

Welcome to the real world...I haven't reached those dizzy heights yet... Reflections on a transition from university teaching to school teaching.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the author's transition from university lecturing and course coordination to secondary teaching and curriculum leadership: a return and also a taboo. It draws on the personal experience of the author and also on her recent doctoral work around teacher development of a disposition for enquiry into professional practice (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2001) and 'care-full research' (Brown, 2006). Preparing beginning teachers to enquire into practice is one thing; introducing experienced teachers to the concept will pose different issues. While it is very early days of transition, the paper will be an autoethnography which makes use of narrative methods of enquiry to explore the terrain of returning to secondary school teaching and working with experienced teachers to build a culture of professional learning.

The paper connects the concept of 'care-full' research (an analytical framework developed in the doctoral work) and 'care-full' teaching. It will be argued that the need for care in research of and with teachers, should be developed into a more sophisticated disposition of care for pedagogy, content knowledge and people within the teaching profession. In this way the myth that higher degree research has little impact on school classroom practice will be explored.

The totems are my beliefs about teaching and learning and professional practice. The taboos are my actions (moving from tertiary to secondary teaching) and this fits with the concept of risk taking within teaching.

Introduction

I have left a position as a senior lecturer in a School of Education and I have returned to a secondary school as English curriculum leader and Curriculum and Professional Development Coordinator. In some ways this could be seen as a taboo or a step backwards. I prefer to see it as a planned career move. A teaching fellowship offered by the university has provided a natural bridge between the tertiary and secondary education worlds and has made the transition easier. I would like to see whether I can connect academic research and secondary classroom practice in some useful way. A belief in the importance of teachers enquiring into practice underpinned my teacher education work (Brown & McGraw, 2002). It has also informed my participation in practitioner research throughout my career. Recent doctoral work explored ways of learning in teacher education and led to a focus on the need for care in teacher research. Risk taking is a critical ingredient in learning. If we don't take risks we limit our own horizons. Having taken risks in research methods in the past, and having ventured into the challenging and creative realms of narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995) and autoethnographic (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) ways of writing about learning, I am excited about the possibilities that my career move has opened.

Traditionally, in Australia, education academics have taught for some time in schools before pursuing post-graduate study and a career as an academic. The career trajectory

from lecturer to professor has been clear. The ‘game’ has had rules (doctoral qualifications, publication record, participation in professional bodies and so on). I think there are good reasons for playing the ‘game’ differently. The traditional path has led to interesting lives for researchers but it has not necessarily improved the experience of students or teachers. There has been tension around universities’ relationships with schools and teachers – as played out in the frequent theory/ practice divide debates (Korthagen, 2001; Loughran & Russell, 1997; Zeichner, 1999). The results of academic investigations have not always been disseminated to practitioners. Or maybe teachers have not ‘heard’. Teachers are busy people and their focus is usually on their students. Often their own teacher education experiences have not been positive (Braiden, 1997). Anecdotally, academics have been viewed with suspicion or derision. Attributing blame is not useful. I am only interested in building bridges and connections between university and school, in helping teachers enquire and learn. I am keen to link research and practice more closely.

Care in research of and with teachers is something that preoccupied me during the doctoral research. As I embrace the challenge of working with experienced teachers I am very conscious of the need to show care for them and their experiences. I sense a need to develop a model of enquiry into practice that incorporates care for individuals, their pedagogy and their content knowledge.

This paper is an exploration of my experiences so far this year. It will be developed with a series of vignettes or stories of my personal experiences (identified by boxes), interspersed with discussion and background explanations of enquiry into professional practice and ‘care-full’ research. Narrative ways of writing help me explore in a personal way and provide a powerful way of learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Laurel Richardson’s (2000) suggestion that we ‘write ourselves into understanding’ is a useful method for reflecting on the early months in my new role. I have not researched with any other teachers at the school yet. That will come later as we journey together. My approach is not conventional and boundaries are being challenged.

‘Welcome to the real world’

‘Here is my contract for employment,’ I said tentatively as I handed the document over.

‘Thanks. Welcome to the real world,’ commented the administrative assistant, ‘you know there won’t be any admin. help for you now. Teachers don’t get admin. help.’

Somewhat taken aback I responded defensively: ‘Maybe teachers need administrative help, I know the university provided some admin. help and it left lecturers with more time to do what they are meant to do- lecture and research.’ I quietly left the room.

