

**STUDYING THE FORMATION OF A
TEACHER'S KNOWLEDGE USING
COLLABORATIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY:
A LOOK AT MYSELF**

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B. Ed., University of Lethbridge, 1974

A One Course Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of The University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

September, 1989

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to all the people who have played such integral roles in my life--both those who are named in this document, and those who are not named, but who have touched my life in some way, perhaps without even realizing it.

I want to make a special acknowledgement to my family:

to Rochelle, my wonderful wife and best friend who through her nurture and support has not only helped me become a more caring and understanding person, but who always encourages me to believe in myself;

to my children, Kristin, Kyle, and Karyn, who have been so patient with my preoccupation with studies;

to Mom and Dad, who were so patient and understanding during my formative years and were able to give me a solid value base on which to build a successful life;

to my brothers and sisters who have shared my life with me and are still always there when needed.

Finally, I would like to mention Dr. Richard Butt, who has displayed a true humanistic approach to his teaching. I want to thank him particularly for expending a great deal of time and energy to help me discover who and what I am--giving me a link to the past and strength for the future.

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Chapter One: A Memory

As the enormous three-ton truck jerked forward gasping for more fuel, huge pieces of dirt clumps that clung onto the wide-treaded tires fell to the wayside. Inside this rustic machine sat a little girl of ten who, although she was barely able to see over the over-sized steering wheel, maintained her power over boredom and kept the beast on the straight and narrow. On occasion, she would glance in the direction of the side mirror to watch her brothers and sisters labor alongside their parents in the scorching noon day sun. This was beet harvest time!

It was only the night before that my parents had crowded us around the table in our dimly-lit kitchen area to explain what our duties would be. Marjory, who was the oldest of the preteens, was assigned the task of steering the monstrous beet truck which, although it was governed (carburetor adjusted to a constant speed) it provided an enormous challenge for a little girl who was only able to see through the openings of the huge steering wheel. Irene, Don and I were the littlest of the family (Rick was just a baby) and were asked to pull the loosened beets from the ground and shake them of any dirt, preparing them for topping. My older brothers Richard, Bill and Kiyo were to follow alongside my parents topping the beets and then toss

them into the bin of the truck. When my parents finished explaining our duties, I remember taking a quick peek at my brothers and sisters and saw that their faces wore a mask of grim determination. Being only five at the time, I was too naive to fully comprehend the seriousness of our assigned tasks. I had visions of having a great time with a lot of laughter and fun.

"Satoru, Satoru!" I heard someone calling my name in the distance, but I really didn't care. I was tired and needed more sleep. How could anyone be so rude as to awaken a child who needed his sleep in order to grow up big and strong? Besides, it was still dark outside and so cozy under the blankets.

"Satoru, wake up!" ordered my mother, "It's time to eat and get ready for work!" Then it came to me. Yes, today we were going to help our parents and have a lot of fun doing it. As the first hour wore on, my arms and legs began to feel like lead weights. It was painful just to wipe the beads of perspiration off my forehead or drag my feet over the stubble. My back was also losing its battle against fatigue and it was more comforting to stay bent over than make any attempts to stand erect. You talk about the Cro-Magnon Age! Whatever happened to the fun and laughter? This wasn't at all what I had envisioned the night before.

However, whenever I wallowed in self-pity, I would simply look over at my parents and see the strength and determination they exuded. I was inspired by them to keep at the job. It was the first time I realized how hard they worked in order to survive.

Although I can't remember every detail about my early years on the beet farms, I certainly have retained a vivid image of this occurrence. To this day, I am proud of my parents and siblings for the hardships they have overcome and they can rightfully be called "survivors".

As far as I can remember, my parents always espoused the philosophy that the harder we worked, the sooner we would realize our dream of leaving the old shacks and beet farms and move to the city, and hopefully, a better life.

One December day in 1954, this dream became a reality. I can recall the feeling of joy and excitement we little ones had as we crammed into the 1950 Pontiac. I really wasn't sure why I was so happy and in retrospect, I believe I was happy only because I thought we were going on a big trip. It should be noted that my parents never took holidays and we only left the beet farms to go to Sunday school at a Buddhist Church which was conveniently located on the outskirts of Taber, Alberta.

Although there was happiness, there was also a sense of

sadness or loss. My parents were the last ones to get into the car, but not before taking one last long look at the surroundings they had called home no matter how terrible the conditions had been. I saw tears in my mother's eyes which left me feeling confused and unsettled.

The move to the "big city" (Lethbridge, Alberta) and our quest for respectability was not an easy one. At that time, there were very few Japanese-Canadians willing to reside in Lethbridge for they were like "bananas"--yellow on the outside and white on the inside--and being a conspicuous minority, they were not able to hide from the glaring eyes and sharp tongues of some bigoted people (Japanese Canadians were not allowed to settle in Lethbridge until they regained their Civil Rights on March 31, 1949). I am certain that my sensitivity towards students of visible minority groups--like Native Indians, Vietnamese, Japanese and Pakistanis--is a direct result of the many instances of discrimination I personally faced in my early childhood.

My parents always expressed the notion that physical force was not a proper alternative in solving problems and that one may "lose face" if he got into trouble with an authority figure. In order to gain acceptance and respect-ability, it was essential to make others believe one had patience, honor and honesty. However, this was easier said than done. I

can recall the time when I entered school for the first time in Lethbridge, I was awed by the hugeness of the old brick building. I vividly remember how ominous it looked after living on farms with wooden barns and old run-down shacks. The inside was just as impressive, as I remember standing there with my eyes glued on the heavy wooden railings and the wide winding steps that led upward toward the sky. Yet, the most astonishing feature of this imposing structure was the number of scary, unfriendly-looking white faces of all sizes and shapes gawking and pointing at us as we huddled around our parents looking for a place to hide. I guess it really didn't matter that we were dressed in our "Sunday best", with our hair slicked down, faces washed and shoes polished. I am sure we were a sight to behold, for we were one of only two Japanese families attending this school.

For the first number of years, I respected my parents' wishes and did not react to the name-calling and racial slurs directed at me. I'm not certain how my siblings handled similar incidents because it was never discussed openly at home. In our separate ways, it seemed as though we learned to put up shields to deflect all unwarranted insults tossed our way.

Initially my shield proved to be extremely strong but slowly the dents became larger and deeper. Then the time came when

it finally failed to protect me. I was in the fifth grade, when a sixth-grader was relentless in his attempts to "put me down". After calling me a dozen or so unmentionable names, he finally struck the right chord--he called me a "JAP". Within seconds, this young lad, who was a head taller than I, was flat on his back with blood oozing from his nose. This was the first time I had retaliated and I can still remember the instant "rush" I got when I was able to put all my pent up feelings, accumulated over the years, into the single blow. I guess the hard work in the beet fields paid off by giving me a bit of extra strength for my stature. Another thing that occurred instantly was that I gained a measure of respect and notoriety and although I had great respect for my parents and their teachings, I began to feel that the fame and power achieved by fighting back was a quick and easy way to handle these types of incidents. Needless to say, after I was victorious in a few more encounters, others quickly learned to hold their tongues.

It's interesting to note that I was able to heed my parents' advice about authority figures and neither the school nor my parents heard about these fights, for I was always selective about the time and place these little skirmishes occurred. I didn't have to fight often during these times because my reputation carried me a long way. It sort of reminds me of some teachers' reputations-- whether they be good or bad--

and how hard it is to change once established. Perhaps this was the reason one of my initial goals as an educator was to try and earn an early reputation as being a "good teacher".

Lethbridge was at one time divided into two distinct areas separated by the train tracks. The "Northside" housed the majority of immigrants (Italians, Ukrainians, Chinese and Japanese) settling in Lethbridge while the "Southside" was home for the city's middle class and upper crust. Needless to say, we felt that the "Southsiders" strutted here and there with an air of affluence while the "Northsiders", of which I was a member, were not so confident. The typical "Northsider" was considered to be uneducated, poorly groomed, ill-mannered, and financially unstable. Yet, many were highly respected for their honesty and hard work.

