey, 1938)}
\]

For the purposes of this study, a definition by Carr and Kemmis (1983) is most apt, that reflection is systematic inquiry into practice based on personal beliefs and educational theories. This section begins with a background to reflective practice in education. Applications of reflection in educational research are then examined to identify how the acts and techniques of reflection link to underlying theoretical purposes such as teacher identity formation.

In the 1930's, Dewey introduced the notion of reflection in educational literature as a way for teachers to think about action, mainly for practical problem solving (Pedro, 2005). He encouraged doubt and perplexity as states in reflection that preceded development of possible solutions. Dewey (1938) believed that reflection was particularly important for two areas of professional development; attitudinal changes and functional changes related to practice. Most importantly, Dewey regarded reflection as a learning process for teachers to become lifelong students of teaching.

In the 1980's, Schon introduced the dimension of timeframe to link reflection to the time it occurred, in-action or afterwards (on-action) (Schon, 1983). He emphasised use of reflection by professionals to frame and reframe problems to test interpretations and modify their practice as a result. In the 1990's Zeichner and Liston (1996) critiqued many of the conceptual approaches to reflection in education following the work of Schon. They expressed concern that insufficient links were being made between the practices of reflection and criteria used to make educational actions meaningful. Therefore Zeichner and Liston (1996) argued for a social reconstructionalist tradition that expects teachers to think critically about social order and the roles of teachers within it. This model of critical reflection is used to examine issues of equality, social justice and the moral and social aspects of teaching (Henniger, 2004).

Handal and Lauvas (1987) viewed critical reflection as a way of framing and re-framing experiences based in personal interpretation in order to understand how knowledge and values transmit. Their work emphasised values as the lens through which teachers interpret everything on the basis of what each teacher views to be good. Through their research, examination of values, beliefs and attitudes emerges as a central concern in critical reflection (Handal & Lavas, 1987).

In the past five years many models have been produced to depict the processes of reflection in systematic ways. The following model depicts a cycle of critical reflective practice developed by Gibbs in 1988 (cited in Reid, 2000) that demonstrates the stages that may be used for reflection to unpack experiences, the feelings they cause and subsequent meaning making.
For critical analysis to occur in reflective practice, the sense making needs to include identification and challenge of assumptions and underlying influences on the situation (Burns & Bulman). This model depicts a process that seeks to identify the strengths of a situation or body of knowledge as well as aspects that may need to be adjusted or reconstructed. Self-knowledge and self-awareness inherent in reflective practice have the potential to take professionals beyond the usual practices of problem solving and critical thinking, based largely on formal and empirical knowledge (Burns & Bulman, 2000).

Abilities that need to be developed to become reflective are self-awareness, description, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Reid, 2000). Synthesis indicates changes to practice, so that a person may describe and analyse an experience, evaluate it and then synthesise learning from this into their new way of being. This theory of critical reflection firmly links transformation of self as an end result of reflection so that it becomes more than analytical thinking, but is inherently linked to changed action. Three phases of activity involved in the act of reflecting were described by Louden (1992) drawing from the work of Habermas:

- **Introspection**: looking inward, the traditional understanding of reflection that may involve mainly personal interest, inner assumptions and beliefs, but can become critical by aiming to link these perspectives to broader social concerns.

- **Replay and Rehearsal**: by replaying classroom and playground events, then rehearsing different responses and strategies, teachers may create possibilities for future actions. Louden says that this meaning making is hard to achieve in a busy classroom.

- **Enquiry**: a movement between ideas or discourses and interpretation of actions.
While the Gibbs model (cited in Reid, 2000) provides a sequential system of reflecting, Louden (1992) perceived reflection as more fluid, with each activity overlapping and recurring. Burns and Bulman (2000) make the distinction that while critical analysis and critical thinking are sometimes used interchangeably; reflective practice has the added dimension of acknowledging feelings and actions that may make a positive difference to practice. In this way, it can become an ongoing tool for professional learning.

2.5.1 Reflection for professional learning

Jackson (cited in Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, p.72) contends that, in teacher development, 'none substitutes for the kind of enriched understanding that only prolonged reflection on teaching, from a variety of different perspectives, can ultimately give'. Sachs (2000) concurs, noting that reflection can assist teachers to cope with change, improve their problem solving ability and thus improve the quality of their teaching. Moore (2000) notes, however, that the acquisition of pedagogical skills and knowledge through reflection is useful for professional learning only if it improves the quality and effectiveness of practice. He opposes the inclusion of reflection in teacher education for reflections sake saying that what is learnt and by who is important. Moore (2000) expressed concern that reflective practices appear currently to be more popular with teacher educators rather than current official discourses of teacher education. Counter to this argument, Frid and Reid (2003) claim that reflection is now included as a discourse in teacher education, but is used more for assessment purposes than purposeful student learning. A survey of journals, texts and curriculum outlines during the literature search for this research revealed that many forms of reflection have been employed in teacher education programs in the past fifteen years, mostly relying upon written tasks, designed for assessment purposes. This suggests that other forms of reflection, not linked to assessment, need to be explored further.

Khamis (2000) emphasises the socialisation and self-understanding generated by critical reflection. Therefore he promotes the value of collaborative reflection with mentors and other teaching colleagues. Lauriala (2005) explored reflective conversation and personal inquiry as a means to co-construct meaningful teacher identities among pre-service teachers in Finland. She noted that such conversation needed to be based on a conceptual framework (as discussed earlier in section 2.4), in order to become systematic reflection oriented to change and growth.

2.5.2 Reflective styles

Three overarching levels of reflective practice have been delineated by van Manen (1990) and are useful for this study. The first level is ‘technical rationality’ that allows application of knowledge for classroom practice, without taking into account individual contexts and differences. The underlying question in technical reflection is ‘how’, rather than ‘why’. The second level, considered deeper by van Manen, is ‘practical reflection’ that concentrates on aligning what you think with what you do in order to improve aspects of practice (Taylor, 2000). The third level of reflection is called ‘emancipatory’, involving critical reflection on issues to identify the underlying theories and power relationships operating in situations (McBurney-Fry, 1998). Within these styles of reflective practice, there are further considerations of the ways in which people prefer to reflect, such as written, verbal or through visual representations such as mapping and artwork (Taylor, 2006). Further attention is given in this review to theories on critical reflection since it correlates most strongly with the central
Critical reflective practice includes concerns of social justice, equity, and a critique of situations (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Engagement in critical reflection requires participants to question wider historic, cultural and political values and beliefs. In addition to improving practice and therefore broader social conditions, critical reflective practice is able to provide ‘better opportunities for those who suffer most as a result of institutional marginalisation and discrimination’ (Kemmis, 1985, p.46). Social activists such as Freire (1972) pioneered this critical intent in educational research with oppressed groups in South America. These principles were applied in the work of Carr and Kemmis (1983) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) to develop critical action research for new knowledge and critical thinking about teaching practice. Through critical action research, Moore (2000) believes that teachers can move beyond self-criticism to action criticism about what is being done ‘wrong’. Critical reflection therefore emerges as a powerful tool for improving meaning making for teachers in all phases of their careers.

2.5.3 Studies of reflective practices related to this research

Exemplars of reflective practice in education contexts exist as far back as the 1980’s but several recent studies cited here provide most relevance for this study. The first project explores collaborative reflective practice with pre-service teachers as part of team based professional experience placements. While the study was cited by Ramsey (2000) as an example of innovation in teacher education, a report of the study was not published until 2005 (Gibson, 2005) a year after data collection for this thesis. The second study, also published in 2005 by Husu, Patrikaninen & Toom (2005), provides a significant contribution to theory about reflective practices.

The University of Wollongong offers an alternative pre-service training program: Knowledge-Based Community (KBC) (Gibson, 2005). Learning in this program is based on field experience, collaborative reflection and problem-based learning. Teaching students are organised into small mentored groups to reflect collaboratively in order to prepare jointly produced assignments. Collegiality and collaboration are emphasised throughout the program. The KBC pre-service teachers immerse themselves in school culture two days a week as professionals rather than students. This changes the role of supervising teacher to being a colleague rather than a judge of performance criteria. Participants collaborate using an online discussion forum as well as team meetings for knowledge construction and sharing. Gibson (2005) found that collaborative reflection with a mentor increased the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers involved in KBC.

A similar teamwork approach was adopted at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) (Fawns, Jacques, Sadler & Rodrigues, 2001) involving pre-service teachers in reflective teams with teacher mentors and university staff. The express aim of this partnership program was to facilitate reflective professional dialogue so that pre-service teachers could begin talking and acting as teachers within a circle of mentors. While the course was assessable, the aim was to attend to identity formation in early secondary school teachers through small group process. Scaffolding for reflection was used as a means to maintain focus on professional issues of
concern in identity formation. A basic premise of Fawns et al. (2001) was that feelings and intellect are inseparable in the process of becoming a teacher, needing systematic processes that can facilitate their examination.

The project by Fawns et al. arose out of similar concerns to the issues underlying this research:

In teacher training courses there is a dearth of evidence that, reflection on practice in initial teacher education is an opportunity to connect any form of pedagogical theory with personal professional identity formation (Fawns, Jacques, Sadler & Rodrigues, 2001, p.10).

The difference between the current study and the RMIT and KBC projects is that this project is not linked to assessment or coursework requirements. A sustained literature search suggests that most of the research conducted on reflective practice with pre-service teachers has been applied to evaluation of course content and processes in order to explore teacher identity. No research could be found that is independent of institutional concerns, indicating a significant gap in the literature.

Researchers at University of Helsinki constructed another model of scaffolded reflection relevant for this study (Husu, Patrikaninen & Toom, 2005). They have developed a ‘hot-cool’ model of reflection aimed at developing the theoretical base of teacher awareness through reflection on practice. The system requires teachers to reflect twice on the same critical incident, the first time ‘hot’ (soon after) and the second ‘cool’ (two weeks later). By applying this twofold approach, the researchers found that revisiting issues with coolness or less emotional charge deepens the nature and quality of reflection. The researchers used a scaffold for guiding reflection in order to stimulate recall based on issues recorded in the initial reflective session. They used discussion, interview and video in addition to written reflections. Husu, Patrikaninen & Toom (2005) reported that beginner teachers in the project built strategies for reflecting on their practice as well as achieving greater complexity in meaning making through the two-fold guided process.

2.5.4 Collaboration and collegiality

Collaborative forums facilitate dialogue between people with different perspectives, allowing an interchange of voices and ideas (Potter, 2001). Potter (2001) claims that collaboration is an antithesis to teacher isolation because it provides the time to engage in sustained professional dialogue. A challenge to equity in collaborative projects occurs when participants are not mindful of their perceptions of others in the group. Potter (2001) found that a collaborative research project she facilitated was endangered because of unexamined perspectives among participants. The group initially regarded the university researchers as ‘thinkers’ or theorists, while the participant teachers identified primarily as ‘technicians’ or classroom practitioners. With reflection on this dynamic the group concluded that it is important to consciously look for and aim to redress power imbalances. This enables collaborative reflection to work effectively.

Voluntary involvement, partnership and the length of commitment are also key factors in effective collaborative reflection (Hargreaves, 1992). Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) add that when teachers identify and collaborate on problems that are common, they also improve their individual development, encouraging individual and collective risk taking necessary for creative, quality teaching. The other beneficial aspect of collaborative reflection (Raymond,
2.5.5 Constraints to collaboration

Many factors constrain collaboration among teachers, particularly the isolation that Fullan claims begins in teacher education (Fullan, 1993). This isolation is partly caused by coping strategies where it is easier to work behind the metaphorically ‘closed doors’ of the classroom rather than spend time collaborating with others (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). By building learning communities, teachers can be supported to cope in the classroom (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Winter, 1998). Time constraints also limit collaboration and collegiality as discussed earlier but the key constraint is attitudinal. When collaboration is driven by the desire to reach consensus, then teachers may avoid deep engagement with problematic issues (Winter, 1998).

Pushed to extremes collaboration becomes ‘group-think’ – uncritical conformity to the group, unthinking acceptance of the latest solution, supression of individual dissent. People can collaborate to do the wrong things, as well as the right things; and by collaborating too closely they can miss danger signals and learning opportunities (Fullan, 1993, p.43).

The point here applies equally well in pre-service focus groups as with experienced teachers, that diversity of opinion and critical analysis are needed to avoid normative cultures within reflective groups.

A further criticism of collaboration is that without critical insight, it may create anxiety, causing teachers to feel anxious about their work (Goodson, 2000). Goodson points out that at different ages and stages, teachers will have a different focus of priorities. Too often collaboration and reflection are forced upon teachers in the guise of professional development without regard for the needs and voice of those participating (Goodson, 2000). While co-operation and collegiality are evident in some teaching contexts, Apple and Jungck (1992) claim that both teaching and teacher development are currently characterised by standardisation and rationalisation. They argue that this creates a need for strategies and research into ways that teachers can develop and build upon collegiality in order to take back some control in their lives as teachers.

When teachers become active in defining their identities through professional discussion and research about their experiences and perspectives, it is voiced research (Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Goodson (2000) claims that this style of research is needed to privilege teachers’ voices within the context of prescription and reform in education. Through collaborative voiced research, teachers can confront their own assumptions and articulate changes to their emerging understandings and practices contextually (Potter, 2001). It can help new teachers to develop personal theories of teaching grounded in experience rather than dictated from external, regulatory sources (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998).

2.5.6 Links between narrative, collaboration and teacher identity

By sharing stories of critical incidents in learning, pre-service teachers may move beyond their concerns of self and focus on linked concerns of practice (Loughran, 2005). Sharing narratives collaboratively encourages pre-service teachers to move from not wanting to think for oneself to being willing to take risks in thinking according to Loughran (2005). Five years earlier, Davis et
al. (2000) emphasised the importance of narratives in learning processes through meaning making and framing of knowledge. They claimed ‘narrative is both a means and an end’ (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p.53) in expressing self as a teacher. Vinz (1997) advocates storytelling as a way of making sense of one’s self as teacher through the silences between the statements as well as the stories told about practice. She found that the pre-service teachers in her classes were better able to negotiate uncertainty and change in their teacher education through shared storytelling.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explored the use of reflection in personal knowledge formation in order to make images conscious and available for inspection. Since aspects of identity are often unconscious (Austin, 2005), then storytelling offers a means of becoming aware of unexamined aspects of self. Beattie (1995) describes this process ‘Our stories would therefore be our ways of telling who we were and who we were becoming’ (Beattie, 1995, p.47). This is achieved by naming the ‘ground on which one stands’ (Oberg & Underwood, 1992, p.164), thus providing a lens for identity through examining how this ground changes over time.

### 2.5.7 Beyond cognitive reflective models

A criticism of current approaches to reflective practice are that they are cognitive only, that is, that they privilege what someone does or applies, rather than how someone ‘is’ (Johns, 2005). Consideration of ways of ‘being’ that are central to Buddhism and Native American Indian philosophies can counter the purely rational approaches common in reflective practice. According to Johns (2005) academic traditions often reject esoteric views as non-rational. Cognitive approaches reflect Western roots in rationality that favour ‘the construction of models and the application of techniques rather than the Eastern concern with ways of being rooted in spirituality and mysticism’ (Johns, 2005, p.67). Along with Taylor (2006), Johns believes that reflective practice can become a way of being, a developmental progression towards higher forms of consciousness. Both Johns and Taylor recommend non-linear ways to view and apply reflective practice to encompass complexity and ‘mindfulness’. While this may be beyond the scope of this Masters project, the work is seen as relevant in providing deeper meaning to the idea of the reflective practitioner.

By introducing the concept of mindful practice into reflection, Johns (2005) extends Schon’s (1983) idea of reflection-in-action to include the concept of the ‘internal supervisor’. Mason (2002) also names this supervision of self as intentional or disciplined noticing. The internal supervisor is simultaneously having a conversation with the self whilst engaged in external actions. This position accepts that encounters are unpredictable, needing a response that is sensitive to the moment, a way of being rather than a technical skill (Mason, 2002). Johns (2005) believes that the significance of intuition and mindful practice need further exploration in research on reflection in order to overcome the current domination of cognitive-rational models.

In summation, the call to develop ways to acknowledge uncertainty and question conscious, mindful choices in being a teacher is evident in recent literature (Barty, 2004; Britzman, 1991; Fawns, Jacques, Sudler & Rodrigues, 2001; Gibson, 2005; Johns, 2005; Mason, 2002; Taylor, 2006; Vinz, 1997).
Conscious decisions are, for the most part, neither conscious nor decisions (but, rather, after-the-fact justifications)... most of teaching action is a matter of getting caught up in a flow, of enacting sensibilities that are deeply inscribed in one's embodied habits of acting (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p.23).

This section has examined a range of theories and strategies in critical reflection that may enable teachers to unpack their embodied habits in order to remain responsive to changes in educational landscapes. Because reflection and collaboration are problematic constructs they require further exploration and research in order to inform teachers about identities in flux (Klette, 2000).

Finally, reflection is briefly viewed in the context of action research as a pathway of examining teacher identity collaboratively. This is taken up further in the following chapter.

2.5.8 Reflection in action research

Action research employs systematic reflection as a means of informing action by 'transforming practice in the light of critical reflection' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.221). Teachers become researchers of themselves and their professional actions by joining a 'community of learners' (Bransford et al., 2000, p.199). Through reflection in action research, teachers may support the pedagogical and professional development of themselves with peers. Bransford (2000) develops this argument further to claim that action research can enable teachers to examine, challenge and support beliefs about learning in themselves as well as their students, forming the basis of building learning communities.

According to Moore (2000), action research is an important strategy teachers can use to shape their pedagogic identity. Pedagogic identity provides the character of one's teaching style, because it draws on discourses of teacher as communicative, reflective, reflexive and competent (Moore, 2000). The second importance of action research for teachers cited by Moore (2000) is to build capability in teachers to solve unanticipated future problems. By using action research teachers may 'construct an appropriate professional identity that will promote a reasoned, proactive response rather than a predominantly self-blaming or reactive one, to the full range of classroom situations' (Moore, 2000, p.149).

The final link between critical reflection, action research and the key concerns of this study is that it connects the personal with the professional and political aspects of teachers' experience (Carr & Kemmis, 1983).

2.6 Conclusion

It is evident from the wide range of literature surveyed in this chapter that learning how to be a teacher involves more than technical skills and pedagogical knowledge. Technical aspects of teaching will not prepare a practitioner for the constantly changing educational landscape of secondary schools, because traditional methods may not be relevant in new contexts. An important aspect of teacher professionalism will be the capability to reflect on practice and implement changes necessary for maintaining dynamic learning environments (Ramsey, 2005). Understanding the 'why' of actions as well as the 'how and when' enables teachers to be proactive in their professional development and identity formation. More recently, a third aspect
of identity, being, is emerging in literature, as an elusive but important link between traditional concerns of knowing and doing. Constructs of teacher identity now consider the personal aspects of 'self as teacher' as well as professional concerns. Formation of teacher identities involves engagement with cognitive, emotive and intuitive ways of being in order to negotiate social structures in schools and broader society.

Notions of teachers as professionals are being contested and redefined through accelerated change and increasing expectations. Being a professional entails being prepared to vision and voice new possibilities and to actively engage in the ongoing challenge of making sense of being a teacher. The question yet to be answered is ‘Can collaborative critical reflection among pre-service secondary teachers inform and shape conscious identity formation over time?’ particularly when engaged on a voluntary basis rather than for assessment. The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods employed in this research study to answer this question.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this study, the principles and practice of action research were used to inform the development and improvement of reflective practice within the focus group established for this research. The rationale for an action research approach based on group reflection was to increase participant understanding of their developing identity as secondary school teachers. This chapter will provide justification for the choice of action research methodology and outline the data collection methods used to explore the central research question:

**How can secondary teacher identity formation become a conscious, informed process?**

The research sought to actively engage participants in exploring issues and experiences that shaped them as teachers by facilitating collaborative reflection on changes to self in the process of forming teacher identities. A critical stance is applied to the interaction between personal and professional identity in order to better capture and understand the complexity of teacher identity formation.

It is important to note at the outset, that parts of this chapter are written in the first person as 'I' in an endeavour to acknowledge that my own perspective or 'voice' as a facilitator and author shape both the group processes and the telling of the research story. My role as participant researcher needs to remain open to scrutiny since I was an active participant in the research process rather than a neutral observer. As a teacher engaged with others in questioning professional identity, my own teacher identity continued to undergo change and challenge. Notions of 'voice', participation and critical dialogue are central to the methods described in this chapter which sets out how we explored teacher identity through reflective practice.

Discussion begins by locating the broad research paradigm that frames the research (3.2) and then moves to establishing the philosophical and methodological tenets of action research as appropriated for this study (3.3). The participants in the focus group are then introduced (3.4) before outlining some of the ethical considerations that required ongoing negotiation. Following this is a description in detail of the issues and processes that shaped the evolving structure of the group (3.5). The methods used as part of the action research process are then detailed (3.6) and the relationship between data collection and analysis is explored (3.7). The chapter concludes with some insights into the limitations of the approach used as well as a summation of links between methodology and methods.

3.2 Qualitative paradigm

This research is located in a critical qualitative paradigm (Taylor & Roberts, 2002) because identity formation tends to be personalised and therefore difficult to quantify and generalise. The socially situated, constructivist, and largely individual process of becoming a teacher (Bransford, 2000) is suited to exploration through qualitative methodology. A qualitative paradigm supports individual interpretation of identities in context specific ways (Britzman, 2003), avoiding the need to measure and classify aspects of personal transformation.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The critical perspective adopted in this research calls for examination of issues of power and knowledge construction (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). Teacher identity formation, in a critical constructionist view, is context-specific negotiation of experiences and socialisation rather than adaptation to a fixed role (Frid & Reid, 2003). Because critical research examines the beliefs, values and assumptions that underpin participant experiences (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998) it is useful for viewing the enculturation involved in becoming a teacher. A critical perspective questions ways that knowledge can empower participants to have increased control over their lives (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2005). Therefore, a critical qualitative paradigm offers potential for research participants to link their awareness of situations with increased possibilities for choice within them.

Post-modern constructivist views of identity (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000; Frid & Reid, 2003) inform this research. Identity is understood as fluid, contextual and negotiated, in contrast to modernist ideas of identity being a fixed core self (du Gay, 2000). Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000) describe identity formation in ecological terms as an ongoing interaction between knowing, being and doing, in response to contexts. They therefore acknowledge the importance of language and perceptions in describing and viewing identity. This ecological perspective provides a lens through which the processes of identity formation are explored in this study. Integral to this approach is the notion of praxis, or informed action. Praxis is central to both the ecological view of identity and the research methodologies contained within the umbrella of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). Therefore, my theoretical understandings of identity formation at commencement of the project fitted with the aims of action research methodology (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

The following section provides an overview of action research and endeavours to articulate the particular ‘branch’ of this methodology as it was applied in this study on secondary teacher identity formation.

3.3 Action Research as meta-methodology

Qualitative action research was chosen as the overarching methodology for this project because it is a form of collective enquiry that engages participants in critical examination of their actions, linking theory with practice (Dick, 1997). The key characteristics of action research are self-reflection, collaborative participation and interactive cycles of action and evaluation (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). In action research these processes aim to improve practices as well as generate further knowledge and understanding. The question of how to become a ‘good’ teacher is a shared concern for pre-service teachers (Goodson, 2000). Because action research is useful to develop ‘practical theory’ around shared concerns (Altrichter & Somekh, 1993), I saw it as a methodology that could serve both participant and researcher needs for this project. The professional development inherent in action research made it the most appropriate methodological approach in order for the inquiry to link theory with practice in understanding teacher identity.

Critical action research or emancipatory action research is a particular branch of a vast, expanding field of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). Critical action research is more suited to the aims of this inquiry than technical or practical modes (Grundy, 1982) because it enables participants to question the traditional dictates and habitual practices inherent in teacher
education. Drawing on critical theorists and postmodernist perspectives, this style of action research challenges fixed notions of truth and identity. Critical action research provides a process for knowledge to be confronted through analysis of experiences so that theories can be reconstructed for future action (Taylor, 2003). Choice of critical action research as methodology for this project provided the potential means to negotiate identities through critical discussion of underlying influences on the participants as teachers.

A process of critical reflection and action is developed to enable us to become aware of where the images, ideas, positions and opinions we have of ourselves and others come from, and to gain the possibility of giving a different meaning to who we are and a different direction to our lives (de Koning & Martin, 1996, p.10).

