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## Many Treasure Soup: A School-Based Project for Pre-Service Teacher Education

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*Abstract: This paper narrates the development of a project developed by four researchers with differing approaches to qualitative research. The aim of the study was to examine the value of a school-based approach to pedagogy and curriculum subjects for pre-service teachers. What emerged from our collaboration was the accommodation of significant differences about what constituted 'evidence.' The article begins with an account of the project itself, followed by a number of research narratives. The researchers draw upon diverse traditions in qualitative research fields that include program evaluation, empirical research and narrative inquiry. Our study embraced Lather's (2006) notion of paradigm proliferation in order to elicit more interesting and useful ways of knowing. Our study reveals the importance of school-university partnerships in improving the quality of teacher education.*

### Introduction

At the time of Spring Festival in China one of the home treats enjoyed in celebration of the New Year is a soup in which many ingredients combine to produce a joyous flavour. The ingredients are not fixed but may be varied according to the circumstances of the household. As we began this paper, 'many treasure soup' (*labazhou*) seemed a suitable metaphor for a mixture of method and methodology that we employed in the project described below, although we are not claiming it is a treasure.

In 2004 a school-university partnership was established between the University of Melbourne and Collingwood College<sup>1</sup>, which enabled two core pedagogy and curriculum subjects for the Graduate Diploma (Dip Ed) and Bachelor of Teaching (BTeach) programs to become school-based for one tutorial group of twenty-five students. Following positive feedback from staff at the school and the pre-service teachers, it was decided to extend the opportunities to undertake this innovative mode of learning and subject delivery. Three school-university partnerships were formed in 2006, enabling three tutorials to be school-based. The aim of our study was to review the piloting of the school-based delivery of the core pedagogy and

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<sup>1</sup> The actual names of the schools involved have been used with permission and to acknowledge their engagement with the project.

curriculum subjects from the pre-service teachers' perspectives of their experience. We decided to include their insights, as research frequently features those of university academics (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner 2005; Kincheloe 2004, 2005).

However in this project, as in any other, the relationship between the researchers and the researched was a key element. In listening for the voices within this relationship the researchers themselves detected 'interference' emanating from the diversity of their own approaches. The project overall had a major emphasis on 'narrative' and it quickly became apparent that this meant different things to different researchers, although they were not necessarily contradictory. For example, the notion of discourse which is fundamental to narrative lent itself to at least three forms of interpretation. According to one view, discourse emerging from interviews may be analysed in order to detect patterns and themes, for example discourse analysis (Gee 2005). Another view of discourse is derived from narratology (Cuddon 1992; Eagleton 1996) and emphasises the way a narrative is conveyed by plot, structure, mood, characterisation and genre. In the case of a third researcher, discourse was clearly linked to the way a narrative was conveyed but the emphasis was on participation and evaluation (Papineau & Kiely 1996). We are mindful that in 'telling the story' of our research project we are also depicting a discourse.

### **Literature Framing the Study**

Debates 'about quality have been part of the teacher education landscape for more than a century' (Darling-Hammond 2006: 275). According to the recent Report of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), *Studying Teacher Education* (Cochran Smith & Zeichner 2005), one of the most heavily debated issues in education is the effectiveness of different kinds of teacher education programs. In Australia, many reports have addressed this issue, the most recent being: *Top of The Class: Report on the Inquiry into Teacher Education* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training 2007). Given the extensive range of literature on teacher education programs, we have narrowed the focus to pedagogy and school-university partnerships for the purpose of situating our research within the context of this paper.

Pedagogy is a complex term that evokes an image of pre-service teacher education for many. It is a word that teachers report belongs in universities and that they rarely use (White 2006). Some teachers mistakenly use 'pedagogy' interchangeably with 'strategy'. While others (White, Scholtz & Williams 2006; Anderson 2005) argue that the complexities involved in pedagogy have not been understood, or have been denied, they assert that the word 'pedagogy' has many different meanings. Our preferred definition implies that it has something to do with both the 'art' and the 'science' of teaching, learning and the profession.