As a teenager, living on the northside provided me with many priceless experiences--experiences which have held me in good stead as an educator. You wouldn't have considered me a typical juvenile delinquent, but some of my associates certainly earned that label. My parents' early teachings provided me with a solid base from which to work and I generally was a quiet observer of events more than a participant. I will not elaborate on these experiences at this time, but suffice to say, that I was party to gang fights, under-age drinking and smoking, stealing and

vandalism. Having had first hand experience with these kinds of events during this phase of my life, it has allowed me to deal with students who are experiencing similar situations today. Ironically, all my years of teaching have been on my "old stomping grounds" and many of the students and parents with whom I deal, feel that I can relate easily to problems and deal effectively with the situation at hand--little do they know, "I was there".

I am struck with the number of ironies, educationally speaking, that are apparent in my life. In many ways I have "come full circle". As just mentioned, my first teaching position was on my "old stomping grounds". I began teaching at George McKillop Elementary School which was located just four blocks from where we first lived when we moved to Lethbridge. The following year I transferred to Westminster Elementary School which was the first school I attended in Lethbridge. In addition, as fate would have it, this move allowed me to work alongside my grade five teacher, Mrs. Hunt, as well as Mr. Tanne as principal--both of whom have been a great influence on where I am today. (I later became the assistant principal of this school.) I can recall Mr. Tanne helping me build up my self-esteem when I was a sixth-grader by selecting me as the captain of the soccer, softball and hockey senior teams.

One final twist of events occurred recently at a banquet featuring presentation of long service certificates to teacher associates, sponsored by the Faculty of Education's Undergraduates Society. At this function, I sat beside Mr. Wasilenko, about whom it was noted that he had worked with the most number of student teachers over the years and I followed in second place--just one behind! Interestingly, I was one of his student teachers and eventually became his assistant principal. At this same function, I also had the opportunity to reacquaint myself with a student I had taught 12 years ago. He has now completed all the requirements needed for an education degree. I wonder if I'm part of his teacher knowledge?

Perhaps the final link in this chain of events occurred this past spring when I was asked to move schools once again. I've accepted the challenge of working with special needs junior/senior high school students as an assistant principal and school counsellor.

This is certainly not a unique story, by any means. There was a television series not so long ago ("Welcome Back Kotter") featuring a former "sweat hog" returning to now teach a group of juvenile delinquents. My situation is not as dramatic as his was, however, it makes me wonder whether, according to some great plan, God, in his infinite wisdom

placed me in that particular childhood environment to experience various life patterns without getting "harmed", so that I could use that experience to later help others.

The anecdotes cited throughout this paper just reinforce the fact that a teacher's personal knowledge, regardless of when, where, why, how, and by whom it was formed and shaped, has a profound effect on why and what s/he does in the classroom.

Chapter Two: The Study

Three personal and professional experiences have contributed to my decision to study the formation of teachers' knowledge using autobiographies in collaborative research. They are: my involvement in a graduate course, my view of curriculum change and my experiences in implementing the clinical supervision model.

Firstly, in the winter of 1985, I was introduced to a very unique style of teaching in a graduate level course on curriculum studies instructed by Dr. Richard Butt at the University of Lethbridge. The basis of his course was to study curriculum through relating and writing personal autobiographies and then engaging in collaborative interpretations with colleagues. In actuality, we were at the time studying the area of the "formation of teachers' knowledge and its relation to "why teachers do the things they do in the classroom". This course had a tremendous influence on the way I started to view myself and my colleagues regarding curriculum development and change. I began to look at "why teachers say it" more than "what they said". It is understandable then, that when Dr. Butt requested my permission to do a further in-depth study of my autobiography at the conclusion of this course I was more than a willing participant.

Secondly, when I began my teaching career, I held the view that curriculum change was a natural and healthy phenomenological process that occurred when natural circumstances called for change, such as a shift in societal needs and values, a change in economic and political conditions and a change in my personal needs and foci. However, this positive feeling slowly began to diminish and my view of curriculum changes started to take on a more negative tone due to the many number of changes that were left unfinished or were unsuccessful. Some other changes were even recycled and just given new names. I began to question why we were required to make so many changes in the status quo and started to believe that we were changing for the sake of change alone.

Becoming an administrator had again caused a shift in my perspective and I again began to believe that curriculum change was very healthy and positive. As an administrator I was given the opportunity to see first-hand how the "powers that be" operated and justified their reasons for change. I may not have agreed with all their changes, but I did see the value of keeping abreast of the times--progress is vital for the survival of the human race. However, teachers might rightfully accuse me of being a "Benedict Arnold", viewing curriculum change from the top down. Being a facilitator and implementer of curriculum changes, however, while

continuing to be a classroom teacher has made me even more cautious, analytical and critical when dealing with these issues. In fact, being a teacher/administrator has made me believe that I am even more tolerant and understanding of others who are suffering from the same ills and fears that I once had with curriculum change.

At this time, it also became clearer to me that teachers might be voicing their opposition to curriculum changes because they are either unaware of why changes bother them or that the changes were a direct challenge to their mores and values ingrained in them since birth.

Thirdly, the final event that led me to this study was the way I felt after I worked through , as a supervisor and evaluator, a clinical supervision cycle with a colleague. Although we were able to identify many strengths and isolate growth areas and possible strategies for achieving them, the changes were only minimal and fleeting. Feeling disillusioned, I questioned the supervision model itself. I began to wonder if the autobiographical approach for understanding and facilitating development and curriculum change was indeed the route to take (Butt, et al, 1986). I resolved to further examine the collaborative research method using autobiographies.

Rationale

There were four reasons why I believed and still believe a study of this nature is important in the field of educational research. They include the need to understand the collaborative autobiography, to address the issue of insider's vs. outsider's perspectives in educational research, to analyze a teacher's perspective in a study such as this, and to bring about further studies in this area of research dealing with professional development and curriculum studies.

Firstly, in my attempts to study the process of Butt and his co-researchers (Butt, et al., 1986) I concluded that there would be no better way than to be an active participant. I supported the structural framework in studying professional development and curriculum change through collaborative autobiography and in being a co-researcher, I was availed of the opportunity to obtain first-hand experience and possibly assist in shaping a powerful future tool in curriculum studies.

Secondly, many curriculum changes are construed to be mandated in a vertical fashion. Through my experience, such changes are not longlasting because of the lack of ownership and a more horizontal approach would seem to be desirable. Theoretically speaking, change should originate with the

teacher because s/he is "at the front". However, historically this has not been the case. In discussing this topic with many colleagues, there is a general feeling that teachers are overworked, undermotivated, apathetic and fearful of their job security, that they tend to go along with curriculum change and are reluctant to risk opposition or complaint. There seems to exist a common belief that they are not heard as a group because of the hierarchical nature of the system. Some colleagues even go as far as to state that the "powers that be" have not been sensitive to the needs of the teachers. Therefore, a study of this nature is very important, for it brings to the fore the question of insider's vs. outsider's perspectives in educational research (Butt, Raymond, Yamagishi, 1987). As well, there has been minimal dialogue between teachers and scholars of education not only because of the dysfunctional nature of the relationship of outsiders to insiders, but because of the lack of an approach to inquiry that effectively grasped and represented what one might call the teacher's voice.

Thirdly, I felt that if I could analyze my own perspective as a teacher, I would have a better practical, personal, professional and intellectual understanding not only of myself, but in an empathetic way, of other teachers, which would greatly facilitate the process of supervision in my

role as an administrator. In the same way that we have all been student teachers before we became teachers, and as future psychoanalysts are all required to undergo psychoanalysis, I believe that every evaluator or supervisor should be evaluated or supervised with the same procedure as s/he is planning to use to evaluate or supervise.