Thoughts tumbled through my head. What real world? I thought my world was rather real. I know lecturers are accused of living in ivory towers. I know the press is constantly full of criticism for teacher educators and their lack of connection with what happens in schools. But then the press is full of criticism for teachers too. At the last ISATT

conference I remember making a somewhat impassioned plea for educators not to be always cast as the 'devil'. I was tired of being part of a profession that is constantly criticised in Australia, despite our best efforts and commitment. I am still saddened by this.

Accusations of not living in the real world have always bothered me. I have constantly sought ways to connect my professional practice with theoretical understanding and research.

Still, I left that school office somewhat shaken. My decision to leave academia had not been an easy one. My fears were reinforced by this encounter.

Questions swirl. What is the 'real world'? Whose world is more real than any other person's? Don't we all just live in our own world and for us it is real?

'I haven't reached those dizzy heights yet.'

I attend the students' orientation day at my new school. Apprehension floods my being.

I am making a rather unusual journey 'backwards' or 'forwards' it depends how it is viewed. I had left secondary teaching about seven years earlier, having taught for over a decade. My decision to leave secondary teaching was two-fold. The university work had become increasingly engaging and challenging and the opportunity had arisen to coordinate the secondary teacher education program. This coincided with a personal epiphany. A moment. Life contains interesting moments and I distinctly remember thinking that I had to leave school teaching for a while. A particularly challenging year 8 student had brought me to a very bleak place. Nothing I tried would engage him. His troubles were mainly academic but I could not find the 'key' to help him and he actively resented my efforts. I remember looking at him and thinking I was spending far more emotional energy on him than on my own children and I became very angry. Angry at my own failure. Angry with him for taking me to this place in myself. All through my university teaching I had taught passionately and enthusiastically. I was so certain of the power of education to transform lives. A personal mantra had been 'The day you find yourself looking at a class and not liking the people in front of you is the day you need to take a break from teaching'. I was all too aware of the teacher's power to enhance or destroy a student's learning. I reached that day with that student. Somehow at that time, I won the position at university and I embarked on another stage of life's journey.

So here I was back in a school, being introduced to my new form group for the coming year. The other form teacher was not new and I was happy to have her lead the proceedings.

'Hello, Year 8, my name is Ms And this is Dr Brown – I haven't reached those dizzy heights myself yet...'

I stopped listening, I was stunned. Almost six years of study had led me to the very recent completion of an Ed D. I had been engrossed in the learning journey and had engaged in the process so deeply. I certainly didn't see a post-graduate degree as reaching any 'dizzy heights'. For me it was a totally personal journey of discovery. I was exhausted and delighted when I finished.

Standing in a classroom with twenty-three interested, tentative students and one other teacher, I felt myself shrink. What was I doing here? What had that comment really meant? Was it pretentious to be known as 'doctor'? I would have preferred to be known by my first name, but this would not really be possible. I left as quickly as I could, thoughts swirling.

The recent doctoral work on the ethic of care and professional learning was high in my mind. Maybe I had my super-sensitive antennae working over-time because I was possibly committing a taboo. Leaving an academic career, a completed doctorate and a recent promotion to senior lecturer, could seem like career 'suicide'. I had misgivings myself. My reasons were complex but also logical. My university work took place in another town, an hour from where I lived. I had commuted for years.

Another important motivation was that I felt I needed to work with school students and teachers again, to try to connect some of the things I had learnt and researched while teaching at university to school life. Certainly I had visited many schools over the years while mentoring teacher education students and I had run various workshops with teachers. Occasionally I had felt a yearning to find out what was really happening in schools. Sometimes I was concerned when recent graduates contacted me with stories of the complexity and demands of their roles, the difficulties they were experiencing, the deep frustrations they felt. The doctoral research had certainly highlighted the difficulty beginning teachers had finding time to reflect on their practice. (Loughran, 1996; Brown, 2003, 2006).

Transitions...What I notice...Things have changed...

Time is different. I have always enjoyed being busy and the challenge that some pressure provides. The idea of multi-tasking is invigorating. I have also always enjoyed thinking. As a university course coordinator I was flat out with administration, pastoral care and teaching. As an academic it was important to have thinking time and my one hour commute each way to work ensured that I had at least that time to think. I rationalized the travel by saying that the morning trip was for visualizing my teaching for the day or planning my research and the evening trip was for reflecting on the day and I consciously left the stresses of the day behind as I traveled. Obviously research requires more thought than this and I made sure there were blocks of time in my busy life for research and writing. I know I was frantically busy at university and I often felt that I could be doing three or four things with every minute I was at work - or at home.