Pedagogy determines how teachers think and act. Pedagogy affects students' lives and expectations. Pedagogy is the framework for discussions about teaching and the process by

which we do our jobs as teachers. Pedagogy is a body of knowledge that defines us as professionals. Pedagogy is a belief that all children can learn and that it is the duty of the adult to participate in that growth and development. Pedagogy is a definition of culture and a means to transmit that culture to the next generation (Anderson 2005: 53).

Doll (2005: 55) refers to 'pedagogy of practice' which he argues is not a pedagogy of mimesis but a process of transformation of 'an individual's nascent, natural instincts, interests, powers, abilities into mature, reflective, successful and productive ones,' which is what we focus on in this paper. Doll's use of the terms 'mimesis' and 'nascent' resonates with our reconceptualisation of pedagogy and the fundamental purpose of our study, which was to support our pre-service teachers in the process of becoming teachers (Britzman 2003).

As an important part of their pedagogical development, we encouraged our pre-service teachers to articulate their developing beliefs and values (axiology). We argue that our focus on establishing a community of learners (Roghoff, Matusov & White 1996; Matusov 1999, 2001; Roghoff, Goodman & Turkanis 2001; Wenger 1998) connects with the basic human need to feel a sense of belonging (ontology). We believe the emphasis we placed on establishing a supportive and inclusive environment would be influential in the development of our pre-service teachers' understanding of pedagogy. They learnt by *belonging* to a community, rather than just talking about this as an element of pedagogy. We attempted to have our pre-service teachers work together as 'knowledge producers, knowledge workers who pursue their own intellectual development' (Kincheloe 2004: 51) through acquisition of a knowledge of practice. We believed that familiarisation with a 'local knowledge of practice' (Cochran-Smith 2004) would assist in responding to the perennial questions posed by Cherry Collins (2004: 237): 'How do we help pre-service teachers to understand the uncertainty of theory and the ubiquity of theory? And how, having understood that, are students to be helped to appreciate the importance of good theory?'

In addition to making links between theory and practice, was the need to assist our pre-service teachers in clarifying their own beliefs about teaching—their 'professional knowledge landscapes' that signify teacher knowledge *outside* the classroom (Clandinin & Connelly 1995, 1996). Epistemologically we wanted to emphasise the importance of context and argued that 'knowledge was both formed and expressed in context [and that] this context is immensely complex' (Clandinin & Connelly 1999: 2). We also wanted students to consider 'teacher knowledge in terms of narrative life history such that 'these narratives of experience, are both personal—reflecting a person's life history and social—reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live' (Clandinin & Connelly 1999: 2). It is this very context of 'personal practical knowledge', the knowledge situated in teachers' past experiences, their present mind and body, that we believe impacts their future plans and actions.

School-university partnerships have been relatively commonplace for many years—initially for preparing pre-service teachers for the profession (Toomey, Chapman, Gaff, McGilp, Walsh, Warren & Williams 2005). In Australia, particularly over the last decade, formal and explicit partnerships

between schools and universities have been set up for the renewal and development of teacher professionalism. Examples in the Australian context include: the 'Innovative Links' project (see Beck, Howard & Long 1999; Sachs & Groundwater-Smith 1999; Peters 2002; Yeatman & Sachs 1995); the 'Quality Teacher Program' (see Perry, Komesaroff & Kavanagh 2002; Johnson, Peters & Williams 1999); and the 'Teacher Renewal through Partnership Program', a program instigated by the Association for Independent Schools. Christine Ure acknowledges 'a need to see the teacher education curriculum as being constructed through collaborative processes involving three key stakeholders: the pre-service teachers, schools and universities' (2004: 6). Some schools are initiating their own links with universities as was the case with schools in this project, and are seeking what Toomey *et al.* (2005) claim as symbiosis—that is mutual interests being used to shape the relationship. Yet, the House of Representatives' (2007: xxi) report on its inquiry into teacher education perceives 'a lack of investment in building partnerships that help bridge the gap between theory and practice' as a persistent problem in ensuring high quality teacher education.