Furthermore, changes that occurred in me as a person during the study, as well as insights which might occur during the interpretation of my autobiography, would or could effect changes in me as a teacher, and in turn, on my curriculum and pedagogy. If I could experience the process and share my learnings with colleagues, hopefully changes could come about in my own and others' curricula. My belief was that I could help them organize their thoughts and help them change, which would lead to changes in curricula.

Literature Review

In my search of the literature, I could find no articles dealing directly with what I am addressing in this study, that is, studying the formation of teachers' knowledge using a collaborative methodology within an autobiographical approach. This is mainly due to the fact that there has been little research done using this approach. I would like, therefore, to contextualize this study within the

problematics of classroom change and the teachers' perspective.

A lack of awareness, which Olson called "ignorance of teacher's minds and interpretations" (Olson, 1982 in Ben-Peretz, Bromme and Halkes, 1986, p. 49) has been thought to be at the basis of difficulties encountered by attempts to change the curriculum and to improve teaching. The common scenario for curriculum innovations on classroom practice is that reformers take little stock in scrutinizing the central role of teachers' intentions and pedagogical expertise in effecting significant classroom change (Aoki, 1983). The teacher was to be a facilitator who attempted to understand the approach of the developer, to adopt it and convey it to his/her students. But the curriculum developer in turn works on the teacher to modify his/her behavior, which in turn creates teacher tension and resistance for change (Elbaz, 1983)

The development of more adequate views of curriculum development and implementation thus calls for a shift in focus and of approach in the study of classroom change; instead of adopting an outsider's perspective whereby researcher, reformer, or innovator generated criteria are used to make judgments about change, we need to ask the teachers themselves what classroom change means for them from their own perspective and criteria. In doing so, we need to develop research approaches that allow the teachers' knowledge of classroom realities to emerge. (Butt, 1986).

Other researchers have also detailed the importance of understanding the teachers' perspective and reality when studying teacher knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985; Brown and McIntyre, 1985; Clark, 1986). Research on teacher knowledge can be distinguished into two types; research on what we know about teachers and research on what teachers know (Clandinin, 1986). An example to the former can be found in *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Lortie, 1975) in which he deals with a variety of issues in the organization of teaching work and inquires into the various sentiments that teachers hold toward their daily tasks. The central theme was to delve into the nature and content of the ethos of the teaching occupation. Studies of the latter type--research about teachers' knowledge--have been divided into four types (Clandinin, 1986); they focus on what teachers know about theory, what teachers know in practice, the kind of knowledge held by teachers, and research on practical knowledge.

Various researchers working in this area have different terminologies and slightly different versions of the nature of "teacher knowledge". Some examples are "functional paradigms" (Crocker, 1983), "practical knowledge" (Elbaz, 1981), "professional craft knowledge" (Brown and McIntyre, 1985), "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1985).

Functional paradigms.

Functional paradigms are meant to convey the idea that the characteristics that unite a community of practitioners are likely to be centered on practical matters and therefore immediately suggests that we should be focussing on commonalities amongst teachers (Crocker, 1983).

Practical knowledge.

Practical knowledge proposes a view of the teachers as holding and using practical knowledge. The basic notion guiding this type of study is the view that the research subject is a person, who has feelings, values, needs and purposes which condition his or her participation in the research (Elbaz, 1981). This particular knowledge is made up of five categories which include the knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development and instruction (Elbaz, 1983).

Professional craft knowledge.

Professional craft knowledge means the knowledge that teachers acquire primarily through their practical experience in the classroom. This knowledge guides the teacher's every day-to-day action, usually in a spontaneous,

routine and sometimes unconscious manner (Brown and McIntyre, 1985).

Personal practical knowledge.

Personal practical knowledge deals with all the things that go to make up a person--a knowledge which has arisen from circumstances, actions, and undergoings, which themselves had affective content for the person in question (Clandinin, 1986).

Of the four notions, Butt and Raymond (1986) acknowledge Clandinin as being the closest to their conceptualization of teacher knowledge--"teachers' knowledge pertains to the personal, practical contexts within which teachers think, act, feel and intend." The way that it attributes knowledge to the teacher and also in its emphasis on the context of practice and action as an influence and stage for thoughts, feelings, and intentions of the teacher renders it an intuitively powerful notion. Also, because it is expressed as minded action, integrating theory and practice, the theory/practice dilemma in professional knowledge and approaches to reform can be addressed.

Yet, Butt, et al. (1987) criticize Clandinin's personal practical knowledge with respect to:

- a) its narrowness in scope, not taking into con-

sideration the whole cultural and ecological of breadth of contexts interacting with the intentionality of living working, and acting through which each teacher's knowledge is expressed;

b) shallowness with which it treats the personal, ignoring the degree of depth that can be achieved in studying the teacher's personal private world, the social world and the professional world;

c) its ambiguous treatment and lack of explicit conceptualization of the biographical, using only fragments of biographical data in understanding teachers' knowledge;

d) its neglect of the process of formation of teachers' knowledge through autobiographical interpretation;

e) its lack of consideration of the stream of social/institutional contexts that shape teachers' knowledge and its expression--rather than seeing the teacher as being an intentional actor who creates a cultural and social ecology that shapes

and influences particular contexts, events, situations, and interactions;

f) the preoccupation with its expression and present action, not acknowledging the complex interactions of past experiences and present expressions, leading to shaping of future reactions.

They offer instead the notion of autobiographical praxis, which attempts to take account of the foregoing issues. This study is based on the notion of autobiographical praxis as teachers' knowledge which is a "dynamic synergy of both the substances and process of teachers' knowledge as well as its evolution and expression throughout a teacher's life history through dialectical relationships between person and context, thought and action," (Butt, Raymond, Yamagishi, p. 70).

The term "praxis" reflects the dynamic relationships among the past, present and future in which are embedded the complex interactions between person and context, thought and action, experience and reflection. The term "autobiography" refers to the teacher's conceptualization of his/her own reality, providing a means by which we can study and understand the process of acquisition of knowledge.

The collaborative method employed by Butt, et al. involves

encouragement and facilitation of the process of autobiographical expression and interpretation. The process of continual autobiographical writing enables, encourages, and provides a supportive framework, allowing the presentation of the "whole story"--rather than just fragments--according to the teacher's view as s/he perceives them. This follows a progression from addressing questions related to teachers' current working context, their pedagogy, and curriculum-in-use, their past life as it relates to thinking and acting as a teacher, and a projection into the future. Having written the life story, the teacher then engages as a co-researcher with Butt and Raymond in addressing the following questions. This is what I did in respect to this study.

Research Questions

This study deals specifically with four questions:

- 1) What are the central aspects of my autobiographic praxis?
- 2) How did my autobiographic praxis evolve, develop, and change? Why?
- 3) How is my autobiographic praxis expressed/not expressed in action?
- 4) What are my perceptions as a teacher working as a co-researcher in a collaborative autobiographical research study?

Methodology

Background.

Researchers have employed a variety of methods in order to inquire into the nature of teacher knowledge, most of them using a case study, interview and classroom observation technique (Elbaz, 1981; Clandinin, 1986; Crocker, 1983; Brown and McIntyre, 1985). Butt, et al. (1986), however, used an autobiographical approach in understanding teachers' knowledge--the way their thoughts, actions, and knowledge have evolved through specific incidents and experiences in their life histories. They felt that these data would better reflect this the theoretical perspective with regard to teacher knowledge and how teachers see their own personal knowledge. They refer to this as autobiographic praxeology (Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi, 1987)--the study of human thought and action through autobiography.

Butt, Raymond and Yamagishi (1987) go into more detail regarding the advantages of using qualitative approaches in understanding teacher thinking. They do not argue for the abandonment of the empirical-analytical approach, but feel that multiple paradigms such as critical theory, phenomenology and appropriate scientific approaches can all complement each other. They also believe that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can work together in

a synergistic fashion.