I am surprised to find that school is even more frantic. We rush from class to class, meeting to meeting, yard duty, parent meetings and so on. So often I feel as if I am fighting to plan my teaching well. It must be my priority. It must!

Sounds are different. My world is totally invaded by noise. People want me or something from me all the time. Voices wash around me. Requests, orders, bells, questions, laughter, answers, denials, chatter. When I have a lesson off sometimes I put ear-phones in just so I can't hear the class next door. My old world had some quiet time. Driving time, writing time. I yearn for the hours spent sitting at my computer writing, Gentle tapping on keys, peaceful thoughts, hard thoughts, and quiet thoughts.

Thinking feels so rushed, so superficial. I yearn for depth. I attend so many meetings that are interesting and where important issues are raised. They all seem to require follow up work. I try, but I don't feel that I am able to give things the detailed consideration that they deserve.

Schools have changed. I teach in a privileged school. Laptops are present in all classes. The students are confident and happy using them. The technology feels like an integral part of my teaching. I am intrigued that students just use laptops as extensions of themselves. They personalize them and communicate with them. I remember earlier days of computers and laptops and the intense frustration when things wouldn't work or when noone seemed to know what they were doing. Now I can't imagine learning and teaching without all the technology.

The curriculum has changed too. New electives are offered, rich tasks are incorporated. Documentation and accountability requirements are much more evident than the past. In some ways this is a good thing as teachers can be supported by documentation. But I sense an underlying tension. This will require careful negotiation. My initial concern is that too much documentation will cut the creative edges off teachers' work. Teachers may lose their sense of personal efficacy, even pride and pleasure in their work if the requirements are too sanitized, sterilized, homogenized. I know this is not the intention but those of us working in curriculum need to be mindful of these dangers.

Students have always been the reason I teach. I have been challenged by learning with them and exploring ways of helping them learn. I am somewhat relieved to observe that students are still interesting, funny, thoughtful, silly, smart, lazy, bewildered, organized, creative, challenging and all the other things they have always been. It is interesting to talk with them about the concerns they have and things they want to learn about. I grew up in the time when the nuclear threat seemed very real. I remember being deeply concerned that some idiot would end the world before I had had a chance to grow up. Today's children are concerned about the environment, water, wars, poverty. Similar concerns but different. As always I am so conscious of my responsibilities as a teacher.

Teachers are the same and different too. I am impressed by the pride they have in their work, in the commitment and industriousness of so many. I don't really want to generalize. I am reminded that some teachers will always be learners and some will not. I

am constantly reminded of the emotional nature of teachers' labour (Brown, 2003, 2006; Hargreaves, 1998, 2002) and the pressure of time that they all feel. The intensification of teachers' work as described in the literature (Apple, 1986; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Day, 1999) is certainly evident.

My role has changed, of course. At university, course coordination was a busy, challenging, emotionally demanding, creative and totally engaging role. At school I have a leadership role in coordinating the English department and also coordinating the junior secondary curriculum. The roles are interesting and demanding and I have spent the first term finding out about how teachers experience their work. The possibility of working to develop a culture of research and enquiry through curriculum and professional development leadership is very challenging and exciting. The bedrock of my own research and academic life gives me confidence and also respect for the complexity of the process.

My totems

My doctoral search included an exploration of teachers as enquirers into professional practice (Brown, 2003, 2006; Brown & McGraw, 2002). As part of the introduction to the research I clarified my beliefs about education. These beliefs, or my totems, for this paper, will be with me throughout my professional and personal life. Totem poles tell stories, using symbols. Written words are the symbols for my story.

This is who I am...

People matter. Without this fundamental belief there is no point in being involved in education. As a teacher, the students, colleagues, parents and others I work with matter in some way. They form part of my 'circles and chains of care' (Noddings, 2003) and as such our relationships are important. Successful relationships of any type rely on communication, good will, sensitivity to others and openness to learning.

Learning matters. There are an infinite number of ways to live and be. To me the idea of continuing to learn is central to living an interesting and rewarding life. Learning provides the possibility to empower people, to liberate people (Freire, 1998), to strengthen relationships and communities. Learning can be informal and formal, it can be structured and unstructured and it takes time.