Through our approach to school-based teaching, we have attempted to achieve what Toomey *et al.* (2005) refer to as a practice-centred, knowledge creation conception of partnerships. In moving beyond partnerships that function as a supervisory and monitoring role for faculties of education that have an inherent 'power over' relationship, our intention was to seek a negotiated agreement about classroom experience, staff involvement and community participation. This differed with each school. We were, however, mindful that sophisticated relationships with schools and the formation of partnerships require a subsequent intensification of teacher educators' work and are frequently deemed as constraints (Toomey *et al.* 2005). These very constraints were raised as issues in an earlier attempt for a school-based teacher education approach at the Melbourne College of Advanced Education (Stringer & Wilson 1985), the institution which preceded the current Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne.

## The Research Process

The aims of our project aims were threefold:

- to contribute to the small body of ethnographic research (Britzman 2003) about the narratives of beginning teachers;
  - to identify the issues involved in developing school-based teaching for the core subjects in the DipEd and BTeach courses 'Learning & Teaching' (Semester 1) and 'Curriculum & Assessment' (Semester 2) at schools; and
  - to use evaluation processes to better understand the school-based experience from the pre-service teachers' perspective.
- Specifically, the project addressed the questions:
- To what extent did they begin to think about pedagogy?
  - How did they engage with it?

In order to address these questions, we chose a participatory evaluation approach that would 'represent the values and concerns' (Papineau & Kiely

1996) of both pre-service teachers and their lecturers in shaping the research interview questions. The school-based delivery of subjects was an innovation, in the sense that it was a departure from the conventional mode of delivery. The intention of using a participatory approach was to make explicit the structures and processes of the approach and to identify how they impacted on the pre-service teachers' experiences.

Table 1 sets out the numbers of pre-service teachers involved in the program and the inner city government schools in which they were based. In all schools, the students were representative of a range of socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Subject	School-based tutorials	No. of Students Semester 1	No. of Students Semester 2
Learning & Teaching (Semester 1) Curriculum & Assessment (Semester 2)	Collingwood College: P-12	26	22
	Fitzroy High School and Fitzroy Primary School	32	23
	Carlton North Primary School	26	16
	Total no. of Students	84	61

**Table 1: School Settings for School-Based Tutorials**

### Julie and Trevor's Tutorials

All pre-service teachers undertaking the pedagogy and curriculum core subjects for the DipEd and BTeach courses were invited by e-mail to join Julie and Trevor's school-based tutorials at Fitzroy High School, North Fitzroy Primary School and at the Collingwood P-12 College. There were follow-up phone calls and e-mails to clarify how the tutorials would be conducted and the expectations for participating pre-service teachers:

- to work collaboratively with others;
- to share their experience through writing (no prior writing experience or expertise is required); and
- to work independently and flexibly (Student Handout 2006).

During this communication the narrative focus for the tutorials was made explicit. Three questions were used to guide student engagement with the narrative process:

1. What happened?
2. How do you know?
3. What does it mean? (Hay & White 2005).

These questions were intended to highlight the relationship between events and other elements of the narrative (e.g. voice, perspective, stance, sequence of events, 'plot'). During a workshop with one class, the basic questions above were explored in relation recollections of pedagogy. Further, the supplementary questions in brackets below were used to amplify and clarify certain elements of their stories.

1. What happened? (Is there a sequence of events?)

2. How do you know? (Is there more than one view of these events?)
3. What does it mean? (Which elements are significant and why in constructing an overall narrative?)

### **Sally's Tutorial**

In Sally's class at Carlton North Primary School, pre-service teachers were also recruited by e-mail and follow up phone calls were made. The expectation of journals being used to map emergent pedagogies over the course of the two semesters was made explicit. It was intended that the journal be a tool for the telling of stories, analysis and introspection – a dialogue with oneself (Holly 2003). We hoped this would become an ongoing practice in which pre-service teachers thought about who they are personally and professionally, what their beliefs are, and the impact these would have on the pedagogical actions they would initiate as teachers. We wanted students to use their journals to puzzle about their learning and to use writing as inquiry—what Richardson and St Pierre (2005) describe as a condition of possibility for producing different knowledge and producing knowledge differently.