Critical action research has developed in particular ways in the field of education in the past twenty-five years (Dick, 1997). As a subset, educational action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983) concerns research by and for teachers, usually with the aim of improved practice. Winter (1989) argues that educational action research has an ethic of responsible engagement rather than the scientific detachment of quantitative studies. Proponents of educational action research promote a 'teacher as researcher' construct to include classroom and pre-service teachers in critical education communities along with academics (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). As with other forms of action research, it is practitioner based and context specific. Responsible engagement (Winter, 1989) is therefore intended in this study as research in which participants engage with issues of power and practice in order to respond rather than react to the forces that shape them.

3.3.1 Characteristics of action research

The four stages in action research of 'envisioning success, clarifying a theory to get there, collecting data while trying it out, and reflecting on results' are a regular part of teaching practice (Sagor, 2005, p.55). However, Sagor makes the distinction that teachers may not enact these steps with the same systematic focus as they would within an action research project. The action research process scrutinises links between theory and practice in order to identify discrepancies between expectations or espoused theories and what is actually occurring (Altrichter & Somekh, 1993). An important aspect of action research is that the stages listed above are recurring, so that reflection leads to new actions that are in turn analysed and reflected upon. For this reason, Carson and Sumara (1997) refer to action research as a living practice, that follows guiding principles but evolves uniquely according to the needs of the participants.

Action learning or learning through reflection on experience is characteristic of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Traditionally, action learning was seen as a separate process mainly used in organizations, but may now be seen as an aspect of action research (Dick, 1997). Learning from reflection is the basis of informed action or praxis, the intended aim of action research. Passfield (1996) goes further to claim that action learning is a paradigm based on a belief that transformation of self, work and society is possible through the honest interaction with others. He believes that action learning lies at the core of understanding what it is to be human and develop sustainable ways of being together in the world. For the purposes of this research, however, action learning is seen to be a group-generated process within action research methodology. Passfield (1996) warns researchers not to become preoccupied with form rather than substance. In other words, the structures of action research should not be enacted at the cost of learning. As a result, structural flexibility was maintained in our project to ensure that the structures we used were best for action learning to occur.
Researchers' attempts to represent the complexities of action research (Bowen, 1998) have generated many diagrams and models. The spiralling nature of action research through various cycles of action and reflection was first depicted by American social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who is attributed with the initial development of action research. He emphasised that the development of social action, informed by the observation of effects of previous actions, needs to be an ongoing process (Lewin, 1948). This basic theory was applied in a number of settings that determined development of a variety of styles of action research, based on the purpose of the research.

The figure below is a simplification of action research spirals as described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). It attempts to show the forward momentum through several cycles of the four stages of planning, observation, action and reflection. These stages have also been referred to as moments (Grundy, 1982) since they may not be enacted in the tight form shown below. Additional actions may occur before and after cycles such as reconnaissance of literature to aid in understanding of the data being generated. A basic characteristic that will be discussed further in the data analysis section of this chapter is that analysis of data is ongoing, rather than occurring at the end of data collection. The learning generated by this analysis is integrated into the next action plan in order to observe changes made due to interventions in actions. The term 'cycle' is used in action research because of the learning loops that move from problem identification to action plan to review of the action in ongoing progression. The content and direction is not predetermined, but informed by the content that arises (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). While the diagram makes this process look linear, the spiral is an attempt to show that it may be circular and recursive as well as proceeding forwards.

![The action research spiral](From Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p.11)

Research design may incorporate two or more cycles within a project depending upon time and research parameters. The diagram may also be enacted on a micro level within a particular meeting or reflection session so that the same processes apply in a shorter time frame. This is explained further in section 3.5.1 on reflective processes. The following section examines my
personal reasons for choosing action research as methodology. This is part of the critical process of becoming reflexive since the simple explanation was given earlier, that action research best suited the question being asked.

### 3.3.2 Explication of my values, beliefs and assumptions as researcher

Our values name the things we proclaim ourselves willing to struggle towards (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p.29).

Action research and the underpinning philosophy fitted with my past experience and understandings of teaching. As a researcher, I am interested in collaborative, critically reflective methods that support experiential learning. I became increasingly concerned over many years as a supervisor of pre-service music teachers that they had little time for reflection and professional dialogue. Improvement was needed in the processes available to pre-service teachers to integrate their experiences. I began post-graduate studies because of interest in teacher education practices that increased when I began to tutor teaching students at university. I was interested in reflective practice because it puts focus on classroom narratives and personal experiences of teachers as legitimate sources of knowledge (Carson, 1997). This learning theory resonated with my personal value for narrative and an experiential, interactive approach to learning that I saw as inherent in action research.

I sought a methodology that would be empowering and create potential change in the lives of pre-service teachers, believing that research needs to be beneficial for participants. I had observed that experienced teachers often disregarded the knowledge and opinions of pre-service teachers during professional experience placements. They were considered novices but were expected to teach in the classroom as experts. I wanted the research process to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to be heard. I was also interested in improvement of individual and collective understandings about teacher identity formation in the face of increased regulation of teaching standards.

From past experience in collaborative work settings and teachers collegiate groups, I valued a participatory approach. The ‘self-critical community’ possible in action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983) offered a way to overcome isolation for pre-service teachers. Khamis (2000) identified lack of time and opportunity for reflection as key concerns in teacher education. The dialogical learning relationship described by Freire (1972) in collaborative research matched with my previous experience and understanding of collegiality. I assumed, based on previous research, that the reflective skills developed through the action research process would enhance dialogue and life-long learning for each researcher. I had little previous experience with reflection, so this learning was for myself as a post-graduate student and teacher, as well as the pre-service participants.

By forming a focus group of pre-service teachers, I assumed that ‘a multiplicity of truths from a number of marginalised voices’ (Wallerstein, 1999) would be heard in relation to teacher identity. Pre-service teachers are often marginalised by their reliance on many authoritative voices to tell them how to be a teacher (Smyth, 1987). This project was designed to give participants opportunity to develop their own voice as teachers by making time to meet together to engage in collegial dialogue.
In essence, my research interest and choice of methodology was based on a raft of beliefs and values that I had not needed to explicate before undertaking the research. The premise I began with was that greater knowledge of self and context creates more opportunity for informed choices about both personal and professional identity. I believed that this would be further strengthened through a collaborative participatory approach.

### 3.3.3 Participatory research methods

Participatory research requires examination of voice and participation in relation to each other in order to recognise how power is distributed in the group process (Olivares, 2005). In an attempt to redress power imbalances within the group, as facilitator I applied action research principles to my role within the group in order to maintain ongoing questioning of my own beliefs, values and assumptions. Reflexivity (Tripp, 1994) was therefore central to the research methods we employed in order to continue to examine the values and assumptions operating within the focus group. This concern for representation of voice and equitable participation also underpinned the documenting of our research. In order to avoid ‘ventriloquy’ (Fine, 1994 cited in Wallerstein, 1999) it’s important I make clear that the research story I tell in this thesis is my own interpretation, albeit shaped by an iterative process of member checking and analysis. During data collection I aimed to speak with rather than for the other participants.

While case study is a separate research methodology with well-established methods, there are some characteristics I drew upon for this this inquiry. According to Merriam (1998) case study uses a small sample and identifies recurrent patterns or themes as well as delineating a process. It also examines a specific instance but may illuminate a general problem, illustrates the complexities of the situation with many factors that contribute to it and can show the influence of personalities on an issue. Other similarities between this study and case study are that they spell out difference of opinion and seek how this is influential, and are heuristic by aiming to illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomena through explaining reasons and background, to evaluate alternative views (Merriam, 1998).

While the focus group convened for this research did not adhere to all features of a case study, it did document non-obvious and atypical experiences that may have been missed in standard statistical approaches. This is consistent with models of action research reported by Taylor (2006), Fisher, Bennett-Levy & Irwin (2003) and Franzak (2002) all of which informed and shaped my own approach.

### 3.3.4 Congruence of methodology and methods

The action research methods of observing, critiquing and making plans of action formed the basic research design and processes. Choice of action research methodology and methods were based on the assumption that experience in critical collaborative reflection would assist participants to develop habits of inquiry to build upon in their future teaching careers.

Vigilance was required throughout the project in order to ensure that the group was more than a supportive discussion group. The aim was to become critical, that is, to recognise and challenge habitual behaviours, assumptions and institutional dictates. Questioning, discussion and sharing of strategies within the group was a means to develop a professional voice, based on theories critiqued through experience. By observing the effects of changes to action informed by
reflection on action, it was assumed that participants would be able to make conscious, ongoing steps to shape their professional identity rather than merely fall into it or adapt to existing models.

In summary, the choice of action research as methodology, combined with focus group methods for reflection aimed to provide a means for sustained inquiry into identity formation with the participants. The following section introduces each participant and describes the methods used to form the research group.

### 3.4 Forming the focus group

The research project was promoted through fliers and posters (Appendix 1), an invitation at an initial lecture and in online forums. Further discussion with lecturers and members of the educational community was conducted when the initial response was poor. While ten students responded initially by email, only two agreed to the time commitment originally planned. The other two participants were identified through networking and personal follow-up by the researcher. Whilst six to eight participants was the optimum number sought, the final group size of four participants was a compromise settled by the difficulty in obtaining participants with sufficient time to join the group.

The only parameter for sampling was accessibility, that participants were current on-campus students of secondary education courses at the local university. This ensured that all participants could attend meetings held at the university on a regular basis.

#### 3.4.1 The participants

The four participants represented a range of ages and life experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Participant descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Psuedonym</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Combined Degree Visual Arts/ Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family background</td>
<td>No parental links to teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past work experiences</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past teaching experience</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for joining research group</td>
<td>Become a better teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The voluntary nature of this research group provided the participants with a structure in which to investigate and inform their actions separate to coursework requirements. People do not
naturally form action research groups for their own enlightenment (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). The choice to be involved in the research meant that participants were choosing to examine their role as teachers in order to make better sense of themselves in this role. The values of mutual respect, support, acceptance and challenge that underpin participatory action research (Oja & Smulyn, 1989) were central to this process.

3.4.2 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in this project and common to most research were confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms are used to uphold this principle. Participants were voluntary and therefore able to withdraw at anytime. The participatory nature of the research meant that all opinions were valued and significant in shaping the content of research cycles. An underlying assumption in action research is that the research will be mutually beneficial and collaborative, so that member checks occurred at the end of each cycle to ensure that this was the case.

Another ethical consideration was equity of access to the project, addressed by providing an open invitation to all secondary education pre-service teachers through electronic and poster promotion as well as a brief description of the project at an initial lecture for the whole cohort. There were no restrictions placed on participant access in terms of gender, race, religion, physical impairment and other signifying features. Attention was given throughout to the use of non-discriminatory language.

Approval to conduct this research was obtained from the Southern Cross University Ethics Committee (approval number ECN-04-10). Participants were provided with a plan of the research (Appendix 2), a brief explanation of both action research and reflective practice (Appendix 3), with an opportunity to clarify any issues through discussion with the facilitating researcher. They were then asked to sign the consent form (Appendix 4). A list of contacts for free counselling was provided for participants to access.

3.5 Project structure

This section will present the initial research design for the study and the more complex and non-linear structure that developed. As identified by Cook (1998), the diagrams used to depict action research methods cannot fully show the messy, multi-dimensional interactions involved in the research process. Details follow in this section of two spirals of action research conducted during the nine-month project.

The research design initially contained three cycles of meetings but ended with two and a follow-up session. The first cycle consisted of six meetings in first semester, and the second cycle in semester two included three meetings. The original plan of three cycles of three meetings: pre-practicum I (Professional Experience), post practicum I and post the final practicum (II) (see Appendix 2) was changed due to a number of factors. Stress-induced illness, common to many pre-service teachers (Bransgrove, 1994), caused changes to meeting times and frequency. As a result, participants requested additional meetings to maintain regular contact in the first cycle. Differences in course structure meant that participants were engaged in professional experience in schools at different times, so that meetings were arranged around these commitments.
An action plan was made for each meeting, shaped by analysis of content and issues of concern identified by participants. Stan, Junee, Belinda and Jack brought observations about these issues and others that arose in-between meetings to share together and reflect upon. Reflection helped participants to plan changes in their actions to be observed and analysed or tested between meetings. Meetings were used to unpack, evaluate and refine actions as well as critically examine issues of joint or individual concern about being a teacher. The following diagram shows the overall structure and content of each meeting.

Table 2  Action research structure April 2004-March 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting No.</th>
<th>Overall theme</th>
<th>Issues addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 1</td>
<td>Reconnaissance</td>
<td>Brief introductions agreed research aims group processes research style views of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 2</td>
<td>Shared beliefs</td>
<td>Origin of values and beliefs about teachers 'Make a difference' means what? A good teacher is? Why? Hopes and fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 3</td>
<td>Identifying Issues</td>
<td>Changes in self as teacher Being 'knowledgeable' Shared strategies Future issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 4</td>
<td>Inclusive Classrooms</td>
<td>Constraints of home situation and classes Not 'miracle workers' Shared strategies for classroom management Theory vs experience Planning and scripting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 5</td>
<td>Action plan from themes summary</td>
<td>Revisit values, beliefs and assumptions Future group process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 6</td>
<td>Central research questions revisited</td>
<td>Evaluation for second cycle plan Identifying constraints Changed perceptions Doubt and exhaustion Assessment dilemmas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reconnaissance: class room management is problematic and confronting; need to develop more critical analysis; professional experience is pivotal; shorter meetings with detailed scaffolds

CYCLE TWO: Semester two

| Meeting 1  | Professionalism       | Need to be systematic and well organised Duty of care, responsibility ‘Fake it til you make it’ |
| Meeting 2  | Classroom management  | Work of 'inner witness' Finding own style Subject differences Habits that settle and calm |
| Meeting 3  | Values Revisited      | NSW values document as a stimulus for discussion Valuing difference Shared strategies |
| Project Round-up: March 2005 | | Final member check of transcripts and themes Evaluation of reflective processes Review of changes to self during project Revisit initial questions on identity and ‘good’ teaching |

The timing of meetings was fitted around coursework requirements for participants. The first cycle of meetings occurred prior to the final internship placement for the Combined Degree
students, but they could draw upon their professional experience block from the previous year. The Diploma of Education course however did not hold the first practicum until late May, meaning that three meetings were held before these participants had experience of classroom teaching. The second cycle was concluded before the final Professional Experience block for the Diploma of Education students, again causing disjunction between the two courses. As a result post-practicum meetings were not possible until a round-up meeting was held with Jack and Junee still in the area early the following year. Stan made email contributions to these final reflections, but Belinda was unable to be contacted at the time.

Each meeting has been given an agenda title but the content was often more varied, encompassing discussion of previous actions, inclusion of extra issues of concern and returning to issues from prior meetings. Most reflections were cumulative, meaning that they were based on continued discussion of ideas and experiences that were particularly contentious. This was difficult to show neatly in a diagram but is discussed further in the next chapter on findings.

Figure 3 contains the essence of content for data collection, but underlying this structure was a secondary level of action research by me as facilitator in order to improve critical reflection in the group. The diagram below depicts the group action plan (black) with a second spiral (in blue) of action research on group facilitation.

**Focus group**

**Plan and act:** join focus group to improve reflective skills & teaching

**Observe and reflect:** recall of experiences, beliefs, perceptions & feelings about teaching

**Monitor and evaluate:**
- Read meeting transcripts for member checking
- Meet to reflect and plan changes to actions

**Facilitator (in blue)**

**Plan:** form group, introduce research

**Act:** facilitate meeting, reflection-in-action

**Reflect on-action** to improve meeting process

**Monitor and evaluate** meeting transcripts

**Reflect for-action** to analyse, add literature links for reflective scaffold

**Act:** reflect-in-action on group facilitation to add further questions and follow ‘hot’ issues

**Figure 3 Interactive action cycles: Group process and facilitation**

As facilitator I realised that I needed to conduct this second layer of research in order to improve my facilitation so that we were collecting data as well as debriefing. I sought help from a critical friend (Kath Fisher) in order to develop critical questions to tighten the group’s focus. I also used an action research method described by Phelps (2002) to use literature as a roadmap. In this way, I was able to include issues in reflective scaffolds from the literature to assist participants to link their experiences to broader professional concerns. As a result, the reflection
stages for facilitation shown on the right (above) were at times different to the reflective processes of the pre-service teachers' group shown on the left. My analysis of group process was supported by member check-in at the end of each meeting. Each participant (including myself as facilitator) would reflect on how the group was working for them and any changes that were needed.

Initial project planning was also my domain as facilitator, based on a reconnaissance of literature and documents pertaining to teacher identity and methodological issues detailed in Chapter Two. While the first meeting was a 'getting to know you' and familiarisation with methods, action research and reflective practices, the meeting processes gradually became more collaborative. As participants gained more experience in both reflective practice and teaching, they were able to take a more active role in decision making about structure and content. The text on the left side of Figure 3 also shows that the pre-service teachers were focussed on their journey as teachers and the experiences that shaped them. Group processes remained largely my concern as facilitator.

The first plan of action used a framework of discussion points in order to critically examine starting beliefs, assumptions and perceptions of 'good' teaching.' These reflective scaffolds or prompts (Appendix 5) were used throughout the research process, to stimulate group reflections and encourage critical thinking about practices. At times discussion digressed from the scaffold if a particularly contentious issue emerged. They were not intended to be prescriptive. The scaffolds were sent to participants prior to meetings as a stimulus for reflection before we met together. Transcripts sent to participants after each meeting for member checking also acted as prompts for further reflection on issues discussed. The transcripts documented planned changes to action, and so worked as a collective diary, stored in a book and brought to each meeting.

3.5.1 Focus group processes

The following principles that guided our processes as a group were drawn from a wide variety of literature on participatory action research and reflective practice discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The practical function of these principles within our research is expanded upon to provide a full description of our processes.

- Ongoing critique of practices through systematic reflection
- Theories and plans of action, a 'living' evolving process
- Systematic but flexible structure
- Collaboration and collegiality
- Use of critical questions

Four conditions deemed necessary for effective collaborative action research by Oja (1989) were present in the structure of this project. Open and frequent communication in this project was fostered through regular, frequent meetings with an emphasis on trust and confidentiality. Spiralling cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting was the second structural component employed. The third condition of positive relations among participants was established quickly due to the enthusiasm and openness of every-one involved. Member checks about process at the end of each meeting ensured that this continued throughout the project. The
final condition listed by Oja (1989) was democratic project leadership, discussed earlier under facilitation and member checking.

### 3.5.2 Systematic reflection

Many strategies were employed to ensure that systematic reflection was encouraged and practiced within the group. The following structures were used as tools for developing reflective skills in our group:

#### Scaffolds:
As discussed earlier, a list of focus questions were prepared for each meeting (Appendix 5) drawn from issues identified in previous meetings and informed by literature such as the reflective teaching text (Pollard, 2002). Scaffolds were used flexibly within meetings according to the points that resonated for participants. Unlike a questionnaire, questions were only suggested starters for discussion and were sometimes discarded if irrelevant to discussion. The style was developed according to participant feedback so that the Meeting 2, Cycle 2 scaffold was reduced to three focus questions. Some meetings did not use scaffolds so as to experiment with the process in order to maximise reflection.

#### Transcripts
Transcripts were emailed after each meeting for member checking and further reflection on issues that came up in the meeting. Transcripts were a useful tool for longer-term reflection, revisiting initial ideas to look for changes and development in ideas and practices. The style changed from simple verbal transcription when I realised that some of the data was being generated by body language and humour, not evident without description. This change occurred after reading some phenomenological excerpts (Griffiths, 2000; van Manen, 1998) that reminded me that a story was not only told through words.

#### Journals:
I gave each participant an exercise book and pen for reflective journals, but most found themselves too busy to use this method and preferred verbal reflections in the meeting. Meeting transcripts, scaffolds and concept maps of data were stored in a collective research journal that was available to members at anytime. This was used in meetings to take extra notes or adjust transcripts. I maintained a personal reflective researcher log, a source of data for improvement of group facilitation for the ‘conscious and informed’ part of our research question.

#### Emails:
I encouraged members to reflect on transcripts or other issues that arose between meetings through email but again time limitations constrained this process. I shared some of my researcher reflections on email but did not want to dominate discussions or interpretations.

#### Cyclic Mind-maps:
Some members expressed a preference for visual learning so I attempted to summarise the first cycle with a mind-map. This proved to be useful so I maintained a separate sketchbook for this style of reflecting for use in meetings. However, when I took this to a meeting suggesting that we try to draw links and reflections, participants were more comfortable with verbal reflection. I continued to use this visual mapping between meetings to ‘unpack’ and represent many of the themes and issues that arose in the data. The mindmaps proved to be a useful conceptual linking tool in the final layer of analysis that occurred after the group disbanded.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.5.3 Critical questions

Questions were used to encourage deeper levels of reflection and to challenge modes of thinking. Questions generated during meetings were often initiated by me as facilitator, although became more frequent from other participants as their confidence grew. The purpose was to move discussion from recall of events and feelings to more critical concerns such as why it may have happened or ‘how has this changed your self-concept as teachers?’. Using questioning in this way required the development of trust between all participants as well as a greater sensitivity to data lying beneath the initial narratives. An example of this process was a focus group discussion on classroom management that began with questions of strategy and observed practice, with participants comparing experiences and feelings. Through deeper questioning about power, control, institutional expectations and dissonance with sense of self, the reflections moved beyond practical concerns to hold greater theoretical significance. These questions emerged intuitively rather than being pre-planned. As a result, we sought to improve methods of interrogating or analyzing stories and their underlying meaning.

In order to facilitate more critical reflection, I sought the advice of a mentor Kath Fisher (2004) who has spent many years refining the skills of critical reflection in groups. She suggested that the following questions be used regularly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Question Script</th>
<th>Underlying Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is important to me as a teacher?</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I believe to be true in this situation?</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I take for granted?</td>
<td>Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has changed for me about being a teacher and why?</td>
<td>Professional Self-Concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By acknowledging how they believed they ‘should’ be as teachers, I assumed that participants could more easily identify where the basis of their personal and professional judgements came from. The power of ongoing critical questioning was magnified by differences between group members, causing discussion and further clarification of personal viewpoints. Use of these questions regularly in meetings assisted us to develop more systematic ways of being critically reflective.

3.5.4 Theories and plans of action

Theories of action emerged over time for individual participants based on their ongoing observation and analysis of actions and experiences. The three types of action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) examined in the project were ‘past’, the experiences that formed beliefs about teaching; ‘current’, the concerns that arose at each meeting about teaching experiences; and ‘future’, planned changes to actions as a result of critical reflection. By becoming aware of the need for changes to their actions, participants created the opportunity for change to occur, even if it involved more sustained, long-term efforts to transform behaviours. Recognition of constraints on teacher identity formation was a method of in-depth looking in order to inform personal theories of action.
Plans of action were formed at the end of each meeting and at the end of the first research cycle. These were shaped by identifying areas of shared concern that needed to be observed and analysed during and between reflective focus group meetings. Individual participants also made plans to improve their own actions in aspects of becoming a teacher, informed by evaluation of their current behaviours and beliefs. Participants adopted many of the strategies suggested by each other as part of collaborative problem solving and sharing of strategies. Past transcripts were revisited to see if attitudes, values and beliefs had changed over the course of the year.

As a ‘living’ evolving process (Carson & Sumara, 1997) we changed our plan of action in meetings through ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schon, 1983) if events strayed from the research focus. Any intended plan of action was adaptable, according to situations that arose.

3.5.5 Collaboration and collegiality

The collaborative process of our focus group was designed to promote collegiality among participants. Sagor (2005) argues that collaborative action research promotes collegiality among teachers because it is a site for purposeful professional dialogue. This is in contrast to externally devised development projects common in most school settings (Day, 2000). Co-operative research requires consensus by participants (Oja & Smulyan, 1989) but our project relied upon the unique perspectives of each person. Diversity of opinion and experience were valued for the creative tension created in discussions.

The democratic and participative design of collaborative action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983) offered up the ideal of free discourse, even if it was thwarted at times by dominant voices in the group processes. I had to learn to listen more and speak less as facilitator. Oja (1989) points out that collaboration does not mean that each member needs to take an equal role, but that it depends on the needs of the situation at different stages in the research. Equal speaking time was available to each participant so that dominant personalities did not overpower others in discussion. This became an ongoing tension for me as the experienced teacher in the group. It was tempting for me to give advice or intervene in discussion, thus creating a power imbalance. As discussed earlier, by applying action research principles to my own processes of facilitation, I was able to look for these behaviours among the transcripts. As a result, I planned to improve the power balance within the group through speaking less and becoming a more active listener and facilitator.