Meaning matters. Making sense of our experiences is an important part of learning. As Dewey noted so long ago, experience alone does not actually mean much. The capacity to reflect on and learn from experience is what leads to personal growth (Dewey, 1938). Rogers (2002) in her analysis of Dewey's work, goes even further: "The creation of meaning from experience is at the very heart of what it means to be human" (p. 848).

Asking questions is usually, if not always, as important as finding answers. This is the heart of reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Loughran, 1996) and serves to connect the

personal, the intellectual, the emotional and the social dimensions of learning in teaching and beyond.

Constructivist principles underpin these beliefs. The idea that each teacher has the ability, indeed responsibility, to construct his or her professional life thoughtfully, imaginatively, respectfully and creatively drove my thinking throughout the doctoral study. As I return to school, this feeling intensifies. It is another significant totem as I embark on the next stage of my professional life.

Teacher as enquirer into professional practice

Professional learning has become an integral part of teachers' lives. For many teachers this is nothing new but for others it is. Sachs (1997) argues that teachers frequently focus so strongly on students' learning needs that they neglect their own. In times of rapid change and burgeoning information sources it is important for teachers to have the means to develop their own understanding of learning and teaching and the capacity to critique changes as they arise. We need teachers in the profession who can work with 'complexity and uncertainty' (Clarke & Erickson, 2003) and who can sustain their own engagement in the profession.

Enquiry into practice is not a new concept. Reid & O'Donoghue (2001a) note that Dewey (1929) identified the importance of teachers studying the effects of their teaching on students' learning and developing a sensitivity to teaching being "an inherently non-routine behaviour" (p. 28). Hargreaves (2000) argues that it is critical for teachers to enquire systematically into their practice to "lift teachers out of the pre-professional prejudice that only practice makes perfect" (p. 167). Interest in enquiry into professional practice has gained momentum in recent years and Clarke & Erickson (2003) explore the rise of enquiry as a 'requirement' within current policy in the US, UK and Australia. They note: "...there is almost universal agreement that enquiry and reflection in and on practice are essential elements of the teaching profession" (p. 2).

Reid & O'Donoghue (2001a, 2001b) make a compelling argument for the development of an approach to teacher education based on enquiry. The argument centres on the fact that 21st century educators must work within a context of 'change, paradox and uncertainty'. They argue that educators are "engaged in the process of producing, as well as accessing, new knowledge. They are making their own meaning". Traditional ideas of teachers as transmitters of knowledge or skilled artisans are no longer relevant and "in contemporary times the complexity of the task of being an educator calls for deep professional expertise in a range of areas" (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2001b, p. 28). This idea is developed further:

When educators use knowledge resources in their role as educators, drawing upon research, experience and formal and informal sources to make a professional judgment about some aspect of policy or practice, they are not simply transferring and applying this knowledge. They are critically engaging with this knowledge in use, addressing specific problems/ issues/ dilemmas in the context of their work, problem-posing and problem-solving, theorising, devising strategies, and implementing and evaluating these. That is, they engage in the process of making new

meaning through the critical application in new contexts of knowledge resources they have accessed. (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2001a, p. 9).

The question of how schools encourage teachers to become enquirers into practice is what engages me at this time. Certainly there is an expectation of professional development within the teaching profession, and recognition that this is very important. The challenge is to make the professional development enquiry based, engaging and relevant for each teacher.

The actual interpretation of 'enquiry' can be seen at its most simple level as the act of asking questions. But it is more than this. Clarke & Erickson (2003) argue for inquiry as a central tenet of a profession. They identify teacher inquiry as "a generally agreed upon set of insider research practices that promote teachers taking a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students" (p. 3). Encouraging practicing teachers to adopt this approach requires careful planning.

The model adopted at the University of Ballarat supported the concept of teachers developing a disposition towards enquiry. It addressed the need to link theory and practice; to work in partnership with schools; for teachers to be reflective practitioners; to practice close observation and attention to students; to engage in learning and their own meaning making and for teacher educators to model acts of enquiry. The aim was to empower prospective teachers so they "have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to theorise systematically and rigorously about practice in different learning contexts, and to take appropriate action on the basis of the outcomes of this enquiry." (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2001a, p. 9)

In previous work I note: "On a personal level I wanted the course to encourage future teachers to be fully and actively engaged in their professional lives. I want their students to be the beneficiaries of teachers who are lifelong learners, actively involved in their own development and passionate about the teaching profession." (Brown, 2006, p. 12) In my transition to secondary school I am conscious of the need to maintain these ideals. I am excited about working with practicing teachers and my goal is to support these teachers on their professional journeys.