### **Questions We Asked**

In the final class for the first semester, we asked our pre-service teachers to respond in writing to four open-ended questions:

1. What is worthwhile about the school-based way of working?
2. What are some of the limitations about this way of working?
3. In what ways could the school-based delivery of the subjects be improved?
4. How has this way of working developed your knowledge of pedagogy?

Open-ended questions were included as these often 'contain the gems of information that otherwise may not have been caught by a questionnaire' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 255) and may reveal information that can be taken further in an interview.

In the second semester we conducted a simple questionnaire survey using a Likert rating scale and two open-ended questions. Our pre-service teachers were asked to provide a general comment about their experiences in their tutorial together with suggestions to improve the tutorial approach. The attraction of a Likert scale was its potential to tap pre-service teacher attitudes, perceptions and opinions because we believed that they provided 'more opportunity than dichotomous questions for rendering data more sensitive and responsive to respondents' (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 255).

### **Pam's Participatory Evaluation Approach**

Given the aforementioned silencing of prospective teacher perspectives in favour of those of university-based academics, Pam adopted a participatory evaluation approach (Papineau & Kiely 1996) that allowed pre-service teachers some input into the framing of our data collection. Each

school-based tutorial spent 30 minutes in small groups (4-5 participants) discussing their responses to the four open-ended questions and then deciding what they considered were the three most important questions to ask pre-service teachers in a semi-structured interview context. This was the final set of interview questions—a compilation of the questions submitted by all groups.

1. What have you gained from this experience of school-based subject delivery?
2. Do you feel that you have missed out of anything? If so, what?
3. Has this way of subject delivery made a difference to how you see yourself as a teacher? Has it increased your readiness?
4. Did you feel part of the school community? Why? Why not?
5. Has your pedagogy changed over time due to your involvement at the school?
6. If you could go back to the start of the year, would you choose the school-based subject delivery or the regular classroom?

Pre-service teachers from each tutorial (12 in total) were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews for approximately 30 minutes after their studies were completed. Four pre-service teachers from each tutorial volunteered. The interviews were audio-taped with their permission and these were later transcribed.

### **What We Learned: Julie and Trevor's Tutorials**

Examination of the narratives contributed throughout the year suggested an unsurprising split between students who gave an account of some incident in realistic reportage fashion and those who saw an opportunity to be more creative, fictive and imaginative. Many students did not venture beyond questions 1 and 2 or, in dealing with question 3, limited their analysis of significance to their own perspective. A handful explored the variety of possibilities offered up by changes in voice and perspective, as this example from the Collingwood College tutorial illustrates.

*I decided to write a screenplay as I wanted to do a Plato like philosophical dialogue.... I chose a winemaker because it is part of my background and winemaking is one of those mysterious processes romanticised by the movies. Because of that [I thought] it would be a good metaphor for teaching. The characters are Barry – a vineyard manager and Steve the wine maker.*

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**Barry:** *You get to sit on your arse for months...*

**Steve:** *Not quite, we then add sugar and yeast to give the grapes the right ferment. The sugar levels are different for each type of grape and the temperature has to be kept cool and stable or we get all kind of problems. We also monitor PH levels to check progress. If you stuff this up you're in trouble...*

**Barry:** *So basically sitting around... slacker...*



***Steve:** If you think you can do it better with no training, go right ahead... I guarantee you'll get vinegar. Then with reds we put it through a second fermentation process, malolactic fermentation...It's kind of like fine tuning.*

***Barry:** More sitting... and when do you know that the wine has turned out alright?*

***Steve:** You never know. All you can do is the best with what you have and hope for the best...Some years turn out better than others and then it depends how the bottles are treated afterwards...(Manypenny 2006).*

From the experience of the workshop and the writing which emerged from this project, it appears that there was a broad conceptual gap between student understanding of, and enthusiasm for, writing stories about teaching and learning, and understanding of a method of writing based on theory about the elements of narrative. At first glance it would seem that what was required was more detailed analysis of these elements, such as voice, perspective, characterisation in the context of particular stories a 'review' or critique of the stories, in time-honoured literary-discipline fashion.

