The development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing authentic learning experiences

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The development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing authentic learning experiences

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy
From the
University of Wollongong

By

Jessica Mantei
Masters of Education (Research), 2006
University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education
2010
I, Jessica Mantei declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Jessica Mantei
2nd March 2010
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Dad,
David Miller
who taught me to love to read and that I can read anything

To my Mum,
Margaret Miller
my first professional mentor and colleague

And to my husband,
Michael Mantei
who tolerates my reading late into the night
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*With thanks*....

Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jan Turbill, your commitment, encouragement, patience and scaffolding of my learning are sincerely appreciated. You are true teachers and true friends.

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To my friends and colleagues in Building 23, our cups of tea and professional conversations about theories and methodologies were surpassed only by our cups of tea and less professional conversations about things other than theories and methodologies. Phill, Lisa and Lisa, what a team! Thanks to Julie, my personal librarian.

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Michael, Veronica, Eleanor and Oscar, a simple thank you barely seems enough for the ways you have generously and graciously accommodated this student for the last 3 years. Thank you 😊.
Abstract

The retirement of a significant proportion of late career teachers from Australian schools has meant early and mid career teachers are responsible for reshaping pedagogies to enable today’s students to engage with learning experiences relevant to their needs in authentic learning contexts. The literature reports that reflected in a teacher’s ability to design authentic learning experiences (see Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Herrington & Oliver, 2000) are the beliefs a teacher holds about what it is to be a teacher, that is, their professional identity (Ramsey, 2000; Rowe, 2003).

The professional identity of an early career teacher is reported as somewhat fragile and vulnerable to the demands and pressures of the first years of classroom practice (see Darling-Hammond, 2006a; McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006). A closer focus on the development of professional identity during preservice teacher education could support early career teachers’ ‘survival’ during these early years.

This inquiry investigates the development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing authentic learning experiences. Specifically, it explores the ways early career teachers’ abilities to plan and design authentic learning experiences change in response to the development of their professional identity.

The inquiry adopted a design-based approach (Reeves, 2000, 2006) as an organisational frame as it provided a useful way to organise and report the phases of the inquiry and the different focus taken for each. Within this frame, a qualitative research design employed ethnographic principles and action research to collect and analyse rich data from two groups of participants: experienced classroom teachers and early career teachers.

Data were analysed using the constant comparison method through the multiple lenses of quality teaching (see Darling-Hammond, 1997; Ramsey, 2000), authentic learning
experiences (see Brown et al., 1989; Herrington & Oliver, 2000) and professional identity (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Wenger, 1998).

The results of this inquiry generated a theory for the development of a professional identity that focuses not only on oneself as a teacher in a particular school, but also on the types of learners one aims to develop. Further, the findings of this inquiry argue for a professional identity that identifies with teachers beyond the immediate setting of a single school to active engagement within the broader community of teachers. Findings of the inquiry highlighted the ways that teacher education programs can advance the skills of reflective practice, professional dialogue, making connections between theory and practice and active participation within the community of professional teachers to develop an identity that equips early career teachers for the rigours of teaching. Consequently, the theory for the development of professional identity also calls teacher educators to reflect on their own identities and the ways they are translated into learning experiences.

The findings of the inquiry support the argument that questions of identity and the principles for the development of professional identity are related to the development of a professional identity that is characterised by resilience, durability and responsibility. The development of a sense of professional responsibility was observed to empower the early career teachers in this inquiry to participate in the practices of a range of teaching communities, both as consumers and producers of knowledge.

Such findings, it is argued, are critical for teacher educators to consider as they plan learning experiences that support early career teachers as they enter the teaching profession.
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Chapter 1

Introduction
‘Teachers in all futures are bound by a shared professional commitment to giving students the best education possible for them to lead fulfilling, purposeful and productive lives’ (Freeman, Watson, Bawden, Champion, Dare, Lloyd & Williams, (The Neville Freeman Agency with Teaching Australia), 2008, p. 51)

It appears to be a long held view in the media both in Australia and internationally that schools are deficit in meeting the needs of learners of today. Teachers are expected to operate as global citizens capable of engaging learners in events and practices within their own communities and beyond. Common calls are for teachers to be better trained, have deeper content knowledge, know more theory, be more passionate and possess superior ability in skills such as spelling and grammar.

Teaching that encompasses these elements is described as quality teaching (NSW DET, 2003). Quality teaching is underpinned by a teacher’s deep pedagogical understandings and an informed philosophy of learning that includes a belief about their own role in supporting this learning (Alton-Lee, 2003; NSW DET, 2003). That is to say, quality teaching occurs as a teacher’s professional identity shapes the design, planning and facilitation of classroom learning experiences. Quality teaching is considered a skill borne of the practice, reflection, professional growth and professional identity associated with more experienced teachers. Many teachers in Australia are in the late stages of their careers and poised to retire, taking with them a wealth of knowledge about not only how to teach, but what it is to be a teacher. This also means that teachers earlier in their careers will have opportunities to construct and promote themselves as key to the pedagogies of tomorrow. The departure of so many teachers at one time creates in schools an exciting environment for growth and change, but is not without its challenges.

Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) argue that quality teaching is achieved after approximately 3-5 years of classroom experience. This early period of teaching is characterised by ongoing challenges to one’s professional identity as the beliefs developed prior to teaching are translated into learning experiences. Such challenges threaten to
become overwhelming as early career teachers struggle to sustain their emerging teacher selves and meet the many demands of teaching practice. A professional identity that can endure and develop as early career teachers ‘test out’ their beliefs through the learning experiences they design is crucial in developing the skills and abilities for quality teaching.

This inquiry aims to better understand the development of professional identity as early career teachers consider the design and implementation of learning experiences in their classrooms. It explores the development of professional identity in early career teachers based on three key premises:

- Learning for primary school students best occurs through authentic learning experiences because they allow learners to make personal connections to their own experiences, strengths and needs both at school and within broader settings.

- Authentic learning experiences are developed as a teacher applies expert knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy and the unique needs and interests of their learners to planning and facilitating the learning in their classrooms, thus leading to quality teaching.

- Quality teaching is underpinned by teachers’ well-defined beliefs about teaching and learning and the roles that teachers and learners play within this process. Teachers’ underlying principles and beliefs form and inform their professional identity, which inevitably shapes practice.

But just what is a professional identity? How does it relate to one’s teaching? And can it be taught? It is these questions and others like it that prompted this inquiry.
Purpose of the inquiry

The purpose of the inquiry is to investigate the development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing learning experiences. In order to fulfil this purpose it:

- Explores, identifies and describes the connections between the professional identities of experienced teachers and their ability to design authentic learning experiences for their students
- Engages early career teachers in exploration of the learning experiences they use in their classrooms and the connections these lessons have with their beliefs about teaching and learning
- Examines the development of professional identity in these early career teachers

The inquiry is framed by the following research questions

- How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences for their classroom?
- What is the nature of the relationship between the professional identity of teachers and their ability to plan authentic learning experiences for student learning?
- In what ways can early career teachers be supported in the development of a professional identity?

Rationale

School based education is criticised in the media for its failure to provide experiences for today’s learners that will develop key competencies needed in the workforce. Newspaper headlines such as Some students ‘falling through the cracks’ (Jenkins & O'Malley, 2009a, 2009b), Schools lag in study allocation, says report (Harrison, 2009), Schools fail to prepare students for workforce (Patty, 2009) and Universities failing our teachers (Chilcott, 2009) perpetuate the notion that education at all levels in Australia is lacking. Solutions prescribed for the many problems identified include getting ‘back to basics’, embracing technology and new literacies, providing more play time or less play time, giving more assessment tasks and more tests. Further solutions are promoted through resourcing of schools such as one to one laptops and the upgrade of infrastructure across all
schools. Meanwhile, headlines such as [Victorian Premier] *Brumby sings education sector praise* (AAP, 2009) and *Principals’ right to hire lifts schools into the 21st century* (Horin, 2008) do little to bring understanding or alleviate confusion. It is unsurprising, then, that non-teaching members of the public are unsure what to think. In a recent Sydney Morning Herald poll (Figure 1.1) asking people to describe today’s standard of education, a range of views emerged which encapsulated the confusion quite clearly.

![Please see print copy for image]

**Figure 1.1 - SMH Poll (SMH, 2009)**

Teaching in this climate of change and varying opinion is both challenging and complex. Teachers and teacher educators must be able to stand on their pedagogical expertise to ensure the needs of learners is a priority over popular or political agenda. Success in taking this stand relies on the teacher holding an informed, clearly articulated philosophy about teaching, learning and the role of the teacher, that is, a professional identity. A strong professional identity is a powerful tool in this challenging environment. In terms of early career teacher professional development, the development of professional identity is a key role of teacher education.

Research literature, too contends that schools face a number of challenges (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2007). Among the criticisms are that school simply prepares children for school (Gee, 2004; Jonassen, 2003b), that the school environment is too prescriptive (Gee, 2004), that it lacks relevance in learners’ lives (Anstey & Bull, 2006a; Gee, 2004; Green & Bigum, 2003; Oblinger, 2005), that it exists to ‘enforce control rather than enhance learning’ (Nair
and that schools find it ‘very difficult to realise that there are other literacies outside the classroom’ (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8). There is little doubt that there are schools both deserving and undeserving of some or all of these criticisms. Nevertheless, the National Curriculum Board (2009) identifies approaches and environments such as these as insufficient in providing for the demands of learners to function in their communities and workplaces of the future. Instead, teachers and teacher educators are called to look into the future and transform their pedagogies to ‘envisage those demands and ensure they are taken into account’ (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 5). The Neville Freeman agency argues similarly that teachers must consider the demands of future communities in planning for and teaching today’s learners (Freeman et al., 2008).

An increasingly globalised economy has shaped a workforce that rejects the ‘old’ regimes of hierarchy and conformity in favour of new workplace practices that value specific employability skills (Daanen & Facer, 2007; Johnson, Heimann, & O'Neill, 2000; MCEETYA, 2008; McWilliam & Haukka, 2008; National Curriculum Board, 2009). The Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council (BIHECC) identifies these skills as: communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-management, planning and organising, technology, life-long learning and initiative and enterprise (2007). Engagement in the new practices of these communities demands a higher level of autonomy, flexibility and interaction for success than in traditional settings. Further, specific skills such as communication, problem solving and life-long learning demand more sophisticated literacy skills. Technology, too, is identified as an employability skill (BIHECC, 2007). Computer based technologies are acknowledged in the literature as placing new demands on users in the creation and interpretation of new types of texts, thereby broadening what it means to be literate (Anstey & Bull, 2006b; Harste, 2003; Leu & Coiro, 2004). The changed and increasingly diverse needs of learners in schools and of preservice teachers in universities are indeed an important consideration for teachers and teacher educators in the design of learning experiences.
The BIHECC Report (2007) goes on to embed employability skills in a subset of broader
generic competencies. These are applicable to a range of learning and work related
experiences and give teachers further issues for reflection in connection with their beliefs
about teaching, learning and learners. The generic competencies are summarised in Table
1.1.

**Table 1.1 - Generic employability skills (BIHECC, 2007)**

| ‘Please see print copy for image’ |

The workplace skills and generic competencies are important for teachers and teacher
educators to consider in response to previous observations about the limitations of current
practices in schools. Embedded within a teacher’s professional identity are beliefs about
their own role in supporting learners to operate in a range of communities within and
beyond school. Changed demands for workplace skills and competencies require teachers
to reflect on these beliefs in connection with the needs of their learners. Understandings
gathered from these reflections will support teachers as they design experiences that reflect
the demands of these communities, namely authentic learning experiences.

Authentic learning experiences allow learners to experience the way that knowledge is used
beyond the artificial setting of the classroom (Bonnet, 1997; Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves,
2003). Teachers’ perceptions of what constitutes an authentic task relate to the second
underlying premise of this inquiry, that teachers apply their expert knowledge of
curriculum, pedagogy and the unique needs and interests of their learners to plan and
facilitate learning in their classrooms. A teacher’s professional identity includes beliefs
about the needs of the learner and the subsequent role of the teacher and it is this identity that guides the design of authentic learning experiences.

The development of a professional identity is acknowledged in the literature as vital to a teacher’s ongoing commitment to their profession and to professional development throughout a teaching career (Beattie, 2000; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Schulman, 2005). A professional identity is changeable in nature, shaped by teachers’ experiences with learners, their learning, other teachers, parents and the broader community within which a teacher operates (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Flores & Day, 2006; MacGregor, 2009; Mayer, 1999; Rust, 1999). Characteristic of a professional identity are firmly held beliefs about who one is as a teacher and what this means for his/her actions in the classroom (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001). It follows therefore that quality teaching is achieved as teachers make informed decisions about the needs of their learners in connection with these beliefs about teaching and learning and therefore plan learning experiences accordingly (Alton-Lee, 2003; Ramsey, 2000; Rowe, 2003).

Whilst this observation is not new, it is an important consideration in the face of the discussed changes to workplace practices and the implications for schools. Teachers face increased pressure to perform as part of a professional body overseen by Teaching Australia and political pressure to participate in the ‘education revolution’ promoted by the Australian Federal Government. The perception of oneself as a teacher is challenged and shaped by these pressures and this inturn affects the ways one approaches the design and implementation of learning experiences. An understanding of how change has and continues to shape professional identity can inform teacher education pedagogies, theories of professional identity and knowledge about authentic learning experiences.

Teaching Australia was established in 2005 and renamed the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in 2010. It identifies as its primary aim, ‘to raise the status, quality and professionalism of teachers’ (Teaching Australia, 2006, p. 3) in a climate of ‘significant challenges, both internal to the profession and external’ (p. 5). In
achieving this aim, Teaching Australia’s activities were underpinned by the principles of a national perspective, engagement in the profession, quality teaching, collaboration and action as it attempts to ‘build and sustain the capacity of the profession’ (Freeman et al., 2008; Teaching Australia, 2006, p. 5). It is the building of capacity that is significant in this aim. It must be acknowledged that there have always been quality teachers who plan and facilitate powerful learning experiences based on sound understandings about the nature of school, learning and the specific needs of their learners. However, it is argued that it is more critical than ever that all children experience quality teaching. That is, all teachers need to have the knowledge, ability and commitment needed for the design and implementation of authentic learning experiences that will engage students in deep learning and understanding. It is argued that only through this increased capacity that the teaching profession will be able to sustain quality teaching across Australian schools. Those joining the profession need to be committed:

- to the profession
- to remaining in teaching for some time
- to recognising their responsibilities to the children in their classrooms
- to actively engage with professional communities and associations

(Cattley, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003)

In these new times with the advent of a ‘futures oriented national curriculum’ (National Curriculum Board, 2009) and an ageing teaching force, we must ask: How will early career teachers cope? How can they be encouraged to stay in the profession? How can we support the development of an identity that embraces professional responsibility and engagement? An exploration of the ways that early career teachers can be supported in the development of a professional identity in connection with teaching and learning will extend on current understandings of quality teaching. Such knowledge has the potential to address criticisms in the media and research literature about the value and nature of schooling today.
Background of the inquiry

In exploring the changing nature of teaching, it is useful to begin by understanding the teaching population, those who currently teach. The demography of Australian teachers is experiencing dramatic change. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reveal that in 2001, 34% of classroom teachers were between 45 and 54 years of age and a further 10% were over 54 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). That is, 44% of teachers in 2001 were in the final stages of their careers. By 2011, a majority of these teachers will have retired, representing the loss of a wealth of experience and expertise from the teaching profession and a transfer of the responsibility of leadership and educational reform to its younger counterparts. Further, census data reveal that in 2001, 28% of Australian teachers were less than 35 years old and that there had continued to be a decrease in the numbers of young people pursuing teaching as a career (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

Coupled with an increase in the number of young teachers leaving the profession in the early stages of their career (Black, 2004; Gore, Williams, & Ladwig, 2006; Ramsey, 2000), these findings point to the need to provide comprehensive support to teachers early in their study and teaching lives. Such support, it is argued, should be designed to develop in teachers a commitment to their profession and their ongoing professional development, to their identity as teachers and to the design and delivery of quality teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Gore et al., 2006).

Changes to teaching could also be described as dramatic. This inquiry stems from growing pressure for the acknowledgement that schools, their curricula and pedagogical approaches have struggled to keep pace with a rapidly changing society and the literate demands on its participants. In Australia, the election of a Labor Federal Government has seen an increased focus on the changing needs of learners, the demands of the workplace and indeed the very societal structures on which communities are built (Rudd & Smith, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Politicians have called for ‘nothing less than a revolution’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007b, p. 3), arguing that commitment to change in education is of benefit not only to schools but to society’s greater good. Rudd and Smith (2007c) report that countries with such a commitment to quality teaching continue to experience the following benefits:
greater civic participation in community and religious groups
- increased social cohesion and integration
- increased trust, equity and justice
- decreased crime and social disadvantage

These are worthwhile outcomes and while this focus on improving lives and communities through literate practices is not new, it appears that educators are now more strongly obliged and better resourced than ever to achieve quality teaching for all learners.

Knowledge for successful participation in a range of literate practices has long been acknowledged as the divide between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ (Baynham, 1995). Through effective functioning in a range of activities, literate individuals access social power and pursue avenues for the progression of their communities (Baynham, 1995; Street, 1995), whilst those with lower literacy levels are more likely to be marginalised by higher unemployment levels and occupations of lower status and manual work (McMillan & Marks, 2003). Quality teaching potentially empowers learners to greater literate activity. Whilst it has been policy that all learners have access to quality teaching (Gillard, 2009), research findings and media reports suggest that this has not been the reality in Australian schools to date. Factors such as geographical isolation, low socio economic or social status, cultural differences and the perception by educators that certain activities and levels of education are ‘less relevant to work prospects’ for certain learners have created inequity, impacted school retention rates and deprived learners of their right to quality teaching (education.au, 2009, p. 25). Perhaps understandable in the past, advancements in technology, increased social awareness and government policy (in Australia, The Melbourne Declaration, 2008; For example, Every Child Matters, UK, 2003; and the No Child Left Behind Act, USA, 2001) support the shift toward meeting the demands for better teachers for all learners. Darling-Hammond acknowledges the shift for teachers,

…in previous decades, teachers were expected to prepare a small minority for ambitious intellectual work, whereas now they are expected to prepare virtually all students for higher order thinking and performance skills once reserved to only a few. (2006a, p. 300)
It is this shift to meeting higher academic demands than ever before for more learners than ever before that increases the responsibility on all teachers to develop the ability to plan, organise and facilitate quality teaching based on sound understandings about teaching and learning.

Australian Labor Government policy argues that the ‘revolution’ requires ‘a substantial and sustained increase in the quantity of our investment and the quality of our education’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007c, p. 5) if Australian schools are to promote the development of learners who are successful, confident, creative, active and informed (MCEETYA, 2008). In identifying the way forward, the need to consolidate education systems into a national curriculum is identified as important for two reasons.

- The first is related to streamlining the product. A curriculum designed by and disseminated from a single body avoids duplication of effort, expertise and resources across the Australian States and Territories.
- The second acknowledges the shift in the nature of the Australian family. This group is now more mobile than in the past, often following seasonal work or the desire for a change of lifestyle. Consequently, children are often moved between schools and even States and Territories throughout their education. This is currently problematic because of the difference in educational expectations and curricula between them (Rudd & Smith, 2007b).

A curriculum that is universally consistent in its aim, rationale and content is argued as the solution for supporting learners across Australia, regardless of their residential address, socio economic status or cultural setting.

Central to the ideology of recent policy and proposed curriculum changes is the quality of the teaching in classrooms at all levels across Australia (Australian Labor Party, 2008). Teachers who can provide this quality are identified as well informed decision makers who draw on a depth of understanding and beliefs about learning when making decisions for their learners. With the aim to ‘support quality teaching’ and to ‘raise the status and standing of teachers in NSW’ (NSW Government, 2006), the NSW Institute of Teachers outlines the skills and attributes of teachers at four key career stages:

- Graduate teacher (achieved on graduation from an approved tertiary institution)
Professional competence (required during the early years of teaching)
- Professional accomplishment
- Professional leadership (NSW Institute of Teachers, n.d.-b).

The domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional commitment underpin the aspects and elements within each stage. Accreditation at the Professional Competence stage during the early years of teaching is compulsory for new scheme teachers intending to teach in government, Catholic and independent schools in NSW (NSW Institute of Teachers, n.d.-a). The language used in the professional competence indicators reflect the ways that teachers are expected to apply their developing knowledge, for example, ‘apply a range…select and organise…select, develop and use…establish orderly and workable learning…’ as well as interact within their communities as professionals, for example, ‘accept and offer feedback…work productively and openly…interact and network…participate constructively…’ (NSW Institute of Teachers, n.d.-b).

The shift from demonstrating knowledge as expected at the graduate teacher stage to its application within a short time implies that early career teachers are required to be proactive in developing and acting on their beliefs from the beginning of their teaching careers. Such action requires willingness, confidence and resilience to make decisions and take professional risks based on emerging understandings and beliefs. The challenge falls to teacher educators to promote in preservice teachers not only an emerging professional identity, but also a commitment to the development of a resilient identity that is open to challenges, change and diversity. It is for this reason that we need to investigate how this important element of being a teacher, teacher professional identity, can be developed very early in one’s career.

A personal perspective

In positioning this inquiry for the reader, I am drawn to reflect not only on the role of literature and policy, but also to more personal reflection on my own development as a teacher. The task of articulating this context is quite complex as the professional and
personal selves are not separate, but strongly connected as my experiences with children, professionals, literature and policy challenge and shape my self concept as ‘teacher’. Events, both personal and professional have shaped the teacher I am. Whilst some of the experiences seemed unremarkable at the time, the lessons learned have resonated and contributed to my beliefs about what teachers do and who teachers are (or should be).

I cannot pinpoint the beginning of my journey as a teacher but, as is the case for many, the development of my identity as a teacher happened long before I studied at university and it related to my own primary school experiences and observations of teachers at work (Griffin, 2003; Mayer, 1999; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005). Perhaps the journey began when I was a child at my local Catholic three teacher country school where I sat in my row and did as the nuns told me. Many memories remain from those days, but mostly I recall the frustration of being seated next to the same boy year in and year out so that I could ‘help him with his spelling’. There were just 6 boys and 5 girls in my class, limiting the seating configurations, but certainly not excusing the injustice of having to sit next to this same boy each week to help with what, to me, was a simple task. I distinctly remember my frustration that despite all of MY hard work, he still only achieved 3 out 10 (as opposed to my perfect score) in the Friday spelling test! It never occurred to me that he probably disliked sitting next to me just as much as I to him and that he must have been entirely demoralised at his consistent and very public failure. What did strike me, even at that young age, was Why would Sister make me sit here? Why does she think that this will help? To this day, the question Why? is common in my efforts to understand teachers’ behaviour.

My first years of teaching in the 1990s were in a small Catholic school on the Far South Coast of New South Wales, Australia. At this school I was appointed a so-called “mentor”, the Assistant Principal, to guide my teaching. These early days were filled with the usual busy-ness and uncertainty faced by early career teachers (see Griffin, 2003; Mayer, 1999; McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2004; McCormack et al., 2006; White, 2005), and much of it passed with little to report, except for the one (and only) lesson that my mentor teacher came to see. It was a music lesson. I was very nervous, probably under prepared and my
Year 4 students participated with mild enthusiasm and polite interest, not my finest teaching hour. It was, however, an experience that profoundly shaped and continues to influence my identity as a teacher and now teacher educator. As the children filed out to recess, she turned to me and said, ‘Well, that wasn’t very good, was it?’. I do not recall my response, or the outcome of this meeting, I only remember questioning the core of my ability to ‘be’ a teacher (Cattley, 2007; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005) as I asked myself later, Why? Why would this person, supposedly my guide and support choose this negative approach? Why does she think this would help me to improve my teaching? The memory of this experience enters my head whenever I visit any classroom at any level of education.

Whilst these formative experiences as a child and then early career teacher are negative, I know I have also benefited from the many positives that have faded into the background.

Understanding the motivations of teachers continued to be a focus throughout my years of primary school classroom teaching. At my next school, I was fortunate to become part of a teaching community that encouraged and promoted reflection through professional dialogue. The NSW K-6 English Syllabus (BOS, 1994) was released and our principal recruited the staff to study the intention and applications of the modules through professional development sessions with the Literacy Consultant for the Diocese. My question Why? was valued in this professional setting and I relished the opportunity in my career to experiment, to explore and reassess my own motivations and those of my teaching colleagues as we considered and planned for the learning needs of our students. It was the first time I had ever deliberately considered who I was as a teacher and where I fitted within the story of my professional community. That is, I became aware my professional identity and my responsibility for its development (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Sachs, 1999; Wenger, 1998).

Of course, this desire for exploration of not only my own emerging identity, but also the identity of others was not always welcome. At my next school teaching Year 1, it cut deeply as I was criticised for being ‘too passionate’ and ‘too enthusiastic’ about my job. I was even asked not to ‘look so happy about being at work’ and to take the stairs one at a
time rather than dashing up and down on every second step! During these years, the Board of Studies had developed many policy and Syllabus documents for English (1998a), Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) (1998b), Physical Development, Health and Personal Education (PDHPE) (1999a) and Creative Arts (2000), as well as the Science and Technology revised Outcomes and Indicators (1999b). There was much to explore, more to do and little time for apathy (or every step). Again, I was left wondering about the sense of professional identity and the inconsistencies among my colleagues. Dawson (2008) describes this phenomena as important in understanding the impact of teacher motivation, engagement and disengagement and its impact on a school’s professional culture.

Membership in other professional teaching communities in a number of schools coupled with my teaching experiences to date has empowered me to experiment in my approaches and to diversify my perspectives (Dawson, 2008; Huberman, 1989) through university studies and professional development in Reading Recovery training. Marie Clay argued that a teacher’s understanding and skill are reflected in the informed decisions they make from ongoing, systematic and ‘sensitive observations’ of children engaged in literacy learning (Clay, 2002, p. 29). It was here, as an experienced classroom practitioner observing my colleagues and being observed as we taught ‘behind the screen’ during our training as Reading Recovery teachers that I learned to reflect deeply on that which I knew. I learned to deepen my theories about what motivated and shaped these decisions about teaching and learning in an effort to ‘heighten [my] impact in the classroom’ (Dawson, 2008, p. 4). Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that a professional identity is developed through reflection on challenges and affirmations experienced in response to the actions and behaviours one adopts within their professional role. Certainly there is evidence of this in my own teaching journey.

Two key events in recent years brought me to this inquiry. First, my Masters of Education (Research) afforded a deeper understanding of one teacher’s beliefs and how this related to children’s writing in the classroom (Mantei, 2006). The teacher who was the focus of the study had designed child-centred learning experiences (personal interest projects) for Year 4 students that allowed them some control over the choice of topics and the content of
presentations they designed for their peers. I observed the teacher’s interactions with the students over an extended period and we discussed the connection between his beliefs about teaching in relation to the activities completed by the children. In describing his classroom environment, he identified it as important that he encourage children ‘to pursue personal goals both at school and in the community and to share these experiences with the class’ (Mantei, 2006, p. 51). This desire to build connections between school and the broader community informed the findings of that research and led me to consider ways that a teacher’s beliefs influenced his or her concept and design of authentic learning experiences.

The second key event occurred in 2006. I was seconded to the University of Wollongong to work as part of the Language and Literacy Team in the Faculty of Education and later as a teacher in Curriculum and Pedagogy and Research Methods subjects. In the tertiary setting it has been my privilege to work with preservice teachers in Bachelor of Teaching and Bachelor of Education courses as well as with students in the Masters of Education course. In these roles, I have observed the notion of a ‘professional identity’ that seems to be more strongly present in some than others. I have observed the emergence of what I would call a ‘professional identity’ in some preservice teachers more than in others. Subsequently, I was once again forced to reflect quite explicitly on my own professional identity and the environments where it was nurtured and where it was left to flounder.

My observations led to further reading and reflection on the ways that many (often early career) teachers conform to the cultures of their schools, even adopting teaching practices in contradiction with their own philosophies for the sake of ‘fitting in’ and ‘looking like a teacher’ (Buchanan, 2006; Dewar, 2005; Rocco, 2008; White, 2005). It seemed that lacking in these teachers’ ‘tool kit’ were well articulated beliefs about teaching and how these beliefs translate into practice. That is, there appeared to be a discrepancy between their professional identity and their ability to plan and design learning experiences. Furthermore, questions then emerged for teacher educators. It became apparent that there was a need for deeper understanding of what constitutes a ‘professional identity’ and how it can be developed within preservice teacher education.
This inquiry has evolved over three years in response to findings emerging from analysis of the data, a change in supervision and a new focus on identity, pedagogy and literate practices. Initially, my focus was on the use of technology to support authentic learning experiences for children. This reflected assumptions from my Masters research and literature reporting the changing nature of classrooms that teachers would consider computer-based technology use as integral to authentic learning experiences today. Analysis of data collected early in the study revealed that this was not the case and that, while computer-based technology featured in some of the stories shared by experienced classroom teachers, it was not considered a critical component of authentic learning experiences. Rather, authentic learning experiences were considered more as a mode for developing in learners an understanding of what it is to both contribute to and benefit from their communities within and beyond school. Furthermore, what emerged was a focus on authentic learning experiences as a reflection or demonstration of a teacher’s professional identity. At this point, my second supervisor left the University and Dr Jan Turbill assumed the role for the remainder of the inquiry. The inquiry evolved to focus more on the curriculum content and pedagogical approaches used in quality teaching and the connection to teacher professional identity. A further development resulted as the teachers described authentic learning in terms of empowering children by supporting them to engage with the practices and texts required for successful participation within their communities. Consequently, a focus was taken on literate practices in and outside school settings. This rather complicated and complex journey brings me to the inquiry presented here, which investigates the development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing learning experiences.

**Significance of the inquiry**

For classroom teachers in primary schools to achieve the change called for in the literature and in the Labor Government’s Education Reform policies, there needs to be a focus for both teacher professional development and teacher education on professional identity in connection with learning experiences. Quality teaching is a reflection of one’s professional identity. That is, informed, creative teachers engage in complex decision making processes
based on student needs, deep pedagogical knowledge and beliefs about learning to plan and organise authentic learning experiences.

This inquiry initially explores the connection between professional identity and authentic learning experiences in experienced teachers. Then it investigates the potential for teacher educators to develop this connection in early career teachers. If early career teachers can develop a durable and resilient professional identity that equips them to be informed risk takers and decision makers, then a ‘revolution’ could truly be achieved in the quality of teaching provided to both primary school children and to preservice teachers. Findings from the inquiry will serve to inform teacher education and challenge the ways that teacher educators might support the development of professional identity in early career teachers.

**Definition of terms**

**Authentic learning**

Much has been written in definition and description of a task, activity or learning environment that is ‘authentic’. Indeed, some have argued that authenticity is not something that can be achieved through planning for learning at all (Petraglia, 1998). Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) define authentic activities as the ordinary practices of a culture, the sorts of interactions and events that are required for successful participation in one’s community.

Authentic learning experiences are valuable to learners because they encourage reflection on learning within the context of their own experiences. Through authentic learning experiences, learners can reflect on the ways that learning within the school setting connects with personal outlooks and actions within broader contexts (Bonnet, 1997) and moves the learner toward expert practice (Teal, Leu, Labbo, & Kinzer, 2002). Herrington, Oliver and Reeves (2003) argue that it is cognitive authenticity rather than physical authenticity that is key to the design of an authentic learning task. This is supported by Jonassen’s (1995) assertion that the simulation of real world contexts is sufficient in
supporting learners’ development of the ‘survival skills they will need in the 21st century’ (p. 60). These arguments have particular implications for learning within the school setting as a teacher designs learning experiences that attempt to take the learner academically beyond classroom boundaries whilst often remaining physically in the classroom.

For the purposes of this inquiry, an authentic learning experience is defined as one that reflects the ordinary cultural practices of a group. Such activities achieve authenticity by allowing learners to participate in the group’s practices and encourage reflection on the ways their learning empowers them to participate within and contribute to these settings.

**Quality teaching**

Teaching that maximises students’ potential for learning is defined as quality teaching (Glatthorn & Fox, 1996). Quality teachers adopt pedagogical approaches that will focus the learner on the processes of constructing and producing knowledge. The experiences are subsequently enriched by planned reflection on these processes in an effort to promote deep learning. In New South Wales (NSW), teachers are expected to draw on the Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003) when planning pedagogical approaches. The NSW Quality Teaching Framework identifies three dimensions of pedagogy that underpin quality teaching: intellectual quality, a quality learning environment and significance.

- **Intellectual quality** relies on a teacher’s own deep understandings and ongoing professional development about the topics they are presenting to their students (NSW DET, 2003; Rowe, 2003). This is accompanied by the expectation that learners can achieve similar depth through the planned classroom experiences.

- A **quality learning environment** supports class members in not only social development, but also academically through the provision of explicit teaching criteria, consistently high yet achievable expectations for both teacher and learners and development of the skills of reflection, self regulation and metacognition (NSW DET, 2003).

- For students to realise the **significance** of their learning, teachers are required to design experiences that allow for connections to be made. These connections may be made to prior learning, to integrate knowledge from other key learning areas or to draw on learners’ existing
out of school cultural and community practices. Making connections to the real lives of children creates an inclusive environment that acknowledges the diversity of its learners and demonstrates the value of each person’s contribution to their school community (Alton-Lee, 2003; NSW DET, 2003).

Quality teaching in this inquiry, then, refers to the ability, skills and knowledge needed to design and implement authentic learning experiences. These experiences are intellectually stimulating and challenging, supported by carefully selected language and action by the teacher that encourages, guides and supports the learning. Such teaching allows learners to make connections to prior learning and to their own experiences within an academically supportive learning environment.

**Theoretical orientation**

This inquiry is located in the qualitative paradigm, as it seeks to understand the contexts within which the participants’ identities develop and inform the planning, decision making and facilitation of authentic learning experiences. Ethnographic principles underpinning the qualitative paradigm allow the inquiry to acknowledge:

- the *multiple realities* of participants emerging from their experiences and interpretations
- the *process* of interpreting realities as experiences impact understanding
- the *phenomenological* or subjective point of view offered by the participants
- and the *naturalistic and holistic* nature of the research focus, namely teachers in their teaching settings (Burns, 1995).

A qualitative approach affords the collection of data from a range of participants in a range of settings. These various perspectives provide not only the thick description required for understanding of the context, intentions and meanings of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Denzin, 1998), but also the perspectives of insiders, the ‘emic’ view (Merriam, 1998).

The inquiry adopts the theoretical lenses of professional identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Wenger, 1998) and authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000), using action
research methodology to explore the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The analogy of a lens is used to describe the process of ‘progressive focussing’ (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976, cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), where the researcher moves from the initial perspectives gathered from the ‘wide angle lens’ used in the data collection period to engage with the process of ‘sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 462), to allow salient themes to come into focus.

Design-based research (Reeves, 2000, 2006) provides an organising frame for the inquiry. The four phases of the design based research approach guide the inquiry as each of the research questions is examined. Design-based research is further explained in connection with the inquiry in Chapter Three, but briefly, its four phases are:

PHASE 1. Analysis of practical problems by researchers and practitioners in collaboration
PHASE 2. Development of solutions informed by existing design principles and technological innovations
PHASE 3. Testing and refinement of solutions in practice
PHASE 4. Reflection to produce ‘design principles’ and enhance solution implementation

Phase One framed the review of the literature and collaboration with experienced classroom teachers to explore the nature of professional identity and its connection to the design of authentic learning experiences. Analysis of these data informed the design of a solution in Phase Two of the inquiry. During Phase Three, action research informed data collection from early career teachers as they examined their professional identities and Phase Four
provided the frame for the identification of principles of developing professional identities in early career teachers.

*The lens of professional identity*

Wenger (1998) argues that rather than being fixed, a professional identity is an interpretation of one’s experiences, challenges and affirmations within a professional community. This is supported by Flores and Day (2006) who describe a professional identity as an expression of who you are as a teacher. The lens of professional identity allows for an exploration of the ways that each teacher’s experiences have shaped their teaching identity and its connection with the decisions that they make.

*The lens of authentic learning*

Nine principles of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) provide a lens through which the experienced teacher designed tasks are analysed and interpreted. The authentic learning principles allow the tasks to be examined for their potential to take learners beyond the classroom community. Authentic learning experiences:

- Provide authentic contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life
- Provide authentic activities
- Provide access to expert performances and the modelling of processes
- Provide multiple roles and perspectives
- Support collaborative construction of knowledge
- Promote reflection to enable abstractions to be formed
- Promote articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit
- Provide teacher coaching at critical times, and scaffolding and fading of teacher support
- Provide for authentic, integrated assessment of learning within the tasks (Herrington & Oliver, 2000, p. 26).

The design of the research blends the lenses of professional identity and authentic learning within a qualitative paradigm and framed by design-based research. Figure 1.3 depicts the way these elements are combined in this inquiry.
Locus of the inquiry

The inquiry is based in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Wollongong is situated on Australian’s eastern seaboard, in NSW approximately 60 kilometres south of its capital city, Sydney. The University attracts local, national and international students into its courses in the Faculties of Arts, Business, Commerce, Creative Arts, Education, Engineering, Health & Behavioural Sciences, Informatics, Law and Science. Many students enrolled at the University of Wollongong are the first in their families to undertake tertiary education.

At the time of this inquiry undergraduate education students were enrolled in the three year Bachelor of Teaching course. The University of Wollongong was the last in Australia to run a three year program. In order to teach outside the state of NSW teachers need a four year degree, thus the UOW also offered an ‘add-on’ one year full time Bachelor of Education. The early career teacher participants in this inquiry were students enrolled in
the 2008 Bachelor Education course. In 2006 a new four year program replaced both these
degrees so that all students now must complete four years to gain a Bachelor of Education.

**Participants**

There are eighteen (18) teacher participants in this inquiry. Eight teachers are considered
experienced teachers, while the remaining 10 are identified as early career teachers
(Fetherston, 2007). The early career teachers were enrolled throughout the period of the
inquiry in the one year full time Bachelor of Education course. Data gathered and analysed
in Phase One from the experienced teachers inform the design of the solution in Phase Two.
The remaining 10 participants form the early career cohort who engaged with the
facilitation of the solution in Phase Three.

**Site**

*Phase One:* interviews in the classrooms of the experienced teachers: Catholic and
Department of Education primary schools in Southern Metropolitan Sydney, the Illawarra
and Macarthur areas. Each of the schools reflects the uniqueness of its community. That
is, its population and cultural diversity, its socio-economic status and its access to a range
of resources. (Note: Data collected from sites in Phase One were analysed and the findings
used in Phase Two. No new data were collected in Phase Two).

*Phase Three:* sites vary throughout Phase Three because of the changing nature of the data
collection procedures and the participants’ study/work commitments. Initial data are
gathered within the context of the university setting during Autumn Session 2008 tutorial
workshops where the participants engage in *Reflective Practice*, a core subject within the
Bachelor of Education degree.

The BEST (Beginning and Establishing Successful Teachers) website provides data
submitted electronically by the Phase Three participants. BEST (Herrington, Herrington,
Kervin, & Ferry, 2006) is an interactive website designed specifically for students at the
University of Wollongong to develop a community of learners who interact both virtually
through the website applications such as blogging, forum and chat functions and physically through workshops and tutorials. Participants’ weblog postings are analysed in connection with data collected in the physical setting.

Data collection sites shift in the Spring semester to reflect the changed situation of the participants. Whilst some continue to engage with me in the university setting, others invite me to their schools to meet in their classrooms. As with the sites for data collection with experienced teachers, these are located in the Illawarra, Macarthur and Southern Metropolitan Sydney areas of NSW and, again, reflect the nature of their communities.

**Thesis Overview**

**Chapter 2 - Review of the literature**

The literature review aims to situate the inquiry within the broader context of schools as both places of work and learning, in the changing culture of schools and teaching, and of the role of professional identity in quality teaching. It discusses the changing nature and subsequent demands of work and learning in the 21st century in connection with the development of teachers’ skills and attitudes throughout their careers and the ways that this influences quality teaching. It acknowledges the role of professional identity in determining success, satisfaction and change in the profession. The chapter concludes by identifying the potential of the current inquiry to inform teacher educators in their endeavour to support their learners in the development of durable professional identities that empower them as agents of change.

**Chapter 3 - Methodology**

This chapter describes the methodology used to explore the development of professional identity in early carer teachers. Initially, the research questions are discussed together with the theoretical underpinnings and design of the inquiry. Ethical protocols, data sources and
data analysis procedures are identified in connection with the broad nature of the inquiry. Following this, the participants are introduced and the methods of data collection and analysis are connected closely with each of the phases of the inquiry along with the ethical considerations of working with each of the participant groupings. Finally, issues around credibility are addressed and the chapter concludes.

**Chapter 4 - Findings: Experienced teachers**

This chapter reports on Phase One, collaboration with experienced practitioners and Phase Two, development of solutions informed by existing literature and analysis of data gathered in Phase One. Interactions in Phase One were designed to explore the professional identity of experienced classroom teachers and their approach to designing authentic learning experiences. The findings from data analysis are reported as emerging themes and also as four individual mini cases providing a deeper perspective of the identities of these experienced teachers. Following the report of the Phase One findings and the connections to the literature, the chapter then reports on Phase Two of the inquiry, the design of the professional development experiences to be implemented for Phase Three.

**Chapter 5 - Findings: Early career teachers**

Chapter Five reports on the findings from the implementation of the professional development experiences with early career teachers in three parts. Part A examines the early career teachers’ identities prior to the implementation of the solution (baseline data). Part B examines the development of professional identities in four mini cases reporting on four early career teachers. Part C responds to the framing questions of the inquiry. The period of data collection in Phase Three adopted an action research approach that allowed for the model for authentic learning experiences to be examined as the early career teachers engaged with the professional development experiences.
Chapter 6 - Discussion

Chapter Six brings together the findings of Phases One and Three. Emerging from these findings is a theory for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The theory is represented diagrammatically to support its explication in connection with the data and the literature.

Chapter 7 – Conclusions

The final chapter examines the implications of the theory for teacher educators as they consider the ways they should be working to develop professional identities in their students.
Chapter 2

Review of the literature
Overview

In this review I aim to situate the inquiry within the broader context of the workplace, the context of education and the changing culture of schools. An understanding of the ways that schools are influenced by practices beyond their immediate settings is important in establishing what the challenges are for teachers and how the findings of this inquiry inform a response. The review begins with a discussion about the changing nature of work today and subsequent demands on workers and workplace practice. The educational workplace is then considered in connection with the complexity of achieving an educational paradigm shift. The literature is subsequently used to explore the changing demands on schools and on teachers to support learners in order that they can participate within the cultural practices of their communities both in the present and future.

A narrower focus then affords an exploration of teaching itself, including teacher learning and development and the motivation behind a teacher’s practice. The development of teachers’ skills and attitudes throughout their careers is investigated, along with the ways that these influence quality teaching. At this stage of the review, the role of a professional identity is acknowledged as a key determinant of success, satisfaction and change in the profession. Subsequent implications for supporting the development of professional identity are discussed.

This leads to an exploration of the tertiary education setting, the ways that identity develops throughout preservice education and the demands on preservice and early career teachers within their teaching communities. The chapter concludes with observations about the need for a more comprehensive view of the ways that teachers might be supported as they develop their beliefs and understandings about their role as teachers and as agents of reform.

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the structure and intention of this literature review.
Figure 2.1 - Overview of the literature review
**A changed society**

Whilst the focus of this review and indeed this inquiry is on topics other than technology, it is undisputable that the development and expansion of computer technology affords communication and interaction between more people, in more places and more often than ever before. For this reason, the review of the literature begins with a focus on information and communication technologies in connection with school, leisure and workplace practices. Preece (2009) claims that the number of people who use the internet is in the billions and predictions are that half of the world’s population now owns a mobile phone. Such access to information and communication has changed the way people conduct their lives, their relationships, their workplace practices and their leisure time. This is particularly the case for those born after 1980 as they have grown up with access to these life changing technologies (Oblinger, 2005; Oblinger & Hawkins, 2005; Preece, 2009). It must be acknowledged that it is technological changes that have broadened and opened the practices of not only traditional workplaces but of non-workplace communities as well to the eyes of international audiences. This has increased opportunities for information exchange and therefore increased the need for interpretation and negotiation to meet the expectations of others (Messmer, 1999; Rizvi, 2007). Messmer (1999) describes this pressure as potentially negative or positive, ‘depending on the quality of your interpersonal abilities’ (p. 12). Positive experiences will almost certainly be confined to people familiar with the demands of this new workplace environment and equipped to engage in its varied literate practices.

**The workplace context**

Prevalent in contemporary research is the notion that the workplace, its practices and its demands on workers have and will continue to experience rapid and continual change. Sparks, Faragher and Cooper (2001) argue that the main changes to the modern workplace are increased use of information technology, globalisation and the restructuring of workplace practices. Further changes have occurred through the diversification of the workforce itself with an ‘increase in female participation, a growing number of dual-earner couples and older workers staying longer in the workforce’ (Sparks et al., 2001, p. 489).
These changes have seen a decrease in demand for lower level and more menial types of work and an increase in demand for professionals who are ‘highly skilled and ready to face the challenges of increased competition…who understand the part they play in building their organisations…and to work effectively in their roles’ (BIHECC, 2007, p. 1). This has implications for the ways schools prepare and develop students for employment.

The skills valued in the new workforce require employees to be more flexible and adaptable to change, to collaborate in teams rather than as individuals (BIHECC, 2007; Johnson et al., 2000; Kress, 2000; Messmer, 1999), to share the responsibilities of both success and failure with the group (Messmer, 1999) and to consider creative solutions to the environmental threats present and future (Rizvi, 2007). Within the groups, members increase their employability by maintaining their individual strengths and abilities as negotiators, as active listeners and as problem solvers, meanwhile appreciating and capitalising on the unique qualities of the other members (Aselstine & Alletson, 2006; Messmer, 1999). It is both commitment to continued professional learning and the ability to master new skills that are key to successful participation in the complex cultural practices of contemporary communities (Street, 1995), both work and personal.

Aselstine and Alletson (2006) argue that no workplace change in isolation is sufficient to prompt a shift, but that it is the combined effect of the change that creates challenges for employees and employers alike. For those in the business world, reform is a necessary part of survival in an increasingly competitive and globalised economy, ‘change has particular appeal when the other choice is death’ (Bosco, 2005, p. 13). While these challenges are equally present in the education sector, Bosco (2004, 2005) argues that schools have experienced less pressure to make lasting and substantial change because of the important societal function they perform. That is, they are a safe place for children to be during the day (Betts, 1992; Bosco, 2005) and they provide an environment in which parents and others (for example, politicians) feel comfortable (Jacobs, 2010a; Kohn, 1999). It is these perceptions and roles that have protected schools from having to face the realities of their position. Further, this status has acted as a barrier to true educational change (Bosco, 2005). But change in schools is no longer a choice.
The education context

Schools and the curriculum they contain ought not be museums dedicated to preserving a form of the culture that no longer exists. (Bosco, 2005, p. 10)

It would appear that the reluctance to make shifts for educational change has increased the size of the shift required. That is, the problems are cumulative, growing despite or as a result of being ignored and now requiring nothing less than a ‘revolution’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007c). Jacobs (2010a) argues that in American schools three ‘myths’ continue to present obstacles to true change in schools. These myths are: ‘the good old days are still good enough’, ‘we’re better off if we all think alike - and not too much’ and that ‘too much creativity is dangerous - and the arts are frills’ (Jacobs, 2010a, pp. 15-17). Such obstacles have no place in the classrooms of today as schools experience what Comber and Reid (2006) label five ‘newish phenomena’:

- **New students.** There is an increasing diversity between children in Australian schools in linguistic and cultural backgrounds, wealth/poverty and life experiences (Comber & Reid, 2006; Rudd & Smith, 2007b).

- **New resource gaps.** These exist both in the school and home settings as children have varying access to resources with which to engage in their learning (Comber & Reid, 2006; education.au, 2009; Nixon & Comber, 2006; The Council for the Australian Federation, 2007).

- **New global benchmarks.** Test results producing international benchmarks allow governments to make comparisons and draw conclusions about teacher effectiveness and student success. These are based on standardised tests that ignore individual differences and the ‘solution’ is often government intervention through special programs that ‘cannot focus on the individual, changing and context-specific needs of the children referred for remediation’ (Comber & Reid, 2006, p. 341). The government intervention in ‘poorly performing’ schools identified in the recently published ‘My School’ website is evidence of this.

- **New teachers.** Many teachers are set to retire and large numbers of early career teachers continue to leave the profession in their early years of teaching. Like students in primary schools, teachers entering the profession are increasingly mobile both in terms of
residential addresses and career diversity. Comber and Reid (2006) argue that schools can no longer rely on teachers to spend their ‘professional lives within their home states, often with careers spanning 30 years plus’ (p. 342). Schools are staffed by an increasingly diverse group of teachers.

**New literacies.** It is well reported that technology and the ways that people engage with their communities both at work and as leisure has broadened the nature of literacy and literate practices to include a range of texts such as multiliteracies and digital literacies. Schools have not traditionally valued such texts within the education context, yet they offer significant opportunities for teachers to support children’s development of literate practices (Baker, 2010; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Comber & Reid, 2006; Gee, 2004; Leu, 2002b; Leu & Coiro, 2004; Leu, Mallette, Karcher, & Kara-Soteriou, 2005; Nixon & Comber, 2006; Oblinger, 2003; Sefton-Green & Nixon, 2003).

Preece (2009) argues that schools need to be places of motivation, places that engage students in the development of skills and understandings applicable to issues confronting societies globally today. Comber and Reid (2006, p. 336) suggest that a good starting point for change is to ask ‘Who’s finding it hard to learn to communicate and perform…and Where and how are teachers making a positive difference…?’ and to act on the responses.

The current Australian Federal Government political agenda directed at significant educational change is in line with international thinking. For example, Le Vasan, Venkatachary and Freebody (2006, p. 24) state that ‘around the world…primordial questions about the purposes of institutionalised education’ are being asked. Further, Rivzi (2007, p. 4) observes that ‘almost every educational system now maintains that curriculum must become more responsive to the compelling requirements of globalisation’. Australian Prime Minister Rudd (2007c, p. 27) describes education as the key to achieving ‘future economic prosperity’ and ‘future aspirations’, while Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Julia Gillard identifies the need for transparency and accountability in education and equity in the allocation of resources to schools (Australian Government, 2009). But what does this mean at the school level? What are the demands on schools and for teachers faced with this change?
Demands on schools

I often wonder if many of our students feel like they are time travelling as they walk through the school door each morning. (Jacobs, 2010a, p. 7)

Not only does political policy bind schools to change, it would also be unethical for schools to blindly maintain the status quo when the traditional learning environment continues to be labelled inadequate in providing the sorts of experiences required for the new generation of learners (Anstey & Bull, 2006a; Gee, 2004; Jacobs, 2010b; Jonassen, 2003b; Leu et al., 2005; Oblinger, 2005). The literature identifies as unchanged the historic or fundamental goals of education, but argues that the shift for these new times needs to be in the perspectives and approaches taken to teaching and learning. For example, Betts (1992, p. 38) defines the traditional role of education, ‘…to transmit core knowledge and cultural values, provide custodial care and prepare students for life after school’. More broadly, Kress (2000, p. 134) claims its purpose to be, ‘…to provide those skills, knowledges, aptitudes and dispositions which would allow young people who are experiencing that curriculum to lead productive lives in the societies of their adult periods’.

The literature contends that it is the focus within these goals that has altered. Harste (2003) and Betts (1992) argue for a greater emphasis on critical and creative thinking for problem solving and decision making in an effort to empower learners for greater participation within their own communities. Kress (2000) calls for a curriculum that is in tune with international demands whilst taking into account the ways that the global is translated locally. And Rivzi (2007) advocates a curriculum that allows and empowers learners to work toward increasingly democratic and just futures both locally and globally. Combining the development of problem solving skills with the connections between local and global communities, Barbara Comber and colleagues advocate a curriculum that uses ‘language and other symbolic resources in powerful ways to get things done in the world’ (Comber, 2005, p. 10) and one that recognises the need to foster the development of strategies to identify problems and investigate creative, sustainable solutions (Comber, Nixon, & Reid, 2007).
Thus it can be argued that demands for school change are many. These include a focus on teaching by questioning current practice and exploring the potential for connections to be made between learning at school and students’ lives in authentic ways. A further focus on students is required as teachers consider a learner’s capacity for creativity and problem solving in flexible and increasingly independent ways. McWilliam and Haukka (2008, p. 652) identify the development of creative thinkers as a crucial,

Of all the new forms of capital being generated in and through new organisational cultures and their accompanying technologies, creative capital - the human ingenuity and high level problem solving skill that lead to fresh opportunities, ideas, products and modes of social engagement - is emerging as the most valuable.

This literature demonstrates that schools are both morally and financially obliged to join the revolution and to adopt educational reform, however it is the classroom teachers in these schools who carry the professional responsibility for enacting such change. Therefore it is necessary to consider the challenges teachers face in the current teaching climate and the impact of these demands on their commitment and ability to teach.

**Demands on teachers**

…at this point in history, the role of teachers is more pivotal than it has ever been. One of the most constructive things we can do, therefore, is to target constructively the quality of teachers…for teachers have the power to foster that creative and invigorating quality the world needs, namely, hope (Freeman et al., 2008, p. viii).

Australian teachers are under pressure to adopt pedagogical reform, however there are those in the media and community who constantly criticise their efforts. Comber (2005, p. 3) describes media whose reports on education are ‘largely of doom and gloom stressing punitive standards and regulations’ as unhelpful and instead calls for more positive coverage of the many teachers (whom she has observed) who have ‘passion’ and ‘creative know-how in Australian educational institutions’. Some sensationalists fuel this media negativity by positioning teachers as struggling to meet modern teaching challenges and
lacking in requisite knowledge and skills for the school environment. Evidence of this lies in labelling teachers with tags such as ‘digital immigrant’ (Prensky, 2001), with assertions that teachers could not ‘master the same level of skill’ as their students (Prensky, 2005, p. 3). Equally damaging are unsubstantiated claims that previous professional development efforts were misguided and ‘mistakenly focused’ (McKenzie, 2003) in their approach. In some instances, the complexity of teaching and teachers’ work is over simplified by the contention that teaching is easy and success is guaranteed by the implementation of a series of one shot ‘slam dunk’ lessons using computers (McKenzie, 2006, 2007). Such criticisms, sweeping claims and narrow focus on the use of technology do little to empower or inspire teachers to make shifts to new teaching paradigms. Indeed, any progress in the face of such adversity requires teachers to have strongly held and deeply informed beliefs about teaching and pedagogical practice.

Findings that are grounded in research into classroom practice acknowledge the expertise teachers bring to classrooms. Researchers such as Leu (2000, 2001, 2002a), Harste (2003), Labbo (2004, 2005a, 2005b; Labbo, Eakle, & Montero, 2002; Labbo et al., 2003), Turbill (2001, 2003) and Kervin and Jones (2009) encourage teachers to shift toward a new teaching paradigm through their existing expert pedagogical repertoire. Further, teachers are encouraged to consider the place of skills, knowledge and understandings as they appear in the ‘real’ world in the design of teaching experiences (see Gee, 2004; Herrington & Kervin, 2007; Herrington et al., 2003; Jonassen, 2003a, 2003b) so that the way they are learned in the classroom accurately reflects the way that they are used in real life. Such experiences are referred to as ‘authentic’ learning experiences (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). It is these authentic tasks that are recognised in the literature as providing genuine opportunities for learners to learn, develop and use real life skills for real purposes (Herrington & Kervin, 2007; Herrington & Oliver, 2000; Jonassen, 2003a; Lombardi, 2007) rather than to accumulate banks of knowledge and skill tucked away for use at some undetermined future time.

Labbo (2005b) acknowledges a dilemma for busy teachers when she states, ‘they simply cannot afford the luxury of wasting precious classroom time on too many false starts and
stops’ (p. 782) in developing new teaching approaches. She argues that teachers need to feel reassured that any new approach they are considering will ‘work’. Labbo (2005b) coined the term ‘zone of proximal comfort’ to describe the ways that teachers can have this assurance whilst moving toward teaching in a new paradigm. Analogous to Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development, the zone of proximal comfort acknowledges the teacher’s position at the cutting edge of his or her learning, requiring some support to achieve new understandings, but not so far beyond their own skill level that the learning becomes too difficult. Labbo (2005b) argues that within the zone of proximal comfort, a teacher can take and apply known sound pedagogical approaches to new teaching and learning and use student assessment and teacher reflection to reach new understandings. Sometimes the ‘new’ component will be computer based, but it will also include untried teaching/learning approaches (perhaps groupings, or presentation methods), the use of texts or literate practices external to the traditional school environment or the sharing of power and leadership with students. From within the zone of proximal comfort, teachers increase the potential for learning success through existing good pedagogy, while creating opportunities for transformative learning by teacher and student alike.

Contrary to the many media criticisms of teachers, the literature cites numerous examples where teachers have drawn on their existing skills, knowledge and understandings (their ‘zones of proximal comfort’) to facilitate authentic learning experiences in their classrooms. In what follows three examples are shared.

*Example One: ‘Children write for real reasons’* (Comber, Thomson, & Wells, 2001)

In response to concerns expressed about the trees and parks in their suburb Year 2 and 3 children developed a project where they explored and identified a ‘problem’ in their local area. The children petitioned their local council for change and made recommendations for improvements to their local environments. The project took familiar classroom literacy learning practices and used them to make connections between the children’s school and community practices,

…These children did not simply learn letter writing as a genre, or how to write and send a fax, or how to read a map in case they need these skills one day. They learn
these forms of literacy as social practices that are part of everyday life...as resources for them to use both in the present and in the future. (pp. 457, 460)

In this example, the power of a common classroom literacy learning scenario is realised when the children experience legitimate membership within their communities (Lave & Wenger, 2005) as they participate in the accepted cultural practices (Street, 1995) of the group to improve their lives. Of particular note in this research was that the participating children lived in a low-income community, a group that often struggles to be heard or to achieve social change.

**Example Two: The digital language experience approach**

Espinetti, (2002), Labbo, Eakle & Montero, (2002) and Turbill (2003) drew on their own experiences as classroom teachers and researchers to support teachers in using computer based technologies for literacy learning. The Digital Language Experience Approach (DLEA) extends on the tried and tested Language Experience Approach (LEA) to utilise computer based technologies in order to capture children’s stories. The findings of each of these papers acknowledge the existing expertise of the teachers in the use of LEA, which encouraged them to make the shift to attempt DLEA. DLEA is an example of a known pedagogical practice transformed for new learning. It provides children with real purposes for writing and a range of audiences. The digital medium affords a range of outcomes, for example, texts can be bilingual, multilingual, oral or written, linear or non linear. Turbill (2003, p. 8) describes DLEA as ‘an approach that suits the needs of both the teachers and the students in exploring and using new literacies’.

**Example Three: Professional collaboration for new practices**

Re-envisioning the roles of teacher and librarian required moving well beyond our comfort zones, but was well worth the effort. (Spence, 2009, p. 27)

In this example, Spence (2009) reports on her teaching experiences as a librarian in collaboration with Nancy, a classroom teacher. These teachers recognised a common desire to investigate the potential of inquiry writing projects to make more authentic
connections to their students’ cultural and home practices and to allow the children to express their own interests and knowledge with their peers and communities. Initially, the children and teachers worked on a whole class investigation of dinosaurs. This provided opportunity not only for the children to understand the nature of the task, but also for the teachers to ‘test the water’ in terms of sharing responsibility with the children and understanding the abilities of the learners. This task, too, perhaps allowed the teachers to gather their own confidence for taking the next step. The authors explain, ‘the children were ready to begin research on a topic of their individual choice’ (p. 24). These topics drew on the cultural practices of their communities and the children created a range of texts appropriate for the information they were presenting. For example, one child wrote a recipe for Tortillas, whilst another designed and conducted an interview with a local personality. Final texts from the projects were shared with parents and other community members at a Parent Evening, providing real audiences for the texts.

In summary, the teachers in these examples demonstrated the commitment and capacity to match their teaching to the demands of their learners. They demonstrated the expertise of experienced teachers who make careful planning decisions for quality teaching and who are willing to create new experiences in an attempt to make learning authentic for their students. What is not clear, though, is that which underlies the teachers’ motivation. Much of the literature on meeting the needs of today’s learners is focused on increasing the use of computer-based technology, yet technology was not the only focus for quality teaching in the examples shared. What do teachers draw on when they make decisions about authentic learning experiences? How do they come to their decisions? What is the relationship between teaching experience and the ability to design authentic learning experiences? An investigation of the practice of teaching and the professional life cycle of teachers follows as I consider the ways that teaching experience informs practice.
The practice of teaching

It is useful to consider literature on career teacher life cycles in attempting to understand teacher identity and the different ways teachers behave, plan and design learning experiences and interact with children and colleagues. In order to review the vast literature in this field, I have chosen to focus on specific aspects, namely quality teaching, authentic learning experiences and professional identity. In this way I hope to present a fresh perspective on an existing problem.

Teacher career life cycle

A teacher’s career is characterised by certain behaviour and practices underpinned by the development of particular beliefs about teaching and learning. It is believed that these occur within stages of development, or as a life cycle. In early research into the life cycle of career teachers, Huberman (1989) represented his theory through the following model (Figure 2.2) to describe the life cycle of teaching as a profession. The theory emerges from an extensive review of the literature and his own research with a range of secondary teachers in Switzerland:

Figure 2.2 - The Life Cycle of Career Teachers (Huberman, 1989)
Huberman’s (1989) theory identifies certain points where teachers make choices based on their commitment to the profession and their level of connection to their professional community. These choices provide the action that is change: change in a teaching approach, a belief about how learners learn or about their own role as a teacher. Huberman (1989) argues that it is these actions that move teachers through the life cycle for both positive and negative consequences until they disengage from and leave the profession either through retirement or early resignation. Of course, teachers as a group are not homogenous (Dawson, 2008; McCormack et al., 2004), not all teachers will move through all of the stages and not all of them will move at the same pace or in the same way. Therefore it is important that ‘generalisations are made with caution’ (McCormack et al., 2004, p. 2). Further, and perhaps this is a reflection of the age of the model, the language used generates questions. Is it ‘survival’ for all early career teachers? Could it be ‘thriving’? Can teachers leaving the profession be only ‘serene’ or ‘bitter’? Is it possible that they could be triumphant and satisfied or animated and energised?