Focus group processes were crucial for collection and analysis of data within meetings. The following section further explains and outlines the ways in which data collection and analysis were conducted in this research.

3.6 Data collection and analysis

Qualitative data were generated through participant discussion, review, reflection and analysis of experiences and beliefs. Data was sought on multiple interpretations of secondary teacher identity. Analysis of this data was ongoing, to inform and improve data collection techniques so that the two processes were intertwined. The complex interplay of data collection and analysis continued throughout the project as an integral part of action research methods. Further analysis continued without the benefit of group process in the final thesis write-up.
3.6.1 Data collection methods

The primary means of collecting data was the conduct and audio recording of collaborative reflective discussion in regular focus group meetings. Transcripts of this dialogue were stored in a large journal along with copies of action plans in the form of reflective scaffolds. Summative mind maps were included in the journal as a way of representing themes and linked concerns for member checking and further discussion. As discussed earlier, participants did not maintain regular written journals but engaged in some email contact between meetings, a second source of data. The third source, my facilitator’s journal, was used mainly to analyse and inform the process of facilitation and so was not central to the research issue of pre-service teacher identity formation.

The final source of data collection used for the project roundup was another reflective scaffold used to review prior transcripts as well as seek greater depth in certain issues raised. This was a prompt for discussion with the two participants able to meet together with me. Another participant responded by email, again using the scaffold as open-ended prompts rather than a questionnaire. The fourth respondent provided some verbal feedback but was working elsewhere when the final collection of data took place.

3.6.2 Links between data collection and data analysis

The first level of analysis of raw data in the transcripts occurred after the meeting to inform the action plan for the next meeting. This analysis evaluated both substantive content about teacher identity, and methodological processes. As a result, adapted action plans and new strategies were used in order to answer our inquiry. At the end of each cycle of meetings, initial findings and themes were analysed further by the group in order to plan the next cycle of meetings. After the research group dispersed, I conducted a third layer of inductive data analysis in order to write a description of our processes and findings. Member checking occurred between the initial reflections, progressive transcriptions and final reflections of participants to seek evidence of emerging identity and the factors that influence individuals in this process.

Construction of themes based on illustrative quotes from participants provided corroborating data on aspects of collective identity. However, differences in response and perspectives were also viewed as useful data in understanding individual constructions of identity. The next level of analysis sought correspondences and non-correspondences (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p.85) between theories that participants ‘espoused’ about themselves as teachers, and the ‘lived experiences’ they shared with the group (van Manen, 1990). This indicated further possibilities of data collection through discussion.

While the collection and analysis of data was participatory, the primary responsibility for monitoring this process was mine as facilitating researcher. I analysed and interpreted the transcripts between meetings in order to identify themes and areas of mutual concern that could be explored in future meetings. I also sought literature in relation to the themes that arose so that further critical dialogue could be facilitated. Some literature provided content for reflective scaffolds that were emailed to participants prior to meetings along with the transcripts of the previous meeting. By sending the transcripts and scaffolds to group members before meetings it was possible to engage them in further reflection in preparation for interaction with each other.
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3.6.3 Data analysis

Interpretive thematic coding (Taylor & Roberts, 2002) formed the basis of data analysis. The process of identifying commonality as teachers, drawn from the initial definition of identity (Austin, 2005), was supplemented by data about different ways of negotiating meaning as teachers. The data represented aspects of participant identities as sites of construction rather than existing edifices to be filled with similar content. In this way, both commonality or themes, and individual concerns about teacher identity became data. Analysis generated further questions at each stage of the research cycles so that significant relationships between pre-service participants and aspects of their socialisation as teachers could be identified.

My analysis of progress after three meetings indicated that group reflections were not critical, containing mostly what happened, the feelings that arose, and the recognition of shared concerns. As discussed in section 3.5.3, a plan of action in response was to seek outside help from a critical friend who specialised in critical reflective theory and techniques.

By revisiting earlier transcripts and comparing differences in perceptions of themselves as teachers, participants were able to identify some changes in their teacher identities. A teaching barometer, adapted from the Reflective Teachers' book and website (Pollard, 2002) became useful for the group to describe how they saw themselves. Core values and beliefs persisting throughout the project became more evident through this process as well. I continued analysis of data after the conclusion of the focus group meetings through continued re-reading of the transcripts for further tacit aspects of teacher identity that did not arise during group reflections.

Further themes (see Chapter 4, Figure 5) became evident when re-reading transcripts in relation to changes in participant behaviours and attitudes. An example of this was participant ability to engage in pedagogical arguments with confidence, based on their growing knowledge and experience. This later phase of data analysis was clearly shaped by my own interpretive lens since I no longer had access to member checking as a means of making the analysis collaborative.

3.6.4 The role of facilitating researcher

In this section I present some of the issues involved in being a facilitating researcher which are later expanded upon in Chapter 4.2.8, supported by extracts from the journal I used to document my reflections on this process. Grundy (1982) claims that the role of a facilitator is pivotal in critical action research methods because the other participants may not have the time or theoretical foundation to ensure that the level of group communication is sufficient to go beyond technical and practical concerns. Therefore an important part of the research method in this inquiry was avoidance of manipulation of the group process (Habermas cited in Grundy, 1982). I therefore conducted my own critique of practice as facilitator, carefully examining if, when and why I tried to control or dominate rather than facilitate the group.

In order to respond to changing circumstances, I experimented with meeting structures to find the best way to facilitate group interaction. For instance, meetings four and five were conducted without reflective scaffold prompts to see if discussion was freer and more interactive. Scaffolds were re-introduced after we reviewed our group process together in meeting five and some participants expressed a preference for a more structured approach. In this way, the action
research processes of informed action through ongoing evaluation proved useful in improving our group practices, but were limited by my inexperience in directing this process more clearly. Another result of my inexperience was that I was not sure when to intervene in discussion to ensure that we stayed within the focus of the research. As a result, the transcriptions at some points resemble a debrief of feelings rather than analysis of the causes for them. In other words, my wish to explore a critical perspective in our reflections conflicted with the concerns of the rest of the group to share and evaluate practical classroom strategies. The method of keeping this process transparent and examinable was to member check on group process in each meeting, making sure that any issues arising could be dealt with promptly.

Notions of participation continued to create tension for me until I realised that one of the skills required of a facilitating researcher is to accept and work with what is able to be offered by participants rather than maintain pre-existing or unrealistic expectations. Full attendance was an example of an unrealistic expectation I began with. Three participants attended the first meeting but the fourth person did not attend until the third meeting, leading to some discontinuity and the need to include Junee into the loop. I spent time familiarising her with the processes and progress of the group. Another participant was absent due to ill-health and pressure to complete assignments on a number of occasions. He considered withdrawing from the research but we convinced him that his input was valuable even though he couldn’t attend all meetings. Another limitation to my initial view of participation was that I wanted it to be equal, with the others taking on more responsibility within the group and yet it was more important to me than the others. For instance, the project was purposefully designed to be non-assessable and outside the requirements of any course work. As a result, work on assignments took higher priority for participants than the research group. This ‘data’ then prompted us to change our actions so that we then reduced the length of meetings from two hours initially to concise one-hour meetings in response to group needs.

Another method of analysis I used was to critically review each scaffold (Appendix 5) to seek the underlying assumptions and beliefs behind formation of questions. In this way both the issues generated by participants as the focus of meeting content as well as my own biases were revealed for critical examination. An example of a scaffold on professionalism (in bold) follows with my comments/analysis shown in italics.

(Professionalism Reflective Scaffold, Cycle 2, Meeting One, 28/7/04 annotated 29/7/06)
How can I apply a critical lens to the assumptions that lay under my preparation of this scaffold? Core questions to keep asking: I assume a need for ongoing evaluation but this needs to be prompted each time, how can I get the others more involved in critical analysis?

How do you see yourself as a teacher? 2. How do you present yourself as a teacher? 3. What do you consider important as a teacher?

I see these questions as central to recognising changes in identity because they go beyond changed actions into the ways that people identify themselves, as well as how they are viewed as professionals.

Aspects of professional identity:
Skill mastery: knowledge is essential to teacher sense of confidence (subject specific; learning theories and policies that are given but not always understood; systems knowledge). I assume that the amount of information to absorb grows over time so that skill mastery goes beyond the pre-service years and remains a key concern of being professional throughout teaching.
Organization: teaching has taught me this since it is essential to the job but I still wish I was more organised as I see this as a failing that I need to keep improving in myself.
People skills: successful teaching is based on these skills, the need to understand teenagers and the need to communicate well with other staff and parents, but I believe that it is hard to teach anyone how to relate successfully to others so it may be a matter of learning to work with and improve the way you are

Ongoing learning curves: being a student for the rest of your working life is the curse and blessing of teaching because your work is never done but you are always learning more, it’s always hilly not flat

Self-knowledge: I see this as essential but others may not, particularly in research. How much of this is my own personal experience? Is it valid for the others in the group? I need to bracket this somehow

Pathways from novice to expert: It’s hard to see the view when you’re climbing the steep learning curve. I assume that valuable learning comes from the experience of teaching but it is not always explicit and can be hard to see at the time without looking back. Maybe I am expecting too much for people to be able to see this yet.

Capability (able to learn/develop new skills) to deal with change v/s specific strategies: I believe that change is the only thing we can count on, but it can be stressful and is characteristic of being a teacher in my experience. Often there is too much to learn at once. I must be careful not to let my experiences determine what I hear the others saying. What does it mean to be capable? It implies having the skills to get new skills as needed. I think it gives resilience and a reflective outlook to being a teacher rather than emphasising competencies. Renata’s work really made me think cos I want strategies on the computer, how to do the next thing, and have resisted some of the stuff she talks about in her thesis. I suspect that being capable is a personal perception rather than something judged by others.

What does a diversity of learners in the classroom mean for your working environment? I find it hard so how much harder must it be for new teachers?

Personal confidence: Teaching is very emotional at times so the detachment of inner witness from Mason is useful. I’d be interested to know if the others think like this. Some emotions are hard to share with others cos I like to appear confident even when I’m not. I must look out for this in the group

Professional behaviours/duties/responsibilities ENCULTURATION look for implied, formal, expected, legal. It’s very complex and is a mixture of spoken/written and tacit stuff

Change in status and work opportunities: A major impact on me was that I came respectable, something I didn’t care about in previous jobs, in fact felt a little suspicious of what that might mean in terms of giving up my freedom of thought. I like being trusted to do a good job as a teacher but it also feels like an onging thing to live up to. I like the income and security though and the feeling from my family that I am finally doing something respectable’ in my life.

Presentation: what does a professional look/sound/feel like the theatre of teaching. I liked that as an original idea for the thesis and so tried this reflection from the Y-chart analysis I use with kids. It’s another way of asking them stuff and finding hidden perceptions or obstacles.

Member of an elite group we are priviledged by our access to education, we become seen as ‘wise’ but may have ‘out-of-touch’ expectations, we need to engage in professional dialogue in our groups so as elite doesn’t mean elitist in a negative way

Community perceptions may be perceived in negative ways as well as positive ones as teachers, so I assume we need to look at these to make us sort out what we feel and think of these perceptions

Personal changes/challenges to conform some people find it hard to conform more than others. This is an issue for me and I wonder if it creates problems for the others in the group. I don’t know what other personal challenges are coming up either for each person. Do I need to know? Another assumption?

Comparisons with other professional occupations linked to reasons for becoming a teacher

Working within a system: government or independent poorly funded public education with inequities with rich private schools. I want to know how every-one experiences this on their pracs. I know I choose to work in public education because I believe that every-one has the right to a good education despite their income. I feel that my public education meant that I am more understanding towards people with less opportunities or bad home lives. This is obviously a strong moral agenda I have running here...

Career aspirations: maybe this doesn’t come up until later, so becoming a teacher is enough

Other aspects of being a professional what can’t I think of? There must be more aspects that are raised by the group. The problem with making these scaffolds is that they shape things, and may leave out important stuff. I’m not sure what I’m doing with this yet.
The comments appearing in this scaffold above were a starting point for me to analyse the values, beliefs and assumptions I took into meetings without realizing it. The last comment also shows what an uncertain and challenging experience facilitation was, even when I sought books to guide me (Dick, 1991). The method was one which evolved through application of action research principles and was refined through member checking and group feedback.

3.7 Limitations of the research methods

The scope of this research project is limited to the context and experiences of the four participants rather than staking any wider claims on knowledge that may be generalised to all pre-service teacher identities. While the project drew on action research principles and practice it did deviate from the characteristic cyclic structure (Carr & Kemmis, 1983) due to a number of changed circumstances from the original plan. The following descriptions highlight issues that proved to be both limiting and beneficial to the research methods used.

As explained in section 3.4.1 participants were drawn from different courses. This created both issues and opportunities in data collection. Combined Degree and Diploma of Education conducted professional experience at different times so that two people were in practicum when the others were not. This made continuity of experience within the group difficult. While diversity of participants has already been identified as a source of rich data, some differences between them created unforeseen limitations. My original intention was to engage pre-service teachers at the same stage, the final year, of their teacher education course. Professional experience blocks occurred for Stan and Junee in late May while Jack and Belinda drew on memories of practicum from the previous year. They had to wait until late October, during their nine-week internship, to be actively teaching. While all experiences relied on memories, more recent teaching experiences provided immediacy to discussions and this occurred at different times for the participants.

The structural differences in the education courses also caused changes to the timeframe of the project since the original plan consisted of three meetings prior to the first professional experience block, three meetings after it, and another three meetings after the second practicum block. Instead, we met six times in the first cycle and three times in the second cycle but then were unable to conduct a full third cycle because of interstate and remote professional placements. Meeting times were also changed due to illness and car trouble but were only a temporary limitation.

The sample size of four participants was by circumstance rather than design so that issues of benefit and detriment to the project arose as a result. The small sample enabled diversity of experience, age and course structure. A large sample that could produce generalised data was not appropriate for the methodology and scope of an inquiry at Masters level. The small group offered more time for each person in collaborative discussion than a larger group. The Action Research Planner (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) recommends a small group in order to facilitate effective communication. Because the meetings were short, sixty to eighty minutes, our group of five, (including me) were afforded many opportunities to discuss and interact that may have decreased in a larger group. However, a larger group may have ensured that illness and car breakdown had less impact on numbers at meetings. As discussed further in description of the project structure, only two of the nine meetings had all four participants present. Most meetings were attended by three participants plus the facilitating researcher. This was a variable
largely beyond our control since it proved very difficult to reschedule meetings due to other commitments of participants. The process was not, however, dependent on full attendance at all meetings because the transcripts sent to everyone after meetings kept occasional absent members in the ‘loop’.

3.8 Summation of methodology and methods

The research processes described in this chapter draw upon the guiding principles of critical action research and were adapted to suit the needs of the focus group participants in order to explore the research questions. In this way, individual plans of action were enacted and evaluated by participants through the awareness engendered by group discussion. The recurring iterative process linking reflection with theory, actions and ultimately greater choices regarding teaching practice and identity is represented in Figure 4.

The Orchestration

Social milieu: teaching culture

Figure 4 Overview of research process
(Adapted from Habermas’ Organisation of Enlightenment in Grundy, 1982, p.361).

This diagram is not intended to replace the spiral diagram of action research but is another way of showing the interconnectedness of group member identity choices and the methods used in the study. The progression is not linear as shown by the double-headed arrows, but moved back and forth variously for each participant. The critical intent of participants was to develop ‘rigorous discrimination’ in the changing relationship between personal theories of practice and the social milieu (Grundy, 1982) of discourses on being a ‘good’ teacher. A critical intent requires questioning of habitual behaviours, beliefs and systemic constraints. Participants sought to critique and link theoretical sources of knowledge with practical experience and judgement through collaborative reflection. This generated new personal theorems of action and ideas to enact within sites of teacher education. Participants brought awareness of changes in their teacher identity or practices to the next focus meeting for discussion. This dynamic movement between intent, engagement, analysis and awareness continued with varied intensity for each of the participants throughout the project.

The specific improvements expected from this process were the conscious and critical construction of teacher-selves by the participants. Diverse perspectives and experiences were valued in the discussion process. Normative views of what it is to be a teacher were challenged. Action research methodology was chosen to assist participants in becoming more aware of choices around ways of being a teacher, with greater scope for them to shape teacher identities that felt authentic for them. The initial research data collected was mainly formative rather than summative. The identification of themes and issues was subject to member-checking to ensure that they were valid and representative. The following chapter details findings in relation to teacher identity and some of the complexities of the collaborative reflection used to inform these findings.
Chapter 4: Reflections and Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, which focused on whether and how secondary teacher identity formation can become an informed, conscious process for pre-service teachers. Included in this discussion is the story of how participants used reflective processes to influence meaningful choices in identity formation. Figure 5 summarises the findings in each section, presenting themes in a circular form so that none are interpreted in a constrained or linear way. The processes and issues represented were complex and interactive with different resonances and emphases for each participant. Therefore, themes are grouped summatively but are not essentialised, so that some themes apply to individuals rather than the collective. A further rationale for presenting circular diagrams is to exemplify how teacher identity and reflective learning are 'moving forms' (Vinz, 1997) shaped by various situational contexts and varied time factors for each person.

4.1 Findings on teacher identity

The following discussion presents the thematic concerns that each pre-service teacher identified as crucial in understanding their emerging experience of teacher identity. This section structures eight main recurring themes as clusters of issues for participants on ways of knowing, doing and being in order to become a teacher. These themes are represented in Figure 5.
The predominant focus at the outset for the group was ‘unpacking’ what it meant to become a teacher and why people had made that choice. As the research progressed, further issues emerged about their perceptions and motivations for joining the teacher profession.

4.1.1 Joining a profession

Notions of being a professional teacher changed over time for each participant as their pre-held perceptions were tempered by practical experience. Being a professional was initially both an exciting and a challenging prospect. Changes and constraints in behaviour and attitude due to changing notions held by participants of what it means to be a professional are presented in the following section.

Examination of reasons for becoming a teacher revealed collective assumptions about the teaching profession that were culturally embedded but not necessarily understood in the same ways by each participant. Jointly, the group initially perceived teachers as knowledge workers with a commitment to making a difference in the lives of young people. While the values underpinning this are discussed further in section 4.1.5, improved working conditions were assumed to be associated with teaching. ‘I’m stoked about it. I’ve worked as an unskilled labourer for ages and it’s hard. I’m much more enjoying this and you get paid. I’m looking forward to being a professional’ (Stan). Good working conditions including short hours, was another assumption that begged further exploration. However, many of the starting assumptions of group members were not tested until they were working as teachers during professional experience.

Stan, Belinda and Jack expected the actual work of teaching to be easier than past employment. They were operating from memories of their own teachers during schooling. Stan’s father was a teacher so that Stan’s view was also shaped by observations of his father. The pool of previous jobs participants held such as waitress, labourer, and gardener provided wages for set hours of work, confined to the workplace. Jack, Belinda and Stan were surprised by the extra work and preparation required outside of school hours in order to teach effectively. Jack lamented that he felt ‘pooped’ by the weekend when he needed time to relax and rejuvenate, but was required to spend time preparing classes and honing new skills. However, Junee had a more realistic idea of the workload because she had taught at community schools and raised children. She expressed less concern about the ongoing, outside-of-hours work of teaching. Easy workload was not the only assumption about teachers that participants needed to critique in relation to professionalism.

A related tension about being ‘knowledge workers’ was the realization, slow for some, that teaching required ongoing learning. Jack felt daunted initially when he realized that he would need to keep learning for the rest of his career. He began his teaching course with a perception of shorter working hours, with less effort required for thinking rather than labouring. But the intensity of thinking and learning was physically exhausting for all of the participants, particularly during professional experience placements. Both Stan and Jack had previously perceived teaching as a largely non-physical job and had not considered mental tiredness as a factor. Belinda reflected that a great deal of the pressure she felt during professional experience was due to the need to learn how to demonstrate many new art mediums in a short time. Belinda knew that teaching would require her to have current knowledge, but she had not fully
considered the range of practical skills that she needed to learn to become an art teacher. The physical and mental challenges of classroom teaching, including the need for ongoing learning, contradicted notions of the teaching profession being an ‘easy job with lots of holidays’ (Jack).

Each participant was motivated to become a teacher, in part, because they saw it as a profession that makes a difference in the lives of others. Idealistic notions soon gave way to pragmatic realities, however, as participants became aware of what this meant for them. Stan was drawn to teaching because of the potential he saw for environmental change through education. He was disappointed when he observed the lack of recycling and environmental awareness in schools. His enthusiasm for giving students a greater appreciation of environmental issues was severely dampened by his classroom experiences. He had to re-evaluate what he could achieve realistically within existing school culture. Junee entered teaching with the desire to create a more caring, holistic experience for students at school. Her sense of agency in this process was also greatly modified as she critically examined what caring meant in school settings. She reflected on ways she made a difference for a few individuals through her work but had to let go of some idealism in the process. Belinda saw art teaching as a way for her to help students express themselves. Her professional journey became concerned with the practicalities of doing this. She noted that getting students to be creative also made them louder. She was faced with balancing student expression with classroom management. Core motivations for teaching remained a guiding force in how each person approached their work. But, in final reflections participants were more realistic about ways of achieving their goals, modified by both their own capabilities and the constraints of school systems.

In the final roundup meetings when reasons for becoming a teacher were revisited, Jack proposed he was best suited to working in learning disabilities or with individual students. In part this was a return to experiences he found satisfying as a teenager when he taught music privately to differently abled students. His initial motivation for teaching was to help students achieve their full potential. In classrooms with large numbers of students he found this difficult to achieve. Jack said that he felt most effective when working one-on-one with a student, particularly those that struggled with school, since it reminded him of himself as a student. It was a significant finding for Jack that secondary teachers have a variety of situational choices available rather than conventional classrooms. While this sorting process between ideal and actual potential in teaching occurs for all pre-service teachers (Lauriala, 2005), we found that the ongoing reflective process informed participants of issues lying beneath the cliché of making a difference.

Status proved to be another problematic concept associated with becoming a professional. Each participant viewed teaching as a high status profession in comparison to his or her previous employment. Stan and Jack entered teaching from trade backgrounds and said that they looked forward to having a job that was not physically hard or dirty. In contradiction to this however, the prospect of becoming a professional also created challenging changes to identity comfort zones. The notion of respectability in being a teacher created personal tension for each participant for a variety of reasons. Inadequacies and doubts about being able to become a professional emerged throughout the study. Junee said that she was quite happy being ‘a normal pleb’ rather than being under scrutiny as a respected community member. Reflective transcripts document her movement back and forth between feelings of capability and strength, to fears of inadequacy and self-doubt. Junee was surprised to find that an experienced teacher she admired still became nervous at the start of each year. She concluded that she needed to acknowledge the
fear but do the work anyway, a decision that Stan dubbed ‘fake it ‘til you make it’. While the higher status of being professional promised better wages and holidays, the expectation of behaving professionally disrupted many personal boundaries for participants. These issues of boundaries are discussed further in section 4.1.4.

A pivotal point for each person in gaining a sense of professionalism was the practicum or professional experience placements in classrooms. Meeting transcripts, prior to these placements, provided a reference point that enabled us to track progressive changes to levels of identifying as a teacher over the course of the year. Workplace issues were prominent in most reflective discussions, particularly in relation to professional responsibilities and unspoken institutional practices. We found that capability to manage workplace issues was an essential component of feeling competent as a teacher. In turn, feeling competent enhanced participant perceptions of being professional. The following section details findings about various aspects of professionalism arising in teachers' workplaces.

Managing workplace issues

A variety of workplace issues emerged regarding constraints to teacher identity formation. For instance, Junee, Stan, Jack and Belinda were initially unaware of many of the professional responsibilities expected of them as teachers. The following findings suggest that these responsibilities and constraints require ongoing critique by teachers, not just in the pre-service phase of teaching.