There is a clear need for this kind of approach in the use of narrative in education. Much of the work in pre-service teacher education, including our own in the Postgraduate DipEd and BTeach courses at the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University, has consisted either of stimulatory stories contributed by staff (see, for example our stories 'Just who do you think you are? And 'Too good for me' (Hay 2004) followed by workshop sessions, or 'scenario' exercises, in which students assume the role of teacher and find a solution to a problem. Somewhere between this limited role-playing, which can obscure as much as it reveals, and an approach which, unfortunately, as in the case of this project, tends to divide the students into 'writers' and others, there appears to be a way of using narrative, and even narrative theory, to highlight pedagogy.

The experience of this project suggests that a simple question method, such as the one above (which was initially used with pre-service early childhood educators to improve story-telling skills) may well help students understand the complexities of any 'story' of pedagogy. The area of greatest difficulty and promise—it seems is implicit in the question 'How do you know?'. Our students responded to this as though it were self-evident 'I know because I saw it, heard it, was told it', but when we asked them to focus on how their perception might have been influenced by leaping prematurely to the third question ('What does it mean?'), we began to expose the context of the story and the role of the narrator as significant elements in any account of pedagogy in action. We also began to highlight the way the voice and perspective of the narrator actually influenced both the selection and ordering of events and the meanings that were available to an audience/reader. In order to move students' observations and reflections on pedagogy beyond the recount, it will be necessary to develop ongoing workshops in which the range of genres of student writing is enhanced with improvisation, radical change of perspective and above all, complete reinterpretation of the meaning of events. We will need, over time, to collect a body of narratives of pedagogy and apply the questions illustratively in school-university workshops so that students can begin to see a way of

representing pedagogy that is not limited either by pragmatic problem-solving or the ability to engage in ‘creative’ writing.

### **What We Learned: Sally’s Tutorial**

Pre-service teachers’ journal entries varied considerably—some were simply recounts of what they observed, some merely fulfilment of what they viewed as a hurdle task, which appeared to lack the rigour and insightfulness we had been trying to instil. Some, however, were highly personalised responses to observations of teacher pedagogy and their own emergent pedagogies. Occasional snapshots appeared in journals of reflexivity and of emergent pedagogy, described by one pre-service teacher as being in its embryonic stage, as seen in the following journal extracts.

*Katherine had a very strong culture of rewards and prizes with table points for good behaviour which constituted a quiet working environment (whispers only), and immediate attention whenever the teacher was speaking or giving instructions. This led to the ‘volume meter’ on the board showing indicators from silent-whispers-quiet voices-too loud!! These strategies seemed a little extreme (and similar to my own primary classroom experiences). However, it definitely seemed to achieve its object ...I don’t want my classroom like this. I want children talking and discussing their ideas and experiences with each other.*

*Children + papier maché + hot wax = CHAOS. The children who were playing up are the same students who are struggling to achieve their task — seeing little progress on their sculptures — and giving up on an idea of being able to succeed. My new goal for this class is to engage those students (a row of rowdy boys) and see if I can help them find solutions to their challenges.*

These entries also reveal what Connelly and Clandinin refer to as a shaping of ‘personal practical knowledge’—a connection with the ‘teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions’ (1988: 25). Yet, overall, our pre-service teachers’ reflections did not achieve an active and persistent consideration of their beliefs and knowledge, in the tradition of Dewey (1933). Reflection was generally carried out ‘mechanically and ineffectively’ (Mason 2002:17) and often indicated simply thinking back vaguely about incidents that were observed. With the benefit of hindsight a workshop which familiarised students with the two major theories that guided our work would have been beneficial: Mason’s (2002) theory of noticing and Richardson’s (2000) concept of writing for inquiry.