The motivation to develop as an enquirer will vary from person to person but there are some common elements. As Mitchell (2003) notes: "Teachers decide to engage in research for a number of reasons, but concerns about aspects of their own classrooms are almost always the most important." (p. 201) Teaching is an extremely rewarding career and it is emotionally and physically demanding (Hargreaves, 1998). There is no doubt that those teachers who are happy and engaged in the profession are a positive influence on their students. The idea of engaging teachers in a model of enquiry, "taking part in looking closely and by taking the time to notice, seeing so many other parts to learning and teaching..." (Cooley & Lugar, 2003, p. 32) is one that is appealing, interesting and offers many possibilities to teachers.

A few weeks into school life and I reflect that it would be quite possible to forget I had ever been at university. Days pass by in a frenzy of activity. Certainly no one has asked

me much about my university work or research. There have been some assumptions made: 'You must be crazy to come back', 'You wouldn't know anything about writing reports now would you?', 'This might be a bit boring...' I don't say much in response. I am in my listening and observing stage! I suppose the teachers are working me out too, in some ways I am viewed with suspicion. I am conscious of being circumspect as we all negotiate the new relationships.

I had taught in the Master of Education program at the university for a number of years. I always enjoyed the opportunity to share professional conversations with educators from a range of backgrounds. Having undertaken post-graduate study whilst working full time I was very aware of the demands on teachers and the need to be sensitive to the professional and personal pressures they experienced. Post-graduate study in education does not hold the same status as in some other professions and frequently there are no tangible rewards. In many cases the study was a way for teachers to ensure they continued to be active learners. The cost of the courses is very high and we had had trouble finding ways to make the courses accessible. Occasionally the School of Education had talked about the possibility of introducing the Master of Education program directly into schools.

Some email conversations with university colleagues suggest exploring the possibility of offering an M Ed to a group of teachers at my new school, with the possibility of the university providing support on-site, at school. It is an interesting opportunity. I am aware that some teachers I am working with are interested in post-graduate study.

An opportunity at a staff meeting:

'Would anyone be interested in the possibility of studying a Master of Education through a university but using the school as your site of research? I don't know much else but please let me know if you might be interested.'

Over the next couple of days eight people mention their interest. Most comments are prefaced by something like: 'I don't know how I would fit this in but I am interested...'

A seed is sown.

I am immediately made aware of the vulnerability of teachers, even very experienced teachers (Kelchtermans, 1996). I have raised the possibility of study and clearly these people are interested, for whatever reason. But there is a tentativeness or diffidence in the enquiry. Teaching is emotional work, demanding work, consuming work. The idea of study is challenging, exciting and frightening. Perhaps the possibility of having a program brought to them is appealing. I haven't explored their motives yet. I am reminded of the work about care-full research (Brown, 2005, 2006) and so many aspects of that resonate in my new work. I need to work with these teachers care-fully as they enquire into aspects of their practice. What follows is an explanation of the idea of 'care-full' research. It is possible that some of the principles of care-full research that are described can be transferred into a care-full approach to supporting teachers enquire into their professional practice.

Care-full research

The idea of care-full research is one that developed over time. It needs to be understood in the sense of ‘full of care’- hence my spelling. It developed from the feeling that some research seems to lack care for the participants and the data they provide is merely material for the researcher to use in any way he or she chooses. Care-full research clearly identifies the relationship between the researchers and participants as central to learning. It values the dialogue within the relationships (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and supports the idea that research is something that should be ‘useful’ for both the researcher and the participant. Care-full research is respectful of what is shared and ‘given’ as data. It is attentive to the whole research process and it focuses closely on what is being said. It is tactful, thoughtful and reflective and as such has some larger purpose. Care-full research has pedagogical implications; it has the potential to transform the practice of the researcher and possibly the participants. It has its theoretical foundation in hermeneutic phenomenology and yet it springs from the heart and the mind. The idea of care-full research was developed with the image of the enquiring educator firmly in the front of my mind.