The main constraint to professionalism identified by the group was insufficient educational funding and resources, factors that were largely beyond the control of pre-service teachers. The ongoing problems each participant experienced in managing teaching workplace issues often related to lack of resources or unrealistic expectations upon schools and teachers. For example, an action plan in meeting four dealt with inclusive classrooms, a policy to include differently abled students in mainstream classes. This arose because participants identified the conflict they felt between negotiating employer expectations and the reality of what they, as new teachers, felt they could achieve in classrooms. Difficulties for inclusion identified by the group included class sizes, ancillary support, medication and duty of care. While these were explored to some extent through Special Education tutorials and an assignment, difficulties with inclusion of differently-abled students continued to arise. Discussion in our reflective group focussed on ways to deal with these problems as a teacher and what this meant on both personal and professional levels.

Our action plan centred upon identifying issues and discussing them in greater depth than afforded in university classes and schools. As a result, greater awareness of both the political and practical aspects of schools as workplaces emerged for participants.

Related to inclusive education were concerns that participants could not fulfil other professional responsibilities fully because there were a range of other mandatory policies in schools beyond their knowledge and skills. While this may be an example of new teachers feeling a need to focus on content and pedagogy initially, the issue arose as detrimental to self-efficacy and esteem by participants. The number of educational policies evident in schools and discussed in lectures overwhelmed Jack and Stan because they felt unable to attend to them adequately, both mentally and physically. Jack noted that the teachers he observed often did not have time to read policies let alone do anything about them. 'It is often a ticking of boxes without much real change occurring' (Jack). 'If these policies aren't monitored and reviewed, and given support

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documents, then how can their implementation be taken seriously?' (Stan). While both Jack and Stan were particularly aware of the situation and felt the need for change, they did not see themselves as change agents because of the size and working of the system.

The data suggests that critical reflection engendered awareness about professional constraints, but this knowledge did not easily convert to effective action. For example, Junee was the only participant that had any contact with a teachers' union, when she attended the New South Wales Teachers' Federation (NSWTF) stop-work meeting. Therefore, participants did not share a sense that they could effect change through unions either. For instance, Stan questioned why policies that he deemed important such as Environmental Education lacked the support documents and funding for proper implementation. He expressed disappointment and frustration with the system he hoped would help him to effect change. Many examples of critical reflection on educational issues weave through the transcripts but the finding is that pre-service teachers are largely powerless in the face of an education system they perceive as inadequate.

Our group served to provide for debrief, rather than relief, so that the process of negotiating workplace restraints remains the subject of ongoing examination.

Other professional responsibilities created concerns shared by all the participants, such as providing 'duty of care' for students. Schools were perceived by the group as having increasing accountability yet decreasing support for teachers, particularly in areas of student welfare and behaviour management. Based initially on the stories of other teachers and university course work, these concerns were soon grounded in experience. Jack said that he felt 'disempowered' as a teacher by an ineffective school discipline system at one of his professional experience placements. He was concerned for the safety of his students as well as himself due to unsafe behaviour by some of his students. Jack recalled that he felt undermined when challenging these behaviours to be told by these students 'they won't do anything' (meaning the Head teacher, Deputy Principal and Principal). Jack followed through the discipline procedures of the school, only to find students given verbal cautions by the deputy then sent back to his class, where they continued to swear and disrupt the class. He contrasted this with his sense of efficacy during another professional experience in a school with a clear, firm discipline process in place, supported by the whole school. By learning to negotiate divergent school discipline systems, Jack began to develop classroom discipline strategies that he saw as central to his success as a teacher. He also reflected on the need for teachers to work together to provide consistent discipline for students. His stories generated a great deal of reflective discussion from others in the group about ways to negotiate unsafe situations with students effectively.

Growing awareness of workplace constraints allowed participants to identify complexities in their role as teachers so that they could engage with ideas and issues prior to employment. For example, Stan, Junee, Belinda and Jack all believed that integration of every student was a sound policy. The problem they identified was that insufficient money, training and teachers aides were available in order for them to be able to cater for individual learning needs of students. 'If the State government is genuine about inclusive education then they need to fund it properly. I'm not a miracle worker' (Stan). Jack added that smaller classes could make it possible to provide some individual attention, but there was a lack of time to prepare adequately. When he added up the time taken to adapt work for three students per class, he wondered where he could find the time to deal with the rest of his duties as a teacher. 'In this way, the system doesn't make logical sense' (Jack). This data suggests that systems issues
became personal issues as each participant worked out his or her own ways to negotiate workplace environments.

**Negotiating tacit standards and procedures**

Another constraint to being professional became evident in school placements as participants tried to determine what was expected of them. Belinda, Stan and Junee found it hard to be aware of procedures and rules unspoken or assumed in their professional placements. Belinda gave the example that she was not aware of the phrases used by her supervising teacher at first so that students did not respond to her prompts easily. She said it was much easier to manage the class once her supervising teacher provided the exact wording and methods used, but she needed to ask for this. During Belinda’s internship, she struggled to manage a student who carried a time-out card for anger management since again the system was tacit. Interestingly, her supervising teacher was unaware of it also because communication networks were not adequate within the school. Belinda noted the school had not taken time to share student management plans with staff due to lack of time, but the expectation was that she, as a novice teacher should enact them.

Another example of tacit standards was evident in participant experiences of staffroom cultures. Junee found that the staffroom in her school placement was a difficult place to negotiate since she was not included in much of the non-verbal communication and assumed shared knowledge that develops between people who have worked together over time. She said that she did not feel like a real teacher because she was not included and could not pick up the tacit clues. Each participant provided examples of looking for the unspoken rules and behaviours in their professional experience placements. This process of observation of unspoken practices emerged as important strategy for each group member in becoming a teacher.

Discussion focused on the need felt by participants to develop relational skills to communicate with other staff, students and parents, ‘how can we know what to do when we don’t even look at this’ (Belinda). For instance, Jack expressed concern at knowing how to deal with potentially aggressive parents, and the other participants agreed that they were also at a loss as to how to deal with parents since there was no structured contact during their professional experience. Linked to this was a perceived ‘cycle of resistance to education’ (Stan) by some of the parents they encountered on practicum. Discussion about possibilities for parent programs and ways to work with parents arose for an action plan but seemed beyond the scope and knowledge of the group. Participants felt that they would need to be aware of this when they began teaching full-time. The ability to link effectively with parents in order to foster education in the community emerged as an important part of being a teacher.

**Challenging assumptions of teacher as technician**

The view of teacher as ‘technician’ was persistent throughout the group and throughout the project, meaning that participants wanted to concentrate on practical rather than philosophical concerns. Participants wanted teaching strategies included in each action plan, particularly from me as an experienced teacher. The desire to ‘know what works’ (Jack), to gain strategies, dominated the focus of group discussions, even though participants acknowledged that when they unpacked this assumed need, there was no handy list of solutions. The ‘what’ and ‘how’ of practice generally assumed much greater importance in reflective discussions than the ‘why’. Over the cycles of the research, the impetus to share strategies in meetings seemed particularly
strong before or during professional experience placements. Critical awareness of issues was best fostered when practical concerns were less pressing.

All participants initially privileged external sources of knowledge about teaching such as experienced teachers and lecturers, but over time began to trust the knowledge they were gaining personally through experience. Initial preference for ‘expert’ input, revealed a shared assumption that experience meant expertise among teachers. My views as an experienced teacher and the views of supervisors and lecturers were accepted as ‘higher truth’ rather than being open to challenge initially. I found this an easy role to fall into and aimed to be reflexive about my interactions in the group. In meeting four of the first cycle, participants wanted to have specialists attend a meeting to provide practical strategies, however we opted to maintain the group structure. We found that the ability to make professional judgements about and within pedagogical moments strengthened once participants could view the practices of experienced teachers critically. They then engaged in the complexities of problem solving rather than applying pre-set strategies. ‘There are no easy answers to classroom management and you have to go and work it out for yourself’ (Stan). ‘It is different every time anyway’ (Belinda).

Related to this finding of emerging personal teaching theories is the ability to critique habitual practices and viewpoints in other teachers. This was an essential in order for each participant to develop his or her personal teaching style and behaviors. Stan found the authoritarian approach of his supervising teacher inappropriate but he said ‘it works for him’. He reflected that the ‘chalk and talk’ strategies used by this teacher were the most effective for Stan to adopt in that classroom situation because students were used to them and responded well. At this point Stan reflected that he did not feel confident enough to build different relationship structures and behaviours with the students, so he adopted the practices of his supervising teacher. On further reflection, Stan said he intended to ‘train classes differently’ when he became a qualified teacher, so that he could try more innovative approaches. This supports a finding that personal teaching theories are situational and may include future possibilities as well as current practice.

Personal confidence emerged as a major component of presenting as a teacher, even when internal feelings did not match the confident exterior needed to appear to be professional. For example, Jack said that he witnessed a car accident on the way to his first day of professional experience that caused him to arrive late, feeling upset. He said that he walked into class and faked confidence, which to his surprise, worked. Belinda said that she worked on appearing confident and not worried by anything even when that was not the way she felt. In the same discussion, each participant had observed teachers that were able to appear cross about behaviour while remaining calm inside. Junee noted she would need to practise both humour and an authoritative tone in order to become a teacher. Stan said that his confidence increased when he was well prepared and organised, but that he was easily unsettled at first if plans changed. This suggests that his confidence relied on his pre-prepared knowledge rather than an ability to improvise in the moment. Jack summed this up, ‘it becomes what you do, it becomes what you are if you are good at it’. Jack found that by acting professionally and assuming the role, his doing could then become his ‘being’.

While personal responses to professional challenges varied, all participants found that the teaching profession was much more complex and demanding than they had expected. Critical analysis of these challenges proved useful in interpreting what it meant to be a professional in
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different contexts and phases of teaching. The next section focuses on how theory and practice were linked throughout the project.

4.1.2 Linking theory and practice

Findings in this section of chapter four present issues that arose for each pre-service teacher when trying to negotiate connections between theory and practice. Critical perspectives on experiences in teacher education, particularly professional experience (practicum) seemed difficult for participants to develop because many of their reflections concerned events, feelings and debrief of experiences. The deeper level of critiquing the relationship between institutional expectations and self-efficacy as teachers took longer for participants to recognise and engage with. This suggests that personal theories of teaching need ongoing examination to develop effectively.

As participants strengthened their identity as teachers, they seemed to explore links between theory and practice with greater confidence, sorting the strategies suggested at University into those that would or would not work for them personally, in particular contexts. Stan expressed surprise that seemingly trivial things such as windy weather and Mondays yielded a vastly different classroom landscape in student mood and behaviour. Stan talked of an inner voice or coach that he began to hear when making decisions in the classroom, so that part of him was observing the action and making professional judgements about how to act. Greater self-agency was in evidence from each of the participants as they developed greater knowledge of effective behaviours and responses to students and staff.

Professional experience

Findings of this project support the premise that time spent in teaching activities increases confidence in one’s self as teacher and therefore strengthens teacher identity. As Stan noted ‘before I did that prac I didn’t have much of a concept of how to be a teacher at all really... now I’ve done that, I think I can’. All participants claimed that longer, more frequent professional experiences that began earlier in their course would have improved their sense of efficacy as teachers. Jack and Belinda found that the long intervals between teaching experiences in the Combined Degree, nine months from the second practicum to the final internship, left them feeling disconnected from teaching and unable to form a strong sense of being a teacher. Reflective discussion towards the end of the second cycle in September became more detailed for most participants. They were able to compare and evaluate several placements together, with specific details of teaching dilemmas rather than theoretical constructs. Practicums were invaluable, need more and longer, you get the tools for teaching. The rest is bullshit except for Special Education, but only because it makes you aware how important inclusion is’ (Stan). ‘I definitely found that real life situations, actually practical teaching things, was where I faced a lot of the things I needed to know. As far as the Uni course goes, I found there wasn’t a lot that was practical or purely straightforward.’ (Jack). ‘I think that the theory and history, maybe it gives a good background or something but I think I could go and research that if I’m stuck at school. I think it’s a bit of a waste of time. It’s frustrating to see all that theory and not get some hands on experience and get a prac early on, and some reflection time’ (Junee).

While participants favoured practicum as the best means of learning how to be a teacher, several problems arose within placements that challenged their views of themselves as competent
The main problem identified by the group was the lack of systematic professional experience supervision in schools. Jack noted that placement in schools was a bit like a lottery because one school gave him better experience than the other as a teacher. Participants found that some supervisors provided them with more support than others did. Jack considered himself ‘lucky’ because his placements ‘went smoothly’ in terms of supervision. The difficulties he experienced with the variety of discipline systems in schools eroded his confidence as a teacher when he felt he was without backup.

The attitude of supervising teachers seemed highly influential on the self-efficacy of the participants. ‘Supervising teachers really helped me shape my teacher identity. It is really important that student teachers get an enthusiastic, motivated, quality teacher on which to model themselves’ (Jack). However participants shared a concern that most of their supervising teachers were not interested in hearing or using new ideas that they brought to the practicum. Areas of personal interest with potential for experimentation within teaching placements were constrained by unwillingness on the part of supervising teachers to allow variation to content. A common attitude seemed to be that the participants were there to learn rather than having things to offer through exchange of ideas. Participants said on several occasions that they did not feel confident to suggest new ideas to their supervising teachers. They did not think that they were viewed as having anything new or useful to offer. For instance, Belinda noted that she learnt to use very advanced technology for teaching at university yet most school placements did not have functioning overhead projectors let alone power-point facilities. The theoretical and technical knowledge introduced at university was sometimes not applicable at schools due to lack of resources or systems.

The power imbalance perceived by participants between their knowledge and the knowledge privileged in schools created tensions and frustration for them. Junee said that she was conscious of being a visitor in ‘their’ classrooms. The group agreed that they were not encouraged to take risks by their supervising teachers. According to Stan, Junee and Belinda, higher marks seemed achievable through following the advice of supervisors rather than trying new strategies. The pressure to conform to normalising behaviours rather than explore personal interests as teachers created tension for participants in their identity formation process.

The behaviour of some supervising teachers was experienced as inappropriate and damaging to the self-esteem of participants. There were several instances of group members arriving at their school for practicum then feeling that they were an imposition. In her final placement, Belinda’s supervising teacher told her directly that she was too busy to have a teaching student but had no choice because it was ‘their turn’. Stan’s first school claimed it did not know he was coming and did not want a student. When directed to the science staffroom, a discussion ensued in front of Stan about who had to take him. While the placement ended up being a positive experience for Stan, he said that initially he felt like an imposition in his first school placement. In both instances, the teaching experiences were ultimately useful in learning to be a teacher, but Stan and Belinda commented that their supervising teachers left them to ‘sink or swim’ to a large extent. This suggests that the participants expected more support in learning how to teach during professional experience. But as a result they became more metacognitive because they had to plan and evaluate learning through personal experience rather than mentoring.

Although participants reflected that they felt more able to be an effective teacher when in a supportive environment, adversity also proved to be useful for learning. Difficult placements...
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were also beneficial once the participant could get past their emotions of frustration and disappointment to focus on what they could learn from the situation. Junee had a very positive first placement and then experienced a break down of communication with her second supervisor. He locked her out of the art storeroom and did not allow her to use school materials for teaching. After initial feelings of failure, Junee said that it strengthened her because she had to develop creative ideas for activities with the kids without accessing materials from the storeroom. She described her first supervisor as ‘respected by her students, she was a good teacher, she was well practiced, she had her own way down pat, she was also very comfortable, she was also very good with classroom management’. However she felt that her second supervisor resented her being there. Rather than encouraging Junee and giving feedback, she found him to be very obstructive. Through discussion with the group, Junee was able to come up with strategies to work around the difficulties of the situation. While this supports a finding that ‘negative’ professional experiences can also be very informative for teacher identity, it is not an ideal situation.

Reflection on the frustrations of inadequate professional experiences led the group to critique insufficient funding for teacher education. The two key concerns that emerged were that placements were too short and that supervising teachers had to work with them on top of their normal load, causing stress and some resentment. Identifying the underlying cause of constraints to effective supervision and professional experience did not change the situations that the pre-service teachers were in. They still needed to learn to negotiate the difficulties resulting from perceived inadequacies in their placements creatively, as teachers. Belinda found that lack of supervision by University staff, only two visits during her nine-week internship, caused her to develop her own problem solving abilities. She said that she became more organised once she realised that she would not obtain the external assistance she originally expected. An example of this was a daily checklist that she developed so that she aimed to fulfil one competency at a time rather than tackle many at once. When she shared this with the group, other members adopted her approach as a way of managing their own classroom practice. They became more aware of supervising themselves in the absence of external support.

Length of professional placements

The group found that the length of professional experience placements had a profound influence on their identity as teachers. Final Combined Degree placements were longer (9 weeks) and placed teaching students in classrooms on their own without the supervising teacher. Belinda and Jack said that they felt a stronger sense of autonomy as teachers when they were in the classroom without supervision. However, shorter placements, one of three weeks and one of four weeks in the Diploma of Education proved to be problematic for Stan and Junee. While Junee entered teaching with some prior experience in tutoring art, she saw the practicum as an opportunity to practise her skills and get them ‘right’. She was concerned that three weeks was not long enough to build effective relationships with students, something that she viewed as central to her teaching. Stan compared his teacher education to other jobs such as trades that provided more frequent and sustained work experience. ‘A seven-week apprenticeship, that’s all I get is seven weeks of prac. I’d like to see going into schools one day a week and doing at least one lesson per day when you go in and have it running for the whole semester. And then if you realise that you don’t want to be a teacher, you realise at the very beginning before you waste all your money on HECS and all your time’ (Stan). This sentiment was echoed by Jack, who saw several of his friends drop out of the course during the year with feeling of failure once they
realised that they were not suited to being a teacher. He noted that by being in the classroom earlier in the course they might have realized what was entailed in becoming a teacher.

In summary, professional experience placements emerged as the key link between theory and practice for each participant in the research group. The variety of contexts and attitudes experienced within placements proved to be formative for teacher identity. Personal theories for teaching began to emerge for Belinda, Jack, Junee and Stan through the interaction of their professional and personal identities. Through classroom experience they could test out and evaluate theories presented to them at university then ground them in practice.

### 4.1.3 Learning to negotiate

The relational aspects of being a teacher arose as essential in many examples during reflections. Many of the findings presented in the following section seem to relate directly to the secondary context, the age and stages of students as well as whole school structures and practice.

Working with teenagers proved to be problematic to each of the participants in different ways, creating challenges to many of their assumptions. Stan and Belinda had to let go of their assumptions about learning. ‘I assume that kids want to learn and I’ve found out that the percentage of kids who actually want to learn is in the minority’ (Stan). ‘You just assume that they all want to be there and have a great time’ (Belinda). This caused them to reconsider their approach as teachers. In the first reflection session of this research project, each participant expressed the desire to make their teaching enjoyable, that they become ‘fun’ teachers. They shared memories of past teachers that included models of serious no-fun teachers that they did not want to emulate, as well as inspirational teachers that made learning exciting for them. For each participant the imagined ‘ideal’ of the teacher they wanted to become was challenged by their experiences of ‘negative’ teenage attitudes they encountered. ‘Being tough with the students is hard as a teacher’ (Junee). ‘I feel like I’m a cranky old ogre but the teachers I’m with say that I’m doing exactly what I need to do to make the students respect me’ (Jack).

Dilemmas and strategies about classroom management surfaced in most meetings, based mostly on dilemmas of how to relate effectively to students. Stan concluded that ‘you’ve got to be a personality chameleon’. The idea of acting in authoritative ways while keeping emotionally detached became something to aim for as a teacher for all of the participants. Belinda noticed this process in motion on her next professional experience block when a student kept goading her with personal questions that were upsetting and confronting. She said that if she showed her feelings, the student would be rewarded and might continue his behaviour, so she aimed to ignore him and maintain focus on her teaching. Belinda seemed to be developing that ability to notice her feelings without distracting her from the task of teaching, something that she had not had to do before becoming a teacher.

Finding personally authentic ways to manage student behaviour was a central challenge for each participant. Tensions arose when they tried to adopt the management strategies of their supervising teachers, because they often were not suited to the disposition or physical characteristics of participants. Belinda did not have a loud voice to project above practical art classes and though told that she would need to ‘yell at them’ by her supervisor, she devised other means such as rearranging furniture and running a raffle rewards system in order to maintain student attention. Stan initially adopted the authoritarian voice tone and ‘chalk and
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talk’ strategies of his supervising teacher, even though he thought privately that they were inappropriate. He wanted to ‘do well’ and so conformed to common practice, but he planned to run his classes differently when he became qualified. It was amusing and informative to explore the tensions of classroom management further in the reflective group with the question ‘what is the worst thing that could happen?’ By sharing their worst fears, laughing at them but also planning strategies for future action, Stan Belinda Junee and Jack could reduce the tensions they felt. They were ‘freed up’ to pay more attention to things they could do rather than fear what might happen.

At times our reflective group resembled a bunker, as participants retold critical encounters with students they had attempted to negotiate with, much like tales from war. Learning to promote co-operation and engagement among students was the core business of professional experience placements. This was dependent upon learning about teenage culture as well as ways to communicate effectively. Belinda said that she spent considerable time in her art classes listening to students chat to each other to find out what they were interested in so that she could make her teaching relevant to them. Each participant expressed a shared concern that they find ways to help their students understand. Stan changed his views on using rewards with his students because he wanted to do anything that worked. He had initially worked on building internal motivation among students but noticed that they responded well to reward systems, after using some of Belinda’s strategies. The delicate art of negotiation may only have been at classroom and playground levels, but for Stan, Jack, Belinda and Junee they saw it as essential for their survival as teachers.

Management of student relationships with each other was another challenge to assumptions and prior beliefs for each participant. Jack identified the most important aspect of teaching for him was to be someone who ‘genuinely cares’. He described this as encouragement and helping students to gain confidence, with acceptance of difference rather than judgement. Belinda agreed and added that in music and art rooms particularly it was important to stop kids from putting each other down also because they needed to learn to be creative and take risks. Stan added that teachers are able to present themselves as authority figures without putting negatives on kids all the time. This view was challenged when he tried to counter the racism that students displayed to each other in his classes. Stan recalls trying to intervene when students began name calling and would not let Aboriginal students work in groups with them. But these students retaliated with the same behaviour so his attempts were ignored. He recognized from this experience that he needed to learn more about Aboriginal culture and ways of communicating if he was to become an effective teacher.

Another area of relationship challenge for Stan and the others was learning how to teach differently abled students. An example of this was Stan’s experience with Asbergers Syndrome students. ‘It’s important to be aware of some of the things we take for granted in normal social interaction that may not happen with these students, such as careful use of language because things are taken literally.’ He felt that it was an impossible task catering for these students properly in large classes with other students, but that he could only do his best to understand them and try to help. Insights into identity formation emerged as participants realized that being a teacher involves negotiation of the existing terrain both emotionally and intellectually in order to develop and build upon relationships with students. Learning to deal with frustration at seemingly impossible demands as a teacher, was mostly a compromise of expectations of oneself, in Stan’s case, accepting that he could aim to ‘do my best given the problems’. This
section has suggested a finding that the emotional aspects of becoming a teacher need to be given attention as well as the cognitive and pedagogical 'identities'. Linked to relationships is the dilemma of establishing and maintaining boundaries, another seemingly problematic area of forming a teacher identity.

4.1.4 Finding boundaries

In order to integrate inner self with emerging professional selves, participants needed to critically examine boundaries of many kinds. Issues arose in relation to privacy, job expectations, and the multitude of ways teachers are required to behave in various contexts.

Participants reflected regularly on 'what percentage of you is a teacher'. Their sense of identifying as a teacher increased throughout the year of teacher education. Junee was optimistic after her first professional experience that she could offer students extra time at lunchtimes. Her perception of teaching was, 'Teaching is a whole career whereby out of school and in school you are a teacher. It's a time of leaving childhood and moving into adulthood through being a teacher. Your perceptions become much deeper' (Junee). While she recognised that maintaining personal boundaries was important in order to maintain her energy levels, she was keen to spend extra time with students wanting to learn. She felt that her role extended beyond the time spent in the classroom. But by the final reflective round-off six months later, she realized that she felt exhausted when trying to do too much without a break. As a result, Junee developed a more realistic understanding of what being a teacher involved, moving from ideal hopes to the reality of physical limitations. 'I still have the fuzzy heart from when I started but I've also got a few weapons, not weapons, but tools to take with me and I have to bring myself back to some really straightforward realities' (Junee). In this instance, the percentage of Junee that identified as teacher remained high, but the time she could spend in active engagement with pupils was modified to suit her energy levels.