Whilst Huberman identifies a teacher’s actions over time as the catalyst for the different stages in the life cycle, Steffy and Wolfe (1998) propose that the life cycle of the career teacher is a developmental continuum driven by time, experience, reflection and professional development (Figure 2.3). They argue that this view is useful for promoting teacher efficacy based on the continued growth and development of competence throughout a teacher’s career.

The theory is represented by the phases in model 2.3:

‘Please see print copy for image’

Figure 2.3 - The Life Cycle of Career Teachers (after Steffy & Wolfe, 1998)

Steffy and Wolfe (1998) observe that not all teachers achieve every phase on the continuum but that the majority finish their careers either as professional or expert teachers. They argue that teachers who do not engage in a cycle of reflection, renewal and growth are in
danger of becoming disengaged with the profession, which results in withdrawal (and therefore a failure to move along the continuum).

When drawing comparisons between the models, it can be seen that Steffy and Wolfe identify different types of teachers, whilst Huberman describes the activity in which teachers at different stages engage. Some alignment is evident if one considers that the novice and apprentice teacher engages in the activities described in Huberman’s first two stages, survival and discovery and stabilisation. Further, the notion of a professional teacher can be aligned with the mid and final stages of Huberman’s model: experimentation/activism and reassessment/self doubt and then serenity/relational distance and conservatism. Steffy and Wolfe argue that teachers can finish productive and successful careers as professional teachers. Therefore, they would reach Huberman’s final stage of disengagement: serene or bitter whilst still in the mid stage of Steffy and Wolfe’s model. However, teachers who are considered expert or distinguished can also move from the mid to final stage of Huberman’s model, and perhaps an emeritus teacher would not disengage from the teaching community at all as they interact with and contribute to the professional life of teaching even after retirement. The similarities and differences observed between the models are depicted in Figure 2.4.
Comparison and contrast demonstrates how any model or attempt to identify a single entity in teaching is challenged by the complexity of teaching as well as the individuality of teachers and their students. Common to both models, though is the importance of time spent teaching and the gathering of classroom teaching experience(s).

It is interesting to note at this point that it is unclear how a teacher education approach such as that proposed by Teach for Australia (2006) fits with the research cited here that acknowledges the role of time and ongoing experience in developing quality teachers. In Australia, Rudd government policy will follow UK (Teaching First) and US (Teach for America) teacher training with Teach for Australia in 2010. Teach for Australia identifies as its aim the recruitment of the ‘best and brightest’ graduates from a range of disciplines to undergo a six week course and then teach for a period of two years in low socio economic and difficult to staff schools (Gillard, 2009). Supporters claim recruits are clever enough to learn on the job and are well supported by mentors, ‘clinical specialists’ in universities and

Figure 2.4 - Comparing models of career teacher life cycles
each other as they develop their skills within a teaching community. Opponents argue, however, that Teach for Australia devalues the ‘craft’ of teaching because the training ignores long accepted practices such as practicum teaching experience and methods courses and is built on the assumption that intellectual ability alone is sufficient for teaching (Aedy, 2009; Berliner, 2009; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). A greater understanding of the ways that teachers develop their beliefs and test their understandings in connection with their practice provides a framework within which pedagogies for teacher education can be considered.

The behaviour and phases identified in the professional life cycle of teachers literature could be organised into three key periods: beginning to teach, continuing to teach and concluding a teaching career. These are now examined in relation to more recent literature about the development of teachers and the sustainability of teaching.

**Beginning to teach**

Early career teaching is characterised by survival and discovery. Preservice teachers (also described as novices) transition to apprentice when they undertake sole responsibility of planning, programming and teaching for their class (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001), something they had only done previously under the supervision and/or mentoring of another teacher. Apprentice teachers are usually preoccupied with developing pedagogical understanding, content knowledge and growing confidence in their role within the teaching profession. There are many tensions evident in the literature about this phase of teaching. On one hand, beginning to teach is characterised by excessive optimism and self confidence in one’s ability to teach (see Hristofski, 2008; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; McCormack et al., 2004; Needham & Flint, 2005; Romano & Gibson, 2006). On the other, the literature reports that early career teachers are also filled with doubt and low self confidence at this time (see McCormack et al., 2004; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005; Roberts, 2000; Rust, 1999).
Either way, a preservice teacher’s transition to apprentice seems to burst the confidence bubble and ‘almost always produces feelings of anxiety, self doubt and withdrawal’ (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 19). Darling-Hammond (2006b) argues that this early challenge becomes more problematic when teacher education has been an inadequate preparation for the reality and demands of teaching. For example, a heavy emphasis on ‘content-focused methodology and field experiences’ (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 16) or the sharing of strategies without examples and models generally does not lead to deep engagement or enactment (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005, p. 360). Darling-Hammond describes the pitfall for teachers beginning their careers thus,

When various behavioural prescriptions have proved inadequate to the real complexities of teaching (whether these were the proverbial maxims “don’t smile until Christmas” or the “research-based rules” such as “maintain a brisk pace of instruction”), teachers were left to their own tacit knowledge - largely how they themselves were taught. (2006b, p. 79)

As knowledge and understandings develop, the apprentice teacher moves to the next stage of the career life cycle, a period of stabilisation (Huberman, 1989).

But what do teachers who are in the early stages of their careers consider to be ‘good’ teaching? How do they go about planning for authentic learning experiences? Whilst the literature describes many of the emotions attached to beginning teaching, what these teachers consider to be an authentic learning experience remains unexplored. This is a focus of the current inquiry.
Continuing to teach

As teachers enter the professional teacher phase (Steffy & Wolfe, 1998, 2001) their work presents opportunities for continued growth and development (Dawson, 2008). Steffy and Wolfe (2001) suggest that it is at this point of their professional career that many teachers cease their development through the life cycle. It is particularly problematic in certain circumstances, such as being undervalued by administrators. However they also suggest that professional teachers are more likely to be motivated by their students than by their teaching superiors. Consequently, the opportunities they seek for professional growth tend to be informal interactions with peers rather than formal study. It follows, then, that the professional teacher tends to value opportunities for ‘observation, reflection and interaction’ with like minds (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 7) like those found within professional associations and informal teacher networks.

Much of the literature suggests that the confidence, knowledge and beliefs developed in the first years of teaching initially inform practice so during this period of the life cycle the teacher’s focus begins to shift to listening and responding to student feedback. Steffy and Wolfe (2001) observe that the development of respect by the teacher for the students and by the students for the teacher in turn underpins the teacher’s motivation to teach. Supporting this more personal perspective, Dawson (2008) and O’Connor (2008) acknowledge the place of emotion in achieving success with teaching and therefore with students. Dawson (2008) argues that a teacher with ‘passion’ for the job can support student outcomes, whilst O’Connor (2008, p. 125) recognises the role of ‘caring for and caring about students’ as important aspects of successful teaching. They warn, however that this personal dimension is highly demanding, often undervalued by political bodies (O’Connor, 2008) and has the potential to test teachers’ commitment to their profession.

These ‘middle years’ (seven to eighteen years) afford opportunity for appraisal of one’s teaching. Huberman’s (1989) Life Cycle of Career Teachers model (Figure 2.2) indicates that teaching approaches will be characterised by experimentation and reassessment. Resonating with the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSWQTF) is this closer focus by the teacher on the quality of their own teaching, the responses from the children and their
needs and learning preferences and the desire to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for children. The NSWQTF (2003) identifies three key dimensions of quality teaching. These are ‘intellectual quality’, ‘quality learning environment’ and ‘significance’.

Figure 2.5 demonstrates the connection between three perspectives of the middle years of teaching. These are: Huberman’s (1989) and Steffy and Wolfe’s (2001) models of the life cycle of career teachers and the NSWQTF (2003). This is a useful connection to explore as we consider the types of experiences that teachers in the middle years of their career count as authentic learning experiences.

It is suggested that evident in the classroom practice of a teacher in the middle years of their career would be child centred experiences such as inquiry learning or group tasks that allow the learner to take their own paths to learning in an effort to achieve deep
understanding (see McKenzie & McKinnon, 2009; Scheffers, 2008; Spence, 2009; Wolf & Laferriere, 2009). These approaches go by many names. Interestingly, many of the learning experiences labelled ‘authentic’ take a focus on the ways that technology is used to engage learners (Herrington & Oliver, 2000; LeLoup & Ponterio, 2000; Lombardi, 2007; Means & Olson, 1994). However, others that also take a focus on engagement, on deep learning and on the connections to be made between in and out of school settings label such experiences as experiential (Buchanan, 2006; Holmqvist, 2004; Kayes, 2002; Langer, 1997), inquiry (Bruce & Bishop, 2002; Damnjanovic, 1999; DuVall, 2001; McKenzie & McKinnon, 2009; Wolf & Laferriere, 2009) or even mindful learning (Burke, 1994; Langer, 1997). It is this broader aspect of authentic experiences that remains a focus throughout this inquiry and it is the reliance on technology that is challenged by its findings.

While much of the literature cited indicates that teachers in their mid career tend to plan child-centred, authentic learning experiences, there seems to be little research that highlights just how the experienced teacher goes about doing this. Questions such as what do experienced teachers draw on as they plan and program authentic learning experiences for their learners and why? And just what do teachers believe an authentic learning experience to be? It is hoped that this study will shed light on these questions.

**Concluding a teaching career**

Literature on late career teachers tends to focus on two groups as they begin to disengage from the profession. The two groups, ‘serene’ and ‘bitter’ (Huberman, 1989), describe teachers’ viewpoints as they prepare to exit the profession. Whether these labels apply to all teachers in the late stages of their careers is beyond the scope of this inquiry, but they are useful terms when exploring the nature of late career teachers in schools.

Literature about ‘bitter’ disengaging teachers portrays them as lacking in passion, being ‘burnt out’, ‘jaded’, out of touch with new pedagogies and even unwilling to adopt reform. Drake’s (2002) research on maths teachers, for example, found that although late career teachers (21-30 years experience) demonstrated a deep understanding of reform and policy,
they often reported being less willing to implement changes. He describes the attitudes of the experienced teachers in his study thus,

…late-career teachers felt confident that they understood the reforms and could teach in reform ways if they chose to do so. However, they were not very supportive of the overall notion of reform, and their reports of practice indicate great variety in the ways they taught. (p. 321)

Hargreaves (2005), too, found that late career teachers question and resist change more strongly than their less experienced colleagues and require proof from authorities that a change is relevant and worthy of their attention. These findings suggest that deep knowledge, beliefs and understanding about how children best learn leads these teachers to make decisions about authentic learning experiences for their students rather than being dictated to by policy.

In another example, Dawson (2008) argues that older teachers who were previously passionate about their careers often ‘become embittered, dispassionate, disengaged or burnt-out’ (p. 1). Causes are revealed as Huberman (1993) points to lack of opportunities for career progression after 18-20 years in the profession compounded by many teachers’ inability to move to where the opportunities are. The result is a career plateau that leads to subsequent frustration about teaching. Both Dawson (2008) and Drake (2002) identify the responsibility of leaders within schools to provide professional support for these teachers and to capitalise on their abilities as quality teachers within whatever constraints they are experiencing.

Professional support is reported to lead to more positive outcomes, perhaps allowing teachers to discover serenity rather than bitterness and certainly to develop a richer professional community (Boyer, Maney, Kamler, & Comber, 2004; Dawson, 2008; Drake, 2002). Reciprocal mentoring as professional development, for example, provides opportunity for teachers at all career stages to learn from each other, for an experienced teacher to share his/her knowledge, beliefs and understandings and to be ‘rejuvenated and re-enthused’ (Boyer et al., 2004, p. 149). The sharing of ‘teacher wisdom stories’ (Kervin
& Mantei, 2009; Labbo et al., 2003) is another example where teachers, both spontaneously and in planned situations share their knowledge and understandings with others. Opportunities such as these provide avenue to value, affirm and learn from teachers late in their careers. It is late career teachers and the perspectives they bring of gathered wisdom over long periods with a vast array of students that are of great value to the profession. Comber, Kamler, Hood, Moreau and Painter (2004, p. 76) argue that it is with some urgency that we need to ‘historicise the work of the profession and to capture the career-long knowledge of a generation of teachers who will soon leave the profession’ if we are going to build on quality pedagogies for authentic learning experiences with today’s learners.

It is clear from the literature in this area that throughout the teacher career life cycle, professional and personal experiences potentially shape beliefs and practices held about quality teaching and the authentic learning experiences that constitute such quality teaching. What is also clear is the lack of consistency in the ways that researchers and practitioners define an ‘authentic learning experience’. It is therefore important that this review now explores the literature about quality teaching and authentic learning experiences in the changed climate of education today.

**Quality teaching and authentic learning experiences**

...local and international evidence-based research indicates that ‘what matters most’ is *quality teachers and teaching*... (Rowe, 2003, p. 1, original emphasis)

Glatthorn and Fox (1996) define quality teaching as that which maximises a student’s potential for learning and that it is teachers drawing on deep pedagogical and theoretical understandings who are able to design and facilitate such learning. The NSW Quality Teaching Framework (2003) represents a statewide pedagogical focus on teaching. It emerged from earlier work about authentic pedagogies (see Newmann, 1996; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993) and productive pedagogies (The State of Queensland Dept of Education, 2001) as well as the Principles of Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL) (see Mitchell &
Mitchell, 1997) and the ensuing Ramsey Report (2000) on the state of education in NSW. As previously mentioned, the model draws on three principles of quality teaching and is underpinned by a number of elements within each that pertains to the decisions, activities and learning of both teacher and student (see Figure 2.5). Similar principles are present in the proposed National Curriculum and therefore become even more relevant to teaching and learning into the future. The National Curriculum intended educational outcomes for young Australians are:

- A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built
- Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications
- General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 9).

These principles of learning designed to develop flexibility, creativity, collaboration and deep knowledge are echoed in the literature on authentic learning.

Lombardi (2007) argues that authentic learning experiences are generally multi disciplinary in structure and use pedagogical approaches such as role-play, problem solving, case studies and group work to focus on real-world, complex problems and their solutions. It is these teaching techniques, Lombardi argues, that provide learners with the authentic experience of responding to and finding creative solutions to ‘real’ problems. Herrington and Oliver (2000) propose nine features of authentic learning experiences:

- Provide authentic contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life
- Provide authentic activities
- Provide access to expert performances and the modelling of processes
- Provide multiple roles and perspectives
- Support collaborative construction of knowledge
- Promote reflection to enable abstractions to be formed
- Promote articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit
- Provide teacher coaching at critical times, and scaffolding and fading of teacher support
- Provide for authentic, integrated assessment of learning within the tasks (Herrington & Oliver, 2000, p. 26).

Learning experiences with these characteristics are clearly complex and therefore take time and skill to design. Further, opportunities for exploration, collaboration, reflection and adoption of a range of perspectives broadens the nature of the task and require teachers to loosen their hold on the decision making process with respect to the learning experience. Often, early career teachers are so preoccupied with management and discipline as they learn to teach (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Hammerness et al., 2005; McCormack et al., 2004; Pietsch & Williamson, 2004), that the sharing of power is potentially confronting. Yet, the focus on ‘real world’ activity and the sorts of problems learners face in their communities requires the teacher to hold deep understandings about what learners require in the new environments of the 21st century and how these needs can be met. Authentic learning experiences are a demonstration of this knowledge and provide a starting point for considering and exploring the development of professional identity in early career teachers.

It seems that becoming a quality teacher takes time. Feiman-Nemser (2003) observes ‘By most accounts, new teachers need three or four years to achieve competence and several more to reach proficiency’ (pp. 2-3). These years are described as a crucial time in an early career teacher’s development, one that requires considerable support, induction and mentoring into the teaching community (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005) as teachers move from the stage of ‘surviving’ toward experimentation and activism (Huberman, 1989). However, Darling-Hammond (2006a) and Comber (2005; 2006) argue that time is too short to waste in these rapidly changed and changing communities and that all learners in all classrooms are entitled to receive quality teaching. They argue further that leadership teams in schools where students have challenging behaviours need to provide better support for the early career teachers as they develop the skills and understandings required for quality teaching. Moreover, the challenge extends to teacher educators who, it is argued, need to better equip preservice teachers so they begin to develop a strong sense of what it means to be a quality teacher. Such a professional identity is more likely to be resilient to these initial challenges, durable in its ability to sustain them over time and one that can be drawn on to identify the sorts of
teaching and learning that is required in their classrooms. How such an identity can be developed is the focus of this inquiry.

**Professional identity**

Professional identity is consistently defined in the literature as an unfixed entity that develops and changes in response to the experiences, affirmations, challenges, successes and failures that confront a person within their professional life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Mayer, 1999; Sachs, 1999; Stets & Burke, 2000; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998; Walkington, 2005; Wenger, 1998). The beliefs teachers hold about their role as a teacher, the role of the learner and the nature of teaching and learning will influence the types of learning experiences they design and the environment they promote within their classrooms (see Pietsch & Williamson, 2005; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992; Stets & Burke, 2000; Wenger, 1998). Individual teaching approaches shaped by unique teacher identities are what Walkington observes ‘makes every classroom look different’ (2005, p. 54).

It seems though that simply having teaching experience is insufficient for the development of a professional identity. It is strongly argued in the literature that reflection is key to the development of a teaching identity built on deep understandings of the ways that learners learn and that teachers teach (Cattley, 2007; Hristofski, 2008; McCormack et al., 2006; Ostorga, 2006; Walkington, 2005). In explaining how experience informs identity, Flores and Day (2006, p. 220) argue that a professional identity is developed when teachers engage with the ‘ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one’s own values and experiences’. Furthermore teachers at all stages of their teaching journeys can explore who they are in their teaching stories and what kind of teacher they want to be (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Korthagen, 2004). In fact, Walkington (2005) identifies it as the responsibility of those in the profession to continue to develop one’s own identity and to challenge and encourage the identity of others. This is a call echoed by Comber et al. (2004) as they consider the identity of the late career teacher.
Chapter 2

Establishing and maintaining a professional identity, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) argue, is crucial for securing in teachers a commitment to teaching and to the culture of the profession. The lifelong process of reflecting on and understanding oneself as a teacher and member of a professional community promotes in teachers the confidence to think flexibly, to make informed judgements and to participate in ongoing change (Walkington, 2005). These are important skills to have for teachers working in complex and shifting professional contexts where the role of the teacher and the very nature of learning are being challenged. It is for these reasons that the development of professional identity is of interest in this inquiry in connection with quality teaching and authentic learning experiences.

But what are the demands on teachers whose professional identities are in their early stages of development? How do these challenges impact their identity in this shifting paradigm? What are the ways that teachers can be supported in the development of their professional identities? The literature that addresses learning to teach, the pathways and experiences of preservice and early career teachers provide insight into the development and maintenance of professional identity.

Learning to teach

Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson (2003) draw on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) to argue that learning to teach (as with all learning) is a social experience that engages learners and teachers in shared and cooperative activity. It is these interactions that contribute to the complexity of learning to teach because underpinning any teaching activity is the unique combination of personal experiences and beliefs held by the teacher. That is, their professional identity. Walkington (2005) argues that it is especially important to challenge and develop the concept of teaching held by preservice and early career teachers as part of their teacher training experience. Teacher education, the development of professional identity and the challenges of the early years of teaching are now discussed.
Teacher education

More than ever, teacher educators are faced with the challenge of graduating students who will be more inclined to teach as they have been taught to teach than they are to teach as they were taught. (Hristofski, 2008, p. 295)

Darling-Hammond (2006b, p. 41) argues that teacher education needs to produce ‘extraordinary’ teachers who believe in and focus on ‘teaching all students for problem solving, invention and application of knowledge’ using deep and flexible knowledge in school cultures and beyond. She states that early teacher attrition is a result of inadequate preparation for teaching within teacher education courses and argues for the following components in any teacher education course:

- A common, clear vision of ‘good’ teaching
- Well defined standards of practice and performance
- Curriculum grounded in knowledge of child development, learning, social contexts and pedagogy taught in the context of practice
- Extended and well supported clinical experiences
- Explicit teaching strategies
- Strong school, university, student relationships
- Application to real problems of practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006b, p. 41).

The development of these skills is considered to better equip teachers early in their careers in order that they can withstand and ‘survive’ the challenges and complexities of classroom teaching (Danielewicz, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006b). Danielewicz (2001) states further that the development of a professional identity is supported through authentic contexts where preservice teachers interact with ‘real schools, teachers, students...and other people usually present in the school setting’ (p. 182). Whilst this is an ideal environment for learning and the development of a professional identity, the reality in Australian universities is different.

Walkington (2005) acknowledges the university structure of lectures and tutorials as a poor simulation of the unpredictable and complex nature of the school context, however, she argues that there are ways that teacher educators can work within these confines to support
the development of professional identity and a deep understanding of what it is to teach. Active participation by preservice teachers in lectures and tutorials that take the individual contexts of school settings as the focus for learning is more likely to allow for the exploration and enrichment of professional identities and the development and strengthening of connections between beliefs and practice.

Stuart and Thurlow (2000) observe that preservice teachers often enter their teacher education courses with simplistic views. Views, for example, that teaching involves little more than liking children and transmitting information to them. The challenge of learning to teach can be a confronting experience for preservice teachers as they face learning about the complexity of planning, designing and facilitating learning experiences with students who are not necessarily engaged by merely attending school.

Student texts designed to complement preservice education courses outline and describe a range of complex and interwoven perspectives on the ways that ‘quality teaching’ and ‘quality learning’ can be achieved. Whilst these texts are often highly regarded by teacher educators and are certainly underpinned by rigorous research and theoretical frameworks, their complexity could potentially overwhelm preservice teachers without suitable support in the lecture, tutorial and workshop settings. The following examples compare the approaches of two quality teacher education texts to planning and programming. Whitton, Sinclair, Barker, Nanlohy and Nosworthy (2004, p. 85) identify seven areas for consideration when ‘planning for effective teaching and learning’. These, Whitton et al. (2004) argue are closely related to each other. Further, within each area are embedded four different levels of content, followed by another four elements. These are labelled ‘four forms of knowledge’. These two pages of text are completed with a further examination of the three taxonomies of learning. In comparison, Killen (2007) adopts a more process oriented approach, providing teachers with stopping points for reflection on their planning and teaching along with a long series of questions to use for reflection on the plan, design and facilitation of learning experiences. Like Whitton et al., (2004), Killen (2007) also finishes this section with an examination of the taxonomies of learning.
Texts such as these are valuable pedagogical tools for teacher educators. However, they must be used in connection with the opportunities for collaboration as identified previously by Danielwicz (2001) and within Walkington’s (2005) recommendations for workshop content. That is, with time to explore the issues in connection with ‘real’ teachers operating in ‘real’ primary school classrooms.

In making these connections, preservice teachers are also challenged to develop the skills and understandings required for designing learning experiences. The strategies for implementing them are a further focus in this setting. Developing the ability to plan, design and implement learning experiences in classrooms is integral to learning to teach. The challenges and considerations for the design of learning experiences are now examined.

**Learning to design and implement learning experiences**

We can learn a great deal from students’ comments about effective teaching. It is clear that relational aspects are highlighted throughout, as students express a desire for intelligent, creative, and empathetic teachers who create trustworthy and respectful spaces for learning in their classrooms. (Robertson, 2006, p. 765)

Examined in the introductory chapter and literature review of this thesis has been the changing nature of teaching, teachers and learners. Along with many others, Latham, Blaise, Dole, Faulkner, Lang and Malone (2006) argue that the ‘basic skills’ model of teaching is insufficient for developing learners now. Further, Latham et al. (2006, p. 288) argue that the role of the teacher in these new times is as, ‘a visionary, a futurologist, political activist, educational reformist and education professional’. Coupled with Robertson’s (2006) call for intelligent, creative, empathetic teachers, it is unsurprising that learning to design and implement learning experiences is challenging in its complexity. Whilst attempting to be creative, visionary, futuristic and so forth, the mechanical aspects of teaching must be learned. These include: mandated government policy, knowledge of pedagogical strategies and knowledge of students.
In NSW, teachers are mandated to design learning experiences that will lead children to achievement of a range of outcomes in each Key Learning Area (see BOS, 1998a, 2002). Learners are expected to demonstrate in assessable ways their mastery and application of a range of skills and understandings learned as a result of the teacher’s facilitation. It appears this will remain unchanged under the forthcoming National Curriculum. Recent documentation updating the progress of the design of the curriculum states,

The curriculum should make clear to teachers what is to be taught, and to students what they should learn and what achievement standards are expected of them. This means that curriculum documents will be explicit about knowledge, understanding and skills, and that they will provide a clear foundation for the development of a teaching program. (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 8)

But learning how government documents such as these ‘work’ is only the beginning.

In learning ‘how’ to teach, preservice teachers must learn to flexibly select and apply a range of available teaching strategies. Prior to engagement in practicum teaching, these strategies are learned in theory, requiring the teacher to develop an understanding of how they might appear in the classroom. Further, the development of these understandings will be somewhat informed by the existing beliefs and practices held by preservice teachers from their experiences as students themselves (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, & Mockler, 2007; MacGregor, 2009; McCormack et al., 2004). Pedagogical approaches are then ‘tested’ within the practicum setting. Subsequently the application of the strategies in the setting of a classroom will challenge, affirm and develop the beliefs on which the learning experience was constructed (Cattley, 2007; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005).

Feiman-Nemser (2003) argues that this testing can be problematic because it is done within another teacher’s classroom, with another teachers’ students thereby limiting the ‘real’ learning that can occur. Indeed this is an argument supported by Walkington (2005) and Brown’s (2009) concern that preservice teachers might put aside their own beliefs and those developed at university and simply model the practice of their supervising teacher in an effort to ‘fit in’ and to receive a passing grade. Nevertheless, the opportunity to interact
with other participants within a community however limited cannot be overlooked. For this is where Lacey (1985) argues a preservice teacher ‘learns’ the profession. In addition, it is within these settings that preservice teachers are directly engaged with their students. Hopkins (2003, p. 2) argues, ‘The teacher’s task is not simply to teach, but to create powerful contexts for learning’. It is these experiences that allow preservice teachers to consider the broader perspectives of learning, building relationships with students and creating powerful contexts for learners.

A focus on the learner and the ways that teachers design and implement learning experiences brings a preservice teacher to a view of teaching beyond outcomes and teaching strategies. The literature strongly advocates that teachers should ‘get to know’ their students and that they should attempt to build genuine relationships with their learners (Killen, 2007; Leach & Moon, 2008; McLeod & Reynolds, 2007). For preservice teachers, this means learning to assess, analyse and teach from assessment results. It also requires them to become keen observers of children and their interactions, and to plan and make time for the development of relationships. Furthermore, they must develop the skill of reflective practice as they bring together information about their learners from a range of places and shape it into learning experiences (McLeod & Reynolds, 2007). Leach and Moon (2008) argue that ‘good’ teachers design learning experiences that empower students beyond the confines of the classroom. They argue that this is achieved by building self esteem and creating opportunities for the learners to engage with a range of communities in meaningful ways and that such teaching reflects a teacher’s beliefs about teaching and learning.

Walkington (2005) observes that when preservice teachers are given time to engage in ‘research’ activities where data collected in classrooms become the focus for discussion and reflection, they are empowered to make judgements in connection with their own beliefs and practices about teaching and learning. Reflective writing, journals and mentoring are identified in the literature as powerful ways to support the development of professional identity as such tasks provide opportunities for practitioners to consider their beliefs about learning and teaching as well as their own role within the professional community (Bintz &
Factors that contribute to the development and fragility of early career teacher professional identities are now examined.

**Developing an identity**

Without the opportunity to challenge personal philosophies and existing practices, pre-service teachers merely perpetuate the behaviour and beliefs of supervising teachers. The potential result is a teacher who knows how to ‘fit in’ to existing contexts, but lacks the skills and confidence to make decisions that will make a difference. (Walkington, 2005, p. 63)

A professional identity is initially formed through personal experiences prior to enrolment as a preservice teacher and further throughout university coursework and the somewhat limited field experiences offered during teacher education. McCormack, Gore and Thomas (2004) argue that a person develops preconceptions of what it is to teach based on their childhood experiences as a student. These can include assumptions about what students should do, how teachers should speak, behave and even how they dress. Supporting this argument, Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell and Mockler (2007) and MacGregor (2009) observe that memories of how one was taught are reflected in one’s teaching identity. These memories remain strong and under times of stress, potentially cause teachers to revert to teaching as they were taught despite professional experiences exposing them to more informed or contemporary pedagogies (Hammerness et al., 2005; Hristofski, 2008).

Within the preservice teacher context, Australian literature focuses on the development of teacher identities in connection with professional (or practicum) experiences. Cattley (2007) and Sinclair, Munns and Woodward (2005) observe that classroom teachers who supervise preservice teachers are largely responsible for determining not only curriculum content and teaching methods but that they also judge the success or failure of the practice teaching itself. This is a position of considerable power. Walkington (2005) further observes that these supervisor/mentor teachers usually operate with ‘very little guidance’ or
understanding of the nature of the university course, leaving them to ‘draw almost solely on
their own core beliefs’ (p. 55) in making these judgements. This situation is problematic
for two reasons. It creates a power imbalance between teacher and preservice teacher that
Brown (2009, p. 5) argues creates pressure for the preservice teacher to simply ‘model their
mentor’s teaching practices’ and that Walkington (2005, p. 63) claims will merely
‘perpetuate the behaviour and beliefs of existing teachers’. Second, it disconnects the
university and school learning contexts. Cattley (2007), Brown (2009) and Sinclair and
colleagues (2005) argue that the supervising/mentor teacher’s power in determining the
success or failure of a preservice teacher potentially promotes craft or experiential
knowledge over institutional knowledge. This disconnect results in an over reliance on
observation of the teacher at work, limiting the understanding of the cognitive processes
with which the teacher is engaging, thereby achieving the same result of reproduction of
teaching approaches (Brown, 2009). Metacognition, systematic thinking about the
complexity of teaching, is necessary for preservice (and indeed any) teaching as it guides
reflection and decision making for a deeper understanding of oneself as a teacher and of
one’s students, better equipping teachers to articulate their needs, their students’ needs and
to take action (Hammerness et al., 2005; Rodgers, 2002).

Brown (2009) observes that the current model of supervision during teacher education
promotes and perpetuates the teacher as a powerful ‘gatekeeper’ to the profession for early
career teachers, where newcomers not conforming to the accepted cultural norms of the
group are prevented from remaining within the community. Whilst those who can ‘fit in’
will do so, newcomers’ pedagogies that are ‘out of tune’ with experienced teachers’ ways
of thinking about teaching are often rejected, a situation that not only increases the
vulnerability of the newcomers’ professional identity but also potentially deprives the
community of new and important understandings (Cattley, 2007, p. 338). In reporting on
this phenomena, Dawson (2008) observes that teachers late in their career life cycles (a
large majority of teachers in Australian schools) are characterised by ‘increased rigidity and
resistance to innovation’ (2008, p. 5). Furthermore, such behaviour is described as ‘less a
quest for what one doesn’t have and more a protection of what one does have’ (Huberman,
1993, p. 11). Such a finding sheds light on the previous observation where experienced
practitioners protect their communities from pedagogical beliefs and practices that deviate from those traditionally accepted. However, it is insufficient to simply understand the problem without attempting to enact change because Pietsch and Williamson (2005) observe that this culture can be both powerful and damaging to early career teachers, their teaching identity and their self perceptions. For example, one participant in Pietsch and Williamson’s research described the difficulty of trying to ‘fit in’ to the culture of her new school,

I've never had anyone really doubt me...I've never had the feeling that people have thought that I was a complete idiot, that didn't know what she was doing until I came here. (Pietsch & Williamson, 2005, p. 368)

These findings are echoed in Ewing and Smith’s (2003) and Ewing and Manuel’s (2005) research into the serious issue of retaining early career teachers into the future. Enacting change in the types of communities that these beliefs and practices promote requires a ‘strong sense of personal and teacher identity’ (Cattley, 2007, p. 339) and a sense of competence (MacGregor, 2009) obliging teacher educators to consider their role in the development of preservice teachers.

In considering the literature to date, it is little wonder that early career teachers often struggle to maintain a professional identity. Compounding the tensions and discrepancies is the literature discussed earlier that calls for teachers to teach in new ways, for schools to adopt new pedagogies and for learning experiences that transform a learner’s understanding to application in the real world. It is no longer (if indeed it ever was) enough to simply emulate the observable practices of more experienced teachers. Clearly the challenges and barriers for early career teachers as they attempt to participate in teaching communities and the implications of these for teacher educators need to be examined.
Threats to the development of a professional identity

Each day, even moment to moment, they are negotiating that boundary, crossing over and then back again, being a teacher, then not, feeling like a student, but addressed as a teacher. (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 112)

Many preservice (or novice) teachers find the transition to early career (or apprentice) teacher as ‘sudden and sometimes dramatic’ (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 219) and they often feel lonely or even isolated from their familiar and trusted university based networks (Mantei & Kervin, 2009) as they attempt to engage with a range of communities with varying expectations and practices. These teachers’ professional identities are being challenged within complex settings: the culture of teaching, understanding themselves as teachers and learning how to teach (Walkington, 2005, p. 57). And their available resources are ‘easily displaced’ by these rigorous demands (Pietsch & Williamson, 2005).

The school context is the place where a professional identity is ‘honored’ and, ideally, this is a stable environment that supports and enriches the emergent identity through reflection and professional dialogue as the early career teacher gains teaching experience (Pietsch & Williamson, 2005). Ewing and Manuel (2005) encourage early career teachers in these new settings to volunteer their membership to a range of committees as a way to participate in the school community and to develop one’s identity as a member of the profession, and this is certainly sound advice for teachers in these settings. For many, though, the initial reality is casual and temporary teaching contracts, where, Pietsch and Williamson (2005) warn early career teachers’ ‘professional identities are likely to be curtailed and their commitment to the teaching profession remain undeveloped’ (p. 370). These teachers need access to alternatives that exist outside the school setting. For this reason, it is necessary for teacher educators to support preservice teachers to develop an identity that is able to withstand the pressures of uncertainty in employment, of unsustained professional experiences, of existing and unchanged pedagogies and delayed opportunities to participate within a more permanent teaching community so that they may continue to develop their professional identity, particularly in connection with quality learning experiences.
Conclusion

Understanding what it is teachers need to learn and how they learn it and sustain it has never been more urgent as we get ready for the generational change of shifts that is about to occur in the workplaces of schools and faculties of education. (Comber, 2005, p. 8)

The focus of this inquiry, therefore is on the ways that teacher professional identity can be fostered and developed in early career teachers. An understanding of the ways teacher educators might support and develop an identity that is resilient to these challenges and durable over time is useful information. Such knowledge can inform teacher education for the development of quality learning experiences within the tertiary setting. For early career teachers, the development of such an identity can support professional growth and development and ultimately mean the enactment of a sustainable and successful teaching career.
Chapter 3

Methodology
Overview

This chapter describes the methodology used to investigate the development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing learning experiences. Initially, the research questions are discussed together with the theoretical underpinnings and design of the inquiry. Ethical protocols, data sources and data analysis procedures are identified in connection with the broad nature of the inquiry. Following this, the participants are introduced and the methods of data collection and analysis are connected closely with each of the phases of the inquiry along with the ethical considerations of working with each of the participant groupings. Finally issues around credibility are addressed and the chapter concludes.

The inquiry aims to:
- Explore, identify and describe the connections between the professional identities of experienced teachers and their ability to design authentic learning experiences for their students
- Engage early career teachers in exploration of the learning experiences they use in their classrooms and the connections these lessons have with their beliefs about teaching and learning, and finally
- Examine the development of professional identity in these early career teachers

Research questions

Three key questions frame this inquiry. Each was carefully chosen in order that the aims of the inquiry could be met and the purpose achieved. These questions in turn guided the inquiry and the final research design. The questions are:
- How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences for their classroom?
- What is the nature of the relationship between the professional identity of teachers and their ability to plan authentic learning experiences for student learning?
- In what ways can early career teachers be supported in the development of a professional identity?
Theoretical underpinnings

Inseparable from the learning experiences that a teacher designs is the rationale upon which the experiences sit. Teachers’ understandings of who they are and what it is that they do influence the many decisions they make about teaching and learning (Korthagen, 2004). Consequently, the concept of ‘teacher professional identity’ (Stets & Burke, 2000; Wenger, 1998) is employed as a theoretical frame for this inquiry, operating as one lens through which data are analysed.

Wenger (1998) observes that the connection between a teacher’s professional identity and the way s/he plans for and teaches in the classroom is profound. Unlike developing a social identity where a person is ‘at one’ with a group and adopts the group’s perspectives, Stets and Burke (2000) observe that developing a professional identity requires coordination and negotiation of interactions with others within the group as well as manipulating and controlling the resources for which this group is responsible. Understanding what a professional identity is, then, is crucial knowledge informing this inquiry.

Professional identity is defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) as an interpretation of who one is as a member of a certain profession rather than an expression of what one knows. Described as one’s ‘way of being in the world’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 151), the core of professional identity is made up of beliefs about teaching and what it means to be a teacher (Walkington, 2005). Sachs (1999, p. 3) defines professional identity as ‘a shared set of attributes, values and so on that enable the differentiation of one group from another’. It is these attributes and values that teachers respond to as they explore the type of teacher they want to be (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Professional identity forms and reforms in response to challenges, affirmations and perspectives gathered through reflection on one’s participation in professional communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Hammerness et al., 2005; Walkington, 2005; Wenger, 1998). What teachers believe about teaching and what it means to be a teacher is reflected in the types of experiences they plan and design for their students. That is, the learning experiences that teachers design provide a tangible demonstration of their beliefs in action. Analysis of such experiences creates opportunities for a deeper understanding of a professional identity and how it develops.
Researchers agree that a professional identity is not fixed, it is a dynamic and changing interpretation of oneself as a member of a professional community (Danielewicz, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007; Wenger, 1998). A teacher’s professional identity is shaped by participation in experiences and interactions that cause them to challenge, interpret and (re)negotiate who they are, who they think others are and who they want to be (Danielewicz, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006). Participation is key in establishing teacher professional identity, commitment to work and the desire to adhere to the professional norms associated with being a teacher (Hammerness et al., 2005). This development does not occur solely through the activities in which a teacher directly participates, but also within the social context of the group. For teachers early in their careers, observing everyday school events and activities beyond their own experiences also contributes to the development of a professional identity (Wenger, 1998). Such peripheral participation provides a supportive environment for the development of professional identity as the new member is free to be ‘engaged in the action without being themselves the focus of attention’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 193).

Those who identify as ‘teachers’ vary in age, experience, beliefs and ability, a consideration reflected not only in the recruitment of participants for this inquiry, but also in its research design.

**Research Design**

This inquiry adopts a design-based research approach. It sits within a qualitative paradigm and draws on the principles of ethnography as it explores the perspectives, interpretations and situations of teachers within their complex professional settings. Action research methodology is used within the design to enable planning, development and facilitation of interactions with the participants followed by reflection in connection with the purpose of the inquiry. Each element of the design is now discussed.
Design based research

Design-based research is not a research methodology, but an approach to organising and framing an inquiry. Within the design-based research approach can sit a range of research methodologies suitable for the research at hand. Patton (2002) argues that qualitative research needs a design that is both open and flexible if it is to allow a thorough exploration of the inquiry focus. Because a research design continues to emerge even after data collection has commenced, Patton (2002, p. 257) rejects the selection of expected or parochial methodology in favour of considering the ‘paradigm of choices’ available to a researcher. The design-based research approach affords the inclusion of a range of methodologies within its frame, thereby responding to Patton’s call for ‘theoretical appropriateness’ in research design (Patton, 1990).

Joseph (2004) argues that the goal of design-based research is to contribute to ‘research, design and pedagogical practice’ (p. 235). To do this, the researcher first identifies a challenge or ‘problem’ within a professional context. Through research and discussion with peers and practitioners, a researcher designs an approach or ‘solution’ that aims to address the needs of those experiencing the problem. Using an iterative cycle of data collection and analysis, the solution is tested and its principles modified at each iteration in response to data analysis. The aim is twofold - to refine both theory and practice (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004). The researcher uses findings to identify principles that will contribute to a deeper understanding of the problem, that will advance knowledge of theoretical methodologies and that will present practical applications for classroom teaching and learning experiences.

Design-based research sits comfortably within the qualitative paradigm as both aim for the articulation of clear theoretical perspectives, which emerge from the rigorous, prolonged data collection periods and deep analysis that build the credibility of findings (Creswell, 2003; Reeves, 2000, 2006).

Four phases characterise design-based research (Reeves, 2000, 2006). The phases are depicted in Figure 3.1 and then explained in connection with this inquiry.
PHASE 1. Analysis of practical problems by researchers and practitioners in collaboration

The problem identified in this inquiry was that confusion exists for teachers about the nature of authentic learning experiences for classroom teaching. Research literature and the texts of the political domain create pressure on teachers to provide experiences that are meaningful and relevant to the interests, experiences and needs of their learners. However, what is not clear is how this is conceptualised in daily classroom teaching and how it relates to professional identity.

The Design-Based Research Collective (2003) argues that bringing together researchers with practitioners not only develops powerful relationships but also promotes deeper understanding of the challenge within the context of its practice and the ‘characteristics of potential solutions’ (van den Akker, 1999, p. 8). Therefore in Phase One of this inquiry, professional identity and the principles of authentic learning experiences identified in the literature (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) were examined in collaboration with eight experienced classroom practitioners. Experienced teachers were interviewed about their beliefs and practices and the ways that they define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences for their learners (Appendix B). Findings emerging from the analysis of this collaboration allowed the inquiry to take into account the reality of the classroom, the unique context within which the learning occurs and the individual experiences and beliefs of the teacher who facilitates the learning. These findings and those identified in the literature were utilised in Phase Two.
PHASE 2. Development of solutions informed by existing design principles and technological innovations

In Phase Two the outcomes from the analysis of the data collected in Phase One were incorporated with the literature to develop a ‘solution’ to the problem. The solution was a series of professional development experiences (Appendix I) designed for facilitation with early career teachers in Phase Three. It was planned as an initial series of formal workshops over one University Semester followed by a period of less formal interactions as the early career teachers planned, developed, delivered and reflected on authentic learning experiences in connection with their own professional identities.

Underpinning the solution was a model for authentic teaching and learning (Figure 3.2). This model represented findings from Phase One, an understanding of authentic learning experiences from the perspective of both the literature and from experienced practitioners.

Figure 3.2 - A model for authentic teaching and learning
**PHASE 3. Iterative cycles of testing and refinement of solutions in practice**

Professional development experiences, the formal component of Phase Three, were facilitated in the University tutorial setting over the course of one semester (13 weeks). The participants were early career teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Education, studying *Reflective Practice*, a core subject of the course. The informal component of Phase Three continued throughout the second semester as follow up interviews and planned interactions with the same participants.

The professional development experiences, developed in response to the underpinning model (Figure 3.2), were designed to explore each of its principles in connection with the participants’ own experiences and beliefs, their connections with the literature and with the experiences of others. Professional development activities engaged participants in a range of professional experiences, for example,

- Teacher Vignettes: exploring teacher identity and its connection to teaching decisions (Appendix F)
- Primary school students’ work samples: analysis of the teacher’s intention and the interpretation of the learner, the value of the experience, the opportunities for authentic learning
- Planning for integrated learning: analysis of teaching programs and the opportunities for authentic learning, exploration of the beliefs about teaching and learning reflected in the program

The professional development experiences are summarised in Chapter Four and detailed in Appendix I, while interactions with early career teachers are examined in Chapter Five.

Reeves (2000) and van den Akker (1999) argue for rigorous testing of tentatively identified principles in allowing for their refinement and modification in light of newly emerging evidence from data analysis. This rigour was achieved using action research to inform the content and facilitation of the professional development experiences throughout Phase Three as the model was tested with early career teachers as a solution for developing an understanding of authentic learning experiences in connection with professional identity.
**PHASE 4. Reflection to produce ‘design principles’ and enhance solution implementation**

Design-based research often culminates in the creation of a tangible computer-based product, however, a ‘process oriented scenario’ (Reeves, 2000; van den Akker, 1999, p. 9) or models of successful innovation are identified as equally suitable in achieving the design-based researcher’s aim of inquiring ‘broadly into the nature of learning in a complex system and to refine generative or predictive theories’ (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003, p. 7).

The ‘design principles’ of this inquiry are expressed as a model for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The content and nature of the phases within this inquiry are summarised in Figure 3.3.

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**Figure 3.3 - Using the design-based research approach**

A single iteration was conducted in this inquiry. Time spent gathering extensive data in Phase One acknowledges the important role of practitioners in advancing both theory and practice. Without this initial lengthy implementation, an understanding of the nature of the
established professional identities of experienced teachers could not have been achieved. Nor could the inquiry have been ground deeply in classroom practice and the culture of the professional teaching community. Data were gathered in Phase Three over the course of one academic year (February-November), allowing for deep engagement with the participants in a range of settings.

**A qualitative paradigm**

This inquiry is located within a qualitative paradigm so that it allows the context of the environment to be considered in understanding the phenomenon. A qualitative research paradigm affords the construction of ‘complex and encompassing perspectives’ (Creswell, 2003, p. 182) through multiple sources of data in developing an understanding from the perspective of the participants, the insider’s view (Merriam, 1998). Within this inquiry, ethnographic principles and action research methodologies were identified as appropriate for supporting an investigation of the development of professional identity in early career teachers. Individual methodologies are now examined.

**Ethnographic Principles**

This inquiry is not an ethnography. However, it draws on the *principles* of ethnography to develop an understanding of the problem from the perspectives and realities of each participant. The focus in this inquiry is the emic, the ‘insider’s perspective’ of a cultural group (Burns, 1995; Fetterman, 1998; Merriam, 1998), a complex and multifaceted phenomena that varies between and among each member because of the range of perspectives, experiences, beliefs and practices that they bring to the group. Ethnographic principles allow a researcher to acknowledge that the actions of individuals must be understood within the broader context of their group because of the power of social interactions in shaping beliefs and practices (Pole & Morrison, 2003; Tedlock, 2000). To obtain this broader perspective, ethnographic principles accommodate a range of data collection methods for building an understanding of the inquiry’s focus.
The principles of ethnography encapsulate the essence of the qualitative or interpretive paradigm. They provide ‘general commitments or orientations’ to this inquiry that acknowledge its practitioners, their beliefs and practices and the contexts within which they operate (Burns, 1995, p. 249). The participants in this inquiry represent a breadth of experience and expertise. The teachers differed in age, cultural background and gender. Their teaching experiences have occurred across a range of classes, schools, education systems and geographical locations, with children of different abilities from different socio-economic groups and cultural backgrounds. Ethnographic principles allowed for the acknowledgement of these differences as both informative and valuable in providing rich accounts of what it is to be a member of the professional teaching community. Using ethnographic principles also afforded recognition of the organic nature of our ‘realities’ as a process of growth and change.

Each of the ethnographic principles identified by Burns (1995) is now explained in connection with the inquiry.

**Understanding, interpretation and multiple realities**

The inquiry recognises that a person’s understanding of the world is an interpretation of their experiences and relationships and that perspectives differ between people (Burns, 1995; Fetterman, 1998). For this reason, participants were purposively selected to ensure a broad range of perspectives (and therefore realities) could be captured. Comprehensive descriptions of settings and scenarios throughout the analysis and reporting stages supports the process of understanding actions and realities within the context of their settings (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 1998). In gaining comprehensive accounts, data were collected in a range of ways. The participants shared their beliefs and understandings in physical and virtual settings, in collaboration with others and also alone. They were asked to describe their own practices as well as respond to the actions and work product of others. This multifaceted approach to data collection was designed to explore the realities and to capture the views and beliefs that have formed through each teacher’s different experiences and interactions.
Process
Burns (1995) argues that interpretations and understandings are unfixed and that they change in response to a person’s experiences. The acknowledgement of this process supports the view examined earlier that a teacher’s professional identity similarly grows and changes (Wenger, 1998). Teaching is a process where both positive and negative events continue to shape teachers’ concepts of who they are within their teaching stories. Reflective teachers take these experiences and consider them in connection with their philosophies about learning and teaching. It is this extended process of action and reflection that develops deep understandings and beliefs about teachers and teaching. Subsequently, teachers with a number of years experience will usually hold strong views about learning and teaching, whilst for an early career teacher, these views are understandably more tentative (Fetherston, 2007; Marsh, 2000). In this inquiry, each interaction was designed to explore teachers’ beliefs and practices, to challenge these concepts and understand their basis. Two groups of participants were recruited for this inquiry: experienced primary school teachers and teachers early in their careers. Participants were purposively selected to represent a range of backgrounds and experiences within the inquiry. Recruitment methods and criteria are further examined later in this chapter and summarised in Tables 3.1 and 3.5.

Phenomenology
O’Connor and Scanlon (2006, p. 3) identify the principle of phenomenology as the attempt to ‘uncover the meaning of experiences from the subjective or first person point of view’. In this inquiry, the principle of phenomenology affords the incorporation of the lived experiences of each of the teachers (Burns, 1995; Creswell, 1998; Mertens, 1998) in Phases One and Three of the inquiry. Creswell (2003) observes that researchers adopting the principle of phenomenology within their research designs will separate or ‘bracket’ their own experiences so they can understand the phenomenon from the participants’ rather than their own points of view.
The ways that the participant teachers, both experienced and early in their careers interpret the concept of teaching and being a teacher is important information in understanding the nature of a teacher’s professional identity. Data are reported throughout this inquiry through the lens of each teacher’s lived experiences in an attempt to capture the ‘essence’ of each participant teacher’s identity.

**Naturalism and holism**

Research guided by ethnographic principles investigates action in natural rather than contrived settings in order to develop understandings within the social context where they normally occur (Brewer, 2000). In this inquiry, the research draws on teachers’ knowledge and reflections about that which occurred within their professional settings, allowing an understanding to develop about how ‘the actions of individuals are motivated by events within the larger whole’ (Burns, 1995, p. 250).

**Considerations for ethnographic principles**

Fetterman (1998) argues that all researchers enter the field with bias, indeed the very topic identified as researchable is a biased observation. Rather than a limitation of the principles, Fetterman (1998) describes controlled biases as important in focussing and limiting the research. In this inquiry, my bias is driven by my experience as a primary school practitioner and more recently as a teacher educator and firm ideas about what this means. My teaching experiences since entering the profession in 1991 have caused me to reflect on the ways that I fit within each school community and on who I am as an educator. Further study (BEd, MEd) has deepened these understandings as they are viewed within a range of theoretical frameworks and through a variety of lenses. Such knowledge allows me to operate as both insider and outsider, to understand the perspectives of those teaching and beginning to teach in the setting, however, the bias is controlled through checking processes such as member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation of the data. These checking procedures are examined later in this chapter.
**Action Research**

Action research is a process of systematic inquiry with the aim of developing in practitioners transformational understandings that lead to ‘new knowledge and understanding…to improve educational practices…to see the world in a different way and therefore do things differently’ (Stringer, 2004, p. 13). In supporting the intention of individual studies, action research can encompass a range of methodologies within qualitative, quantitative and mixed mode paradigms, but for this inquiry, it remains within the qualitative paradigm.

The impetus for action stems from the practitioner. It is practitioners who identify the problem through personal experience and observation of the context in which they teach, coupled with a desire to improve the situation (Burns, 1995; Elliott, 1991; Holly, Arthur, & Kasten, 2005; Kervin, 2003). McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996, p. 13) describe the action researcher as one who is ‘intent on describing, interpreting and explaining events’ in an attempt to improve his or her practice, a process that will adopt either a participative or observational approach depending on the researcher’s ontological perspective (McNiff et al., 1996). Implicit in action research is the teacher-researchers’ reflection on their own teaching practice underpinned by ‘informed, committed action that gives rise to knowledge rather than just successful action’ (McNiff et al., 1996, p. 8).

Action research takes the researcher through the stages of the research process. Although different models identify these stages in different ways, the principles of observation, reflection and action remain constant, as does the cyclical, non linear nature of the research process between and among the stages (Mertler, 2006; Stringer, 2004). For example, Stringer (2004), Holly, Arhar and Kasten (2005) and Baumfield, Hall and Wall (2008) advance the three stage process of look (observe), think (reflect), act. However Cherry (2002) and Mertler (2006) incorporate a four step approach: plan, act, develop and reflect. Reflection and action are key activities for the researcher within the three stage approach. A four stage action research focuses on the researcher as a change agent and prompts reflective practice with questions such as ‘So what?’ and ‘What next?’ (Cherry, 2002, p. 2) in response to observations and reflections. These questions feed the planning and
development stages of the process, which is now discussed in connection with the current inquiry.

Mertler’s (2006) four stage action research model was selected as appropriate for exploring and developing teacher understandings within this inquiry. Mertler’s (2006, p. 24) model, ‘The process of Action Research (adapted from Mertler & Charles, 2005)’ is shown in Figure 3.4. Each of the stages, planning, acting, developing and reflecting, is a comfortable fit with the intention and focus of this inquiry. In planning for learning in the tertiary setting, understandings drawn from Phase One of this inquiry are combined with my own beliefs about learning to inform the design of professional development workshop content and strategies developed in the design phase of the inquiry, Phase Two. In acting on this plan, observation and feedback from learners and colleagues informed both the reflections and subsequent development of future workshops. This cyclical process was non linear as reflection occurred regularly throughout each stage of the research and informed all decisions.

![Please see print copy for image]

**Figure 3.4 - The Process for Action Research (from Mertler & Charles, 2005)**

Burns (1995) argues that while the research inquiry must come to a close, the process of planning, acting, developing and reflecting, in fact does not end, but redefines and challenges the practitioner’s role. This view is shared by Elliot (1991, p. 52) who explains
that action research serves to develop and enrich a practitioner’s ‘capacity for
discrimination and judgement’ within the complexity of people and relationships. Cole and
Knowles (2000) concur, observing that the focus of action research is on the process of
teaching and learning rather than on any final product. This inquiry will challenge teaching
in the tertiary education setting as it explores the ways teachers conceptualise themselves as
teachers and the nature of authentic learning for their own primary school classrooms.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) argue that the researcher’s perspective and focus will
determine the methods and techniques of data collection and analysis. For example, an
objective perspective on teaching may lead the researcher down a quantitative path where
relationships are examined through correlational-experimental methods. In this inquiry,
however, the perspective of the ‘insider’ is sought (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Merriam,
1998). Actions and decisions are viewed as a reflection of one’s values and beliefs and
therefore need to be examined within that subjective, open-ended context (Kemmis &
McTaggart, 2000; Mertler, 2006). This subjective, ‘multiple realities’ view of practice
inspires a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis.

The literature argues strongly in favour of action research for bringing together theoretical
understandings and teaching practice, an aim common to the organising frame for this
claim that the power of action research lies in its twofold potential to contribute to
theoretical knowledge whilst enhancing practice and meeting the needs of practitioners.
McKay and Marshall (2001, p. 52) eloquently summarise the challenge of action research
‘…the very essence of AR is encapsulated within its name: it represents a juxtaposition of
action and research, or in other words, of practice and theory.’
**Drawing the design together**

Figure 3.3 demonstrated the role of the four phases of design-based research in progressing and organising this inquiry. Figure 3.5 locates theory and methodology within the design-based research approach to demonstrate the rigour, complexity and intention of the design.

![Figure 3.5 - Research Design](image)

**Research in Action**

**Ethical procedures**

The University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for the commencement of this inquiry (HE07/289). Procedures throughout the inquiry have been guided by associated protocols.

Each participant was included in information sessions about the purpose and procedures of the inquiry. They were provided with participant information sheets for future reference (Appendix D, E) and all gave informed, written consent to participate. All participants
were reminded that their participation was voluntary, information shared was confidential and that they could withdraw from the inquiry at any time free from penalty or prejudice. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity, whilst names of schools, students and other identifying information has also been omitted to ensure confidentiality.

Electronically generated data such as interview transcripts are stored in a password protected computer belonging to the University of Wollongong and print based data are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Faculty of Education.

**The BEST website**

Along with the physical setting of the weekly workshops, the early career teachers enrolled in the Reflective Practice subject were also given password protected access to the BEST website. Beginning and Establishing Successful Teachers (BEST) is an online community of learners developed specifically for primary and early childhood students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. The site hosts a range of features to enable collaboration and interaction with a range of educators to support teachers in transition from preservice to early career teacher. Features include an online mentoring space, opportunity to create, read and respond to weblogs, forums, professional reading resources and a repository of audio files from professional dialogue between the early career teachers as well as with more experienced colleagues (Herrington et al., 2006). Data were collected from the BEST website during Phase Three of the inquiry. Weblog (or ‘blog’) postings formed the primary data collected from the BEST site. These blogs were reflections on the issues of teaching. The issues that were taken as a focus for reflection included the workshop topics as well as the individual topics identified by early career teachers themselves. Figure 3.6 shows a screen capture of the BEST homepage and the URL for the site is at, http://ftp.uow.edu.au/educ/students/best.html
Data sources

Data were collected from a range of sources throughout the inquiry. These are described and justified here and then revisited within the phases of the inquiry in connection with the framing questions and the specific participants within each phase.

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix B & C)

Elliott (1991, p. 80) observes that interviews are a ‘good way of finding out what the situation looks like from other points of view’ and that semi-structured interviews are particularly useful as they allow both interviewer and participant the opportunity to follow an interesting lead that arises spontaneously within the interview. Further to understanding the viewpoints of others, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe interviews as powerful in capturing the constructions, reconstructions and projections related to a participant’s experiences and beliefs. Within this inquiry, each of these was a significant viewpoint. Experienced teachers discussed their current beliefs emerging from reconstructions of past events and their projections about the future, whilst the early career teachers demonstrated a greater focus on projection, on the type of teacher they were striving to be.

Figure 3.6 - The BEST site homepage
Interviewing is recognised as integral to both action research (Elliott, 1991) and ethnography (Burns, 1995) because of its capacity to provide rich accounts of the contexts within which the participant operates. Taking into account the nature of these methodological approaches, Fontana and Frey (2000, p. 664) suggest that an interview within this paradigm is a ‘practical production’, where together, the interviewer and participant move beyond the ‘whats’ of the interview to the ‘hows’. This is particularly fitting for the current inquiry that seeks to understand how knowledge is conceptualised.

**Reflections/journal entries/weblog postings (Appendix O)**

Reflection is identified as a vehicle for understanding oneself as a teacher (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (1998, p. 166) argue that journals support teachers as they ‘weave together their accounts of the private and the professional, capturing fragments of experience in attempts to sort themselves out’. Such information is particularly useful for exploring growth of professional identity within early career teachers.

Information shared through reflection is particularly useful in action research as it allows the teacher researcher to engage with the cycle of planning, action, development and reflection (Mertler, 2006), fosters ‘critical self awareness’ (Riessman, 2008, p. 191) and provides an ‘historical record’ of the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 167). Further, the design-based research approach is supported by the use of a reflective journal in informing the analysis of changes made, as the principles are tried, examined and modified in response to data analysis.

**Documents**

Documents are defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as written or recorded material not prepared in response to a request by a researcher, but for a specific personal or professional purpose (Burns, 1995), for example, lesson plans, teaching programs and classroom artefacts or work samples (Mertler, 2006). Hodder (2000, p. 703) observes that any type of text collected as data needs to be analysed in the ‘contexts of their conditions of production
and reading’ and it is within the context of understandings reached through analysis of interviews, observations and field notes that relevant documents were analysed.

In this inquiry, documents were collected and analysed to support and enrich data gathered through interview and observation. Analysis of these data allowed the inquiry to explore the individual interpretations (Hodder, 2000) of each teacher evident within the learning experiences they designed and the stories they shared.

**Field notes and observation**
Observation and field notes were gathered as the early career teachers engaged with the professional development experiences within the workshop setting. The interactions observed were between early career participant teachers with a focus on gathering evidence of the development of professional identity. Identified as an important source of data for research that draws on ethnographic principles, participant observations afford close involvement with the participants and their individual settings (Burns, 1995), whilst field notes provided in depth descriptions of the circumstances of the events being observed (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006; Mertler, 2006). Reflection on these data supported the action research process to inform future decisions about data collection and teacher direction.

Observations and field notes are effective in triangulating data to test understandings achieved through analysis of core data. Whilst it is acknowledged that ‘pure, objective, detached observation’ is impossible to achieve in making observations (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 634), neither is it sought. Rather, it is the relationships formed and perspectives gained that are valued in providing deep understanding of the insider and their reality (Fetterman, 1998).

Forming core data were semi structured interviews and journals/weblog postings, while supporting data: field notes and observations and documents (such as teacher programs and tutorial work product) further informed the analysis. This is depicted in Figure 3.7.
Data analysis

Whilst specific data analysis procedures will be examined within each of the phases of the inquiry, it is useful here to explicate the process by which the data were analysed in connection with methods literature. In this inquiry, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for data analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define the constant comparison method as an inductive process, appropriate for interpreting data from multiple sources because it offers a way for systemic analysis. Two activities, fragmenting and connecting, guide analysis using the constant comparison method (Dey, 1993, in Boeije, 2002) and each complements the other. Fragmenting the data allows each piece to be removed from its context and considered in isolation, while connecting ensures that the piece is then replaced and analysed within the complexity and richness of the data as a whole (Boeije, 2002).

Using the constant comparison method, the researcher begins analysis when the first data are collected. Early analysis allows the researcher to return to the field with purpose and direction about what data are sought. This process continues with an aim to achieve ‘theoretical completeness, when the theory is able to explain the data fully and satisfactorily’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 494).
The constant comparative method is appropriate for this inquiry because it allowed the data to be considered throughout the collection process, informing subsequent data collection decisions and direction. The comparison of newly collected data with existing data examines the fit between the data and categories and directs reconsideration and modification of emerging theory in light of this analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). Although guided by stages of analysis, the constant comparative method is non linear in design as the researcher moves between data collection, analysis and then further collection driven by emerging understandings from codes and memos (Boeije, 2002; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The cyclical nature of the analysis fits with the underpinning design of action research, and the design based research approach.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) identify four stages of analysis using the constant comparative method:

1. *Comparing incidents and data that are applicable to each category* 
   Incidents are coded first in isolation (fragmented), then compared (connected) with other data from the same participant and also with other data within the same code from other participants (Boeije, 2002; Cohen et al., 2007).