Care-full research is relational

At the forefront is the understanding that the researcher and the research participants are related through the research (Clandinin, 1986; Ellis & Berger, 2003). The relation from the researcher’s point of view is one which is full of care in terms of wanting to learn, empathise, and hear the stories. Noddings (1992) outlines the importance of dialogue in moral education as a search for “understanding, empathy or appreciation...a genuine quest for something undetermined at the beginning”. So care-full research develops out of conversations with participants and the relationship is central. The feelings and values of the participants are important aspects in a relationship and they are important to consider when researching (Elbaz, 1983). Connelly & Clandinin (1990) explain this in relation to the shared construction of narratives, where “both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories” (p. 4).

The second part of the care-full relationship is with the data. On one level data can just be seen as words on a page or words on a recording. In another the words are jewels, gifts, bequests from the participants and as such they need to be treated with care. To read words ‘care-fully’ is to read with sensitivity. It is reading to understand more of the participants’ lived experience (van Manen, 1990) and to honour the stories being told. Part of this includes avoiding making assumptions about what is said, or rushing to conclusions that might fit the research question but not the person telling the story.

From a personal perspective, I could not separate myself into the dispassionate researcher and I didn’t really want to. Erkkilä and Mäkelä (2002) argue that a researcher “should not try to separate the emotional and cognitive aspects” of their work (p. 51).

I have wondered whether the relational sensitivity of care-full research only applies when the researcher has a prior relationship with the participants. I don't believe this is the case. In earlier research the same issues had arisen. In each instance the desire to honour the participants and to relate their stories honestly has been profound. In one awful situation I found a co-researcher grabbing sentences from transcripts and throwing them into a very neat and rigid analytical frame. Sadly that research did not ultimately reflect the depth of the emotions and experiences shared by the participants. It was just another piece of utilitarian writing.

Care-full research is respectful of what is 'given' and 'shared' as data

Care-full research is embedded in respect for the participants and what they have shared. This links closely with the previous point in that respect can be construed as an aspect of care but it also highlights the participants' right to provide whatever information they choose. It is also informed by the understanding that:

Just like literary stories, the personal stories we tell each other have thematic structures and artificial ends. In contrast our lives are complex, ongoing and incomplete. Many of our life histories cannot be integrated into a harmonious whole. Our identities are layered and laterally segmented... (van Manen, 1991, p. 23)

Beattie (1995) provided a useful insight into respect in research. She described how her own research with a teacher was actually enhanced by their mutual respect of the other's work: "We built on the initial trust and respect we had for each other and moved forward toward a greater understanding of the other and a greater valuing of each other as collaborative partners" (p. 123).

Care-full research is attentive and focused

Care-full research is deeply attentive. Elbaz (1992) discussed attentiveness in relation to teachers' relations with children. She identified the aspect of attentiveness that "relates to the ability to notice details, to watch for small signs of growth, to remember important bits of information at the right moment, to maintain "a sense of a children's complexity" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 426). These qualities of attentiveness are also relevant to a care-full approach to research. In conversations with research participants the researcher notices details, watches for growth or change, remembers relevant information or connectors and always acknowledges the complexity of the individual lives being shared in the research (Diller, 1991).

Attentiveness in research conversations requires the researcher to focus fully on the interaction. It is not to be preoccupied with asking the next question, or pushing for a particular response. It is to listen very carefully to what is being said and to hear the subtle changes in a voice as a story is related. It is to carefully observe the person speaking.

Van Manen (1991) provides an interesting perspective when he notes that "pedagogical understanding is sensitive listening and observing" (p. 83). In a way 'care-full' research

could be seen as a natural development from the pedagogical understanding an enquiring teacher looks for.

Attentiveness also occurs after a transcript is produced and can be practised by people other than the original researcher. 'Care-full' reading involves holding a lens up close to the text: looking carefully for insights into the participants' experiences. Looking at the language chosen, the words selected to tell the story. The care-full reader is 'listening' carefully for details, for the sounds of the voices and the emotions being conveyed. The reader is attentive to the nuances within the text.