Recognition and maintenance of effective boundaries was found to be a problematic area of teacher identity formation. The divide between personal and private was challenging for participants to negotiate. Stan played in a band with a very raunchy stage-act and found it disturbing to look into the audience and see some of his students present, particularly when he knew that some were under-age drinkers. It seems that his perceptions of being upstanding or respectable as a teacher were in conflict with choice of activities in his private life. The public nature of being a role model is a conflicted one because initially the participants viewed teaching in the same way as previous jobs. These jobs ended when they left the work premises, but teaching involved an ongoing public persona. Junee observed that you become a teacher '24, 7', meaning twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in the same way as being a parent. She felt ready to embrace teaching as a lifestyle as well as an occupation.

The other participants however, aimed to establish boundaries that defined 'on duty' and 'off duty' time as a teacher. While Stan and Jack were comfortable with the notion of being a role model for students while at school, they wanted to separate their private lives from their professional lives, a task that proved difficult for them in the small rural towns that they lived and worked in. This was exacerbated by their 'other life' as rock musicians, lives lived with less respectable personas in comparison to teaching. It seemed to them that they needed to curb their private lives in order to become a teacher. Further group reflection added by every-one in the
group (including me as facilitator) suggested that it was easier to maintain boundaries if you did not live in the same town or area that you taught.

Other examples of personal boundary issues concerned physical appearance and choice of clothing. Belinda was unsettled, at first, by student interest in her tongue piercing. The first dilemma was that she did not want to be under personal scrutiny. This aspect of being a teacher had not occurred to her before professional experience and she suspected that it related more to teenage 'obsession' with appearance rather than a problem for primary teachers. Presenting well through dress seemed to be more important for the two female participants than the males, and some discussion arose about the compromises needed to make one’s appearance professional. Junee played with this somewhat by saying that she liked to provoke student thought through her clothing, at times wearing a head scarf and other culturally ambiguous items to challenge student prejudices. The finding behind these examples is that teaching involves being on show, so that personal choices such as appearance become political and professional choices as a teacher. The gender specific aspects of this finding are explored next.

**Gender issues**

Some of the problematic issues of personal and professional boundaries pertained to being male or female. Issues of being gender ambiguous did not arise, however, since all participants appeared to place themselves on the definite end of their particular gender spectrum. Jack summed up a concern shared with Stan about being male as ‘I suppose I’m very cautious with young women just because I’m a young guy. So I make sure I keep that very far away and out of the picture. It’s a pretty big issue with adolescents’ (Jack). Jack realised that as a teacher he needed to distance himself from the unwanted attention of students as well as any feelings of attraction that may surface for him. Stan also found that ‘as a man I am a little scared of finding myself alone with girls’. His concern was centred more on how he may be perceived rather than fear that he may feel attracted to students. The reflections of Jack and Stan were probably specific to secondary teachers since primary school students may not form the same attachments to their teachers. The main concern for the men was how they may be perceived or treated by impressionable female students, rather than the ways they themselves might behave, since they were both confident that they would behave in a professional manner. It seemed that both Stan and Jack preferred to be viewed as teachers, rather than their gendered selves. Teachers are required to connect personally with students to build relationship for learning, but tension is created for pre-service teachers by the realisation that they may need to vet their responses in order to behave professionally.

The female participants did not experience the same dilemmas in relating to students, but raised concerns about how female teachers are viewed by students. Discussion on professional appearance raised a gender difference where both female participants and the facilitating researcher felt that they had to wear something different everyday because students scrutinised and commented on their appearance. While we realized that this was a social construct about acceptable female appearance, each of us felt pressure to conform in various ways. The male participants did not see clothing as an important part of being a teacher, and had not received comments from students regarding their appearance, whereas as Belinda and Junee did. The only dress requirement that they felt was needed as a teacher was to be clean and tidy. They may have been impervious to student evaluation of their clothes but could not recall any pressure or comments, and preferred to wear the same clothes for several days. While this was a
very humourous segment of our reflecting together, it does strongly suggest that gender differences have a significant impact on teacher identity formation.

**Learning to work with personal qualities**

Linked with gender issues are the personal, physical and emotional qualities of self that have pre-established boundaries but come under challenge during teaching. This was evident through behaviours that participants observed in other teachers that they felt they should adopt in order to appear to be a real teacher. As an example, voice tone and projection arose as an issue for the two female participants. Belinda was not able to raise her voice sufficiently to be heard by large classes. She worked out a strategy to change the table groupings to a large U-shape. In this way, she noted that friends in the class were less likely to talk because they were all facing her so that she could stand in the middle of the U and be heard. In this instance Belinda realised that she could not work in the same way as her supervising teacher and so needed to negotiate classroom changes to suit her own voice type. Junee also found it difficult to raise her voice for student attention and planned several interventions in her classroom practice. She made action plans to simplify instructions, use pauses and develop non-verbal cues rather than just voice. She was able to evaluate and refine these strategies over time so that they were part of her practice as a teacher.

Neither of the male participants felt troubled by having soft voices because their voices were loud and deep. They both considered that being a male teacher was an advantage in this respect. But Stan rejected the style of ‘yelling’ at close range adopted by one of his supervisors. He believed that using such a dominant strategy was counterproductive to his desire to communicate with students. In summation, the finding is that reflection on practice enabled participants to become more mindful of their physical attributes so that they could choose how to work with these in the classroom.

The me/not me process of identifying with a social group such as teachers (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000) was articulated often in the stories of participants. ‘My supervising teacher said I’d end up yelling at them (students) because that’s what she did, but it wasn’t an option ‘cos I can’t project loudly. After a week of kids climbing the walls, I worked out a raffle system that they really liked, and they ended up being my favourite class’ (Belinda). As mentioned above, Stan found the authoritarian approach of his supervising teacher inappropriate but he said ‘it works for him’. He reflected that the ‘chalk and talk’ strategies worked with students because they were used to them and responded well. But he intended to ‘train-up’ his classes differently when he entered teaching so that he could try more innovative approaches. He was able to recognize aspects of his personal teaching style and plan for future change based on this awareness.

Personal identity boundaries were transgressed in participants by some unconscious behaviour that developed through being a teacher. Belinda had not realized how she had changed until told so by her friends. ‘I think it’s what you take home too, like I used to get home from prac and my friends would go ‘you’re not at school anymore just don’t talk to us like that’ and you’d go ‘oh sorry’ and snap out of it’ (Belinda). Stan developed a means to separate his professional self from his private or inner self. ‘It’s good to be able to separate yourself, you’ve got to put yourself into it, but you go into the classroom and it’s a discipline thing so you go ‘yadayadayada’ but you can sit back and go inside ‘I’m faking it, I’m not power-tripping here’
On reflecting back over the project, Jack perceived this separation of self as a gap, as if he were two different people. "The gap widened between my personal life and the life of a teacher. As a person I'm usually pretty casual, like to take the piss out of things and muck around and be an idiot basically and if you do that as a teacher ‘look out’, so I’ve got to have more sense of myself" (Jack). Another way of putting this was that teacher identities required greater awareness of self in different contexts. Knowing more about themselves seemed to give participants greater choice about what aspects of themselves they were prepared to reveal in being a teacher.

**Metaphors for being a teacher**

Throughout the project participants used metaphors to express their sense of self as teachers as well as aspects of their teaching landscapes. Use of metaphors seemed to be part of a sense making process, particularly for emotions that were hard to identify and describe. Some metaphors depicted their state of being, embodiment or how they saw themselves, such as:

- I got into a sort of rhythm (Belinda)
- I find my feet (Jack)
- We’re like babysitters (Stan)
- I feel like I’m a cranky old ogre (Jack)
- A personality chameleon (Stan)
- It’s my heart that drives me (Junee)

Some metaphors depicted feelings about student behaviour and situations such as:

- Things go out the window (Junee)
- The icing on the cake will be working out individual programs with kids (Jack)
- Kids climbing the walls (Belinda)
- I love seeing kids go ‘ding’, the lights go on (Stan)
- The basis of teaching seems to be pump, pump, pump the kids with knowledge (Junee)
- Kids are slipping through the gaps (Stan)

And some metaphors spoke for the individual in the face of a powerful system:

- The teaching course is like a giant machine (Stan)
- Policy can be a bureaucratic monster (Jack)

Participants used metaphors to deal with complex aspects of transforming themselves into teachers. The metaphors suggest moments of powerlessness, disembodiment (‘find my feet’) and struggles with a multitude of roles. Artistry is suggested by words such as ‘rhythm’ and ‘heart’. A depth of emotional intensity and personal risk taking is indicated by these metaphors. They seem to serve to explain or provide a visual image of the inexplicable or less familiar aspects of self that emerge in becoming a teacher.

**4.1.5 Ongoing evaluation of values beliefs and assumptions**

Ongoing evaluation of values, beliefs and assumptions enabled shifts in identity to be recognized and traced to their source. Values define who we are (Fisher, 2004) and those we identify with (Weeks, 1990). As analysed earlier, a shared espoused value from the beginning of the project was that teachers should ‘make a difference’, but the ways in which this could be enacted changed variously for each participant, from idealism and enthusiasm initially, to ideas grounded in the practicalities of classrooms. The social problems of students impacted on the initial idealistic views of participants about their ability to ‘make a difference’. Interestingly, the New South Wales (local state) Department of Education and Training aims to attract potential teachers by using this phrase. The following findings support the premise that awareness of underlying values, beliefs and assumptions is essential to informed identity formation.

The transcripts of the reflective group were useful to document the highs and lows in participant views on their self-efficacy. As well as being able to debrief at the time, members of the group could revisit what they had said in idealistic or disenchanted moments and gain a sense of
perspective about their development. Each meeting recorded emotional and intellectual snapshots of Stan, Belinda, Junee and Jack as teachers, making feelings and ideas available for re-evaluation over time. At a low point, Junee said it was difficult to feel that she could make a difference, ‘You can feel worn down by students, teachers and school environment and that’s stressful’. Stan felt even more disheartened at one stage, ‘we’re just glorified babysitters… there can be a cycle of resistance built to education through families. How will kids read books if their parent don’t read books’? Apart from viewing a barometer of how much of them felt like a teacher, a second barometer would be useful to visualize how one feels about being a teacher including key elements of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The statement above by Stan illustrates how unexamined values may operate for teachers beneath their intent to be beneficial to others. The high value placed on education and reading by Stan echoes the values of the profession he is entering. Stan did not question the cultural value or appropriateness of reading and education for all students, this was a value he already shared collectively with teachers. He felt moral discomfort when he encountered students in his classes who did not value education and did not share his belief that it is good for them or worthwhile. His students did not necessarily share Stans’ values so Stan had to learn to work with the tension created by this conflict.

This is also an example of the finding that becoming a teacher involved each participant in working out ways to negotiate less than perfect situations, often conflicted with their own views of how teenagers should be raised by parents. For instance, the social life of some school students caused most of the participants to re-evaluate beliefs they brought to teaching. Belinda expressed her horror at the number of young students who had hangovers (or said they did) on Monday mornings. She felt that anything that she tried as a teacher would not work, for reasons beyond her control, because of their hangovers. While this and other examples highlighted the need to work more broadly with parents and the community, it required a spirit of understanding and compassion rather than judgement stemming from conflicted values. The boundaries and assumptions that seemed so clear at the start of the study became more fluid and problematic as participants examined them critically.

**Being ‘fun’**

Another shared starting value that participants noted was not mentioned as important by university lectures nor professional placement teachers according to participants. It was the idea of learning being fun. Fun was jointly identified as a quality they valued highly in teachers and classrooms. Each of them aimed to make sure that they created fun as teachers in the learning experiences of their students. When we unpacked this value, it became clear that including fun in teaching stemmed from participants own memories of schooling and teachers they had liked or disliked. The problem identified by the group was that fun was not modeled in the teaching they observed, and so was something that they had to plan for and enact themselves to make their classes engaging. Stan observed that learning was more likely to occur when his students were enjoying themselves. Junee, however, felt that she would have to work on humour and fun in the classroom because she did not see herself as a fun person in general.

Participants found that their assumptions about the attitudes of experienced teachers were challenged and changed over time. They were surprised and at times disappointed when their supervising teachers seemed jaded with their work and were negative about becoming a teacher.
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‘is this how I’m going to end up?’ (Belinda) Participants had to revisit their pre-held assumptions about teachers liking their students and work, since many of the staff they encountered seemed disenchanted by teaching work and conditions. Junee cited the carpool as the only place she could access professional dialogue since her supervisor was unwilling to discuss practice and new ideas with her. Huberman (1992) found that after a decade or so, many teachers become ‘professionally dissatisfied’ and are less willing to engage with problematic issues of practice. Becoming a part of teacher culture in its various forms proved to be problematic for all the participants at different times. This was mainly due to the unspoken or attitudinal environments created by some of their supervising teachers, most likely shaped by unexamined values, beliefs or experiences.

Values about subject discipline

The strongest underpinning value for each participant was related to subject discipline, specifically the importance of what they could offer students through their particular worldview. The benefits that Junee, Jack, Stan and Belinda associated with their subject area was cited by each of them as their reason for entering teaching as well as the main thing they valued in being a teacher. Belinda viewed art as potentially therapeutic, getting students to ‘do something they may not have done before ... to get their emotions out through art and deal with a lot of things without talking about them’. Jack agreed with Belinda that encouragement and helping students to gain confidence was a key aspect of music teaching also, so that he wanted to develop the musical potential in all of his students. He felt that it was important for teenagers to have a creative outlet to express themselves. Stan, however, viewed science teaching as a way of educating people about how to care for the environment. He believed that the main benefit in his role as a science teacher was that he could ‘share scientific method with students in order to perceive the natural environment’. This supports findings by Siskin (1994) that the conceptual framework and belief systems of teachers (important aspects of identity) are shaped by the subjects that they teach in secondary schools.

Teaching as moral work

Learning to identify moral perspectives as teachers proved to be problematic, particularly if these were not normative, collective values. For instance, Junee was a parent and a teacher of art in community schools prior to joining the teaching course. She had already established her own views on the moral purpose of teaching. These beliefs, the things that she saw as important, shaped her role as a teacher ‘The teacher needs to encourage solidarity among students to make better choices... peer support is an essential thing to promote among students’. She also viewed schools as a community with a responsibility to children. ‘It takes a community to raise a child and a collaborative approach by teachers would make a big difference’ (Junee). Her belief in the value of collaboration had also motivated her to join the research group, so that her actions were strongly shaped by her beliefs. These beliefs did not seem to diminish over the year of the study, but she was able to place them in context, with what she could realistically achieve.

While the reflective group made examination of values an ongoing part of exploring teaching identities, it was found that their core values remained unchanged by the end of their education courses. Each one of them began believing that they, through teaching, could make a difference in the lives of their students. Values that they identified as being shared were self-respect and respect for others, accepting difference, and making learning fun. By the end of the research period, they had modified their expectations of themselves as teachers, but remained largely
optimistic that they could effect a degree of change that they perceived as positive for the learning of their students.

In summation, the data suggests that forming teacher identities involves pre-service teachers in defining a more realistic scope for their professional roles, particularly in relation to their moral frameworks. For example, Jack found that it was ‘difficult to criticise student lives and say that something is wrong’ but it was necessary to be aware of what was happening for students, then ‘stay out of their home lives’ (Jack). Throughout the eight meetings, tensions remained between what each participant felt they could achieve as a teacher and the desire to assist with difficulties students faced in their broader lives.

Some unexamined values of participants only emerged in conscious form through the act of teaching and the subsequent reflection upon it. ‘Sometimes in the classroom you don’t want a kid to do something but you hadn’t realised that it was important before you said it’ (Belinda). Swearing by students was a complex issue because it was clearly against school rules at all sites, and so needed to be challenged by the pre-service teachers. But many of them found it hard to notice since they were used to swearing themselves. Stan, Belinda and Jack said that because mild student swearing did not affront their personal values, they had to develop vigilance to hearing and preventing this behaviour in themselves and their students due to their new role as teachers. Upholding rules that he did not agree with, such as students removing hats in the classroom, seemed punitive to Stan, but he recognised that it was expected of him as a teacher, so that he ought to do it. Part of becoming a teacher involved upholding the rules of others in order to conform to school values. Lauriala (2005) calls this the ‘ought self’, which she says is often in conflict with the ‘actual self’ or things that people believe to be important themselves. This is closely related to the differences between espoused and embodied values that are discussed next.

Espoused and embodied values

The group found that the values that teachers said they had, or are mandated by employers, sometimes differ from the values that are actually enacted or embodied in one’s teaching and sense of identity. Belinda felt that her values had not changed much from the start to the end of the project, but that she began to realise that as a teacher, she should not voice them as much. ‘Teachers need to watch what they say. Do we really want to tell them our values?’ (Belinda). While she and Stan believed that personal values should not be imposed on students, they did identify some core professional values that they shared. The two things that they cited as most important for themselves ‘respect for each other’ and ‘valuing difference’, are also formally acknowledged in the New South Wales Values in Public Schools document (Refshauge, 2004). Subsequently, we used this document as stimulus for a meeting that focused on professional and personal values, since the issue was recognized as pertinent to teacher identity. An agreed finding from this meeting was that teachers need to guide students in identifying and clarifying their own values, leading rather than imposing.

An example of the difficulty of taking this stance arose over the issue of student use of the word ‘gay’ to mean stupid, or weak. Each participant said that this arose for them in the classroom and they pointed out to their students why use of the word was homophobic. In each case their students retorted with explanations that they did not mean it to be derogatory and it was used by everyone, like ‘sick’ for something good. Tension arose between accepting student vernacular
to develop friendly communication, and the expectation that they as teachers should challenge offensive language. The enacted value of teacher as 'enforcer' as Stan put it, was in conflict with his espoused value of being a teacher as supportive of students.

**Negotiating prior beliefs**

Junee often reflected on ways that her strong personal beliefs and prior experience may impact on how she is seen as a teacher. She saw herself as potentially radical as a teacher. One example was her belief that food allergies are a source of poor behaviour in students that is being ignored by the common practice of giving students Ritalin or Prozac instead of seeking other causes of disturbance. Junee cited a festival she attended where children were fed only organic food and she said that their behaviour improved markedly. She felt from her experiences as a mother and in community work with young people that understanding children was very complex and problematic when we may not know as teachers what chemicals are being given to students. 'I feel that I am a radical in this way and will be bringing a radical approach to schooling in my role as a teacher. My strengths are having experience and my deficiencies are having experience because this may cause problems when I start teaching'.

**4.1.6 Expanding knowledge and skills**

Through sustained reflection over an eight-month period, the pre-service teachers recognised and valued their personal experience and the sense they could make of it, above the knowledge presented to them by 'experts'. The value of experiential learning in interaction with proposed theories is illustrated in the transcripts of participants in the following section of findings.

Observation of experienced teachers in order to emulate their practice was made difficult for the pre-service teachers because many of the behaviours appeared to be automatic, 'embedded in the identity of the person' (Benner, 1984). Time constraints often prevented participants from being able to 'unpack' practice issues with their supervisors. But assumptions about teachers knowing what to do meant that experienced teachers were viewed as having an ease of knowing that did not involve the experimentation and risk required of the new teachers. Certain phrases and behaviour emerged as useful for the pre-service teachers to adopt however. Belinda reflected on trying to gain the attention of a class in her internship, which did not work until she used the phrase of her supervisor 'when you are ready class', accompanied by an expectant pause, she was amazed that they responded immediately. The challenge of this for Belinda and the others was being able to recognize these expert behaviours since they were not made explicit by their supervising teachers.

However, many standards and procedures are tacit in schools and require the pre-service teacher to notice them, since experienced teachers assume that they are obvious or common practice. Stan struggled with a student with 'oppositional defiance' until he realised that there was a behaviour book and system in place to work effectively with this student. Initially his supervising teacher did not advise him of this system at the school because it was assumed practice, not stated. Belinda also faced adverse experiences due to unspoken management strategies that the school had established but did not advise her of. Stan and Belinda both felt that their professionalism had been undermined by often unintentional lack of information from supervising teachers. The complexities of the particular school settings seemed to be difficult for schools to convey to practicum students due to the tacit nature of some practices.
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The secondary-education context holds particular challenges for potential teachers, not least because community expectations and classroom environments differ from the primary school context. Primary school teachers immerse themselves in teaching culture over a four-year period, with greater frequency and diversity of professional experience. Primary teachers have chosen to be teachers rather than add a teaching qualification to their undergraduate degree. This seems, in initial analysis, to have a clear influence on the way secondary-teacher identity is perceived and formed. The specific identity of secondary-school teachers is related to their undergraduate education. The identity of the four research participants was strongly linked to their undergraduate identity as scientist, artist or musician. This seemed to shape the values and assumptions they discussed in initial reflections on reasons for becoming a teacher.

I’m interested in how kids get their emotions out through art and how they are able to deal with a lot of things without talking about them (Belinda).

Environmental Resource Management made me realise that care for the environment relies on education, managing peoples’ perceptions and attitudes more than the resource itself (Stan).

Tension between identity determined by subject discipline and emerging teacher identity persisted throughout the project, suggesting that it may be an ongoing source of professional tension for secondary-teachers. All of the participants found that their undergraduate courses lacked the breadth of knowledge and skills needed in classroom teaching, especially art and music courses that encourage specialisation in a particular medium or instrument. Science teaching also requires pre-service teachers to be familiar with chemistry, biology and physics. The two artists-becoming-teachers (Belinda and Junee) found that there were too many techniques to learn in the short time of their curriculum specialisation studies. Belinda for instance specialized in sculpture and was not familiar with print making and other common media in schools. A common belief in the group was that ‘teachers need to be knowledgeable and skilled in their particular discipline to gain the respect and co-operation of students’ (Stan), but that they felt incompetent as teachers through their lack of discipline specific knowledge and pedagogy. The need for ongoing learning, and rapid catch-up in most cases, became apparent for participants not only in pedagogy but also in their specific discipline. Teacher-as-learner emerged as an ongoing construct for their new identities.

Assumptions about subject disciplines

Participants perceived their teaching identity as largely defined through their subject discipline and the pedagogical practices common to that discipline. Phrases in later discussion started with ‘as a science teacher I …’ or ‘in art classes we…’ Reflective dialogue between Belinda and Stan indicated their belief that subjects considered non-practical, such as mathematics, would be easier to teach because there was no cleaning up involved and there would be an expectation for students to come in quietly and start work. The perceptions Belinda and Stan held were based on assumptions rather than teaching experience in a mathematics classroom. Belinda did experience teaching a PE theory class and was surprised to find that the students entered the room ready to work quietly in their workbooks, so that classroom management was not an issue for her. In the course of discussions it became clear that all participants held views on other subject disciplines based on things that they had heard or remembered from their time as students at high school. Participants also found that expectations of them as teachers of practical subjects were different to teachers in other subject disciplines. Participants in this project
support the notion that teacher identity in secondary schools is partially defined by specialisation of subject discipline; not just teacher, but science teacher or music teacher.

By coincidence, all of the participants in this study represented ‘practical’ subjects, art, science and music that required them to learn how to work with students using a variety of materials and equipment, some of which was potentially dangerous. Issues of classroom management were substantially different when the teacher was required to hand out scalpels, knives, Bunsen burners and fragile expensive musical instruments. Duty of care was a contentious issue for each participant as a result of their growing awareness of safety issues in their workplaces, particularly because of subject specific equipment and activities. Instructing large numbers of students to use equipment safely seemed a daunting task for participants, but necessary as part of their professional responsibilities.

Further assumptions about subject specific teaching spaces were challenged through collective inquiry. For example Belinda assumed that art rooms were ‘always noisy’ because of her experiences as a student and also as a teacher. She had to reappraise her assumptions when advised to keep students quiet for drawing. Her supervisor told her that talking and drawing used different sides of the brain so that doing both made it harder to concentrate. She reflected after trying this ‘once they were all quiet, they got heaps done’. Belinda changed her view of art rooms as a result. Another significant aspect of this interchange was that Belinda was able to reappraise the assumptions that shaped her classroom management strategies by taking the advice of an experienced art teacher, who could link the practice with theory underlying it. In the same reflective meeting, Stan clarified his position as a science teacher: ‘Science is a bit different to art… a certain amount of noise I’ll tolerate but if I was telling them something I’d expect them to be quiet, especially when you’ve got scalpels out and stuff like that’. While classroom management issues surfaced in every meeting we held during the research, we found that some of these issues were subject specific rather than generic.