Procedure.

this study has been an ongoing project, starting with the requirements for education 5201 in the winter of 1985, culminating in the writing of a one-course creative project in the spring of 1989.

The following procedure was established for the study of the formation and expression of my knowledge as a teacher. I will describe and trace the stages of this study.

Phase 1: The Graduate Course

Question: "What are the central aspects of my autobiographical praxis?"

Action: In order to address this question, I wrote four autobiographical pieces dealing with my current working reality, current pedagogy and curriculum-in-use, reflections on my past personal and professional life, and my projection into the future as related to a personal critical appraisal of the previous three accounts. After each autobiographical writing, I shared my perceptions with fellow Graduate students who helped me examine my thoughts and feelings by discussing and asking questions for further study.

Phase 2: Collaborative Stage

Question: How did my autobiographical praxis evolve, develop and change? Why?

Action: Although part of this question was addressed in phase one, a deeper examination and representation of my development as a teacher was required. This was accomplished when I became a co-researcher with Butt and Raymond. As a co-researcher my thoughts were expressed from a teacher's point of view. Butt and Raymond analyzed my writings and expressed their thoughts in their own words. As a co-researcher, verified their accuracy.

Phase 3: Field Study

Question: How is my autobiographical praxis expressed or not expressed in action?

Action: Butt did the preliminary work and initial observations to answer this question. He acted as a participant-observer in my classroom on a weekly basis gathering field notes. I responded to questions developed by Butt on the basis of his field notes as well as having the opportunity to

ask him new questions that popped up unexpectedly during this stage. Fellow graduate student, Jim Paul, under the supervision of Butt, completed the the field study phase. Paul was an observer in my classroom twice-weekly over a four-month period. During his stay, I responded in oral and in written form, to questions developed by Paul from his observations in the classroom. He would then interpret my responses and give them back to me for verification. We negotiated all aspects of this phase--truly collaborrative experience. Paul also interviewed Shirley Fleming, a Rehabilitation Aide working with me in the classroom, as well as Mike Bollinger, who was working with me as a student teacher from the University of Lethbridge.

Phase 4: Reflections On The Process of Collaborative
 Autobiography

Question: What are my perceptions as a teacher working as a co-researcher in a collaborative autobiographical research study?

Action: This question is answered in detail beginning on page.

Analysis of Data

Throughout the study, I was the primary interpreter of the data in the sense that I was the author of the autobiography in question. Dr. Butt was involved in a collaborative manner in further interpreting the written data, verifying the interpretations through interviews and classroom observations. The classroom observations were done mostly by a fellow Master of Education student, Jim Paul, who used the field study for his required thesis.

Results

Some possible questions from this study:

How can we improve professional development and curriculum change?

How do people who have gone through a similar process feel in terms of how it has changed their personal and professional lives?

Are there any variations in the collaborative research method?

-- Can gender affect the collaborative method and process?

-- Does the age and experience of the co-researcher affect the collaborative relationship?

-- Who should be the co-researcher with the teacher?

-- Who should choose this co-researcher?

-- Is this style of study for everyone?

Chapter 3 : My Life Story

The themes and patterns of my pedagogy have been shaped and molded by the many people and events I've encountered in my lifetime. Some of these are a direct result of my experiences occurring over the last decade, while others are a part of my ethnic heritage, and personal and social development which occurred much earlier in my life.

As mentioned earlier, in the winter of 1985, I was introduced to a unique graduate course in curriculum at the University of Lethbridge by which I studied curriculum-in-use through autobiographical writing and collaborative interpretation with my peers. The following segments are just glimpses into my autobiographical writings.

Four distinct aspects of my professional life were dealt with in this course--my working reality, my curriculum and pedagogy, my past, and my thoughts about my future.

Working Reality

In my initial writings, I described my working reality being overwrought by pressures I experienced from several sources: covering the curriculum at the upper elementary level, dealing with the many non-curricular tasks and interruptions

that significantly diminish curriculum time, dealing with intercollegial relations, coping with the pressure of being scrutinized "in the fishbowl," and dealing with perceived expectations of being an administrator. I will deal with these here only insofar as they had related to my curriculum and pedagogy.

I had documented over 40 non-curricular activities as well as the continued flood of forms to fill out, record keeping, distribution of letters and advertisements that took away from my teaching time. I was peeved that charitable and service agencies constantly bombard schools with ideas they would like to promote for their own reasons and that schools provide easy access to large numbers of people, a captive audience, and impressionable minds. I realized that a number of these agencies had, and still do, have good intentions. However, these activities took away precious time, energy and attention from the official curriculum and left me less time to cover any "nice-to-knows."

I was annoyed when confronted with intercollegial matters and expressed my dissatisfaction with my peers who "bitched" about interruptions but did very little collectively in order to alleviate the problem. More times than not, I left staff meetings questioning teachers' professional integrity when I experienced their apathy, lack of dialogue and dis-

cussion on issues I knew they would be upset about much later. I was of the opinion that the teachers refused to engage in discussion for a number of reasons: a teacher's voice lacked power, therefore, why waste time; some teachers didn't want to be labelled as being a "complainer", "lazy", "bitcher" or "just plain hard to get along with; some teachers are followers and find it easier to agree with the majority; other teachers operate with an hidden agenda seemingly to go along with the majority, but in reality they'll "do their own thing"; and yet there are others who use the strategy of keeping tight-lipped in order to shorten the staff meeting, allowing themselves the opportunity to race to their personal sanctuary (home).

Another sense of pressure I felt at that time was that teachers are forever scrutinized by students, parents, colleagues, administrators, the public at large--and sometimes unfairly judged. It felt as though I was a goldfish darting around in a bowl. One example of this phenomenon was the increasing use of test scores, not only as a way of measuring student achievement but also inevitably by some people as a way of assessing teaching competence, without taking other variables, such as socio-economic status, into account.

Another example was that of my role of being an

administrator. Not only do students, parents and superiors measure your every move, you have the additional pressures of fulfilling your responsibilities of being a confidante and a counsellor to colleagues as well as carrying out the tedious chores of sifting through the paperwork and routines. It should be mentioned, however, that I didn't want to have it any other way--I loved and still do love the personal contact and pressures of my dual roles as a teacher/administrator.

The Present -----

When dealing with my classroom teaching, I felt that my major concerns were for the students' all-round growth, specifically in the areas of social and academic development.

Socially speaking, I felt it was my quest to teach individuals responsibility, respect and commitment, and help them grow in their self-concept and self-esteem. It seemed as though each day I was faced with children who were emotionally and socially disadvantaged, and at times, I felt I was more a social worker than I was a teacher.

I can vividly recall one incident when a colleague of mine angrily requested to meet with me over the irresponsible

behavior of my class.

As she stormed away, my innocent-looking children stared at me with disbelief. "Boy, is she ever mad at you," volunteered Sara sympathetically. "At me?" I questioned. "I'd say she was quite upset with you students," I added. I guess it was lecture time again. My students' overall work habits, attitude, and general conduct had not been up to par since the Christmas break and a gentle reminder during the first week back must have been ineffective... "Now, give it to me straight," I ordered. "I guess some of us weren't being very responsible students," offered Blake. The rest of the class nodded their heads in agreement.

"Well, people," I began, let's review my rules and your growth objectives that you established at the beginning of the year." I felt a little better, for they were now able to admit their mistakes.

It's interesting to note I really only had two rules and I do mean RULES! There are some teachers who simply hate the word RULES because of its negative connotation and prefer the more softer tone of words such as objectives, expectations, goals, etc. I prefer using the word RULES

because that's what they are and since children are constantly reminded of rules at home, why not have the home and school be consistent?

My two rules are quite simple: "No one will speak when someone else is already speaking," and "Homework must be completed." I believe in having few rules because the more rules you have, the more vigilant you must be in enforcing them. As well, too many rules can work against you since the students and the teacher lack any sense of focus.