2. *Integrating these categories and their properties* 
   A shift occurs during this stage through further coding, as the incidents within a code are no longer compared with other incidents, but with the properties of a category (Cohen et al., 2007). Memoing supports this process as the researcher explores the relationships among the themes identified within the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

3. *Bounding the theory* 
   Theoretical completeness occurs at this stage as the data can be explained satisfactorily and a core variable is identified (Cohen et al., 2007). A model or criteria or set of principles demonstrates and explains the relationships between and among the themes of the inquiry (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).
4. Setting out the theory

The theory is explicated to culminate the process. That is, ‘the researcher has gathered and generated coded data, memos and a theory, and this is then written in full’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 494).

Phases of the design

Details of the participants, data collection procedures and analysis are reported in connection with the design-based research data collection phases. Please note no data were collected in Phases Two and Four of this inquiry. Phase Two involved design of the solution, a series of professional development experiences underpinned by the model for authentic teaching and learning. This ‘solution’ was implemented as Phase Three of the inquiry. During Phase Four, principles for the development of professional identity in early career teachers were identified. The Phases are described using the subheadings:

Phase One
- Focus
- Participants
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Ethical considerations

Phase Two
Design of the solution to be implemented in Phase Three. The solution is professional development learning experiences for early career teachers.

Phase Three
- Focus
- Participants
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Ethical considerations

Phase Four
Identification of principles for the development of professional identity in early career teachers
Phase One

Focus

The focus for this phase of the inquiry was to gather the wisdom of practitioners to better inform the identification of the problem being investigated. Findings from analysis of these data were used in the design of the solution, professional development experiences (Phase Two).

Participants - Experienced classroom teachers

Phase One of this inquiry was conducted with eight experienced primary school classroom teachers. A teacher is considered “experienced” after approximately five years of teaching practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Fetherston, 2007; Steffy & Wolfe, 1998). Experienced teaching is characterised by self-confidence and flexibility. Teachers can become ‘engrossed in numerous trials and experiments’ as they apply, challenge and modify their understandings through the learning experiences they design (Marsh, 2000, p. 320).

Experienced classroom teachers were identified as appropriate for Phase One of the inquiry, collaboration with practitioners because of their openness to being challenged and their ability to contribute to the design of the professional development experiences in Phase Two. The experienced teachers are the practitioners Reeves (2000) identifies as important collaborators in identifying the problem in Phase One of the design-based research approach.

The teachers were selected using snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) in an effort to capitalise on the knowledge, experiences and recommendations of practitioners who deem each other to be experts in their field. This selection method was successful in capturing data from teachers with a range of teaching experiences, ages, areas of expertise and from a range of regions. Table 3.1 sets out the criteria for selection to participate in the inquiry and Table 3.2 identifies the participant teachers from this group, their years of teaching experience and current teaching commitments. Names of teachers and schools have been changed or omitted to protect their identities and to maintain confidentiality in the stories they shared.
### Table 3.1 - Criteria for recruitment of experienced teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Selection Criteria</th>
<th>Aim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Experienced teachers      | More than 5 years teaching experience  
Expertise acknowledged by peers (snowball sampling) | - A mix of male and female teachers  
- Teachers from systemic and non systemic schools  
- Teachers working with a range of socio economic groups across a range of geographical locations |

### Table 3.2 - Experienced teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym and location</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Role at the school at the time of the inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Daphne                 | 19 years            | - 2 stream school  
- Executive teacher*  
- Teaching Year 2 |
| Location: South West Sydney |                     |                                                                                                             |
| Jenna                  | Over 30 years       | - 1 stream school  
- Executive teacher*  
- Teaching Year 5 |
| Location: Illawarra    |                     |                                                                                                             |
| Justin                 | 10 years            | - 3 stream school  
- Executive teacher*  
- Teaching Year 4 |
| Location: Southern Illawarra |                   |                                                                                                             |
| Keith                  | 25 years            | - 2 stream school  
- Principal, previously held other executive* roles in this school |
| Location: South West Sydney |                   |                                                                                                             |
| Meredith               | 12 years            | - Education Officer, Pedagogy  
- Previously held classroom teaching roles - 2 stream school |
| Location: South Coast NSW |                   |                                                                                                             |
| Paul                   | 22 years            | - 3 stream school  
- Assistant Principal  
- Pedagogy support for staff |
| Location: South West Sydney |                   |                                                                                                             |
| Stan                   | 6 years             | - 2 Stream School  
- Technology support teacher (staff and students)  
- Teaching Year 3 |
| Location: Southern Sydney |                   |                                                                                                             |
| Tonia                  | 14 years            | - Assistant Principal, 3 stream school  
- Literacy support teacher |
| Location: Southern Illawarra |                 |                                                                                                             |

* An executive teacher holds a position of authority and leadership in NSW Primary schools.
Data collection

Data were gathered in a range of places throughout Phase One of the inquiry at convenient places identified by each experienced teacher. Generally, these occurred as interviews in their classrooms or offices on school grounds either during recess and lunch breaks or after school. The interest in this inquiry was on the ways that the teachers talked about authentic learning experiences and made connections to their professional identities, therefore, no teaching was observed as part of the data collection process. The school sites provided rich opportunities for teachers to draw on their classroom surroundings or documentation to demonstrate or provide supporting evidence of a particular viewpoint. Collecting data in these sites informed the ethnographic perspective of this inquiry by contributing to the understanding of the context within which each teacher works.

Summarised in Table 3.3 is the purpose of each of the data sources in responding to questions one and two of the inquiry. Included with these are the codes assigned to each piece of data for the purposes of an audit trail (Appendix A). These codes are used throughout this inquiry to cite the source of data reported.
Table 3.3 - Connecting experienced teacher data with inquiry questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>QUESTION 1</th>
<th>QUESTION 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>- Explore, challenge and understand experienced teachers’ definitions and concept of authentic learning SI5.12a, SI5.12b, SI6.12, SI10.12a, SI10.12b, SI13.12a, SI13.12b, SI13.12c</td>
<td>- Understand the process of identifying content, planning, facilitating and assessing authentic learning experiences - Allow each teacher to tell their own stories rather than following a preconceived path determined by the researcher SI5.12a, SI5.12b, SI6.12, SI10.12a, SI10.12b, SI13.12a, SI13.12b, SI13.12c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>- Evidence of the ways that the teachers’ beliefs are transferred into a teaching program WD5.12a, WD5.12b, WD10.12a, WD10.12b, WD13.12</td>
<td>- Descriptions of the settings reveal ways that authentic learning is conceptualised in the classroom SI5.12a, SI5.12b, SI6.12, SI10.12a, SI10.12b, SI13.12a, SI13.12b, SI13.12c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field notes/Observations</td>
<td>- Descriptions of the settings reveal ways that authentic learning is conceptualised in the classroom SI5.12a, SI5.12b, SI6.12, SI10.12a, SI10.12b, SI13.12a, SI13.12b, SI13.12c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data analysis**

The principal data collected from experienced classroom teachers were interview transcripts (Appendix N). Secondary data came from field notes and programming samples (Appendix L & M). The analysis of these is described according to the four stages of the constant comparative method as identified by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

1. **Comparing incidents and data that are applicable to each category**

   Each interview was initially read in its entirety. Incidents within the data were then coded within the framework of the principles of authentic learning experiences as identified by Herrington and Oliver (2000). This framework was used to code each of the interviews both in isolation from other data and then in comparison with them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Key words within the data were used in identifying the category to which they belonged. For example, a principle of authentic learning experiences is that they ‘reflect the ways that knowledge is used in real life’ (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Within the
interview and secondary data analysed, words that conveyed the connection between the
learning opportunity and the way that it reflected activity outside of the classroom were used
to connect the data to the category, such as ‘real life’, ‘real world’, ‘connected to their own
life’, ‘choices’, ‘decisions about...’ and ‘work together on problem solving’

In addition to connecting the data to Herrington and Oliver’s (2000) framework, the process
of fragmenting and then connecting the data revealed further categories that related to
elements beyond the nine principles of authentic learning experiences. These categories
were: professional responsibility, external pressures, engagement, community ‘give and
take’ and ‘good’ teaching.

2. Integrating these categories and their properties
The new categories were considered in connection with the original principles of authentic
learning experiences. As before, key words were identified within the data that placed it
within certain categories. The excerpt in Table 3.4 below demonstrates the mapping
rules for language used to explore one of the emerging categories, professional responsibility.
The language used during interview was mapped in this way to allow for allocation of
categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A teacher’s professional responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“These children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build (self esteem, security etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set clear expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Bounding the theory
Although Glaser and Strauss identify stage three of the constant comparison method as
bounding the theory through the achievement of ‘theoretical completeness’, the findings
were only tentative at this stage (Phase One) of the inquiry. Instead, a tentative model of authentic teaching and learning was constructed during Phase Two (Appendix G) in preparation for further testing in Phase Three.

4. Setting out the theory

Theoretical completeness was not achieved in Stage One because at this time in the inquiry, data had only been collected from experienced teachers. Still to come was Phase Three of the design-based research approach where the solution (designed in Phase Two) is tested with early career teachers. Once the early career teachers had engaged with the solution (professional development experiences), the analysis moved to Stage Four. In Stage Four, the data collected in Phases One (with the experienced teachers) and Three (with the early career teachers) achieved theoretical completeness and principles were identified for the development of professional identity in early career teachers.

Ethical considerations

As a former primary school teacher and now teacher educator, designing this inquiry prompted me to consider my own beliefs and perspectives about teaching and the way that knowledge is shared within a community. Teachers are story tellers, they share their wisdom with each other as they develop their own expertise and contribute to the expertise of their school communities (Labbo et al., 2003). It was important that I remained focused during the interviews, resisting the temptation to digress in ‘interesting chat’ and the imposition of my own beliefs. It was for this reason that I used snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) to access the stories of teachers working in primary schools who were identified and recommended by their colleagues, rather than identifying these teachers myself or through my own teaching networks.

As these experienced teachers shared and justified their identity, an important element of the interviews was to understand and embrace the different perspectives that each teacher provided regardless of my own beliefs and to consider the implications of this in my own work with preservice and early career teachers. The perspectives gathered through member
checking and then peer debriefing ensured I was not seeing what I wanted to see, but that I was accurately interpreting the ways that these teachers had conceptualised authentic learning experiences.

**Phase Two**

The design of the solution is described in Chapter Four of this thesis as part of the flow describing the findings from Phase One.

**Phase Three**

**Focus**

The focus for Phase Three of the inquiry was to test the model for authentic learning and teaching through the professional development experiences with early career teachers. The aim within the *Reflective Practice* workshops was to facilitate deeper understandings about authentic learning experiences and the professional identities that inform these understandings. Findings from analysis of these data were used in conjunction with those from Phase One for reflection on the principles of authentic learning experiences in Phase Four.

**Participants - Early career teachers**

Phase Three was conducted with ten early career primary school teachers. An early career teacher is described as being in their first five years of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Fetherston, 2007; Steffy & Wolfe, 1998). The early career teacher experience is characterised by self discovery, an instruction-centred style of teaching and growing self-confidence as teaching begins to ‘work’ (Marsh, 2000).

Teachers early in their careers were identified as appropriate participants for Phase Three of this inquiry for a number of reasons. They are recent University graduates and, whilst they have spent considerable time exploring contemporary education theory, their experiences designing and implementing learning experiences in classrooms is limited. Early career teachers are usually younger than their more experienced counterparts, so they bring different perspectives on teaching, on who teachers are and on what ‘authentic’ means.
Finally, as identified by Fetherston (2007) and Marsh (2000) they are in a period of self discovery and growing self confidence as they consider their role in education and explore what type of teacher they want to be (Korthagen, 2004). This suggests that they are well positioned to test and refine their current understandings, explore a range of perspectives and capitalise on the opportunity to explore their professional identity.

Purposive sampling was used in recruiting early career teacher participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Criteria for selection allowed students to nominate themselves. They were recruited from within a cohort of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong (UOW), Australia. They were completing the compulsory subject Reflective Practice within the BEd. I was one of two lecturers teaching in this subject. The other was Dr Lisa Kervin, my principal supervisor in this inquiry. Participants were sought who were simultaneously studying and working as classroom teachers on a full time, part time or casual basis during 2008. Participants were recruited to remain in the inquiry throughout 2008, first throughout the Autumn Session within the reflective practice subject and then through a series of interviews for the remainder of the year. Recruitment criteria are summarised in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 - Criteria for recruitment of early career teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Selection Criteria</th>
<th>Aim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early career teachers</td>
<td>Less than 5 years teaching experience</td>
<td>- A mix of male and female teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrolment in the Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>- Teachers from systemic &amp; non systemic schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completing Reflective Practice Autumn 2008</td>
<td>- Teachers working with a range of socio economic groups across a range of geographical locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement in classroom teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Full time/Part time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Blocks of work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regular casual teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purposive sampling was successful in recruiting early career teachers from a range of regional and rural locations, teaching commitments, life experiences and motivations for teaching. Table 3.6 identifies participant teachers from this group, their teaching experience and current teaching commitments. Names of teachers and schools are changed or omitted to protect their identities and to maintain confidentiality.
## Data collection

During Phase Three, data were collected initially on university grounds following or prior to professional development experiences. This environment was mutually convenient and familiar to both researcher and early career teacher. Data were gathered later in this phase either in the same university settings or in the classrooms and staff rooms of the early career teachers during morning/lunch breaks and after school. The interviews were conducted in the school settings at the invitation of the early career teachers, with some of the teachers enthusing that it would be a good opportunity for me to ‘see their classrooms’. Interviews (Appendix C) with early career teachers were also conducted by telephone toward the end of the inquiry, as many of the participants had begun teaching outside the local area and expressed a preference for telephone contact over travelling to the university.

### Table 3.6 - Early career teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Teaching commitment at the beginning of the inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Immersion experiences Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Illawarra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breanna</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>3 days/week Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Southern Illawarra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Full time Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Metropolitan Sydney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Full time Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Western Sydney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>2 days per week Years K-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Southern Sydney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Casual teaching K-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Illawarra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Casual teaching K-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Metropolitan Sydney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Full time Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: South West Sydney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>3 days per week K-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: South Coast NSW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>Practicum placements</td>
<td>Casual teaching K-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: South West Sydney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summarised in Table 3.7 is the purpose of each of the data sources in responding to questions one and two of the inquiry. As with Phase One data, included with these are the codes assigned to each piece of data for the purposes of an audit trail (Appendix A). These codes are used throughout this inquiry to cite the source of data reported.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>QUESTION 1</th>
<th>QUESTION 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Initial and final interviews aimed to explore and understand early career teachers’ concept and definition of authentic learning before and after the facilitation of professional development experiences SI28.2a, SI28.2b, SI3.3a SI4.3a, SI4.3b, SI4.3c SI10.3 SI13.3a, SI13.3b, SI13.3c SI17.10 SI22.10a, SI22.10b, SI23.10a, SI23.10b, SI24.10, SI12.11a, SI12.11b</td>
<td>- Understand the process of identifying content, planning, facilitating and assessing authentic learning experiences - Allow each teacher to tell their own stories rather than following a preconceived path determined by the researcher SI28.2a, SI28.2b, SI3.3a SI4.3a, SI4.3b, SI4.3c SI10.3 SI13.3a, SI13.3b, SI13.3c SI17.10 SI22.10a, SI22.10b, SI23.10a, SI23.10b, SI24.10, SI12.11a, SI12.11b</td>
<td>- Deconstruction of teaching, where the early career teacher made connections between the lesson they had designed, their facilitation of it and authentic learning experiences DI5.8, DT5.8, DT7.8, DT12.8, DT14.8, DT3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection/Journal</td>
<td>- Weblog postings from early career teacher participants defined their initial understandings of authentic learning experiences BP6.3, BP13.3</td>
<td>- Reflection on planning and teaching experiences in connection with their existing beliefs and the professional development experiences - Examination of weekly stimulus question designed to promote reflection related to workshop content (or topic of choice) BP13.3, BP20.3, BP3.4, BP10.4, BP17.4, BP24.4, BP1.5, BP8.5, BP15.5, BP22.5, BP29.5, BP24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Analysis of workshop tasks completed individually and in groups, along with assessment tasks WD13.3, WD15.5, WD29.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data analysis

Data collected from the early career teachers included semi-structured interviews, weblog postings, work documents and field notes about their interactions during the professional development experiences. As for the analysis of data from experienced teachers, analysis of these is described according to the four stages of the constant comparative method as identified by Glaser and Strauss (1967)

1. **Comparing incidents and data that are applicable to each category**

As with the experienced teacher data, all data collected from early career teachers was initially read in its entirety. Unlike these previous data, however, the incidents within the data were coded within the new framework that included the emerging categories from analysis of Phase One data (as seen in Figure 3.2, p. 73). Key words within the data were used in identifying the category to which it belonged. For example, within the emerging category of ‘engaging learners and learning’, key words and phrases were identified and matched from the data, such as ‘engage’, ‘interests and interesting’, ‘sharing own stories’, ‘teacher value of the task’, ‘fun’, ‘open and flexible’ and ‘meeting student needs’.

2. **Integrating these categories and their properties**

Cohen and colleagues (2007) identify a shift in stage two of analysis as the properties of each category are examined. Within this inquiry, a key theme of professional identity began to emerge from the analysis of the early career data in connection with the experienced teacher data. This took the inquiry back to the original early career teacher data to be analysed from this perspective. Within each of the categories, data were examined for “I” statements. That is, statements made by the participant that use the personal pronoun to reflect on their current beliefs and identity and its relationship to their teaching practice. The example shared in Table 3.8 demonstrates the focus of the analysis of “I” statements in exploring the ways that opportunities for articulation and reflection on professional identity through the Phase Three professional development experiences might support its development. Findings from data analysis focus on the ways that Phase Three afforded opportunities for the teachers to reflect on elements of professional learning, on professional identity and on the connection between beliefs and practice.
Table 3.8 - Analysis of “I” statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“I” statement</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the key points I explained earlier, I have begun to ask myself &quot;Am I a quality teacher?&quot; and &quot;Does my teaching reflect effective learning experiences?&quot; and from these implications I hope to continually ask myself these questions when teaching. (WD15.5)</td>
<td>The opportunity to reflect on the connection between a professional reading and his own classroom teaching experiences leads Terry to consider his ‘quality’ as a teacher and the ways that quality teachers behave. The evaluative questions he poses further suggest that his awareness of a quality teacher and his desire to be one will lead him to reflect further on this issue of professional identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst not explicitly reported in the findings of the inquiry, the analysis using “I” statements served an important purpose. It assisted in developing an understanding of the ways that the teachers reflect, where their focus for planning and teaching lay and the differences that this created between participants. These differences were particularly significant for when reporting the cases of specific early career teachers in Chapter Five.

3. **Bounding the theory**

It was not until the findings of each of the phases were considered in relation to one another that a notion of ‘completeness’ developed. The emergence of the key theme of professional identity and its role in the design and facilitation of authentic learning experiences required further analysis. As the findings are described in Chapter Five, the professional development experiences are examined and theory developed from here.

4. **Setting out the theory**

As Figure 3.3 (p. 75) depicts, the study explores and is informed by the ways two sets of teachers conceptualise authentic learning experiences for their classrooms. It is from the analysis of data from those whose professional identity is mature in comparison with those whose is budding that a theory for the development of professional identity can be explicated.
Ethical considerations

The participants of Phase Three of this inquiry were part of the student cohort enrolled in the subject Reflecting Practice, where I was one of two lecturers. All the students in Reflective Practice completed the same tutorial workshops, responded to the same reflection questions on a weblog and submitted the same assignments. Work product from these activities provided data in the early part of the data collection process. These participants were assured that their consent and voluntary participation in the inquiry would not impact their workshop input, their assessments and grading or their relationship with either tutor, whether they remained in the inquiry to its completion or if they withdrew.

Building credibility

Cohen et al. (2007) warn that the interpretative nature of qualitative research is an ongoing threat to an inquiry’s reliability and validity. These issues of credibility are now examined in connection with this inquiry. The inquiry aimed to demonstrate its credibility and trustworthiness in three ways:

- Data collection processes
- Considering data from multiple sources
- Checking

Data collection processes

Data were collected in this inquiry through semi-structured interviews, reflections/journal entries, document analysis, observations and field notes. An example of each is included in the Appendix and identified beside each subheading following. Whilst these data collection methods proved useful in providing a complex and rich account of the inquiry focus, they are not without their limitations and careful consideration of the potential effects of these on any research is imperative. The limitations of the data collection methods utilised within this inquiry were recognised and addressed as follows.
Semi-structured interviews (Appendix C)

While semi-structured interviews provide flexibility and the opportunity to explore individual participants’ stories, the effect of the interview design and the interviewer has on the participant cannot be overlooked (Burns, 1995; Cohen et al., 2007). The order of questions asked, interview setting and nonverbal cues given within the interview can affect the way the participant and interviewer interact (Cohen et al., 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2000). Similarly, the desire of the participant to give the interviewer the answer that they want, to be ‘socially acceptable’ or to be liked can impact the types of responses a participant may give (Burns, 1995; Fontana & Frey, 2000).

In this inquiry, the questions were carefully planned to be open ended and flexible. They were discussed at length with supervisors and modified in response to their feedback. Participants selected their own interview settings and I was careful to take a non-confrontational position by maintaining appropriate seating distance and establishing a friendly rapport from the outset. In an effort to help participants feel comfortable and confident in sharing their stories, I was careful to maintain an open and accepting demeanour throughout, encouraging further responses by showing my genuine interest in their opinion and beliefs. Transcripts from interviews were compared with other transcripts as well as to other data sources and were made available to participants to view following the interviews.

Reflections/journal entries (Appendix J)

The potential to impede rich data collection through reflections or journal entries is similar to the limitations of semi-structured interviews. Cole and Knowles (2000) argue that the public nature of recording one’s reflections can impede what is shared, that the author may be tempted to record what they perceive others will want to read rather than that which they are truly thinking. Keeping a reflective diary is recognised in the literature as important in building the credibility and reliability of an inquiry because it promotes an awareness of methodology (Riessman, 2008), creates an audit trail and most importantly provides evidence of the ‘investigator’s mind processes, philosophical position and bases of decisions’ made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 109).
Throughout this inquiry, early career teacher participants were asked to record their reflections as weblogs on a closed website (password accessible to those within their tutorial workshop colleagues and their two tutors). Although blogging was an expectation within the Reflective Practice subject, they were not assessed and the posting of comments by tutors was at all times supportive, constructive and encouraging of further reflection. All the early career teacher students were encouraged to read and respond to each other’s reflections, with regular reminders that there is no single correct answer or method of teaching and that the development of our professional identity occurs through experience, interaction with others and opportunities for challenge and change.

Documents (Appendix K)
Hodder (2000) observes that documents, like speech, require their interpretations to be contextualised within the environments they were constructed. However, documentary evidence has proved problematic for analysis:
- It is often ‘mute’ and therefore not open to member checks (Hodder, 2000, p. 710)
- It often holds personal interest rather than research potential (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998)
- Documents are often quite dissimilar, making comparison difficult (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

In this inquiry, analysis of documents provided secondary data. The documents collected were quite similar as they were the work product of either teacher planning and programming, tutorial work product or Reflective Practice workshop documentation. They were created just prior to or during the data collection period, so the participants were available for member checking of interpretations. Because the documents were work product rather than personal accounts, their connection to the research and the potential to deepen understanding of the ways that teachers conceptualise authentic learning experiences was valuable.

Observations and field notes (Appendix L)
Observation of the interview and tutorial workshop settings formed secondary data in this inquiry. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) observe that participants will often modify their behaviour under observation and therefore it relies on a researcher’s skill to take this into
account when analysing data. Observations of interview settings with experienced teachers were compared with the data from interview transcripts and analysed within this context. Similarly, early career teachers’ participation in discussions was compared with the other data sources informing this inquiry, that is, interview and reflective journal.

**Multiple sources of data**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that a researcher can draw confidence about the credibility of a qualitative inquiry when evidence is gathered and analysed from multiple sources of data. Burns (1995, p. 273) supports this, indicating that credibility is achieved in two ways, first, by examining the ‘consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods’ and second, by checking interpretations from the same data collection procedure across a number of participants.

The use of multiple sources of data collection in qualitative research is traditionally defined as triangulation (Burns, 1995; Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p. 104), however, argue that the broadened meaning of the term has rendered it ‘imprecise and abstract’, that it ‘confuses more than clarifies, intimidates more than enlightens’ and recommend that a researcher simply describe the rigorous process they engaged with rather than attempting to attach a label. This theme is further examined as Janesick (2000, p. 392) proposes the term ‘crystallisation’ as a preferable analytic lens as it ‘recognises the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life’.

Regardless of the term applied, the intent is consistent, to develop confidence in the findings of qualitative research through multiple data sources which are analysed and interpreted through careful comparison between and among them. In this inquiry, data were analysed and interpreted within and between the core and supporting data gathered. In Phase One, semi-structured interviews were analysed and compared with other interviews from the participants, observations made during interviews and with the documents collected from teacher programs. In Phase Three, interviews were again
compared between and among participants and then with reflections, work documents and field notes/observations. Figure 3.8 demonstrates this process.

![Figure 3.8 - Comparison of data](image)

**Checking**

Member checks and peer debriefing continued to inform and guide the inquiry throughout data collection and analysis.

Merriam (1998, p. 202) argues that checking researcher interpretations with participants from whom the data were collected protects the researcher from bias and from ‘finding out what he or she expects to find’. Member checking should be both informal, (‘playing back’ the data as the beginning of analysis) and formal, where participants confirm that the researcher’s interpretations are plausible and realistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Throughout this inquiry, interpretations were checked formally and informally with participants as a deeper understanding was reached about their beliefs about teaching.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 308) describe peer debriefing as ‘useful in establishing credibility’ in an inquiry because, as Merriam (1998, p. 202) also observed, it prevents the
researcher from ‘finding out what he or she expects to find’. Rather, it provides opportunity for the testing of emerging hypotheses, for unanswered questions to be posed and for researchers to clear their minds to focus on the salient information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this inquiry, peer debriefing occurred with researchers with extensive research and teaching experience who were able to assist with the review and discussion of the collected data and the subsequent analysis (Kervin et al., 2006).

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to set out and describe the methods used to conduct an inquiry the development of professional identity in early career teachers and its relationship to the design of authentic learning experiences. It began by describing the underpinning of professional identity theory and located the inquiry within a qualitative paradigm. The design of the inquiry, a design-based research approach incorporating action research methodologies was then explained, participants were introduced and data sources connected to each research question. The role of participant groups, experienced and early career teachers was examined in connection with the constant comparison method of data analysis and examples of the ways that different lenses supported thorough analysis were shared. Ethical issues around researcher conduct, interactions with participants who were also students and the need for confidentiality were addressed. Finally, the chapter reported on the ways that the inquiry attempted to build credibility by identifying strengths and weaknesses of the data collection methods used along with the use of triangulation and checking to examine researcher interpretations.

The next chapter reports the findings of Phase One of the inquiry, interactions with experienced classroom teachers (practitioners). The Phase One findings were used to design a solution for the development of professional identity in early career teachers.
Chapter 4

Findings: Experienced Teachers
Overview

This chapter reports on Phase One, collaboration with experienced practitioners and Phase Two, development of solutions informed by existing literature and analysis of data gathered in Phase One.

Interactions in Phase One were designed to explore the professional identity of experienced classroom teachers and their approach to designing authentic learning experiences in an effort to understand the ways that early career teachers might be supported to develop their own professional identities. This collaboration aimed to provide an understanding of the nature of established identities and the relationship between these and quality teaching. Findings from the analysed data and the literature reviewed in Phase One informed the Phase Two development of a solution to the ways that early career teachers might be supported in the development of their professional identity.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In Part A, the findings of Phase One are reported first as emerging themes and then as individual cases to examine more deeply the connection between identity and the ability to design authentic learning experiences within the unique context of the participants. Four experienced teacher participant cases are reported that explore more deeply those teachers’ beliefs. The four cases selected represent a cross section of the types of tasks shared within the inquiry and a range of approaches to designing and facilitating authentic learning experiences. What becomes clear in reporting these cases are the similarities in beliefs about teaching and learning despite differences in
content, task structure and the age of the children. The cases are examined through the theoretical framework of the inquiry and the emerging themes.

Part B describes the subsequent design and content of the solution to the identified problem. In short, the solution is a series of professional development experiences designed to facilitate an exploration of professional identity in connection with quality teaching over the course of one university semester (13 weeks), followed by ongoing examination of the early career teachers’ experiences and development as they engage with their teaching communities.

It is important to note again at this time that observations of the teachers in their classrooms are beyond the scope of this research and therefore were not undertaken. The interest of this inquiry is on the ways that the teachers talk about the ways they translate beliefs into authentic learning experiences. It is for this reason that the inquiry draws on the ethnographic principle of phenomenology as each teacher makes sense of their teaching selves within the context of their own unique teaching context.

The following questions framed the inquiry,

- **How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences for their classroom?**
- **What is the nature of the relationship between the professional identity of teachers and their ability to plan authentic learning experiences for student learning?**
- **In what ways can early career teachers be supported in the development of a professional identity?**
Part A.

Phase One: Collaboration with experienced practitioners

Eight experienced teachers participated in individual semi-structured interviews (Appendix B), which aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the ways that teachers plan for learning and the underpinning motivations for the decisions they make about these learning experiences. The principles of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000), underpinned by theories of professional identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Stets & Burke, 2000; Wenger, 1998) informed the design of the interviews and formed the basis for the professional dialogue between the interviewee and myself throughout each interview. Data were collected and analysed for the purposes described in Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
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</table>
| Interview                 | - To understand some of each participant’s teaching experiences and the ways these shape beliefs  
- To gather contextual information about the school within which they worked at the time of the inquiry  
- To explore each teacher’s beliefs about learning and how these shape the design of learning experiences for their students  
- To deconstruct an example of a design that the teacher considered provided children with an authentic learning experience. |
| Field Notes               | - To gather further detail and understanding of each teacher’s professional environment |
| Artefacts                 | - To collect evidence of the teachers’ planning for further analysis and triangulation of the data |

Data were analysed using the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method is appropriate for Phase One of the inquiry because it allowed the data to be analysed first in isolation, then in connection with the unique context of each experienced teacher’s stories and finally in connection with the findings in the literature. The themes that emerged from the data analysis fell into three broad themes:
- **Professional responsibility**

- **Discussing authentic learning**

- **Applying the principles of authentic learning**

Part A of this chapter reports on these data within these three themes. Categories within each of the themes emerged from comparison between and among data sets. For these experienced teachers, the following categories were identified within the three themes:

- **Professional responsibility**
  - Identifying their strengths
  - Professional credibility
  - Meeting children’s needs

- **Considerations for authentic learning**
  - External pressures and accountability
  - Engaging learners and learning
  - Community give and take
  - ‘Good’ teaching

- **The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning**

The four experienced teacher cases selected as representative of the stories of the larger group of eight are then examined through the theoretical framework of the inquiry and the emerging themes and categories.

**Emerging themes**

**Theme 1: Professional Responsibility**

Each of the teachers interviewed had more than five years of classroom teaching experience and all held positions of leadership in their schools. These are the characteristics identified in the literature as those of an experienced teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Fetherston, 2007). Table 4.2 identifies each teacher’s pseudonym, provides information about their role within the school and contextual information about their school.
### Table 4.2 - Experienced teachers and their schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCED CLASSROOM TEACHER</th>
<th>ROLE WITHIN THE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE INQUIRY</th>
<th>SCHOOL CONTEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Daphne                        | - 2 stream school  
- Executive teacher  
- Teaching Year 2 | **Location:** South Western Sydney  
**Population:** high multicultural, low socio economic, ‘open to a whole lot of experiences’ |
| Jenna                         | - 1 stream school  
- Executive teacher  
- Teaching Year 5 | **Location:** Illawarra  
**Population:** high multicultural, low socio economic, ‘very spirited children’, ‘socially aware’, competent users of technology |
| Justin                        | - 3 stream school  
- Executive teacher  
- Teaching Year 4 | **Location:** Southern Illawarra  
**Population:** somewhat multicultural, a broad range in socio economic status, predominantly traditional family set up, ‘average’ academic ability, a preference for group work and collaborative learning |
| Keith                         | - 2 stream school  
- Principal, previously held other executive roles in this school | **Location:** South Western Sydney  
**Population:** high multicultural, low socio economic, ‘these children want to make a difference in the world’ |
| Meredith                      | - Education Officer, Pedagogy  
- Previously held classroom teaching roles - 2 stream school | **Location:** South Coast  
**Population:** predominantly Anglo Saxon, high socio-economic, ‘a little sheltered’ |
| Paul                          | - 3 stream school  
- Assistant Principal  
- Pedagogy support for staff | **Location:** South Western Sydney  
**Population:** predominantly Anglo Saxon, a range in socio economic status, generational enrolments, a ‘traditional parent body’ |
| Stan                          | - 2 Stream School  
- Technology support teacher (staff and students)  
- Teaching Year 3 | **Location:** Southern Sydney  
**Population:** predominantly Protestant Anglo Saxon, high socio economic, highly engaged in extra curricular activities, ‘really well behaved and really well mannered’ |
| Tonia                         | - Assistant Principal of a 3 stream school  
- Literacy support teacher | **Location:** Southern Illawarra  
**Population:** high multicultural, low socio economic, ‘a lot of kids that need that individual care’, many parents do not speak English |
The teachers each participated in individual semi structured interviews (Appendix B) for approximately one hour. Each of the teachers provided insight during these interviews into their teaching identities through the stories of their current school and their broader teaching story. As part of the interview, they were asked to describe learning experiences that they had designed and facilitated in their classrooms that they would consider ‘authentic learning experiences’. Further probing during the interview aimed to understand the rationale and motivation of each teacher in planning and teaching the authentic learning experiences. The teachers also provided programming samples that they felt relevant in further communicating their rationale.

Evident within the teachers’ interview transcripts was an understanding of who they are, what they believe, where they fit within the context of their professional communities and how they aspire to meet children’s needs.

As previously discussed, categories emerged within each of the three broad themes that provided a more detailed understanding of each. The key categories that characterised the ways that the experienced classroom teachers in this inquiry talked about the theme of professional responsibilities are:

- Identifying their strengths
- Professional credibility
- Meeting children’s needs

Each of these is now examined in connection with the analysis of the data.

**Identifying their strengths**

Each of the teachers articulated an area of expertise within their school community. While some were quite explicit and referred to areas of curriculum, others spoke more generally about their ability to manage people and processes within their schools. For example, Meredith was succinct in describing what she had to offer, ‘Curriculum, literacy and curriculum and professional learning, I think that would be my strength…not that I am
narrow in my vision of a whole school, but that would be it’ (SI10.12a). Likewise, Paul saw his strength in curriculum,

When I came here, maths was one area which wasn’t as high as the literacy so I have embarked for the last two and a half years addressing those particular needs in the school. (SI10.12b)

Other teachers identified their strengths in terms of their experience gathered through working alongside and dealing with others. For example, Tonia identified the ability to work with others as a benefit, ‘I think as an assistant principal my problem solving skills have been developed… It’s really difficult with some staff there’s a lot of personality and stuff that comes into play’ (SI13.12c). Similarly, Daphne drew on the value of working with a broad range of different people,

I guess it’s the experience that I bring from working with people in other schools. The different people I’ve had a chance to teach with who I’ve actually learnt a lot from. They’ve ranged from very experienced teachers who have been in a grade for many years and not wanting to move on because they feel comfortable there but they have so much to give…I’ve also taught with teachers who have come from an administration type background where the requirements of reports and assessment [are a strong focus], making sure you’ve got evidence and making sure you’re true to the program that you are giving to the children. (SI13.12b)

None of these experienced teachers had difficulty identifying their strengths and the value of their expertise to their colleagues. Their identity as professionals appeared to be well established and grounded in a range of experiences and opportunities.

Identity is not fixed but negotiated through interactions with others (Wenger, 1998), and evident in these teachers’ stories are examples where they have made explicit decisions about becoming the ‘kind of teacher [they] want to be’ (Korthagen, 2004, p. 81). A clear example is in Justin’s transcript. Justin reported that initially he accepted work in whichever school made an offer and he took on whatever experiences came his way because ‘that’s just what you do’. His first leadership role was to coordinate the sport and
physical education in the school and ‘because you are male you also get thrust into roles like discipline too’. He identified as a benefit that he became ‘a better manager and organiser’, but that it was constricting because he ‘didn’t want to be the sport guy forever, [and] wanted to do something with curriculum.’ Because Justin’s principal blocked this avenue for growth, he felt compelled to go in search of this opportunity. He found it supporting teachers using computers in their teaching, not because technology was his passion, but because it was an opportunity for ‘someone who was young and aspiring to move up the ladder a little bit, that was my way of getting in, a niche’ (SI5.12b). Justin’s reflection on his learning trajectory, where he had been and where he wanted to go (Wenger, 1998) further shaped his professional identity through broadened experiences as a teacher.

**Professional credibility**

In identifying their areas of expertise, the teachers made reference to their credibility within the immediate school community and with their staff. There were strong similarities between the teachers as they justified giving advice and direction to other teachers. Paul described it as demonstrating his ability as a classroom teacher first, ‘the rhetoric matching the practice’ (SI110.12b), while Meredith explained that her credibility as a professional development officer came from ‘…my classroom practice. I think that it is really important when you are talking to your colleagues. You really need to be able to back up what you are saying with experience’ (SI110.12a). Tonia spoke about using her own classroom practice to promote change in her school by aiming to ‘prove it to people before coming in and saying well we’re going to do this. Because every day you could come in with a new and brilliant idea’ (SI113.12c). Again, the negotiation is evident within these transcripts. These teachers are each members of their communities (Wenger, 1998) and have each identified ways to operate successfully within them.

**Meeting children’s needs**

The responsibilities of teaching were expressed in relation to their learners within this cohort. The experienced teachers were able to clearly articulate what they believe are their responsibilities within the classroom. Table 4.3 summarises the experienced teachers’ perceived responsibilities in meeting the needs of their students. Following this, different
perspectives shared within the category, meeting children’s needs are examined in connection with the data.

Table 4.3 - Meeting children’s needs identified by experienced teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT CHILDREN NEED</th>
<th>Daphne</th>
<th>Jenna</th>
<th>Justin</th>
<th>Keith</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Paul</th>
<th>Stan</th>
<th>Tonia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- To know ‘how to survive in the world…taking on board things that are around you and using that to benefit yourself and those you come in contact with.’</td>
<td>- ‘To be confident, they need self esteem… to know that they can rely on more than one person…and say, “I need help!’”</td>
<td>- A love of and thirst for learning</td>
<td>- Exposure to the possibilities, about social justice and equity</td>
<td>- Learning that is meaningful and carefully planned, making no assumptions about what is known based on a thoroughly researched philosophy of learning</td>
<td>- The ability to take on new knowledge and use it in new places</td>
<td>- ‘To feel success at least once in every day otherwise it would be extremely boring and unrewarding’</td>
<td>- ‘To feel safe and valued within their school communities’</td>
<td>- To ‘learn how to be in this world and learning who to be and learning that you are important.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The flexibility to select and apply resources, skills and strategies</td>
<td>- Experiences at school that prepares them for the future</td>
<td>- Clearly identified purposes for their learning</td>
<td>- To develop independence of thought, to question and challenge that which they see, hear and read</td>
<td>- The opportunity to ‘make a difference in the world’</td>
<td>- Clear expectations from teachers</td>
<td>- ‘Freedom to think, structure to learn’</td>
<td>- To be empowered as autonomous learners</td>
<td>- To build up relationships mutual trust, honesty and respect are at the core of learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - Experiences at school that prepares them for the future |                                                                        | - ‘Opportunities to use knowledge in new places, because that is learning’ | - To build relationships with teachers and with others and understanding that their efforts and creations are valued | - To feel worthwhile and valued in their communities                    | - Choice, not handing the entire learning experience over to the learner |                                                                      | - Requisite skills and knowledge that provide the learner the power to choose | - Empowerment: they have to feel they have a voice, that there are ‘real reasons for doing things’ | - To be trusted and allowed to guide the learning

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The teachers described meeting children’s needs from two perspectives. They talked about the *processes* rather than the products of learning and also the development of *social/emotional skills* to apply throughout life rather than the accumulation of content knowledge when they talked about the needs of their learners.

**Responsibility for learning processes**

In terms of processes, the teachers identified that children need:

- To be engaged in learning experiences that are relevant and of perceived value to the student (SI5.12a; SI5.12b; SI6.12; SI10.12b; SI13.12c)
- To develop flexibility in applying skills and knowledge, especially literacy and information technology (SI5.12a; SI5.12b; SI6.12; SI10.12a; SI10.12b; SI13.12b; SI13.12c)
- To engage in reflective practices that allow them to identify their learning needs (SI5.12a; SI10.12b; SI13.12b)
- Opportunities to collaborate with and learn from others: peers, teachers and people beyond the immediate school environment (SI5.12b; SI6.12; SI10.12a; SI5.12a)
- An understanding of audience and the different purposes for creating texts (SI5.12b; SI6.12; SI10.12a; SI13.12c)
- The ability to engage with both planned and spontaneous classroom learning experiences (SI5.12a; SI5.12b; SI10.12b)

**Responsibility for personal development**

For social/emotional development, the teachers identified that children need to:

- Feel like worthwhile members of their classrooms where opinions are valued and learning celebrated (SI5.12a; SI6.12; SI10.12a; SI10.12b; SI13.12b; SI13.12c)
- Develop relationships with teachers and learners before learning can occur (SI5.12a; SI5.12b; SI13.12c)
- Strive for achievable goals and experience success often (SI6.12; SI10.12b)
- Take responsibility and ownership for their learning (SI5.12a; SI10.12a; SI10.12b; SI13.12b)
- Develop resilience/persistence in striving to achieve new learning (SI10.12b; SI13.12a; SI13.12b)

Whilst it becomes clear through an examination of the next theme, *discussing authentic learning*, that the creation of finished products and the development of content knowledge are important, data analysis revealed that these teachers hold as a higher priority the development of flexible learning strategies and social/emotional wellbeing.

**Theme 2: Considerations for authentic learning**

The teachers described their approach and understandings of authentic learning experiences throughout their interviews. Prior to sharing specific examples of the sorts of experience they considered authentic, they talked about the considerations they had to make in the design and preparation of such experiences for their students. Whilst each teacher held a unique view of what constituted an ‘authentic learning experience’, analysis of these data revealed commonality in the ways that they talked them. Emerging from the theme, *discussing authentic learning* are the following categories:

- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning tasks
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

Each of these is now examined. Whilst they are reported in a linear way (as is the restriction of print based texts), they are non linear and interconnected in nature. Each of the teachers shared their concerns and considerations as they planned for authentic learning experiences in their classrooms. It was not until they had described all of these factors influencing the planning and programming decisions they made that the teachers then moved on to describe an authentic learning experience they had designed.
### External pressures and accountability

Each of the teachers identified external elements that had to be considered when planning and teaching. External pressures and accountability when planning authentic learning are summarised in Table 4.4 and then examined through the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>- BOS documents, using the Outcomes to guide the learning and assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- A whole school focus on a topic/teaching strategy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Assessment and reporting to parents, ‘as long as you’ve got your evidence’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Time to plan and complete complex learning experiences within the busy schedule of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>- Mandatory processes and policies, especially A-E grading</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Foundation Statements guide planning and the ‘level’ at which to pitch the task</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The professional environment within which the teaching is planned and the children are moved through each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What makes something authentic and is it different for each child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>- Mandatory processes and policies, for example, A-E grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Assessment and reporting, the need to provide evidence to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parent, community and media attitudes toward teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- BOS outcomes as a framework for building authentic activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>- Syllabus and curriculum constrain planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Parental expectations about content knowledge over process knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The responsibility to use your own knowledge to benefit the lives of others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teachers’ varying commitment to teaching and professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meredith</td>
<td>- BOS syllabus documents provide ‘the evidence for compliance’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- External stakeholders and government documents, for example A-E grading</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Expectations from the school executive and school documents such as scope and sequence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>- Outcomes must be considered and met</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adequate and effective professional development within the system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Teachers’ subject content knowledge (or lack of)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stan</td>
<td>- Expectations from parents for extensive extra curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Meeting parental expectations leaves time short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Technology use, ‘the censorship that happens at schools is amazing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonia</td>
<td>- Outcomes guide planning, ‘I always know what I am supposed to be able to do with these kids’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Planned assessment that is flexible to suit the learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parents’ ability, capacity or willingness to support their children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The teachers’ observations centred on the perspectives of:

- Mandatory government policy
- Parental and societal pressures
- Expectations of a professional
- Individual school policy

These perspectives are used to investigate the ways these teachers talked about external pressures.

**Mandatory government policy**

All of the teachers were aware of the mandatory Board of Studies (BOS) syllabus documents and the role that outcomes and Foundation Statements play in planning for learning. Of all of the teachers, only Keith expressed dissatisfaction with syllabus documents, ‘Too much of this stuff is curriculum stuff, it’s divorced from any real meaning’ (SI13.12a), whilst the other teachers described outcomes as a useful framework within which quality teaching could be achieved. Justin described the role of outcomes as supportive when designing new learning experiences, ‘the outcomes are going to be the same, but with content that is meaningful and relevant to them’ (SI5.12b). Tonia reported using them as a guide and then applying them to the context of her classroom, ‘It always starts with the outcomes. I always know what I am supposed to be able to do with these kids. Then it’s, “How can I get it across?” and that’s where the teacher’s creativity and knowledge of the students comes in’ (SI13.12c).

**Parental and societal pressures**

Two perspectives, parents’ views and beliefs about their own children, and parents’ understanding of schools, assessment and learning today were identified as sources of pressure by the experienced teachers.

Parental expectations are a factor in the types of experiences teachers design in their classrooms. The teachers described the sorts of pressures that come to bear from parents, further revealing the complexity of teaching as the teacher attempts to address a range of
considerations in the design of classroom experiences. For example, Justin described the pressure of parents’ academic expectations,

…now you have a greater element of parents who expect more than you can actually give and question everything and they think that their child is the only child in the classroom and they ask, “What are you doing to cater for my child? My child is gifted.” (SI5.12b)

Stan, too, felt pressured by parental expectations of extra curricular opportunities,

STAN: I think that the parents expect that reading, writing and arithmetic will be taught, that is given. But they want their children to be given as many opportunities to do as many other things outside of that as possible…to do public speaking, debating, band, choir…we play 15 different sports at PSSA level every year and we have 2 or 3 dance groups and they perform…so does the band. We put on a school musical last year and we do that every few years and that’s a full on production and includes a lot of children.

RESEARCHER: Does that create some pressure on the staff?

STAN: Oh a huge amount of pressure! Huge amount because we have 13 classes, that’s 13 teachers and support staff and there’s only a certain number of hours in the day and they expect that the basics of school, the core lessons will happen as well and it creates issues in that they want those things to be done but they don’t necessarily want their child’s teacher to be the one who is organising it! (SI6.12)

The discussion about unrealistic expectations from parents relates to a further observation by the experienced teachers that many parents fail to understand the changed nature of teaching and learning. For many parents, their most recent experiences with the education system is as students themselves, and it is from here that they form their beliefs about the way that school is (or should be). Some of the teachers speculated on the source of these misunderstandings, for example Tonia believes that ‘different parents have different parenting abilities…are intimidated by the system or feel they have nothing to contribute’ (SI13.12c). Paul attributed the staid nature of the parents at his school to its history, ‘You will find children in every grade whose parents and grandparents have been through the
school’ (SI10.12b). Such beliefs are manifest in the expectations parents hold and the subsequent interactions they have with teachers, their own children and with the school system itself. Whether negative or positive in approach, the impact of parent involvement in teaching cannot be overlooked.

Common among the teachers, though, was the conviction that the solution to this pressure was in gathering and presenting evidence of the children’s abilities when reporting to parents. Daphne explained the importance of being prepared when reporting to parents,

…a lot of parents go straight to the grade. They want to know how their child is going and it’s their right to know that. But seeing that grade can be a little bit off putting…as long as you’ve got your evidence to present to the parents with the rest of the report. (SI13.12b)

Similarly, Justin reported being confronted about the A-E grading system used now for assessment in New South Wales and having to justify his grading,

…a lot of parents aren’t happy with the grade their child gets, you know, “Oh they’re only a C.” Well the parents come from a system, I think, where they were graded individually for each little individual piece of work, whereas we’re giving them an overall grade and if they look at the common grade scale a C isn’t bad, a C is quite good. (SI5.12b)

Rather than building a collaborative relationship between child, teacher and parent, assessment and reporting appears to create an adversarial dynamic, which is prone to misunderstanding and accusation. It appears that the experienced teachers in this inquiry feel that parents have limited understanding of the complexity of assessment and the responsibility a teacher has in not only applying a grade to a student’s work, but to being able to justify and support their decision with evidence.

*Individual school policy*

The school setting was the source of some frustration to the teachers. Examples of inhibiting school practices include:
- Rigid school scope and sequences that dictate content (SI5.12b; SI10.12a; SI13.12a)
- Uninformed teachers who operate on ‘good ideas’ rather than strong theoretical underpinnings (SI13.12a; SI13.12b; SI13.12c; SI10.12b; SI6.12)
- The formalisation of information technology skills classes rather than having it incorporated into daily practice (SI5.12a; SI5.12b; SI6.12)
- A lack of meaningful and relevant professional development opportunities for staff (SI5.12a; SI5.12b; SI10.12a; SI10.12b; SI13.12a)

It is these restrictions that appear to inhibit what the teachers reported as necessary in designing authentic learning experiences for their students and their ability to meet their individual needs.

**Engaging learners and learning tasks**

In describing the ways that they plan for authentic learning experiences, the teachers began by talking about their students, the school and the community within which it operates. It would seem that this is a fundamental consideration in planning authentic learning experiences. These are summarised in Table 4.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN ARE ENGAGED THROUGH:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daphne</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sharing story</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Having and being an audience who can share and listen to stories, ‘it is just as important to tell stories to a genuine audience as it is to have an audience for written texts’</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Making community links alongside ‘school’ texts</td>
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<td>- Practical application of the concept being learned</td>
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<td>- Knowing how to select resources that will help in solving a problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Technology skills and an interest in using technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jenna</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Making links to real life relationships, to their own lives and to the practical application of the knowledge and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Knowing the purpose of a task and its relevance to the real world</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Feedback from peers to enhance and enrich the learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Using ICT to support learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Making connections between the classroom learning and global issues of social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seeing that the teacher values the task</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Seeing strong connections between home and school and an acknowledgement of the complex nature of home literacies</td>
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<td>- An articulated purpose, a genuine audience and time to share without rushing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>or receiving superficial feedback about their work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledgement of children’s out of school (and in school) ICT experiences and their ability to multitask</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement in tasks that are open and flexible to accommodate the needs of a range of learners</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities to personalise learning so it fulfils a purpose in their lives</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Keith</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Meredith</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Stan</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tonia</strong></td>
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Two perspectives emerged from the analysis of data about the category of engagement. First, the experienced teachers described the children by making connections between who they are and therefore how they are best engaged. In response to the analysis, these data are reported as *Connecting with children*. The second connected theory and learning philosophy. The teachers drew on a range of theorists as they described the nature of a task that will engage learners. These data are reported as *Connecting with the literature*.

*Connecting with children*

All of the teachers described in positive terms the children in their schools, regardless of any status identified as making up the culture of the school, for example,

> Beautiful children absolutely beautiful, very spirited. (Jenna, SI5.12a)

> These kids are wonderful little kids and they do respond generally very well to being given ownership of things, the chance to make choices and all that sort of stuff. (Stan, SI6.12)

> It is a lot of lower socio economic children so they are open to a whole lot of experiences… They have a lot of stories too, some of them a little sad, but a lot of the time they like to share. (Daphne, SI13.12b)

> They’re a great bunch of kids. There is a big group who are low socio economic, which is a bit of a shame…we do have a lot of kids who need individual care. (Tonia, SI13.12c).

Descriptions reflect the respect the experienced teachers have for their learners and revolve around their cultural heritage, socio economic status, likes/dislikes and parental influence in their lives.

In describing the design of the learning experiences, the teachers often talked about the needs of ‘*these* kids’ when indicating the ways that they engage their learners. Meredith talked about the rationale behind the unit of work she shared at interview,
…a class of 28 children all Anglo Saxon living in a community that was quite affluent but income wise, perhaps $100 000 income from families and very supportive parents too, and I think a little sheltered. I wanted to just show them that there’s probably more in their own community that they need to see. I know there were things that they had never seen or heard in their community that they needed to know, that some people in their community are facing difficulty, emotionally, spiritually and financially. (SI10.12a)

Justin described the learning preferences, skills and expectations of his students,

They are more independent and more confident in questioning things, “But why?” they want a justification for why they are doing things even more than 5 years ago. They are coming to school with a greater range of skills. They are on the Internet at home and chatting to their friends, texting and talking on the mobile phone, listening to their iPod and watching TV. And then they come to school where we do maths for 45 minutes or an hour and that’s it. So they’re still coming to school with all these skills to do multiple things at once and that’s the challenge for us to cater to that, to get them engaging in a few things at once because that’s what they’re used to and that’s how they operate…Children love socialising a lot in terms of group work. They like doing that…These children are coming to school expecting to do group work, a lot more project based work. (SI5.12b)

All of the experienced teachers talked about their students in their classrooms and in their schools and made immediate and direct links to the influence these students have on the planning and organisation of authentic learning experiences.

Connecting with the literature

Some of the teachers made reference to specific theoretical underpinnings of their educational philosophies, whilst others alluded to broad beliefs about learning. For example, ‘Revans…really made sense to me because I was really doing a lot of that intrinsically anyhow but I wasn’t formalising it…and it sat so well with the natural conditions of learning (Cambourne, 1988) and is sits so beautifully with my beliefs on how
children learn’ (Jenna, SI5.12a). Danielwicz (2001, p. 10) argues that professional identities reflect our understanding of ‘who we are and who we think other people are’. These teachers provide an interesting perspective on not only themselves, but through stories about their colleagues, who they think other teachers are and who they should be. The stories that the teachers shared also reveal their perspectives of who their learners are and, while this is further examined later, it was useful here to look briefly at the ways that learning is spoken about through the professional identity framework.

**Community give and take**

The teachers acknowledged their learners as global citizens capable of both drawing from and contributing to the broader community. In drawing on the knowledge and culture of communities beyond the school setting, the teachers in this inquiry attempted to empower their learners for success through interactions with the people and texts in those communities. It appears these experienced teachers perceive that authentic learning experiences take learners beyond the confines of their classrooms not only to observe but also to interact with a range of communities. Table 4.6 summarises the ways the experienced teachers work to develop their learners as global citizens.

**Table 4.6 – Give and take between school and community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Community Connections:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daphne</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Enriches learning experiences through guest speakers, visits to local venues and using community texts alongside ‘school’ texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Benefits children by receiving visitors and making visits, ‘it’s another person to listen to and they love to share what they know and it’s another person to listen to them.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Through community texts such as newspapers increases awareness and develops language to participate in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Empowers children through communicating with and informing their communities, ‘Rarely do children get to choose’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jenna</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Builds connections between the classroom learning and global issues of social justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Empowers the group by building relationships for exploring confronting and pressing issues, ‘I’ve had to build the relationship with these children first. Now looking at world poverty, social justice thread running through the class.’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Justin       | Provides a genuine audience for the children and informs parents about what happens at school  
|             | Makes a connection between the school and other communities  
|             | Improves the quality of the children’s work, ‘because that audience was there they tried a lot harder’  
|             | Increases learners’ understanding of new literacies and their place in the community, for example, through the design of websites, ‘…if you go to a website and it always looks the same, people will assume there is nothing new to read there, but by selecting a different theme, they think oh the website’s changed and they start reading it again, but the content hasn’t necessarily changed…’ |
| Keith       | Helps learners identify how the learning may relate to their lives, it holds real meaning  
|             | Supports learning and increases status through the creation of useful resources for people |
| Meredith    | Allows teachers to make learning significant to children’s lives in their classroom and in their environment as a child  
|             | Provides opportunities for the learner to improve the lives of others through their knowledge, the reward is intrinsic  
|             | Can show children their community from an alternative perspective ‘that they need to see.’  
|             | Provides an audience beyond the classroom and opens the classroom to the community |
| Paul        | Affords connections to knowledge in the broader context, ‘How has their view of the world changed because of what they know now?’  
|             | Capitalises on parental and community expertise in designing and facilitating problem solving  
|             | Builds confidence and self esteem for learners at school in order to build resilience in a changing and more complex world |
| Stan        | Capitalises on parental involvement through expertise and their willingness to volunteer  
|             | Builds the school’s profile within the community  
|             | Affords opportunities to experience being a citizen, a consumer, a customer and so on within school learning experiences  
|             | Raises the status of technology in schools, ‘…because it’s not a choice in the real world’ |
| Tonia       | Builds the profile of cultural groups for the sharing of expertise and confidence within the school  
|             | Encourages parents and community groups to participating with the school as part of their community  
|             | Gives children a voice in their communities |
Analysis of the data shared about the role of the community in authentic learning experiences revealed three perspectives on the ways that children can participate:

- Providing access to the expertise of the practices within a community
- Acting as a repository of knowledge about how things are and of how to participate
- Operating as an audience for children

It appears that the value lies partly in opportunities simply to contribute to a community’s practices, and further in the value communities place on those contributions.

**Providing access to the expertise of the practices within a community**

As the teachers described the motivation behind their lesson designs, each acknowledged the value of expertise within the community in engaging students and contextualising their learning. For example, Stan drew on expertise from a baker and an accountant as he supported student learning in his classroom. Daphne, too, identified the value of community expertise in helping children make links beyond their classroom, ‘if I don’t have access to it in the school I will see if I can find it in another place and bring in people who did’ (SI13.12b). Thus the community becomes a knowledge source.

**Acting as a repository of knowledge about how things are and of how to participate**

The design of the tasks described by the experienced teachers relied on access to community people and texts to make links from the classroom context to the broader communities. These sources acted as a model of the ways that the classroom learning operates within their real setting. For example, Jenna’s students drew on the knowledge of community members and texts as they researched and interpreted social issues relevant to their lives. Similarly, Justin drew on community texts to design learning experiences that facilitated development of critical literacy skills in connection with the literacy practices and events required for participation within their own communities. It appears that capitalising on opportunities to build these relationships suggests these experienced teachers had built a level of confidence necessary to approach a range of people, to organise interactions and to take risks in opening their classrooms and the children’s learning to this broader audience.
Operating as an audience for children

The teachers indicated that the community acted as an important audience for the children’s learning and generated a purpose for the creation of texts. For example, as the children in Keith’s classroom created bike safety booklets for younger children, knowing that these texts would be used to inform others within the community and to keep younger children safe when riding bikes was observed to increase the level of responsibility felt about the quality of the texts, both visually and as valid information. An opportunity to share expertise and new knowledge within their communities was further identified by the teachers as providing an authentic learning experience for the learners. Building further on the example from Keith’s classroom, he observed that opportunities to create resources for others allowed the children to share their knowledge and thereby increase their status within that community.

‘Good’ teaching

All of the teachers identified the importance of ‘good’ teaching in achieving authentic learning in their classrooms. For these teachers, the notion of ‘good’ teaching appeared to be connected to well known pedagogical practices as well as the teaching of literacy. The summary in Table 4.7 collates the ways the teachers described this teaching and the implications for learners.

Table 4.7 - The requirements for ‘good’ teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘GOOD’ TEACHING REQUIRES:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Careful decisions based on knowledge of both children and curriculum</td>
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<td>- Explicit teaching as well as the facilitation of independent learning</td>
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<td>- Meeting parental expectations for literacy as the school’s ‘main objective’</td>
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<td>- Time for lengthy discussion, conversation and wondering</td>
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<td>- Development of vocabulary through discussion and immersion in appropriate texts</td>
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<td>- Monitoring of independent work ‘so the teacher knows when to return to explicit teaching’</td>
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Daphne

- Acknowledgement that literacy underpins all learning, ‘All learning is based on relationships and underpinned by literacy, so all projects must draw on personal development and literacy outcomes’
- The development of ‘reading and writing stamina’ to equip learners for literacy across the curriculum and across time
- A balance between explicit and independent teaching
- Teacher input prior to independent work because it helps children make choices and allows the teacher to plan for achievement of outcomes
- Journaling for reflection and goal setting, ‘Children must be taught how to reflect’
- A positive environment that allows for critical analysis of peers’ work

**Justin**
- That the teacher knows the students
- Initial teacher input and explicit teaching to set the learning structure
- A balance between and among content, skills and strategies within Key Learning Areas
- Learning experiences that are both planned and spontaneous
- An audience for critical feedback.

**Keith**
- Opportunities for reflection on learning through a range of literate practices
- Teachers to monitor learning through observation and assessment of knowledge application (rather than accumulation)
- Opportunities for creation of products, resources and experiences to demonstrate understanding by transferring the knowledge and to improve someone else’s situation with your knowledge

**Meredith**
- Time initially for explicit delivery of content and teaching of skills, this will set the scene for the making of choices later. It creates the ‘bubble’ within which the children are supported as they learn
- A balance between teacher input and independent investigation
- Facilitation and development of group problem solving and collaboration skills
- Assessment through reflection, it affords a demonstration of deeper understanding and insight

**Paul**
- Opportunities for reflection and goal setting
- Opportunities for guided and independent learning
- A balance between independent and structured instruction
- Teacher reflection to identify what children need through assessment
- Learner reflection to identify what they need
- Tasks that build confidence and resilience

**Stan**
- Considered integration of Key Learning Areas
- A balance between independent and teacher directed learning
- Valuing mistakes as an important step in the learning process, ‘the opportunity to learn more’
- Time within the busy-ness of schools to make deep connections
- Capitalising on a range of skill sets for success in the larger project

**Tonia**
- Immersion in oral language in setting the context of the experience, ‘explanations need support from visuals’
- A balance between independent and guided learning with opportunities for explicit teaching through mini-lessons
- The expectation that children will rise to meet carefully set learning goals identified through teacher knowledge of the children
- Honesty in providing feedback to students and an expectation that they can judge the quality of their work
From analysis of the data summarised in Table 4.7, it is apparent that these experienced teachers value the use of explicit teaching for deep learning. Comments such as, ‘There has to be a balance between autonomous learning, unstructured learning but with a strong structure which the teacher has set up’ (Paul, SI10.12b) and ‘I teach them very explicitly the skills that they need, at other times, they get choices…’ (Stan, SI6.12) demonstrate an understanding that ‘good’ teaching requires different levels of support, independence, collaboration and feedback.