### **Student perceptions of the school-based tutorials**

Student perceptions are discussed in relation to some of the key themes that emerged from our analyses of surveys completed by the pre-service teachers across all tutorials at the end of each semester and semi-

structured small group interviews conducted mid-way through the second semester. Findings sometimes varied across the tutorials, although several dominant themes emerged.

Of the 38 returned questionnaire surveys (68% return rate), 85% of pre-service teachers agreed that they would repeat the school-based tutorials experience and 95% agreed or strongly agreed that it had been a positive experience. Comments on the open-ended questions in response to what was 'worthwhile' frequently related to the opportunity to be re-familiarised with a school environment prior to their first practicum placement, as these comments verify.

*Actually witnessing how a classroom works before we went on placement was helpful - settled our nerves about being in a classroom before placement. (North Fitzroy Primary School)*

*Getting into classrooms – we got a feel of the school since most of us hadn't been in a school since we left. (Fitzroy Cohort)*

*Being in a school environment allowed us as students to re-connect with school life and gain deeper understanding of the workings of a school. (Collingwood College)*

*It was good to be able to observe teaching as we were straight away thrown into it on our first school placement. (Carlton North Primary School)*

*Great to be out of uni – frees your thinking up a bit (Fitzroy Primary School).*

For many pre-service teachers it was being in a real school environment—facing issues that real teachers face and having first-hand classroom experience that appealed. Pre-service teachers from the Carlton North Primary School tutorial in their interview typically recalled:

*When we were doing assessment my teacher immediately offered to show me student portfolios. And when Anne [the assistant principal] heard we'd been talking about assessment in our tute she gave us a presentation on portfolios the next week.*

*Yes, and Chris [the principal] came and spoke to us about school policies when she heard us questioning an issue on excursion payments.*

However, one of the most frequent claims about what aspects of the school-based tutorial experience were 'worthwhile' related to camaraderie and the notion of becoming a member of a community or a group. This appeared to be valued above everything else. Pre-service teachers viewed the school-based tutorials as 'more friendly' and remarked on experiencing a greater sense of community than being in a standard tutorial. Several respondents felt that a group identity had emerged. It was also frequently mentioned across the three groups that trust and a close bonding had developed among school-based pre-service teachers through their shared conversations and experiences as these examples illustrate.

*Some great connections between students were made. There has been a real dialogue and an ownership of the progress. If I see another student from this cohort walking into a lecture, or on a train station our shared connection with this group provides a basis on which great conversations about teaching and life have grown – far more so than in any other tute group. (Collingwood College)*

*In such a big program it is easy to get lost, but the school tutorial was a great way to feel part of something – I felt like part of a group rather than an individual learner. (Fitzroy High School)*

*We actually interact with each other (in a school environment) and grow a bit together and discuss our feelings more – we don't get a chance to do that anywhere else in Uni at all.... It's safe, secure, warm, and bright and the discussions are healthy. More of this style should be encouraged at Uni .... I often feel slightly isolated at Uni. (Collingwood College)*

This strong emergent theme of feeling part of a community reminded us of what a lonely place the university campus can be and how important it is to nurture a community of learners (Roghoff, Matusov & White 1996; Matusov 1999 2001; Roghoff *et al.* 2001). While learning communities are a 'buzz word' in educational theory they are often not enacted within the university environment.

### **Criticism of the School-Based Approach**

In the first semester, while acknowledging the benefits of school-based tutorials, a notable number of pre-service teachers felt that they may be disadvantaged by their choice as these comments indicate.