On the other hand, I still have my students develop their own personal growth objectives at the start of the year and although these are their own goals, I find that I am the one who must coach the students to help carry them out. These goals can cause frustration at times, but nonetheless are stressed whenever possible. These goals are, typically, to strive for excellence; to respect each other as persons; to work as a team and help each other; to be responsible for their own actions and to accept the consequences; and finally, to be self-disciplined.

I conscientiously encourage the students' growth objectives on a daily basis by pointing out all possible positive examples. As well, I monitor all failures and at times dispense my "responsibility lecture" in which I deal with key concepts such as self-respect, self-discipline,

maturity, pride, teamwork, commitment, honesty and trust. At the end of my mini-lectures, the students are usually a little subdued, appearing to be in deep thought, and hopefully, pondering the virtues of my words. Most times I even get a collective apology and I feel quite confident that I have reached them, evidenced by their proper behavior for the next little while--until the next lecture seems necessary.

I take pride in having one of the more responsible, trustworthy, and disciplined classes in the school. However, having a disciplined class also brings added pressure. At times I fear that my classroom becomes a dumping ground for students with every conceivable weakness--academic, social, disciplinary, and emotional. On a number of occasions, the principal or parents request placement of a difficult student in my classroom. Generally the reason cited is because the student requires a structured setting. However, how I perceive the message is, "We would like to place Johnny in your class because you can handle him." The majority of these requests have been granted, leaving me to now worry about burn-out, especially when some classes become overpopulated with special needs children.

Overall, I do see definite progress with individual students during the school year. The satisfaction I get when they do

indeed develop and grow--evidenced when students make return visits, make some kind of success in their lives, or I receive feedback from parents--make it all worthwhile. I have made a difference!

Academically, I mentioned I was a stickler for following the mandated curriculum for a number of reasons: I have made a habit from earliest teaching days to refer to the program of studies and curriculum guide and follow it like the Gospel; I wanted to avoid criticism from my students' subsequent teachers; I wanted my students to have an easy transition from grade to grade; and I wanted to have the black-and-white data to justify my programs to administrators, parents and outside groups (safety measure).

In retrospect, I guess the real reasons were that I didn't want authority figures to "come down on me" for failing to cover the curricula; that nothing should be left out in a system of progression; and that I found it challenging to learn and cover all curriculum areas since it gave me a sense of knowledgeability.

I truly believed in testing procedures to measure academic growth and developed a very comprehensive grading system. I generally use my own and other tests quite frequently, including pre- and post-testing procedures, since I believe that growth can be measured from start to finish; problem

areas can be diagnosed; any concept worth teaching is worth testing; and children need to write tests in order to be better prepared in knowing how to write tests (external tests).

I had described my style of teaching by the way I approach teaching mathematics and social studies. When teaching these subject areas my teaching style is characterized by structure, organization, flexibility, sequential order, and progression. It is not surprising then, that I plan and prepare for my lessons very thoroughly.

As for the human and emotional side of my teaching, I stressed the need to be patient, understanding, and sympathetic to the needs of my students. I also want them, and push them, to strive to pursue their individual capabilities, using praise as a motivational tool. As well, I expend a significant amount of time and energy in developing relationships and good rapport with my students.

Tales From The Past

Of the four assignments, writing about the past probably had the biggest effect on me not only as a teacher, but as a human being. I found the exercise of digging into my past very therapeutic and rewarding, for it gave me an opportunity for sorting out my personal feelings as well as

giving me an understanding as to why I do the things I do in the classroom.

In this section, I've summarized a number of events or experiences that I considered to be the most significant factors in the development of my pedagogy. These events dealt with the feelings I have about my family, cultural deprivation, Mrs. Hunt, my obsession of being a great teacher, Objective Based Education, and of my additional duties of being a school-based administrator.

My family.

Probably the single most important influence in the development of my pedagogy was my family--my parents and my siblings. The two main factors concerning my parents that were of great influence were their strength of character and their cultural heritage. As far back as I can remember, my parents repeatedly stressed the concepts of respect, responsibility, commitment, self-discipline, teamwork, trust, and the difference between right and wrong. Through example, they provided the leadership and role modelling necessary in constructive learning, and because it was so ingrained in me, I automatically emphasize the same concepts in school. My parents became determined survivors after losing most of their earthly possessions during the

evacuation or relocation of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. "Shikata ga nai"--it can't be helped--this passive attitude, coupled with the determination to "make good" in the face of adversity, made them a stronger people, which shows that strength of character is a vital factor in determining success. This is what I attempt to instill in my students.

My experience of coming from a family of 10 children has provided me with certain beliefs about how a classroom should be run. For example, I firmly believe that certain rules such as not speaking out of turn is essential to have in any classroom. As well, I also believe that there should be a feeling of sticking together, helping and caring for each other and that no one person is more important than any of the others.

Cultural deprivation.

Having been culturally deprived myself, I'm probably more aware of, and more sensitive to, the needs of disadvantaged children. As a youth coming from a minority background, I found some difficulty in adjusting to the mainstream of society, its values and customs. In particular, although I had great respect for my parents, as a child who didn't want to be singled out as being different, I became increasingly embarrassed when my parents came to school or when I was

with them when we accidentally came upon some of my school friends. I never took any of my school friends to my house to play. The embarrassment was a direct result of my parents being unable to speak English fluently as well as their naivete of "white man's" customs. I struggled with this for a long time and did not fully understand the ridiculousness of it all until my later teenage years. On occasion I still feel a sense of shame and guilt that I had harbored these feelings inside me. My father has since passed away, however, I have certainly made it a point to mention to my mother how important she is in my life and how she has influenced my successes and pedagogy. Upon reflection, and moreso now that I have had to analyze and write about my past, I see how much my parents have nurtured me and feel indebted to them for their rich legacy.

Mrs. Hunt.

I struggled as a student during my first four years of schooling. Perhaps it was a direct result of being a culturally deprived student (although my parents were concerned about their children receiving a good education, they personally did not have the background to assist us in the Three R's), I lacked any form of success and floundered in school. My needs were finally met by my fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Hunt, who capably steered me in the right

direction.

Mrs. Hunt taught in a very structured manner, was sensitive our needs as students, and always had interesting lessons. She had many motivating techniques and was probably the single most important factor in my appreciation for handwriting, reading and mathematics. I modelled myself after her as a patient, understanding and humanistic teacher.

An obsession.

Even though I felt emotionally and physically drained at each day's end, the many instant rewards from the students plus requests from parents to have their children in my class, motivated me to pursue my goal of "being the best". I can recall working five to six hours an evening on school related work as well as hundreds of hours each summer to prepare for the upcoming school year. Crazy, yes... unrewarding, no! I was simply obsessed with being the best, even at the expense of my family life and friends.

I am fortunate and thankful that my wife was so supportive during these growing years. Her patience and understanding often permitted me to use her as a sounding board. More specifically, she helped me sort out my own feelings and emotions, and this awareness has spilled over into my

classroom. My students and I have established a mutual understanding that emotions and feelings are something real and to be dealt with and not ignored. She also taught me that we can learn from each other and that an open line of communication is a must if learning is to take place. This is one of the first things I establish with my students as well as with other students, teachers and parents in the school.

Objective based education.

Referred to most as O.B.E., Objective Based Education was implemented in 1976 and had a great effect on my pedagogy in two main areas--knowledge and affect. Although I was familiar with the mathematics curriculum guide, I was fortunate to be able to go through the program with a "fine-toothed comb." It more or less reaffirmed my belief that concepts should be broken down to their simplest elements and be taught in a sequential and progressive manner. It also gave me an awareness of content priorities, that is, some content areas are more important than others. I was also able to learn the proper procedures of test-making, called "blueprinting." I am able to employ this knowledge in my classroom in that I can develop my comprehensive and unit tests secure in the knowledge that I have used a systematic method that "covers all bases."

Being an administrator.