Care-full research is tactful, thoughtful and reflective

Care-full research is predisposed towards tactfulness. Van Manen (1991) explained in detail the place of tact in teaching. I would argue that the same qualities he looked for in the tactful teacher should be found in care-full research. Van Manen's interpretation of care is narrow but I think his understanding of tact adds strength to the qualities that a 'care-full' researcher should bring to the research process. He discusses the concept of care in relation to tact:

To be tactful is to be able to take other people's feelings into account. Tact is sensitive to delicate situations and having a feel for what they require... tact is the expression of thoughtfulness that involves the total being of the person, an active sensitivity toward the subjectivity of the other for what is unique and special about the other person. (p. 145)

'Care-full' research demands that the researcher displays 'active sensitivity' to the research participants as part of the research process and also when working with the data. This also requires a predisposition to thoughtfulness which van Manen (1991) notes is the product of "self reflective reflection on human experience" (p. 127).

Van Manen (1991) addresses the issue of tact in scholarship and interestingly he sees this as a "highly reflective human activity" practiced while reading and writing texts. In contrast, he sees tact in human interaction as something more spontaneous, more immediate. To me tact in scholarship can be the same as tactful action because it is "thoughtful, mindful, heedful" and as van Manen himself notes: "Tact is the effect one has on another person even if the tact consists, as it often does, in holding back, waiting" (p.127). Care-full research also requires the researcher to hold back and wait and to accept that developing understanding takes time.

Care-full research is reflective and reflexive. It stays in the mind of the researcher and questions about the process, the data, the relations and the writing compete with other everyday activities and thoughts. The research process can change and develop as the reflective thoughts become actions. The care-full researcher is naturally reflexive as they acknowledge like Shacklock and Smyth (1998) "that there are no privileged views on getting at the truth in the generation of research problems, processes, and accounts, because these things are, like the researcher, socially situated" (p. 7).

Care-full research is hermeneutic

Care-full research is essentially hermeneutic in that its central purpose is to find meaning or gain understanding from the research activity. There are elements of creativity, exploration, imagination even, in the process. The work in the field of hermeneutic phenomenology provides a useful framework here (Gadamer, 1989; Sharkey, 2001). The gaining of understanding is not seen as something that required a particular research method. Conversation is central to reaching genuine understanding.

Care-full work with teachers

In planning my day to day work with teacher colleagues I am conscious of the need to be respectful of their knowledge and experiences. The relationship I develop with them needs to be trusting and positive, with the hallmarks of a care-full practitioner. On one level it is easy because I have a naturally positive disposition and I am passionate about teaching. Leading change and innovation is invigorating. But I am aware that others are not necessarily like me. People teach for a host of reasons and the advanced study unit in the doctorate explored the 'chip on the shoulder' that some teachers exhibit (Brown, 2006). Some started teaching at a time when it was one of few ways to get a bursary to university. Some have become disillusioned as the system has constantly changed. Some are simply tired and feel trapped. At the same time many teachers are enthusiastic and engaged even if they do feel overworked or under constant pressure.

All teachers need to feel valued and supported and my role as professional development coordinator provides a good opportunity to do this. Conversations with teachers will help me appreciate their interests. Already some teachers have sought my advice or support for particular types of professional development. I am interested in developing structures to encourage sharing of professional learning experiences. The challenge is to provide opportunities for people to engage in deep professional learning without feeling as if it is another imposition on their precious teaching preparation and evaluation time. I am deeply conscious of the evidence that teaching has become increasingly intense and demanding (Apple, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Kelchtermans, 1996; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

The ethic of care (Noddings, 1992, 2003) must underpin whatever models of professional learning that are developed. My colleagues have now become part of my circles of care (Noddings, 2003). Their pedagogy and discipline knowledge need to be valued and possibly explored in their enquiry and research.

A meeting at the university in the Easter break.

Some gentle enquiries from former colleagues about my new job, genuine interest from a number. Astonishment from others as I explain that I am hoping to combine a secondary teaching career and an academic research profile. I am reminded of the 'rules of the academic game' and how limiting they can be. Education careers should not be divided into simple pathways if we are to have a genuine integration of research and practice.

An interesting conversation with some leaders around how we can develop the M Ed study program. Teachers' views and interests will be sought via a survey. The possibility of reducing the high cost through scholarships will be investigated. I will explore the level of support available from the school.

I return to school and further conversations. The possibilities of teachers exploring their own practice are increasingly interesting to them. The school administration is keen for some input into the proposed structure of the course. The program will begin in 2008 and I am looking forward to the learning journey. It is a privilege to be working with these teachers, and to maintain a connection with the university.

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