A further connection emerges in analysis between learning and literacy as teachers support children to construct a range of texts to suit the demands of a task. For example, Tonia promotes the development of oral language in all interactions with her students, while Justin observes the need for an audience when children are constructing meaning. Further, Jenna articulates that all learning is ‘underpinned by literacy’ and therefore, ‘projects must draw on…literacy outcomes’ (SI5.12a).

Daphne brings the two together as she explains her role as an educator,

\[ \text{I think there’s very explicit teaching I need to be doing. I do need to teach them to read and to write so they can access later on in life whatever may happen to them. (SI3.12b).} \]

The connection between ‘good’ teaching, literacy learning and equipping children to succeed beyond school appears to be a common feature of the beliefs of these experienced teacher participants.

The teachers talked about ‘good’ teaching from three perspectives:

- Identifying and maintaining a teaching and learning focus throughout the experience
- Achieving a balance between independent and guided learning experiences and between group based and individual tasks
- Providing time for engagement, reflection, sharing and taking one’s own paths to new learning.
These perspectives reflect the cyclical nature of teaching and learning and the ways that the teachers understand and apply them. In striving to maintain balance in their teaching, the teachers have designed experiences that are modelled for all students, guided in small groups and others that allow for independent learning. The findings reflect the value of each of these groupings in informing the next part of the teaching and learning cycle for both teacher and learner. The teacher is able to reflect on the information gathered within these episodes as evaluation of teaching, assessment of learning and to set goals for future planning and programming.

*Identifying and maintaining a teaching and learning focus throughout the experience*

The teachers each identified the need for a teaching focus for learning experiences and emphasised the importance of maintaining this focus throughout. For example, Meredith’s design of an authentic learning experience, whilst an integrated task, drew most strongly on Outcomes for Religious Education and her rationale, ‘that to be Catholic is about giving others an opportunity’ (SI10.12a; WD10.12a). Her assessment reflected this focus of transforming understandings and deep participation within their communities.

The following example from Stan sheds further light on the challenges of maintaining a focus on learning within the complex and open design of authentic learning experiences, …whenever you are doing anything that is open ended you have to have a lot of flexibility within it so you can adapt and change it because if you give kids choices they won’t always choose anything you think they will. They might suddenly go in another direction and you have to decide whether to rein it in or go with it. You need flexibility and then because things are open ended, you have to be a careful judge of whether it’s worthwhile. At some point you need to be able to say, yeah it is a lot of fun, but maybe we should just stop it there because they aren’t learning any more. (SISI6.12)

Maintaining the teaching and learning focus throughout the learning experience appears to rely on a firm understanding of the purpose of the task at the outset, followed by careful monitoring by the teacher through observation, reflection and assessment.
Achieving a balance between independent and guided learning experiences and between group based and individual tasks

Striving for balance in teaching appears to acknowledge that no single teaching approach is adequate and that achieving this balance requires thought and effort. Tonia described the role of preparing a learner to engage in an independent writing task through guided instruction and modelling, ‘there is lots of support. That comes through the mini lessons and also the support of walking [a child] through how I would do it [the writing task]’ (SI13.12c). Paul’s philosophy of giving children ‘freedom to think, structure to learn’ resonates with this desire for the development of flexibility and transfer of knowledge, ‘There has to be a balance between autonomous learning, unstructured learning but with a strong structure which the teacher has set up’ (SI10.12b). Similarly, Stan explains that his objective to make himself ‘redundant’ is achieved through teaching

...children the skills they need to empower them to learn on their own, to give them the knowledge they need so they can take ownership and control of their learning and to learn independently of me and everyone else. (SI6.12)

Providing time for engagement, reflection, sharing and taking one’s own paths to new learning

The experienced teachers acknowledged the need for time spent on the process of learning, on reflecting on that learning and identifying the potential for that new knowledge. Keith lamented the use by some teachers he has observed throughout his teaching career of poorly thought out teaching approaches that cannot provide this environment. Further, Justin observed that there is little point having children invest time and effort into the construction of texts if sufficient time is not provided for the sharing of these texts. Jenna described time for reflection as essential for children’s development of independence, ‘students knowing what they need to learn, and also knowing what they’ve learned…and what they need to learn next. And when they start owning that, it doesn’t matter what organisation you put them in [they can understand and reflect on] what they have learned’ (SI5.12a).
In summary of Theme 2, *discussing authentic learning experiences*, it appears to be something of a balancing act, juggling the tensions created by bringing together what a teacher believes about teaching and learning, the context of ‘these students in this school’ and the responsibilities of teaching to design authentic learning experiences. Teachers are challenged to weave their way through the complex terrain that is created by the intricacies of teaching, and these teachers appear to draw on well developed beliefs about being a teacher and their role in children’s learning. Reported on now is the teaching and learning designs that the teachers shared.

**Theme 3: The task, Applying principles of authentic learning**

In preparation for their interviews, the teachers were asked to reflect on learning experiences they had used in their classrooms that reflected their philosophy of authentic learning experiences. They brought these ideas and programming samples along to the interview for discussion and exploration of the rationale behind their teaching decisions. Table 4.8 summarises the tasks shared by each of the teachers.
Table 4.8 - Learning experiences shared by experienced teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>‘AUTHENTIC’ TASK</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>- <em>Waste not, want not</em>: Explore waste in our community and identify ways to be agents for change.</td>
<td>Yr 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>- <em>My community</em>: Design and make a television advertisement that reflects on and responds to a personally identified societal issue.</td>
<td>Yr 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Justin    | - *Websites*: Develop, maintain and respond to individual students’ websites showcasing their classroom achievements.  
             - *Cereal boxes*: Use community texts to study the role of purpose and audience in design, content and layout choices. | Yr 4  |
| Keith     | - *Bike safety*: Design, make and distribute a safety manual for bike owners in Year 3. | Yr 6 & 3 |
| Meredith  | - *Making a difference*: Serve others within the community by identifying a need and working with an organised charity to address it. | Yr 5  |
| Paul      | - *Numeracy in the community*: Make connections between classroom numeracy and real world use through a whole school approach to number, space and measurement | Whole school |
| Stan      | - *Baker’s doughlight*: Set up a small business by researching, marketing, producing and selling bread within the community | Yr 6  |
| Tonia     | - *Mothers’ Day*: Use a common event (Mothers’ Day) as a springboard for poetry writing and publication for a specific audience  
             - *Music as a cultural experience*: To incorporate cultural music practices of Sudanese students into English language learning | Yr 3  
             |                                                                 | Whole school |

Each example shared in Table 4.8 expresses a different perception of authentic learning experiences in terms of student age, content, teacher/student control, learning outcomes and development of understandings. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are considerable differences between the tasks, a number of similarities are also noted. The tasks are similar in that they integrate Key Learning Areas, they offer choice, the tasks are complex, there are opportunities for collaboration and each has the potential for a range of ‘solutions’ to problems. A further similarity is the focus of taking learning beyond the classroom, recognising students as global citizens.

Four of the experienced teacher participants were selected for deeper investigation through mini case studies because they demonstrate the breadth of the examples shared across the group. The teachers selected are: Justin, Stan, Jenna and Meredith. As explained at the outset of this chapter, the chosen cases represent a cross section of the types of tasks shared
within the inquiry. For example, Stan’s task focused on providing a service and consumable product to both known and unknown members of the community, whilst Justin’s took a focus on authoring and a website as a consumable product and the ways that this product is perceived by unknown members of an even broader community. Meredith’s task aimed to teach children about their responsibility to serve others within their communities, whilst Jenna’s aimed to highlight opportunities for drawing others into generating change within these same communities. Moreover, these cases were selected as they represented a range of approaches to designing and facilitating authentic learning experiences. For example, Stan responded to a desire to teach children about what it is to be a corporate citizen by offering an opportunity to ‘sell bread’, whilst Jenna adopted a social justice perspective and aimed to bring children to understand their own role in supporting and improving the well being of others. The reported cases offer a range of perspectives about the nature of authentic learning experiences and in turn reflect the range of beliefs held within the professional identities of each of the experienced classroom teachers. The cases are examined through the theoretical framework of the inquiry and the emerging themes.

Selecting experienced teachers to report as mini-cases

A rationale for the selection of each of the teachers’ stories is now shared in connection with the framing questions of this inquiry:

- **How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences in their classrooms?**

As each of the teachers described the process of planning and making decisions, selecting content and organising resources for the lessons they had planned, it became clear how each of them were interpreting authentic learning experiences in their classrooms.

- **What is the nature of the relationship between a teacher’s professional identity and the concept of authentic learning?**

Further discussion and reflection throughout the interviews revealed underlying assumptions, beliefs and existing knowledge about learners, learning and the teacher’s role.
in the process (their professional identity). Analysis of the data enabled an exploration of the relationship between the classroom activities and these beliefs and practices in providing authentic learning experiences for learners.

- *In what ways can early career teachers be supported in developing a professional identity?*

Findings from analysis of the data from each of the experienced teachers informed the design for Phase Three interactions, professional development for early career teachers.

**Choosing Meredith**

Meredith’s explanation of the planning, organising and facilitation of *Making a difference*, revealed not only her perception of an authentic learning experience but also something of her professional identity. Further discussion, reflection and explanation during interview about the topic provided insight into her knowledge and beliefs. *Making a difference* is underpinned by beliefs about social justice and a person’s responsibility to enrich the lives of those with whom they interact. It integrates content and skills across a range of Key Learning Areas to create a complex yet achievable project for these Year 5 students. Further analysis provides opportunity to examine the relationship between Meredith’s underlying philosophy about her role in supporting student learning and therefore the way she designs learning experiences for her students, providing insight into the second research question. Understandings gained from engagement with Meredith’s story inform the ways that early career teachers can be supported in the development of their own professional identities.

**Choosing Stan**

Stan’s explanation of the evolution of the task, his subsequent facilitation of the learning and the rationale behind these decisions provide opportunity to respond to the first and second research questions. *Baker’s doughlight* immersed children in the experience of being both consumer and producer within the community, that is, being a ‘corporate citizen’ (SI6.12). Like Meredith’s task, it integrated content and skills across the curriculum whilst maintaining relevance and interest for the children in the class. Its
connection to the workings of business generated rich data for analysis, further enriched by a focus on collaboration, sharing and cooperation amongst the learners. Deeper analysis of the ways that Stan’s professional identity is reflected in his decision making affords an exploration of the relationship between the two. Such findings also provide direction for ways that early career teachers can be supported in the development of a professional identity.

**Choosing Justin**

The first research question is addressed in *Websites* as Justin’s use of computer based technology to connect children with audience represents his perspective of authentic learning experiences and his beliefs about learning. The focus on the student as an informed consumer and producer of texts provides opportunities to further examine Justin’s professional identity. As with Meredith and Stan’s stories, analysis of the data reveal the connection between what a teacher believes about their role in teaching and learning and the subsequent learning experiences designed. It further provides insights into the ways that early career teachers can be supported in making connections between their own identities and their practice.

**Choosing Jenna**

Jenna revealed something of her professional identity as she explained the planning, design and facilitation of *My community*. The tasks drew the children’s community networks into the classroom by exploring the issues that were most relevant to them and then challenging them to pose a range of solutions to these real and complex problems. Her beliefs about her role as a teacher and the nature of learning were revealed as her story emphasised the importance of relationships, personal development and literacy learning within the tasks designed. Analysis of these beliefs in connection with the tasks designed afforded a deeper understanding of the relationship between the two. This provided direction for the ways early career teachers can be supported in the development of a professional identity.

Each teacher’s task is examined in connection with Herrington and Oliver’s (2000) principles of authentic learning and with the emerging themes identified in this chapter.
Teacher Cases

Case 1 - Making a difference

The Making a Difference task (Appendix P) and Meredith’s underlying rationale are now examined through the framework of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) and in connection with the themes emerging from analysis of the interviews with experienced teachers examined in the first part of this chapter.

i. Authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life

Donation of time and resources is a common method of raising funds for charity organisations. The children in this experience had a clear purpose in supporting the needs of others in the community. Their decision to support a Catholic charity that reaches out to families suggests a connection felt between the children’s own positions as family members and as Catholics.

However, Meredith’s task takes the learner beyond merely the reflection of knowledge as it is used in real life. In fact, the task IS the knowledge used in real life. It engages the children in active membership of their local community. They do this by taking their knowledge and understandings about those in need to explore avenues for responding to these needs. They give to their community through the taking of informed action, sharing their own understandings and supporting others with their knowledge. The tasks required them to participate in the practices of their community in certain ways, and Meredith’s careful literacy teaching throughout supported the children to construct the texts that assisted in achieving the goal of the Making a difference task.

ii. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life

Much of the detail about how the learners might make the connections between Caroline Chisholm and their own lives was undecided at the outset of the task. It was for the children to identify appropriate avenues and strategies for attaining the desired goal, just as
problems in the community often rely on a person’s ability to reflect on and identify appropriate avenues for action.

It is important to note however, that this complexity and flexibility existed within boundaries constructed by the teacher,

I still think that learners need...a wide bubble around them perhaps as they are learning. I’m not talking about putting restraints upon them, but I definitely think a learner needs to have a bit of a boundary and what that means can vary...where I come from and considering the children that I’ve taught, I don’t think that giving them just that broad spectrum is time efficient, nor is worthy of what they can achieve.

(SI10.12a)

This finding strengthens the earlier observation that teachers use the teaching and learning cycle to support their planning and programming for learning through evaluation and assessment of teaching and learning. The role of modelling is evident here as part of that cycle, it is part of the balanced approach that allows for learning within a range of structured environments.

iii. Authentic learning experiences provide access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation

Expertise was accessed from a range of places as necessary throughout the task. In exploring the problem, the teacher described the issues, invited guests to explain the process of supporting families in need and provided various authoritative (print and screen based) accounts of Caroline Chisholm’s life to demonstrate the possibilities to the children. In designing, marketing, advertising and enacting their selected solutions, other expertise was sought, such as advertising material, procedural texts, parents and charity workers.

iv. Authentic learning experiences provide coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners

Coaching and scaffolding for this task took a range of focuses as learners were supported to collaborate on tasks, to deconstruct and construct a range of texts for specific purposes and to solve problems in ways that promoted the achievement of their self identified goals. The
use of fluid groupings for tasks throughout the process allowed learners to support each other according to their own strengths and interpretations of the task.

It would appear, though, that there is more to the notion of providing a scaffold for learning. Meredith’s data suggests that coaching and scaffolding are elements of authentic tasks that need to be considered well before the learning begins in the classroom. She describes her responsibility in providing authentic learning experiences for her students by responding to considerations emerging from both within and outside the classroom,

...you have to start with the syllabus because with programming you need to have evidence there. Then I think you need to think about the children in your care, their needs and from that, use your syllabus, whatever Key Learning Area it is, but take them further, with the needs of the students, your actual classroom context and making that learning significant thinking about the cultural diversity that may be and unravelling that learning with the children in your classroom so they can use it in their own day to day living. (SI10.12a)

It appears that Meredith responds to and plans to meet the needs of the students well before the learning occurs within the classroom.

v.  Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored

Taking on the role of researcher, exploring the perspectives of Caroline Chisholm’s life and the ways that others perceived her allowed the children to consider their own lives and actions from a range of perspectives when exploring the appropriate support that they could give. Meredith further challenged the learners as they explored the possibilities for being of service to others within their communities by guiding them toward considering what they themselves were capable of. An excerpt from Meredith’s transcript reveals more,

MEREDITH: ...I posed the question, “What can we do for people in need in our community?” Thinking about it, it’s fine for you to bring in $2, how easy is that?
RESEARCHER: Yes, especially if you bring in your Mum’s $2!
MEREDITH: Exactly, it’s easy for us to do, we can give money to St Vincent de Paul and feel great, but we need to work for this, I don’t want to just bring in the money... I think that makes it all a little more worthwhile or significant (SI10.12a).

The design of this experience afforded the exploration and adoption of a range of solutions (including the ‘easy’ way of handing over cash). Students were provided the space within the design to make decisions about the ways that they were equipped to respond to the problem.

vi. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge**

The teaching and learning cycle allowed for planning, action and reflection on learning throughout the task. Activities within the task grouped the learners as a whole class, small groups and individuals, depending on the focus of the learning. This allowed for a sharing of leadership and direction within the tasks as the teacher and children explored the problem and shared their growing understandings. Of particular note for these tasks was the timing and placement of teacher directed input into the learning. This generally occurred at the beginning of a learning cycle, followed by opportunities for making choices about the interpretation and construction of new understandings. Meredith explains her rationale for this,

I think some people/educators have a vision when you say self-directed learning or that sort of thing that you are handing over the whole task to the children. That’s not the case at all. I think giving them choice about, say, the pace of the lesson or the time that they are given to achieve something... So negotiating too and ok you’re able to present this in a variety of modes. These are some choices you might make. So giving the children the right to choose how they present what they have learnt. It shows the children that you are flexible and that you value their negotiation. But it certainly is not giving over the whole task. (SI10.12a, original emphasis)

vii. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration**
Reflection was a key learning tool within this unit of work as the children reflected on their deepening understandings in written and oral forms. Reflection in this task took a range of perspectives on learning:

- The ways that the children’s lives differ and are similar to Caroline Chisholm’s
- In constructing texts to advertise their product, the children reflected as individuals, small groups and a whole class reflection on the needs of a range of audiences for engaging with texts
- The spiritual connection between being Catholic and being of service to others and what this means in modern society

**viii. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for articulation of growing understandings**

The children monitored their own understandings and approaches throughout the process. They articulated these by reporting to a range of stakeholders. The identification of stakeholders, also known as an audience, emerged throughout the process as the ill-defined nature of the task supported learners to ‘carve out’ their paths to understanding. Once the range of audience members was identified, the purpose for subsequent texts influenced the ways that the learners constructed their messages for their audience. The following audience members were identified during the *Making a difference* task:

- Their small group partners
- Classmates
- Other classes within the school
- Parents (through the school web page)
- The identified charity
- Their teacher

Meredith described the ability to identify an audience and construct appropriate texts as important for helping the learner to ‘take on new knowledge and use it in new places’ (SI10.12a).
ix. **Authentic learning experiences provide authentic assessment of learning**

Whilst this task drew on a range of skills drawn from a number of Key Learning Areas, Meredith focused on Religion in assessing the children’s learning in this task,

‘…the primary focus was the Religion outcomes and I think that’s another thing with learning when you are looking at your teaching, you’ve got to decide on what is the primary focus. You can certainly integrate, but you have to remember the significant outcome you are trying to achieve and in this case, it was the Religion outcomes’ (SI10.12a).

The final assessment was designed as a reflection on learning in connection with each child’s learning journey. Meredith described her assessment of *Making a difference* as ‘an open-ended question, thinking about Caroline Chisholm and your life and today how can you make links’ (SI10.12a). Reflection on learning is identified as a critical skill for users of literacy (BOS, 1998a), and this task supported the students to reflect both on their spiritual and academic development. Again, in an attempt to support the development of independence and problem solving in learners, Meredith designed the task to allow children to choose the mode of presentation for this assessment. Meredith explained that most children chose to construct a technology based visual mode (such as PowerPoint or iMovie) with audio narration of their understandings.

**Interpretive summary: Connecting with professional identity**

Data analysis suggests the connection between Meredith’s professional identity and the subsequent classroom learning experiences is strong. The task she described grew from her belief that learning should be relevant to the lives of children today and this led to the modification of the existing unit of work set for the class. Her observation that *these* children needed to look beyond their own relatively comfortable lives to consider their responsibilities in supporting others took the learning beyond the classroom and into their communities, producing an authentic learning experience for those children.

Taking action to modify existing school program content and to experiment with different approaches reflects Meredith’s commitment to the needs of the learners in her care.
Furthermore, it could indicate a high level of confidence in herself as a teacher and in her ability to fulfil mandatory requirements through her own designs.

Meredith’s view of herself as a facilitator of deep understandings is evident in the gradual removal of support structures as the children took ownership of the problem. Again, an established professional persona appears to have provided her with the skills to design complex and open learning experiences that change to suit the needs of the children over time. And again, this identity appears to give her the confidence to share with the children the leadership and decision making roles in setting the directions for learning.

Meredith’s knowledge of curriculum and her ability to deliver quality teaching was further enriched by her knowledge about the learners and her beliefs about her role as a teacher. An established professional identity appears to have equipped Meredith with the skills and knowledge to make decisions about the learning in her classroom.

**Case 2 - Bakers’ doughlight**

The Baker’s Doughlight task (Appendix P) and Stan’s underlying rationale are now examined through the framework of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) and in connection with the themes emerging from analysis of the interviews with experienced teachers examined in the first part of this chapter.

1. **Authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life**

All of the children in this setting had experience using a bakery either as a customer or accompanying a parent customer and had consumed bread. An excursion to the local bakery was also included in the design of the task. The decisions and actions that the children needed to make in setting up the business mirrored those required within ‘real’ life.

However, as with Meredith’s task, *Bakers’ doughlight* is more than a reflection, it is an example of a real business in operation. There was profit and loss, manufacturing and retail of the product. ‘Real’ life was not just reflected, it was occurring in the classroom.
...it had a really easy purpose for them to see. They were making it with an audience in mind, with customers in mind. It was a real business, it had real significance to them and it was easy to see why they were doing it. People would buy the bread and they would come back in and tell the kids how wonderful it was and so there was nothing artificial about the teaching. Sometimes you teach something and the kids don’t know why they’re learning it, but they could see a real point to it. (SI6.12)

**ii. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life**

At the beginning of the project, the only set aspect of the task was that the students and teacher were going to make and sell bread, the rest of the decisions were made according to the needs of the group and the group’s decisions. This design allowed learners to take their own paths to learning as they adopted a range of roles within the learning environment.

However, Stan explained that he worked at the outset of *Bakers’ doughlight* to develop content knowledge and a deeper understanding of the context of the task before any decisions were handed over to the learners. He utilised the teaching and learning cycle to achieve balance across the teaching episodes.

And so my role…I teach them very explicitly the skills that they need, at other times, they get choices about either what they are going to learn or how they are going to present the information or what activities they might do around a book perhaps. And so they have some sort of ownership and control over it. So there is a mixture of teaching so they have the skills and knowledge and then opportunities to take control...So by giving them the background of core knowledge then when you give them choices you give them the full range of choices, rather than saying you can choose this and this, but the kids can’t really choose this one because they don’t really know what it is, but I guess that’s why I try and make sure they have some sort of core knowledge and skills before they make the choices. (SI6.12)

**iii. Authentic learning experiences provide access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation**
Expertise was engaged as necessary throughout the task. The children themselves could be considered experts both in their knowledge of how ‘good’ bread should taste, and in their understanding of the value of a product and the exchange that needs to occur between a consumer and producer. Stan himself was a valuable resource as he had had retail experience. His expertise afforded a perspective as both consumer and producer that could be shared with the children. A parent visitor came to the classroom to teach about account keeping. Interestingly, the expertise shared here moved beyond the usage of Excel to the development of problem solving strategies such as the help and tutorial functions in the software. In making choices about marketing, advertising and disseminating information about their product, Stan and the children deconstructed other relevant texts and interviewed experts in the field when they visited local businesses.

iv. Authentic learning experiences provide coaching and scaffolding by both teacher and other learners

Throughout the experience, teacher and children supported each other to complete the tasks required for success. For example, each day the starter had to be fed accurately with flour and water, requiring an understanding and application of the mathematical formula. Some children needed longer ongoing support with this task than others. Rather than excluding these children in favour of more able children, the teacher and children supported each other in developing this skill, more able students pairing with those less able and being available to ‘check’ the other person’s attempts before the final product was sent for baking.

v. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored

Groups worked together to consider the problems and solutions to a range of problems throughout the experience. For example, one loaf of bread was sold that had been incorrectly made, rendering it inedible. Stan and the children examined the possible ramifications for their business income, reputation and relationship with their customers and then explored possible remedies for the problem.
He explained the value of dealing with a range of issues in connection with the children’s roles as both consumers and producers of knowledge within communities,

Well they were part of the community by getting out there and selling their bread. They met people who weren’t their friends, parents, they had people coming in from the community and telling them what they were doing was good. They had to face dilemmas that people face in the community like what do you do when you have sold someone something and they’re not happy with it. They got to see things like the fact that bread is not just something that comes in a plastic bag in the supermarket. (SI6.12)

The opportunities to be both consumer and producer, to have both positive and negative experiences with community members provided for the children the type of community give and take that is a reflection of the way that communities function. Not all experiences are positive, and it is experiences such as the production of inedible bread occurring within the safety of classroom setting that can teach important life lessons about problem solving, responsibility and justice.

vi. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge**

Collaboration was key throughout the Bakers’ doughlight task. Without sharing of expertise, knowledge and workload, the children could not have achieved the tasks, ‘if they didn’t share, then it wouldn’t get done’ (SI6.12). At all stages of the process, different children adopted a range of roles and these, along with the progress of the business was tracked through business meetings where profit and loss statements were tabled, along with reports from committees about Bakers’ doughlight. In allocating their profits, the children discussed at length what happens to profits in the ‘real world’ as they came to a decision about the correct use of theirs, a class party and a donation to their ‘sponsor’ (the school).

vii. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration**

Reflection and sharing occurred through discussion about the experiences of running a business. For example, reflection occurred through discussion, analysis of research data
and by drawing links from existing knowledge. Further, when researching bread and the possibilities for their business, the children were called to reflect on their existing knowledge of the product, the market and the process of establishing a business in a competitive market. In addition, independent reflection occurred as each child identified their strengths and interests in order to establish the role and responsibilities of each person with in the business. Reflection to solve problems occurred as students considered the challenges of business and the range of creative solutions available to the business.

Stan observed that the *Baker’s doughlight* task allowed the learners to reflect on ‘corporate responsibility in terms of what do we do when we make a profit in our community and who should benefit from that…a better sense of what it means to be a citizen, a corporate citizen, a consumer, a customer, they got a sense of all that and they got to give something back to their school’ (SI6.12).

**viii. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for articulation of growing understandings**

Much new knowledge was developed throughout the process of *Bakers’ doughlight*, from business knowledge about production, management of resources and people and construction of texts for a range of purposes and audiences. Stan argues that these understandings are best developed when ‘…kids are given a lot of opportunities to share what they already know, to teach each other, to present what they already know to others inside and outside the classroom, inside and outside the school’ (SI6.12).

**ix. Authentic learning experiences provide authentic assessment of learning.**

Successful marketing, production and retail of the bread provided Stan with assessment integrated into the experience that could be matched to syllabus learning outcomes. These approaches allowed Stan to respond to the pressures of mandatory syllabus outcomes and programming constraints.

A further observation was that he was able to draw conclusions about the children’s development of such strategies as problem solving skills, collaboration and flexible
thinking as he observed them at work in their business. These perspectives afforded Stan an insight into the children’s new understandings within a broader community context, their perception of their roles within such communities and the transfer of the knowledge from the classroom to the community setting. He was also able to enact his beliefs about the value of belonging and being valued. Stan explains,

One of the purposes behind it was the teamwork and the cooperation and you can keep track of that, but if there are kids who aren’t working well with others, then that’s even more reason for them to be doing it. You can assess a lot of it, and for the kids who were not doing the right thing, it was even more reason for them to be part of it and I encouraged them to get involved. (SI6.12)

The pressure to engage learners through engaging activities was eased as Stan drew on the momentum of the task, the enthusiasm of the class and his thorough knowledge of his students to ensure success for each student.

**Interpretive summary: Connecting with professional identity**

As with the example shared by Meredith, Stan’s professional identity is reflected in the planning and organisation of the *Baker’s doughlight* task. Stan brings to the classroom both his experience as a teacher and a wealth of other knowledge from earlier experiences working in hospitality and trade. This later entry to the teaching profession appears to provide Stan with both outsider and insiders’ perspectives on school, especially on the use of computer-based technologies. For example, Stan is concerned about the use (or lack) of technology in schools. He observes that for some children ‘going to school’s like going to a museum’, that using technology is ‘…not a choice in the real world’ and that children need to be taught to be ‘sensible’ and ‘safe’ on the Internet (SI6.12). These beliefs are observed in the *Baker’s doughlight* task as he supported the children engaging with a range of print and screen based texts to achieve the purpose of making, marketing and selling bread.
Stan’s broad views about the purpose of school for the greater community and his role as a teacher are evident in his pedagogical approach to facilitating learning through ‘real life’ activity. The value he places on collaboration, teamwork and problem solving as important skills for these children to have is reflected in his respectful and carefully planned interactions designed to engage even the most disinterested child in this authentic learning experience.

Stan’s established and somewhat complex identity appears to enable him for active engagement in planning and programming decisions. Further, it appears to give him the confidence to experiment with the learning experiences he designs with the knowledge that he can respond to the learners’ needs and monitor their learning through reflection.

**Case 3 - Websites**

Websites (Appendix P) and Justin’s underlying rationale are now examined through the framework of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) and in connection with the themes emerging from analysis of the interviews with experienced teachers examined in the first part of this chapter.

1. **Authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life**

   Personal websites are common on the Internet and easily accessed by children. Web based texts are increasingly the dominant text form with which children engage. Texts such as these are created by a range of people as an expression of who they are, a reflection of an identity that they wish to portray. Creating a website, indeed reflects the ways that such knowledge is used in real life. More than this, though, is the strong focus on critical literacy in the deconstruction of the web based texts prior to constructing a website. This focus meant that the children not only learned about how the knowledge is used, but why. That rationale for this deeper analysis of knowledge is revealed when Justin describes the learners in his school as being ‘more independent and more confident in questioning things, “But why?” They want a justification’ (SI5.12b).
ii.  *Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life*

The complexity of the problem addressed in this task emerged only after the children were challenged to construct and maintain their own websites. Throughout the teacher input stage of the task where websites were deconstructed, the level of teacher control minimised complexity in favour of a close focus on the purpose, structure and intention of a range of texts. As the task then shifted to the children authoring their own texts, they were faced with questions surrounding the ways that identity is constructed through text, they were forced to reflect on such questions as, Who am I? Who is my audience? What do I want them to know about me? What do different text based decisions I make say about me? Which texts portray the face that I want my audience to see? As the children made these decisions, the task again, became more clearly defined.

As with the previous cases, however, the learners were not required to engage in the complexity of the task until certain boundaries were in place. The rationale for this is evident in Justin’s transcript, where he shares his opinion about learning.

...[it] isn’t giving the child the choice to do whatever they like, it’s giving them choice within a structure. So I might say we are going to investigate gold for 10 weeks. You may need 2 weeks of pure content and input and then you might say, “OK, now I want you to investigate an aspect of gold that you are interested in.” Give them choice to investigate whatever they like, but within your narrow field...

Giving choice within specific guides. (SI5.12b)

Justin explained his choice, ‘Children are smart but I don’t think they can work without specific goals’ (SI5.12b) and so these goals support children to engage in meaningful learning experiences. Setting these goals allows the teacher to respond to and meet external requirements for accountability, ‘I’m going to let children choose things within the realms of what I want and need to achieve’ (SI5.12b).
iii. **Authentic learning experiences provide access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation**

Justin operated in the role of expert at the outset of Websites as he modeled the interpretation of web-based texts in whole class text sharing. A deeper level of expertise was modelled through the planned explicit literacy learning episodes where he facilitated the deconstruction of these texts with small groups. As these lessons progressed and the children’s levels of understanding were deepened, Justin shared this role of expert with his students as they began to demonstrate their own interpretations of texts, share these understandings with others and act as models for the construction of new texts.

This principle of authentic learning was extended by Justin’s use of the teaching and learning cycle to reflect on and share the expert role, to plan for explicit literacy teaching and to make connections between traditional and screen based texts.

iv. **Authentic learning experiences provide coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners**

Coaching and scaffolding for learners are achieved through the use of a range of groupings within the classroom, opportunities for learning to take place in guided and independent settings and the use of supportive texts that demonstrate what authors do. Support for learning is evident in terms of skill with technology as well as with literacy learning. As Justin withdrew the high levels of support evident at the beginning of the task, he described the role that other learners played in promoting interest in the texts, in their ongoing improvement and their innovative design. For example,

> For the children it was great because they had an audience. They put their work up and they’d go onto our [electronic] class journal and tell the children, “Here’s my website address, go and have a look.” And they did. They responded and gave comments and they were very good, they were always positive comments about the website. Even if it wasn’t very good, the children always found something positive things to say about it. (SI5.12b)
v. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored

In engaging with the Websites task, the children adopted multiple roles and considered a range of perspectives in investigating the problem. These occurred within the teaching and learning cycle where the teacher and children worked in a range of whole class, small group and individual groupings as suitable to the task. As consumers of web based texts, the children considered the intention of a range of authors and the many decisions that the authors had made in the creation of their texts. As creators or authors of texts, they took the inverse perspective and made decisions based on the ways that they wished to construct meaning. In the role of editor, they reviewed and responded to the input of others as well as their own reflections and evaluation of their websites and made changes to improve their message. Finally, as an audience of their peers’ texts, they reflected on their own interpretations of these texts, the ways that the texts influenced them and how the author could improve the texts for future audiences.

By making changes of both content and design, the children were able to demonstrate a growing awareness of the role audience and purpose plays in the construction of text. Justin observed a connection between a growing awareness of the role of audience and the quality of published text, ‘...if that [error] was on their books, no one would see it and you would say, “So what?” But because that audience was there, they tried a lot harder’ (SI5.12b).

It would appear that the Websites tasks immersed the children in a range of perspectives on authoring. These opportunities seem to have given the children a deeper understanding of the differing purpose of these roles, insight into the challenges they pose and an ability to place themselves in the various ‘shoes’ of text creation, such as author, reader or editor.

vi. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge

The whole class, small group and individual groupings used within the teaching and learning cycle afforded collaborative construction of knowledge within the Websites task.
Justin appeared to respond to the children’s needs and the demands of the tasks within the larger Websites experience by adjusting the groupings and structure of individual tasks to support learning. Opportunities for collaboration enabled the children to learn from the texts of others and then to build knowledge within their community through the construction of their own. As children presented their websites for critique and response from the group, they responded to the texts in relation to the understanding of the purposes of the texts and the ways that they appealed to their audience.

vii. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration**

The process of deconstructing and then interpreting and constructing texts required the children to reflect on their learning both within the small group setting of guided literacy groups and the independent web design time. The children reflected not only on their skill development in manipulating the software, but more importantly on their developing understanding of the text they were creating and the ways that different audiences might respond to or interpret their message.

Reflection was planned within the Websites task as modelled, guided and independent episodes in the classroom. For example, modelled and guided reflection formed part of Justin’s teaching as he demonstrated the ways that different web based texts were constructed and how the authors used a range of techniques to engage and position the reader. Reflection appeared to perform an important function within these teaching episodes as Justin used ‘think aloud’ techniques to demonstrate the ways that he grappled with and interpreted the text on the screen. Independent reflection occurred when the children worked at, edited and modified their websites and they were encouraged to reflect on the ways that an audience might interpret their text. Further independent reflection was embedded in the design of Websites as the children engaged with each other’s texts. As readers, they became the audience and considered the ways that they responded to the texts, discussing with and making recommendations to the authors.
viii. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for articulation of growing understandings**

The system of providing feedback to each other afforded the children opportunities to explore their growing understandings about the purpose of the texts they viewed. In articulating strengths and weaknesses of a website, the child could make connections to their own text as well. These abilities to create, consume and critique texts are important skills to have both within and beyond the school setting. The *Websites* task presents to children the nature of these skills in real settings and potentially develops in them the ability to participate as creators and consumers of texts to meet a range of demands.

Justin described the children as thoughtful and empathetic in their responses to their peers’ efforts as authors.

> They responded and gave comments and they were very good they were always positive comments about the website even if it wasn’t very good, the children always found something positive things to say about it. (SI5.12b)

Further, he identified that the children were able to make informed and constructive comment about the texts. For example, ‘Children would send each other an email saying, “Oh, I noticed on your website that you...”’ And then the child would go back and fix it’ (SI5.12b). This engagement in each other’s texts, their content and structure reflects Justin’s connection to the emerging category *Engaging learners and learning tasks* as he attempted to provide ‘opportunities to personalise learning so it fulfils a purpose in their lives’ (SI5.12b).

ix. **Authentic learning experiences provide authentic assessment of learning**

Articulating this process of moving from learning about to applying new knowledge as a published text within one’s community reflects the way that knowledge is shared, simultaneously providing the teacher with opportunities to make observations about and assessments of each child’s learning. The functionality of each website provided Justin with an understanding of each child’s skill with computer based technologies, whilst the content, structure and layout revealed much about that child’s understanding of audience and purpose.
Interpretive summary: Connecting with professional identity

*Websites* reflects Justin’s beliefs about learners and his role as their teacher. His observation that ‘children are smart’ is reflected in his high expectations of each child to create and maintain a website. The complexity of the task is considerable not only from the perspective of creating and managing content, but also in the creative decisions each child needed to make to position readers in certain ways. Further, Justin’s trust in the children’s ability appears to build his confidence to open his classroom to the broader audience as a range of people accessed the children’s websites and the texts constructed in his classroom and posted on their sites.

Justin observed that school holds the dual purpose of preparing children for the future as well as supporting them as active participants in communities now. Reflecting this belief is the nature of the *Websites* task. The children did not practise making websites, or work on a whole class site, but were engaged in the construction of real texts that held the genuine purpose of sharing knowledge with audiences, both known and unknown. Justin’s efforts to ‘personalise’ learning indicates a connection with his learners that takes the learning beyond a classroom task to the creation of real world texts as an expression of each child’s own identity.

Justin’s professional identity appears to be well established and embraces the role of the learner as an active and responsible participant in the classroom. The design of Websites indicates that Justin is active in his planning and teaching. Further, the way that the task changed over time to suit the increasing abilities and changing needs of the students suggests he is adept at responding to his students’ needs and to his observations and reflections about classroom interactions. Furthermore, his confidence as a professional apparently empowers him to facilitate learning beyond traditional texts and pedagogies.
Case 4 - My community

The My Community task and Jenna’s underlying rationale are now examined through the framework of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) and in connection with the themes emerging from analysis of the interviews with experienced teachers examined in the first part of this chapter.

i. Authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life

The task promoted the development of knowledge within a real life context. Community service and political advertisements aim to raise awareness and understanding of certain issues, an aim of this experience too. They seek to present a certain position on the issue in order to provoke a response in their audience. The children selected issues to address within their advertisements that they understood were relevant to the context of their schools, their communities and their own understandings, placing them in the position to similarly adopt their preferred perspective.

The task took on a more personal dynamic as each author group was included in the program at a school/community function. The authors presented not only the advertisement, but also a prepared oral text outlining the complexity of the problem and arguing for support from the community. Presenting and justifying their stance to a ‘live’ audience took the task from being a reflection of the real world to being part of the real world. The children were empowered to participate as informed members of their communities and to enact change.

ii. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life

Social dilemmas within communities (such as homelessness and depression) are complex problems to which there are no easy solutions. The My community project reflected this complexity throughout the task as the children explored the issues facing their own communities and considered some avenues of response. Rather than setting the topic to be addressed, the teacher designed the task to focus on topical social issues. The focus for
each advertisement emerged from the children’s exploration of the opinions, knowledge and beliefs of parents, grandparents and local media.

The teacher bound the task with certain parameters before it was introduced to the children. The children then engaged in decision making and problem solving within those boundaries. Jenna explained her role in responding to external considerations such as government documentation, designing pedagogically appropriate learning experiences and engaging children in activities that support deep learning,

Yes, I suppose there has to be some kind to teacher decision making before it happens. I will tell you that children don’t really know what they need to know. As far as designing rich questions, they can’t design rich questions, so there needs to be some teacher direction that comes from the Board of Studies outcomes that I am trying to achieve...It does not sit comfortably with me children taking ownership of the content perhaps or the rich questions that we think they can design...it comes back to teacher decisions, a lot of teacher input at the beginning and then the children deciding where to take that. (SI5.12a)

The use of planning, programming and goal setting as a critical part of the teaching and learning cycle supported both Jenna’s desire to understand her learners and the children’s need to achieve deep learning. Her use of a range of groupings and approaches (whole class modelled, small group and independent) afforded opportunities for the close reflection required to monitor balance in approaches and close observation required for future goal setting.

iii. *Authentic learning experiences provide access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation*

Jenna’s expertise in *My community* lay in her literacy teaching and pedagogical skill in facilitating the task. She acknowledged her limitations in terms of operating the video camera and with using editing software and she identified particular children in the class as the experts in this area. Similarly, she did not portray herself as an expert on the content of the task. Jenna does not live in the suburb in which she taught, therefore it was for the
children to discover the required information from their own identified experts. The experts were: their parents and relatives, local media, community texts and the children themselves. Jenna used her expertise in critical literacy and the construction of text to demonstrate and model the processes of interpretation and construction of message. The role of ‘expert’ was shared within the My community task.

iv. **Authentic learning experiences provide coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners**

Jenna identified that the children were able to achieve the desired outcomes for the My community task within a socially supported environment, ‘with help and support…have put an ad together…to promote the social issue’ (SI5.12a). The help and support included a range of skills and strategies such as critical viewing in guided groups, peer tutoring in using technology and whole class discussion about different perspectives people bring to a social issue. Using this variety of teaching and learning approaches provided Jenna with deep knowledge about her learners. Therefore, she was able to make complex decisions about the level of support required for certain tasks and knew when different children within a group were able to act as learning support for their peers.

v. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored**

The My community task challenged the children in this experience to take on the role of consumer and creator of texts as they researched, interpreted and expressed their perspective of the issues. A further perspective was adopted as the children presented and justified their decisions and stance on the issue. Jenna demonstrates her connection here to the emerging theme of ‘good’ teaching where she aims to create space for understanding the multiple roles and perspectives that are part of the task. She explained that it was important for the children to have time for ‘journaling for reflection and goal setting and a positive environment that allows for critical analysis of peers’ work’ (SI5.12a).
vi. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge

Jenna’s belief that ‘all learning is based on relationships and underpinned by literacy, so all projects must draw on personal development and literacy outcomes’ (SI5.12a) is consistently demonstrated throughout her explanation of the My community task. Working in a range of small group configurations allowed for a collaborative approach to the construction, for taking on different roles within the group structure as well as allowing the shared understandings to be expressed. Discussion, problem solving, research and experimentation with approaches allowed the construction of deep knowledge about the social issue under investigation. Further, as the children collaborated to construct the text, a sharing of expertise occurred in using computer-based technologies as well as knowledge about the ways that information can be used to inform and persuade.

vii. Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration

Reflection is a key component of the teaching approaches, reflection on learning, setting goals for future learning and making connection to existing understandings. The use of a personal journal supported the students as they reflected on their own developing understandings, while the whole class and small group reflective discussions and text deconstruction tasks supported the collaborative nature of developing group understandings. Jenna’s description of the role of both personal and group reflection in learning supports the activities she describes in the task,

…shared understanding of dialogue between the students and myself, opportunities for them to share and learn from each other as well as from me. So I think that cycle…I try and get a balance happening…to get better at self reflecting and students self reflecting. To me the core of child centred learning…is children knowing what they need to learn, and also knowing what they’ve learned…and what they need to learn next. And when they start owning that, it doesn’t matter what organisation you put them in…whether you have a teacher directed classroom, whether you’re using IT to enhance the learning
viii. **Authentic learning experiences provide opportunities for articulation of growing understandings**

As the advertisements took shape and groups presented their works in progress, the teacher and children engaged in critique. Jenna explained, ‘it’s not the final product…we put in recommendations from the audience on how to improve their product and then they take it away and make more changes’ (SI5.12a). It was through these opportunities that Jenna observed the children in her class were called to reflect on, reconsider and modify their message in response to the feedback from their peers and teacher.

Her explanation of the value of opportunities for articulation of understandings is reflected in the emerging theme of **Engaging learners and learning tasks**. Jenna described the process of critique and making recommendations and using ‘honest positives’ (SI5.12a). She argued that the use of ‘honest positives’ when responding to texts is more powerful for learning than the use of vague affirmations or even criticism. Further, Jenna argued that ‘honest positives’ are key to creating a climate that supports the development of understandings and engaging learners more deeply with their texts.

ix. **Authentic learning experiences provide authentic assessment of learning**

Reflecting the complexity of the task itself, Jenna took a range of approaches to assessment. She explained her multiple focus, ‘I want to know about what they learned...how they could explain what they had learnt literacy wise, IT wise and personally’ (SI5.12a).

Jenna assessed the children’s learning in the following ways:
- **Journals for personal reflection** ‘we journaled [sic] what they had achieved and what they wanted to achieve in the next session, setting goals’ (SI5.12a).
- **Group analysis of texts** ‘they justify what they are saying, then we make some recommendations. And that’s really taken as learning on here...we do a written reflection on others’ work and their own...they write up 3 other people’s speeches, why it was good, what they learned from it and their own’ (SI5.12a).
- Teacher assessment through rubric the children’s texts were graded according to a predetermined criteria which focused on: presentation, depth of content and critical analysis of the task

Interpretive summary: Connecting with professional identity

Jenna argued that all learning is built on literate practices and centred on building relationships (SI5.12a) and that her role, therefore is to develop relationships herself, to support the children to develop relationships and to empower them as literate individuals. This aspect of her professional identity is clearly evident in the authentic learning experience My community. By exploring issues of personal importance to the children in her class, Jenna demonstrates interest and concern for supporting their successful engagement in the communities within they are expected to operate. Her teaching decisions reflect active concern for the students’ learning as well as flexibility and willingness to experiment with approaches to meet the children’s needs.

Further, Jenna’s commitment to the development of relationships for learning and her focus on the development of literacies for engagement in community practices connect strongly with the emerging categories of professional responsibility, community membership, ‘good’ teaching, external pressures and the engagement of learners. It is these elements of the My community experience that demonstrate the connection between Jenna’s professional identity and her quality as a teacher.

Jenna’s professional identity has become established over ‘more than 30 years of teaching’ (SI5.12a). It appears to have provided her with confidence in her ability to meet the needs of her students through the learning experiences she designs. The My community task is an example of such teaching as it engages children with audiences beyond the classroom and aims to empower them as legitimate members of their communities.
Interpreting Phase One: Collaboration with practitioners

Part A of this chapter has reported the findings of Phase One of the inquiry, collaboration with practitioners. The purpose of this phase in the design-based research approach is to ensure the problem is understood from both theoretical and practical perspectives. That is, from the research literature and from practitioners themselves. It is reasonable to argue that the review of the literature in Chapter Two and the findings described in Part A achieve this purpose. Using these perspectives, a solution can be designed as Phase Two of the approach that is practical and yet theoretically informed.

A summary of the findings can now be discussed from the perspective of each of the research questions.

How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences in their classrooms?

Experienced classroom teachers in this inquiry define authentic learning experiences within the context of their broader professional settings and in the settings of their learners. They define authentic learning experiences as more than the accumulation of content knowledge, more than engagement in school literacies and more than completion of tasks for the purposes of administrative documentation and measurement of learning. The experienced classroom teachers in this inquiry define a learning experience as authentic if it holds meaning for the learner beyond the confines of the classroom, if it engages them to consider others within their communities and if it develops in the learner the requisite skills, strategies and abilities to actively participate within a range of community settings for a range of purposes.

In planning authentic learning experiences, the teachers consider a range of perspectives and responsibilities before considering the content of the task. Evident within this planning are considerations around their own status within their professional communities, the cultural, socio economic and social situations of their learners, acknowledgement of pressures around government policy and from external stakeholders such as parents and community and their underpinning beliefs about teaching and learning.

Part A of this chapter has shown that authentic learning experiences allow learners the necessary
space, time, resources and interactions needed to develop problem solving skills, to make decisions about their own learning and to transfer this learning to both in and out of school contexts. These experienced teachers view themselves as valuable human resources in authentic learning and so the tasks they design will capitalise on their strengths, interests and beliefs about authentic learning. This perception sits within the teacher’s professional identity and the experiences designed are a reflection of those beliefs.

Teachers in this inquiry reported facilitating authentic learning experiences by first establishing parameters within which the learning will occur. They spent considerable time at the outset of the task supporting learners to develop conceptual understandings so they can later make informed decisions about their own directions for learning. Once the framework for the task is set, the experienced teachers move into a less didactic role so children may explore and develop their own beliefs about the topic as they interpret and transfer the incoming information. In facilitating authentic learning experiences, these experienced teachers make careful decisions based on deep understandings of their learners, their needs, interests and strengths. The experienced teachers in this inquiry viewed their role at the final stages of authentic learning tasks as facilitators of: reflection, the articulation of new understandings and goal setting for future learning.

*What is the nature of the relationship between a teacher’s professional identity and their ability to plan authentic learning experiences?*

It is clear these experienced teachers’ professional identities present as important elements in the design of authentic learning experiences in this inquiry. These experienced teachers went to great lengths to justify the purpose and intention of their decisions before they explained the content of the task itself. The strength of the connection between identity and practice was revealed as the teachers first articulated who they are in the stories of their schools and who they believed their learners to be before they described the nature of authentic learning experiences in their classrooms. Each of the teachers described in detail the culture of their respective school, the students’ learning preferences and something of the social make up of the community in justifying the planning decisions that he or she made.

A well developed professional identity appears to equip these experienced teachers with the
confidence to be pedagogically creative and take informed risks in the design of learning experiences. Such knowledge guides the utilisation of the teaching and learning cycle to provide appropriate levels of support at different times within learning experiences. This was observed in this inquiry as each of the teachers described the need for direct or explicit instruction at the outset of authentic learning experiences in an effort to equip children with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their own learning as the experience progresses. With these parameters set, teachers’ knowledge and beliefs continue to inform practice as they make decisions about providing appropriate time for the completion of tasks, identifying suitable approaches to tasks including decisions about grouping students and providing opportunities for interaction, collaboration and reflection on learning.

It was revealed in Part A of this chapter that a professional identity where the teacher embraces the tenets of teacher as facilitator and acknowledges the significance of a child’s place in a range of communities allows them to plan for learning that draws on a range of resources within and beyond the classroom. Particularly significant for authentic learning experiences are human resources such as the teachers themselves, other students, parents and members from the broader community. This sharing of the learning builds relationships as teacher and learner negotiate the nature of the task and the processes with which each person will engage.

Teachers who know what they know are able to make informed decisions when designing authentic learning experiences for their students. Such teachers can see students’ learning within a broader social context that guides them to design learning experiences that empower them to participate in these contexts. These teachers can justify their decisions to stakeholders because the tasks they design are built on knowledge borne from experience, reflection and learning. It is evident from findings of this inquiry that a professional identity equipped a teacher with these tools to question, challenge and develop their beliefs and practices, affording professional growth and therefore the ability to adapt to and provide for the ever changing needs of learners.

In what ways can early career teachers be supported in developing a professional identity?
What emerged from analysis of the Phase One data is not only the importance of having a professional identity, but that it is an identity built on strong theoretical foundations that can provide a practitioner with the confidence to actively engage with the process of designing learning experiences and the strength to withstand setback and challenge. From analysis of Phase One data a model for authentic learning experiences (Figure 4.2) was developed to demonstrate diagrammatically the ways that the experienced teachers in this inquiry perceived authentic learning experiences.

Within this model, Herrington and Oliver’s (2000) principles of authentic learning experiences operate for these teachers as the end product of a process where one’s
responsibilities as a teacher are initially identified. Following this, the experienced teachers in this inquiry considered external pressures, the ways that these learners could best be engaged, the role of the broader community and the demand for ‘good’ teaching. A model for authentic learning experiences was used to underpin and guide the Phase Two development of a solution.

Findings from Phase One suggest that early career teachers might be supported in the development of their professional identity in an environment that allows time for systematic reflection both individually and in collaboration with others, that explores theory to practice connections and challenges the existing beliefs and practices within a supportive learning environment. As such, Phase Two of the inquiry draws on a model for authentic learning experiences to develop a series of professional development experiences to be facilitated with early career teachers. This is presented within the inquiry as the ‘solution’. The solution was tested in Phase Three for its potential to develop the professional identities of early career teachers. The model is designed to both underpin and guide professional development experiences with early career teachers using the action research cycle of planning, acting, developing and reflecting (Mertler, 2006).
Part B

Phase Two: Development of a solution

The development of a solution to the ways early career teachers can be supported in the development of a professional identity is reported as Phase Two of the inquiry. The solution is a series of professional development experiences to be facilitated with early career teachers. Phase Two is circled in Figure 4.3 and described by Reeves (2006) as involving the ‘development of solutions informed by existing design principles’.

The professional development workshop series designed in Phase Two is built on the theory that reflection affords personal and professional growth (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bintz & Dillard, 2007; Ostorga, 2006; Rocco, 2008; Rodgers, 2002). Learning experiences draw on Walkington’s (2005) argument for students to: be active participants in their learning; focus on the individual contexts of school settings and be provided ample time to discuss and reflect on classroom practice in connection with theory.

Further, the professional development experiences respond to Brown’s (2009) call for an exploration of the metacognitive processes of classroom teachers in understanding that which is observable in the classroom. And they acknowledge the challenges associated with making the transition from preservice to inservice teacher such as stress (Flores & Day, 2006), loneliness (Mantei & Kervin, 2007), unrealistic optimism (Darling-Hammond
et al., 2005; McCormack et al., 2004) and the pressure to conform (Cattley, 2007; McCormack et al., 2004; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005; Rocco, 2008).

**Professional development experiences**

The solution, professional development experiences formed the course content for the early career teachers enrolled in the core BEd subject *Reflective Practice*. These workshops were timetabled in the Autumn Session (13 weeks) for three hours on Tuesday afternoons from 4.30-7.30pm. This time allowed participants to teach during the day whilst studying for their Bachelor of Education in the evenings. Workshop tasks were planned to follow a similar format each week with a range of focuses relevant to classroom teaching.

Workshop focuses are summarised in Table 4.9 and described in more depth in Appendix I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Workshop focus</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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| 1  | **Reflective practice**  
   - Becoming a reflective teacher  
   - The ‘parts’ that teachers need to be aware of and reflect on | Introduce aims of Reflective Practice:  
   - Explore the role of teachers  
   - Make connections between theory and practice through reflection |
| 2  | **Professional development**  
   - Exploring the role of professional associations in the ongoing professional life of a teacher | Participate in a public professional development workshop hosted by the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA) |
| 3  | **Values and identity**  
   - What does it mean to be a teacher?  
   - How does reflection develop professional identity? | Explore values through vignettes – stories of teachers (Appendix F) that reflect the literature and data from Phases 1 and 2  
   Consider the model for authentic learning and teaching that emerged from Phase 2 (Figure 4.2). |
| 4  | **Curriculum**  
   - Learning and teaching experiences understanding the teacher’s purpose  
   - Student knowledge and understanding  
   - Developing teaching strategies | Reflect on a teacher’s purpose in setting a task and the ways a child interprets it.  
   Identify the knowledge a teacher brings to the task (curriculum, pedagogical, personal) |
| 5  | **Planning**  
   - Implementing curricula  
   - Supporting student needs  
   - Analysis of data to inform direction | Challenge existing understandings held about planning and implementing lessons in classrooms |
| 6  | **Learning** | Explore use of learning spaces and |
## Chapter 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>Student achievement of outcomes</th>
<th>Dimensions of Quality Teaching</th>
<th>technology in schools to meet the needs of learners today</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
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<td>Consider content knowledge of:</td>
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<td>- Monitoring learning and</td>
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<td>- Literacy</td>
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<td>- Impact on learning and</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
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<td>Explore a teachers’ influence on learning environments (through research findings and video)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Managing the classroom</td>
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<td>environment</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify stakeholders in education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Communicating with key</td>
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<td>Consider responsibilities when reporting to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>stakeholders</td>
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<td>a range of stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Managing relationships amongst</td>
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<td>Identify the value of different staff</td>
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<td>students, staff and community</td>
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<td>members in building a community and</td>
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<td>professional relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Reflective practice</strong></td>
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<td>Reflect on the development of deep</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Seeking further professional</td>
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<td>understandings</td>
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<td>development opportunities</td>
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<td>Identify opportunities for further</td>
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<td>professional development</td>
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Workshops comprised three parts:

- *Sharing to build community*
- *Tutor input*
- *Independent professional tasks*

### Sharing to build community

Workshops were structured each week to begin with a gathering activity to allow group members to share their stories and to reacquaint themselves with this community of teachers. Generally a busy and highly interactive time, stories shared in small groups, pairs and sometimes with the whole group found affirmation, questions, challenges, encouragement and professional development as advice and sympathy would be offered in critique of the events.
Tutor input

Tutors in the workshop activities were Dr Lisa Kervin and myself. Tutor input and set tasks following this sharing time were designed to reflect the sorts of challenges in school contexts that ‘real’ teachers would experience. They required learners to take on the role of both learner and expert as they identify and explore problems from a range of perspectives. The tasks attempted to facilitate the articulation of tacit knowledge for the benefit of group understanding and called for collaboration with a range of parties in reaching outcomes.

Independent professional tasks

These tasks were designed to follow the weekly workshop focus as set out in Table 4.9. The tasks allowed early career teachers to explore their own emerging understandings, to engage as professionals with information from a range of sources and to make connections between their practical experiences and theoretical knowledge. These tasks are: professional dialogue groups, ‘wisdom’ pairs and blogging. They are now briefly described.

Professional dialogue groups

The early career teachers met weekly to discuss a professional reading in connection with their experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning. These were recorded on an iPod and uploaded onto the BEST site as audio files to enrich teacher reflections. The following framing questions were supplied as a framework for professional dialogue:

What are the key points in this article for me and why?
What puzzled or confused me?
What are the implications for my professional identity as a teacher?

‘Wisdom’ pairs

The wisdom task drew on literature that reported the ways that sharing of knowledge within the teaching community builds relationships and enriches the shared knowledge of the

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1 A description of the BEST site is given in Chapter 3, p. 84 of this thesis
group (Labbo et al., 2003). This journal article acted as a stimulus for the early career teachers’ own professional investigation as they worked together to design, conduct, edit and publish an interview with a more experienced teacher for their peers. Wisdom stories were stored as audio files in a common repository on the BEST site that provided convenient access for all members of this Reflective Practice cohort.

**Blogging**

It was planned for the early career teachers to post individual reflections on the BEST site as they reflected on the connections between theory and practice. Bloggers were encouraged to read and respond to reflections on the site and to make connections with the weblogs of others in their own reflections. Weekly blogging tasks related to the content of the workshop by posing broad, open questions to stimulate reflection and discussion. The early career teachers were also encouraged to blog about items of personal interest.

In summary, whilst the focus for each workshop was predetermined based on *a model for authentic learning experiences*, the detail for each was determined as part of the action research cycle utilised in Phase Three. Analysis of data collected along with discussion and analysis between the tutors, supervisors and other interested colleagues, informed content for future workshops within the focus set.

**Conclusion**

In Phase One of this inquiry, Herrington and Oliver’s (2000) principles of authentic learning experiences formed the framework for interactions with practitioners (experienced classroom teachers). These principles provided a basis for an exploration of experienced practitioners’ professional identity in connection with their perceptions of authentic learning experiences in primary school classrooms.

Analysis of these data revealed that the nine principles of authentic learning experiences (Herrington & Oliver, 2000) whilst applicable to the design and structure of the task itself,
were insufficient in explaining the nature of authentic learning experiences. In fact, the data revealed that the ability to design authentic learning experiences is closely linked with professional identity. Specifically, it is the beliefs the teachers hold about teaching and learning that inform the planning and organisation of authentic learning experiences. Themes emerging from the data revealed a number of considerations teachers make before they engage with content and specific task design. These considerations draw on a more global concept of education, children and community. The data have been reported through these themes in this chapter. The emerging themes reflect the underlying beliefs that the teachers hold about learning and, indeed, their concept of themselves as ‘teacher’. These findings are summarised diagrammatically as Figure 4.2, *a model for authentic teaching and learning* (p. 176).

In Phase Two, the *model for authentic learning experiences* was used as the basis for the development of a solution. The solution is a series of professional development experiences designed to foster the development of professional identity in early career teachers. An overview of the experiences is summarised in Table 4.9 and further detail provided as Appendix I.

Phase Three tests the premise that early career teachers can be supported in the development of a professional identity through this series of professional development experiences. These experiences focus on understanding the connection between beliefs and action through reflection and professional dialogue about experiences in one’s own classroom, the experiences of others and findings in the literature. The aim of the professional development experiences is to support early career teachers to develop confidence and resilience in their professional identities so they are equipped to plan and organise authentic learning experiences, justify their pedagogical approaches and respond professionally to the challenges they encounter within their teaching communities. Findings from Phase Three are reported in Chapter Five.
Chapter 5

Findings: Early career teachers
Overview

This chapter reports the findings from Phase Three as indicated in Figure 5.1.

*Figure 5.1 - Design-based research (Reeves, 2006)*

Phase Three is the implementation of the solution designed in Phase Two in response to findings from analysis of data collected in Phase One. From the review of the literature and analysis of the findings from Phase One, *a model for authentic teaching and learning* (Appendix G) was developed. In Phase Two, this model underpinned the design of the solution. The solution is a series of 13 professional development experiences designed for early career teachers to develop their professional identities through exploration, challenge and enrichment of their concept of authentic learning experiences. This formal implementation period was followed by a further 13 weeks of informal data collection as the teachers continued to engage with classroom teaching.

Formal professional development experiences formed subject content for the Reflective Practice subject within which they were enrolled in Autumn Session 2008. The informal component included blogging on the BEST website and the early career teachers also captured as a sound file an example of their teaching. This was deconstructed at interview. The early career teachers made connections to authentic learning experiences and professional identity as we listened to and analysed their teaching. A final interview concluded data collection. The chapter is reported in three parts:
Part A: Baseline data. This section reports the findings from data collected prior to the implementation of the solution. The baseline data identify the experiences, beliefs and understandings of the early career teachers prior to the implementation of the solution.

Part B: Teacher cases. The professional journeys of four of the early career teacher participants are described in this section. Action research methodology was used to guide the implementation and ongoing facilitation of the professional development experiences throughout the 13 weeks of the Autumn session. The development of these early career teachers’ professional identities is described as they engage with the professional development experiences, immerse themselves in their teaching settings and explore their own identity in connection with planning and design of authentic learning experiences.

Part C: Responding to the research questions. The chapter finishes by responding to each of the framing questions in this inquiry.