The fact that I moved into administration after eight years of teaching resulted in changes in my pedagogy in that my habits and attitudes have been affected. I have learned to be more patient and understanding of teachers and parents alike as well as to seek school-related goals versus individual goals--certainly a big change in attitude.

"You've come a long way , baby."

As I reflected back on the many trials and tribulations I had encountered and will encounter over the years, I feel fortunate to have come this far--from a borderline delinquent to a respected teacher and administrator. I am sure that many of my former teachers and companions are amazed that I changed so drastically from when they knew me. In the same vein, however, I am sure that these same people are not even aware that each and every one of them have had an effect on my current pedagogy.

The Future

Career goals.

The experience of writing this portion of the course brought forth two immediate goals that I hoped would someday come to

fruition--to become a school principal and to work with student teachers at the university under its secondment program. Other personal goals dealing with my future pedagogical and curricula agendas will be discussed later in conclusion of this paper.

Perhaps as in the case of all fledging vice principals, my ultimate goal is to become a principal of a school. In order to achieve this objective, I planned to continue my personal growth by earning my Master of Education degree and by continuing to work on my administrative skills, gaining as much experience as possible at all levels of education.

After working with a large number of student teachers over the past years, I would very much like to experience working with student teachers at the other end. The inner workings of this respected program has always fascinated me and I feel it is about time that I got a first-hand look. Also the position of travelling supervisor would afford me the opportunity to visit many schools and teachers and observe a variety of programs, strategies and styles.

Chapter Four: Interpretation: The Nature, Source and Evolution of Lloyd's Knowledge

As co-researchers, Butt and Raymond interpreted my autobiography independently. Butt took the leading role in the interpretive process due to his involvement in the graduate course as the facilitator, thereby being exposed to the social education that provided a context from which to interpret the biography. He later engaged in an exercise of rewriting the autobiography in summary form using as far as possible my language, words and concepts. This was done in the form of the third person. This exercise was thought to enable a deeper appreciation of the past in a verbatim sense and also was thought to discourage interpretive conceptualization which was premature prior to a thorough understanding of the text.

Raymond wrote a descriptive summary which carried the concepts, categories, phrases and expressions of my biography. She followed by using a form of charting in order to highlight important elements in the accounts as well as relationships identified by me in my own rendition.

Both authors used a process similar to theoretical memos (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) whereby important elements and interpretive ideas were noted as they pertained to the nature, sources of influences, change and evolution of the

teacher's personal practical knowledge. This enabled them to see what specific elements of my current pedagogy were related to what biographical influences and, at the same time, to identify the most potent influence of the past.

Following this process a joint description and interpretive summary was constructed using the autobiography, the descriptive summary, the charts and theoretical memos.

As co-researcher, I collaborated in the interpretation process in two ways, Firstly, as the writer of the biography, my reflections on the analysis of events, relationship between events, thinking, action and meaning led to the initial shaping of the interpretations. Secondly, I validated the accounts, checking for any disagreements or suggestions with respect to confidentiality of certain aspects of the accounts.

When I was handed the initial draft of their interpretation of my personal practical knowledge, I felt like a little child who was offered his/her first ride on the ferris wheel--excited, but very, very apprehensive. I was worried about the unknown, not knowing if I would be getting an emotional high from their interpretations or if I would take an unexpected fall. It certainly was another anxious moment in my life, however, I simply rationalized that this apprehension was just another obstacle I needed to hurdle in

order for me to better understand my personal practical knowledge. This was why I agreed to continue in the study in the first place. With 20/20 hindsight, I can see that this only serves to confirm their notions of the 3 S's, that my teaching is characterized by safety, survival, and success for myself and for my kids.

I can still vividly recall my initial reaction when I first glimpsed at the interpretation. The words, 3 S's SURVIVAL, SAFETY, and SUCCESS leaped off the page triggering my automatic defensive mechanism, providing me with a protective shield against anything that would threaten my personal psyche. The three words bothered me greatly and my protective shield was being tested. At first glance, it sounded like they thought I was a person who was looking to get ahead by worrying only about myself, stepping on anyone's toes in the process. Also, depicted was a person who never took risks, which indicates to some a sign of weakness and insecurity. However, in weighing my alternatives, it seemed that I had but one choice, that is, to continue to read the interpretation and sift through the "garbage".

After reading the interpretation, I still felt uncomfortable with, and took exception to, their use of words like "acceptance, withdraws, engrainment" and "move up." These words made me feel as though I was another Adolph Hitler

attempting to create the " perfect student." I felt accused of foisting my personal mores and values on these young impressionable minds and that my middle-of-the-road values were being criticized.

I read the document a second time which only reaffirmed my first impressions. I definitely disagreed with what my co-researchers had concluded. It was then that I decided to bring in another viewpoint, my wife's, because I had learned to expect honest feedback from her and because she probably knows more about me than any other living soul. After perusing the article, she simply smiled and asked, "What do you think is wrong with it?" I grabbed the article and read it for the third time, this time more objectively. I soon realized their interpretation was indeed based on my reflections and that they had summarized the information I had provided them--not unlike the communication skill of "paraphrasing." Operating more objectively now, I began to analyze the interpretation at face value. I first asked myself these questions--"What are my life goals?" " Which ones are my immediate goals and which ones are my long range goals?" "How far would I go in order to achieve these goals?" With some thought, it became evident that it would be necessary for me to deal with these questions in a systematic way. The simple reason for this strategy was to help me make sense of all the thoughts that came to mind.

In doing so, I might be able to find out if there existed some common threads that tied my life together, how and why my goals came to be the way they were and by what methods I tried to attain these goals. I divided my chronological life span into four segments: 0-10 years old, 11-20 years old, 20-30 years old and 31-40 years old. For each segment I asked myself the above goal-oriented questions and examined my behavior as to whether I had stayed true to my personal value system in order to achieve these goals. At each stage, it was apparent that the central theme incorporated the notions of Survival, Safety and Success. For example, beginning at my earliest stage, being a minority group member presented the challenge of being accepted (Success, Survival) but also staying within the law (Safety.) The pattern continued throughout each of the next stages, although to different degrees.

Once I concurred with my co-researchers that my personal life was indeed embodied with the notion of the 3 S's-- Safety, Survival and Success, I was also able to see how it paralleled that of my professional life, especially in the classroom. In both instances, my motives are the same, but in my professional life I've taken on an additional group of players--my students. It became evident to me that since I found security and happiness by operating under the 3 S's script, then without question my students would enjoy a

similar fate should they follow the same manuscript regardless of their background. This may sound scary and the first and foremost argument would be the one of indoctrination of one's personal mores and values on another. I simply counter this argument by mentioning that educators have an important role to play in fostering society's mores and values and as long as I stay within their parameters, I'm simply performing my obligations.

I believe that the overall effect of their interpretations has made me a more complete person and teacher, not only because I had more answers to why I do the things I do in the classroom, but also because of the sense of well-being that comes from "knowing thyself."

Chapter Five: Classroom Observation

Methodology

In our first meeting on September 7, 1989, Jim Paul, a fellow graduate student, and I discussed his objective of collecting field notes to see how I expressed my teacher knowledge in the classroom setting. Butt had made a few preliminary visits earlier in the study, however, much of the observation process was done by Paul. We also agreed on Tuesday and Thursday morning 90-minute visitations. These were to last for an unspecified time period, however, the Christmas break seemed to be the most appropriate termination date. The process of collecting the data was simply one of writing down his observations, formulating discussion questions and having me respond to the questions. Paul would then finalize the responses and I would verify their authenticity. The topics of questions ranged from classroom settings, lesson content, styles of teaching, different philosophical beliefs in education, and some isolated incidents that occurred over the four months.

Findings and Interpretation

Image of family.