**How do you know they are learning?**

A source of tension for each of the participants during the professional experience placements was to know if their students were learning anything as a result of their efforts. Jack said that it was harder to know if you were ‘doing your job’ with teaching compared to spray painting where you could see the progress. Belinda joked that it would be good to see a light bulb go on over their heads when they understood. Stan linked student learning to his own feelings of efficacy as a teacher, ‘I feel like their learning is not just jumping up and down and answering questions so that I go ‘oh yes, I’ve done my job’, but doing something new with the situation’. Each participant valued the practical theories of experienced teachers in conducting practical classes since processes were able to broken down into logical steps rather than the approach of a pre-service teacher, with the end in sight without a clear picture of the steps in-between. Successful learning was viewed initially as students being able to complete the task.

While Stan was required to administer tests to his science students to ascertain their knowledge, he found that he was more interested in teaching his students how to learn and how to access the information they needed. In this way he found that his role as a teacher went beyond transmission of information. Junee however taught in two disciplines: art and science and said that she viewed learning as different in the two subjects, so that what she expected and looked
for in student learning was creative expression in art and more memorisation and problem solving in science. Both Stan and Junee noted that learning in knowledge-based subjects such as science was easier to measure by tests to know if students were learning. Jack agreed with this approach for music theory but said that music is an easy area to judge learning because students can either play the music or not. While his view will no doubt be tested further by classroom experiences, the main finding of the group about learning was that it was useful to have discussion with other subject area teachers in order to reflect on their own learning and teaching.

4.1.7 Being resilient

Becoming a teacher involves finding ways to maintain a sense of self among the often-challenging circumstances in schools. While the word ‘survival’ was used several times, as a group we decided that the term ‘resilience’ best describes the ways that participants believed they could best manage the job of being a teacher. Stan reflected after his first professional experience block that to be a good teacher is to do the best job that you can, ‘take on board the policies but work out how to do your best in the situation you are in’. Jack agreed after expressing a great deal of frustration at times at what he viewed as inadequacies in school structures such as large classes due to lack of school funding. He found that many of these constraints made it hard for him to do his job properly, and be the sort of teacher he wanted to be. He added that he also wanted to keep boundaries around the amount of extra time he spent on his job. ‘I don’t want to have spent so many years training to be working endless hours of overtime and be stressed. I think I’ll be able to do a better job this way’ (Jack).

The struggle to keep going in the course in the face of a range of tensions, most frequently stress and illness, were negotiated in different ways by different participants. Belinda reflected on the paperwork and accountability during her second professional experience ‘The amount of stuff I have to write up really is a big thing to get used to’. She then developed a strategy of focussing on one aspect of her teaching practice in each day, then reflecting on it at the end of the day. This strategy was adopted by the other participants as a way of limiting what needed to be noticed and improved, making it more manageable for them. But survival, defined by Jack as just getting through the day in class, emerged as a struggle at different times for each of the participants.

A contributing factor to survival that was cited by all the participants was having time to prepare classes, complete assignments and attend to work commitments. Lack of time to complete these tasks sometimes led to stress and illness according to Jack. He missed several of the reflective meetings due to feelings of extreme stress as he tried to juggle study, part-time work and the demands of practicum. He believed that the recurrent colds he experienced were partially due to stress and partially due to greater exposure to sickness through students in the classes he taught. He wanted to leave the course near the end but felt that he had ‘gone too far to back out’. He said that the combination of internship class preparation over nine weeks, with four major assignments led to illness and self-doubt about his ability to cope with being a teacher. Belinda continued to work part-time as she completed her studies but cited time management as one of the most stressful aspects of becoming a teacher. Junee undertook part-time coursework but found it hard to find time to spend with her son when planning good quality activities to do with others peoples’ children. Stan did not have issues with illness or paid employment but opted to miss a research meeting in order to complete assignments. Being
able to manage time efficiently was an aspect of teaching that was already present for Stan, Belinda and Junee but became a major learning curve for Jack.

Stan noted that as a teacher he realised that he needed to have all his preparation and marking done in his spare periods and lunchtimes so that he does not take as much work home. Discussion of these strategies and many more were evidence of the participants negotiating their teacher identities within the limits of their personal energy and time. ‘My personal identity is definitely different to my professional identity however I didn’t realise that until I became a practising teacher. The most significant moment in my pre-service education was the practical experiences where I realised that academic reality is removed from practical reality’ (Stan). Three months later when Stan was out in schools teaching, he reflected in the final email round up that ‘I find it hard to stop thinking about work when I am at home on the weekend’.

**Personal background**

Reflection on the influence that personal background has on teaching provided a rich source of data on the attitudes underpinning the development of a personal style in teaching. Jack attributed his patience with poorly behaved students to his own school days of misbehaving due to boredom and trouble at home. He said it helped him to deal with students fairly if he remembered that the behaviours might stem from problems outside of school. Belinda raised a contrary view that it was her stable supportive upbringing that allowed her to feel more compassion for students with troubled backgrounds, since she had been quiet and well behaved at school. Stan also connected his approach to students with his own schooling experiences. ‘I am able to relate to kids that don’t really care about school or getting good results, because I didn’t really care when I was at school. It makes me want to crack them, get inside their head and engage them’ (Stan).

Certainly the data indicated that personal attributes brought to teaching through background experiences need to be viewed in tandem with the transformational experiences of teacher education in order to understand the formation of a teaching identity.

**4.1.8 Meaning making**

This study found that a major aspect of becoming a teacher is being able to make sense of the huge range of experiences and information involved in teacher education. Participants found that making sense of what one is observing and doing in relation to what one wants to become is an ongoing part of the conscious aspects of forming an identity. In order to make sense of their experiences participants firstly recalled the details, then evaluated what it meant for them. Meaning making has no end point since the relevance and meaning of events and feelings changed when they were revisited at later stages. What emerged as important in order to understand teacher identity was to have processes available that facilitate meaning making. ‘There are so many different questions when I think of education, rather than answers’. (Junee)

It would appear that the process of discussion can produce shared meaning, or may help to clarify and strengthen diverse positions. Junee favoured catering for the differences of students through individualising materials and activities, but Stan challenged her view. He argued that teachers must prepare students to work within standardised systems, making them able to adapt to circumstances that may not suit them. ‘We need to prepare students for the world that they
are going into where there are constructs they have to align themselves with to be successful’ (Stan). A heated discussion ensued in the group about how each person perceived the role of teachers differently, and how this in turn influenced their actions as teachers. This example illustrates how purposeful discussion allows participants to become actively involved in shaping their educational philosophies rather than just adopting the dominant discourses offered to them through their formal education. In this instance, collaborative reflection did not require agreement among participants, but provided the opportunity for professional dialogue.

**Constraints to meaning making**

The finding amongst the group that subject knowledge and the means of conveying it seemed more important than philosophical underpinnings indicates a further finding. The participants expressed feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information they were receiving from a multitude of sources, so they each seemed to prioritise this knowledge on a ‘need to know’ basis. In this way incoming knowledge about how to be a teacher was filtered or ‘digested’ in order to make sense of it. Some issues or skills assumed greater importance for each individual at different times during the research. The technicalities of remembering student names, classroom and school-wide procedures and sequencing of information took precedence on reflection as noted by Stan during his first practicum, ‘I was too busy doing it to reflect on it’. While this is commonly noted as an experience for pre-service teachers (Britzman, 2003; Hauge, 2000; Henniger, 2004; Khamis, 2000), it indicated that interpretations of meaning making need to be broader than intellectual activity. Meaning was drawn from immediate experience as well as subsequent reflections upon it. Conversely, actions became more meaningful once the theory behind them was understood.

Changes in the narratives of participants indicated changes in the ways they viewed themselves as teachers. The three cultural myths identified (Britzman, 1991) as common to teaching students, that teachers need to be experts, that everything depends on the teacher and that teachers are self-made, were evident in the initial reflections of participants. Over the course of the project, participants became more comfortable with ‘not knowing’ (Vinz, 1997). They began to see themselves as being guides in the learning process rather than feeling that they needed to be the holders of all knowledge. As subject specialists though, the scientist, musician and artists felt that they needed to appear competent in their practical skills and theoretical knowledge to gain the respect of students. Being adept at demonstrating skills persisted as a more important aspect of being a teacher than being knowledgeable. Meaning making was sometimes constrained by the stronger need of participants to be able to perform competently in front of students and supervising teachers.

The biggest difference that emerged in the group in relation to meaning was that I as facilitating researcher was focused on meaning making while the other participants were more interested in knowing how to improve their practice, without seeing meaning making as crucial to this process. This tension remained throughout the project because participants wanted to complete their teaching qualifications while I wanted to collect meaningful data to illuminate the research question. Our purposes were not at odds, but certainly constrained collaborative meaning making at times.

The section following describes the reflective process used for each of the purposes above, learning about teacher identity and learning to be a better teacher.
4.2 Collaborative reflective processes

This section of Chapter 4 presents findings on the second half of the research question that deals with the ways in which identity formation can become an aware informed process. Each of these themes is discussed with brevity since the main focus of the research centred on findings about secondary teacher identity and the attendant challenges for pre-service teachers in negotiating this. Therefore section 4.2 contains findings about the ways that critical reflection informed or did not inform changing notions of secondary teacher identity.

4.2.1 Informed action

The reflective focus group provided participants with ‘pause for thought’ about experiences in professional experience placements as well as assignment work and lectures. Critical reflection on actions as well as discussing future strategies seemed to have a cumulative effect, forming a pool of information for possible actions. Transcripts from later meetings showed a greater awareness of choices among participants than evident in the first three meetings. While this is to be expected in any practice based profession where novices learn from their experiences, the process of becoming informed was more systematic through involvement in the action research group. Being ‘informed’ meant that participants could scrutinize both their personal theories and those presented at university through planned strategies and evaluation rather than the ‘trial and error’ process described by their peers who were not in the project.

The process of evaluation prompted in the focus group became evident in stories of reflection while teaching, or reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983). Examples of this are discussed in the next section on ‘noticing’, however the capacity to notice and respond is further evidence not just of greater evaluative skills by participants, but also their growing repertoire of strategies informed by discussion with peers in the group.

Figure 6   Findings on reflective processes

4.2.2 Habits of noticing

4.2.3 Reflective styles

4.2.4 Reflective tools

4.2.5 Personal and Interpersonal reflection

4.2.7 Facilitation for reflection

Reflection for informed, aware choices

4.2.6 Becoming critical

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4.2.2 Habits of noticing

In the second cycle after professional experience placements, participants reflected on different instances of a voice in their heads, known by Schon (1983) as ‘reflection in action’ and by Mason (2002) as ‘the inner witness’. In the midst of a pedagogical moment there develops a part of the teacher that is observing the action. ‘I kinda, in the back of my mind, went hang on you’re doing the wrong thing here’ (Belinda). Stan also described seeing himself in action, but having a voice inside coaching him and creating a sense that part of him was watching rather than acting. All participants began to actively ‘notice’ (Mason, 2002) themselves during teaching, with part of them being observer, part actor. Schon (1983) calls this process in professionals ‘reflection-in-action’ and van Manen (1991) calls it ‘pedagogical tact’. Simply put, Stan began to think like a teacher, problem solving on the spot. Junee described this experience differently since she spent time imagining herself as she would like to be in the classroom, and after some time noticed in action during teaching that she was doing the things she had imagined.

This visioning of oneself or rehearsal (Louden, 1992) for possible future action as a teacher is also known as reflection-for-action (Graham & Phelps, 2003) since participants were able to develop their habits of noticing through imagining how they might become. Rather than the ‘fake it ‘til you make it’ strategy mentioned earlier, this form of reflection facilitated for Junee and the other participants a means of clearly identifying how they wanted to be as teachers. By noticing what constrained or enhanced this ‘ideal self’ (Lauriala, 2005), future changes to behaviour and embodied identity were possible.

4.2.3 Reflective styles

The group refined reflective activities throughout the project by employing the cycles of action research, that is, planning, acting, observing (or noticing) and reflecting. A notable finding from this is that a range of reflective styles needed to be explored to suit the varied needs of pre-service teachers. Two of the participants preferred verbal reflection. ‘I’m not much of a writer, I’m better at verbalising it, that helps me, I remember the things we talk about’ (Stan). But Belinda noticed that she responded better to mind map summaries and the opportunity to sit back, observe the group and contribute only when she felt the need to. Jack said that he preferred to reflect alone but used the group to ‘think out loud’ particularly when he needed to clarify his thoughts. Stan added that sometimes he did not know what he thought about something until he said it, so that his verbal reflections enabled him to access previously unconscious attitudes and ideas about issues.

Junee was the only participant who used the journal given to each participant at the outset to write reflections. Email was hardly used for reflection by participants even though we agreed as a group that there were benefits from sharing ideas between meetings. Lack of time was cited as a constraint to this process by every-one. All participants said that they found the transcripts mailed to them after each meeting useful for stimulating thinking and keeping track of the action research process. This allowed reflection for individuals at times that suited them. The second advantage cited for transcripts was that they were organised according to the scaffolds and included non-verbal body language in brackets. Overall, the preferred style of reflection with all participants in the group was verbal interaction with the other group members.
Transcripts were a useful tool for longer-term reflection, revisiting initial ideas to look for changes and development in ideas and practices. They provided snapshots of stages in the emerging identity of the participants. A strategy in the final meeting was to read from the earliest transcripts as a benchmark and ask participants to reflect on changes in their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Stan shifted his perception of teaching as his job, to a vocation inspired by the desire to make a difference in the lives of his students. He began with this view as an ideal theory, but after experience in the classroom he began to engage more fully with and be able to articulate what this would mean for him personally.

Another key finding of the research in relation to reflective processes concerns the apparent preference of participants for technical and practical reflection rather than critical reflection on the theoretical underpinnings of their actions and identity. The discussion ‘comfort zone’ for participants was centred on reflection for practical concerns that had immediate application in classroom situations. Prompts by me as participant researcher to consider the ‘why’ of situations were subsumed by a general wish to share and discuss strategies. Participants seemed to assume that ‘how to do it’ was a solution to their fear and discomfort. The desire for practical ‘hints’ is also evident in some of the transcript comments about the university course being very theoretical and of little use for teaching. Stan, Jack and Belinda viewed the strategies presented at university and those modelled by supervising teachers as less important than the strategies they shared and refined together to suit their own personal style.

A finding that was disturbing for me as facilitator initially was that there seemed to be discontinuities in the capacity or interest of some participants to sustain reflection on their teacher identity and practice. I had assumed that the process would be as exciting for every-one else as it was for me. Passive phases with some participants seemed to link with time out of classrooms so that issues were more pertinent when there was immediate application. Conversely, Stan noted that he did not have time to reflect in depth during his professional experience placements because his main concern was what to do next. He preferred to consider more critical and problematic aspects of practice when his brain had less demands upon it. Belinda noted that she became more systematic with her reflections when on practicum placement because there was a specific purpose. She said that the nine-month break between placements in her Combined Degree made her feel disconnected from being a teacher. In the round up of final reflections on the group process, however, participants found that they were better equipped to think about their actions and beliefs as teachers due to their involvement in the research project.

4.2.4 Reflective tools

The group conducted regular checks during meetings about the reflective processes and meeting structures to ensure that they met the needs of participants and the central research questions. In the final round-up to evaluate the whole project, a number of issues were raised that may be of use for educators and researchers interested in running similar reflective groups for pre-service teachers.

Stan believed that more participants would improve the quality of reflection however the other three participants liked having a group small enough to allow in-depth dialogue. The following
transcript from an email sent by Stan illustrates how he viewed the reflective processes after the group meetings finished

Q: Was there a difference between reflecting for course assessment and reflecting in this group? Yes. Why? (not answered).
Q: Did the research project serve your needs and how do you see it now? It served my needs in terms of getting things off my chest at the time, in terms of now, I have put this off for ages due to memory lapses and time commitments but now that I am doing it, (sic: reflecting on the group process) it is still helping me consider myself as a teacher and how I might become a better one’ (Stan).

Use of scaffolds and reflective questions

Additional questions arose during discussion in addition to those on the scaffolds (Appendix 5) so that often it was more useful to divert from the scaffold if discussion became ‘hot’, that is, created lively discussion and different viewpoints. Initial data analysis in this sense was immediate in determining if the discussing was providing insights so that further questions could be generated to focus in on collective and individual changes in teacher identity.

Stan said he found the informality of the group refreshing because ‘there’s enough concentrating in the course already’. When I offered as facilitator to spend time teaching the group further reflective strategies, it was decided collectively that this would be yet another thing to learn, and that the group process worked better by evolving according to what was needed. This suggests a finding that the participants did not recognise reflection as a learning strategy in the same way as learning to teach because of their pre-held ideas about reflection and self-knowledge. This was further evidenced in the transcripts after the group process had finished. My inexperience as a facilitator prevented me from pursuing this further with questions and challenges during meetings because I wanted the participants to have an equal say in the processes of the group.

4.2.5 Processes of reflection

While participants for different reasons cited the processes of reflection used in the research group as valuable, the following examples show that the group was a place to debrief without judgement or assessment of their contribution. On the use of email Jack commented ‘the problem with reading words (email reflections) is that you need to hear how it’s said and a lot of what we communicate isn’t words’. Junee says that the value of our reflective group gave her ‘freedom to speak without criticism, without in-house politics, without that weight on a person’. Stan added ‘I realised the value of reflection in helping me clarify my thoughts on what it means to be a professional. Reflecting in a group environment also helped me to validate my opinions. The thoughts left my head, bounced off someone else and re-entered, allowing me to make a judgement on my ideas.’

4.2.6 Personal and interpersonal reflection

The process of reflection moved beyond meetings as participants cited examples of using reflection on their own as well as within the group. The following section of this chapter outlines further findings of the group in relation to reflection.

The benefits of collegial input and professional dialogue became evident as an effective countermeasure to the isolation participants experienced in the classroom and when reflecting alone. ‘It helps to know that I wasn’t the only one feeling this’ (Jack) ‘It’s been nice to compare
with the experiences of everyone else and to know why I’m feeling that way’ (Belinda). ‘The verbal, physical communication afforded by collaborative reflection differs from the cyber-connection of email and chat rooms. Verbalising my thoughts helps me to sort through them and prioritise or expand on them’ (Stan). Stan used a great deal of body language and mime to communicate as well, which became evident in the transcriptions that attempted to describe the actions that accompanied the words. Reflection on the group process revealed that laughter and commiseration helped to establish bonds that enabled participants to challenge each other on certain issues, and to express differences of opinion.

Differences seemed to emerge about personal and professional reflection. ‘I guess reflection in a group is more reflection on how you see yourself as a teacher and how you want to change and how to reflect that. Personal reflection is more about ‘did that work that lesson and how can I change to make it better next time?’ (Stan). Junee however did not distinguish between her personal and professional selves, describing her insights in one realm as having an effect on the rest of her life. In each instance however group discussion allowed participants time to reflect on the processes of ‘becoming’ as well as their mastery of ‘doing’. But glimmers of realisation evident in the transcriptions about how participants would prefer to be and do seemed overshadowed by the practicalities of managing classrooms and satisfying requirements of supervisors and assessment tasks at times. Some personal reflections emerged as shared concerns when discussed within the group while some were particular to the personal situation of each participant alone. In these situations, the reflective group provided a circle of critical friends in which to be ‘heard’ and validated.

4.2.7 Becoming critical: Evaluation of reflective practice

A key finding on the quality of reflection is that the most common forms to emerge in analysis of data were technical and practical rather than critical, even though some examination of values, beliefs and underlying constraints was evident at times.

When participants reflected on changes to their actions, beliefs and practices from involvement in the project they indicated in different ways that becoming reflective brought about changes in perception as well as actions. ‘It’s a realistic understanding of my processes and I think reflecting on that. It’s really important to consolidate. Being able to talk about it and review it and look back to where I began and where I am now, I have a more realistic understanding. (Junee). ‘I consciously see staffroom debriefs with colleagues as reflection, my personal reflection helps me to improve my practice in the classroom, for example behaviour management strategies’ (Stan). Post-project, Stan viewed reflection as a means to improve his practice independently from staff development opportunities, suggesting that he valued reflective practice as a way of directing his development as a teacher.

Non-assessable reflection

A finding worthy of further research is that the non-assessable reflection conducted in the research group was of greater use to participants than reflective tasks included for course assessment. Without competition with peers and the pressure to please examiners, participants said that they felt freer to take risks with their thinking. ‘Because you are not being assessed you say what you feel and think as opposed to what you think the lecturer wants to hear’ (Stan). Junee saw that it was a valuable professional development activity that could be extended to the first few years of teaching. ‘I wish it could be part of professional development from Uni into the
teaching environment’. Jack found that the group offered greater freedom to express himself. ‘We weren’t judged on our reflections and could pretty well say whatever we felt and if something was a little detached from what the actual question was, it would still be OK to say and have a little talk or go “yeah I feel that too”. You didn’t have that sort of flexibility and be able to express anything much at Uni’.

4.2.8 Facilitation for reflection

In addition to the seven themes depicted at the start of this section 4.2, I have added a section on facilitation for reflection for two reasons, firstly to raise some of the dilemmas involved in effective facilitation for reflection. The second reason is to provide examples of my own reflective processes enacted to improve group reflection but also evidence of changes in my own perceptions of my teacher identity. While this was not an intended outcome of the research, that transformation of my own teacher identity was also facilitated by being a part of the group.

The following extract from my personal reflective diary charts the ways that I applied action research principles to improve my practice as a facilitating researcher in order to learn to work with tensions in the process. The extract also illustrates how reflection prompted me to question changes to my own practice as a teacher resulting from facilitation of the project. I had long believed that the personal is political, or in this instance professional, so that any change in identity was a change in my whole being. Initially I viewed the tensions that arose as obstacles to the research, but found in the literature (Mason, 2002) a perspective that made sense of these tensions and taught me how to work with them.

Mason says that if tensions are embraced rather than avoided they can provide access to useful energy and sensitivity to inform practice. This contradicts my desire for things to be harmonious, work well, and for me to be a ‘fix-it’ with teacherly zeal. By becoming more aware of this challenge as a researcher, I am sensitised to noticing this same desire for ease and comfort (or lack of conflict) in the rest of my life. As with the student-teacher participants charting changes in their behaviours and attitudes during the research project, the same processes are changing the way I see and live my life. I am now trying to sit with, but not act on, my wish to give advice or assistance. I am trying to acknowledge that my truths aren’t other peoples’ truths and therefore may not even be recognised by others if there is no ‘resonance’ with them. As a teacher I feel a responsibility to be knowledgeable and wise. This expectation was also recognised by several of the participants when discussing what they thought would make them a good teacher. Is it a hazard of our profession that we start to believe that we ‘know best’? Some teachers are better at fostering discovery learning through questioning. I have found as a music teacher that I have needed to demonstrate skills in the sense of a ‘master’ rather than the Socratean approach. If I continue to practice this questioning mode within the research group, is it possible for my teaching style to change? (Facilitator journal, July 2004).

In terms of reflection, my inexperience as a group facilitator created limitations in the effectiveness of our group processes. I was learning how to be reflective along with the rest of the group. While action research assisted me in improvement of the process, greater experience would have allowed me to model critical reflective practices for participants. Until I sought the assistance of a critical friend, our group reflections were mainly technical and practical concerns, lacking the original critical intent. I found that learning to live with the tensions of uncertainty was an important part of facilitating reflection effectively.

While all experiences relied on memories, teaching experiences in practicum provided immediacy to discussions and this occurred at different times for the participants. In order to
respond to changing circumstances, I experimented with meeting structures to find the best way to facilitate group interaction. For instance, meetings four and five were conducted without reflective scaffold prompts to see if discussion was freer and more interactive. Scaffolds were re-introduced after we reviewed our group process together in meeting five and some participants expressed a preference for a more structured approach. I applied reflective practice principles when reviewing meeting scaffolds to identify my underlying assumptions and beliefs so that these were transparent. In this way, the action research processes of informed action through ongoing evaluation proved useful in improving our group practices, but were limited by my inexperience in directing this process more clearly.

Another result of my inexperience was that I was not sure when to intervene in discussion to ensure that we stayed within the focus of the research. As a result, the transcriptions at some points resemble a debrief of feelings rather than analysis of the causes for them. In other words, my wish to explore a critical perspective in our reflections was conflicted with the concerns of the rest of the group to share and evaluate practical classroom strategies.