The relationship of Parts A, B and C to the design-based research phases is represented in Figure 5.2. Design-based research Phases One, Two and Three are shown as green blocks, while Parts A, B and C as presented in this chapter are in grey.
The following questions framed the inquiry,

- *How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences for their classroom?*
- *What is the nature of the relationship between the professional identity of teachers and their ability to plan authentic learning experiences for student learning?*
- *In what ways can early career teachers be supported in the development of a professional identity?*

**Part A. Baseline data**

In reporting the data collected in Phase Three, the baseline data allows an investigation of professional identity and of the early career teachers’ concept of authentic learning experiences prior to the implementation of the solution. Baseline data were collected through an initial interview with each early career teacher participant as well their first blog posting, created prior to the implementation of the professional development experiences. Findings from data analysis are examined through the same themes identified in Phase One:

- *Professional responsibility*
- *Considerations for authentic learning*
- *The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning*

This allows the findings from interactions with practitioners in Phase One to be examined in connection with data from this group of early career teachers. Whilst the data are reported within the identified themes and categories, it is unsurprising that the perspectives shared within them differ from those shared by the experienced teachers in Phase One, due to the different age and depth of experience of the cohort. Each of the categories within a model for authentic learning experiences is described in connection with the data. As before, the themes are reported in a linear way but, again, their non-linear, interconnectedness is acknowledged:
Professional responsibility
- Identifying their strengths
- Professional credibility
- Meeting children’s needs

Considerations for authentic learning
- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning

Theme 1: Professional responsibility

Information about each early career teacher’s prior teaching experience was sought at the beginning of Phase Three, prior to the implementation of the solution. With the exception of Breanna, each participant’s entire teaching experience comprised three annual practicum teaching experiences between 2005 and 2007. Graduating in 2004, Breanna had worked in a casual and temporary teaching capacity abroad from 2005 to 2007 in addition to practicum in 2002, 2003 and 2004. All of the early career teachers indicated their intention to begin working in classrooms in some capacity throughout the period of the inquiry. Table 5.1 summarises the contexts within which each of the participant teachers were employed at the beginning of Phase Three.
Table 5.1 - The context of each early career teacher’s teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Context Prior to Implementation of the Solution</th>
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</table>
| Bernice | Immersion days in local schools and community groups for observation  
|         | Private individual tutoring                             |
| Breanna | Part time teacher (3 days per week): Year 5  
|         | Location: Southern Illawarra  
|         | Population: low to mid socio economic, European/Anglo Saxon |
| Caroline| Full time teacher: Year 1  
|         | Location: Metropolitan Sydney  
|         | Population: high ESL, multicultural, ‘these children have a lot of social problems’ |
| Jasmine | Casual teacher  
|         | Part time teacher (1 day per week) Yrs 2, 3, 5 Science  
|         | Location: Southern Sydney  
|         | Population: predominantly Anglo Saxon, high socio economic |
| Jordan  | Casual teacher  
|         | Location: Illawarra  
|         | Population: various |
| Mark    | Casual teacher  
|         | Location: Illawarra, Sydney Inner West  
|         | Population: various |
| Melinda | Casual teacher  
|         | Location: South West Sydney  
|         | Population: low socio economic, highly multicultural and ESL |
| Nicole  | Part time teacher (3 days per week): K-2 Science  
|         | Location: South Coast NSW  
|         | Population: low socio economic, predominantly Anglo Saxon, some Indigenous students, ‘a lot of single parents…kids with young parents’ |
| Sophie  | Temporary full time block: Year 5/6  
|         | Location: South West Sydney  
|         | Population: low socio economic, highly multicultural and ESL |
| Terry   | Casual teacher  
|         | Location: South West Sydney  
|         | Population: low socio economic, highly multicultural and ESL |

Unsurprisingly, the early career teachers differed from their experienced counterparts and presented as less sure about who they are as teachers and what they bring to the teaching community. The categories analysed within the themes revealed uncertainty from the participants about the nature of their strengths for the teaching community and questioning of their credibility as professionals. Each of these is now discussed.
Identifying their strengths

Asking the early career teachers to identify their strengths or expertise in teaching revealed their uncertainty. Youth, energy and being new were commonly identified assets to an ageing staff population, for example ‘being younger than the other people there’ (Caroline, SI28.2b), ‘I feel I have a fresh angle on things…I’m a novelty factor’ (Jasmine, SI3.3a), and ‘a bit of a change’ (Nicole, SI13.3b). Contradictions emerged, however, Caroline cited a love of sport, youth, enthusiasm and energy as her strengths, yet described herself in interviews and a weblog posting as ‘tired’ ‘exhausted’ and ‘struggling’ (SI28.2b; BP6.3). Mark, too, indicated that he was still unsure,

I think I am fairly proficient in ICT. So I could probably come up with a fairly good program involving computers and teaching Internet literacy and that sort of thing. I play soccer, so I could coach a bit of soccer, a bit of sport. I’m fairly enthusiastic, although I’m sure most teachers are fairly enthusiastic. I’m not really sure, but it’s probably a good thing to think about…isn’t it?’ (SI4.3a)

Professional credibility

Evident in transcripts of interviews was uncertainty about what constitutes a professional teaching experience, surprise about the complexity and uncertainty of teaching and also the demands placed on teachers. Accompanying this was concern about ‘fitting in’ with teachers, with being perceived capable and reliable and being considered a valid staff member.

For example, Jasmine acknowledges the complexity and uncertainty of teaching,

I remember thinking “I want to do primary teaching because that’s nice routine!”
That was the stupidest thing…because I’ve found out now you go in, you can have planned for everything, but it’s not there. (SI3.3a)
Bernice is similarly surprised by

…kind of like the diversity of teaching. I always thought, I kind of had one idea in my head, but there’s actually this huge range of things they do…and…it’s kind of like a huge range of things they do and…you can’t learn everything at uni. (SI13.3c)

The desire to be perceived by their peers as a ‘teacher’ was evident as the early career teachers described their early teaching experiences and the motivation behind the decisions they made. For example, in an effort to be perceived as capable and therefore employable as a casual teacher, Mark admits,

I probably let them (the children) get away with a little more as a casual and maybe just separate them from the class and then put them out in the hallway rather than putting burdens on other teachers. (BP6.3)

Terry, too, expressed concerned about the ways that others perceive him, preferring to be thought a ‘good teacher’ by his peers than to be liked by the children. It appears that he considered these to be mutually exclusive. He shared in his initial blog posting,

As a teacher I am hearing through the grapevine that I am a “cool” teacher and that the students like having “Mr W” as their teacher. While this is great to hear (and also boosts my ego), I am worried that I lack some ability in controlling a class and that I may need to take on the role of dictator in the classroom in order to get results. (BP6.3)

Balancing the authority of being a teacher with the desire to be liked and wanted appears to challenge professional identity, thereby allowing it to develop.

Meeting children’s needs

The responsibilities identified for meeting children’s needs differed within this cohort from those shared by the Phase One experienced teachers. The responses shared are summarised in Table 5.2.
### Table 5.2 - Meeting children’s needs identified by early career teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>WHAT CHILDREN NEED:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bernice | - Preparation to live in the world  
- To make better health choices  
- Problem solving skills        |
| Breanna | - A healthy learning environment where they can learn from their mistakes  
- For me to be the best teacher I can be and clearly set goals  
- A love of learning and learning that is relevant to them  
- Skills for later life, like times tables and related number facts  
- Reward for good work  
- Computer technology |
| Caroline | - Literacy, ‘I really want to get them to read and write’  
- Behaviour management  
- To listen and learn  
- To teach them to the best of my ability |
| Jasmine | - A safe, relaxed environment  
- To ‘own’ their learning  
- An excited and motivated teacher |
| Jordan  | - To learn something new every day that interests them  
- To feel like they have achieved something  
- To be respected           |
| Mark    | - Independence  
- Content knowledge  
- Community, relationships, respect  
- A balance of teacher support between experiences, ‘provide the right types of experiences and know the right things to do at the right times’  
- ‘…an ability to work things out for themselves, being able to think for themselves…to learn how to learn’  
- ‘Learning to read is probably the most important thing to learn in the world’         |
| Melinda | - An education  
- Social development and skills  
- To have their perspectives incorporated into things        |
| Nicole  | - Social skills  
- Know how to deal with the day-to-day world  
- To feel safe, wanted, have fun and to be treated properly  
- Respect  
- Teacher as a role model           |
| Sophie  | - To be kept occupied  
- Attention  
- Preparation for life        |
| Terry   | - Balance between fun and learning  
- Guidance, building blocks, foundations  
- Manners  
- Lead by example         |
An interesting finding in these data is the brevity of most of the responses and the somewhat black and white focus on ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’. The perspectives shared about the category of meeting children’s needs centred on the role of the teacher and of the learner rather than on the processes of learning or teaching.

**Responsibility for teaching**

In terms of themselves, the teachers identified that they need:

- To be role models themselves, someone that the children can emulate (SI10.3; SI3.3a; SI13.3b; BP6.3; SI28.2a)
- To manage children’s behaviour (SI10.3; BP20.3; SI28.2b; SI13.3a; SI28.2a)
- To be a motivated, organised teacher who can instil a love of learning in their students (SI10.3; SI3.3a; SI28.2a; BP20.3)
- To provide a balance of learning experiences, some describe a balance between teacher guided and independent learning, whilst others describe the need for balance between learning and fun (SI4.3b; SI4.3a; SI28.2a; BP6.3)
- To provide a safe and respectful environment (SI10.3; SI3.3a; SI4.3a; SI4.3c; SI4.3b; SI28.2a; BP6.3; BP20.3)

**Responsibility for learning**

With a focus on the children, the teachers identified that children need to:

- Listen to and show respect to the teacher (SI28.2b; SI4.3c; SI13.3b; SI13.3a; SI28.2a)
- Accumulate content knowledge (SI10.3; SI28.2b; SI4.3a; SI4.3c; SI28.2a)
- Develop skills and understandings beyond the classroom (SI13.3c; SI4.3b; SI4.3a; SI4.3c; SI13.3b; SI13.3a; BP20.3)

It can be seen within these responses that prior to the implementation of the professional development experiences (the solution), there was a limited understanding of the role of learning beyond the classroom. Their early observations about the purpose of school appear to compete with their need to feel in control of the environment and their
understandings of school based on previous experiences as children themselves. Only
Mark was able to take a broader view of teaching and learning in interview and early
weblog postings.

Grounds for this broader view possibly stem from Mark’s own ongoing study experiences.
At the time of the inquiry, Mark himself was conducting research as part of the Bachelor of
Education Honours degree, with a focus on digital literacies. His superior ability to
articulate his understandings about the needs of learners could be a reflection of the deeper
reading and analysis he had engaged with as a researcher himself.

**Theme 2: Considerations for authentic learning**

Initial interviews for baseline data in Phase Three were designed to explore the ways that
the early career teachers described their approach and understandings of authentic learning
experiences prior to considering specific examples of the sorts of experiences they consider
authentic. Further data about the concept of an authentic learning experience were gathered
through early weblog postings. Categories within the theme *discussing authentic learning*
are as follows:

- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning tasks
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

Each category is examined in connection with the data.
**External pressures and accountability**

Each of the early career teachers was asked about the pressures they felt when they plan for authentic learning. Their responses are summarised in Table 5.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS/ACCOUNTABILITY:</th>
<th>Bernice</th>
<th>Breanna</th>
<th>Caroline</th>
<th>Jasmine</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Melinda</th>
<th>Nicole</th>
<th>Sophie</th>
<th>Terry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>- Using the outcomes in the Board of Studies (BOS) documents to make learning meaningful</td>
<td>- BOS - Parents - Catholic Education Office - Child protection legislations (a list recorded as a blog posting)</td>
<td>- University</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td>- ‘Link the curriculum, link the Key Learning Areas because you do lessons for a purpose’ (S14.3b)</td>
<td>- Interactions with parents - Casual teaching: being accepted and coping</td>
<td>- Other staff members</td>
<td>- ‘Classroom layout is the key to behaviour management’ (BP6.3)</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td>- The desire to be ‘different from all the other casual teachers’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neither Jasmine nor Sophie identified pressures or considerations beyond their own organisational skills prior to the implementation of the solution. Further, Caroline indicated that tertiary studies created pressure for her teaching as it impinged on her time and focusing on the classroom, Nicole identified its layout as key in planning for authentic learning. The remaining early career teachers vaguely mentioned a range of government and school based policy and procedures as being considerations when planning for learning in the classroom. However, they did not elaborate on the nature of the pressure. It is interesting in this summary that Breanna, the most experienced of the cohort, listed the greatest range of considerations for planning. Perhaps this is an indication that policies and procedures become more of a focus with experience in facilitating the curriculum. However, Breanna did no more than mention their existence as part of the considerations she had for planning and teaching, suggesting that they might be something she was simply aware of rather than something that placed pressure on her planning and teaching.
Engaging learners and learning

When the early career teachers were asked about the ways that learning can be engaging and the ways that children could be engaged, they identified a need for balance between ‘fun’ and ‘work’. Their descriptions of engagement are summarised in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4 - Early career teachers’ beliefs about engaging children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CHILDREN ARE ENGAGED THROUGH:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bernice| - Opportunities to be immersed in the ideas of a lesson  
             - Extended time allowed to spend on a task                                      |
| Breanna| - Developing a love of learning  
             - Making mistakes and allowing others to learn  
             - Clearly set teacher goals                                                     |
| Caroline| - ‘Effective classroom management’ (BP6.3)  
                     - ‘Getting to know your kids’ (SI28.2b)  
                     - Enjoying a task                                                          |
| Jasmine| - Something new, a teacher, an interesting visitor or item that their teacher is excited and motivated  
                      - Learning that is fun and meaningful, ‘you have to sort of “sell” the lessons to the kids’ (SI3.3a)  
                      - Believing they are ‘lucky’ in ‘getting to do this task’ (SI3.3a)  
                      - Technology, making work harder for more able children                     |
| Jordan | - Having ownership of the classroom and being respected  
                      - Feeling good about their learning  
                      - Effective behaviour management  
                      - Learning about things that interest them                                      |
| Mark   | - The ‘right sort of learning experiences’ (SI4.3a) that interest them  
                      - Clearly identified learning goals  
                      - Seeing a teacher’s willingness to be apply themselves to thorough preparation and implementation of a task  
                      - Teacher demonstrations and opportunities to teach each other                |
| Melinda| - Learning that is made meaningful by the teacher  
                      - Experiences that are contextualised within other learning  
                      - Enjoyment and opportunities to share their perspectives                    |
| Nicole | - Good behaviour management (which Nicole also links to classroom layout)  
                      - Teacher understanding of the age, behaviour and abilities of children  
                      - Teacher skill in ‘how to put concepts into interesting lessons’ (BP6.3) |
| Sophie | - Teacher understanding of students’ individual needs  
                      - Teacher knowledge of ‘a diverse range of learning style such as kinaesthetic, auditory as well as visual’ (BP6.3)  
                      - Teacher knowledge about their students’ school and home life  
                      - Being kept occupied ‘so they don’t get bored’ (SI13.3a)                     |
| Terry  | - A balance between fun and learning  
                      - Sport and the promise of sport  
                      - Teacher guidance in building the ‘foundations’ of learning (SI28.2a)       |
Analysis of the responses shared by the early career teachers revealed commonalities in the beliefs they shared about the ways that learning can be engaging and children are engaged. These are:

- **Teacher motivation, planning and control**
- **Balance**

These perspectives are examined in connection with the data.

*Teacher motivation, planning and control*

The teachers clearly described the teacher’s role in student engagement:

- To be organised (SI10.3; SI28.2b; SI3.3a; SI4.3a; SI4.3c; SI13.3b; SI13.3a; SI28.2a; BP6.3; BP20.3)
- To be motivated and enthusiastic about the activities on offer (BP20.3; SI3.3a; SI4.3a; SI4.3c; SI13.3b)
- To manage and supervise children’s behaviour and application to the task (SI28.2b; SI4.3b; SI4.3c; SI13.3b)

The third point, management and supervision of behaviour, seems at odds with the beliefs that engagement occurs through a teacher’s motivation, enthusiasm and organisation. The contradiction of this belief is evident in Caroline’s weblog posting where she begins by identifying a learner’s right to challenge their environment but finishes with quite a different observation,

> I feel that it is the learners’ right to ask questions if they are unsure and every child should have an equal opportunity to learn. I do not believe that the saying “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make them drink” applies in any school or learning situation. The role of the learner is to listen and learn within those classroom walls. It is in their best interest and they are far too young to be able to ignore the education that is handed to them on a gold platter. (BP6.3)
Sophie reveals similar tensions as she explains in a weblog (posted March 12th 2008),
...it is my career objective to lead and inspire young minds to be the best that they can be, to follow their dreams and to help them know that their world may be without boundaries. (BP20.3)

However, during her initial interview just one day later, her perception of her role in engaging and supporting her learners differs,
The higher ones just want to be kept occupied so they don’t get bored and for the other ones if you don’t pay attention or help them out they just get lost in the scheme of things. (SI13.3a)

Conflict is evident in these early career teachers’ developing understandings and beliefs.

Balance
Most of the teachers described the need for a balance in the learning to achieve engagement:
- Balance between ‘fun’ and ‘work’ (BP6.3; SI28.2a; SI3.3a; SI4.3b; SI13.3a; SI13.3b)

The inference in these responses is that fun and work are mutually exclusive and one is a trade off for the other. For example, Nicole described her science teaching as balancing the status quo for the children,
...they’re always doing maths and literacy with their teacher…I have the opportunity to do interesting things and don’t really have the responsibility of teaching literacy and maths. I am able to have creative lessons because there is less worry. (BP6.3)

Similarly, Terry separated work from fun, describing his aim, ‘for the students to get something out of the day at least and have a bit of fun as well’ (SI28.2a) and Jasmine described the her goal for a casual teaching day ‘I’ve got to make it fun and interesting’ (SI3.3a).
- Balance between teacher input and adequate time for independent work opportunities (SI13.3c; SI4.3a)

Mark’s belief about balance differs, identifying that there are ‘a lot of things’ that engage and are engaging,

…an ability to work things out for themselves, being able to think for themselves. I think it’s important for them to learn history, science and maths but I think it’s more important to learn how to learn … looking at books, learning to read...but then there’s [sic] lots of things about learning how to read…so it’s probably reading and learning… I think you just have to provide the right types of experiences and know the right things to do at the right times to support them to get where they have to be. (SI4.3a)

Perhaps the difference in Mark’s contribution is related again to his more focussed and reflective persona developed through his own research. This presents the question of whether the opportunity for deep reading and engagement with questions and topics of interest, perhaps affords preservice teachers richer opportunities to transition from student to teacher.

**Community give and take**

As part of initial interviews, the early career teachers were asked about learning, its connection with the world beyond the classroom and the ways that the two are connected. This perspective was outside these teachers’ experiences and perceptions at the time the interviews were conducted, but some shared general views about learning as ‘relevant’ and the role of the school in children’s social development. Table 5.5 summarises the ways that the early career teachers talked about the connections between the classroom and the community within the children’s learning.
Chapter 5

Table 5.5 - Connecting the classroom with the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Perspectives on Connecting Classroom with Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Kevin Rudd’s “Sorry Day” apology to indigenous Australians was an opportunity for school and community to come together, ‘This makes the school Sorry Day stuff more meaningful and relevant to students’ (BP20.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Breanna | - ‘Learning experiences that are relevant to them’ (SI10.3)  
- ‘...Maths education is vital for providing children with skills they will need later in life, the importance in knowing your time tables and related number facts’ (BP20.3) |
| Caroline | None identified |
| Jasmine | - Using things that are happening within their out of school experiences at the time (for example, Australian Idol, The Simpsons)  
- Linking concepts to their own experiences (for example, making comparisons between the life of another child and their own lives) |
| Jordan | None identified |
| Mark | None identified |
| Melinda | A focus on social development, ‘social skills, ways to act socially’ (BP6.3) |
| Nicole | - Developing ‘social skills, how to talk to one another nicely, get on with each other...knowledge of how to deal with the day-to-day world’ (BP6.3) |
| Sophie | - ‘School needs to prepare students for life and help them apply their knowledge and skills in realistic concepts’ (BP20.3) |
| Terry | - For children to ‘understand their rights and responsibilities and teaching them manners and stuff like that’ (SI28.2a) |

Within the category of Community give and take, the early career teachers shared their perspectives on:

- **Relevance**
- **Social development.**

These are now examined in connection with the data.

**Relevance**

The teachers consider ‘relevance’ as important in engaging children for learning, but it appears that they are unsure what this could mean or ‘look like’ in the classroom. For example, Bernice indicated her belief that relevance is achieved through planning, ‘You can use the outcomes to address things that are more relevant to them’ (SI13.3c). Jasmine believes relevance is achieved through popular culture such as Australian Idol, claiming that a task is relevant to the children ‘because that was what was happening just at that minute of time’ (SI3.3a).
Breanna attempted to explicate her belief with some prompting during interview,

BREANNA: ‘...[I] try to instil a love of learning and try to make learning experiences relevant to them’

INTERVIEWER: What is relevant to them?

BREANNA: Umm (long pause), in maths and things they like it when you can relate it to money so that they can see that it’s, you know, useful to them I guess and just trying to make it fun as well is very important (SI10.3).

**Social development**

Terry, Nicole and Melinda each identified the development of social skills at school as a necessary focus of their teaching (SI28.2a; SI13.3b; SI4.3c). It was their perception then that this development is achieved through both modelling from the teacher as well as through direct teaching. Nicole’s views summarise the nature of the responses shared,

Social skills, how to talk to one another nicely, get on with each other, mainly I think, knowledge of how to deal with the day-to-day world. They need support, especially there’s a lot with low socio-economic status where I teach and there’s a lot of single parents, there’s a lot of kids with young parents so I think they need a strong role model, a solid one that’s always there. (SI13.3b)

**‘Good’ teaching**

Just two of the early career teachers made reference to ‘good’ teaching as an underpinning of authentic learning. This is in direct contrast to the responses shared by experienced teachers in Phase One and is a category requiring close analysis throughout the implementation and analysis of Phase Three.

Whilst Mark identified learning to read a broad range of literacies, especially multiliteracies as important for students in developing independence in learning (SI4.3a), Caroline’s focus was narrower. She had identified in interview and early weblog postings that her class comprised a large multicultural population, ‘Basically they are all ESL students, so I’ve got 2 who are not ESL students. Most of them speak Arabic, others speak Vietnamese’
It is within this context that she articulated her focus on literacy, but it is evident that this focus is easily clouded,

"Literacy is a big thing for me. I really want to get them to read and write, so that’s my main focus for Term 1. But even behaviour, it’s just a tiny thing, but even getting them to sit on the floor, have their legs crossed and stay in one position is a big goal for me." (SI28.2b)

Analyses of these early data reveal only an emerging understanding of the role of ‘good’ teaching in learning. Speculation could lead to the suggestion that it is lack of teaching experience that leaves these teachers unaware of this characteristic of their teaching. Or perhaps it is a limitation of their emerging understandings and beliefs about learning.

The findings now move to an examination of tasks identified as ‘authentic’ by the early career teachers at the beginning of Phase Three.

### Theme 3: The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning

Each teacher was asked prior to the interview to select a teaching and learning situation they had designed that they considered reflected their own perception of an authentic learning experience. Table 5.6 summarises the experiences they shared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Bernice</th>
<th>GRADE: n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: * Bernice was not able to describe a teaching example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Breanna</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 4 (part time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Treasure hunt</td>
<td>Follow compass directions to locate treasure hidden in the playground and then write your own clues for a peer to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: for the students to know compass directions and ‘transfer that learning into something practical’ (SI10.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: Observation and marking the worksheet. That is, successful location of the ‘treasure’ and subsequent design of new clues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Caroline</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 1 (full time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Small group work</td>
<td>Engage with maths tasks and rotate through different stations that require a range of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘...to interact with one another because these children have a lot of social problems...working out things and helping each other’ (SI28.2b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: Marking the exercise and activity books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHER: Jasmine</td>
<td>GRADE: Year 3/4 composite (part time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Advertising a charity. Create an advertisement for an aid organisation, winners are judged by a panel of their peers in an Australian Idol format</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘skits about poor people’ help children understand ‘what it’s like to be like that’. Use ‘Australian Idol format to make it more fun and relevant...’ (SI13.3a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: 2 students and teacher formed a panel and allocated a score out of 10 using scorecards like the television show ‘Dancing with the stars’ (no criteria given).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Jordan</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 1 (casual day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Birthday Train. Survey class members for birth dates, construct and display a class birthday calendar. Share stories about how birthdays are celebrated in your family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘I think it’s good for the kids to talk in front of the other kids...get confidence, to get experience with talking in front of a group and share their own experiences and see that some other kids are different to themselves’ (SI4.3b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: Content knowledge of their birth date, confidence in presenting to the class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Mark</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 3 (casual day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Circuits. Explore electricity through experimenting to make circuits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘They didn’t do many experiments in class, so it was something new for them’ (SI4.3a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: Observation of children at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Melinda</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 5 (Practicum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Critical interpretation. Read Jeannie Baker’s Window with a focus on symbolism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘getting kids to offer their perspective on things...they like talking about things that they know. I think if you can incorporate that into it, then that’s something positive, but otherwise I’m not experienced enough to answer any more’ (SI4.3c)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: none described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Nicole</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 2 (part time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Transport. Design and make transport using recyclable materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘seeing how other people think, put things together and their ideas of how to make things’ (SI13.3b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: none described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Sophie</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 5/6 composite (full time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Telling the news. Create a news program on natural disasters and social and global issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘so they have a better comprehension of what we are talking about not just learning definitions...understanding that it is to do with the world’ (SI13.3a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: none described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER: Terry</th>
<th>GRADE: Year 1 (Practicum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TASK: Experiment. Investigate liquid travelling the xylem and phloem of a celery stalk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIONALE: ‘I didn’t expect a lot, I just said, “Draw a picture of it and write what you see.” ‘ (SI28.2a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT: Marking work product for content knowledge</td>
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</table>
Reflected in Table 5.6 is a range of confidence levels, expertise and understanding of authentic learning experiences. Rationales for the tasks ranged from simple completion of the task, through social development, to attempts to teach flexibility of knowledge. As each early career teacher responded to the request to share an example of a task, they appeared unsure, perhaps even reluctant in fear of not being ‘right’.

For example, Jasmine began by confessing, ‘I think I stole it, it wasn’t even my idea’ (SI3.3a). Mark began his explanation with, ‘It wasn’t ideal’ (SI4.3a). And Nicole excused her lack of experience as a result of her demanding teaching load, ‘Um. So far, I haven’t done many lessons because I see so many classrooms’ (SI13.3b). Although Melinda appeared confident at the beginning of her response, she finished her description exclaiming, ‘I’m not experienced enough to answer any more! (laughs embarrassed)’ (SI4.3c).

Table 5.7 compares the tasks that the early career teachers described with Herrington and Oliver’s (2000) principles of authentic learning. This analysis reveals a limited understanding of authentic learning experiences, perhaps reflecting the emergent and somewhat fragile nature of these teachers’ professional identities.
Table 5.7 - Early career teachers’ initial teaching experiences examined through an authentic learning lens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life</th>
<th>complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life</th>
<th>multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored</th>
<th>expert performances and modelling of real processes</th>
<th>coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher &amp; others</th>
<th>collaborative construction of knowledge</th>
<th>reflection in isolation and collaboration</th>
<th>articulate growing understandings</th>
<th>authentic assessment of learning</th>
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<td>Bernice</td>
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Most evident from this table is a lack of complexity of the tasks. It appears that the tasks have a single outcome predetermined by each early career teacher. Further, opportunities for reflection on and articulation of new learning are limited. By limiting these opportunities and directing the children toward a predetermined goal, the teacher is able to control much of the direction of the learning. Perhaps this reflects reports in the literature about the preoccupation many early career teachers have with management, control and the mechanics of running the classroom day-to-day.
Interpretive summary

Evident in these initial data are the early career teachers’ feelings of uncertainty about what they bring to the school setting. Three years of teacher education have revealed to the early career teachers the complexity of teaching, but with only an emerging understanding of how they might participate in the school setting. It appears that these teachers know there is much to consider when planning learning experiences. However, specifically what these elements are and how they transfer into classrooms as quality teaching remains unclear.

What is clear is that each of the early career teachers demonstrated a strong desire to connect with their students and with the teaching communities into which they are moving. The concern for being considered ‘a teacher’ appears a driver of many decisions these early career teachers make about their practice. These can even be made in conflict with their existing beliefs and understandings about ‘good’ teaching as they are brought to question and challenge their existing beliefs and practices.
Part B. Teacher cases

Reported in Part B of Chapter Four are the experiences of four early career teachers as they engage with the professional development experiences in Phase Three of the inquiry. Further detail of each of the workshop sessions, including the activities that were planned and observations from field notes are included as Appendix I. The data are examined using the constant comparative method as the teachers engaged with the professional development activities designed in Phase Two that are underpinned by a model for authentic learning and teaching.

It is through these professional development experiences that the inquiry aims to provide opportunities for early career teachers to explore their own professional identity, to examine their understanding of authentic learning experiences and to reflect on the connection between the two.

In reporting this journey, four (4) of the teachers were selected as mini cases. These teachers were carefully selected after all data were collected and in the early stages of analysis. It was identified at this stage that the data gathered from four of the teachers were representative of the broader group of ten teachers. To allow for deep analysis and the thick description, four of these teachers became the sources of primary data. The participant data gathered from the remaining teachers formed secondary data sources. The selection of each of the four teachers is now justified.

Selecting early career teachers to report as mini-cases

Any of the ten early career teacher participants could have been selected as cases for this inquiry. Each of them exhibited growth in how they plan for authentic learning and each demonstrated increasing ability to articulate their beliefs about teaching and learning. However, the four selected teachers present particularly interesting data in relation to the second research question that explores the relationship between identity and planning for authentic learning. Furthermore, analysis of these data revealed important implications for teacher educators supporting the development of professional identity.
Choosing Terry

The authentic learning experience that Terry described at the end of Phase Three was one he had taught before. Changes to this new lesson reflected his developing understanding of authentic learning experiences and his role in facilitating these. Terry’s weblog postings described the tensions, challenges and successes he experienced throughout Phase Three and the ways that they impact his identity and therefore the lessons he designed.

Choosing Jordan

Jordan’s desire to teach, to ‘be a teacher’ and to enact the understandings developed at university is evident from the outset of Phase Three. Throughout the period of data collection, what became apparent was Jordan’s willingness to try a range of experiences and to explore becoming the type of teacher she aspires to be. Her openness in the data about the challenges and successes of her teaching provide rich data for understanding the relationship between her beliefs and the learning experiences she designed.

Choosing Sophie

Sophie’s data conveys a sense of busy-ness. Her reflections contain numerous references to the sense of chaos of the classroom, the communities from which her students come and her studies at university. Of particular interest to this inquiry is what sits beneath these sometimes frantic contributions. Sophie appears to protect her identity from the challenges of the professional development experiences through sometimes broad and quite superficial reflections and observations. This defensive behaviour potentially hindered the exploration of the nature of the relationship between one’s identity and the design of authentic learning experiences. However, Sophie’s case provides important insights into the ways that early career teachers like Sophie might be supported to becoming open to professional challenges and the development of identity.
Choosing Breanna

Breanna provides a useful case in understanding the relationship between the design of authentic learning experiences and the development of professional identity. Breanna had had more teaching experience than her early career teacher colleagues and, after two years of temporary and casual work, began to question her passion and commitment to teaching. As she engaged with a new teaching job that had the potential to become a permanent position, her reflections revealed rediscovery of this passion and a developing commitment to her professional identity. This translated to a reflection on the nature of the tasks she designed for her learners.

The cases of Terry, Jordan, Sophie and Breanna are now reported.

Terry

Background information

At the beginning of the inquiry, Terry indicated that he was working regularly as a casual teacher in South West Sydney, mainly in two schools. Terry identified the population at these schools as being of low socio economic status, highly multicultural with English as a second language for many students. Terry maintained this arrangement for casual teaching throughout the period of the inquiry.

Terry identified science, sport and computers as personal interests that support his teaching. His belief that it is important when working with children to ‘establish a relationship where there is respect and acceptance from both parties involved’ (WD29.5) is evidenced in his efforts to identify with them through their popular culture. For example, ‘it’s really good just to get to know them and find the in common things, like I say “I like The Simpsons and Star Wars” and they say, “This is better,”...’ (DI5.8).

Whilst not explicitly stated, from early in the inquiry Terry’s concept of himself as a teacher is apparent and filled with a sense of humour and adventure. He used analogies that drew on intertextual references to explore this identity, wearing his ‘trusty casual teacher
outfit’, (BP6.3) he is ‘kicking goals on the way to effective teaching moments’ (BP20.3), a ‘hero’ for the people. He wrote,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A short time ago, in a classroom not too far away...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MR WILLIAMS: A NEW HOPE</td>
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</table>

It is a time of unrest. An aging fleet of teachers is edging towards retirement and the need for new teachers to fill this void is apparent.

During the last 4 months one man was able to escape the safety net of university, armed with a teaching degree and new ideas, he begins his journey down the path of primary school teaching.

Pursued by Department of Education, Terry Williams uses his influences to take on new commitments and finds himself in a new role, custodian of quality teaching that can shape Australia's future... (BP6.3)

Terry’s engagement with the planned professional development experiences and subsequent informal interactions are examined through *a model of authentic teaching and learning* (Appendix G).

**Theme 1: Professional responsibility**

As Terry explored his professional responsibilities, tensions were revealed between his beliefs and his actions. His reflections suggest a growing awareness of the complex nature of teaching and the multifaceted problems with which he is confronted. Throughout the inquiry, Terry explored two areas of responsibility:

- **Designing and implementing ‘effective’ learning opportunities**
- **Making informed decisions**

*Designing and implementing ‘effective’ learning opportunities*

Terry’s reflections reveal not only confidence in his ability to design and facilitate “effective” learning experiences (BP20.3; BP17.4) but also the desire to provide them, ‘I try to always give students the opportunity to achieve deep understanding’ (BP17.4).
Through his reflections on the professional development experiences in weblog postings, Terry acknowledged the role of reflection in evaluating the success of his lessons,

I am not perfect, not all of my planned goals have led to effective teaching moments. However, I see what caused the problems. In most cases I tend to just follow a set of outcomes or activities that need to be done. Rather than putting my own spin on things, I just follow what is given to me, making it easier. (BP20.3)

However, Terry identified certain tensions that potentially inhibit his ability to deliver, especially in his role as a casual teacher. He observed that a classroom teacher’s position empowers them to set lessons to be completed in their absence and he is wary of making changes that may disadvantage the learners in this classroom,

...I want to provide the students with quality learning, which I can provide by completing my own set work, I find as a new casual teacher I don't want to rock the boat...the work they set for the students to complete...is integral to their progression through the unit of work. (BP20.3)

Making informed decisions
Terry’s reflections initially demonstrate frustration at being stifled of creativity and autonomy in the classroom. However, his later analysis of his own weblog reflections about professional identity further addressed his concern about depriving children of important learning experiences. He summarised the tension felt about his professional responsibility,

In order to be a responsible teacher I will need to meet outcomes (Blog E) and follow the six key learning areas of the NSW board of studies (Blog F), just some of the requirements of a teacher of the NSW department of education and training. If I fail to follow the set requirements, I will not know the fundamental skills to be taught, which are needed to succeed at and beyond school, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy and I will not be confident that I am delivering the most important learning for students (BOS, 2004). If I do follow the set requirements, students will gain the fundamental skills in education, enabling a strong and
prosperous future. (WD29.5, References to Blogs E and F and BOS, 2004 were present in Terry’s original text)

Terry posed a question that demonstrates his ongoing analysis of the problem, ‘Do I complete work set by other teachers, keeping them happy or do I use my own work, keeping the students happy?’ (BP3.4). A comment posted by a fellow early career teacher in response to this reflection affirmed Terry’s dilemma and concluded that ‘...until we firmly cement our place in the school we are kind of restricted to what the teacher says’ (BP27.3).

The time that Terry has taken to explore his professional responsibility appears to have provided him with opportunities to reflect on the ways that he perceives this element of his identity and the inhibitors and enablers on his ability to be ‘professionally responsible’.

**Theme 2: Considering authentic learning**

Opportunities to explore the nature of authentic learning experiences, to investigate the teaching of others and to draw connections between a teacher’s theory and their practice were provided through the professional development experiences. These appear to have revealed to Terry a range of elements that influence the ways that teachers work in their classrooms. An understanding of these appears to have led Terry to reconsider his own beliefs and the ways that they are reflected in his practice. These findings are examined now in connection with the categories:

- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning tasks
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

**External pressures and accountability**

I need to be accepted in schools...I can often push quality teaching out the door in order to gain acceptance. (WD29.5)
Throughout the period of data collection with the early career teachers, Terry’s classroom experiences seemed to increase his awareness of the range of factors for consideration beyond the classroom setting. Perhaps because of his role as a casual teacher, these external pressures centre around:

- Expectations of staff
- Participating in the teaching community
- Being liked at the school

Opportunities for reflection on the issues relating to theory and experience drew Terry to reflect on the ways he attempted to maximise the likelihood of pleasing others, being accepted and being liked through certain teaching behaviours.

**Expectations of staff**

Whilst Terry understood that he is free to make decisions about teaching within the parameters of a casual teaching day, his reflections revealed a tension between the advantages of facilitating his own learning experiences and the expectations of the regular classroom teacher,

> Now I understand that I could take a stand and use my own set of work in classrooms but I find this could be counterproductive...I want to make good impressions in schools, which could come from my lessons and different teaching styles. However, if I use my own work I will fail to complete the work set by the teacher. The teacher may become annoyed that particular work is incomplete. (BP27.3)

The need to be employed for further casual teaching days appears to drive the decisions that Terry makes, but only for now, ‘When I get my own class (often the dream of many pre-service and casual teachers) I will…’ (BP3.4).  

**Participating in the teaching community**

Through reflections on subject readings and weblog postings in connection with his own experience, Terry identified and discussed his desire to be considered a capable teacher who is part of the teaching community, but that, in doing so, he must challenge existing
beliefs. This theme is repeatedly visited as Terry clearly identified disparity between his behaviour and his beliefs about teaching.

I have the pre-conception that I don't need help with my teaching because I am fresh from university and that I need to focus on behaviour management... the article (McCormack et al., 2004) shed light on my own pre-occupation on behaviour management and my inability to seek help with problems. I need to begin to look beyond behaviour management as the key to effective teaching and begin asking for help from teachers that already have the wisdom I seek, enabling my professional development to continue beyond university studies. (WD15.5)

In connection with a later reading (Townsend, 2005), Terry reiterated,

I need to ask for help in the school setting. While I may already know some established knowledge from university studies, I need to begin asking for help from teachers that already have the wisdom I seek, enabling my professional development to further grow. (WD15.5)

Terry’s reflections later in the inquiry continued to examine the issue of feedback and collaboration with staff,

To enable professional development I will need to look at gaining feedback from my teaching or even using the idea of teacher wisdom stories to further build my funds of knowledge in my teaching. (WD29.5)

Terry appears to be committed to active and successful participation within the teaching community.
Chapter 5

*Being liked at the school*

Terry drew on his own weblog postings as well as comments posted by myself and other early careers teacher as he explored his desire to be liked at school. Terry appeared to draw confidence from and take comfort in the similarities he observed among his peers. Terry’s analysis of being liked demonstrated that he had drawn on information from across the professional development experiences. The initial reflection was posted in his first weblog,

> As a teacher I am hearing through the grapevine that I am a "cool" teacher and the students like having "Mr W" as a teacher. While this is great to hear (and also boosts my ego) I am worried that I lack some ability in controlling a class. (BP6.3)

I responded to this posting,

> Control seems to be a dominating feature of the worries of teachers early in their careers - there seems to be that desire to be liked (or to be thought 'cool') pitted against having control. (BP6.3)

While Terry did not respond immediately to this posting, he drew both his comments and mine into his reflections later in the inquiry, along with a comment about students from a fellow early career teacher in the subject, ‘they’re not really taking me seriously’ (posted 20/4/08) and another who reflected on the importance of developing relationships with students (posted 21/4/08).

He reflected on my posting about issues of control, ‘The...comment left by one of my subject coordinators in response to my need to establish a relationship with students...shows that I am not the only person worried about the relationships created with students’ (WD29.5). And then he drew on the comments of his peers, ‘After observing the relationships between students and myself, my peers have the same need to establish a relationship where there is respect and acceptance from both parties involved’ (WD29.5).

Reflections on his issues of respect, control and acceptance suggest an uncertainty in Terry about the way that he wants to be seen as a teacher not only by his students, but within his
own perceptions too. However, showing through all of these comments, again is his commitment to making the necessary changes to be part of the community.

**Engaging learners and learning**

Terry indicated a belief that he is capable of engaging students for deep learning through:

- *Careful planning*
- *Focus on the learning process*

**Careful planning**

As Terry reflected on the issues of engaging learners, he identified lessons that were less successful than others. He concluded that his planning and application to the teaching are at the heart of this decreased engagement. Terry explained that it was his interpretation of the outcomes and content of the lesson that attracted the children to engaging in the task whilst simultaneously allowing him to fulfil the demands on the teacher.

I am able to set tasks that I think will be interesting and that the students will be engaged in. I plan for outcomes to be met and for the students to take some knowledge or understanding from the experience...I see that when I plan goals for learning, I need to put my own spin on things and not take the easy way out...I need to plan lessons that engage and at the same time allow my goals to be met.

(BP20.3)

But it is the question that Terry posed for himself later in the inquiry that really demonstrated deeper reflection on learning and engagement. Having explained in some detail the children’s interest, enthusiasm and excitement about an ongoing science experiment with celery and water that he facilitated during a practicum experience, Terry asked himself, ‘But how did I know this was deep learning?’ (BP17.4). He responded to his own question,

The students kept coming back to experiment, asking what will happen, even transferred the knowledge to other areas, e.g. they asked if big trees did the same
thing... the students were actively involved in the lesson, they enjoyed it and transferred the knowledge from the lesson to real-life situations. (BP17.4)

Whilst this teaching experience had occurred some two years earlier, reflecting on the success of the lesson allowed Terry to analyse his own understanding of deep learning.

Focus on the process
Terry articulated a discrepancy he has observed between teachers’ beliefs and their behaviour as he reflected on a reading about the use of wall displays in classrooms (Labbo, Montero, & Eakle, 2001). He began by sharing his understanding of the ways that teachers focus on the development of students’ understanding and progress toward outcomes through the process of engaging with learning experiences. The discrepancy for Terry, then, lay in his observation that teachers tend to display completed work, that is, the final products of a task rather than a display of the process of the learning.

Most of the time...the teachers choose the final product to display. This I find strange, as teachers we continually assess students, looking at outcomes being met throughout learning, not focusing on the final product and whether or not the student can produce a complete final product that advertises their ability. (WD15.5)

This opportunity to reflect has altered Terry’s viewpoint, ‘For my teaching, this journal article has left me looking at classroom displays from a different point of view’ (WD15.5).

Community give and take
Prior to participating in the professional development experiences, Terry observed that children’s role in connection with the community was to, ‘understand their rights and responsibilities’ and that the teacher’s role was ‘...teaching them manners and stuff like that’ (SI28.2a). In subsequent reflections during the inquiry, he demonstrated growth in his beliefs about the role of community in children’s learning. Terry explored the people who make up this community and the potential for improving the lives of his learners:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Community members as role models

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Identifying stakeholders

In reflection on a subject reading (Townsend, 2005), Terry observed that school and schooling involves more than the staff and students. In identifying the stakeholders in a child’s education, Terry was able to make connections between people who may be interested in the learning of the students and their potential to contribute to the school community, ‘I see school as a community affair, that needs parents and carers, the community and other stakeholders to create a better school ‘ (WD15.5).

During workshops, the early career teachers were asked to reflect and journal about a specific student with whom they had worked as part of practicum or as an early career teacher. In reflecting on their needs, interests and strengths, Terry was able to identify particular ways to support the learning of that student. Terry observed the role of community in developing the ability of the Year 3 student to interact with his peers in socially appropriate ways. Terry identified opportunities for public speaking, for formal and informal sharing of knowledge about his out of school interests and operating as an ‘expert’ in teaching others as important in developing the young boy’s self esteem and raising his profile among his peers (WD29.5b).

Community members as role models

As Terry’s involvement in the inquiry was coming to a close, he shared ideas for where his teaching could ‘go next’. Terry expressed an interest in a sports based unit of work that he had seen in another university subject. The focus was on Rugby Union, the history of the game and its legends. The unit made connections between the footballers and other legends and historical events, such as Simpson and his Donkey. Terry’s reflections placed value on the opportunity for the students to explore the term ‘hero’ and moving beyond the superficial to an understanding of what real heroes are,

TERRY: Looking at rugby league or rugby union, they (the children) know the better players. Going into schools up home, they are “Who’s your favourite footballer? What’s your favourite team?” So I guess using that they can see **what the best players are**, by being able to **link that with other sort of qualities that other heroes have**, like Simpson, people like that.
RESEARCHER: How can you approach the negative side of sporting heroes with the drunkenness and so on? Sometimes they are not good role models.

TERRY: I think discussing it...maybe showing problems and also showing **players who don’t have those problems that are the heroes**. And making comparisons, asking “Why is he your favourite, is it only because he’s good on the field? Or is he your favourite because he goes out and helps the community?” and stuff like that. There’s always the ones who are building community themselves. (SI23.10b, emphasis added).

**‘Good’ teaching**

Terry’s description of classroom activity revealed an emerging understanding of the value of ‘good’ teaching. His reflections implied a developing perception of explicit teaching and the engagement of literate practices as a means for building:

- **Building relationships**
- **Building knowledge and understandings**

**Building relationships**

Terry explained that he begins casual teaching days with a focus on building relationships with the children. The tasks he described draw on common literate practices, such as letter writing. He explained that he begins the day by reading a letter to introduce himself to new classes (SI23.10b; DI5.8). He justified this decision thus,

…they really want to hear you!...I wrote about my family, I wrote about my brothers and my pets at home and what football team I go for... They relate so much to the letter, like “I’ve got a brother too”. And I like that at the start of the day, it’s really good just to get to know them. (DI5.8)

Terry explained that he then invites the children to respond with a letter and/or picture in return. Terry described it as an efficient way to get to know the children’s names, something he indicated is important in developing rapport, as well as their interests, which
he then tries to incorporate into teaching for that day. Terry explained how he rounds off
the lesson, ‘...and then I read them a story’ (DI5.8).

Building knowledge and understandings
In describing the activities that he designed, Terry referred to the use of oral language to
explore, challenge and reach new understandings. He identified discussion as important
during collaboration to promote problem solving (DI5.8; WD29.5b) as well as to achieve
new learning and its transfer to other settings. He responded to prompting to reflect on the
reasons he engaged the children in discussion about the learning process,

...they had to think about taller structures being stronger and made of stronger
materials... Just to keep them thinking I guess... to extend what they have done
rather than just that’s it, finished, but to get them thinking more and so they go “Oh
we might be able to do this next time” or “If we had more time we could have done
this”. So a more cognitive part of it. (SI23.10b)

Terry’s reflections reveal a growing understanding of the ways that teachers use ‘good’
teaching to build knowledge. More specifically, present in his data too, are observations of
the role of literacy in learning and in building relationships. This knowledge is directly
observable in the development of particular learning experiences for his students that are
designed to use common literacy experiences, such as receiving and writing a letter to
develop both relationships and knowledge in his learners.

Theme 3: The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning
The Straw Towers activity (Appendix Q) was designed for a single casual day. That is, it
can be begun and completed within one day. Terry identified that he had used this task
earlier in the year with a younger group of children. He made adjustments to the lesson in
response to his reflections on the design of the task, his own teaching and the response from
the students.
Table 5.8 - Terry’s Towers

| Authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life | - The task makes strong connections to such home based activities as Lego construction with which many children are familiar.
- Knowledge of structures, support and design are developed in this task through experimentation, trial and error |
| --- | --- |
| Opportunities for exploration, they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life | - Although the teacher provided the materials, he did not have a preconceived idea of the ‘right’ way to complete the task. The groups were free to explore the problem and to identify the possibilities using the resources at hand.
- The complexity of the task is limited in this example by the time constraint of a casual teaching day. |
| Access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation | - Stimulus images provided models for the possibilities, whilst the children acted as models for each other as certain processes were found to be successful or unsuccessful. |
| Coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners | - The teacher encouraged the children to trial their ideas, but he was still available to facilitate reflection on the process for new understandings to develop.
- An existing body of knowledge was revealed as one group had completed a similar activity as part of an inter school competition. |
| Opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored | - The children took on different roles within the group as they explored a range of approaches to the problem.
- The classroom community allowed different perspectives to be trialled as ideas were shared and ‘borrowed’ among the groups.
- Working on the task as a group as well as participating in a reflective whole class discussion supported the development of new understandings about not only the construction of the tower, but about processes of problems solving, collaboration and application to new learning. |
| Opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge | - Reflection was evident throughout the process as the children worked within their group, presented their ideas for consideration and then reflected on the broader process as a whole class.
- As the towers grew, the children had opportunities to identify successful and unsuccessful approaches. Through discussion, they were able to make connections to the steel frames that builders use for construction. |
| Authentic assessment of learning | - Assessment was integral to the task, as a successful tower indicated the solving of problems and the collaboration of a group. Further discussion allowed the teacher to make informal inferences about the learning as the children discussed their learning. |
Terry acknowledged the value in having opportunities to read, reflect, challenge and consider his understandings of what it is to teach in his final task for the professional development workshop. In his final workshop task, he explained,

The time spent throughout this synthesis has provided myself with many insights into my teaching, ones that I would have never thought of without the need to make the blog entries for this synthesis. At the start I found it difficult to reflect and be critical of my teaching, but from working through writer's block, I have been able to see that teaching is a complex occupation, one that takes time and effort in order to be most effective. (WD29.5)

**Interpretive comment**

The professional development experiences appear to have supported Terry to achieve deep understanding about himself as a teacher. He engaged enthusiastically with the learning experiences designed for each workshop. He was observed to be particularly interested in the viewpoints of others within workshop discussions and professional dialogue. Terry posted many weblogs over the course of the inquiry and responded to the postings of others. These actions contributed to the rapport and open communication achieved in the workshop setting.

From the ways that Terry engaged with the workshop activities, an inference could be drawn that this style of teaching supported his own learning style and fulfilled his needs for collaboration and growth. He reflected on his professional identity quite specifically during formal tasks as he considered the ways that his beliefs about teaching aligned (or didn’t) with members of school communities. Furthermore, informal interactions and reflections indicated an increasing confidence in himself as ‘teacher’.

Evident in Terry’s identity is a commitment to ‘belonging’ to the community of teachers. He described the range of ways he has attempted to engage with teaching colleagues. He also described the ways that his identity is challenged by the practices of others. Terry
appeared especially challenged by the actions and decisions of more experienced colleagues and seemed to expect that they would be purveyors of quality teaching.

Along with the theme of ‘belonging’, it is also evident that Terry values the building of strong relationships with children. His childhood experiences in a low socio economic community seem to provide the impetus to reach out and connect with others in similar communities. He acknowledges the important role that local communities play in the lives of children and appears to embrace this as a basis for the design of authentic learning experiences.

Terry decided not to return to one of the schools where he had been casually employed. This was in response to his frustration about the organisation of the school, the types of learning experiences he observed there and the teachers’ interactions with the children. He described them as ‘unorganised’ (DT5.8), ‘a couple of classes that were a bit sort of… they seemed feral’ (SI23.10b) and that the teachers ‘seem to set work that the students find boring, without making anything interesting’ (BP3.4). He finished this observation with a question, ‘Does the teacher do this because they feel casual teachers are inadequate? Or that casual teachers are just glorified babysitters!!!’ (BP3.4).

His decision to discontinue working at this school possibly reflects his growing confidence in his own abilities as a teacher to build relationships and to plan, design and facilitate authentic learning experiences.
Jordan

*Background information*

At the beginning of the inquiry, Jordan indicated that she was working as a casual teacher at various locations throughout the Illawarra region. Each school varied in size, population and cultural make up, providing her with a range of teaching experiences upon which to reflect. In May 2008, approximately half way through the period of the inquiry, Jordan secured a fulltime teaching position as a temporary contract until the end of the year. She was allocated a Kindergarten/Year 1 composite class in a small school in the Northern Illawarra area.

Evident in the data is Jordan’s sense of herself as a teacher, both her strong desire to teach and her concern for the children. She explained, ‘all I wanted to do was to work as a teacher… I just want to learn more and I think I learn more in the classroom than anywhere else’ (BP13.3). Accompanying this is empathy and respect for the children in her care. In one weblog posting, Jordan described an incident where the children’s behaviour presented significant challenges for the teacher. Despite their unpleasant and inappropriate behaviour, her focus remained on the children’s personal safety, especially for the child who had scaled the storeroom shelves. ‘...what do you do? He could hurt himself’ (BP13.3).

Jordan’s experiences throughout the period of data collection are examined through *a model of authentic teaching and learning* (Appendix G):

**Theme 1: Professional responsibility**

Jordan’s professional responsibilities featured regularly in her reflections throughout Phase Three, revealing growth in confidence, understanding and her ability to respond to the challenges she identified. These data are reported thus:

- *Being prepared and equipped for the task of teaching*
- *The classroom as a reflection of professional identity*
- *Being prepared and equipped for the task of teaching*
Jordan’s reflections reveal ongoing concern about her ability to cope as a teacher and the accumulation of the necessary skills and knowledge to respond efficiently to the diverse challenges of teaching. In engaging in professional development workshop tasks, she quoted from a subject reading in justification of her fears,

> No matter how comprehensive a preservice program may be, it only lays the foundation and it is when an early career teacher enters their own classroom that they really begin to learn about the complexity of being a teacher. (McCormack et al., 2004, p. 2)

In early weblog postings and reflective workshop tasks, Jordan described a range of occasions that left her feeling ill equipped to meet the demands of her job. Revealed in later data, however, is greater confidence in her ability to cope. She attributed this to study, experience and reflection on that experience. The following example provides a clear demonstration as she revisited the event over the course of the inquiry. She began by describing the classroom environment at a previous practicum placement,

> A primary school with majority Aboriginal population in a low socio-economic area, only about 17 students in the class… 2 boys were fighting and swearing “f” words to each other, and one of them had a pair of scissors chasing the other around…One of students decided to go to the teacher’s storeroom and climb the shelves… up about 4 shelves I asked him to get down he screamed at me “NOOOOOOO”… I had a student in timeout and put her name on the board… she went and rubbed it away and so I told her I didn’t need to write it down I could remember it, she was so angry at this and screamed at me that I was a bi*#h! This was the worst thing a child has ever said to me. (BP13.3)

In her initial reflections, Jordan questioned both her ability and desire to teach,

> This was something that I was not prepared for when heading into the classroom...But my experience absolutely blew me away. I was not sure that this career was for me......Well it really hit me... I was almost in tears at lunchtime...Is this really what I want? (BP13.3)
Later, as Jordan reflected on her journey of teaching in connection with theory and practice, she acknowledged her development,

If I had that day over again, I would of course approach it differently. My knowledge now of children with behavioural problems and special needs would facilitate in the control of this class. Knowledge does come with experience, and even I can say that now, with a further year of study and my experience so far... There is a variety of learning styles...and it is important that I know how to treat all students fairly and give them opportunities to succeed. (WD29.5)

Other areas where Jordan’s reflections demonstrated a growing confidence in her ability included assessment and reporting to parents (DT3.9; SI12.11a) and matching learning experiences to students’ abilities, interests and limitations (DT3.9; SI12.11a).

*The classroom as a reflection of one’s professional identity*

Jordan reflected not only on what type of teacher she aspires to be, but also how this is revealed through her teaching decisions and professional behaviour. As with her reflections on being equipped for teaching, Jordan demonstrated growing confidence over time in her understanding of her professional identity, who she is as a teacher and therefore the sort of teaching experiences that will reflect this. Jordan’s initial response to securing full time employment was one of nervous excitement. She enthused in a weblog posting, ‘I want to make the room reflect what type of teacher I am and also what sort of environment I would like to work in. I’m looking forward to this new beginning and this exciting new challenge for me! I start Monday! Any tips?’ (BP15.5).

In a more formal work document, Jordan articulated her belief about the role of a professional identity, ‘I believe that the classroom environment reflects what type of teacher you are and how you want your students to feel in their learning environment’ (WD15.5).

Jordan recognises the importance of nurturing the development of one’s professional identity, acknowledging the need for growth,
I felt I needed to find my teaching identity when given my own class for the rest of the year. I felt this was my chance to prove what teacher I really am, after years of dreaming about having your own class and what it will look like and what “you” will teach them. (WD29.5)

This attention paid to the development of her professional identity has observable gains in the ways that she talks about the type of teacher she is in later reflections. Jordan described its value for both teacher and students, ‘I am gradually putting my “changes” in place and I am finding out some interesting things about my students and myself as a teacher’ (SI12.11a).

Opportunities to reflect on her responsibilities and the beliefs that underpin her teaching appear support Jordan’s development as she immerses herself in classroom teaching.

**Theme 2: Considering authentic learning**

Jordan was observed throughout the period of data collection to engage enthusiastically in the professional development experiences on offer. As Jordan moved from casual to full time employment, a shift became evident as her focus turned to continuity in teaching and on the students’ ongoing learning. The professional development experiences allowed for this more complex focus on teaching. Findings from data collected from Jordan are examined now in connection with the categories:

- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning tasks
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

**External pressures and accountability**

Jordan’s new teaching position presented challenges not considered when she was a casual teacher. Throughout the professional development experiences, Jordan was encouraged to engage in reflection on the relevant issues for her teaching, and it was here that she was
able to acknowledge the pressure, identify possible responses and reflect on the responses that she had tried. She identified the following perspectives on the pressures she felt in her teaching:

- *Expectations of parents*
- *Participation in the teaching community*
- *Assessment and reporting*

*Expectations of parents*

Jordan expressed surprise at the close attention she received from the parents in her new full time teaching role. She described the parents as both ‘intimidating’ (BP22.5) and ‘demanding’ (DT3.9). Pleasing the parents remained high on Jordan’s agenda throughout the inquiry and she reflected regularly on ways to involve them in classroom life and to develop rapport. She explained this approach,

> As I continue to learn and grow as a teacher I realise that the relationships you form with your students and in particular their parents affect the way the child learns and their behavior in class. (WD29.5)

The importance she placed on the parents’ opinions is evident in reflections about the work she set in her classroom. She said when justifying a teaching decision, for example, ‘I liked the home task, and the parents liked it’ (SI12.11a). The importance of the relationship was further revealed in Jordan’s final interview in this inquiry. She had explained that her contract would not be renewed for the following year as the permanent teacher intended to return to the school and therefore she must leave. The following excerpt from the final interview transcript captures her response,

> RESEARCHER: So the person whose position you’re in is coming back?
> JORDAN: Yes, it’s a shame.
> RESEARCHER: It is disappointing, I’m sure the staff is sorry to lose you.
> JORDAN: Yes! And the parents, they’re upset as well (SI12.11a).
Jordan appears to feel comfortable with what she has learned about the role of parents in her students’ learning and even proud of the progress she has made in identifying the need for and achieving a good rapport.

**Participation in the teaching community**

Jordan indicated that participating in the teaching community is necessary for two reasons: more experienced teachers are valuable for the professional development of less experienced teachers, and the staff as a whole play a role in the social life of the school. She draws on findings and arguments in the literature from the professional development experiences to develop her own argument for support of early career teachers, posing such questions as, ‘How will you learn from experienced teachers without talking to them???’ (BP20.3), and, ‘Who am I supposed to ask for guidance or support?’ (WD15.5).

Engagement with the professional development workshop set readings appears to confirm her belief that more experienced teachers, particularly executive staff are responsible for the mentoring and development of early career teachers.

Further analyses of Jordan’s reflections revealed her desire to be included not only in the professional business but also the social lives of the teachers. She holds fond memories of practicum experience where she enjoyed the staffroom camaraderie,

> It was great! Laughter, conversations about home life and family.... It allowed me to get to know many teachers on more of a personal level. I made friends and I am still friends with these teachers now. (BP20.3)

She appears certain that strong relationships with these teachers are key to her own development as a teacher, ‘I find it crucial for teachers to “socialise.” If you are working as a team, it is important to “bond” and get to know each other on a personal level as well as a professional’ (WD15.5).

**Assessment and reporting**

One professional development workshop took an explicit focus on assessment of student learning (PDW7). The early career teachers discussed the assessment strategies with which
they were familiar and there was a general resolve in the room that such strategies become a teacher’s focus when they are employed in permanent and full time positions rather than as a casual teacher (WO24.4). As Jordan moved from casual teaching to her full time position with Kindergarten/Year One, this became evident in her reflections. In fact, the first time assessment of student learning emerged in the data was after her appointment to the new school (WD15.5). Jordan reflected on her approach to assessment following some experience and reflection on the results and concluded that the purpose of the assessment is for the monitoring of learning as well as reporting.

Well I’ve changed the way I plan, really. Because you go through...what all of your students know already, what most of your students know and what some of your students know. And you assess them at the start of the unit or something and then you try to meet those outcomes throughout the unit...There’s this thing, tracking and monitoring, so you write down your indicator and then you can as you go mark off if they’ve met it or how far if they’re exceeding past that for report time. Now, I can actually go back to those monitoring sheets and see where they’re up to and it’s just easier to know where every kid is, really. If they’re at different levels, it doesn’t matter because if they’re beyond, I’ve put “beyond” on that tracking sheet. (SI12.11a)

Reflection on the process and purpose of assessment appears to have relieved some of the pressure Jordan felt as she became more confident in gathering and manipulating the information required for assessment within her role as a fulltime teacher. Interestingly, Jordan’s reflections on assessment not only reveal knowledge gained, but also knowledge yet to come. Indeed, although she had engaged the children in a range of diverse learning experiences and she had acknowledged a sophisticated approach to assessment, she still felt compelled to give a formal assessment task,

...well I handed a sheet as well that had a proforma that they had to fill in. “This is what I found. This is where I found it.” On an A4 sheet and they brought that back. (SI12.11a)
Engaging learners and learning

You can see when learning occurs, but how do you know when it is good?

(WD15.5)

Jordan identified student engagement as an important part of reflection. She identified the need to focus not only on the learning experiences a teacher provides, but also on the responses observed in the learners. Jordan shared the following perspectives on engaging learners in learning experiences:

- **Children’s needs**
- **Teacher knowledge**

*Children’s needs*

Jordan indicated during the inquiry that she valued the use of technology in meeting children’s needs and engaging their interest in learning. As one of the professional development experiences, Justin (one of the experienced teacher participants from Phase One of the inquiry) delivered a presentation about the use of computer technology for engaging learners in the classroom (PDW6). Jordan’s weblog posting entitled, ‘Technology...Don’t be scared! TECHNOLOGY IS GREAT!’ (BP24.4) revealed confidence and enthusiasm for the use of technology in classroom learning experiences. She enthused,

After the lecture on technology...it made me soooo excited about using it in the classroom... Technology is very important to our students. It is imperative for children to have knowledge about technology and to be able to use it confidently.