Paul's (1989) findings and our collaborative interpretation of these findings can be best explained by describing a

visual organizer he created about my praxis. We agreed that I continually demonstrate a primary mission in life--to move upward by becoming a better person, a better learner and a better teacher through exploration, improvement and growth to self, others and the world. In pursuit of this upward mobility and its effect on myself and my students, I use a strong "image of family" to present social and academic skills rooted in what was determined through the initial study (Butt, Raymond, McCue and Yamagishi, 1986) as my 3 S's-- 'safety', 'survival' and 'success'. The 3 S's include my personal notions of acceptance (safety), hard work and competence (survival) and positive feedback (success).

Paul observed the "image of family" in three ways--competition, sense of community and parent-teacher relationships. As in the case of my own family, competition is based on self-competition alone, that is, we attempt to become the best we can possibly be, and all family members will provide support through encouragement. Likewise, students requiring special assistance, such as in the case of the learning disabled student, will receive verbal encouragement (positive comments on their strengths) or nonverbally (never laughing at their weaknesses).

The sense of community was best shown through the physical nature of the classroom. Students' and teachers' desks are

always arranged in a fashion that enhances a sense of individuals belonging to a community. As well, the room itself is mostly decorated with student work which further provides a sense of students feeling it is a home away from home.

Finally, it was observed by Paul that I convey the same messages to parents. It is expressed to them that their child's classroom is like their second home due to the amount of time spent at school and that certain values like commitment, responsibility, and respect to self and others will be stressed. The reinforcement of these values were observed on many occasions by Paul.

Pedagogies.

Paul's visual organizer cites three specific pedagogies--(1) The Pedagogy of Ingrainment, (2) The Pedagogy of the Basics, and (3) The Pedagogy of Experiential Learning, which are the basis of my achieving the following three central themes, respectively--(1) Theme of Social Development, (2) Theme of Academic Development, and (3) Theme of Humanistic Development.

Pedagogy of ingrainment and social development.

The Pedagogy of Ingrainment moves towards the theme of social development, that is, using the process of stressing, reinforcing, and repeating basic social skills which are

reflective of my personal values and beliefs that are, in turn, linked to my own need for safety, survival and success. This was evidenced in a number of ways, mostly in the areas of helping the students get along with others and feel better about themselves.

Paul observed that I gave verbal and non-verbal reminders of a simple code of behaviour--"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"--with its underlying message of trust, honesty, and responsibility to self and others and requiring good communication skills. Other observed behaviours and actions such as: the use of classroom routines for taking attendance and assigning specific students the responsibility of giving absentees any missed assignments; the use of self-disclosure in personalized stories in various parts of my teaching; the use of structured classroom management techniques to emphasize personal contact and a feeling of caring; the use of tests to reinforce the notion of self-competition (doing the best you can do); and the use of responsibility lectures to deal with homework problems, not bringing school supplies and playground behaviour, are further examples of my pedagogy of ingrainment for development of social skills in students.

Pedagogy of basics and academic development.

The Pedagogy of Basics focuses on the theme of academic

development by means of covering the mandated curriculum in a logical, highly-planned and very sequential manner. Three basic elements are stressed which include: the importance of teaching survival skills--basic math/language skills for students with academic gaps and more complex and challenging work for stronger students; basic communication skills relating directly to how students deal with life experiences (getting along with others); and my curriculum-in-use which is built upon the traditional 3 R's, the communication theme and the mandated curriculum. The following of curriculum guidelines and approved texts were most explicit.

Pedagogy of experiential learning
and humanistic development.

The Pedagogy of Experiential Learning was most evident in the theme of humanistic development and in Paul's observations and interpretations was stated to be the most powerful of the three pedagogies because it deals directly with both social and academic development. Observable aspects of this pedagogy were: the use of 'warm fuzzies' which are colored pieces of paper carrying supportive messages of caring and valuing, written by students and teachers to each other; the selection of a 'student of the week' which recognizes a student who has done the best s/he could do over the past week; the use of a team teaching approach with a teacher aide (Shirley) and student teacher

(Mike); the involvement of parents in the form of interviews and classroom invitations; the 'student profile board' which explores the positive images of self by having students talk about their history, likes and dislikes, and hobbies; the use of audio visual materials for motivational purposes; the use of drama for self-expression; and the ingrainment of students by balancing their emotional needs and academic abilities with the goal of upward mobility.

Reaction

In dealing with the methodology of the observation segment of this study I found the experience very positive in nature due to the excellent manner in which Paul conducted his observations. Although he lacked formal training in field work studies, he demonstrated characteristics of being a strong observer by being unobtrusive and nonthreatening to his subjects, not only to myself as the teacher, but to the students as well. Often we were unaware of his presence in the classroom and we were able to conduct our daily routines as usual.

For the most part, the questions he presented for discussion were questions to which I could respond. However, during the few times when I found the questions to be too difficult to answer, due to their broadness or philosophical nature,

Paul was able to reword or restructure them in a more succinct way.

Paul's easy manner in the interview process was great, except that I had a problem coping with the tape recorder session. I found the session done in this way to be a humbling experience. Whether it was the intimidation of speaking into the microphone or the pressure of having to have an instant answer to a question, I walked away from the interview feeling very uncomfortable. If there were prizes for sounding inarticulate, I certainly would have won first, second and third. It has made me a firm believer in not using tape recorders in any interview sessions I might need to perform in the future--either as an interviewer or interviewee--because of the unnecessary stress added to the situation. However, if a subject makes a special request to have a tape recorder present, then I would certainly honor his or her wishes.

In terms of the findings and collaborative interpretations, on hindsight, I feel that the communication theme categorized within the Pedagogy of Basics for academic development belongs moreso under the umbrella of the Pedagogy of Ingrainment dealing with social development. Although they could fall into either camp, I tend to stress communication skills (helpers and stoppers) in more of a

social context in order to teach students how to get along with each other which leads to increased self-esteem.

As well, although I am in full agreement with Paul's interpretations of my pedagogies and themes, I personally believe the central issue--the 'image of family', should not be limited to three observable examples--a sense of community, self-competition and parent/teacher relationships. I feel that the 'image of family' cannot be separated from the three pedagogies and themes. Therefore, they should have been woven throughout and highlighted when dealing with each area.

Overall, I found the observation sessions very beneficial in that they provided me with feedback about what I do in the classroom. It really didn't matter if the feedback was positive or negative. The information in itself was invaluable in presenting me with confirmation of what I feel I do in the classroom. This new attitude of openness or receptiveness to personal analysis about myself can be directly attributed to my acceptance of Butt's and Raymond's interpretation of my teacher knowledge earlier in this study.

However, it occurred to me that perhaps I was subconsciously playing out the script I had created from my life stories, wanting Paul to verify my truthfulness. It also struck me

that perhaps Paul, who became familiar with my life story prior to his observations, was so influenced that he unconsciously searched for certain patterns which would have resulted in overwhelming experimental bias. I was relieved to learn that I indeed carried out my script on a daily basis and this was confirmed not only by Paul, but also during an interview with Mike Bollinger, who worked with me as a student teacher for nine weeks, as well as Shirley Fleming, a classroom aide who had been with me since the start of this school year. He discovered, from these other sources that my perceptions of what I do in the classroom are in fact correct. Corroboration might have also been obtained had Paul interviewed the recipients of my efforts--the students themselves.

The fact that my perceptions and the perceptions of others are congruent, not surprisingly, has brought me again full circle--right back to the 3 S's--SURVIVAL, SAFETY and SUCCESS.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Four years later and much the wiser, I can honestly state that my participation in this study has lifted me one step closer to self-actualization. Without it sounding like a testimonial, I find it difficult to express in words how powerful a tool this study was in enhancing my level of self-awareness, which I feel is the initial step to realizing self-actualization. Often we take for granted our existence on this earth, never fully appreciating what we have and how we came to get it. As in the case of a Born-again Christian, whose spiritual life has been rekindled, I feel I am a Born-again teacher who has been given an opportunity to learn about and understand my true feelings toward the profession I dearly love and have chosen as a life career. This new insight has rejuvenated me as a teacher and I believe I have become a stronger person. This strength I attribute directly to having a better understanding of why I do the things I do in the classroom.