*Wonder if students in uni are learning something we are not. It didn't feel like a real class and I am concerned that we are missing out on more formal teaching aspects of the subject. There is less time for discussing course work and assignments and lectures. (Collingwood College)*

*I feel like I am learning less than other classes and not getting a great grasp on the theories. The amount of time in the classroom is probably a bit too short and I am not getting the three hours of 'seminar time' with my peers. (Carlton North Primary School)*

*I am left wondering what they do in other tutes that we are missing. I felt we missed out on some of the activities they did at uni. (Fitzroy Primary School)*

There was an option to take a tutorial back at the University campus in second semester, which a few students in each tutorial chose. Those who stayed were committed to the approach. Given that only two students raised this as an issue in the second semester's open-ended questions suggests that their insecurity had largely dissipated. The most concerning limitation of

school-based tutorials was the fact that in some schools our pre-service teachers did not feel welcomed and this made some of them feel awkward—a limitation raised by responses to open-ended questions in both semesters.

*Sometimes [we] feel like intruders in the school or like an invader in the environment – other teaching staff did not know who we were in the staff room.* (North Fitzroy High School)

*One thing I really dislike is feeling awkward – I like to come across comfortable and like I fit in. I was worried he [the teacher] did not want us there and if he had been informed about not giving us more ‘admin work’.* (Carlton North Primary School)

Overall, there was a sense of discomfort and displacement expressed by a number of respondents across the school-based tutorials. Pre-service teachers attributed this to a need for more concrete discussions with the school and more importantly the actual classroom teacher as this comment illustrates:

*My impression was that the classroom teachers were not sufficiently briefed about the school-based tutorial’s purpose in general — so it was almost an unexpected burden on them.* (Carlton North Primary School)

A staff survey Carlton North Primary School confirmed that the purpose of the program was unclear to her staff. Communication between the staff had been inadequate, as had the enactment of collaborative processes (Ure 2004: 6). Partnership building (Toomey *et al.* 2005) needed to occur through negotiated agreements among staff, pre-service teachers and university staff. Comments overall are indicative of the sophisticated relationships with schools that these partnerships require (Toomey *et al.* 2005) and imply the need for a subsequent intensification of teacher educators’ work if our partnerships are to succeed (Stringer 1985; Toomey *et al.* 2005).

## Learning About Pedagogy

Conceptualising of pedagogy was a central aim of the three school-based tutorials, despite our acknowledgement that pedagogy is a complex term (White, Scholtz & Williams 2006). In the first semester, pre-service teacher responses to open-ended questions revealed that they found school-based learning assisted with the development of their knowledge of pedagogy.

*It helped 'breathe' practice into theory, made pedagogy relative via experience and reflection - experiential learning!!! It helped.* (Collingwood College)

*Seeing different teachers and a variety of teaching practices—snapshots of their pedagogy—helped in developing our own pedagogy. A deep insight into 'how schools work' made my beliefs about teaching and learning clearer.* (Fitzroy High School)

*School-based classes provided for some an authentic look at teaching environments, where pedagogy is more ... present and...on the table compared to other environments.* (Carlton North Primary School)

Yet more typically, pre-service teachers were struggling to flesh out and personalise what pedagogy meant to them as the following response encapsulated:

*I still struggle with the concept of pedagogy, and my knowledge of pedagogy is patchy and incomplete. I still haven't grasped pedagogy and it's a term that is still hazy for me.* (Collingwood College)

We believe this is likely to be the case, despite the second semester survey revealing that 89% of the pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed that school-based experience enhanced their knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum.

A number of our pre-service teachers in the semi-structured interviews acknowledged their initial questioning of the emphasis on theory.

*In first semester I questioned what's the point – it's all about me what I think – I thought just teach me how to teach – but with the start of the Curriculum Assessment subject I started to see the importance of my values and beliefs and how these will influence my own approaches to assessment and curriculum.* (Carlton North Primary School)

These comments connect with Collins (2004) claim of the dilemma we have in helping students appreciate theory when they are simply bent on being given 'the recipe'. Other pre-service teachers claimed that the opportunity to speak with practising teachers and to see them in action was pivotal in enhancing their knowledge and understanding of pedagogy. A further response from a pre-service teacher at Carlton North Primary School, however, was more cautious, acknowledging that:

*The subject has helped me make links between theory and practice, pedagogy and curriculum, but I am not totally convinced that being part of a school-based tutorial necessarily supported this.*

This comment best expresses our own tentativeness and uncertainty as to what extent the school-based delivery of tutorials have assisted in developing pre-service teachers' knowledge and understanding of the complexity of pedagogy.