(BP24.4)

In fact, her confidence drove her further to adopt an advisory role with her peers, ‘Please don’t be scared teachers!!! It will only get easier!’ (BP24.4). Such was her confidence in this area of teaching.

Jordan also reflected on engagement through meeting children’s other needs. She identified a range of ways that teachers can ensure they are meeting children’s needs. These include, ‘hands-on learning experiences’ (BP13.3), work aimed at ‘their level’ of
ability (WD29.5; DT3.9) and opportunities to ‘improve on’ their existing skills and knowledge’ (DT3.9). Jordan suggested that the students’ level of engagement will ‘be evident in their work, behaviour and attitude towards learning’ (WD15.5). A further element for engaging children, Jordan explained, was the provision of time to share and celebrate their achievements,

JORDAN: It’s just good to let the other kids hear what other people have written about the same thing or just share, they like reading out their work, instead of me, like I don’t just read it out. I get them to read it out and they like it.
RESEARCHER: It’s fun?
JORDAN: Yep
RESEARCHER: What other benefits can you think of for that extended sharing time?
JORDAN: Just the confidence. It gives them the motivation to finish as well (DT3.9).

Teacher knowledge

Similar to other reflections about the role of the teacher, Jordan’s reflections about teacher knowledge and engagement of learners centred on the need for the teacher to ‘know’ what to do. She warned, ‘...a simple mistake by grouping the children incorrectly could cause a learning activity not to work’ (WD15.5) and challenged others, ‘If you as their teacher are unable to confidently provide learning activities, how are they supposed to learn!!!!’ (BP24.4).

Further reflections identify aspects of learning Jordan believes necessary for consideration if children are to be engaged in the learning experiences teachers design:

- Student grouping: ‘There are some positive and negatives on grouping strategies. Ability groups are good because like minds work together, challenge each other and the work is at their level. There are also some negatives on ability groups, you need to ensure students are assessed correctly and in the right group and need to reassess to watch their progress’ (WD15.5)
- The purpose of the lesson: ‘If students are unaware of “why” they are doing a certain activity, they may not be motivated or engaged in the learning to start with’ (WD15.5)
- Teacher organisation: ‘Lessons need to be organised and well structured and introduced correctly’ (WD15.5)
- Fostering independence: ‘Let them have a go. Just let them try and see what they can do. Give them ideas, but don’t force it on them, so just see what they can do and that’s how I do it’ (SI12.11a).

The opportunity to consider her own experiences in connection with the literature and the experiences of others within the professional development experiences appears to have supported Jordan’s understanding of the complexity of engaging learners. Further, it has revealed Jordan’s sense of deep responsibility for the engagement of her learners.

**Community give and take**

Prior to participating in the professional development experiences, Jordan made no observations within the collected baseline data about children’s learning in connection with the community beyond the school setting. In her final interview, through discussion about the learning activities she designed for her Kindergarten/Year 1 students, she demonstrated an emerging awareness of the potential for give and take between the community and the classroom. Through a discussion about a unit of work on *Mini Beasts* (which is discussed later in this case), she talked about the students’ learning in terms of:

- Developing connections between home and school
- Taking learning beyond the classroom

*Developing connections between home and school*

The development of connections between home and school relates to Jordan’s earlier reflections on the need to build relationships with parents. She described the homework she set for the children as part of their exploration of *Mini Beasts.*

> We did a nature walk around the school but then I wanted them to do one at home. I wanted to see what they could find at home... I liked the home task, and the
parents liked it because they came home with something, But I like them going home and doing something with a parent, not every night, not at kindy level, I don’t think, but to take a task home to do I think it’s good for the relationship at home.

(SI12.11a)

The opportunity to build this ‘relationship at home’ implies not only the child/parent bond, but also the quality of the school/home connection.

*Taking learning beyond the classroom.*

Whilst Jordan’s early reflections indicated a somewhat narrow view of learning in the classroom, her perspective observably broadened as she considered the purpose of learning and the potential for a range of audiences for her learners throughout the inquiry. For example, her students had created digital texts whose content reflected their understanding of a science concept. These were uploaded to ‘the teacher tube thing’ (SI12.11a), a repository for such texts, providing the children with a genuine audience for their work.

In making further connections between their classroom learning and knowledge needed for participation in the community, Jordan described her rationale for the range of activities she designed for the *Mini Beasts* unit. She explained the power of the task she had designed, ‘it’s real; they’re going to come across it. [And] They know what it is...’ (SI12.11a). A connection can be made here, too, to earlier observations about Jordan’s concern for the health and safety of the learners in her care. That is, by developing their knowledge of *Mini Beasts* and the characteristics of each, they are able to make good decisions about how to respond safely when they come across one.

Jordan appears to have developed greater awareness of the role of learning in the community and the ways that children can be both consumers and producers of knowledge as she reflects on and responds to the challenges she faces.
‘Good’ teaching

Jordan’s reflections on ‘good’ teaching demonstrate her increasing perception of its importance for her learners. Her reflections drew on the elements of reading, writing, talking and listening as she described the ways that the quality of her teaching affects a range of learning experiences in her classroom. She described ‘good’ teaching from the perspectives of:

- Knowing the students
- Creating a supportive learning environment

**Knowing the students**

Jordan appears to be of the opinion that knowing her students is closely associated with understanding their skills in literacy. For example, when asked at an interview, ‘What are some of the great things that are happening in your classroom? I mean socially, what are you loving?’ (DT3.9), she answered,

I love every day really, the kids are changing so much, they’ve just grown so much since I’ve been there, you know they’re changing reading levels and… it’s just good even to assess them and they go up a [reading] level, they’re just so happy. It’s good. (DT3.9)

Further, she identified her knowledge of a student’s reading and writing ability as a powerful indicator of broader knowledge for use in future planning,

writing and reading…is a big indicator of where they are… if they can put together a sentence for starters… spacing the words apart, anything, just putting words down on paper… when you can read it and see that it makes sense…not just copying off mine. (SI12.11a)

With her knowledge of the children, Jordan demonstrated that she is able to take risks with their learning. She talked about her approach to independent writing time,

I mean I can’t write for them, I don’t know, I try to let them have a go because I know that most of them, if they were to just sit next to me they could tell me exactly
what to write but they just don’t put it on paper...[and] I’m always there to help. (SI12.11a)

These are interesting perspectives on knowing children. Jordan articulated their literacy learning as an indicator of their happiness in one example, and as a way to build their independence in another. The ‘knowing’ that Jordan described appears to be a combination of development as both social and literate individuals and that this is achieved through ‘good’ teaching.

Creating a supportive learning environment.
Knowing the students is closely connected to the creation of an environment for learning. Throughout the professional development experiences, Jordan identified goals for herself in creating a stimulating environment both physically and academically for the students. For example, during professional reading, she reflected on the ways that teachers in Lapp, Flood and Goss’ (2000) research supported writing in their classrooms. Declaring their approach ‘an excellent idea especially for the teaching of literacy’, she drew on an example from the reading to support her view.

An example in the text was the invitational atmosphere created with the use of pillows, throw rugs, bright carpets, colourful charts, photos of children, self portraits and displays of multiple aspects of student work and interests. (WD15.5).

Jordan took this idea to her classroom, as revealed in the following excerpt from field notes at the final interview. It describes a reading corner in Jordan’s K/1 classroom,

In one corner, a fireplace has been covered over and replaced with a brightly coloured backing board. The board, mantelpiece and surrounds are covered with children’s work. The topic for this display is Mini Beasts. The children’s work has taken many forms: posters, books and pamphlets to name a few. In front of the display are 2 beanbags and some colourful cushions. A large bookshelf holds a range of books, factual texts about Mini Beasts as well as picture books of all sorts. This certainly is an inviting corner! (CP12.11)
Much of Jordan’s language reveals her approach to developing a climate that promotes independence in literacy learning. She described instances where she encourages individual attempts. Examples of these include:

‘they can write about something they like themselves not just something I put up on the board’ (DT3.9).
‘I don’t just read it out. I get them to read it out and they like it’ (DT3.9).
‘Give them ideas, but don’t force it on them, so just see what they can do’ (SI12.11a).

These excerpts suggest openness to the learning that will allow the children to make their own way toward new understandings.

Further language choices suggest that Jordan values repetition when engaging in a certain writing activity, ‘I thought it was more for them to try it again using more [descriptive] words’ (DT3.9). Further, she acknowledged different children’s strengths and learning preferences through her planning and set expectations for the class. She explained,

I’m not saying, “OK make a book” because some of them might not like to do that...and if they don’t write, then they talk about it. So they are still expressing what they, what they’ve found. (SI12.11a)

‘Good’ teaching for Jordan appears to be about the development of relationships built on deep pedagogical understandings and knowledge of her learners. The professional development experiences seem to have supported Jordan’s development of the deep understandings necessary to achieve ‘good’ teaching because they allowed her to bring together a range of perspectives from which to consider her own design.

**Theme 3: The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning**

The Mini Beasts task (Appendix Q) was a large preplanned unit or work commonly taught with this age group.
Table 5.9 - Jordan’s Mini Beasts

| authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life | The information was identified by the teacher as important for use in later life, ‘...it’s real, they’re going to come across it, they’re going to pick up a rock and say, “Oh that’s a...” whatever. They know what it is’ (SI12.11a). |
| opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life | As the children explored the playground, there was not a preconceived idea of what they would look for. The children took their knowledge of *Mini Beasts* from the classroom research and applied it to the context of first the playground and then their home environments. |
| access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation | The teacher and published texts operated as experts within this context. There were other children and parents, too, who were able to operate as experts in such practices as safe handling, identification and categorisation of the Mini Beast. |
| coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners | Texts were created firstly with teacher guidance as whole class and small group constructions and then as independent work as the amount of scaffolding and heavily structured supports were removed. |
| opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored | The children took on the role initially as researchers of as they read about and shared their early understandings of. This role developed as they explored the connection between their research and their findings in the playground setting with the support of their teacher. |
| opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge | A third perspective was explored as these researchers reached into their own settings and constructed texts to express their own construction of knowledge. Sharing of understandings was achieved through this process as shared, guided and independent reading and writing in the classroom and then talking and listening in the presentations allowed for the sharing, challenging and consolidation of knowledge within and among group members. |
| opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration | Articulation of and reflection on understandings occurred within this task as the learners gathered together their understandings for the construction of their own texts and then through the texts shared by others. |
| opportunities for articulation of growing understandings | The teacher endeavoured to use an authentic assessment strategy through the use of the final product for the task, however, because this was an optional component of the task, not all students completed it. Consequently, the teacher designed a worksheet that assessed student knowledge through questioning. |
| authentic assessment of learning |  |
Interpretive comment

Jordan came to the workshops each week directly from her classroom. The opportunity to reflect on her teaching from that day, to share and hear about the teaching of others and to engage with the literature appear to have supported the development of a deeper understanding of the nature of teaching and her role as a teacher. The workshops provided Jordan the opportunities for the collaboration and interaction that she acknowledged as important for teachers (BP3.4). She was observed throughout the inquiry to interact with her colleagues, sharing and taking in knowledge and actively articulating her beliefs in connection with the focus of the learning tasks.

From analysis of the data, it is apparent that engagement with the professional development experiences supported Jordan to develop her understanding of authentic learning experiences. At the beginning of the inquiry, Jordan’s description of tasks such as these was limited to the types of classroom literacies one expects from more traditional approaches, such as completing worksheets (SI4.3b). Analysis of the task *Mini Beasts* revealed in Jordan an increased awareness in the role of communities outside the school setting to children’s learning. Further, the task demonstrates the increased responsibilities that the children take on as they make decisions about their learning. Opportunities to listen to colleagues, to post and respond to weblog reflections and to make connections between theory and practice appear to have deepened Jordan’s understanding of learning and her role as the teacher, thereby better equipping her for quality teaching.

Evident in Jordan’s identity is a commitment to building and maintaining strong relationships with children. Often during interviews and weblog postings, Jordan would describe setting activities because the children ‘liked it’ or because it is ‘good’ for them to share their stories with the class. Even when faced with serious management challenges, Jordan’s focus on the child’s well being appears to be maintained. An interesting perspective on Jordan’s identity is her connection for the children between social success and literacy learning. She was observed throughout the reporting of her case describing the literacy success of her students in connection with their happiness or progress.
A further perspective of her focus on building relationships is parents. Early in the inquiry, Jordan appeared somewhat preoccupied with parents and the ways that they interact with her. She expressed surprise at the amount of interest she generated by starting as the new teacher at the school. Further, she made a concerted effort to develop rapport with the parents, especially with homework and making the links between learning at school and home.

In all, the development of relationships appears to increasingly drive Jordan’s planning and facilitation of learning in her classroom. Jordan’s identity is reflected in the design of tasks such as *Mini Beasts* and the opportunities the children were given to collaborate, to interact with each other, to make connections between home and school and to make choices about their own learning.
Sophie

Background information

Sophie presents as a cheerful and pleasant person, who appears happy to oblige when called upon to contribute to the knowledge of her community. Her description of teaching conveys a belief that teaching is a complex undertaking requiring organisation and flexibility in both planning and action. She described teaching as an extremely busy activity that is ‘pretty insane!’ (SI13.3a; BP29.5a), complete with ‘curve balls’ (SI22.10a), but that she feels her efforts have been ‘so far, so good’ (SI13.3a). She acknowledged the importance of maintaining a balance between work and study, explaining in her initial interview, ‘...I will just do casual days, it’s far too much. I can’t do full uni and full work, it’s far too much, so I’ll just do half work and uni’ (SI13.3a, emphasis added).

However, within days of the beginning of Autumn Session at university, Sophie indicated that she had accepted full time employment, a situation that remained unchanged throughout the course of the inquiry. The result was a feeling of busy-ness throughout the inquiry that Sophie revealed at various times had decreased her ability to apply herself sufficiently to her study (BP29.5a; SI22.10a).

Sophie’s repetition of ‘far too much’ in the excerpt from this first interview, along with her descriptions of the hectic nature of teaching provides insight into her frame of mind as the year began. It may be that Sophie was anxious about the nature of the classroom teaching and the university studies to which she had committed. Further, it could be an indication that she felt the demands of teaching, of being a ‘real’ teacher posed a threat to her professional identity. Language such as that which Sophie used in the previous examples conveys teaching as a volatile and overwhelming environment. Whilst it is unclear why she has chosen such wording, it could be inferred that these language choices potentially create a safety net that would allow her to attribute any perceived failure later to the difficult circumstances under which she was attempting to operate.
Sophie had initially secured a full time, year long teaching contract in Sydney’s outer South Western Suburbs with a Year 5/6 composite class. She described the school population as being highly multicultural and of mainly low socio economic status. In May of the same year, she left this position as she had secured a similar temporary position, but this time teaching Year 3 closer to her home. A contrast to her previous school, she identified working with this more homogenised school population as making her job, ‘a lot easier having the culture less diverse, if that makes sense? Because you’re not dealing with as many different kinds of people [who] don’t understand where each other is coming from’ (SI22.10a).

Interestingly, however, Sophie was again quick to identify the extreme challenges that this class presented, ‘…I have a really, really hard class. I’ve got like one anxiety student and 2 students who are medicated. Like I have a mixed bag’ (SI22.10a, emphasis added). Sophie again positioned herself here in a difficult and demanding place. Her description of the class as ‘really, really hard’ positions her as working against the odds, so to speak. Sophie’s awareness of the different contexts of school settings, cultural diversity and diverse needs of students continued to be a focus of her attention throughout the course of the inquiry.

A feature of much of the data collected from Sophie is its use of descriptive rather than reflective language and her desire to attest to her competence as a teacher rather than to acknowledge and explore areas for growth and development. Her attendance at university during the period of the inquiry was erratic, she was often late to class and even missed some of the professional development experiences altogether. While most of her weblog postings were brief, her assessment tasks demonstrated that she had engaged with the readings and some connections were made between these and her classroom experiences.

Sophie’s experiences throughout the period of data collection are examined through the model of authentic teaching and learning (Appendix G):
**Theme 1: Professional responsibility**

Throughout the professional development experiences, the early career teachers were encouraged to use the weblog facility to share their stories and to reflect on them in connection with the literature and the stories of others. Work documents collected throughout the inquiry similarly challenged them to respond through reflection to the connections they could make between theory and practice. It was a tendency noted in the data, however, that Sophie preferred to focus on teachers generally than on her own experiences and on demonstrating her existing strengths rather than on identifying areas for growth. Within the theme of professional responsibility, Sophie’s focus turned to:

- **Sounding like a teacher**
- **Identifying her competence as a teacher**

**Sounding like a teacher**

The following excerpt is drawn from Sophie’s weblog posting in response to the reflective task “How do you see your role as an educator?” (PDW2).

> Whilst it is extremely important for the teacher to be aware of any risk of harm to any one of their students, simultaneously it is mandatory for the teacher to maintain a professional distance to avoid looking suspicious. The teacher must appear in a caring and considerate manner, portrayed as one to be sought after for knowledge and discipline. (BP24.4)

In a more formal work document submitted as an assessment task, she wrote, ‘...a teacher's role is to inspire young minds while competing with the enhancing intellectual society in order for students to reach their full potential’ (WD29.5).

And in a later weblog, she shared,

> It is therefore important that primary school teachers continue to review their thinking and practices as well as their organisation and process to promote effective continuity in students personal development. Teachers must also aim to connect middle years’ students in ways that direct their energy, shape their self-concept and raise their expectations. (BP29.5b)
Whilst she explained ‘I frequently seek feedback from other teachers, students as well as parents’ (WD15.5), her attempts at reflection reveal a more superficial connection between her practice and the literature. Furthermore, her reflections read like something one might find in a textbook or handbook on teacher education rather than as a personal reflection posted as a blog.

The following excerpts from her final interview provide clues to her mindset as Sophie examined her own practice more deeply, ‘All the parents have given me really good feedback and my parent interviews went really, really well and I’ve had a few letters to the principal from parents saying I was doing a good job. So I can’t be doing that bad!’ (SI22.10a, emphasis added). The final sentence in this transcript almost implies that someone has indicated the opposite. There is, however, no evidence of this.

In describing her efforts to prepare for teacher accreditation, she explained, ‘So it all looked really good on paper’ (SI22.10a). This is an interesting statement coupled with the previous findings. Sophie appears to be concerned about the ways that she ‘looks’ as a teacher. Appearance seems to be more important than substance for Sophie at this time in her teaching career. She appears to have something of a mask or barrier in place to prevent her identity from exposure to scrutiny, almost as though her role is one of acting rather than being a teacher. It is possible that this lack of focus on her own practice, her preoccupation with saying the ‘right thing’, looking ‘good’ and with portraying her work environment as extremely challenging act to mask some insecurities in her professional identity.

*Identifying her competence as a teacher.*

During professional development experiences, the early career teachers engaged with a range of literature designed to connect with and challenge not only their own beliefs and practices, but also of those that they were witnessing in their work contexts. Framing questions were used to support professional dialogue between and among the early career teachers during the workshops. The early career teachers then used these questions, dialogue and weblog postings to make their own analysis of the key findings of the readings in connection with their own beliefs and practices. Revealed in Sophie’s
responses was a perception that there was little for her to gain from the readings. For example, she discussed the key points in Lapp, Flood and Goss’ (2000) article exploring the value of group work, of facilitating independence and of have children work on writing tasks of interest to them. Sophie indicated that these were points she was already aware of, ‘Being the writing support coordinator for stage three at my school I found these points not particularly surprising but more reaffirming the methods which I already have in place in the classroom’ (WD15.5).

Similarly, she was dismissive of the Rodgers’ (2002) discussion about values and attitudes within teaching,

I do not really understand how this is a key point when I would expect that any individual working within a school organisation would have to encompass values and attitudes that mirrored the organisation’s, otherwise how would it be possible for a positive experience...if you as the teacher do not represent the attitudes which you strive to instil in your learners. (WD15.5)

Her personal reflections take this notion of competence further as she positions herself as being ‘up to the task’ of teaching in a range of complex and challenging contexts. She conveyed this perspective in the following examples. In describing her first teaching position,

I am catering for someone who is in like year 1 to probably about year 9. So it’s an incredible span of people in my class...Well I have about 20 different timetables, so coordinating all of them together as well as just the mainstream of the class. And I’ve got some of them off and doing...there’s always people. (SI13.3a)

And her new position,

As I discovered throughout my first day there are some serious behaviour issues within the class...The classroom is bare as the previous teacher understandably took all her resources. So I have a blank canvas to work with...I feel this is going to be extremely challenging...Nothing like being thrown in the deep end. (BP29.5)
Sophie described the needs of the students in this new class,

...there’s one particular student where I had to create my own program for him and other than that it was just getting them at the right level of where they are supposed to because when I got into that classroom they weren’t...At the moment, I’ve got someone that ranges from year 2 reading level to year 5!...So it goes from that.

(SI22.10a)

Opportunities for Sophie to describe and reflect on her students and her practice have allowed her to acknowledge what she believes are her strengths. It is unclear how strongly the beliefs shared here are reflected in her classroom practice. However, some insight is gained in Theme 3 as she shared her authentic task.

Theme 2: Considering authentic learning

When Sophie was present at the professional development experiences, she engaged in the professional development experiences to explore the range of considerations teachers take into account when designing authentic learning experiences. However, inconsistent attendance or late arrival at workshops often saw her scrambling to ‘catch up’ with the discussions and activities within which the early career teachers were engaged. Findings from analysis of the data are examined now in connection with the categories:

- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning tasks
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

External pressures and accountability

...it’s a lot easier having the culture less diverse...because you’re not dealing with as many different kinds of people. (SI22.10a)
Analysis of Sophie’s data reveal that diversity within the classroom and in the community created pressure for her as she attempted to fulfil her obligations as a teacher. This diversity is expressed from two perspectives:

- **Multiculturalism**
- **Meeting different learning needs**

**Multiculturalism**

When asked, ‘How would you describe the kids you are teaching at the moment?’ (SI22.10a), Sophie replied,

> I have a mixed bag...At the moment, 50% are from a Greek culture, but that doesn’t really effect anything. They’re all a very nice bunch of kids from fairly stable homes. (SI22.10a)

Sophie identified a range of challenges when working in culturally diverse classrooms such as ‘conflict amongst class members’ (BP15.5), different values placed on ‘formal education’ (BP15.5) and a range of attitudes and expectations placed on the teacher (BP29.5). The opportunity to reflect on these challenges prompted Sophie to consider her beliefs and to connect with supporting literature from a previous university subject. She then went further, describing working in a school with an Indigenous population as ‘a real eye opener’ (WD29.5). Finally, she identified the experience as useful in developing her understanding of teaching in a multicultural context, explaining that it ‘encouraged me to participate in a lot more in depth than had I not entered teaching in this particular region’ (WD29.5).

In this example, the structure of the reflection task appears to be successful in supporting Sophie to lower her guard, allowing her to explore her beliefs about teaching children from a range of cultural backgrounds.

**Meeting different learning needs**

It is in describing the range of needs of children within a class that Sophie again acknowledged the complexity of teaching. Sophie was preoccupied with the diverse needs of learners both socially and academically. A range of behaviours challenged Sophie,
describing some of the children in her class, ‘serious behaviour issues...severe anxiety and depression... three other extremely naughty boys...and one autistic student’ (BP29.5), ‘one anxiety student and two who are medicated’ (SI22.10a). Compounding these are her observations that ‘formal education has been valued’ more in some families than others, resulting in different levels of respect for teachers (WD29.5a).

The presence of students with additional needs is something to which Sophie made regular reference, both in terms of control in the classroom and of learning. She explained her coping strategy,

…if I set a task I don’t let them deter from the task because if I let one, you kind of lose control, because I’ve got 31, you kind of lose control of all of them. So it has to be rigid. My class has to be really rigid because they’re now really used to having routine and if I were to break that I think I would lose half of them out the window. So, and also, like the 2 autistic ones they’d be kind of completely lost if I changed from plans. (SI22.10a)

This statement is an uncomfortable fit with her earlier observations that a teacher’s role is to ‘inspire young minds’ (WD29.5), ‘to connect with middle years students…to shape their self-concept and raise their expectations’ (BP29.5).

Such is Sophie’s struggle to meet the diversity of needs in the classroom that she wrote, ‘all the people who surround us seem composed of equal parts good and evil’ (WD29.5). This extreme statement seems at odds with the portrayal of herself as competent and in control. Perhaps further opportunities to reflect on the ‘good and evil’ she witnesses would allow her to explore and challenge this extraordinary observation. Further, she could benefit from opportunities to examine the ways that teachers cope with and cater for diversity in an effort to draw connections between her own beliefs and practice.

Her reflections at the culmination of the inquiry indicated a belief that the problems of diversity and student needs are solved through discipline. That is, the greater the diversity, the stricter the school needs to be,
...just the differences combined into one school. Their discipline is a lot stronger just because it has to be and their guidelines are a lot stronger. Everyone’s a lot more wary of the procedures and policies out there whereas, I think, I’m in [a less diverse] region and it’s a lot looser because you don’t come across as many hiccups and things like that. (SI22.10a)

Engaging learners and learning

As a teacher my goal is to personally lead and inspire young minds to be the best that they can be, to follow their dreams and to help them know that their worlds may be without boundaries. (WD15.5)

Comparisons between Sophie’s weblog postings, formal written tasks and interview transcripts reveal some disparity between her planned reflections in weblogs and written tasks and her spontaneous responses shared during interviews. This emerged as a tension between:

- Maintaining control and empowering learners.

Maintaining control and empowering learners

In maintaining control, Sophie identified that the teacher ‘is primarily available to be sought after for knowledge and discipline’ (WD29.5). Her focus was on ensuring the children engaged in the task in the way that she intended,

I don’t give them a lot of choice once the activity’s begun, like that’s what I’ve set, it is what we are doing...I never ever give them a choice about the activity that we are doing...if I set a task I don’t let them deter from the task because if I let one, you kind of lose control, because I’ve got 31, you kind of lose control of all of them. So it has to be rigid. (SI22.10a)

Conversely, Sophie claimed to have a ‘level of flexibility which coerced me to reassess my teaching style depending upon the audience which would receive the lesson’. Further, she declared, ‘I would hope that if I was teaching a class that was uninterested and not
motivated then I would reassess my teaching methods to suit the class dynamics of the individuals I was teaching’ (WD15.5).

An interesting inference can be drawn here that Sophie feels she has not actually ever taught a class where the students lacked interest or motivation.

These issues of maintaining control contrast with other beliefs that Sophie shares about empowering learners. For example, ‘schooling needs to prepare students for life and help them to apply their knowledge and skill in realistic concepts’ (BP13.3), ‘by creating a child centred environment the children will become more passionate and deeply engaged participants and learners’ (WD15.5) and ‘teachers must also aim to connect [to] students in ways that direct their energy, shape their self-concept and raise their expectations’ (BP29.5b). These reflections contrasted with Sophie’s rationale for the design of a maths task in her room. She explained, ‘Oh, that was just the lesson for the day. That’s the maths topic we’re studying’ (SI22.10a). There appears to be disparity between the ‘philosophy’ Sophie espouses and the direct connections she makes to her classroom practice.

During the final interview, I took Sophie’s statement (Oh, that was just the lesson for the day) as an opportunity to challenge and probe her understanding. The result was positive. Further discussion and reflection led her to reconsider what her purpose may have been. She explained,

...and we applied it [fraction knowledge] to the real world, like even when we form up classes, we have to divide 105 year 3s into 4 different classes, this is why we do it, this is how we do it. I kind of created a real life scenario and that kind of thing. (SI22.10a)

An explicitly guided opportunity for reflection such as the one shared in this interview example appeared to support Sophie to reflect on and challenge the connections she made between her beliefs and her classroom practice. Perhaps the more personal context of the one-to-one interview supported Sophie’s learning needs and empowered her to reflect on her practice.
Community give and take

Whilst Sophie made limited connections to the ways that the learning experiences she designs promoted both contribution to and benefit from communities for students, her reflections demonstrate an understanding of her own place in the community as both producer and consumer of knowledge:

- **Teacher as community member**

*Teacher as community member*

Through a formal extended reflective writing task, Sophie acknowledged quite generally the collaborative nature of teaching, ‘we must continually reflect not only alone but with the input of community members and your interactions with others’ (WD15.5). Further, she expressed enthusiasm for participating in a mentoring relationship for the purposes of guiding her ‘through the challenges of the teaching profession’ (WD15.5). She recognised the potential for the teaching community to foster in teachers a commitment to lifelong learning (WD15.5). Again, these observations sound informed and powerful, but lack close connections to her own experiences and developing understandings.

However, Sophie’s desire to be part of the teaching community drives her to make closer connections to her own role as valuable for the future, ‘We should embrace not evade technology...I walk into a room and see a smart board and get excited, some others may look straight for the plug to disconnect it’ (BP1.5). She later described a desired identity, ‘I do not aspire to be a teacher that is known as old fashioned and can not keep up with technology’ (WD15.5).

Her reflection on her relationships with the children in her class drew further on the notion of being ‘up to date’ and able to relate, but implies that her status will change with age and experience,

> I think also you have an advantage being younger because they want to be close to you because you are closer to their age...and they don’t feel threatened by you whereas a lot of the older teachers who are outstanding they’re petrified of because
of their authority whereas I don’t have that status yet. So you’ve just got to kind of work that to your advantage. (SI22.10a)

Sophie’s reflections on her place in the classroom and staffroom suggest she understands that what she offers to the community and the teacher she is now will change over time. Whilst earlier data, perhaps, suggests that Sophie may be less open to identifying areas for her professional growth, these reflections potentially reveal an underlying awareness of and commitment to the development of her own professional identity.

‘Good’ teaching

As with many other areas of complex decision making, again, Sophie’s reflections demonstrated tension between her beliefs and her actions about learning. In this example, she criticised a traditional teaching approach where children simply copy notes into their exercise books. Her critical reflection on the way she was taught is promising in that it suggests she rejects it as a valid teaching method and will engage children in other ways to gather and collate information for deeper understandings. Her explanation was as follows,

I remember when I was at school occasionally we would copy information out of a book in the library. I think we did this because there was such a low expectation in some cases that so long as we had something written down that was appropriate to the concept it was accepted by the teacher. Additionally we didn’t do the intellectually challenging task of researching and analysis because the subject matter failed to capture our attention. (BP1.5)

Of further promise was Sophie’s response to the interview question, ‘And how do the kids in that class learn best?’ (SI22.10a), Sophie explained, ‘The majority by doing, they’re not copy from the board and write kids, they’re hands on and very practical’ (SI22.10a). Yet when designing maths experiences that facilitated the exploration of fractions, one of the tasks was for the children to copy her notes from the board! Further probing prompted Sophie to share her rationale, ‘...And then they just had to copy down from the board for the sake of having the notes down’ (SI22.10a, emphasis added).
Although it is not yet evident in her practice, Sophie appears to ‘know’ the need for the ‘intellectually challenging task of researching and analysis’ (BP1.5), but that there is more to be done in developing the connection between beliefs and action.

**Theme 3: The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning**

A lesson on fractions (Appendix Q) was the task Sophie shared as an example of an authentic learning experience in her classroom.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 5.10 - Sophie’s Fractions</th>
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<tr>
<td>authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life</td>
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<tr>
<td>opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access to expert performances and modelling of processes as they occur during the real situation</td>
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</table>
| coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners | - As children worked in groups they were able to collaborate to identify solutions to text book questions  
- The teacher used ‘lots of questions at the end and they seemed to know what they were talking about’ (SI22.10a) in an effort to develop understandings  
- Copying notes from the blackboard provided no such support |
| opportunities to engage with multiple roles and perspectives as the problem is explored | - None provided |
| opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge | - None provided |
| opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration | - None provided |
| opportunities for articulation of growing understandings | - None provided |
| authentic assessment of learning | - None provided |
**Interpretive comment**

Sophie’s case presents interesting challenges for teacher educators. Sophie demonstrated during episodes of explicit teaching (such as happened in the final interview) that she can be open to new learning and to examination of her practice. Further, she demonstrated the ability to make insightful analysis of the literature through her examination of the set readings in the *Reflective Practice* subject, as was evident in her second written task. However, the slipping point for Sophie appears to be confidence to participate during interactions with peers and colleagues to focus on the examination of her professional identity. Her vulnerability became evident during times of group discussion and reflection, both in the physical setting of the workshop and in the virtual blogging community. She resorted to making broad generalisations about teachers in general, rather than to herself as a teacher (for example, BP24.4; BP29.5b). Further, she regularly closed down discussions with comments such as ‘it’s all good’ (SI3.3a), ‘so far so good’ (SI22.10a) and ‘nothing like being thrown in the deep end’ (BP29.5) instead of articulating clearly her response to the discussion item. Perhaps her tendency to arrive late to class as the workshop sessions progressed was an indication of her discomfort at the personal nature of ‘sharing time’ scheduled for the beginning of each workshop.

The data reveal that Sophie is in the career phase of ‘survival’ (Huberman, 1989). To cope with this phase, she appears to have constructed a ‘busy’ persona where teachers, children, the school setting and her university studies present a considerable, but not unsurmountable challenge for this capable and cheerful early career teacher. Glimpses of Sophie’s identity, however, suggest a different story. Clues to her fragility and uncertainty emerge when she shares such thoughts as, ‘I can’t be doing that bad!’ (SI22.10a), ‘It all looked really good on paper’ (SI22.10a) and ‘I don’t know it’s all very fuzzy at the moment’ (SI3.3a). Opportunities to collaborate with trusted others over extended time could support Sophie to face her insecurities and to examine the ways her beliefs translate into practice. The findings from Sophie’s case support the need for teachers to be part of professional networks that continue to support their development beyond the university setting and outside of the sometimes insular world of individual school environments.
Sophie’s approach to planning and designing learning experiences appears to reflect the scope and sequence policies and procedures of her employing school. Operating within this frame sees Sophie explain that they are ‘doing a COGs unit’ (SI3.3a), or ‘doing fractions’ (SI22.10a). It seems that they are simply ‘doing school’ for the sake of doing school. This safe approach to lessons, again, suggests uncertainty or lack of confidence in Sophie’s professional identity. More specifically, it suggests that her beliefs about the purposes of school and her subsequent role as the teacher are insufficiently developed to inform the design of authentic learning experiences. When pressed to reflect more deeply, her observation that she can support learners to make connections to the real purpose of fractions during her maths lessons suggests as before that she can be open to growth and development of understanding.

Sophie’s case highlights the need for explicit teaching for the development of professional identity, especially in connection with the ability to plan, design and facilitate authentic learning experiences. Further, the important role of trusted others and professional networks is revealed as powerful in supporting early career teacher development of professional identity.
Breanna

*Background information*

Breanna was working at the outset of the inquiry in a local Catholic primary school in a part time position. She was employed three days per week to teach Year 5 as part of a job share arrangement until the end of Term 1. Her workload then increased to full time in second term of the school year (in late April 2008) and she continued her studies for the Bachelor of Education and for the Certificate of Religious Education at the Catholic Education Office. The school, newly constructed in the Wollongong Diocese, was built in response to residential development within the region. It is a well appointed school with three classes per grade and large learning spaces designed for collaboration across the classes. She described the children as

Great! They’re very friendly, beautiful children. We don’t have many major behavioural problems in the school. I guess we have that Catholic sort of “Treat others as you want to be treated” instilled into the children. (SI10.3)

She does indicate that there are some challenges, however, observing ‘My class itself has some lively personalities in it’ (SI10.3). Before this appointment, Breanna worked abroad as a casual and ‘block’ teacher from 2005-2007 in both mainstream and schools for students with special needs.

Breanna presented as a friendly and sincere teacher who values and respects those within her teaching community. She acknowledged the value of more experienced teachers and the opportunities they provide for her own development, ‘I am lucky at my school in that I deal with very experienced and approachable staff who are always more than happy to help me’ (WD29.5a). Evident in her data is the view that the development and maintenance of relationships for learning is the responsibility of both the children and the teacher and that part of this good relationship is an environment conducive to learning and personal growth. Early in the inquiry, Breanna explained that children

need an environment where they can feel they can take risks and they are safe to make mistakes and an environment where they want to learn. They deserve for me
to be the best teacher I can be and to try to adapt my teaching styles to their learning needs and to extend their learning as much as I possibly can. (SI10.3)

Breanna’s experiences throughout the period of data collection are examined through the *model of authentic teaching and learning* (Appendix G):

**Theme 1: Professional responsibility**

Breanna reflected regularly on her professional responsibilities as she described and drew conclusions about the range of classroom experiences she encountered. Her reflections reveal a diligent approach both to teaching and to participating in the teaching community. The data within the theme of professional responsibility are reported from the perspectives Breanna shared:

- *Performing as a valuable team member*
- *Making informed decisions*

*Performing as a valuable team member*

What if they don't score well? How does that reflect on me as their teacher? And what if the other Year 5 teachers’ students do really well and mine don’t?  
(BP29.5a)

The responsibility to meet the expectations of other teachers, to meet the needs of the learners and to attain satisfactory results in student learning appears to weigh heavily on Breanna in these early days in her first extended teaching position in Australia. She explains, ‘it is daunting at times when you realise that you are the one who is ultimately responsible for a child's learning, and not always with a lot of support’ (WD15.5).

Despite being at times overwhelmed by these responsibilities, Breanna demonstrated the desire to participate in the teaching community and to remain flexible in response to the demands and expectations of her colleagues. For example, at her new school, the staff had adopted a learning approach that included fluid grouping of children across the grades in response to their learning abilities, strengths and needs. Usually ability based, these groups
changed not only throughout the term, but also throughout the day in response to the subject and topic being taught. Breanna explained,

I am at a school which teaches with a stage-based approach, where we are encouraged to teach and plan together collaboratively. Therefore, my classroom layout had to cater to this, which a grouped desk arrangement does. (WD29.5a)

Other ways that Breanna believes she contributes to this teaching team are: ‘being consistent with daily routines’ (WD29.5a), ‘keep[ing] each other informed of any changes’ (WD29.5a), ‘building relationships with people’ (SI23.10a) and ‘doing peer evaluations on one another, encouraging one another’ (SI23.10a). The following excerpt demonstrates that Breanna identified managing behaviour as a strength of her teaching and something of value she has to offer her colleagues.

RESEARCHER: What are some things that have really shaped your teaching?
BREANNA: The UK was good for behaviour management strategies. You have to learn pretty quickly to control a bunch of children, especially ones you don’t know. That was good for my casual teaching. And then I guess, going into different schools has allowed me to become adaptable and able to take on strategies to deal with lots of students from different backgrounds.

RESEARCHER: And that has helped you now with your job here?
BREANNA: ...Building relationships with people, being able to work as part of a team...and of course behavioural management’s going to be helpful wherever you go, whatever you are doing (SI23.10a).

Confidence in her ability to contribute to her community emerged throughout Breanna’s reflections on teaching, building her identity as a valuable member. In one instance, she confidently articulated her belief about the need for a range of assessments to support learners’ needs. She explained,

I also have an issue with multiple-choice testing as was seen in the current 2008 NAPLAN paper. I do not believe it gives a true indication of students' knowledge...A better form of National Assessment must be used if it is to give a true and fair indication of a child's knowledge, especially if it is determining their funding allocation. (WD29.5a)
Her growing confidence is demonstrated in the comment that ensued, ‘I would expect that my colleagues have a similar view in regards to assessment and use a range of strategies also’ (WD29.5a).

Experience in the classroom coupled with opportunities to reflect on her beliefs and practices appear to have shaped Breanna’s perception of herself as a teacher capable of conducting assessment that is an authentic reflection of the learner’s ability and of making such professional decisions.

Making informed decisions
Related to her performance as a team member is Breanna’s approach to decision making. Consistently throughout the period of Phase Three of the inquiry, Breanna’s data reflected a considered approach to making decisions. Her reflections described a process where she drew on information from a range of sources. These sources included findings in the literature, the beliefs and opinions of her university peers and the experience of her school based colleagues. These authoritative sources are used to support and justify Breanna’s teaching decisions. For example, when considering a programming sample of an integrated teaching approach, she concluded, ‘At examining it more closely and after some discussion, I realised it was in fact correlation’ (BP10.4). This example is further discussed in connection with the theme engaging learners and learning.

In another example, Breanna justified her classroom seating arrangement,

Group settings of course lend themselves to collaborative learning, whilst rows can tend to give an institutional like atmosphere. On the downside, group settings can create distractions with students chatting rather than doing their work…I have taught in classrooms with both kinds of layouts (rows and groups) and much prefer groups. With my current class… (BP22.5)

A final example examines the use of collaborative cloze activities in literacy learning and points her in a new direction for teaching,
I was amazed at how by simply structuring the cloze activity differently, far more modes of language and outcomes were covered. I know from my experience I have given clozes to students as an independent task, but having that illustrated to me, I believe it works far better in a collaborative environment and will now implement tasks like this in my classroom. (WD15.5)

Reflection on her practice in connection with a variety of sources appears to have developed Breanna’s identity as a confident professional, able to consider and make choices from the options available and to participate in her professional community.

**Theme 2: Considering authentic learning**

Baseline data revealed that Breanna was able to list a range of elements that impact a teacher’s decisions in planning and designing learning experiences for their students. However, analysis also showed that her knowledge was mainly limited to a quite superficial depth of understanding. Engagement with the professional development experiences appeared to support Breanna in the development of a more comprehensive perspective of the issues around designing authentic learning experiences. Findings from data collected from Breanna are examined now in connection with the categories:

- External pressures and accountability
- Engaging learners and learning tasks
- Community give and take
- ‘Good’ teaching

**External pressures and accountability**

Analysis of Breanna’s data revealed that the main elements that create pressure for her are *Time* and *Assessment*. The tensions she discussed in terms of time relate to the complexity of teaching and teachers’ accountability in delivering mandatory content. Assessment created pressure for Breanna as she grappled with the conflicting messages around the effectiveness of the teacher in student success, the ways that students are assessed and the ways that below average assessment results reflect on the teacher.
Time

Time, or the lack of it, affects Breanna in both the preparation and delivery of learning experiences. In terms of planning, Breanna reported in August, ‘I still find programming hard and that’s my most time consuming thing’ (DT7.8), implying that she thought it would have become easier with the teaching experience she has already had. A further exploration of this pressure revealed the challenge of planning for the volume of content that is to be taught within one year,

trying to get through the content for the year. We’ve got 8 units we are supposed to get through a term and I’m only getting through about 6, so I’m feeling kind of pressured. (DT7.8)

In reflecting on her teaching, Breanna revealed that time continues to challenge once the program is transferred to the classroom. She observed that lack of time

…is a big constraint when it comes to lesson effectiveness. There is so much pressure to get through the mandated outcomes that often the teacher will have to rush through concepts in order to complete units of work on time so that they can commence the next unit. (WD29.5a)

As the year progressed, Breanna’s reflections demonstrated that this pressure remained. In October of the period of inquiry, she explained that her main aim was

…trying to get through all of the maths for the year because we’ve had a very very busy year... There was just a lot on, something on every week. Main priority is trying to get through my maths content for the year because it’s sort of a big time pressure really. (WD23.10a)

Reflection on time and how to manage it appears to help Breanna to take a rational perspective of the problem, concluding that there will be time at the end of the year for catch up and revision of learning (DT7.8). Similarly, reflection led her to acknowledge the support available within her professional community in managing time, ‘We’re lucky we plan together as a stage so a lot of the units are already written into the scope and sequence’
Opportunities to reflect appear to have helped Breanna to understand the pressures she is feeling and to put them into perspective.

Assessment

I was actively involved in the NAPLAN testing last week and found it just as stressful, or quite possibly more than my students (BP29.5a)

Breanna appears to remain unsure throughout Phase Three of the inquiry about the validity and value of standardised testing and the accountability of the teacher. On one hand, she supports assessments such as standardised tests, stating in a weblog posting, ‘I don't believe they are a total waste of time’ and ‘I do believe there is a need for a Nation-wide standardised form of assessment’ (BP29.5a). The pressure, then increases if this view is supported, because she points out in the literature that, ‘as teachers, we have the most significant impact on student achievements’ (WD15.5). Making these connections and reflecting on the task of teaching could only serve to increase feelings of pressure and accountability for this early career teacher.

Interestingly, though, and in line with her earlier efforts to support and justify her decisions in connection with authoritative sources (as identified in Making informed decisions), Breanna explored other possibilities. She observed that teachers are often left with ‘a lot of responsibility and very little assistance with improving their practices’ (WD15.5), that ‘…everyone says the results aren't anything to do with the teacher’ (BP29.5a), that standardised tests ‘do not give a true indication of a child's knowledge and skills’ (WD29.5a) and that she supports ‘using a range of assessment strategies to assess student outcomes’ (WD29.5a).

Experience, reading and reflection have revealed to Breanna the various conflicts and pressures surrounding teachers in relation to standardised testing. It would appear that further development of understanding and opinion would occur for Breanna in the future, but that at this stage, she remains unsure. She concluded in her work document, ‘my opinion regardless, the tests still must be carried out’ (WD29.5a), perhaps indicating that
her identity is not yet sufficiently developed to confront her beliefs about this complex issue. Or perhaps it is that she feels so responsible for the students’ learning that any gaps in their learning will be revealed in tests such as NAPLAN and thereby confronts her identity as a professional. Breanna’s response to the NAPLAN appears similar to the defensive activity observed in Sophie’s data.

**Engaging learners and learning**

In reflecting on engagement, Breanna discussed the relationships she has with her learners and the potential for the lessons she designs to connect with the lives and interests of her students. These data are reported as:

- **Relationships**
- **Connections for learners**

**Relationships**

In describing the ways that she interacts with her students, Breanna used a number of phrases indicating the relationship she aims to develop with her students. She explained her approach, ‘I don’t like to be a really authoritative teacher’ (SI23.10a), preferring to be thought ‘approachable’, ‘supportive’, ‘organised’ (SI23.10a), ‘inspiring’ (WD15.5), ‘professional’ (BP22.5) and ‘passionate about teaching’ (WD29.5a). She explored the challenge of engaging learners, initially believing that it is achieved through ‘clearly set goals’ (BP3.4) so all learners understand the aims and expectations of the task. However, this was challenged early in her teaching experiences in an incident where the children were ‘constantly disruptive, very rude and very little of them were completing the set task’ (BP3.4). The benefit of reflection on teaching and learning is revealed here as Breanna set herself the goal of deeper thought, ‘I guess even if you clearly state goals for a class, there may be other factors as to why the lesson may not work’ (BP3.4).

A product of this deeper thought is revealed in later data as Breanna reflected again on the ways that learners are engaged in learning experiences. In this example, she identified respect as key. ‘I prefer to build up a relationship with my students and having that mutual
respect for one another rather than coming down on them too harshly’ (SI23.10a). She explained further, ‘if you’ve got that respect there, they tend not to play up as much’ (SI23.10a).

This snapshot of Breanna’s identity under construction suggests that further reflection will allow her to consider again the purpose of this respectful relationship for authentic learning experiences beyond simply controlling behaviour.

**Connections for learners**

As Breanna described the design of authentic learning experiences and the decisions she made about programming, she made regular reference to the connections she attempts to make between the learning experiences and the children’s own interests and needs. She articulated these connections in a range of ways:

- For ‘enjoyment’ (BP24.4; WD15.5)
- Allowing for the interpretation of ‘knowledge in ways that are meaningful’ (BP24.4)
- Authentic experiences that allow for ‘deep learning to occur’ (WD29.5a)
- That the children are ‘part of something really fun and special’ (WD15.5)
- Providing opportunities that ‘allow students the time to reflect’ (WD29.5a)
- ‘That it’s interesting and relevant to them’ (WD23.10a)

Her reflections on the quality of learning, (perhaps on authentic learning) throughout the period of the inquiry reveal a challenge to previous thinking in light of new evidence. As part of the professional development experiences conducted throughout Phase Three of the inquiry, the participants considered the nature of an integrated learning experience and what they perceived this to be. In an early blog entitled “Correlation Vs Integration” she reflected on the content of the professional development workshop focused on planning (PDW5) and articulated a change in her previous thinking.

Now I must say that when Lisa and Jessica put up the rainforest mind map and asked if it was integration, initially I believed it was. It was a unit of work linked by a common theme, which is what I had always thought integration was. But at examining it more closely and after some discussion, I realised it was in fact
correlation. Though the KLAs [Key Learning Areas] were linked by the theme of rainforests, they were not meaningful links. A lot of the links were very weak, and the students would not actually learn any outcomes related to the rainforests topic. So correlation I guess is linking activities with a theme, but not necessarily in a meaningful way. Integration actually goes that step further and links activities through achievable outcomes. (BP10.4)

This development in her understanding based on reflection, close examination and consultation with peers is later reflected in her practice within her professional community. The following excerpt reveals her shift in thinking and the development of her identity in participating as a professional,

BREANNA: Well we’ve got a subject that’s called integrated units, but it’s not really integrated.
RESEARCHER: What does that mean?
BREANNA: Well the intention was to make them integrated units, I think, but it’s not happening at the moment. That’s something that we’ve recognised at the moment. So it’s generally supposed to be HSIE [Human Society and Its Environment] and Science combined and that’s what that’s timetabled for, but it’s generally been an HSIE or a Science unit, rather than being combined too much, not in a real significant way, anyway. We’re trying, looking at that at the moment. (DT7.8, emphasis added).

This development in her beliefs about authentic learning and her role as the teacher support an earlier reflection that it ‘...occurs when students are able to interpret new knowledge and construct it in a way that is meaningful to them and can transfer the knowledge into many situations’ (BP24.4).

**Community give and take**

Breanna’s focus throughout Phase Three of the inquiry remained strongly on the children within her class and the connections they were able to make between the different Key
Learning Areas mandated for schools. The data reveal only emerging awareness of the demands and expectations that occur for children beyond the classroom and the potential for learning experiences to support children to make authentic connections between school and other communities. The first quote demonstrates her understanding of school as preparing children for engagement elsewhere (in this case, secondary school). In our final interview, the discussion had turned to ‘teacher talk’ versus ‘student talk’ in Breanna’s classroom and her desire to increase the latter. She explained

...they need to get that maturity and then after Year 6 they’ll be going to high school...so they’ll need to be a lot more independent. So I guess teaching them to be a bit more independent. (SI23.10a)

She then talked about a unit of work on Democracy that her class studied and the ways that it was ‘relevant’ to the children.

RESEARCHER: Say in one, democracy, how do you make it relevant, authentic, they’re not 18, they can’t vote, so how can it be relevant?
BREANNA: Well, we have a parliamentary club at school, so it would be relevant to those students because they need to know the structures and stuff. The other students watch the parliamentary club in session as well, so they are exposed to it. Our trip to Canberra too, we are linking it in. We are booked into question time. So yeah, we’re trying to link the unit to that. For some relevance. I don’t think all of the unit’s relevant, but…
RESEARCHER: Does relevant mean it has to apply right now?
BREANNA: No! There is preparation for the future, otherwise you would be learning only a few things for a group of 12 year olds (WD23.10a).

It is not clear that her experiences thus far have brought Breanna to consider the possibilities beyond the classroom, however, the final comment in this interaction suggests that such a notion may soon emerge.

Breanna’s ongoing focus on the children and only their direct interactions with school learning is something of a surprise within the context of her reflective approach to other areas of teaching. Perhaps these findings indicate the need for a more explicit focus within
professional development experiences on reflection that prompts learners to consider learning beyond the school to the events and practices of broader communities.

‘Good’ teaching

Breanna’s reflection on and discussion of ‘good’ teaching was underpinned throughout the inquiry by the developing belief that children learn through a range of experiences and that they demonstrate their knowledge in a range of ways. During the period of data collection she reflected on ‘good’ teaching in connection with the integration of Key Learning Areas, a range of student groupings, teacher modelling of processes and assessment of learning. These data are now examined.

In exploring the value of integrated units of work, Breanna reflected in an early blog, our students are learning how to make a film. They have to do it on something related to Antarctica, and it has to be an explanation (to link with one of our text types for the term). I believe the students will learn far more from this integrated unit, they are just so engaged. (BP10.4)

The reference to ‘text types’ demonstrates again her preoccupation with mandated curriculum identified in the theme community give and take. In later data, she reflected further on the value of integrated learning. ‘Integrated units of work really lend themselves to deep learning, as students are able to make meaningful links from literacy across the curriculum’ (WD29.5a). This reflection suggests a deeper understanding of the role of literacy and its connection with all modes of learning.

In considering the make up of groups, Breanna advocated the use of ability based groups for the teaching of processes in literacy and numeracy (BP22.5) as well as using other social groupings for learning. She drew support from the literature in these decisions by citing Hopkins (2003, p. 6), ‘students taught with group investigation learned at rates above...students taught by teachers who used conventional teaching techniques’. She
observed, ‘This was reassuring for my professional identity as I use a lot of collaborative learning in my classroom and have found it to be very worthwhile’ (WD15.5).

Breanna also identified the importance of modeling in teaching, and again drew on the literature, this time to identify an area for growth in her own practice,

...modeling was an integral part of introducing the task. Lapp, Flood and Goss (2000) provided the students with numerous examples of the text type, as well as giving her students examples of her own writing. In addition to this she provided a framework of questions the students needed to ask themselves in order to create their piece of writing. I believe this is crucial to good literacy instruction and is probably something I could do more of in my classroom. (WD15.5)

This modeling indeed became part of her practice later in the inquiry. In this example, Breanna has shared an excerpt of her teaching and she explained her approach,

...then I will go into a modelled demonstration and then they’ll either work in pairs or individually to do that. And that’s how generally I do it, a bit of modelling each time and then if there’s still a group that’s unsure I’ll take them and work with them. (DT7.8)

The chance to reflect on her practice in connection with the arguments and findings of others is observed to have impacted her classroom practice.

In discussing assessment of learning, Breanna referred to the range of skills and strengths of her learners. She drew on the strands not only of reading and writing, but also talking and listening in identifying the ways that student learning may be assessed. Further, she made observations for changes to her own teaching. As with the previous examples, Breanna’s beliefs and identity are supported by the literature,

effective teaching-learning activities were structured so that learners were encouraged to use more than one mode of language (Cambourne, 2001). This is one point I do not believe I would have thought of when it came to identifying the elements of effective teaching-learning activities, but having had it identified for me I can see it is an important one. This element also allows students who may
struggle with written tasks a chance to do really well, as they may find it easier to express themselves in other ways. As a teacher it is crucial to provide these opportunities so that all students have a chance to shine, not just the talented spellers or story-writers. (WD15.5)

As Breanna brought together her understanding of teaching and learning, reflected on the development of her professional identity and considered the role of professional learning in this process, she was, once more drawn to the literature. She observed that, ‘critical systematic reflection is a necessary condition for quality teaching’ (Hopkins, 2003, p. 9) and connected this to her experiences in the professional development experiences that were Phase Three of the inquiry. She stated,

this has been the premise of our subject and has really changed my view upon reflection. In the past it was something I stuck on the end of my lesson plans in order to fulfill the requirements but now I realise how important it is in regards to the improvement of practice. (WD15.5)

**Theme 3: The task: Applying the principles of authentic learning**

Breanna described a lesson on Timetables (Appendix Q) as an example of an authentic task in her classroom.

| authentic contexts reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life | - A train timetable is a familiar community text with a different structure from others. Using a timetable to plan a train trip is a common event, especially for young people without access to personal transport.  
- The ability to interpret a train timetable was identified by the teacher as an important skill for the children to learn.  
- Whilst the task itself appears fairly simple, the complexity lies within the text itself.  
- The text layout provides challenges for users in its non-linear structure, non-standard layout (the text can be read vertically as well as horizontally), use of abbreviations and codes and 24 hour time. Further challenges include changes in relation to weekdays, peak times and holidays. Identifying a suitable train involves trial and error, testing and monitoring to ensure the train will arrive at the station by the required time.  
- The complexity of the text allows learners to take a range of perspectives to investigate, trial and select appropriate plans. |
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<td>opportunities for exploration; they will be complex and ill defined, as they occur in real life</td>
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<td>Table 5.11 - Breanna’s Timetables</td>
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| coaching and scaffolding, by both teacher and other learners | - The teacher supported the learners as she moved around the classroom and observed the children working at their own problem.  
- The children operated as support for each other as they made and tested selections from the timetable. |
| opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge | - Following the modelled demonstration, the children worked in pairs to interpret the layout and content of the timetable and plan a return day trip. |
| opportunities for reflection on learning; in isolation and collaboration | - Opportunities for reflection were limited in this task to an immediate consideration about whether the answer to the problem was correct. |
| opportunities for articulation of growing understandings | - The children articulated their understandings of 24 hour time and the skill of reading a train timetable as they collaborated on the task and then in a more formal way when they presented their interpretation to the class. |
| authentic assessment of learning | - The teacher tried to use an authentic assessment strategy in the final product for the task, however, it was an optional component and not all students completed it. Consequently, the teacher designed a worksheet that assessed student knowledge through questioning. |

**Interpretive comment**

Breanna’s learning appeared to be well supported by the design of the professional development experiences, especially the facility for both physical and virtual interactions through the BEST site. Her reflections and formal work documents reflect a deepening understanding of and growing confidence in herself as a teacher. She appeared relaxed and comfortable interacting with her peers and colleagues throughout the workshops and also in the online community. Breanna was observed to be particularly interested in hearing and discussing the viewpoints of others throughout group tasks and professional dialogue. Early career teachers within her group were also very interested in hearing of her experiences both teaching abroad and more recently in her part time position. Indeed, Breanna was positioned within these episodes as something of a teaching expert, something she appeared to find quite amusing and almost absurd.
Breanna’s reflections on her teaching throughout the period of the inquiry demonstrate growth in understanding of the complexity of the design of tasks and the range of considerations that need to be made. Her early observations about experiencing difficulties in the classroom centred on a simple idea, that if the children were told what to do, then they could and would do it. ‘Although the goals were clearly set at the beginning of the lesson of what they had to do, the lesson was not effective as the class were constantly disruptive, very rude and very little of them were completing the set task.’ (BP27.3). Her later reflections demonstrate a much deeper understanding. In this reflection, she included classroom layout, teacher organisation, opportunities for collaboration in groups, suitable resources and a happy learning environment as ‘barely scratching the surface’ (BP22.5) of what is required when designing learning experiences. It would appear that opportunities for Breanna to reflect on her own experiences, to make connections to the literature and to examine the nature of authentic learning experiences in collaboration with others has supported her to deepen her understanding of the ways that such tasks are planned and designed.

Evident in Breanna’s identity is her commitment to being an active and valued member of her teaching community, both in the smaller setting of the tutorial workshops and the broader profession of teachers. Breanna demonstrated growing awareness of her strengths and the qualities that she brings to the classroom. Her initial efforts to engage with children appear to centre on having them like her and yet maintain control. Subsequent experience, reflection and action led her to a more informed understanding of the ways that relationships can be built with her learners. She explained, ‘I prefer to build up a relationship with my students and having that mutual respect for one another’ (SI23.10a).

Such was the development of her professional identity and her growing sense of commitment to the profession that Breanna registered her membership with the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association. She then became an even more active member of the teaching profession by submitting a short article for publication.
Part C. Responding to the questions of the inquiry

To summarise the findings of Phase Three of the inquiry, a response is offered to each of the research questions in connection with the experiences, learning and reflections of the participant early career teachers. The findings from data analysis are drawn together to consider the development of professional identity in early career teachers.

How do teachers define, plan and organise authentic learning experiences in their classrooms?

The early career teachers in this inquiry continued critical analysis of their beliefs in order to develop deep knowledge about authentic learning experiences throughout the inquiry. Impacting their understandings were emerging beliefs about teaching and learning and their ongoing classroom experiences, both positive and negative. Of stronger influence, however, was the nature of the work in which the teachers were engaged. Those in temporary and casual positions reported feeling pressure to be accepted and to be included socially and professionally within these teaching communities into the future. Consequently, they reported making teaching decisions that were at times at odds with their own philosophies. The adoption of what they considered ‘inappropriate’ pedagogies was considered a valid trade off for the promise of more work. It appeared that these teachers were willing to suspend their increasingly sophisticated knowledge of authentic learning experiences until their professional status provided them with the space to design and implement them in safety.

Conversely, the teachers holding more permanent positions reported feeling less of this type of pressure and therefore were able to trial a range of approaches to planning and organising authentic learning experiences. The permanence of workplace contracts as an element affecting a teacher’s beliefs about authentic learning experiences is an interesting and important finding as many early career teachers start out in temporary and casual positions, yet are expected to operate in the same ways as permanently employed teachers.
Whilst the *experienced* teachers defined authentic learning experiences within the context of their broader professional settings and in the settings of their learners, the *early career* teachers’ beliefs were more narrowly focused on the popular interests of the students and accumulation of skills for the future (such as catching a train, naming a bug or reading a movie guide). The tasks shared are what Herrington and Oliver (2000) describe as a ‘reflection’ of the information in real life. Although this is a narrower focus, it nonetheless resonates with the findings of Phase One of the inquiry as it recognises the potential for authentic learning experiences to take learners beyond the classroom. Further, it acknowledges children in their classrooms as members of communities within which they need to be able to operate and it importantly provides potential springboards from these ‘reflections of life’ to designing tasks that are real life.

In planning and facilitating authentic learning experiences, again the issue of being a temporary or permanent staff member is relevant. The permanent teachers in this inquiry drew on the resources available within the school, the guidance of more experienced teachers within this community, the existing structures that dictate the progression of learning within the school (such as scope and sequences) and the methods of inquiry/group work/cross stage learning adopted by partner teachers. The temporary and casual teachers valued their own expertise as the main resource and therefore capitalise on their strengths, interests and beliefs while they accumulate collections of concrete materials to complement their repertoire. The temporary teachers in this inquiry plan for experiences that reflect the nature of the day-to-day casual work they do. Specifically, these authentic tasks can be completed in a shorter time frame or extended for a longer block of time should the work be extended. Many of the resources are ‘fixed’ to ensure that everything is available and the opportunities for taking multiple perspectives, collaborative reflection and construction of knowledge are bound within this more condensed task. The perception and understanding of who you are as a teacher and what you believe you bring to the learning environment is keenly evident in these casual teachers’ approaches to planning authentic learning experiences.
What is the nature of the relationship between a teacher’s professional identity and their ability to plan authentic learning experiences?