To elaborate, this study has provided me with increased knowledge and experience as well as improved self-confidence and self-esteem. Not only has my way of thinking been altered about past, present and future events, it's also rewarding to have participated in a project that has enriched the field of education by suggesting a new

curriculum strategy.

When I reflect on how this study has affected me both personally and professionally, I've come to the realization that the course and study are inseparable, and therefore when I am speaking about one, I'm also speaking about the other.

Perhaps the biggest effect this course had on me was that it forced me do some soul-searching which was very therapeutic, giving me a better understanding of what and why I do the things I do in the classroom and as a professional.

Generally speaking, I believe that people of all ages and occupations, unbeknown to them, have the opportunity to better themselves through some guided soul-searching. Through introspection it might become clear as to why and how they have come to be the way they are. They may also realize why they think about, believe in, and react to the things they do on a day-to-day basis. Although most people tend to analyze themselves, they generally take only a superficial look and it is my belief that by touching only the surface, they fail to find the real truth. This inner truth only comes by dealing with the self on an intimate level, a level which deals with the past, present and future. This deep level of soul-searching does not occur

very often due perhaps to many reasons, some of which would include that individuals have no script to follow and don't know how to do it, they are unable to admit weaknesses, they may not know what to do with the results, and their natural defence mechanisms are operative. These reasons underscore the necessity for a collaborative method. The process of this study forced me to go into this deep state of soul-searching and it resulted in making me a more confident and fulfilled person. I walked away from the course having not only a better understanding of myself, but also of others. It also helped me realize that I must not deal with issues on a superficial level if I am truly seeking the truth.

Prior to my involvement in this study, whenever I was asked to explain why I was so successful in accomplishing things in my classroom, I really didn't have an answer, which I found somewhat embarrassing and puzzling. As well, when colleagues asked for suggestions and they were not successful in their application, I couldn't understand what went wrong. As I progressed through this study I began to reach a higher level of reasoning and understanding of why I do the things I do in the classroom. This transformation was the key that I needed to open the door which had been locked for many years. I started to see why I was so successful in certain areas and was now able to transmit

some of these thoughts and ideas much more clearly to my colleagues. However, I also came to the realization that because of my own teacher knowledge which might be different from my colleagues', my strategies might not necessarily "work" for them.

In retrospect, I thoroughly enjoyed participating in this study, beginning with the course itself. The class was made up of people with similar (teaching) backgrounds, yet their experiences were so varied and interesting that it made for many exciting and thought-provoking discussions. I believe we became risk-takers, developing a sense of trust and a bonding which perhaps will never be broken. It's interesting to note that I can still remember the names and faces of all the participants in this course from three years ago while I've lost the mental images of my colleagues in courses I've taken recently. I sincerely believe that this trust and bonding would never have occurred without Dr. Butt's gentle guidance and nurturance and the self-disclosing nature of the course. It really reaffirms my belief that as teachers, we must provide a safe and warm environment which is conducive for learning.

The assignments were perhaps the four hardest assignments I've ever encountered. To soul-search on a superficial level is one thing, but to dig deeper is something else! The

assignments dealing with my "daily reality" and the "present" were good exercises in that they heightened my awareness of the importance of analysing everyday happenings, as well as helping me to realize that one should take the time to "smell the flowers." In addition, the assignment about the "future" set some possible goals for me in the here-and-now and in the years ahead. Although I enjoyed doing these exercises, they didn't have the same impact as when I encountered the real test--that of dealing with the "past". Having to deal with my past really put my life into perspective.

Through my writings I was able to discern many things that I really didn't think about before and possibly took for granted. It made me realize how important a role my wife has played in my personal growth since our first meeting 21 years ago and how influential my parents, siblings and children have been on my moral and character development throughout my lifetime. It provided me with a greater sense of respect and admiration for those who have shaped and molded me over time. Furthermore, going back in time also provided me the opportunity to take a good look at myself and see where I am now and where I want to be in the future. This exercise left me in T.A. terms (Transactional Analysis) feeling, "I'm O.K.--You're O.K." What more could I have

asked? It was like a psychotherapy session.

In the area of how the course was organized, I was very pleased that we were guided through the four assigned themes. However, initially, I was not pleased that we had to present what we had written. It wasn't the public disclosure that bothered me, but the uneasiness of presenting itself. I soon found out the payoff that followed (dialogue/discussion) the presentation was worth the few minutes of anxiety. It also reinforced my commitment to teach my students formal speaking skills so they would not have to suffer through similar anxieties later on in life.

I also liked the collaborative set-up of the study in that it was "safe" in the sense that I had the opportunity to react to interpretations, giving me ownership and the ability to lessen misunderstandings.

Although I have become more analytical about my life, no major changes have occurred in what I teach. In fact, my commitment to what I teach has solidified because of the validation I experienced through the collaborative process and will only be changed by natural influences such as a change in curriculum or a change in society's mores and values. I still stress the development of the whole child, believing that social skills have as much importance as academic skills in daily living. The only difference from

now to when I first took part in this course is that I now understand why it's so important for me to stress both these skill areas. I've always made minor alterations to my programs to keep abreast with the times, but nothing too drastic. I've also continued to stress, through the concept of "FAMILY", areas such as "individual responsibilities", "trust", "honor", "pride", "self-esteem", "commitment" and "teamwork".

The same cannot be said of how I teach. Since I am a more confident person I've become more of a risk-taker, something that is contrary to how I was raised. Having a clearer understanding of my style of teaching and having found success in it, I realize that should new strategies fail, I can always revert to my old ways. For example, in my reading program, I've always used a basal reader approach until two years ago. The safety of using a structured program overrode any thoughts of my becoming adventurous and experimenting with other successful reading programs (novel approach, whole language, etc.) However, last year I decided to create my own reading program which was moderately successful and this year I decided to change to a modified whole language approach to keep abreast with the times. I should also mention that I still attempt to challenge all students regardless of the level at which they're working. The slow learners will get challenged as

much as the fast learners.

Administratively speaking, I've become a more understanding administrator in dealing with day-to-day duties and problems. Since I know where I'm coming from it's easier for me to handle the behavior of others. Also I've even used parts of the collaborative autobiographical praxis model with some of my colleagues. It has even effected some minor changes in their way of thinking and style of teaching.

Furthermore, the sharing nature of this course taught me that much can be learned from your colleagues and that professional development is very healthy. I now make a point of encouraging colleagues to participate in professional development activities, whether it be as a presenter or a learner.

In fact, I would say that the course itself might be used as a professional development tool in the sense that it would be a catalyst for self-understanding. However, I can see a lot of opposition to the implementation of this process as a normal professional development activity, because there are too many school-based teachers who would find the honesty and self-disclosure too threatening. Yet, there might be a possibility of finding an innovative principal with an accepting staff and to use as a pilot school. Greater numbers of people who are exposed to the process could lead

to increased acceptance and willingness to participate. I feel that the real payoff would be in the area of teacher "stress" or "burn-out". I can certainly see the value of working collectively with these teachers, providing them with a means to analyze and restructure their lives to be better able to cope with their jobs.

I can also see this process used in conjunction with some form of supervision or evaluation of teachers. For example, once strengths and growth objectives have been isolated, the collaborative autobiographical praxis model can be implemented in order to determine why these situations have occurred. If they understand why they do certain things, then perhaps changes can be effected if necessary. Similarly, if this process is effective with classroom teachers, could we then assume that success would be found in counselling students as well? The target population may be those identified as having behavioral problems, but as a general method of self-understanding, it may also be employed successfully in a Health curriculum.

Opportunities to apply this method seem quite endless. We should not restrict implementation only to the many areas of education, but to virtually all aspects of human endeavor.

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