After re-reading the transcripts of the group interviews we were struck by the extent to which the students focused on quite specific issues rather than just their individual development of knowledge *about* pedagogy. They seemed to learn *through* (Gardner 1993, 2003; White 2006) the establishment of community and the process of articulating their developing beliefs through telling their stories. After carefully considering the data gathered during this study, we now forward this new conception of pedagogy as the need to belong, the need to theorise about one's developing knowledge and the need to articulate beliefs and values.

### **Concluding Comments**

So to come back to our soup metaphor, how well did our stock work as a basis for these varied ingredients? With hindsight, we have discussed the unease that we felt when we anticipated obstacles of interference in our research orientation. Yet we found that instead of being limited by each other, richness emerged where each of us was stimulated to work in new ways that have provided additional layers to our findings and to the insights we have gained into school-based teaching and learning. Overall, this study has indicated that pre-service teachers value the opportunities this approach offers. Over the past year, we have observed the potential for school-based tutorials to be highly productive learning communities, in which pre-service teachers have had opportunities to theorize and construct their own 'personal practical knowledge' (Clandinin & Connelly 1995, 1999) through immersion in the 'local knowledge of practice' Cochran-Smith (2004). However, the study has also identified some tensions and concerns that require immediate attention if this model of school-based learning is to continue.

At the pilot stage we deliberately privileged the voice of our pre-service teachers, but in effect the study has silenced the voice of the teachers, albeit unintentionally. We acknowledge that the collaborative partnership building and the negotiating of agreements which we undertook with school administration needs to be extended to include the teachers, as ultimately the success school-based learning is dependent on their collaboration and cooperation. We must ensure teachers are fully cognisant of the program content, seek their input, be more consultative and tap into their expertise and professional knowledge. As Darling-Hammond stresses, success is dependent 'at least in part on having a shared educational focus and vision' (2006: 289). This groundwork needs to be undertaken prior to the commencement of pre-service teachers in the schools so that respectful relationships can develop among the three key stakeholders: teachers,

university staff and the pre-service students. Essential preparatory work required for university lecturers interested in this approach would include the establishment of relationships with key school-based personnel, familiarisation with the school and its routines and a 'problem-solving' and 'what if...?' attitude.

We have become increasingly aware that school-based tutorials require a high level of commitment and are far more time consuming than classes held on campus. The success of classes is dependent on relationship building and effective communication and this would need to be developed with the continuation of the program. We have also learnt that school-based learning does not suit all pre-service teachers and believe that we need to articulate more clearly what the expectations are of those who choose this approach. This small-scale project presents many challenges, as discussed, if it were to be the standard mode of delivery for a large cohort. In order to encourage reflexivity, it will be necessary to develop ongoing workshops that assist pre-service teachers to connect their observations, writing and pedagogy. To enhance students' engagement with the narrative approach, we will need, over time, to collect narratives of pedagogy and apply the questions identified earlier, in school-university workshops so that students can begin to see a way of representing pedagogy as their narratives. A more unified approach is intended so that these workshops can operate across the tutorials.

As with most new projects, this has not been a smooth ride. However, we can now build on the learning outcomes from the pilot study and hopefully offer a more refined understanding that will inform the new Master of Teaching course offered by The University of Melbourne from 2008. An e-mail received after the final school-based tutorial from one of the school principals has strengthened our view that school-based learning can work for all stakeholders:

*All of us have been so impressed by the standard of the cohort [pre-service teachers] who has remained with us. They will be an asset to any school; they are a very talented and hard working group of young teachers and the future leaders of our schools, which gives me heart in knowing that education has a bright future. [We] look forward to continuing the partnership.*

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