The relationship between a teacher’s beliefs about teaching and learning and the lessons they design is well reported in the literature (see Alton-Lee, 2003; Ramsey, 2000; Rowe, 2003). It is also a finding of this inquiry. Another perspective of the relationship, though, was that the way the participants defined themselves as a teacher impacted their ability to design authentic learning experiences. It was not the case that the early career teachers in this inquiry believed themselves incapable of quality teaching or the design of authentic learning experiences. In fact, one of the early career teachers felt himself superior in ability. Rather, the design of their authentic learning experiences reflected their beliefs about their place in their teaching communities and who they are in the story of ‘this school’. It follows, therefore, that the teachers who felt empowered by their more permanent teaching positions were able to enact their identities through authentic learning experiences, while those in temporary and casual positions were more constrained by an identity perhaps characterised by not belonging and having to prove their worth. Perhaps, then, an aim for teacher education should be to support preservice and early career teachers in developing an identity that embraces membership of both individual schools and the broader teaching community. That is, an understanding of themselves as members of the profession of teachers, accountable and responsible for both taking from and contributing to the community as a whole.

The permanently employed early career teachers in the inquiry began by briefly describing their learners, the culture of the school and the nature of teaching in this context before they described the nature of authentic learning experiences in their classrooms. Important to these teachers (and different from the experienced teachers), was meeting the expectations of and receiving affirmation from external stakeholders such as parents, demonstrating the broader perspective of an identity that encompasses more than the immediate school environment. The connection between this more complex identity that includes external stakeholders and the learning experiences designed is evident in the ways that the learning experiences take the children beyond the school setting and into other communities, such as home and the sporting arena (even if it is only as a ‘reflection’ at this stage).

In the interpretive summary of Phase One of this inquiry, I wrote, ‘Teachers who know what they know can make informed decisions when designing authentic learning experiences for their
Interpreting the findings of Phase Three prompts an amendment to this understanding; Teachers who know what they know and **know who they are** can make informed decisions when designing authentic learning experiences for their students. The growth of a professional identity not only through the accumulation of expertise as a teacher, but as a valued and empowered member of the professional teaching community can equip a teacher with the necessary skills to negotiate change, challenge current thinking and facilitate authentic learning experiences that similarly engage and empower their learners.

**In what ways can early career teachers be supported in developing a professional identity?**

Early career teachers can be supported in the development of a professional identity through their undergraduate learning and into the early phase of their careers through quality teacher education. A theory about how this might be achieved is the focus of the final chapters of this thesis. First, though, it is important to reflect on the findings from the Phase Three action research methodology for the development of a professional identity in early career teachers.

The implementation of a solution that formed Phase Three of the inquiry was underpinned by a number of elements. These were:

- Findings from Phase One
- Design of the solution in Phase Two
- Weekly learning experiences informed by the reactions, responses, interests and identified needs of the early career teachers

Reflection emerged as a key driver for the early career teachers as they developed their own professional identities. Furthermore, reflection was identified as key for the action research guiding the professional development experiences to support this development.

Rodgers (2002) warns against taking the perspective that ‘reflection’ is merely thinking over the events of a day. In explicating this theory, she draws on the work of Dewey to articulate four characteristics of reflective practice:
Reflection is a meaning making process where reflection on one experience takes the learner to a new one.

Reflection is a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking.

Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others.

Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others (Rodgers, 2002, p. 845).

Table 5.13 makes the connection between each of these elements of reflection and the design of the professional development experiences.

| Reflection is a meaning making process where reflection on one experience takes the learner to a new one | - Early career teachers revisited weblog reflections as well as workshop discussion topics in light of new knowledge and in the face of new challenges. This knowledge and these challenges came both from the tutors facilitating the workshops and the early career teachers themselves.  
  - Engaging with the experiences of others led early career teachers to reconsider and critique their own beliefs and practices. |
| Reflection is a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking | - Tasks designed to promote reflection were standard practice in the weekly workshops, conveying the importance of being systematic and rigorous. Professional readings on reflection supported the development of the skills of reflection.  
  - Professional readings examining issues within teaching provided further stimulus for reflection and dialogue. |
| Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others | - Interaction and engagement with others was a basic function of the workshops. Early career teachers were expected to participate, to contribute and to critique within a professional setting, just as they would as a member of a school staff.  
  - Reflections recorded as weblogs on the community website afforded further insight and opportunity for early career teachers to collaborate both with like minds and with those whose beliefs challenged their own. |
| Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others | - Throughout the implementation of the solution a climate of professional respect was developed through the promotion of dialogue and the use of professional rather than personal language to build knowledge.  
  - Weblog reflections and those shared in discussions created a sense of collegiality and empathy as the early career teachers realised and acknowledged the similarities between and among themselves in terms of their experiences and their developing perceptions of teaching. |
Reflection as the key to professional development and growth has been established in education research, (see Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bintz & Dillard, 2007; Ostorga, 2006; Rocco, 2008; Rodgers, 2002). The findings of this inquiry extend on the notion of reflection to build a sense not only of ‘being’ a teacher, but further, of the responsibility a teacher has to operate as an active and accountable professional of the teaching community.

As outlined in Chapter Four, the design of the solution acknowledges the complex challenges facing preservice teachers in transition. Consequently the design of the solution draws on a range of research findings around teacher education, professional identity, reflection and authentic learning. These research findings are used as a frame to respond to the final research question guiding this inquiry:

- Reflection affords personal and professional growth (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bintz & Dillard, 2007; Ostorga, 2006; Rocco, 2008; Rodgers, 2002).
- Learning occurs through active engagement, reflection and time spent discussing and exploring classroom practice in individual school contexts in connection with theory (Walkington, 2005).
- Observation of teachers at work without discussion, critique and reflection is insufficient for understanding the metacognitive processes of classroom teachers (Brown, 2009).

**Reflection affords personal and professional growth**

Throughout the implementation of the solution, many opportunities were given for reflection in a range of ways. Some examples are:

- Posting responses to open questions on the BEST website
- Group professional dialogue with broad focus questions to frame discussion
- Analysis of classroom work product followed by reflection on one’s own practice

Walkington (2005) observes that reflection promotes in teachers the confidence to think flexibly, to make informed judgements and to participate in ongoing change. These are certainly valuable skills for teachers to develop as they commence their teaching careers.
This inquiry supported the development of professional identity by providing opportunities for reflection. Reflection began informally, with a focus on sharing, on encouraging participation and a sense of being a teacher who belongs to this group. Informal sharing at the beginning of each workshop encouraged teachers to share stories of practice (both positive and negative) with their colleagues in a casual setting that allowed the early career teachers to build on each other’s stories, to affirm, challenge and learn from one another as they engaged with teacher peers. These opportunities were observed to build relationships, trust, empathy and understanding and even friendships between members. These relationships were reflected in the more formal workshop tasks such as online blogs, written reflections and writing tasks, group tasks and analysis of work product and teacher resources. An example of the development of reflection, relationships and growth appeared in a response (one of many) to Jasmine’s account of a fistfight that occurred in the Year 6 classroom when she was casual teaching. Melinda responded,

Wow [Jasmine], I think I really needed to hear your account of this fight. I can see myself having to deal with similar issues at school. It is interesting to hear how you handled it, because I think if I was put in a similar position I might find myself acting on impulse. I’m not sure if any reason would even come into my head, but I know I’d be flustered! I think you handled it very well, and I'm not sure I would have known what to do if I hadn't read this. Yes, I'm sure I'll be recalling this blog some time this year. Although it sux having to be the punching bag! (BP3.4)

Rocco (2008, p. 304) states, ‘Writing, especially writing that unknown others will read is an emotionally risky and challenging business’. The current inquiry supported early career teachers to make this investment through the development of relationships. Nowhere in Melinda’s response is she critical or dismissive. Rather, she indicates to Jasmine her admiration for her actions as a teacher, the value of sharing her story and then seeks further collegial interaction.

Connections made in the workshop setting afforded deeper engagement in more challenging tasks. Further, they contributed to a climate where participants valued the notion of trying something new, of testing out beliefs and of reflecting on new learning in
connection with existing beliefs.

But this achievement has value beyond the immediate setting. Supporting the development of reflective practice is powerful beyond enhancing interactions between and among early career teachers in tutorial workshops. Steffy and Wolfe (1998) argue that professional teachers value observation, reflection and interaction as important elements of their ongoing professional development. Indeed, Terry’s data support this as he grapples with the notion of quality teaching versus the expectations of executive members of schools for casual teachers. Terry’s shock at being told by the school’s deputy principal, ‘as long as they’re quiet and they’re doing their work, I don’t mind’ (SI28.2a) forced him to question the school’s focus on learning and his own place within that school setting. The ability to interact as a teaching professional can support the desires many of the early career teachers in this inquiry identified in relation to being accepted as a teacher, looking like or sounding like a teacher or being considered a teacher (as reported in the early career teacher cases previously in this chapter).

Early career teachers familiar with these methods of renewal and engagement within the profession may be empowered to participate earlier and more confidently with their more experienced and expert colleagues in a range of teaching communities. Further, they are positioned to confront the power imbalances present between experienced and less experienced teachers (Brown, 2009) in ways that are familiar to this more experienced cohort. Their ability to participate in appropriate ways can allow them to stand firm under the sometimes present pressure to unquestioningly ‘perpetuate the behaviour and beliefs of existing teachers’ (Walkington, 2005, p. 63). Or even to respond professionally and assertively to unpleasant experiences such as ‘being called “Casual” as if that’s my name’ (Melinda, SI4.3c) or simply being ‘ignored’ in the staffroom, a common experience shared by the casual teaching early career teachers. Careful facilitation of methods of reflection in a range of settings and for a range of purposes in this inquiry supported the development of professional identity and engagement with others within the professional teaching community.
Learning occurs through active engagement, reflection and time spent discussing and exploring classroom practice in individual school contexts in connection with theory

Walkington (2005) argues that preservice teachers need opportunities to spend time. That is, time in observation of teachers in classrooms, time discussing and exploring that which they observed and time reflecting on the connections between their observations, their own experiences and the literature. This inquiry supports Walkington’s (2005) argument.

Jasmine enthusiastically shares her opinion of being given time,

I love the moments as class commences. Fellow teachers both permanent and casual come in with tired smiles, sit down and share about their day - brilliant integration ideas, catastrophic lesson plans and behaviour management strategies spill into the conversation as we settle in. (WD29.5b)

The teachers in this inquiry were supported making these important connections by sharing personal experiences thus far. Because the teachers in this inquiry were employed in casual, temporary, part time and even full time positions, the experiences they shared highlighted varying advantages, challenges and pressing concerns in a range of settings.

Observed as particularly supportive was the engagement in professional dialogue in response to scholarly literature. The provision of time, the expectation that all participants could and would contribute to the discussion and public posting of the discussion increased in the early career teachers the sense of accountability in contributing to the community. They were motivated by ‘having something to say’ as well as the responsibility to articulate those beliefs and opinions in a professional and informed manner.

Early career teacher professional identity is described as somewhat underdeveloped and fragile, prone to curtailment when challenged (Pietsch & Williamson, 2005) and that a more ‘robust’ identity is required. Cattley (2007) argues that an identity that is based on a broader understanding of the complexities of teaching can achieve this aim. Opportunities to practice voicing one’s opinion, to justify one’s beliefs in connection with both theory and practice and to challenge and be challenged could potentially build a greater resilience in
early career teacher professional identity. Furthermore, it could prepare early career teachers for the less predictable challenges of the school setting. An example from within the workshop settings is as follows. Using the stories collected from the experienced teachers in Phase One, a series of vignettes was written, describing different teachers’ approaches to setting up the classroom learning environment at the start of a new year (Appendix F). They were created to promote discussion about the ways that a teacher’s beliefs and values are reflected in their practice. The early career teachers discussed the ways that they identified with the different ‘teachers’, justified their decisions and considered the justifications of others who identified with different teachers. This was followed by a reflection on the ways that their classroom environment reflects their beliefs about learning and their role as the teacher. This is an example of the ways that theory and practice can be brought together to consider what Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson (2003, p. 1401) call a ‘concept of teaching’ and one’s role within this concept.

This inquiry demonstrated that opportunities to ‘be’ a teacher within the workshop and to engage with teachers working in a range of settings created a climate where professional identity could develop and the broad nature of teaching could be examined.

**Observation of teachers at work without discussion, critique and reflection is insufficient for understanding the metacognitive processes of classroom teachers**

Brown (2009) argues that observing teachers at work in classrooms without opportunities for reflection, discussion and critique results merely in replication of that which is observed rather than deep understanding of that which motivates the observed teacher to behave in these ways. Therefore, Brown argues, that those new to the profession will remain pedagogically ill equipped for enacting change. Observation without reflection on the metacognitive processes of the actions leave early career teachers poorly armed for decision making based on connections between theory and practice (Brown, 2009). Consequently, the professional development experiences facilitated in this inquiry attempted to draw teachers to consider the metacognitive processes behind their observations. In the first instance, experiences such as these allowed the early career teachers to make connections
between observations and theory. Further, engaging in the tasks afford exploration of their own identity in terms of the kind of teacher they wanted to be. Two examples of the type of experiences provided are now briefly revisited.

*Teacher wisdom stories:* Opportunities were provided where the early career teachers invited more experienced colleagues to share their wisdom (Labbo et al., 2003) around a certain topic. The early career teachers were then expected to respond to the stories by reflecting on their own experiences, understandings and intentions.

*Student work samples:* The teachers analysed student work samples and the responses that classroom teachers had made. Groups developed hypotheses about what sort of teacher had set the task. That is, what the teacher believed about its purpose, what they valued as ‘learning’ for this student and how they believed the child had interpreted the task.

A new perspective on the identities of the teachers was revealed as they considered what it was they wanted from the learners engaging in the learning experiences they designed, considering the question, *What sort of learners do you want to develop* opened discussion to further explore the depth of each teacher’s beliefs about teaching.

**Conclusion**

Phase Three of this inquiry examined the premise that early career teachers can be supported to develop their professional identity through a series of professional development experiences. It endeavoured to foster the development of confident and resilient identities that can equip early career teachers to plan and organise authentic learning experiences, to justify chosen teaching approaches and to respond professionally to the challenges arising from their interactions with other professionals. Emerging from the data are principles for the development of a professional identity in early career teachers. These are discussed in Chapter Six, along with the notion of professional identity as understanding who one is in their teaching story, the kind of teacher one strives to be and the types of learners that one aims to develop.
Chapter 6

Discussion
Overview

In my ongoing quest for teaching theories, I have encountered and been attracted as a teacher to many ideas that seemed intuitively right, on the mark, visionary and ethically responsible, yet with no obvious practical consequence. (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 140)

The design of this inquiry and the identified methodological approaches support the making of connections between the theory of professional identity development and the practice of teaching for it. This chapter moves now to report on design-based research Phase Four, the final within this approach, where principles are identified that inform both practice and theory (See Figure 6.1).

The chapter begins by revisiting and reflecting on the design of the inquiry as detailed in Chapter Three. Revisiting the methodology is useful as a reminder of the ways that the different methodologies fit with the design-based research phases as the inquiry moves into its final stages. Reflection on the methodology affords the making of connections between the methodological and analytical elements of the design and the findings from analysis of the data. From the findings, a theory for the development of professional identity has emerged. This theory is represented as a model for the development of professional identity in early career teachers (Figure 6.2). Included in this theory are principles for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The relationships between and among the principles are discussed as the theory is explicated. The chapter concludes with a summary of the inquiry.
Reflecting on the design of the inquiry

Identifying and listing a number of principles is the most common outcome of design-based research, as it attempts to support the advancement of knowledge about theoretical methodologies as well as practical applications for practitioners. However, Reeves (2000) and van den Akker (1999) argue that an alternative orientation toward processes such as models and flow charts is equally powerful in achieving the aims of the approach. Identifying a process rather than a list is the orientation adopted for this inquiry. As outlined in Chapter Three, this inquiry afforded deep engagement in each of the Phases to complete a single iteration that examined the development of professional identity through the ability to design and facilitate authentic learning experiences. Identified in this inquiry are principles for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. It is these four principles that form part of the theory for the development of professional identity in early career teachers presented as a model in Figure 6.2.

A strength of this study is its location within the qualitative paradigm and the underpinning ethnographic principles, namely, understanding, interpretation and multiple realities; process; phenomenology; and naturalism and holism (Burns, 1995). These principles allow for the acknowledgement of individual practitioners, their beliefs and practices and the contexts within which they operate (Burns, 1995). Such perspectives supported the production of a rich account of the growing and changing identities and actions of teachers in professional communities in this inquiry. This was especially powerful in developing an understanding of the differences between not only experienced and early career teachers, but also the ways that different workplace commitments (such as full time or casual teaching) impact on the development and strength of early career teachers’ professional identities.

Action research was used to guide and transform the intervention that formed Phase Three of the inquiry. Stringer (2004) argues that the rigorous and systematic approach of action research produces ‘new knowledge and understanding…to improve educational practices…to see the world in a different way and therefore do things differently’ (p. 13).
Revealed in the analysis of these data are implications for a particular approach to teacher education for supporting the development of an identity that can thrive in the teaching community. This inquiry adopted Mertler’s (2006) action research model (see Figure 3.4, p.81) as the stages of planning, acting, developing and reflecting along with a focus on the process of teaching and learning (Cole & Knowles, 2000) fit well with the ongoing design of learning experiences that have the potential to enhance the development of a professional identity in early career teachers.

Data gathered throughout the inquiry were analysed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This allowed analysis to begin from the first data collection event and to continue throughout the identified Phases of data collection. The constant comparative method complemented the process orientated action research methodology by providing increasingly informed perspectives on the data through deep analysis and prolonged engagement with the participant data. The process of fragmentation and then connection (Boeije, 2002) allowed data from each participant to be considered in isolation from its surrounding context and then within the complex environments with which the participants were engaged. The constant comparative method of analysis was particularly useful in providing insight into the different ways professional identity is developed or impeded in the early days of teaching. These insights prompted reflection on the ways that teacher education might support this diversity of needs.

The stories from the experienced teachers in Phase One contributed much to the depth of understanding about established professional identities achieved in this inquiry. Analysis of their data revealed the complexity of planning and facilitating authentic learning experiences that take the learner beyond the walls of the classroom and into the communities to which they belong. They revealed a deep understanding of the connections between theory and practice, a sense of responsibility for their learners and their learning. Further, Phase One data analysis revealed in these experienced teachers a commitment to growth and development of themselves as teachers as well as a commitment to active participation in the professional community of teachers. It is the stories from these teachers along with the research literature that informed the design of the solution and its facilitation.
in Phase Three. Analysis of the data collected throughout Phase Three suggests that the learning experiences designed to promote an understanding of these perspectives on teaching began the process of developing the professional identities of the early career teacher participants. What finally began to emerge from all the analysis of all these data is a set of clear principles or what could be called an emerging theory that illuminates the development of a professional identity in early career teachers. This theory has the potential to become a blueprint to guide teacher educators in the development of professional identity in early career teachers.

The development of professional identity in early career teachers

The theory demonstrates that for a professional identity to begin to develop there is a need to activate in early career teachers an identity of professional responsibility, one that is resilient in the face of change and durable across time and space. Such an identity equips all teachers to consider, respond, develop and reflect in the face of success and challenges, affirmation and criticism throughout their careers. The principles inherent in the theory can be viewed as strategies for the development of this identity of responsibility as early career teachers consider:

- Their own learning and development
- The learning and development of their students
- Their obligation to be active participants as both consumer and contributor to the professional community of teachers

A visual representation of the theory has been designed in order to best explain the general principles and the relationships between and among them. It is important to note that any visual representation in a print-based text must be two-dimensional and can appear hierarchical and rather static. The model presented as Figure 6.2 should be considered multidimensional and dynamic. It is an attempt to depict the complexity of the 'interrelatedness' and overlapping nature of the principles inherent within the theory and thus it can serve the purpose of mapping the territory.
This model is now explained. Each element of the model (diagrammatically represented as Figures 6.2a, 6.2b, 6.2c) is explicated as a theory for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The process begins at the centre of the model with an exploration of the development of an identity that is durable, resilient and responsible.

Questions of identity:

1. Systematic reflection
2. Professional dialogue
3. Active participation in the professional teaching community
4. Connecting theory and practice
5. What kind of teacher do I want to be?
6. Where am I in my teaching story?
7. What kind of learners do I want to develop?

Figure 6.2 - A theory for the development of professional identity in early career teachers
Professional identity:

Teacher education approaches for the development of professional identity are not new:

- Acknowledged is the importance of interactions between experienced and early career teachers as they explore their new teaching environment (Boyer et al., 2004; Labbo et al., 2003; Margolis, 2008; McCormack et al., 2006).

- The somewhat fragile nature of the emerging professional identity is also documented as being in need of protection and nurturing in the preservice setting in an effort to reduce the shock of making the transition to teacher (Cattley, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2006b; O'Connor & Scanlon, 2006; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001).

- Challenges for early career teachers are identified along with ‘solutions’ such as journal writing (McCormack et al., 2004; Rocco, 2008), blogging to create community (Herrington et al., 2006; Kervin, Mantei, & Herrington, 2009; Luehmann, 2008) or time spent engaged in professional dialogue with a range of practitioners (Beattie, 2000; Labbo et al., 2003; Walkington, 2005).

- Reflection has been comprehensively examined in connection with the development of professional identity (Bintz & Dillard, 2007; Buchanan, 2006; Cattley, 2007; Ostorga, 2006; Rocco, 2008; Rodgers, 2002; Walkington, 2005) This is often partnered with the notion of reflective questions about one’s identity, such as *Who am I in the story of my teaching?* or *What sort of teacher do I want to be?* (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Korthagen, 2004; Sachs, 1999; Walkington, 2005).
This inquiry draws and extends on the implications and recommendations presented in these findings to explore the potential for developing professional identity in early career teachers engaged at different capacities in schools. Danielewicz (2001) claims that her approach to teacher education is ‘based on the assumption that it is possible and desirable to encourage identity development’ (p. 133). This inquiry argues similarly that professional identity can indeed be ‘taught’, not in the way that assumes a set of skills is learned and stored as an increasing bank of knowledge, but in that the process of carefully planning and facilitating quality learning experiences will provide the environment and opportunities for learners to deepen their understanding of themselves as teachers. This is achieved through time spent in reflection on identity, on the design of learning experiences and through professional dialogue in a range of settings.

Danielewicz (2001) identified ten principles for teacher education for the development of professional identity emerging from her research with secondary school preservice teachers in America. She argues that teacher education programs should be ‘situated, authentic contexts where they are an organic part of a discourse community that includes real schools, teachers, students…and any other people usually present in schools’ (p. 182). Danielewicz’s (2001) ‘pedagogy for identity development’ focuses on interactions and relationships between and among preservice teachers, teacher educators and classroom practitioners.

Similarities are evident between Danielewicz’s (2001) research and the findings of this inquiry. Both identify the role of dialogue, making theory/practice connections and the need to identify oneself as part of a professional teaching community in developing identities that can withstand the challenges of being an early career teacher. Further, evident in the findings of both Danielewicz’s research and this inquiry is the commitment to developing in each person an identity that is strong enough to counteract the various challenges and pressures that early career teachers face. Examples of such pressures include the complex challenge of teaching and learning to teach simultaneously and the pressure sometimes exerted from existing staff for new teachers to conform to the school’s existing ‘safe’ methods, which are often based on outdated pedagogies.
Dissimilarities are also evident between Danielewicz’s (2001) principles and the findings of this inquiry. These variations can be attributed in the first instance to the different perspectives gathered from conducting research with Australian primary school teachers early in their careers. Further variations are possibly due to the different research designs, application and combinations of theory within each inquiry. An obvious departure between the findings of this inquiry and Danielewicz’s research is the way that each defines the role of reflection to develop professional identity. Danielwicz (2001) rejected reflection or reflective practice as a principle for the development of professional identity in favour of reflexivity. Reflexivity is described as a more proactive approach to professional development because it requires introspection prior to taking action (Ryan, 2005), whilst reflection involves considering one’s interactions after an event has occurred (Schon, 1983). Rothman (1997, p. 36, cited in Darling, 1998) defines reflexivity as ‘delaying the instinctive and unexamined reactions to external stimulus and analysing them before responding’.

Danielwicz defined reflection as ‘the experience of contemplation, moments of quiet thinking that have no inherent critical function’ and identified it therefore as ‘less potent for identity development’ (p. 156). This is a view not shared by the findings of this inquiry. Rather, Dewey’s more complex concept of reflection is adopted where reflection is defined as ‘the intentional endeavour to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous’ (p. 892). Moreover, the complexity of reflective practice is further acknowledged through Rodger’s later work connecting Dewey’s theories to education, where reflection is defined as a ‘meaning making process that deepens understandings’, ‘a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking’ and an interactive activity that values both personal and intellectual growth (2002, p. 845). From this perspective, reflection and developing reflective practitioners is a key principle in the theory promoted in this inquiry about the ways that early career teachers can be supported in the development of professional identity.

Findings from this inquiry broaden the focus on what it is to be a teacher and what this means beyond a personal perspective of self. Emerging from the findings is an
understanding of the need for teachers to develop beliefs about the kind of learners they aim to develop through the design of classroom learning experiences. This fresh perspective on identity in connection with the design and facilitation of learning experiences has emerged from the theory/practice connection between beliefs about learning and therefore the learning experiences that teachers design. A focus on the students in connection with professional identity advances the theory of professional identity and its relationship to the design of authentic learning experiences. From a practical perspective, such knowledge can be used within teacher education and professional development settings to support teachers as they face the challenges of the education ‘revolution’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007c) and the changed demands of learners.

Mockler and Sachs (2006) argue that a teacher’s professional identity requires ‘a conscious shift from being compliant technicians and functionaries serving the interests of a system to being transformative professionals serving the interests of the students they teach and the communities in which they work’ (p. 6). Analyses of data in this inquiry support this argument, as they reveal the value of:
- An identity that is capable of such change
- An identity that is durable, resilient and responsible
- One that allows the teacher to enact their beliefs in the classroom,
- One that actively seeks to transform the face of teaching
The notions of durability, resilience and responsibility are now examined.

**Durable**

A durable identity is one that is robust and enduring. Pietsch and Williamson found that the professional identities of teachers beginning their careers are ‘beset by fragility’ (2005, p. 369) as the demands of early career teaching set in. This poses challenges for their ability or likelihood to commit to the teaching profession (Hammerness et al., 2005; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005) and for active and meaningful progression through the career cycle (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Building a durable identity is desirable for attaining this commitment. An identity that fixes on a single ‘right’ way to teach cannot sustain passion
and enthusiasm for teaching and commitment to the changing nature of teaching. But an identity that can survive the challenges, setbacks and, most importantly, change that characterises teaching is one that will support a teacher throughout the life cycle of their career.

Like participant early career teachers in other studies, the early career teachers at the beginning of this inquiry demonstrated the expected uncertainty, self-doubt and unrealistic sense of what they could achieve in classrooms. Durability in identity was observed to develop at different rates and in different ways throughout the inquiry, but it was the ‘public’ nature of the learning experiences where the strengthening of identities was observed. Activities within the professional development experiences were designed to promote durability of identity in a range of ways. Some required participants to form and articulate professional opinions through dialogue. Others challenged them to interact with colleagues through sharing of formal reflections (digital and print based) about their teaching and by making responses to the reflections of others. These activities were designed to provide the early career teachers with the time and space to ‘try out’ their developing understandings in a supported learning environment of peers. Affirmation and like experiences appeared to act as fuel for the development of a stronger identity as the early career teachers shared their identities. The emerging understandings about building durability in identity presents a challenge for teacher educators in their own design and facilitation of learning experiences.

**Resilient**

An identity that is resilient responds flexibly to challenges and adapts successfully to change. Much of the literature on resilience is focused on classroom teachers developing resiliency in children and young people (see Dellar, 2008; Hristofski, 2008; Litner & Mann-Feder, 2009; McEntire, 2009; Prosser, 2008; Russo & Boman, 2007; Thomas, 2009; Thornton, 2008), but the responsibility remains undiminished for teacher educators working with preservice teachers. Early career teachers need to have increasingly resilient professional identities as they engage with new pedagogies and become ‘transformative professionals’ (Mockler & Sachs, 2006, p. 6) for schools of the future. It is the early career
teacher with a resilient identity who will be able to adapt more easily to the identified gap between the reality of the classroom and their perceptions of teaching developed through their experiences as a student, observations during practicum experiences and preservice training (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2007; MacGregor, 2009; McCormack et al., 2004; Rocco, 2008; Walkington, 2005). In this inquiry, participant teachers demonstrated increasing resilience as they engaged with and reflected on the designed learning experiences.

As the early career teachers took opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs in light of their experiences, the experiences of others and literature through the workshop tasks, they demonstrated an increasing capacity to consider, challenge, adapt and modify existing elements of their identities. Reflections occurred first in relation to themselves as ‘teachers’, their preconceptions about teaching and the sorts of teachers they want to be. However, by facilitating workshop learning experiences so that the practical was considered alongside the theoretical, they were able to consider the ways their identities impact the design and facilitation of the lessons in their own classrooms.

**Responsible**

In this inquiry, teachers with an identity of responsibility acknowledged their accountability in a range of ways. First, they indicated their responsibility for providing quality learning environments for learners and for their own ongoing professional growth. Further, they indicated their responsibility to behave, communicate and interact with others as professional teachers. The literature identifies new responsibilities for teachers in a changed educational climate:

- In catering for the increased diversity of students in classrooms
- In planning around increasing resource gaps in home/school settings
- In considering global benchmarks
- In teaching about new literacies emerging from computer technologies
(Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Comber & Reid, 2006; Rudd & Smith, 2007b; Sefton-Green & Nixon, 2003). The data in this inquiry revealed that each of the experienced teachers interviewed in Phase One possessed a depth of professional responsibility.

Each of the experienced teachers held full time teaching positions and demonstrated a deep connection with their schools, their communities and their students. Further, they revealed in their identities a sense of responsibility for their own participation in the broader professional community of teachers. This was apparent in their attitudes towards education settings beyond their own school community. For example, they identified a clear understanding of the place of their teaching within the school’s broader systemic context. Further, they described a commitment to both acquiring and providing professional development in both formal and informal settings. This commitment was demonstrated through their memberships to professional organisations as well as their submissions to professional publications within these organisations. A focus on the development of a sense of responsibility was incorporated within the professional development experiences facilitated in Phase Three of the inquiry.

Initial data analysis indicated that the early career teachers’ notion of professional responsibility centred on responding to stakeholders through assessment and reporting and knowledge of content and curriculum along with other mandatory policies and procedures such as Occupational Health and Safety, Duty of Care and Protective Behaviours (PDW1). Analysis of data gathered at the culmination of the intervention, however, indicated a shift in understanding of the responsibilities of a teacher. These later findings revealed that the early career teachers considered their professional responsibilities more broadly:
- To ensure the students experience meaningful and engaging learning
- Quality teaching, planning and reflection on teaching
- Ongoing professional development and to ‘give skills to students which will allow them to become contributing members of society’ (PDW11).

The professional development experiences appear to have supported the development of a deepened understanding of professional responsibility, especially in connection with professional learning and the provision of quality experiences for learners.
Questions of identity

The literature argues that developing a professional identity involves an exploration of what kind of teacher one wants to be and who one is in the story of their teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Korthagen, 2004; Sachs, 1999). The findings of this inquiry extend on these questions of identity to include a focus on one’s place in the teaching profession as well as a focus on learners and the types of learners one aims to develop. Questions of identity (Figure 6.2b) are represented in the outer layer of the model for the theory of the development of professional identity. These questions are now discussed in connection with other elements of the model and the data.

Figure 6.2b - Questions of identity

What kind of teacher do I want to be?

It is acknowledged in the literature and a finding of this inquiry that many teachers revert to traditional pedagogical approaches within their initial years of teaching for a range of reasons. Making the transition from preservice to inservice teacher is challenging and complex in nature. Existing in many schools is the pressure to ‘fit in’ with the culture of a school (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Rocco, 2008). Furthermore there is often a level of
expectation that early career teachers already ‘know’ how to teach as a result of their university studies and therefore, there is considerable pressure to ‘look’ or ‘sound’ like a teacher (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Flores & Day, 2006; Korthagen, 2004; Rocco, 2008). Teacher educators can support those who are learning to teach by creating environments that encourage preservice teachers to reflect on the different perspectives and characteristics of ‘being’ a teacher.

Identifying and maintaining a focus on the kind of teacher one aims to be is an important strategy for early career teachers to develop as they face the daily challenges of classroom teaching. The early career teachers in this inquiry considered this question in connection with theory and practice through reflection and dialogue as they examined the sorts of teaching practices they had observed and those that they had tried. They explored the often present gap between the beliefs and action and hypothesised the reasons for such inconsistencies. The act of identifying, describing and justifying their decisions about the types of teaching they strive for was observed in this inquiry to support the development of identity and to focus the early career teachers on learning to teach as a process or a cycle within which they must continue to move and grow.

Where am I in my teaching story?

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) encourage teachers to explore their identity by considering who they are in their teaching stories and in their schools. In this inquiry, the experienced teachers demonstrated a strong connection to the schools in which they worked. For example, Daphne talked about ‘these children’ and the value of the stories they had to share (SI13.12b), while Meredith described what ‘these children need’ in connection with their life experiences to date (SI10.12a). Similarly, Paul described the particular needs of his students in connection with the community and its ‘traditional parent body’ (SI10.12Bb), while Justin explained, ‘Children nowadays, certainly in [this suburb], they love socialising a lot in terms of group work - they like that’ (SI5.12b).
The experienced teachers appeared keenly attuned to a particular community, the needs of the children within it and their role in providing appropriate learning experiences within this community.

Pietsch and Williamson (2005) observe that the development of identities of belonging and of building relationships is best achieved through stable and supportive workplace environments. The reality for many teachers beginning their careers, though, is that they are denied access to full time and permanent teaching roles. They begin their teaching careers in part time and casual teaching positions and most receive at best ‘inadequate and unmanaged’ induction from their colleagues and superiors (Ewing & Manuel, 2005, p. 12; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Pietsch & Williamson, 2004). This was the case for the early career participants in this inquiry. Of the ten, one had secured a permanent position, one a permanent part time position and the others had either temporary contracts or worked in casual teaching positions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the teachers working in casual teaching positions demonstrated less connection or sense of belonging to the professional community than did the teachers holding full and part time contracts.

For example, Bernice expressed surprise about the ‘huge range of things they [teachers] do’ (SI13.3c), apparently not including herself in this group. Further Melinda described the challenges of casual work in connection with a sense of belonging (or, in fact, not belonging),

...when I’ve walked in [to the staffroom] maybe it was just me because I’m not very experienced, I’ve walked in and felt - people have looked at me and looked away. And it’s sort of like, “Oh this is going to be a great day!” I mean I’m just a casual, and at some schools I’m treated like I am just a casual. (SI4.3c)

Jasmine’s reflections were similar,

While some teachers welcome you in with open arms, I’ve discovered you can come across those who couldn't care less that you're there. I do realise we are “just casuals” but a smile wouldn't go astray! (BP6.3)
Further evidence of the feeling of disconnectedness is seen in the ways children are described at different times by the casual teaching early career teachers. In blog postings and interviews, some of the children were described as ‘feral’ (Terry, SI28.2a), ‘very rude’ and ‘badly behaved’ (Breanna, BP6.3), ‘raucous’ (Jasmine, BP3.4), ‘whingey and silly’ (Nicole, BP6.3) and ‘constantly disruptive’ (Melinda, BP13.3). It must be noted, however, that not all of the early career teachers expressed negative attitudes toward the children and there were, of course, positive comments as well. However, these comments are a stark contrast to the experienced teachers’ descriptions of their students as ‘a great bunch of kids’ (Tonia, SI13.12c), ‘wonderful little kids’ (Stan, SI6.12c) and ‘beautiful children’ (Jenna, SI5.12a). It could be that each of the teacher’s descriptions of the students in their classes (both experienced and early career teachers) is a reflection of a sense of belonging to that school community through the relationships they have or have not had an opportunity to develop.

The question, Where am I in my teaching story, rather than who am I allows a teacher to take stock of their progress through their professional journey. They can view these early experiences as just one part of the path they are following and consider the opportunities to work toward being the kind of teacher they strive to be. Taking this process oriented view allows them to make adjustments to this path in light of their new understandings and possibly to take heart during these challenging early years. To shift the focus from linking an identity with the teaching community as a whole (as well as to a single school) allows teachers with fragmented workplace arrangements to continue to develop and grow their identities as teachers. It can emphasise the realities of teaching over the ideal. It can develop an identity that can capitalise on opportunities for transformative teaching in their present situations while identifying other opportunities that must wait.

Teacher educators can use carefully planned learning experiences to support early career teachers to perceive their identity as a developmental process. In this inquiry, the teachers considered the range of smaller teacher communities to which they belonged, identified their place within them and then shared these perspectives with their peers. For example, during professional dialogue activities, the early career teachers were observed deep in
conversation with each other about the demands placed on them in their different settings, expectations of staff, the expertise that they brought to the group and the way that this was perceived by the other teachers in the group. A developing understanding appeared to emerge as the early career teachers identified areas where their communities ‘welcomed’ their initiative, expertise and input and places where such practice was discouraged. Rather than becoming disheartened by the episodes where the early career teachers experienced rejection, the opportunity for dialogue appeared to support the development of resilience and durability. It appeared to strengthen their resolve to ‘keep trying’ or to ‘try again’ in their own work settings.

**What kind of learners do I want to develop?**

The final question of identity examined in the theory for the development of professional identity in early career teachers turns the teachers’ attention to their beliefs about learners. The changing demands for successful participation in the literate practices of communities both now and into the future have been well documented in the literature and examined in the review of the literature in Chapter Two. Harste (2003) argues that children learn more about what it is to be literate outside the school than within it and declares that this is a situation that must change. Similar arguments are advanced in Gee’s (2003, 2004) research about the power and potential of out of school literacies and in Hill’s (2004a, 2004b; Hill & Broadhurst, 2002) observations about the digital practices of young children. Further, Jonassen (2003a, 2003b) identifies the gap between the complexity of problems in the real world and the often contrived simplicity of school based problem solving. In meeting a community’s demands, Comber (2005) argues that children must be empowered so they can operate as flexible and creative problem solvers. Therefore, teachers must continue to reflect on and mature their beliefs about the kinds of learners they are striving to develop if they are to meet these learners’ needs. Part of one’s identity is understanding what it is you are trying to achieve through the design and facilitation of authentic learning experiences.

Learning experiences designed to support early career teachers in the development of their professional identity included a focus on the needs of learners now in comparison to their
needs in previous years. Through these tasks, the early career teachers examined their existing preconceptions about teaching. Further, they examined their beliefs about their role in the teaching and learning cycle as well as the roles of the students. Analysis of the reflections posted on the BEST website as weblogs revealed a growing openness among the teachers to reconsidering their beliefs and to a developing understanding of the need for schools to change. In one experience, the early career teachers conducted an analysis of student work samples from the classrooms of the Phase One experienced teacher participants. They considered the rationale behind the design of the task and how the task itself reflected the beliefs each teacher held about learners and learning. Being able to consider what learners need and what one might achieve with these learners in the time available (for example, a casual day, or a year of full time teaching) appeared to empower the early career teachers in this inquiry to consider the potential of the design of their own learning experiences to meet these needs.

**Summing Up**

Three questions of identity have been posed in the theory for development of professional identity in early career teachers. These questions have emerged from an understanding of the ways that the professional development experiences of Phase Three of the inquiry appeared to support the development of professional identity. Furthermore, the theory has emerged from a growing awareness of the complexity of professional identity beyond a sole focus on one’s own action and self-perception. During Phase Three, the questions of identity were examined through the four principles of the theory depicted in the middle section of the model for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. It is these principles that shaped the learning experiences of the professional development experiences.
Principles for early career teacher professional identity development

Four principles for the development of professional identity are advanced in the theory emerging from this inquiry. The four principles shape the teaching strategies for a teacher educator to consider for supporting learners to explore the questions of identity in the development of a durable, resilient and responsible professional identity. That is to say, the principles are the ‘action’ elements of the theory. It is through these that teacher educators create an environment that aims to foster the development of professional identity. The principles for the development of professional identity in early career teachers are represented in Figure 6.2c. As this section of the theory is explicated, each principle is examined in connection with the literature and emerging findings from this inquiry.

Figure 6.2c - Principles for early career teacher professional identity development
The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through systematic reflection on existing beliefs in connection with personal experience, the experiences of others and the literature

It is the role of teacher educators to teach their students how to reflect, lest they fall into common trap of believing that reflection is simply thinking back over an experience, or ‘moments of quiet thinking that have no inherent critical function’ (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 156). In this inquiry, the act of reflection was explicitly taught through modelling and the deconstruction of reflective blog postings. Key features of description, justification and analysis within the reflective texts were identified and discussed as the early career teachers considered their own approaches to reflection in connection with the demands of participating in the teaching community.

Professional reading, modelling and discussion throughout the tutorial workshops afforded the participant early career teachers opportunities to explore the complexity of reflection as described in the literature, to examine their own preconceptions about its importance and about themselves as reflective practitioners. Reflections in this inquiry took a number of forms: formal and informal, written and verbal, collaborative and individual. It was the combination of these that was observed to support the development of professional identity in the early career teachers as they moved beyond describing the events in their teaching to analysing them.

Statements and observations about their abilities and approaches to reflection revealed a deepened understanding of its complexity, its relationship to quality teaching and its connection with the development of professional identity. For example, Terry described his change in attitude,

At the start I found it difficult to reflect and be critical of my teaching, but now I have been able to see that teaching is a complex occupation, one that takes time and effort in order to be most effective. (WD29.5)
Jordan described the relationship between reflection and her identity,

My reflections changed over time as I gained more experience I tended to be able to relate the topics, my experiences in the class or with parents etc. your own personality, motivation, knowledge, skills and life experiences can effect how you learn to teach and the teacher you become. (WD29.5a)

Nicole reflected on her ‘place’ in schools,

…at the current moment I see myself different from other teachers as I do not have my own class…I find that I have to play a different role to the normal classroom teacher…. After reading other people’s reflective blogs I have noticed…that they see themselves not solely related to the classroom but also colleagues, wider school community, and to the wider community. I also have these roles and need to take them into deeper consideration. (WD29.5a).

And Caroline demonstrated increasing awareness and the value of reflection for quality teaching, ‘I find myself doing this more and more. I ask myself at the end of the day – Where was the learning in today’s work? rather than What did I teach today?’ (WD29.5A).

This inquiry revealed that the principle of reflection to support the development of professional identity in early career teachers has clear connections to pondering the questions of identity as they considered who they were, where they belonged and what their learners required. The principle of reflection interacts too with the other principles of the theory for the development of professional identity and these connections will become clear as each is explicated.
The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through opportunities for professional dialogue with a range of practitioners in connection with experiences and literature

As with opportunities for reflection, the tutorial workshops designed as Phase Three of this inquiry facilitated professional dialogue as both formal and informal interactions. Informal interactions occurred through whole class and group discussion and the initial sharing of selves at the beginning of each workshop. Jasmine described the value of informal dialogue,

> I love the moments as class commences. Fellow teachers both permanent and casual come in with tired smiles, sit down and share about their day - brilliant integration ideas, catastrophic lesson plans and behaviour management strategies spill into the conversation as we settle in. (WD29.5a)

Opportunities for professional dialogue in an informal setting supports the development of identity because a teacher can ‘test out’ their place and their beliefs in the teaching community within the safety net created by being with fellow students. Informal professional dialogue in schools is the type of interaction commonly seen in staffrooms, prior to staff meetings and at systemic staff inservices. These are important times where relationships can be built and collaborations developed. In fact, Jenna, one of the experienced teacher participants interviewed in Phase One explained,

> …even though I’ve done a lot of formal professional development, it is the informal where I’ve learned the most; visiting teachers’ classrooms, dialoguing with a range of different teachers, talking to leadership teams. That’s where I’ve had the most professional learning in my career. (SI5.12a)

The ability to participate in such dialogue with confidence comes with practice and a good understanding of oneself as a teacher. And it is within the university setting that this development can begin its establishment as a lifelong commitment.
Formal professional dialogue was also a feature of the workshop tutorials to develop professional identity. Participants were expected to operate as informed professionals, capable of participating in dialogue with peers and more experienced colleagues within both the school and workshop tutorial setting. As such, two main group activities, teacher wisdom stories and professional dialogue groups, supported the early career teachers as they developed the skills to engage in formal professional dialogue and their identities through preparation and participation in dialogue about pressing educational issues. Rodgers (2002) argues that group work develops professional responsibility, ‘When one is accountable to a group, one feels a responsibility toward others that is more compelling than the responsibility we feel to ourselves’ (p. 857).

This was evident in the group professional dialogue activities designed for this inquiry. The teacher wisdom stories (described in Chapter Four of this thesis) posted on the BEST website for the access of others within the group increased the sense of responsibility for the quality of the product as they ‘made sense of, accounted for, made connections between and among their existing knowledge and this new information and internalised the viewpoints they recorded’ (Kervin & Mantei, 2009, p. 107).

The second activity observed to develop and support professional identity through professional dialogue was weekly meetings in self selected groups. Professional dialogue groups (also described in Chapter Four of this thesis) engaged in discussion centred on the findings promoted in the literature. The members of the group discussed the key issues of the reading in connection with their own experiences, beliefs and understandings. These were captured on an iPod and uploaded as audio files to the BEST website. The following open questions operated as a framework within which the dialogue occurred:

- What are the key points in this article for me and why?
- What puzzled or confused me?
- What are the implications for my professional identity as a teacher?

This focus on making explicit the connection between arguments promoted in the literature and the implications of them for professional identity was observed to strengthen the
participants’ ability to take a position, to defend it and to modify it as needed. That is, there appeared to be evidence of growth of resilience and durability.

The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through opportunities for exploration of the connections between theory and the practice of selves and others

Brown (2009) argues that it is an understanding of the metacognitive processes underlying a teacher’s actions that is key to early career and preservice teachers’ pedagogical development. Such knowledge allows an observer to take what he or she sees and connect it with the theories of teaching within the tertiary setting, potentially strengthening for learners the connection between theoretical and practical contexts. There are strong connections between the first principle of reflection and the second of professional dialogue and this one, the exploration of the connections between theory and practice. It is through reflection and dialogue that the participants in this inquiry used work samples, observations and their own experiences to explore the ways that learning experiences reflect underlying beliefs about teaching and learning.

Walkington (2005) argues that ample time must be provided for discussion and reflection in order to develop an understanding of the new knowledge gathered through professional experience (PEX) or the practicum. Similarly, the early career teachers in this inquiry spent considerable time in reflection and dialogue responding to the question, What does that [observation, work sample, experience etc] suggest this teacher believes about teaching, learning and their role as the teacher? These experiences appeared to support the reflections of the early career teachers.

The tasks afforded the making of connections between theory and practice in a range of ways. First, written reflections on personal experiences obliged the early career teachers to commit to sharing their experiences with the group and to confront issues of difficulty in their teaching. Further, group professional dialogue tasks where an early career teacher could share and compare their own observations and experiences with others allowed for
shared understandings to be developed about the theory/practice connection. Furthermore, opportunities to analyse work product in connection with the mandatory documentation guiding assessment for teachers appeared to focus the early career teachers on the decisions they make when planning and designing learning experiences. For example, in a workshop focussed on assessment, a Year Three student’s writing sample was used to stimulate discussion about what the teacher who had designed the task believed about the student’s needs, the teacher’s role and what constituted ‘good’ writing. (A summary of the workshops can be seen in Appendix I). All identifying markers were removed from the sample to protect the identity of the student, the teacher and the school. The writing sample was the final draft of a report on native Australian tree species. In the child’s work sample, she had copied from the board onto the adjacent ‘practice page’ a list of the key words to be used in the construction of the report. The finished product was declared by the teacher to be ‘Neat work’, with two smiley stickers as evidence of the teacher’s pleasure.

As the participants analysed the work sample, they realised first that it is not possible to fully understand a teacher’s rationale without knowledge of the context of the classroom, conversation with and observation of the teacher in practice. However, their analyses led them to make certain hypotheses about the connection between the designed task and the teacher’s beliefs. Such an exercise returned the participants to consider the questions of identity and to challenge their existing practice through further reflection and dialogue. Using the work sample of an unknown student and teacher allowed the early career teachers to explore the theory/practice connection protected from the somewhat confronting experience of a public focus on their own teaching. It provided a safe way to test out and share developing beliefs with peers. In a subsequent workshop tasks the learners were prompted to reflect on their own teaching in a weblog posting,

Think about your most effective and least effective teaching moments in a classroom. Reflect on the way your goals and the ways that the children interpreted them affected the learning. (PDW7)
This series of learning experiences that began with a focus on others before moving to the more personal perspective on one’s own teaching was observed to provide a supportive environment for the early career teachers to consider their teaching selves. It appeared to allow them to develop:
- Resilience as they pushed more deeply to challenge their own beliefs
- Responsibility as they considered their own lessons and
- Durability as they projected into their teaching futures.

The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through active participation in the broader professional teaching community

Danielewicz (2001, p. 151) argues that teacher educators are obliged to their learners ‘to foster their sense of belonging to a teaching community before they are actually teaching’ and it is this focus on the broader community rather than on individual schools that is the focus of this principle. The sheer size and intangibility of the professional teaching community as opposed to the bound and physical nature of individual schools makes this connection a challenge for an emerging identity characterised by fragility and uncertainty. Even where a sense of community has been developed in the preservice context, the likely fragmentation of early teaching experiences becomes a threat to identity in challenging and sometimes negative environments. For example, Melinda’s identity as a teacher was challenged in the social setting of the staff room,

…so far I’ve had, like, I’ve had difficult kids, but nothing that I’ve felt that at I couldn’t handle, but I have felt sometimes in the deep end when it comes to going to the staff room. Some schools have been really friendly and then others have just, sort of… my name is “Casual”, that’s my name there…they call me “Casual” “Casual wants glue. Casual wants scissors.” as though that’s my name. (SI4.3c)

Terry’s experience challenged his identity as a quality teacher,

I went into a school last week and the Deputy [Principal] who looks after casuals, he goes, “Oh here’s some [blackline master work] sheets.”
And I said, “So you don’t mind if I do sheets?”
And he said, “As long as they’re quiet and they’re doing their work, I don’t mind.”

It was a bit backward to what I was thinking. I didn’t really want to do sheets.

(SI28.2a)

The perception of belonging to a professional group that is broader than such day-to-day school based interactions can affirm one’s teaching identity and support the maintenance and growth of professional identity despite negative interactions such as those experienced by Terry and Melinda. However, it was through active participation within the broader teaching community where the findings of this inquiry revealed further evidence of professional growth.

Locating suitable experienced teachers to interview for the creation of the teacher wisdom stories, for example, required the participants to look beyond the teachers within their immediate settings and to approach other professionals. The requirement that they pose questions to these professionals required them to research and understand the topic of interest. The further expectation that they annotate the interview to create a polished product required an active analysis and response to what was shared. It is this active participation, the obligation to both give and take in the community that develops this responsibility. Whilst the creation of teacher wisdom stories proved a valuable experience within the university/early career teacher setting, its sustainability is questionable in daily teaching as it was onerous and time consuming to locate, interview and collate the information. Further, the role of audience was instrumental in the creation of the product. This is not a feature of the daily interactions the early career teachers would have with their more experienced colleagues. However, the type of interactions, collegiality and development of identity as a valued member of a broader community of teachers as experienced in the wisdom task is present in the existing structure of professional associations.

Professional associations such as the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA) and the Primary English Teachers’ Association (now known as e:lit) provide tangible evidence outside of the school setting of the existence of this broader community of
teachers. Ewing and Manuel (2005, p. 13) describe membership to professional associations as ‘critical’ for new teachers, a claim supported by Emeritus teacher, Dr Jan Turbill. Turbill’s (2004) observation that such membership provides for teachers a ‘sense of community, of belonging, of networking with likeminded teachers’ indicates that professional associations have much to offer early career (and indeed all) teachers. In this inquiry, the early career teachers had opportunities to attend professional development experiences hosted by the local ALEA branch alongside other teachers. Here they could observe the connection between the school and university contexts, meet and interact with a range of teachers in an effort to identify those ‘like minds’ and to establish themselves as members of this group. The early career teachers were encouraged to join the group at discounted student membership rates, and many took the opportunity. Membership to professional associations was observed in this inquiry to empower the early career teachers beyond simply ‘being’ in the group, beyond attending inservices and reading the publications. Breanna and two other early career teachers enrolled in Reflective Practice but non participants in this inquiry each made short submissions to one of ALEA’s national publications, a journal that presents its strength as being authored by teachers for teachers. These were published in the journal in subsequent editions.

The principle of active membership within the broader professional community of teachers was observed in this inquiry to provide the space and support for each of the early career teachers to challenge and grow their perceptions of themselves and their position within the community of teachers. This inquiry argues that teacher educators, too, are obliged to join professional associations for their own growth and development and to continue to enrich the connections between the school and university settings.
Conclusion

Chapter Six has explicated a theory on the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The theory advanced in this chapter draws on existing knowledge about professional identity, reflective practice and the notion of quality teaching. The explicated theory draws the reader to consider professional identity as more than a focus on oneself and the type of teacher one aspires to be. In terms of oneself, it highlights the notion of teaching as a journey requiring reflection and planning as well as the responsibility one has to active participation in the broader profession of teachers. Further, it draws into focus the needs of learners in a changed educational climate, a commitment to quality teaching and teachers’ responsibilities for envisaging in their practice the types of learners they aim to develop.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter in this thesis explores the implications of the theory of professional development in early career teachers for teacher educators.
Chapter 7

Conclusions
Overview

The previous chapter presented and explicated a theory for the development of professional identity in early career teachers. The early career teachers in this inquiry, as explained in the first chapter, was the last cohort to complete a three year Bachelor of Teaching degree and thus considered by the NSW Board of Studies eligible to teach. Therefore they were considered early career teachers. However, in order to achieve four year academic status, which is now required across all Australian states, the cohort was completing a one year Bachelor of Education. Students in their fourth year of study in future education programs are considered preservice teachers. This inquiry demonstrates that teacher educators must focus their curriculum to include the development of a professional identity in each and every one of their students, particularly in exit year of their degree.

This chapter therefore explores the implications of this theory for teacher educators who should be working to develop professional identity in their preservice students. The discussion in this chapter is focused on the learning of preservice teachers rather than early career teachers, for it is the preservice teacher with whom the teacher educator must work to develop a professional identity to be taken through the transition to the early teaching years. This is not to say that the theory that emerged from this inquiry could not also be used to frame early career teacher induction programs organised at both the systems and school levels.

The theory advanced in this thesis has emerged from a single bound site, with one cohort of experienced and one of early career teachers. However, the findings are potentially powerful as a framework for teacher educators as they consider their own approaches to the development of professional identity in their students. As such, the theory is promoted for the development of professional identity within the teacher education setting.
Professional Identity

This theory focuses on the development of a professional identity in the preservice teacher setting that will allow them as early career teachers to participate as informed and active members of the teaching profession from the beginning of their teaching journeys. For preservice teachers making the transition to teacher, it is acknowledged that each experience is different. Early teaching experiences vary across school settings, they are not necessarily isolating or negative and each present with unique challenges and demands. In this inquiry, however, data analysis suggested that the elements of durability, resilience and responsibility are valuable traits to take into these settings. An identity that is durable, resilient and responsible can support early career teachers not only to withstand the challenges and setbacks of early teaching, but also to thrive as they design, trial and reflect on authentic learning experiences in their classrooms. It is this finding that forms the basis of the argument for the use of the theory for the development of professional identity across teacher education settings.

Whilst the literature abounds with observations that teachers need to have a professional identity, the notion of certain traits or characteristics of this identity has not been widely examined (see Cattley, 2007; Danielewicz, 2001; MacGregor, 2009; Pietsch & Williamson, 2005; Vogt, 2002). The elements of durability, resilience and responsibility are examined now in connection with the challenges for teacher educators, whose own settings, too, differ in terms of culture, needs and preservice teacher cohort.

Durable

A durable identity is one that is robust and enduring. Preservice teachers need opportunities to develop confidence in their beliefs, in their capacity to design authentic learning experiences and deliver quality teaching, and in their ability to continue achieving professional growth and development throughout their teaching careers. The findings of this inquiry suggest that it is durability that promotes growth and development in teachers.
Such a trait can support a teacher to maintain passion and commitment to quality teaching and to the profession throughout their teaching career.

**Resilient**

A professional identity that is resilient responds flexibly to challenges and adapts successfully to change. Resiliency is identified in the literature as a worthy trait for everyone, challenging teacher educators to support the development of resiliency in preservice teachers (see Dellar, 2008; Hristofski, 2008; Russo & Boman, 2007). In this inquiry, a climate for the development of resiliency was promoted through systematic reflection and a range of opportunities for the exploration of what it is to teach. The aim of this approach was to foster in the early career teachers deep pedagogical understandings and beliefs that can support flexibility in responding to and coping with change. Further, developing a system of reflection afforded an understanding of what has gone before, to make plans and to set goals for the design of future learning.

**Responsible**

The experienced teachers in this inquiry indicated that a responsible teacher provides quality teaching that caters for the increasing diversity of learners within a changed educational environment. Further, they indicated that teachers are responsible for their ongoing professional growth and for the conduct of themselves as professionals within their work environment. Throughout the inquiry and particularly during the facilitation of the Phase Three professional development experiences, the early career teachers reflected on and identified areas of their own identity. Importantly, these observations were identified to have strong links with the subsequent learning experiences that the early career teachers designed and the ways they reflected on their teaching and the students’ learning.

A sense of increased responsibility was evident throughout the inquiry in a range of ways, for example, joining a professional association, and beginning to collect and collate evidence in preparation for later teacher accreditation application. Further evidence of a growing sense of responsibility was evident in more interpersonal aspects of being a
teacher, such as engaging socially in the staffroom with the permanent staff when working on a casual day and making oneself available to parents. These examples are particularly encouraging considering that both experienced and early career teachers within the cohorts in this inquiry indicated that interacting with staff and parents was a cause of some anxiety.

**Summing up professional identity**

The professional development experiences facilitated in Phase Three of the inquiry were an attempt to foster the development of durability, resilience and responsibility in the professional identities of early career teachers. Evident in the analysis of the research data is an increased sense of responsibility among the early career teachers for their own learning, the delivery of quality teaching and their commitment to active participation in the professional community of teachers. Growing resiliency appeared within weblog reflections as the early career teachers read and responded to each other’s blogs. There appeared to be a growth in collegiality as well as a commitment to change and adaptation in the face on new experiences and understandings. Durability was a less obvious trait within the data. If an identity is durable, then it lasts across time. Whilst the early career teachers in this inquiry demonstrated a somewhat braver, or more robust approach to teaching and the design of learning experiences, it is beyond the scope of the current inquiry to explore the further development and maintenance of durability, resiliency and responsibility over the coming years for these early career teachers.

**Questions of identity**

The theory advanced in this inquiry broadens the focus on questions of professional identity. Evident in the analysis of the data collected with experienced teachers was their threefold focus: the kind of teacher that they were, their place within their schools, and an understanding of their students. For the early career teachers, ‘answers’ to these questions were less clear at the outset of the inquiry. In supporting the development
of a professional identity that prepares early career teachers for teaching, revealed in the data was the need to take this broader focus beyond oneself and on belonging to a single school setting. Further revealed was the need to consider the demands of learners today who participate in a range of communities in a technology rich environment. Questions of identity are now examined.

**What kind of teacher do I want to be?**

There is much reported in the literature about the development of an identity that responds to the question, *What kind of teacher do I want to be?* (see Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Korthagen, 2004; Sachs, 1999) Important in identifying the type of teacher one strives to become is an understanding of what the choices are. The early career teachers in this inquiry expressed surprise at the diversity and complexity of teaching, despite having engaged with three years of undergraduate study, which included three practicum experiences. It would appear that earlier opportunities to explore what it means to be a teacher and how this might be reflected in the design of learning experiences in a classroom would support teacher education students in identifying the type of teacher they would like to become.

Furthermore, the question of why preservice teachers want to be teachers needs similar reconsideration. Knowing that someone ‘loves children’ or that they ‘always wanted to be a teacher’ reveals little of the preconceptions held and potential stumbling blocks to identity development and therefore commitment to the profession. Perhaps a question that would reveal early in the teacher education course the many preconceptions teacher education students bring to their tertiary studies is *What do you believe teachers should know and be able to do?* For teacher educators, the opportunities to design learning experiences that promote a deeper understanding of the myths and realities of teaching would be useful in developing more durable and resilient professional identities.
Where am I in my teaching story?

This question extends on the understanding achieved in the first question. Preservice teachers who identify the types of teacher they will strive to become, without an understanding that this will take time, experience and application, could be disappointed about not achieving their goals straight away. The professional development experiences implemented in this inquiry adopted the perspective of teaching as a journey. Through the workshop activities designed to support an exploration of personal experiences in connection with others and the literature, the teachers examined this notion of teaching as a career long commitment and considered the ways that a teacher might grow and develop throughout that time. Especially evident was a growth among the early career teachers engaging in casual teaching in their understanding about a teacher’s ‘place’ within the teaching community and along the life cycle of teaching. As the facilitation of the workshops continued over thirteen weeks, analysis of data revealed a growing understanding of the ways the design of learning experiences in the present could enact whatever part of their identities was possible. Moreover, they were able to lay aside for the future those parts of their identities that were not encouraged within the casual teaching setting, either because of the nature of their work, their school setting or their colleagues.

For teacher educators, there appears much to value in not only promoting the notion of teaching as a journey but providing explicit learning experiences that enhance such promotion. Preservice teachers need to explore their understanding of the present and what is achievable now for them as teachers and what must wait. Such practices have the potential to foster the development of resilience and durability as they negotiate the challenges of learning to teach in other teachers’ classrooms and within other constraints beyond their graduation.

What kind of learners do I want to develop?

The experienced teachers in this inquiry each spoke about the needs of their learners and the skills, strategies, understandings and values that they wished to develop through their teaching. They were then able to describe the types of learning experiences they used to
achieve these goals. Analysis of baseline data from early career teachers revealed that they were unsure about the sorts of learners they felt could be developed through their teaching. Workshop experiences were designed to facilitate exploration of issues in teaching such as changed education and workplace settings, ‘new’ learning spaces, the broadened nature of what it is to be ‘literate’ in the 21st century and the place of technologies in schools. These activities were designed to foster in the early career teacher a strong focus on their learners. The professional development experiences were observed to extend the early career teachers’ capacity to consider how their beliefs about teaching were connected with the learning experiences they would plan in order to respond the needs of their learners.