**Pre-existing beliefs and assumptions**

My pre-existing beliefs and assumptions shaped my actions and reflections even though I was committed to noticing and challenging these. I realised after several meetings that I was often intervening with advice or stories of my own experiences as a teacher, acting out a power imbalance based on my experience, rather than empowering others to speak. I shared this insight with the group and we agreed to be mindful of preventing this dynamic from continuing.

My conflict is that I imagined rich data on identity formation to be produced by reflection on why this is perceived as important by participants, rather than actual strategy sharing. They are expressing a need to develop these strategies, so our action plan now incorporates using the meetings to swap strategies and ‘unpack’ them. As a result, my perceptions of my role as researcher have changed. I thought my role was to draw out the issues underlying these perceived needs within the group to inform our long-term research goal of understanding the process of becoming a teacher. This was the central aim of the research that these participants agreed to be involved in. I perceived the need for having strategies to take into the classroom as a short-term goal, driven by the immediacy of the practicum. Alternatively I am seeing that being a professional is about gaining a set of effective behaviours through trying them in practice and evaluating them with peers. The problem therefore doesn’t lie with our conflicting needs, but with my ability to think flexibly as a researcher. Do I want to share control of the research direction or am I merely saying that it is participatory? (Facilitator journal, May 2004).

**Conflicting notions of participation**

Notions of participation continued to create tension for me as facilitator until I realised that one of the skills required of a facilitating researcher is to accept and work with what is able to be offered by participants rather than maintain pre-existing or unrealistic expectations. Full attendance was an example of an unrealistic expectation. Three participants attended the first meeting but the fourth person did not attend until the third meeting, leading to some discontinuity and the need to include Junee into the loop. I spent time familiarising her with the processes and progress of the group. Another participant was absent due to ill-health and pressure to complete assignments on a number of occasions. He considered withdrawing from the research but we convinced him that his input was valuable even though he could not attend all meetings.
Another limitation to my initial view of participation was that I wanted it to be equal, with the others taking on more responsibility within the group and yet it was more important to me than the others. For instance, the project was purposefully designed to be non-assessable and outside the requirements of any course work. As a result, work on assignments took higher priority for participants than the research group. The task of facilitating for reflection involved many acts of compromise realised through applying action research principles to the facilitation process. By maintaining group decision making, the most pressing aspects of teacher identity at the surface of participant awareness were privileged rather than those of deepest enduring significance. This limitation is attributed to efforts to maintain an evolving, participatory process. In response to this dilemma, repeated review of transcripts for ongoing manual coding made it possible to see emerging patterns and address them within the group.

4.3 Conclusion

The complexities of constructing a secondary teacher identity are evident in the range of findings in this chapter. Through sustained, systematic reflection it was possible for participants to make sense of their experiences in order to develop confidence as teachers. Learning to work with the creative tensions in educational settings and the resultant changes to personal lives in becoming a teacher will no doubt be an ongoing challenge for participants. Tensions created by shifts between personal and professional identities became a recurring focal point for reflective dialogue in movement from the person engaging in teacher education to the person who identifies as a teacher and is recognised as a teacher by others.

Being able to notice and to a certain extent negotiate circumstances and emerging teacher identities through collaborative reflection enabled some degree of choice about the kinds of teacher each person wanted to become. In the next and final chapter of the thesis the implications of these findings are explored further.
Chapter 5: A fine adventure: Significance and conclusions

Chapter 5 provides discussion and summation of the findings from this study which sought to link constructs that shape identity with ways that pre-service teachers deepen understanding of themselves in teacher education contexts. This final chapter draws together the initial participant connections between knowing, being and doing, recognized as defining characteristics of identity (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Some certainties about self have endured for participants as a result of their reflections on being a secondary teacher. Other aspects of self-understanding in relation to teacher identity have evolved for participants through experiences and learning as teachers. This suggests that identity is a ‘moving form’ (Vinz, 1997) as proposed at the outset of the research.

While the struggle to reflect critically on identity gave the group ‘traction’ for change, it is not clear from our limited, nine-month study whether changes in thinking produce changes in being. There is little doubt participants improved their teaching behaviours by becoming more aware of choices and strategies appropriate to their personal beliefs and capabilities at the time of research. Their situational contexts, collective issues and individual differences are retold in part and interpreted for this research endeavour. It is hoped these pre-service teacher experiences might therefore be heard by the broader educational community, albeit through my filters as storyteller and facilitator. Therefore my efforts to be reflexive in this endeavour have also been woven through this thesis in order to make these interpretive acts transparent.

In the end result, the participants entered the project with the aim of becoming better teachers and were able to spend time during the project scrutinising what this meant for them and the reasons why. Equally, when aspects of knowing, being and doing did not change, conscious identity formation was evident because insights into who one is in the face of professional expectations subsequently emerged. Critical reflection in this project served to clarify meaning and identity through evaluation and unpacking of thinking and experiences by all participants. This final chapter sums up what we discovered and it is shared in the expectation it may be of value for interested others in the field of education. None of the findings in this study are intended to be conclusive because action research seeks to facilitate and sustain changes determined by participants rather than draw broader conclusions (Taylor & Roberts, 2002).

Chapter 5 is structured into the three key areas taken up in the core research question - teacher identity, conscious choices and the processes that enhance those choices. Links are made between existing literature and the findings and processes discussed in the previous chapter. A composite model is developed based on Gibbs’ model of reflection adapted for this study (Reid, 2000) and a current theory on teacher identity (Lauriala, 2005) that informed the interpretation of findings. This model provides a diagrammatic summary of how the reflective processes used in this research informed identity formation. Finally, issues are raised in relation to the current teacher education context to support the premise that pre-service teacher voices need to be active within future educational reform.
5.1 Teacher identity formation

As stated at the outset, this study focused on the initial stages of teacher identity formation, when professional experiences, expectations and standards challenge previously held, personal aspects of values, beliefs and assumptions. While this study argues that teacher identity is an ongoing work in progress, the tensions between personal and professional identity seem particularly intense in the beginning phases of teaching.

By identifying commonalities in experience in teaching and using these as a reference point for exploring individual difference, participants gained a better understanding of teacher identity formation. The small group process allowed for dissent and alternative viewpoints that strengthened critical thinking (Olivares, 2005) and reflection on teaching practice. Group reflections provided a means for participants to identify their own beliefs in order to enact them rather than resort to ‘strategic compliance’ (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). Identified as a common coping strategy for pre-service teachers, strategic compliance means to conform to expected behaviours without changing beliefs. For example, Stan was complying when he decided to behave as his supervising teacher did even though it conflicted with his ideals about how to relate to students. By unpacking this dilemma within the focus group, he gained a stronger sense of his own viewpoint. This process of critical reflection increased awareness of group concerns such as professional behaviours, which in turn created possibilities for individual transformations by participating teachers.

Active investigation of identity is a key aspect of the action research methodology employed. The word ‘active’ in this study relates to theoretical underpinnings of action research used to facilitate ongoing sustained examination of becoming a teacher. The traditional action research aim of improved practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1983), in this instance, refers to improved understanding of self as a teacher. Participants were active in an external sense by planning and enacting changes to their strategies and behaviours as teachers. Findings indicate that they were also very internally active in sorting and selecting meanings behind these actions. However, collaboration meant that constructions of meaning were shared in a forum of peers rather than remaining as personal constructs. Reflection in the form of group discussion also required active listening in order to challenge assumptions and develop critical analysis. As a result, the group members reflected back ideas about self and teaching roles to each other in order to see differences and common ground. By viewing reflection as a form of action, internal changes to thinking and sense of self are recognized as active engagement with identity.

A key constraint to understanding the personal aspects of identity is that internal transformation is harder to observe. It involves changes to core values and beliefs that may not be immediately obvious in changed behaviours. An increased capacity to ‘notice’ (Mason, 2002) through becoming a self-coach or inner witness added a further dimension for participants to be reflective about actions during teaching. This internal work began as largely unconscious and required the active participation and intent of each participant in order to observe themselves in action. This monitoring of self was a key strategy in bringing aspects of their identity to conscious awareness.

Tension between identity determined by subject discipline and general teacher identity persisted throughout the project, suggesting that it may be an ongoing source of professional tension for secondary-teachers. As discussed in Chapter 2, a prior British study of music teachers (CIRME,
2004) highlighted this finding. The project found that public expectations of music teachers as professionals were judged in terms of their musical skills and yet success in the classroom required a different set of skills. Teachers in the study found that they needed to engage in ongoing practices that maintained and developed their musical skills, as well as developing their teaching skills. This dilemma was similar for Belinda, Jack, Junee and Stan, including subject areas of art and science as well as music.

The tension between needing to expand specialist knowledge and skills as well as develop ‘pedagogic reasoning’ (Loughran, 2005) underpinned the problematic construction of teaching identities, leading to a recognition by participants of the need to prioritise and shape their learning journeys. This need for ongoing learning, and rapid catch-up, in most cases, became apparent for participants not only in pedagogy but also in their specific discipline. As a result, teacher-as-learner emerged as an important ongoing construct in their identity formation. Ironically, by becoming teachers, they were also committing to lifelong study in some form. If they could not perform, teenage students lost respect for them. Expert subject knowledge and a broad base of practitioner skills emerged as a prominent force in their identity as secondary teachers.

Another area in which subject paradigms seemed to influence identity was the way in which participants began to view and describe the world according to the field of knowledge they taught. The scientific paradigm, for instance, carried very different values and beliefs to those expressed by the art and music teachers, even though there were many values that all participants found they shared as teachers. Junee taught both art and science, negotiating this tension by having a different way of teaching each subject area as well as incorporating aspects of both paradigms into her own worldview. A question raised within the group is whether people are pre-disposed to a particular paradigm or whether they adopt it as part of becoming a teacher. Casual teachers may be an interesting group in terms of teacher identity because they often train in one field but end up teaching in completely different areas. The other point raised by this finding is whether thinking patterns change behaviours or whether teachers are able to put on a particular set of behaviours in order to teach certain subjects.

The next section discusses links between identity formation and the reflective processes used in this project.

5.2 Reflective practices

This study aimed to develop and refine collaborative reflective practices in order to understand and inform aspects of teacher identity formation. The following figure combines Gibbs’ 1988 model cited in Reid (2000, p.83) for reflective practice (in black) with my interpretation of Lauriala’s (2005) theory of teacher identity (red). The figure includes the iterative reflective processes we used within our focus group. Lauriala’s (2005) situated cognitive approach to teacher identity aligns with the underlying principles adopted, a focus on experiential learning, self-knowledge and the view that identity forms in situated in contexts. In addition, Lauriala emphasised that the ongoing construction of identity involves strong emotions that she found were unacknowledged in previous studies of pre-service teachers’ identity formation. The emotive aspect of forming identity as a teacher appears as ‘feelings’ on the Gibbs model. By interrogating the descriptions of experiences for sources of the emotions beneath, participants could evaluate what this meant to their sense of self as a teacher. Lauriala labels this part of the
process self concept, esteem and self-efficacy, as does Kelchtermans (2005) in his model of
teacher identity). These three factors are crucial in developing resilience as a teacher (McGrath & Noble, 2003), leading to the final three phases that enable changed action as a result of
awareness of how to negotiate and construct teacher identities.

The analysis phase of reflection lies at the base of understanding teacher identities because
aspects of self that are hard to recognize and sort clearly - values, beliefs and attitudes - are
examined through this process. Through analysis at this point, both collective and individual
aspects of identity can be explicated and interpreted. This leads to the final phase, of planning
future actions on the basis of the description, feelings, evaluation and analysis. The process is
circular and ongoing showing systematic reflective processes that can inform teacher identity
formation.

Emotional, physical and mental resilience emerged as a key theme for participants in learning to
become a teacher, but it is important to view resilience as more than an ability to cope. The
figure above encompasses the processes that enable pre-service teachers to develop greater
resilience through understanding the tensions that disrupt their self-concept, esteem and
efficacy. McGrath and Noble (2003) argue that positive self-efficacy is strongly linked to future
goals and actions because it involves personal judgements of how we might handle a situation
or task and so leads to optimistic thinking and perservence through difficulties. When these
theories of Gibbs, Lauriala and McGrath & Noble are viewed in conjunction, they appear to
explain the developmental process of awareness and transformation that was enacted in our
reflective group, both for me as facilitator as well as for the other participants. Reflective

Figure 7 Reflective processes linked to identity formation
(adapted from Gibbs, 1988, cited in Reid, 2000).
practices moved beyond technical concerns to the heart of learning about self as a teacher, and ways to shape future teacher identity.

Another reflective model that is useful to revisit in understanding the reflective processes of this study is the ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ reflection introduced by Husu et al. (2005) in Chapter 2. While emotions were a powerful propellant for participant reflection they were often hard to interpret and analyse, at least initially. In the heat of the teaching moment, participants recalled initially being overwhelmed emotionally, unable to enact strategies even if they could think of them. This reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983) or ‘hot’ reflection while teaching was concerned mainly with doing, while the ‘cool’ cognitive reflection that occurred later in our focus group assisted with developing an inner coach for future reasoning in the moment. Edelstein (1992) calls this process ‘developmental responsiveness’ so that teachers are able to use reflective skills to develop the most effective pedagogical response for a particular teaching situation. Our study supports the premise of Edelstein (1992) and Husu et al. (2005) that guided reflection, particularly with colleagues, needs to be practiced and developed by new teachers in order to improve reflective judgement and professional growth.

Guided collegial reflection has also proven useful in this study for moving the focus (see Figure 7) through stages of evaluation and analysis to the critical nexus between ought and actual selves (Lauriala, 2005). I struggled to facilitate critical reflection in the group because participants found it easier to stay with debrief of events and feelings than move to the deeper levels of analysis. As discussed earlier, examination of the feelings helped participants to bring some unconscious motivations to the surface. But, the really formative force at work underneath this emotional discomfort was how the participants could negotiate differences between what was expected of them and where they actually were at that moment. This tension provided the key to learning about and therefore influencing personal change as shown in the final two phases of Figure 7, changed attitudes and action plans.

Another aspect of Laurialas’ (2005) work with resonance for this study was the premise that prior schemas of interaction are re-stimulated and active in the identity formation of teachers. Britzman (1991) emphasises that people enter teaching with strongly perceived ideas of teachers based on their own memories of school. Our study began with recall of prior beliefs and attitudes about teachers. But, it was the sustained reflection on how these beliefs played out in practice that enabled participants to become conscious of them. It became obvious in the course of the research that much habitual behaviour was based on unexamined memories and assumptions. Reflective processes allowed Jack, Junee, Stan and Belinda to exercise greater choice about themselves as teachers because they became aware of and therefore could move beyond habitual and formulaic behaviours.

Related to unexamined habits was the flipside, that reflection also assisted participants to incorporate useful habits into their teaching practice. The group found that time for reflection on personal processes was just as important as reflecting on ways to enact content and competencies. Reflection in course assessment and teaching certification (New South Wales Institute of Teachers, 2005) still seems to favour technical concerns rather than personal development. However, there are strong links shown in Figure 7 between examination of the emotional and habitual self and conscious shaping of teacher identity and practices.
Assessment shapes reflective activities differently. Chapter 4 introduced a finding that participants viewed the non-assessable reflection conducted in the research group of greater use to them than reflective tasks included for course assessment. This is contrary to a previous study of reflection with pre-service teachers in Canada. In the late 1990’s, academics at the Education Faculty of Alberta University reformed their secondary-teacher education program to assess student reflections on their teaching experience and observations, rather than evaluate their teaching performance (Carson, 1997). The reasons given for the changes were that they recognised ‘the narrowness of technically prescriptive interpretations of teaching’ (Carson, 1997, p.77) and believed that discourses of reflection offered a stronger bridge for students between their personal and professional development as teachers. While the underlying premise of the current project and the Canadian action research project were similar, it is significant in this study that collaborative reflection by the pre-service teachers was more effective and diverse when not assessed. Inclusion of reflection in teacher-education courses with ‘satisfied requirements’ rather than graded assessment may foster greater reflexivity in future teachers than a performative approach.

5.3 Conscious informed choices

As stated throughout this thesis, the aim of concentrating on reflective practice within an action research framework was to increase the potential for participants to make conscious informed choices about their teacher identity formation. Simply being conscious of dilemmas can not change some problematic social and material aspects of teaching (Husu, Patrikaninen & Toom, 2005). The following section examines the notion of informed choices explored within the personal and professional parameters of each participant.

This study supports the premise that the construct of teacher-as-learner is central to pre-service secondary teachers’ development of ‘pedagogical reasoning’ (Loughran, 2005). Subject disciplines in Australian schools are organised into clusters of subjects while undergraduate university degrees require students to specialise within their broader discipline. As discussed in the findings, teaching faculties may require the new teacher to teach up to five subjects that they did not initially study. For example science teachers may need to teach agriculture, physics, chemistry, biology, and environmental science. Artists and musicians are also required to teach a range of techniques and styles beyond their undergraduate experience. In addition, rapid pedagogical change in teaching contexts and content require constant upgrading of professional knowledge. While the choice to become a teacher is also a choice to develop a broad knowledge and skills base from a specialist background, this choice was not conscious among participants initially. Greater awareness of the scope of secondary teaching duties needs to be encouraged from the outset of learning to teach in order for pre-service teachers to make conscious choices about themselves as learners. In this way, Dewey’s (1938) concept of remaining a student of teaching endures as an essential aspect of effective teacher identities.

Sustained reflection assisted participants to develop a sense of perspective about their growth emotionally and intellectually as teachers. Rather than feeling put off by difficult circumstances, the transcripts of meetings allowed participants to review their highs and lows as part of the learning process. In this way, being aware of the many small steps that make up a steep learning curve fostered resilience and self-efficacy. As well as being able to debrief at the time, members of the group could revisit in transcripts what they had said in idealistic or disenchanted moments. The capacity to notice changes and access a range of responses are part of emerging
teacher behaviours (Mason, 2002) that students can strengthen through reflection on and for action.

The gap between awareness and embodied choices is also part of the experiential learning curve that participants learnt to notice. This gap, common to novices (Benner, 1984), was lessened by rehearsing focussed attention and a critical stance to teaching practices within the group. While this process is common to most stages of learning, sustained systematic reflection assisted participants to move from ‘intuitive theories to conscious theories’ (Dick, 1997) about their teacher identities. In order to substantiate this claim, however, I will draw upon the changes participants perceived in themselves as a result of our research together.

5.4 Changes perceived by participants as a result of research processes

Specific outcomes attributed to use of reflective processes by participants were increased confidence and self-efficacy, but this varied considerably between individuals. The confidence to hold and express opinions based on teaching experiences developed over time so that each participant was able to discuss divergent view points on aspects of practice. This collegial dialogue extended as members of the research group engaged with other teachers in professional experience placements as well as with their own peers. As a result, greater appreciation for collegiality was generated in the group, a factor identified as crucial to professional development in teachers (Ramsey, 2000). Viewed critically, however, changes in confidence and self-efficacy were highly dependent on teaching contexts and a range of constraints beyond the control of participants.

Being able to problematise and talk about issues did not alleviate any of the challenges involved in being a new teacher. Jack preferred to miss a meeting when faced with pressure of assignments and lesson preparation, viewing reflective time as useful but not essential to his self-understanding. The other three participants however said that they appreciated thinking time with others to break down feelings of isolation. Participants seemed to use the reflective forum of the group in different ways according to their needs at the time.

The sense of self-efficacy experienced by group members emerged through dialogue and was initiated and sustained by participants rather than the facilitator. The need for reflective prompts lessened as capacity for professional dialogue increased amongst Junee, Belinda, Jack and Stan. Reflective discussion towards the end of the second cycle in September became more detailed for most participants because they had several placements to compare and evaluate together, with specific details of teaching dilemmas rather than theoretical constructs. Teacher self-efficacy and confidence to hold and justify opinions is stronger at the end of a teaching course for most students (Britzman, 1991). However, the ability of participants to be more authoritative in educational discussion in the final four meetings does indicate that they had developed a stronger sense of teacher identity. This links the value of debate and focussed discussion on educational issues in the final stages of teacher education with self-efficacy in order for pre-service teachers to clarify their educational philosophies and approaches.

5.5 Technical competence discourse

The view of teacher as ‘technician’ was prevalent among the pre-service participants throughout the project despite attempts to critically analyse this view. As facilitating researcher, I attempted
to challenge this shared perception but the belief persisted among participants that skills mattered most. The desire to know what works, to gain strategies, dominated the focus of group discussions, even though participants acknowledged that when they unpacked this assumed need, there was no handy list of solutions. I needed to be reflexive in order to avoid the temptation to add ‘tips and tricks’ (Loughran, 2005) during meetings. However, the research journey to discover aspects of secondary teacher identity was also my own, so I shared some stories as a means of uncovering issues or adding examples to discussion. In order to deepen reflections beyond technical concerns, we needed to learn how to work with uncertainty rather than seek certainty and solutions for complex problematic issues.

Reflection appeared to integrate into the thinking and acting processes of most participants as the research progressed. The first level of reflection, related to technical concerns in van Manen’s (1991) schema, is concerned with efficient and effective practice. This was the reason for participants to join the research project, the desire to become better teachers through learning to become reflective. With the addition of key critical questions (Fisher, 2004) the group were able to operate at the second level of ‘practical’ reflection, relying upon an examination of underlying rationale, beliefs and consequences of actions. The embodied nature of this process is discussed in the findings in Chapter 4, in particular the final round-up where critical reflection was clearly evident. The third level of reflection is traditionally seen as critical reflection (Taylor, 2003; van Manen, 1998) and questioned the value of professional actions and goals. By moving beyond technical concerns, participants began to link everyday practice with ‘broader social structure and forces’ (Taylor, 2006, p.178). Forward projection of ‘when I get into a school I want to…’ is a fragment of intent about effecting change as a teacher, a process informed by awareness of school and social structures and constraints.

The need to know the unconscious aspects of self that drive ones actions when teaching are not apparent in teaching standards that favour technical competencies. Yet this research project has focussed on making unexamined aspects of self conscious in order to be a better teacher.

### 5.6 Problematic issues in the research process

The research project was limited to some extent by a lack of time experienced by the participants with work, family and study commitments. The first time-related problem encountered was the difficulty of securing participants despite extensive advertising and promotion. Even though only eighteen hours in total was initially sought for the project throughout the year (nine meetings of two hours duration), few who indicated interest were able to commit. Therefore the group had four participants rather than a preferred number of six or eight. The competing pressures of course work, lesson preparation and having family and work commitments made it difficult for some participants to maintain full commitment to the research. Initially, we decided as a group to change meeting times to ensure that every-one could get there but attendance at meetings was not consistent. The occasional absence of a member did not prevent the reflective process from taking place but changed dynamics within the group. Fewer people attending did allow time for greater intensity of discussion because ideas could move back and forth more rapidly than in the group of five, but viewpoints were less diverse.

My lack of experience in facilitation as the participant-researcher is listed here as a limitation because the process is open to further refinement in the future. While the group refined
reflective processes through action research, scaffolding and other techniques could be
developed further in future projects to make meeting times more efficient. The initial
transcriptions reveal a great deal of the more comfortable aspects of description such as
describing what happened and the feelings associated, without attending to the more critical
aspects of what underlay these feelings and actions. A more experienced facilitator may have
made the process more challenging and ‘critical’ in orientation from the outset. By using action
research to improve my facilitation of the group, I aimed to avoid dominating or unduly
influencing reflections as an experienced teacher. As a result, I tried to facilitate by asking
questions rather than giving opinions. It became obvious that I needed to model reflective
practice for the others through being reflective on my own teaching practice and identity in
order to facilitate the group effectively.

The espoused intention differed from the practical operation of the group. The intention was
‘social construction’ (Olivares, 2005) that involves collaborative learning in the hands of the
participants, without undue influence of the facilitator. In reality, the group preferred greater
structure and direction from me as facilitator. The reflective scaffolds used in all but one of the
meetings were prepared as both a summation and an expansion of emerging themes in order to
hold the research focus on the central question. When each participant received an emailed
scaffold before meetings, they had an opportunity to change or add to these for meetings. Parts
of scaffolds became unnecessary on several occasions when data rich discussion was underway.
In this sense, the distinction made by Olivares (2005) between cooperative and collaborative
critical thinking was blunted in our study, since many of the decisions were left to me as
facilitator. In a truly collaborative group, all decisions are made jointly. On reflection, this
worked for our particular group, but may not work as easily in other situations.