Identifying the types of learner one strives to develop requires reflection on existing beliefs as well as preconceptions about teaching, learning and assessment. Teacher educators need to move beyond asking preservice teachers simplistic questions for reflection such as How is school different now to when you were a child? and consider questions that engage deep reflection such as, How do you use your knowledge and understandings now to participate successfully in your communities? How is this different from the ways that you learned at school? What are the implications of this for your teaching? An understanding of the ways that they participate within a range of community practices could support preservice teachers to make connections to their classroom practice. That is, such an understanding could lead to reflection on the ways that the learning experiences they design can be relevant, appropriate and authentic to the needs of learners today.

Furthermore, for teacher educators to facilitate these new understandings, they need to have considered their own pedagogies and beliefs about what it is to be a “successful” member of a range of communities. That is, they must have a well articulated understanding of the ways that people interact, develop relationships and create the necessary texts to meet their needs. Furthermore, it is the role of teacher educators to draw on this perspective of their own professional identities to support preservice teachers to consider the ways they will create learning environments that in turn assist children to participate in these communities.
Principles for early career teacher professional identity development

Four principles for the development of professional identity in early career teachers were identified and examined in this theory. Each of the principles provides direction for teacher educators as they work with their students to explore the questions of identity in connection with quality teaching. Analysis of data collected with early career teachers suggested that the principles identified in this theory supported the development of professional identity in the key areas of durability, resilience and a sense of responsibility.

The principles are now discussed in connection with teacher education.

The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through systematic reflection on existing beliefs in connection with personal experience, the experiences of others and the literature

In the professional development experiences in Phase Three of this inquiry, the skills and processes of systematic reflection were regularly demonstrated, discussed and deconstructed with the early career teachers. Analysis of the data revealed that as their reflective skills of describing, justifying and analysing experiences became more sophisticated, the early career teachers were able to use reflection as a powerful tool for understanding their own beliefs about teaching and learning. Additionally, the skills of reflection appeared to lead these early career teachers to consider the types of learning experiences they design for their learners and the ways that their beliefs both guide and underpin these experiences. Furthermore, as they were observed to grow in confidence in their abilities both to reflect and to teach, the relationships between and among the early career teachers within this community appeared to strengthen. It appeared that the early career teachers were empowered to use their own experiences, the experiences of others and the literature to support the development not only of their own professional identity,
but also to enrich the identities of their teaching peers engaging in the professional development workshop.

For teacher educators, the challenge appears to be twofold. First, they need to be reflective practitioners themselves in order to ensure quality teaching with their learners—the preservice teachers. Systematic reflection on their own teaching is necessary for teacher educators considering the connection between their own beliefs about teaching and learning and the ways this is reflected in the learning experiences they design. Second, teacher educators cannot assume their preservice students know how to reflect deeply. Thus teacher educators need to teach quite explicitly the skills of systematic reflection in their learners followed by the necessary time and space to develop as reflective practitioners. Findings from this inquiry suggest that it is insufficient to simply ask a learner to ‘reflect’ without first providing experiences that develop a deep understanding of what it is to achieve analytical reflection.

In developing professional and trusting relationships within their cohorts, teacher educators are responsible for creating environments within which are fostered the development of the skills of systematic reflection on own experiences, the experiences of others and those derived from professional reading. A learning environment for preservice teachers can support the ability to interact with other teachers, to contribute to the shared knowledge of the community and to participate in the professional activities of teachers, such as professional reading and dialogue. That is, the active participation as professionals.

The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through opportunities for professional dialogue with a range of practitioners in connection with experiences and literature

The ability to engage in professional dialogue to discuss the design and implementation of learning experiences was a focus for development with the early career teachers within the professional development experiences facilitated in Phase Three of the inquiry. Professional dialogue was modelled during the facilitation of the workshops and also
supported more explicitly through group discussion about the literature connecting beliefs about learning with practice. The use of framing questions along with an expectation that the issues of teaching would be discussed in connection with personal experiences, the experiences of others and with support from the literature appeared to develop in them the confidence to contribute to such discussion both in the workshop setting and broader teaching community. Evidence of this growing confidence was revealed in reflections on teacher wisdom stories.

As with systematic reflection, the findings of this inquiry point to the need for teacher educators to plan for explicit teaching of the skills and strategies for engaging in professional dialogue, followed by learning experiences that provide the appropriate level of teacher support and scaffolding. Opportunities for dialogue in a range of settings, formal and informal, written (as with the blogs) and oral can provide learners with the support and space to explore and develop their beliefs in connection with their practices within a supported community.

**The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through opportunities for exploration of the connections between theory and the practice of selves and others**

Problematic in exploring the development of professional identity is that it cannot actually be *seen*. Rather, the reflection or demonstration of an identity is evident within the learning experiences a teacher designs. Consequently, learning experiences were designed where the early career teachers could explore the tangible evidence of an identity in practice. They were encouraged to make connections between theory and practice using products such as student work samples and teacher programs to stimulate discussion.

Using work product and interactions with teachers from outside the workshop setting provided a ‘safe’ way for the early career teachers to talk about the connection between beliefs and practice as the focus was removed from teachers in the immediate setting. Once the skills of analysis and discussion about the connection between theory and practice were
in place, the early career teachers were then asked to reflect on the design of their own learning experiences. Analysis of weblog postings and formal assessment tasks revealed in the early career teachers an increased willingness over the course of the inquiry to talk about their areas of strength and those for future focus in their own professional learning and teaching.

Teacher educators need to provide learners with opportunities to explore the connection evident in the work of more experienced teachers, where the professional identity is likely to be more firmly established. This will potentially allow for the development of deeper understandings of beliefs in practice and for systematic reflection on the ways this connection is demonstrated through their own designs. Learners need to engage in group and individual explorations in an effort, again, to develop deep understandings in connection with personal experience, the experiences of others and the literature.

The challenge for teacher educators, then, is to maintain strong ties to a range of practising teachers in the profession. It is through these networks that teacher educators and practitioners can work together to demonstrate and explore the design of authentic learning experiences connecting theory with practice.

**The development of a professional identity in early career teachers is supported through active participation in the broader professional teaching community**

Just as school is identified in the literature as no longer a place where children go to become prepared to join the world at a later time (see Bosco, 2004; Comber et al., 2001), the teacher education setting is similarly challenged. ‘Being’ a teacher cannot be placed on hold whilst the necessary information is gathered during tutorials and lectures and stored for later. Preservice teachers need to be part of the teaching community well before their graduation ceremony. Certainly it is the case that preservice teachers have opportunity to engage with the professional community through their many practicums. However, findings in the literature point out that this time is fraught with imbalances of power (see Cattley, 2007; Sinclair et al., 2005). The classroom teacher has the capacity to pass or fail
the preservice teacher, to insist on his/her ‘ways’ of teaching or to accept or reject the pedagogies of the preservice teacher. Whilst the practicum setting must be valued as one place for the development of identity, the findings in this inquiry suggest a more genuine relationship with the teaching community is also required.

The early career teachers in this inquiry reported a feeling of increased standing in their communities as they located and engaged in professional dialogue with more experienced colleague to create teacher wisdom stories. Opportunities to connect with a range of like-minded teachers through the professional organisation ALEA was also observed to increase the early career teachers’ sense of belonging to a broader community of teachers. This was evident firstly from the practical aspect of meeting potential employers in a relaxed setting, but more importantly from the perspective of being part of something bigger than a university tutorial or a school staff meeting.

For teacher education, then, the maintenance of school/university partnerships becomes crucial. Teacher educators are models of good teaching for their students. Their own membership to professional associations should create powerful opportunities for preservice teachers for active participation with practitioners in professional contexts.
Conclusion

The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate the development of professional identity in early career primary teachers and its relationship to designing learning experiences. Experienced teachers and a review of the literature initially informed the understandings developed early in the inquiry about the nature of a professional identity and its relationship to the design of authentic learning experiences in the teaching environment of today. These understandings were used to inform the development of a series of professional development experiences for early career teachers to explore the development of their professional identity. Subsequent interactions with early career teachers over the course of one year allowed the formation of an emerging theory for the development of professional identity in the teacher education setting.

A design-based research approach framed the organisational components of this inquiry. The design-based research approach supported the research design as it accommodated lengthy interactions with practitioners in Phase One to inform the design of later interactions with early career teachers. Further, it allowed different methodologies to be used at different times throughout the inquiry, that is, the use of ethnographic principles for interactions with experienced teachers and then action research methodology for interactions with early career teachers. The constant comparative method of analysis through the multiple lenses of professional identity, quality teaching and authentic learning and ethnographic principles afforded the production of rich data to inform developing understandings about the ways that teacher educators can facilitate the development of professional identity.

The theory explicated in this inquiry extends on existing theory of professional identity. The findings broaden the focus of identity beyond a consideration of who one is in the story of their school and the type of teacher they are. This broader focus allows teachers to consider the needs and demands of learners within the changed environment of teaching in a global community and the responsibility teachers have in catering to these needs equitably. A further breadth of focus in this theory draws on teacher career life cycle
theory to examine the notion of teaching as a journey. Findings from the inquiry suggest that for teachers early in their careers, connections and relationships are not built immediately for those working in part time and casual teaching positions. The ability to place oneself within the broader community of teachers, to interact within professional networks such as professional associations and to acknowledge the changing nature of their ‘place’ is argued to support the development of professional identity.

Moreover, considering a teaching career from the perspective of a journey highlights the need for a professional identity to be durable, resilient and responsible if it is to support teachers’ ongoing professional growth and commitment throughout their teaching careers. It is argued in this inquiry that these are important traits to develop during the teacher education program as the demands on global citizens continue to change and literate practices of communities develop. Further, it is argued in this thesis that it is the teachers who can adapt, modify and transform their practice who will remain active, passionate and committed to their profession.

The findings of this inquiry suggest that teacher educators need well articulated professional identities themselves that are reflected in the authentic learning experiences they facilitate in their teaching settings. They, too, is it argued, need to consider the needs of their learners, their responsibilities in catering to their preservice teachers’ needs and their responsibilities to the profession. The four principles of the theory for the development of professional identity provide direction for the design of authentic learning experiences for teacher educators and preservice teachers alike.

A professional identity that is resilient, durable and responsible potentially equips all teachers and teacher educators to provide for their learners the means to be creative, independent and innovative problem solvers both now and in the future.


Buchanan, J. (2006). What they should have told me: Six beginning teachers' reflections on their preservice education in the light of their early career experiences. *Curriculum Perspectives, 26*(1), 38-47.


Labbo, L. (2005b). From morning message to digital morning message: Moving from the tried and true to the new. The Reading Teacher, 58(8), 782-785.


Robertson, J. (2006). "If you know our names it helps!": Students' perspectives about "good" teaching. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*, 756-770.


Appendices
APPENDIX A AUDIT TRAIL

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**PHASE ONE – Interactions with experienced teachers**

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APPENDIX B SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERIENCED CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Beliefs about learning interview questions for experienced classroom teachers

Introduction by interviewer:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The aim of the interview is for me to learn about your teaching experiences, your beliefs about teaching and the ways these beliefs influence your planning and teaching. The information that I gather throughout this interview will contribute to the design of PD session for early career teachers from February 2008. So that I can gain a good understanding of your teaching, I will ask you some questions about your background and teaching practices and then about learning. I will also ask you to describe specific examples of your teaching in the classroom. Please be assured that anything you say will be treated confidentially and that your name will not be associated with the data when it is reported. Do you have any questions about your participation?

Would you mind if I record your interview to allow me to concentrate on our conversation rather than taking notes? [If yes, start recording. If no, then take handwritten notes.]

1. These first questions are about you
Please tell me a little about your professional background:
Where do you currently teach? What class(es) do you teach?
What is your position at the school?
How long have you been teaching there?
Where did you teach before that?
What expertise do you bring to your school?
What are the main professional development opportunities you have undertaken?

2. The next group of questions seeks to understand your current work environment
What are some of the defining characteristics of teaching in this school?
How would you describe the students you teach and the community they live in?
What do you believe are the educational priorities of the parents of the children at this school?
What skills, abilities and beliefs do you notice that these children bring to school? How is this different from the same as for children you have taught in the past?
How would you describe the leadership style in the school?
What are the external pressures (eg Department, parent body) that influence your decisions in the classroom?
What do you like most and least about teaching in this school?

3. The next set of questions explores your beliefs about teaching and learning
What is learning?
What does learning allow a child to do?
What is your role as an educator?
What are your main goals when you teach? What do you want the students to get out of it? What do children need from school? How do the learning opportunities you provide allow for these needs? How do you like to organise your classroom and students? Why? How do you think your students learn best? And how does this influence you?

4. The next part of this interview is set aside to discuss a specific program/activity that you have implemented in the classroom

Before the interview, I asked each teacher to reflect on a series of lessons/unit of work/rich task that they have taught that they felt truly reflects their philosophy of learning. The teachers are invited to bring this and any accompanying work samples/documentation along to the interview for discussion and sharing with me.

The following questions will be asked:
What was the purpose of the program?
How did you achieve this purpose? What things did you do to ensure your stayed in track?
What learning did you assess? How? Why?
What was the gain for children within the broader context of their communities?
What are some features of this learning experience that made it successful?
What might you change in the future?

5. The final questions are about your plans for future teaching
What are your goals for teaching next year?
How will you achieve them?
APPENDIX C SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH EARLY CAREER CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Beliefs about learning interview questions for early career classroom teachers

20 minutes

Introduction by interviewer:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The aim of the interview is for me to learn about your teaching experiences, your beliefs about teaching and the ways these beliefs influence your planning and teaching. So that I can gain a good understanding of your teaching, I will ask you some questions about your background and teaching practices and then about learning. I will also ask you to describe specific examples of your teaching in the classroom. Please be assured that anything you say will be treated confidentially and that your name will not be associated with the data when it is reported. Nothing you tell me will affect your grades and assessment. Do you have any questions about your participation?

Would you mind if I record your interview to allow me to concentrate on our conversation rather than taking notes? [If yes, start recording. If no, then take handwritten notes.]

1. These first questions are about you
Please tell me a little about your professional experiences so far:
Tell me about the classes you have taught and your position in the school.
What expertise do you bring to your school?

2. The next group of questions seeks to understand your current work environment
How would you describe the students you teach and the community they live in?
What do you believe the parents of the children at this school want from the school?
What skills, abilities and beliefs do you notice that these children bring to school?
What are the external pressures (eg Department, parent body) that influence your decisions in the classroom?
What do you like most and least about teaching in this school?

3. The next set of questions explores your beliefs about teaching and learning
What is learning?
What is your role as an educator?
What are your main goals when you teach? What do you want the students to get out of it?
What do children need from school?
How do you think your students learn best? And how does this influence you?
4. The next part of this interview is set aside to discuss a specific example of teaching you have implemented in the classroom.

Before the interview, I will ask each teacher to think about some teaching they did that reflected their philosophy of learning. I will then ask them to describe the teaching and reflect on what it was that they liked about the teaching.

What was the purpose of the program?
How did you achieve this purpose? What things did you do to ensure your stayed in track?
What learning did you assess? How? Why?
What was the gain for children within the broader context of their communities?
What are some features of this learning experience that made it successful?
What might you change in the future?

5. The final questions are about your plans for future teaching
What are your professional goals this year and how will you achieve them?
APPENDIX D PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEETS FOR EXPERIENCED CLASSROOM TEACHERS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Experienced Teacher Participants

Title of the Research Project:
How do primary school teachers conceptualise authentic learning tasks in their classrooms?

Aims of the Research:
This research aims to examine how primary school teachers understand, plan and program for learning experiences that reflect the sorts of activities that people are part of in their communities (such learning tasks are sometimes called ‘authentic learning experiences’). This will be realised through analysis of the ways that teachers talk about their programming, of the tasks that the teachers design for their students and the ways they collaborate with other teachers to shape their own understanding of authenticity in the classroom.

Research Procedures:
Practising classroom teachers will be interviewed for approximately 1 hour at a time convenient to both parties in December 2007. Initial interviews are designed to collect demographic information and to investigate the ways that practising teachers reflect the demands of the ‘real’ world in their classrooms.
A second interview (either in February or June, 2008, to be determined by the participant) will be conducted as a follow up of the first and to further explore the themes emerging in the study.
All interviews will be recorded on audiotape for transcription and later analysis. Any interactions between participants online will be saved as text files for analysis.

Privacy issues:
The researcher will store all data collected.
Hard copy data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University.
Any computer files or images will be stored on a computer at the University under password protection (known only to the researcher)
At the conclusion of the research, images, recordings and field notes will remain stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University.
No school, student or teacher names will accompany any data used.

Other Information:
Participants are free to withdraw consent to participate in this research at any time. Such a decision will not affect any relationship with the university.

Any questions regarding the project can be directed to Jessica Mantei or her supervisors, Dr Lisa Kervin or Associate Professor Jan Herrington. Any concerns or complaints about the way the research is or has been conducted can be directed to the Ethics Officer of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on (02) 4221 4457, Application code: HE07/289.
APPENDIX E PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR EARLY CAREER CLASSROOM TEACHERS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Early Career Teacher Participants

Title of the Research Project:
How do primary school teachers conceptualise authentic learning tasks in their classrooms?

Researcher:
Jessica Mantei
PhD Student
University of Wollongong
Phone 4221 3465. Email: jessicam@uow.edu.au

Supervisors
Dr Lisa Kervin
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Phone: 4221 3968
Email: lkervin@uow.edu.au

Assoc Prof Jan Herrington
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Phone: 4221 4277
Email: janh@uow.edu.au

Aims of the Research:
This research aims to investigate and examine how primary school teachers understand, plan and program for learning experiences that reflect the sorts of activities that people are part of in their communities (such learning tasks are sometimes called ‘authentic learning experiences’). This aim will be realised through analysis of the ways that teachers talk about their programming, of the tasks that the teachers design for their students and the ways that opportunities to collaborate with other teachers of varying expertise and experience shape their own understanding of authenticity in the classroom.

Collaboration with other teachers will occur both physically and virtually as practising and early career teachers plan, program, implement and evaluate authentic learning experiences in their classrooms.

Research Procedures:
Early career classroom teachers (less than 5 years experience) will participate in group discussions during EDUT422, Autumn 2008 tutorial workshops about the ways that learning experiences in classrooms can reflect the types of activities and demands placed on members of the broader community. They will complete a short survey aimed at collecting demographic information. Interviews will follow with each early career teacher participant at their convenience to collect further information about their beliefs about learning and teaching.
During tutorial sessions, all early career teachers enrolled in EDUT422 will participate in an exploration of the guiding principles of authentic learning experiences through whole class, small group and individual tasks as part of the subject content. Participant teachers will work together for collaborative tasks and work at the same tasks as the rest of the enrolled students in EDUT422. Interactions between participants during tutorials will be recorded as audio files and stored for later analysis. Still digital images may also be captured in providing contextual information. All early career teachers enrolled in EDUT422, Autumn 2008 will access and contribute weblogs (‘blogs’) on the BEST (Beginning and Establishing Successful Teachers) site to discuss issues surrounding subject content and early career experiences. Interactions between participants in the BEST online community will be retained as text files for analysis.

Privacy issues:
The researcher will store all data collected. Hard copy data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University. Computer files and images will be stored on a computer at the University under password protection (known only to the researcher) at the conclusion of the research, images, recordings and field notes will remain stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University. No school, student or teacher names will accompany any data used.

Other Information:
Participating in this research will not dictate specific tasks or programs for you to include in your classroom teaching. However, discussion and exploration with colleagues of differing expertise and experience about the ways that learning experiences can reflect the activities of the broader community may challenge you to change/modify/refine your pedagogies to align with new understandings.

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time. Such a decision will not affect your relationship with the university, your tutor or your grading for the subject EDUT422.

If any participant has any questions regarding the project, please contact the researcher, Jessica Mantei or the researcher’s supervisors, Dr Lisa Kervin (Phone: 02 4221 3968, Email: lkervin@uow.edu.au) or Associate Professor Jan Herrington (Phone: 02 4221 4277, Email: jan_herrington@uow.edu.au). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way in which the research is or has been conducted, please contact the Ethics Officer of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on (02) 4221 4457, Application code: HE07/289.
APPENDIX F TEACHER VIGNETTES

What values, attitudes and beliefs does each of these teachers reveal through their story?

1. A Year 6 teacher begins Term 1. Wanting to establish exactly ‘where they are at’, the teacher sets a number of diagnostic tests for Week 1 of the term. The children work at their desks, diligently completing spelling tests, writing samples and mathematical computations. The teacher collects the independently completed assessment work samples, ready for analysis.

It is the teacher’s goal to prepare these children for high school. From analysis of the work samples, this teacher is able to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in the children’s knowledge base. Using this information, the teacher intends to plan explicit teaching episodes that will allow the teacher to ‘plug the holes’ in their learning. The teacher also sets a range of homework tasks to be submitted by certain deadlines throughout the week. This study approach was adopted to aid the children in their preparation for the increased workload expected in high school. The teacher sees the classroom environment reflecting secondary school as appropriate and necessary for Year 6 children. The teacher believes that successful preparation for high school can be achieved through mastery of Year 6 content and the recreation of a high school environment in the classroom.

2. As a new year begins, a teacher waits in anticipation to meet the students. Placing curriculum requirements to one side for the first week, initial classroom experiences are designed to allow for sharing of story and experiences between and among the children and their teacher. This teacher carefully nurtures and develops an interactive environment that values discussion and collaboration. The children are engaged in extended negotiations about the layout of the classroom and the responsibilities of each person.

This teacher is aware that the children at this school live in families of low socio-economic status. Therefore, experiences are provided for the children that draw on the expertise of members of the community and give the children opportunities to experience being part of the community in a range of ways. One class project provided children experience as both consumers and producers as they planned and implemented a marketing strategy for a product that they then manufactured and sold in the community – profits from this project were donated to a local charity. This teacher believes that it is these experiences that allow children to make strong connections between school and their participation in the broader community.
What values, attitudes and beliefs does each of these teachers reveal through their story?

3. A teacher reflects on set teaching goals for Term 3 and considers the nature of the Year 5 learners in this class. Teacher observations and interactions with the children have led this teacher to form certain opinions of the children, their families and the environment in which they live. These opinions have helped in identifying appropriate learning avenues for exploration and the teacher looks now to modify the content set out in the BOS syllabus document to better meet the needs of the students. This teacher believes that the children would benefit from looking outside of themselves and their families to their immediate community and investigate ways that they can give others less fortunate than themselves some of the opportunities that they have.

The teacher believes that that the children will be able to make decisions about who to help and how as long as a supportive framework is provided that teaches the children about the options available. Therefore, the teacher plans a program that provides a balance of explicit teacher instruction and independent learning opportunities in an effort to promote creativity and collaboration between and among the learners.

4. A teacher has spent much of the summer break carefully examining the files of the students who are about to begin Year 4. The teacher has identified the children who have specific medical and emotional needs, identified appropriate support staff and planned an approach to monitor their health. School files inform this teacher of the marital status of the parents of these children, and careful note has been made of those who have shared care arrangements or live in a single parent home. Using past school reports and analysis of BST results, this teacher has categorised the children according to their academic achievement as well as made arrangements for those identified as exhibiting challenging behaviours.

Analysis of the children’s files has allowed this teacher to plan and program extensive learning experiences in connection with the BOS syllabus outcomes and mandatory content that target the children’s strengths and weaknesses. The teacher has grouped the children by ability for literacy and numeracy learning, planned explicit teaching episodes and selected appropriate texts for serial reading. Feeling prepared and excited to meet the children, this teacher ‘knows’ them already and is looking forward to teaching this class. The teacher perceives that the children will feel comfortable and supported in this classroom as set tasks are achievable and focused on the children’s needs.
APPENDIX G A MODEL FOR AUTHENTIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

Responsibility
- Expose learners to possibilities
- Empower learners for independence and the ability to enact change through literate practices
- Build relationships that value and encourage independence, flexibility and creativity

External Pressures/Accountability
- Consult Board of Studies syllabus documents, BST results, A-E grading, Foundation statements
- Incorporate head office directives
- Follow school scope and sequence policies and the school pedagogy focus
- Consider parents/guardians’ expectations
- Plan for assessment and reporting

Engaging learners and learning
- Allow learners to be a genuine audience for texts and to construct texts for genuine audiences and purposes
- Integrate home literacies into classroom experiences
- Draw on the interests and needs of students when designing learning experiences
- Challenge the existing beliefs and practices of learners within supportive environments
- Utilise ICT as appropriate to support literacy learning
- Articulate links between classroom and home literacies and allow learners to make their own links
- Provide learning experiences within the context of the environment they are found

Community give and take
- Invite INPUT from ‘experts’ within the community
- Provide learners with opportunities to research events and conditions within their communities
- Provide opportunities for the OUTPUT of learning to contribute to the collective knowledge of a community and to enrich the fabric of that community

‘Good’ literacy teaching
- Identify a teaching/learning focus
- Maintain a balance between supported and independent learning episodes
- Allow extended time for planning, construction and sharing of texts
- Reflect regularly on teaching and allow learners regular opportunities to reflect on their learning
- Plan for individual learners to take their own paths to the outcomes
- Engage in formal and informal professional development

Task
- Challenging
- Achievable
- Flexible
- Collaborative
- Applicable in the ‘real’ world
- Encourages reflection
- Assessable

Meeting the needs of learners in the information age
APPENDIX H ROUTINE ACTIVITIES OF TEACHERS

Moving around the school
How do you enter the classroom in the morning? After recess? After lunch?
How do you move the class to and from assembly?
What OHS considerations do you need to be aware of?

Classroom interruptions
How do you respond to a student needing to go to the toilet?
How do you respond to announcement being delivered to the classroom?
How do you respond when students from other classes come to your classroom needing to borrow equipment?
How do you manage the children to participate in a fire drill?

Playground duty
What do you need to take with you?
What do you do during your rostered time?
How do you report to the next teacher about the children?
How do you deal with reports given to you by the previous teacher?
How do you manage and facilitate interpersonal relationships amongst the children?

Parent issues
How do you respond to a parent who turns up at your classroom door wanting to discuss their child?
How do you manage parent helpers? What do you ask them to do?
How do you monitor the ways that they meet your requests?

Sport
How do these experiences impact upon classroom management?
How do you manage the collection and return of resources?
How do you move from classroom to sporting space?
How do you manage the time?

Creative Arts
How do these experiences impact upon classroom management?
How do you manage the collection and return of resources?
How do you manage the time?

Excursions
What are the organisational aspects?
How do you go about recruiting helpers?
What is a risk assessment and how do you do one?
**Guest speakers**  
What are the organisational aspects?  
How do you locate an appropriate person?  
What are the considerations you need to make?

**Integrating children with special needs**  
What do you need to know?  
What are your responsibilities for reporting to stakeholders?  
How do you talk to the other children in the class about this child?

**Managing challenging behaviour**  
How do you respond to challenging behaviour?  
What might you say?  What wouldn’t you say?  
What are your responsibilities?
APPENDIX I PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

All of the experienced teacher participants from iteration 1 were invited to make presentations or facilitate workshops in line with the professional development agenda. Despite busy university and school timetables, Justin (Workshop 6) and Paul (Workshop 10) each made presentations to the early career teachers.

Workshop 1: Focus on Reflective Practice
This workshop introduced the enrolled early career teachers to the Reflective Practice subject and its aim of exploring the role of teachers and the connection between theory and practice through reflection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Reflective Practice</th>
<th>Becoming a reflective teacher</th>
<th>The ‘parts’ that teachers need to be aware of and reflect on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome and orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator input</td>
<td>Orientation to the BEST site</td>
<td>What is a blog?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- deconstruct text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator input</td>
<td>Introduction to the subject</td>
<td>Demographic survey</td>
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<td>and subject outline</td>
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<td>PhD information session</td>
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<td>The study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation for group tasks</td>
<td>Select partner(s), exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>details, gather equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative activities</td>
<td>blogging, wisdom work,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professional dialogue</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Teaching focus - Workshop 1

Workshop 2: Focus on Professional Networks
Unlike others, this workshop was an opportunity to attend a public workshop hosted by the South Coast Chapter of the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA). The workshop focussed on the teaching of writing with a specific interest in the role of the purpose of the writing and the intended audiences available to primary school children during literacy learning.

| Focus on Professional Networks | Thinking about audience and purpose when teaching writing |
Facilitator information
Sometimes the teaching of writing has become formulaic as students are simply taught the formulae for various text types. This session will focus on understanding the relationship between audience, purpose and linguistic choice and what that means for the teaching of writing in K-6 classrooms. Links will be made to the English K-6 Syllabus.

Teaching focus - Workshop 2

Workshop 3: Focus on values and identity
Early career teachers considered a series of vignettes (Appendix F). These stories shared in the vignettes reflect the literature, the stories shared by the experienced teacher participants from iteration 1 and the stories I bring to the inquiry from my journey as a primary school classroom teacher. Presented for consideration, too, was the model for authentic learning and teaching that emerged from analysis of interaction in iteration 1 (Appendix G).

Focus on Values and identity
What does it mean to be a teacher?
How does reflection develop professional identity?

Facilitator input/reflective task
Use vignettes to explore the ways that teachers talk about the children in their class
Identify the different beliefs held by these teachers evident in their stories.
Discuss the ways that a teacher’s identity affects the decisions they make in classrooms
Sharing
Draw comparisons between and among vignettes and identify the one that resonates with you
Form groups with like people ready for next task

Facilitator input
A model for authentic learning experiences

Reflective task
In groups of 3, list indicators, or elements within the principles that you consider relevant in your teaching

Sharing
Discuss the elements - What interested you, what surprised you? Is there something missing?

Collaborative activities - blogging, wisdom work, reading and listening

Teaching focus - Workshop 3

The vignettes stimulated extensive discussion about what is important when teaching and how a teacher should proceed. The early career teachers had little trouble identifying with
a particular ‘teacher’ and discussion furthered as like minds came together and justifications were made.
The model for authentic learning (Appendix G) was presented without the listed indicators, allowing the early career teachers to record their own thoughts in groups of 3. Their responses provided rich data for analysis.

**Workshop 4: Focus on curriculum**

With a focus on curriculum, this workshop aimed to encourage the early career teachers to reflect on the purpose a teacher has in setting a task and the ways that a child interprets the task. Discussion in the opening of the workshop indicated that not knowing the ability levels of the children, their interests or needs made programming a challenge for teachers early in their careers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Curriculum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning and teaching experiences - understanding the teacher’s purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student knowledge and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sharing**

Teachers share stories in small groups about issues with planning and programming that have arisen in recent teaching experiences
Identify main issues for early career teachers

**Facilitator input**

Deconstructing text - what were the teacher’s expectations for the construction of this text? How did the children interpret the task?

**Reflective task** - Analyse work samples.
Identify the teacher’s expectations and the ways the children have interpreted the task.
What are the learning gains evident in the texts?
What connections are evident between KLAs?

**Sharing**

Where would you go next with this student?
Draw together some principles for ‘good’ teaching

**Professional dialogue recording**

Collaborative activities - blogging, wisdom work, reading and listening

Teaching focus - Workshop 4

A brainstorming discussion of teaching issues revealed a different focus for casual and more permanent teachers, although many decisions revolved around management of people and resources.
Identifying the purpose a teacher had for setting a task was challenging, it appeared to be easier to identify a focus on the mechanics of text construction than on a deeper purpose of meaning making.
Workshop 5: Focus on planning
Focussed on planning, this workshop aimed to challenge the existing understandings the early career teachers hold about planning and implementing lessons in classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Planning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of data to inform direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional dialogue group recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection (in notebooks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you understand it means to plan an integrated unit of work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main things you think about as you design an integrated unit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration Vs correlation presentation and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups sharing expertise - what do you understand about authentic learning experiences? (each group has handouts to support discussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the links between integration of KLAs and the principles of authentic tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify a learning outcome you relate to, group with like minds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the learning outcomes by creating an overview of the types of integrated activities that would support this outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative activities - blogging, reading and listening</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Early career teachers examined the elements of integrating a unit of work, identifying the considerations they needed to make when designing an integrated unit. The characteristics of integration were then compared with the principles of authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Similarities were discussed and conclusions drawn about the nature of integrated learning in a primary school classroom.

Workshop 6: Focus on learning
Justin’s presentation, “Let’s Get Creative!” focussed on the creative use of learning spaces and technology within schools in order to meet the needs of learners today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student achievement of nominated outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions of Quality Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting facilitator - Let’s Get Creative!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator input</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of the professional dialogue recordings, identifying the audience
Discussion - Analysis of the themes emerging from the discussions from Weeks 1-3

Professional dialogue group meeting/Reflective task

Collaborative activities - blogging, reading and listening

Teaching focus - Workshop 6

This presentation challenged the early career teachers to consider the possibilities for learners of today. Children were identified as technologically informed and Justin argued that schools have little choice but to adapt to meet their needs. Early career teachers were encouraged throughout the presentation to ask questions and challenge the presenter. Questions centred on management of the technology, for example, How can teachers compensate for children without access to computers at home? How can teachers monitor cyber bullying on Facebook?

The presentation identified characteristics of the pedagogy for today:
- Children should create the content and the resources
- Children should be allowed to deliver the content flexibly
- Learning experiences need to cater for a range of needs
- Children should engage with rich authentic tasks
- Teacher and children learn together
- Teacher and children need an audience
- Being creative and allowing the children to do the same

Early career teachers worked in groups to discuss the implications of the presentation for their own teaching and the classrooms they have worked in.

**Workshop 7: Focus on assessment**

Teachers considered their content knowledge of literacy, the role of assessment within their teaching and appropriate procedures for teaching content knowledge to children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring student learning and performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of assessment upon learning and teaching</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator input - Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals complete a literacy assessment focused on each of the elements: spelling, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective task (in literacy focus groups)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss and concur on the correct answers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify the skills needed and usage that children require in mastering these skills for use when constructing texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each group design and deliver a 5 minute lesson teaching an element from your literacy area (use syllabus and support documents as a guide)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sharing</th>
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</table>
Appendices

Groups teach their lesson to the group, discussing and responding to group questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator input - summarising the story so far</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revise the focuses of the weeks across session, discussing the cumulative nature of the focuses.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on the ways these have informed the ‘model for authentic teaching and learning’ using the blank proforma of the model</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Collaborative activities - blogging, reading and listening |

Teaching focus - Workshop 7

This workshop took a different approach from others, challenging the early career teachers to complete (and grade) an assessment and then demonstrate their content knowledge to their peers. The early career teachers completed the task and then collaborated with their peers in designing a lesson that teaches a skill from their assessment to the rest of the group. Participants were observed consulting syllabus and support material as they discussed the various elements required in designing a lesson. Conversation centred on the types of examples appropriate for the task, the age of the child who would be the target of such a lesson and the ways that the outcome could be achieved.

Each group was scheduled to present their lesson following 15 minutes planning time. As the lessons were delivered, the teaching group relied on the participation of the learning group for the success of their lesson. Some learners challenged the content of the lesson being taught. This was done in an assertive yet professional manner and there were several lengthy discussions about the grammatical structure of a sample sentence, or the appropriate placement of an apostrophe, for example.

In returning the focus of the task to the roles and responsibilities of classroom teacher, a discussion followed calling on the early career teachers to reflect on the focus for each week prior to Workshop 6 and the ways that these focuses had informed their understandings of their teaching responsibilities in designing learning experiences for children. These reflections were recorded individually in notebooks. The blogging task extended these reflections further with a focus on the role of assessment in driving classroom practice.

Workshop 8: Focus on organisation

This workshop used research findings and stimulus video to prompt discussion and reflection on teachers’ influence on learning environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing the classroom environment</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do teachers spend their ‘time’ doing?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
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<tr>
<td>Consider routine activities (Appendix H) during the school day</td>
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</table>
(Groups of 6, working in pairs). Identify procedures for some routine activities. In larger groups explain your procedures, evaluate and suggest improvements. Design a repertoire of strategies and procedures to share with the tutorial group (5 minutes each).

**Viewing**
- Video footage of different teaching approaches to working with a child with challenging behaviour and learning difficulties
- Examining the learning environment through teacher/student interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher B</th>
<th>Student’s challenging behaviour</th>
<th>Teacher B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**: reasons for children responding in certain ways, implications for the other children in the class, for the teachers. Identify behaviours that challenge classroom practice and each teacher’s responses as enablers or inhibitors. Share stories about your responses to a challenge. What might you have done differently faced with a similar event?

**Reflection**
- How do we engage reluctant learners and how will we know they are engaged?

**Collaborative activities - blogging, reading and listening**

**Teaching focus - Workshop 8**

In identifying the elements that interrupt the day and collaborating with peers to create a repertoire of strategies for reducing or eliminating the disruptions, the teachers demonstrated practical and thoughtful approaches to classroom problems. Opportunities for observation of both ‘sound’ and ‘unsound’ teaching practice (through video footage) enabled the early career teachers to identify rich and poor learning environments without identifying personal experiences of their own or others. The workshop concluded with individual written reflection time and an invitation to further explore the elements of creating rich learning environments in weblog postings.

**Workshop 9: Focus on communication**

This workshop focused on a teacher’s responsibility in reporting to a range of stakeholders. Early career teachers collaborated to identify stakeholders in a child’s education and the types of information appropriate for sharing. The workshop concluded with the early career teachers writing a report comment for a student.

**Focus on communication**
- Effective communication for key stakeholders

**Reflect**
- Consider a student you taught in the classroom (either prac or teaching). Write about this student: consider personal information,
social needs, academic performance, extra-curricula activities etc.
Share descriptions, adding further information in response to the discussion

Group Discussion
Who are the stakeholders in a child’s education? List them and identify what each need to know/wants to know and the tensions this can cause.

Exploring reporting methods
“Stephen’s” report: compare and contrast checklist v. narrative reporting. Identify advantages and disadvantages of each.
Read and discuss the report comments from websites - explore the themes reported, types of comments. Identify some categories that you can use to organise the comments. Be prepared to justify these.

Preparing reports
Prepare a report about your case for a stakeholder you have identified for this child. Share.

Independent tasks - blogging, reading and listening
Teaching focus - Workshop 9

Discussion allowed early career teachers to identify those who may be described as stakeholders in a child’s education and information they may/may not need.

Through an examination of sample report comments, a lively discussion developed about what was appropriate or not to include in a report. Further discussion examined the basis of the differences of opinion between these people, identifying different philosophies about the purpose of reporting as the main factor in differing opinions. The blogging task invited the early career teachers to reflect on their responsibilities in reporting to parents.

**Workshop 10: Focus on relationships**
Paul’s presentation focussed on ways a school can build professional relationships among staff by utilising the strengths of staff members to build a professional community.

Focus on relationships
Managing relationships amongst students
Managing relationships with other staff members
Reflective practice
Seeking further professional development opportunities

Facilitator input and discussion
Guest Presenter - Managing relationships in a climate of change

Facilitator Input
Professional associations - ALEA, Maths Assoc
Membership forms, questions

Reflective task
Deconstruct a teacher professional journal - How might
Early career teachers were challenged and provoked into discussion that confronted a number of stereotypes surrounding school systems, ‘older’ teachers and the ways that change may be achieved within a school context.

The teachers then investigated professional bodies through which they could continue to access professional development following the completion of their university studies.

**Workshop 11: Focus on reflective practice**

The final workshop took a focus on the ways that the professional development and their teaching experiences have shaped new understandings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Reflective Practice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on the professional journeys and deepening understandings</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Facilitator input - discussion**

Reflective model - what are the elements that you think of when you are planning a learning experience in a classroom? Do they differ if it is a casual day? Temporary block of work? Your full time job? How?

**Reflective task**

In pairs, reflect on ‘A model for authentic learning experiences’, responding to the criteria for each… Perhaps give examples of how these may look in the classroom?

**Group task**

Share your model with another pair. Together design a skeleton plan for a lesson you would love to try… Consider - rationale, topic, learning experiences and indicators of deep learning

**Sharing**

Pairs/groups share - a lesson I would love to try… Audience can ask questions, give advice, respond to the idea through the lens of ‘authenticity’ and in the spirit of collegiality and good will.

Teachers reflected on their deepening understanding of planning, programming and facilitating learning in their classrooms. Discussion centred on the different demands of a casual day in comparison to extended blocks of work and full time teaching. In describing their ‘dream’ lesson, teachers were encouraged to disregard the constraints many had described in casual and temporary positions.

In revisiting the Model for authentic learning, the early career teachers considered their teaching experience since the beginning of the year combined with the professional
development in the subject, within the BEST website community and in other professional experiences such as other university subjects and school based inservice teaching as they reflected on the elements within the model.
APPENDIX J SAMPLE BLOG REFLECTION

Tuesday, May 13 2008
What will my classroom look like?
Good news... I just got given a job for the rest of the year on ....MY OWN CLASS!!!

Bad news.... the room looks nothing like I would like it to look like.

What will my classroom look like? How do i want the children to learn???

This reflection is in relation to the reading

This reading outlines how teachers find their "identity" and that they are continually looking for new ways to do things and make learning in their classrooms even more efficient and effective.

Well I really don’t know where to start! They said I can change whatever I like.. (which is great) But it was something that really made me start to think.. what type of teacher am I?

What do I change in the room, that identifies what teacher I am...

It is hard because the room and the class is already "settled in" for the year. But... i do have them for the rest of the year... so i want to make the room reflect what type of teacher I am.. and also what sort of environment i would like to work in.

Im looking forward to this new beginning and this exciting new challenge for me!

I start Monday! any tips?
WISH ME LUCK!!! :-)

posted by [REDACTED] at 9:12:00 PM  | 1 comments  |  0 attachments  |  Post Comment
Comments:
[REDACTED] said...

What I think will be really difficult starting a new year as a full time teacher is arranging the room--options seem endless. I guess the good thing about having the classroom already set up is that you can immediately see what you like and dislike, and go from there, rather than a blank canvas.
APPENDIX K SAMPLE DOCUMENT FOR ANALYSIS

[Mind Map Diagram]

MY TEACHING IDENTITY

Characteristics of Quality Teachers

Characteristics of powerful learning experiences

Dewey's Rational Criteria

Week 6

Ask questions of own teaching e.g. Am I a quality teacher?

Week 5

Use a greater number of groups for literacy blocks

Effective instruction, teaching, evaluation, grouping & assessment

Week 4

Use smaller groups for activities

Make a greater number of groups for literacy blocks

Week 3

Problems for new teachers

Use professional teaching standards

Week 2

Seek help from peers

Professional identity, knowledge & practice

Week 1

Seek help from peers

Use of effective learning

Week 11

Be involved in professional development e.g.

Schools purpose is a learning community

Week 9

Hallway Displays

Change classroom displays 30/45

Appendices
APPENDIX L EXCERPT OF FIELD NOTES IN PHASE 3

13/3 Today was the second week of data collection with the early career teachers. I had the first model to show and some vignettes to explore the values and attitudes that teachers hold. I was nervous about the vignettes as I was not sure how the ects would react. Would they respond to the genre? Would they give of themselves? Would they identify with the teachers I described?

Well they certainly did – the talk was wonderful. They articulated clear reasons for agreeing with the teachers’ approaches to teaching. They were able to discuss and challenge each other. From here, they identified values within the vignettes that were evident, and compare them to their own. It was interesting that most ects aligned themselves with teachers 2 and 3. There were 3 in teacher 1 and 5 in teacher 4! There were strong views that you needed to get to know the children before you could even think about reading their files etc. when I explained the model, they were very quiet – some were not sure that it would work, others said it was complicated. I gave groups of 3 the A3 sheet with the headings and asked them to list some of the indicators of these. This was a challenging task, many were unable to identify their responsibilities and fell back on ‘typical’ answers such as team player and coach. I have kept these for later in the year when they will revisit them and reflect again.

The atmosphere in the room during this tutorial was electric – the discussions were lengthy and sustained an argument. there was hardly a person off task, and those who were were discussing the subject outline! I was pleasantly surprised about the willingness of the ects to share what they thought and they would give quite personal and revealing perspectives of their professional selves. It appeared that their professional identities are quite well developed, although interestingly, they fell back to issues of control and behaviour management when things got harder.

As a professional development model, the vignette was a powerful genre because it allowed for discussion about teachers and teaching without making it too personal.

My feelings that the experienced teachers were able to reflect more deeply on the students and their learning than the ects is proving right, the ects ‘know’ they need to be thinking about bigger things, but they tend to be caught up in the everyday and therefore challenged to remain focused on the goals. They have the words, but often not the means to elaborate on that, for example, they listed a duty of care as a responsibility, but most were unable to elaborate on that beyond keeping the children safe. Many said their responsibility was to reach the outcomes, but of course it is the children who achieve the outcomes, their responsibility is to teach for, assess and report on the outcomes.

Early interviews reveal a deep desire to be liked, to do a good job and to be thought of as capable by practising teachers, along with a genuine concern for children and their well being. There was an interesting sense of ownership over their written texts – who is going to see this? Who is going to keep this?
APPENDIX M TEACHER PROGRAM SAMPLE

ACTION LEARNING FRAMEWORK

REFLECTION AND THINKING
What needs to be learnt and why?
Introduction of the theme, idea or issue
What do we already know about this?

SOCIAL INTERACTION

EXPERT INPUT AND GUIDANCE
Explicit delivery of new information
Collaborative designing of new questions relating to theme, idea or issue

PAIR AND SHARE
Where will I find my information?
How will I record the information I have gathered?
What do I want to learn more about?

ACTION
What questions do I still have?
Where and how will I gather more information?
How does what I have discovered affect me and my world?
What is my opinion now?

LEARNING PROJECT
How will I best present my information to an audience?

FEEDBACK
What did my audience learn from my presentation?
What feedback did the audience give me to improve my presentation?

REFLECTION
What did I learn about the theme, idea or issue?
What do I need to learn next to be a more effective learner?
APPENDIX N EXCERPT OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Let’s move on and chat about your beliefs about teaching and learning. What do you believe learning is?
It can be… that’s a really deep question. Well I’m really strong on relationships; I have really good relationships with all my kids. I think without a (Interruption). I think once you have that relationship with them you get the best out of kids and it takes a while to develop. It has to be trusting, it has to be mutual, it has to be honest. Once kids believe you want the best, you have to gain their trust, they will be more giving and open to things that you are offering them. Then what you are offering them, sure you’ve got your curriculum stuff, but once you have a relationship you are more able to make those decisions about what aspects of the curriculum to offer. It’s different for all kids. Learning for me is not all about ABCs, it’s about learning about how to be in this world and learning who to be and learning that you are important. That’s a big thing that I work on with my kids that you are valued and ok we are going to do this bit of work and then how can we celebrate it. How can I help you negotiate whatever it is that we are doing? That’s how I see it in the broad sense.

So what might your classroom look like to reflect that?
Very social. My classroom is always in groups. I always talk my class as our family, our school family and obviously with the curriculum you talk about family structures and the social structures around that. That’s how I foster the idea, that we are family and this how we treat each other. The latest class I had was the IO class and we had big comfy seats to sit and that was our conference area and our talking area and everyone, but because they were special ed kids they all wanted to talk all the time so we had to put structures in. so we had the talking stick and that was how we had our turn. We had to learn to listen to each other. That really went against my grain, because usually I like it a little bit more casual, but that was a specific need that these children had. So it is about being aware of the needs and working out the ways to achieve that but still keep that trust and openness.

How else do I do that? When I teach I let my enthusiasm show. So often I might do a big scream and teachers will walk past and say, oh yeah she’s off again, but honest to goodness it’s really – and it came from RR working one on one. I had a little child I worked with for 6 weeks 1-1 and trying to teach them was. We did all sorts of things. Was was every day, every day, and god love them, and with RR it was, ‘that’s a good try, but have a look at this’. You know the drill! And in my head it’s ‘I already told you that, why can’t you remember?’ and when he actually got it I was truly elated. And you know it’s such an insular world, YEAH!. So that sort of crept into my style and when the kids can get me to enthusiastically do it. It’s never put on, it’s from the heart and CELEBRATE! And they love to see it and how much of a boost is it, because it’s not done willy nilly, it’s a real gut, genuine scream. If they can get me to do that, how much of a boost to morale is that, they can think wow she thinks my work is that good! And because we’ve built that relationship where they want to please you, that whatever I’m trying to teach, it reinforces it for that kid. And then they can say, oh yeah I remember that because MrsK got on the table and did the dance because she was so happy.
And you talk about it being a family and in your own family you don’t have those restraints that teachers often put up. If you want to stand on the table and yell, you do. It’s nice to see that in the classroom.
Well yeah. It often happens.

It was interesting when you said you had the IO class that you had to go against somewhat of your philosophy and introduce the talking stick. If they were your class for a long time, would you see that you could remove that?
Well hopefully, they would learn and understand the concept, because they need visuals. That’s a very IO thing, the visuals. The visual was the talking stick and I’m the controller and I can talk. And because I’m the controller and I’m addressing a lot of people, I can point to the person that I want to direct the response to. I am in control but then I was also giving over my control and then I couldn’t talk either so we became, you know. And then hopefully they learnt the control was… do you notice when I point my eyes also… [look at the other person]. So I’m giving other clues and cues to what the normal cues are, the eye contact, well I want to talk to you now because I have given you the eye contact. and I would turn away the thing [stick] when I want them to stop as I would look away when I want them to stop. So it’s a way of doing it, I don’t know if it would have worked in the long term as I wasn’t there long enough but I would have tried it.

Can we talk about something that you’ve taught or seen that really reflects your beliefs about learning?
It was interesting you said about tapping into the children’s interests. When you’ve got a class of 30, I thoroughly believe if a kid loves truck, then do trucks, but how do you do that with 30 kids. Because of my beliefs what I normally tap into is real reasons for doing things. On Mothers’ Day I had a group of… my role now is ESL, but in term 2 we had STL money and we tapped into the middle group to improve their writing. so they weren’t the bottom, bottom, the next group up, so very hard.

And often a neglected group.
That’s right, but really hard and very low with writing. All our results [show] figurative language, they just don’t get it. So I tapped into Mothers’ Day and mothers and we read heaps of stories about mothers and we talked about mothers and describing mothers and we did lots and lots of work about that. And I said to them we are going to write a poem to our mothers and we’re going to write it on this beautiful paper and we are going to roll it up into a scroll and tie it up with beautiful ribbon and you’re going to give it to your mum for Mothers’ Day. So it became real. It became something that I made sure they all had! You have to be really careful. So we started with similes and we talked about similes and how it enriches the language. We talked about them and we did, you know, red as… and we got onto it, you know Mrs K was jumping around, that’s fantastic, that’s fantastic. And we had one little girl and her problem is that she comes up with brilliant ideas but she copies them. And the proof was in the pudding because she was seeing me go… they were coming up with these wonderful… when they got the gist of what it meant, these kids who did really simple sentences or the and, and, and (boring and sarcastic voice) and really boring writing, were coming up with these really wonderful similes that were blowing my mind away, blowing me away. This one little girl, she really wanted to please me, she bends over
backwards, look at me, look at me, she’s one of these little girls. We were talking about the different things about mothers. We were talking about skin. Again, very concrete, you know, you’ve got your mother’s picture, we had all the visuals. She came up to me and looked me in the eye and she really wanted to please me and she said, ‘my mother’s skin is as pale as the snow.’ And she was watching me ready for the jump and I went ‘no it’s not!’ She’s African!! And she looked at me as if to say ‘fair enough’. I said now close your eye and look at your mother in your eyelids and we took her through it and she said’ it’s like chocolate’ and ‘fantastic, now think about chocolate, what is it about chocolate that makes it so wonderful?’ ‘oh, it’s as smooth as a mug of hot chocolate’. Well I just went Bazonkers! Because it was her work and she thought she had just written the bible! And that’s the sort of things I do with those kids. And it was honest. She came to me with this wa wa wa and I said, ‘no it’s not, think about it Harriet.’ So it’s not accepting just anything, I could have said that’s a really good try, and that, but no it’s not! And that’s my relationship with them. I’ll go to bat for you for whatever, but you’ve got to give me honesty too. And they know that.

It’s expectations too isn’t it? You knew that girl was going to be able to come up with something better than as white as snow and that response of, ‘oh yes, that’s almost right’ is insincere and so often that’s what teachers see as their role, they can’t say no.
APPENDIX O THE BEST SITE

Group weblog function.
Early career teachers were encouraged to visit and update their blogs weekly. Further, they were expected to read and respond to the postings of others in the workshops. Identifying features in this blog have been concealed.

Professional dialogue and Wisdom Stories function
Students captured and uploaded audio files of professional dialogue in response to a specified reading.
APPENDIX P EXPERIENCED TEACHERS’ UNITS OF WORK

Making a Difference

Teacher: Meredith
Grade: 5

Task: To apply understandings gathered about Caroline Chisholm’s life to the children’s own lives by helping others in a meaningful way.

Rationale: To connect the life of an important historic figure with the children’s own real living, not only their own school community but in the wider community to achieve a deeper understanding of the fact that to be Catholic is about giving others an opportunity (SI10.12a; WD10.12a).

Process:
- Children apply knowledge and understanding gathered through a study of Caroline Chisholm’s life to their own lives by supporting those in need in their own community.
- With the support of local charity workers, community workers and the teacher, children identify a project that is achievable and meets the aim to support others. This includes identifying a suitable fund raising approach and suitable charity. (The children chose to bake and sell muffins at school to raise money).
- Teacher and children locate an appropriate recipe (cooking demands, cost and health considerations), identify and purchase ingredients in a class visit to the supermarket.
- The project is advertised and marketed to classes and staff within the school, muffins baked and sold.
- The charity worker revisits the school where children make a presentation of the money raised at an assembly. The charity worker provides feedback to the children about the value and implications of their donation.
- Children reflect in their journals about being of service to others and being part of a community.

Assessment: A reflective journal entry focussing on the religious knowledge and understandings of the work of Caroline Chisholm and the responsibility having that knowledge brings to the children’s lives (WD10.12a)
Bakers’ Doughlight

**Teacher:** Stan  
**Grade:** 6

**Task:** Establish a bread making business.

**Rationale:** ‘I see food and cooking as something that is just pure and it feels good and you make something and you eat it and you can share it and bread has always been that, villagers always have bread and its something you can share. It was something the kids could share in making and if they didn’t share, then it wouldn’t get done’ (SI6.12).

**Process:**
- Teacher and children identify the sorts of activities one would engage in if they were to set up a business in the community. For example, research the product, design a logo, and develop an advertising campaign, monitor profit/loss and manufacturing.
- Class research bread, what types there are and how they are made. (They selected sourdough as the business product).
- Children and teacher produce and sell sourdough. Different tasks are allocated, eg design, marketing, accounts and production. Interested external experts assist with different areas of expertise, for example, a parent who is an accountant gives tutorials in Excel spreadsheet, including the help and tutorial functions.
- All children participate in the process of making and selling the bread, and then making informed choices about allocating profits. Problems are solved through business meetings and consensus.

**Assessment:** The process and the product: successful marketing, production and retail of the bread provided Stan with assessment integrated into the experience. Further, he was able to draw conclusions about the children’s development of such strategies as problem solving skills, collaboration and flexible thinking as he observed them at work in their business.
Websites

Teacher: Justin

Grade: 4

Task: The children create, maintain and manage a website about themselves

Rationale: ‘…to provide children with a genuine audience both within and outside the school community for their work. To provide children with opportunities to make decisions about the work they wanted to share and in the way they want to share it. I argue that the value is in providing a real audience there who respond to the work the children publish.’ (SI5.12b).

Process:
- The teacher and children deconstructed the function, purpose and structure of a range of websites both as a whole class and in small groups.
- Using their emerging understandings of web based texts, each child created a password protected website. The children explored and made choices about colour, layout, design and content as they constructed their pages. They were called on to justify these choices to both their teacher and peers during small group observation and reflection time. The focus of these reflective discussions was on the audience and the way that different people might interpret each child’s website.
- Once published, the children selected and uploaded desired work samples from their classroom learning experiences for public viewing.
- The children were responsible for maintaining and updating the content, appearance and layout of their site.
- Peers, parents and teachers formed a critical audience for these young authors as they responded to the sites both in person and online through email.

Assessment: Observation and reflection. Justin identified it as important that the child
- Is suitably skilled to make changes to the website
- Remains motivated to maintain the website
- Articulates an understanding of the purpose of the website and the ways they cater to their perceived audience
My Community

**Teacher:** Jenna  
**Grade:** 6

**Task:** Plan, design, create and present an advertisement designed to raise awareness of a particular social issue

**Rationale:** To work within the confines of (mandatory syllabus) outcomes to look at national social issues and global social issues to broaden students’ knowledge and to help them see that they can create a climate for change

**Process:**
- Children and teacher research, interview, explore the ways that social issues are reported in their communities, identify issues of interest and particular need.
- Groups collaborate to interpret the issues and construct an advertisement designed to improve understanding and awareness of the issue.
- Group members create storyboards of the advertisement and, in collaboration with peers and teacher, make final decisions about the way their story will be told.
- Group members prepare and film their advertisement together to promote the social issue. The class and teacher act as initial audience, where reflective approaches are used to discuss the process and the message being conveyed.
- Groups revisit their product in light of the class feedback and make final adjustments in consultation with teacher and group members.
- Advertisements are presented to the school at an assembly where the students also make short speeches to accompany their presentation.

**Assessment:** Teacher designed rubric in connection with Literacy Outcomes (including Values Outcomes) (BOS, 1998a) and PEPDH Outcomes (BOS, 1999a)

**Self and peer assessment:** Children used the rubric to reflect on their own understanding and the understandings of others about the social issue presented on their ability to convey their message to their audience. * Grades were not awarded in self and peer assessments, only comments and recommendations

**Teacher assessment:** Jenna similarly used the rubric to assess children’s content knowledge and quality of the presentation. However, she applied grades (A-E) to the rubric as well as making comments and recommendations.
APPENDIX Q EARLY CAREER TEACHERS’ UNITS OF WORK

Straw Towers

Teacher: Terry

Task: The children work in teams using a collection of different sized straws and elastic bands to construct towers.

Rationale: ‘I just basically gave it to them as a science challenge...to get them working as a group...to make the link from a little activity using straws to something that was real in the real world.’ (SI23.10b).

Process:
- Children and teacher observe and discuss stimulus pictures of the structural components of buildings with a particular focus on each building frame and the ways they differed to support different structures. For example, the structure for a tower versus that for a house.
- Teacher described the task as being a science challenge to ‘see who can make the biggest tower out of the straws and elastic bands’.
- Each table grouping had a bundle of straws and elastic bands and collaborated on the construction of the tower.
- Reflection and sharing time allowed the towers to be compared (and a winner identified) and discussed, with a focus on the connections the children could make to problem solving, team work and strategies for future learning experiences.

Assessment: Teacher planned questions for reflection and sharing: How did you make it strong enough to stand by itself? How do you think you could make it taller? What material could you use instead of elastic bands and straws to make it stronger? The aim of the questions was to reflect on the process they had engaged with and then to ‘think about taller structures being stronger and made of stronger materials’ (SI23.10b).
**Mini Beasts**

*Teacher:* Jordan

*Task:* The children participate in a playground safari to explore *Mini Beasts* and then conduct their own safari in their home environments.

*Rationale:* ‘...I wanted to see what they could find at home...and take photos...I just want them to enjoy what they did, I want them to say “Oh remember when we learned about the *Mini Beasts* with Miss Clarke?”’ (SI12.11a).

*Process:*
- Teacher and children read a range of print and screen based texts to explore the concept of a ‘Mini Beast’ and where they may be found.
- Class engage in a playground safari, exploring the characteristics and habitat of these creatures.
- Teacher and children construct a range of texts to explain and describe their research.
- Children are invited to engage in home-based projects where each child explores their home environment and constructs texts to interpret and express their own understandings about *Mini Beasts*. The construction of texts was optional, but a teacher-designed proforma was compulsory and these were handed in at the culmination of the project.
- Children present their findings to the class and display products that are created.

*Assessment:* Teacher designed checklist: ‘Do they know what *Mini Beasts* are? Do they know where to find them?’ (SI12.11a), and an information proforma describing what was found and where that all children completed and submitted.
Fractions

*Teacher:* Sophie

*Task:* For the children to work in independent and guided lessons to complete activities that explore the properties of fractions

*Rationale:* ‘Oh that was just the lesson for the day. That’s the maths topic we’re studying...’ (SI22.10a).

*Process:*

- The class was divided into three ability groups and each worked at a different fraction related activity. All of the children worked through all of the activities as a rotation.

The following table demonstrates the learning focus for each rotation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher identified grouping</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;ST&lt;/sup&gt; ROTATION</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;ND&lt;/sup&gt; ROTATION</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;RD&lt;/sup&gt; ROTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High ability</td>
<td>Completing a page about fractions from the text</td>
<td>Copying notes about fractions from the board</td>
<td>Teacher directed activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle ability</td>
<td>Copying notes about fractions from the board</td>
<td>Teacher directed activity</td>
<td>Completing a page about fractions from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ability</td>
<td>Teacher directed activity</td>
<td>Completing a page about fractions from the text</td>
<td>Copying notes about fractions from the board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The teacher explains her planning,

I had my first group, my highest graded group working firstly on the text book side because that was the side that needed an explanation for kids that were low. And then I got the medium group to copy from the board and then I had my lowest group working with me... then I moved everyone around so the last group I had for the hands on activity was the high group because... they pretty much knew it and then they just had to copy down from the board for the sake of having the notes down and then by the time they got to the hands on they were already like complete understanding of what I was teaching them. (SI22.10a)

*Assessment:* Pen and paper test on Friday
**Timetables**

*Teacher:* Breanna

*Task:* The children read timetables and plan a return trip from their school to a certain destination.

*Rationale:* ‘using real timetables... they will have to do probably not now that they are in primary school but somewhere in the near future, I would imagine’ (SI23.10a)

*Process:*
- Teacher distributes a range of train timetables from local train routes
- Teacher models and demonstrates one return trip, making connections between 24 hour and analogue time
- Children plan and record a return trip to the city within a certain timeframe
- Children share and discuss their trips with the class with a focus on using the timetable to complete the trip within the allotted time

*Assessment:* Teacher analysis of work sample, ‘read 24-hour time and interpret a timetable’ (SI23.10a)