The next section of this chapter examines how the findings of this research relate to the context
of teacher education practices. The findings are not meant to essentialise participant experiences
even when they have been discussed as collective concerns. Throughout it has been important to
view the stories and experiences of participants as individually contextualised rather than
providing overall theories.

5.7 Teacher education

The following issues of course structure, content, context and supervision are specific to the
pre-service phase of teacher identity formation, since they concern the teacher education
experiences of participants. While the structure of the two teacher education courses represented
in this study, Combined Degree and Diploma of Education seemed to have a significant impact
on participant identity formation, further research could clarify these links. Of particular interest
would be course structures that enhance effective teacher identity formation. Initial data analysis
suggests that the units of work and assessments participants studied within both courses were
highly influential on the ways they viewed themselves as teachers. For example, when
contentious issues about teaching special needs students in inclusive classrooms became the
focal point of meeting four, only two of the participants had gained professional classroom
experience at that stage. In the Diploma of Education, the practicum did not occur until nearly
half way through the course, so that much of the early reflection was ‘dry’, rather than based in
experience. Even so, the identification of personal theories, beliefs and assumptions proved to
be enlightening before entering the classroom to teach, according to Stan and Junee.
The influence of specific course content on teacher identity formation needs further exploration to discover if there are links between the timing of course content presentation and the way pre-service interpret their identity. In this study, ‘hot’ issues seemed to coincide with course content in lectures, assignments and professional experience. While the findings are not conclusive, it seems that self-concept and efficacy are strongly linked to the particular curriculum spiral in place. Further to this is the influence of subject disciplines on teacher identity formation. While the current study drew on the work of Siskin (1994) in seeking links between subject discipline, teacher identity and subsequent teaching practice, further exploration of this aspect of secondary teacher identity is needed.

Differences between metropolitan and rural school Professional Experience placements would also be worthy of further research. While the finding emerged that practicum placements had a strong influence on teacher identity formation and efficacy among the participants, the scope of the study was a small sample in a rural context. The studies cited in Chapter 2 that concerned group placements and team approaches in professional experience placement (Fawns, Jacques, Sadler & Rodrigues, 2001; Gibson, 2005) occurred in metropolitan settings. It would be of interest to identify factors in professional experience placements such as setting and choice of context that may have bearing on teacher identity formation.

Further research is needed on the relationship between supervision practices and the formation of teacher identity, particularly for secondary teachers with very little or no access to systematic mentoring in New South Wales (the state in which this research was conducted). The two studies of most relevance to this context (Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002; Ramsey, 2000) both concluded that supervision of teachers needed to be more systematic in order to promote quality teaching. Participants in this study cite that their experiences with supervising teachers were very influential on the way they saw themselves as teachers, but as a small study it is evident that more wide-scale research is needed. Some participants did experience excellent mentoring and encouragement in their school placements, but the process was random and problematic overall.

Teaching relationships and the ability of teachers to communicate effectively with other members of the educational community need to be researched in relation to secondary teachers since most research pertains to elementary school teachers (Dinham & Scott, 2000). This study notes that working with teenagers holds specific relational issues that impinge on and define the identity of secondary teachers, separate from other teaching sectors. Some current texts in use in Australian teacher education (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2003; Wragg, 2004) make reference to the relational expectations upon teachers, but research may provide further understanding in this important area of teacher identity formation.

The finding that collegiality among pre-service teachers was minimal within their teacher education courses suggests that notions of collegiality need to be researched further. While group work was present in the preparation and presentation of some seminars, debrief time was informal or non-existent. Participants cited our research focus group as providing a valuable means to make sense of professional experience placements as well as contentious aspects of course content. The opportunity to share strategies and evaluate them is a shared example of collegiality valued by the research group. Time for the expression of diverse opinions and the opportunity to challenge and clarify issues through critical discussion was another aspect of collegiality afforded by the group. These findings concur with studies on collegiality
Chapter 5 – A Fine Adventure: Significance and Conclusions

(Hargreaves, 1994; Harris & Anthony, 2001; Honey, 1998; Jarzabkowski, 2001) that call for further exploration and application of practices that build upon collegiality among teachers from the outset of teacher identity formation.

This study provides an example of expanded notions of reflective practice from those currently espoused in *Teaching Australia* and the New South Wales Institute of Teachers documents and competency lists. For instance, reflective scaffolds adopted for this study are widely used in overseas teacher education programs (Henniger, 2004; Husu, Patrikaninen & Toom, 2005; Pollard, 2002), but are less evident in Australian literature. The approach adopted in this study emphasizes personal development, particularly ‘habits of noticing’ as part of teacher development, enabling pre-service teachers to join the wider educational research community. This approach also encourages a view that being a researcher is part of being a teacher, as is metacognitive practice. Reflection can be seen as an essential and systematic part of the learning journey of teachers, rather than a competency to be met.

The second significant link that this study makes with current teacher education practice is to acknowledge the relational aspects of teaching as part of understanding what it means to be a teacher. Mentor teams similar to the make-up of our group could be established with minimal expense and time commitment. In this way, experienced teachers could refresh their practice and improve supervisory capability while fostering collegiality and reflection among pre-service teachers. Each of us in the research group acknowledged that there was personal gain for us in knowing ourselves better as teachers. The pre-service participants entered expecting to learn more about themselves as teachers, but I was surprised to experience so much personal growth as the facilitator. The renewal of my commitment and interest in pedagogy at both secondary and tertiary levels has been both personally and professionally transformational due to this study. Critical engagement with current literature and educational theory is not common with my teaching peers unless someone is preparing for promotion. The study was also a valuable collegial forum with people keen and enthusiastic about teaching, again not a common experience for me amongst experienced. The enrichment of relationships and personal awareness from those engaging in this study emerge as the most useful professional development of my career in relation to teacher education to date.

5.8 Concluding statement and questions arising

Four journeys of becoming a secondary school teacher are documented in this thesis, along with my own journey of learning to facilitate more critically conscious approaches to teacher identity formation. Has our exploration together brought us any closer to recognising and consciously constructing our teacher identities? Are improvements to our practices merely changes to *knowing* and *doing* without creating shifts in the third aspect of identity that is, *being*? (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Action research provided an iterative means of reflecting, planning and acting upon issues about being a teacher so that we could share our stories with the wider educational community. Through unpicking and then re-weaving values, beliefs and attitudes about self and teaching, personal sense making became professional awareness. The complexities of teaching are not easily negotiated, particularly for pre-service teachers with a limited base of experience as teachers. Being informed of issues through critical examination did enable greater choice about ongoing construction of aspects of identity.
The notion of informed choices was a connecting thread in all of the themes that emerged in the nine month research period. Being informed relies upon noticing what is going on at the time and having a range of strategies to draw upon so that reactions are reasoned rather than habitual. Choice was also enacted for participants in the collaborative research method chosen. Participants chose to join the research, chose the direction and content of the research and ultimately chose the behaviours that defined them as teachers. Formation of teacher identities, learning to negotiate tensions within both the university course and in professional experience placements is highly individualised, with few processes that ‘fit all’. This study argues that reflection with peers can facilitate aware choices in shaping personal teacher identities through providing both encouragement and challenges to thinking. Critique of shared concerns and similar circumstances provides pre-service teachers with an opportunity to negotiate both the collective and individual aspects of their teacher identity formation.

While participatory research seeks commonality, it also provides the opportunity for differences to be discussed, negotiated and valued by others. I propose that it was the differences between participant perceptions as much as their commonalities that were of interest in examining construction of teacher identities. By reflecting with others to integrate ‘repositionings of self’, participants were able to recognize the ‘me or not me’ aspects of themselves in relation to professional expectations and personal capability. Adaptation of pre-held attitudes and habitual behaviours to the particular contexts of varied teaching experiences was possible through sustained critical reflection on options and consequences. The pre-service teachers involved did not have choice about many of the external factors influencing their teacher identities, but critical awareness gave them some degree of resilience in negotiating them. Taking time to reflect worked to provide a de-pressured learning space for participants in a period of intense demands on time and thinking during teacher education.

Finally, both the process and findings of this study have considerable significance for the participants who engaged in a conscious construction of their teacher identities throughout the project. The findings also have relevance for those interested in promoting the professional and personal growth of pre-service teachers. I do hope this research will add to the cumulative knowledge base of teachers and teacher educators in regards to pre-service secondary teacher identity formation. All in all, it was a fine adventure together.
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Secondary student-teachers needed!

Southern Cross University
Educational Research Project

*How do we develop into capable, confident teachers?*

How do you find your way through the complexities of becoming a teacher?

What does it mean to be a professional?

How can we develop and improve our teaching through reflective practice?

These are some of the questions to be pursued in this action research project. The research will be facilitated by Ms Marian Webb, Master of Education student, in the School of Education.

The research has been approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee. Your voice and insights will make a valuable contribution to conversation and action in teacher education experiences.

Are you interested in becoming part of this action research group? Are you interested in critically examining what it is to be a teacher?

If you would like more information please contact Marian Webb on 0413268238 or mazwebb@optusnet.com.
## Appendix 2  Original action plan outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Proposed timetable of action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Week 2</td>
<td>Orientation Week</td>
<td>Issue invitation to participate via MySCU; student newspaper; fliers and Education lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 1</td>
<td>Pre-practicum 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Participants describe their perceptions of teaching and themselves as future teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March-April Wks 5,6,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher introduces principles of action research, reflective practice and group processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sign Letter of Consent and negotiate meeting times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Group uses a reflective scaffold based on previous weeks discussions to clarify perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of teachers &amp; research process. Notes from previous meeting will be emailed to @ person before meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Reflect on changing values and beliefs about teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Form action plan of strategies for prac. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
<td>Post-prac. One 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Describe a prac. experience with focus on changing teacher perceptions of identity and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August-September Wks 3,5,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Examine further prac.experiences in relation to identity and professional practice; ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>constraints &amp; differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Form plan of strategies for prac. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 3</td>
<td>Post-prac. Two 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Describe new perceptions of self and the job within the two practicum contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October-November Wks (to be negotiated)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group prepares a reflective scaffold for next meeting to clarify reasons for this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Critical evaluation using collaborative reflective scaffold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Meeting</td>
<td>Final member-check of all reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of research focus; process and outcomes for each participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. -Feb. 2005</td>
<td>Final data write-up</td>
<td>Summation of group findings and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare thesis</td>
<td>ID of themes related to current literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3  Information to participants about the research

DOING ACTION RESEARCH

The key principles of this research process:

• Action research is an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences of the changes.

• Action research is participatory. It is research through which people work towards the improvement of their own practices.

• Action research is collaborative. It involves those responsible for the action in improving it.

• Action research establishes self-critical communities.

• Action research develops through the self-reflective spiral of:

  1. Planning
  2. Acting
  3. Observing
  4. Reflecting

Our initial reflections will be on what it means to be a teacher: perceptions; memories; hopes; fears; beliefs; attitudes and assumptions. We will become critical friends by listening to each other telling teaching stories then unpacking these ideas of teacher identity through questioning, examining and challenging assumptions. These regular peer support meetings throughout the research project will provide the process for reflecting upon teaching experiences; and planning for changes you may want to make. By observing the effects of these changes to your actions, you can take conscious, ongoing steps to choose your professional identity rather than just fall into it. These reflective skills enhance life-long learning.

Reflection recalls actions then aims to make sense of them according to the context (school or University) and constraints affecting them. Beyond ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘how I felt’ will lie ‘why’ .... the complex social, personal and political influences upon us as developing teachers.

Together we will explore the processes of action research and reflective practice for identity formation. We will also provide new insights into the becoming and being of teacher identity that goes beyond technical rationality into the realms of intuition and inspiration. In a climate of rapid educational change, your voices and your journey will provide snapshots of ways to teach and learn with adolescents in the classroom.

Adapted from:

1. Professional Practice in Education by Neville Jennings (p46); SCU, (2000).
2. Improving the Quality of Hospital Nursing Care through Action Research and Reflective Practice by Professor Bev Taylor (p86); SCU (2000).
Appendix 4  Informed consent form


Thank you for your interest in participating in this action research group to examine how we develop our identity as teachers through collaborative reflective practice.

Several action research cycles of reflecting, planning, acting and observing will be negotiated within the group according to the interests and accessibility of each member. We will meet three times per cycle to develop reflective skills through critical examination of what it is to be a teacher.

Cycle 1: pre-Practicum one (3 meetings) Wks 5,6,7, Semester 1
Cycle 2: pre-Practicum two (3 meetings) Wks 3,5,7, Semester 2
Cycle 3: post-Practicum two(3 meetings) Wks 11,12,13, Semester 2

It is important that you can sustain your commitment to attending the group regularly.

The meetings will be tape-recorded, transcribed and returned to you to check for accuracy. The tapes will be stored safely for five years then destroyed. The content of meetings remains confidential. If stories are used, they will be presented anonymously or with a pseudonym. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are entirely free at any stage to withdraw from the project, by contacting me in writing, or by email.

Throughout the research, should you have any suggestions to make, questions to ask, information to give, or for any reasons wish to contact me, you may phone me on 0413724231 or you are welcome to email me at mazwebb@optusnet.com. I look forward to our working together.

Marian Webb
Masters of Education Candidate,
Southern Cross University

☐ Yes. I am happy to participate in the action research group throughout 2004. I understand that our discussions will be tape-recorded and that excerpts from these discussions will be used anonymously for the purpose of the research. I understand that the information will not be identified to me personally in any way during the reporting. I am aware that trust and confidentiality are important to the group process and so I agree to honour these principles. I know that my participation is voluntary so that I can withdraw at any time.

I am aware that I can contact Dr Anne Graham (Research Supervisor) by telephone: (02) 66203613 or email: agraham@scu.edu.au if I have additional questions about this study.

If I have any problems associated with the conduct of this project I can contact Southern Cross University’s Ethics Complaints Officer, Mr John Russell, by telephone (02) 66 203705 or email jrussell@scu.edu.au.

I have read the information above, and agree to participate in this study. I am over 18 years of age.

Your name: ____________________________
Signature: _____________________________
Date: _________________________________

Please keep one copy of this letter for your own reference and return the signed copy to me.

I certify that the terms of the form have been verbally explained to the participant, that the participant appears to understand the terms prior to signing the form, and that proper arrangements have been made for an interpreter where English is not the participant’s first language. I asked the participant if she/he needed to discuss the project with an independent person before signing and she/he declined (or has done so).

Signature of the researcher: ____________________________ Date: ____________
Appendix 5  Reflective scaffolds

Meeting One Scaffold

1. Why do you want to be a teacher?

2. What teachers do you remember from your past and why?

3. What do you need to do to be a ‘good’ teacher?

4. Where do these ideas come from?

5. What are your hopes as a teacher?

6. What are your fears about teaching?

7. Anything else you want to add:
Reflective Scaffold for Meetings 2 and 3

Are there any changes in your perceptions of yourself as a teacher since we met last? .......................... 

...common themes to explore from meeting 1:

The fun factor (humour):
1. Why does school need to be fun .............................................................................................. 
2. Where did you get this idea come from .................................................................................... 
3. Is this concept of fun introduced in teacher training ................................................................ .. 
4. Word associations with fun ....................................................................................................... 
5. What do you expect of yourself to make learning fun .............................................................. 

Making a difference:
1. What does this mean?............................................................................................................... 
2. How important is a value-system to your sense of being a teacher eg. sense of good and bad; right and wrong; intelligent or not; acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour? ...................................... .. 
3. Are there any cultural values we should be passing on as teachers and why? ......................... 

First year out:
1. What are the constraints/pressures you may face? ...............................................................
2. What strengths do you see yourself having? ............................................................................ .. 
3. What deficiencies do you think may cause problems? .............................................................. 
4. What strategies are you planning? ............................................................................................ 

.....themes to explore adapted from ‘Reflective Teaching’ text (Pollard 2002, p92):

Recall a situation in which you were a teacher and try to identify the following aspects of your ‘self’ from that situation:

1. Public display (parts you publicly present)
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 

2. Dreamer spots (parts you would like to develop)
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 

3. Blind spots (parts you do not often face up to)
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 

4. Untapped Reservoir (parts you think might be there)
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • ............................................................................................................................................. 
   • .............................................................................................................................................
Paraphrase of p.92  *Replace blind spots with insights; develop dreams and ideals into realities; tap your full potential and facilitate learning.*

**Comparing values and beliefs** group come up with various answers to:
- I believe as a teacher that ............ and
- Values I represent as a teacher are ...........

**REFLECT ON GROUP PROCESS:**

Is there anything useful/not useful in the group?

What issues would you like to explore at the next meeting?

**ACTION PLAN STRATEGIES**
- ........................................................................................................................................
- ........................................................................................................................................
Reflective scaffold for Meeting 5

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION:

How can you make professional identity formation in teachers a conscious, informed process?

Questions revisited:

1. Are there any changes in your perceptions of yourself as a teacher since we met last?

2. Why do you want to be a teacher? Has this changed?

3. Where do these ideas come from?

4. Why do you value them?

5. What knowledge was valued in your home as you grew up?

6. How does this influence you now?

7. What has changed since you started teacher training?

8. What assumptions have been challenged for you in this time?

9. Are you aware of any assumptions you still make while teaching?
Meeting 6 first cycle summary

How can you make professional identity formation in teachers a conscious, informed process?
This the focus of the research, but after four meetings where are we in terms of process and data collection?

Process:
- Need to have all 4 participants at each meeting
- Stick to one hour with clear focus
- Have quiet speakers closer to recording mic
- Maz needs to be clear on acknowledging the experiences of others with her own stories, rather than leading or influencing opinions
- The meeting which didn’t use a scaffold was more rambling but unearthed some interesting issues eg. Implications of teacher performance pay and teaching in disadvantaged schools or classrooms
- Is it enough to reflect on issues as they arise or do we need to be more systematic?
- What would we like to plan for in the next cycle of research that will reveal more about how we make sense of becoming teachers?

Reflections on Identity:
Who am I as a teacher:
- a) that is different from before my training began
- b) that is the same as before I started
- c) what percentage of your self is a teacher

What sort of worker is a teacher?
- The most important aspect of my work is
- The working conditions (pos. and neg.) in contrast to other jobs I’ve had
- Rules: spoken unspoken
- What is your ‘product’?
- What compromises do you make for this job?
- What advantages are there
- What evidence is there of your work ‘quality’

Comment on the usefulness of sources of information about being a teacher:
- a) Books
- b) Other teachers
- c) University
- d) Media
- e) Your intuition
- f) Other
- g) Other

Values
- Have you had to change any of your own
- Are there clear shared teacher values
- How do you know what these are
- Are these fixed or changeable
- Are there values that you don’t agree with
- Is there a difference between what you value and what you do as a teacher
- What do you value in your current curriculum and what would you like to change

Technology: hasn’t been mentioned by any-one as impacting on their professional identity and yet teaching has been transformed by changes in technology in the past 15-20 years.
- What impact has technology had on you as a teacher so far
- What impact might it have in the future

Meaning making: how are you making sense of your experiences in teaching?
Making a difference: what personal investment is required to do this?
How do you aim to do this?

What would you like more of in your training?
How could this be achieved?
Professionalism Reflective Scaffold, Cycle 2, Meeting One

Core questions to keep asking:
1. How do you see yourself as a teacher?
2. How do you present yourself as a teacher?
3. What do you consider important as a teacher?

Aspects of professional identity:
- **Skill mastery**: knowledge (subject specific; learning theories; policies; systems);
  - Organisation
  - People skills
  - Ongoing learning curves: being a student for the rest of your working life
  - Self-knowledge
- **Pathways from novice to expert**: how have teaching experiences changed your knowledge?
- **Capability** (able to learn/develop new skills) to deal with change v/s specific strategies:
  - How do you feel about uncertainty and change?
  - Are you able to be a learner the rest of your life?
  - What does it mean to be capable?
  - What does a diversity of learners in the classroom mean for your working environment?
- **Personal confidence**:
  - What strategies give you confidence?
  - What situations sap your confidence?
  - How does your emotional/mental state effect your teaching?
- **Professional behaviours/duties/responsibilities**
- **Change in status and work opportunities**:
  - Do you feel professional?
  - What is different about this profession than others you have experienced?
- **Presentation**: what does a professional look/sound/feel like
- **Member of an elite group**
- **Community perceptions**
- **Personal changes/challenges to conform**
- **Life long learning**
- **Comparisons with other professional occupations**
- **Working within a system: government or independent**
- **Career aspirations**
- **Other aspects of being a professional**
Cycle 2, Meeting 2

Theme: Classroom management

Agreed principles:

• Meet for one hour only
• Have a short list of possible prompts
• Use email to send reflections or ideas between meetings
• Meet every three weeks
• Share strategies that work

Suggested additions from Maz:

• 'brief-but-vivid': bring a couple of brief stories of situations you want to reflect on, aim to give account-of rather than account-for what happened
• plan for future action: use the reflection as the way of identifying different ways of acting in the future; state these as conscious plans to the group
• inner-witness: like putting on the ogre persona, aim to have a part of you observe the action

Aims: to ask questions only and provide information if asked for rather than talking so much .... Here’s some possible reflective points:

• What are your basic classroom management strategies? What works and doesn’t work about them?
• Are these different to the ways you would like to work with students?
• What actions/strategies would you like to take on board in the future?
Multicultural Classrooms, School and Community Scaffold for Meeting 3, Cycle 2

Links with community

Formal links

- Parent teacher nights
- Parent interviews
- Some parents see schools as a hostile place, only go there when their child is in trouble
- School functions
- School involvement in community functions
- Other

Informal links

- Sporting or cultural activities
- Living in the same community
- Other interests

Resources for information on community

- Long term teachers
- Old school magazines, photos and videos
- Driving around the area
- Local paper
- Local library or council
- Parents and kids (Getting to Know You sheets)
- Documentation in school

Multicultural values:

Values in NSW Public Schools document: “Reflection, explicit teaching and discussion of the core values are essential for schools to communicate to the public the values being taught to students.

- Core values: integrity, excellence; responsibility; cooperation; participation; care; democracy and:
- Respect: “having regard for yourself and others, lawful and just authority and diversity within Australian society and accepting the right of others to hold different or opposing views” AND
- Fairness: “being committed to the principles of social justice and opposing prejudice, dishonesty and injustice.”
Final Scaffold: Reflective Teachers’ Project round-off

The purpose of this final check-in is to review your thoughts and feelings about your teaching course; the place of our reflective group in this; and so that I can fill-in gaps in data/reflections to complete the research project. I need this ASAP, let me know by phone or email if you would prefer to do this ‘verbally’, face-to-face.

1. What changes did you notice in yourself over the year as a result of having engaged in some reflection: as a person and as a teacher? ................................................................................................ .

2. Have your actions, beliefs and teaching practices changed during the project? Examples? .

3. What stands out for you as a significant moment in ‘learning to be a teacher’ (connections between personal identity and professional identity)? ..................................... .

4. Do you see yourself as a critically reflective professional and what does this offer you and your work as a teacher? ................................................................. .

5. Life-long learning: what have you identified as a priority for further development in improving your practice as a teacher? ................................................................. .

6. How do the following impact on the kind of teacher you are:
   - stress levels and health ........................................................................................................
   - sources of satisfaction in teaching ........................................................................................
   - how your experiences as a student/adolescent influence your teaching .............................
   - Gender: this didn’t feature strongly in our discussions, but how does it influence your identity as a teacher? Would things be different if you were a man or a woman? .........................................................
   - educational funding? ...........................................................................................................
   - streamed or non-streamed classes? ......................................................................................
   - supervising teachers? ...........................................................................................................
   - different school environments. .............................................................................................
   - social background of the students ......................................................................................

7. The issues of concern for the group seemed to match the content of units you were studying at the time. To what extent do you think the University course has shaped your teacher identity, in different units eg: practicum, curriculum specialisation and other units? .........................................................

8. What was useful about the reflective teachers’ group? ...............................................................
9. What was not useful or could have been better?

10. Was there a difference between reflecting for course assessment and reflecting in this group? Why?

11. Were there other factors that influenced your reflections?

12. Did the research project serve your needs and how do you see it now?

Suggestions?

13. How valuable is reflection time for you in relation to action? What ways work best for you?

The central question of this research has been “How can the formation of professional identity in pre-service secondary school teachers be made a more conscious, informed process?”... any comments or insights?