
**Developing and sustaining university teaching
expertise in times of change**

A narrative study with award winning university teachers

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Signature of Student

To Kevin McMullen (1920-2006)

Lifelong learner extraordinaire

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Abstract

Excellence in teaching and learning is currently a focus of much debate in the higher education sector both in Australia and worldwide. While the complexity inherent in defining and developing excellence is broadly acknowledged, there is limited understanding of how teaching expertise is developed and sustained in times of change. This study addresses this issue and explores the way university teachers engage in their own developmental process, fashioning and refashioning their identities to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing workplace characterised by a multiplicity of demands.

The use of a narrative approach opens up new possibilities for examining the development of teaching expertise, in ways that promote a more complex understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning in the contemporary university environment. A narrative approach offers a number of advantages over traditional methods of studying expertise. It has the capacity to reflect the complexity of individual and social lives, the ambiguity and the contradictions. It can also elicit practical and personal knowledge stories that can be used to understand and communicate subtle aspects of expertise.

University teaching, like many professional areas, does not lend itself to objective measures of expertise. In this particular study, selection of six participants was based on an institutionally endorsed measure of expertise: receipt of an award for teaching excellence either at an institutional level or at the national level. Receipt of such an award reflects peer and institutional recognition of performance. Additionally, an examination of the structures, processes and practices involved in teaching awards highlights institutionally endorsed discourses of ‘good teaching’ and hence teaching expertise. Techniques used in life history interviews were used to guide the two sessions with each participant.

Working with stories of the development of teaching expertise, I constructed three subtly different types of narratives: personal, social and reflexive narratives. In presenting these narratives, I use three particular contemporary conceptual frames to

examine the development of teaching expertise; (1) developing teaching expertise as lifelong learning; (2) developing expertise as situated learning; and (3) developing expertise as identity work.

One of the key contributions of this thesis is a reconceptualisation of the development of university teaching expertise to better reflect its dynamic, situated and relational nature. The thesis concludes with discussion of three practical strategies to support the development of teaching expertise at sites of practice: private and public writing, in particular, writing groups; the development of learning communities; and the deliberative management of relationships with students.

Chapter 1

Exploring the development of university teaching expertise through narrative

Purpose of the study

This thesis explores the way university teachers engage in their developmental process as teachers, fashioning and refashioning their identities to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing workplace; a workplace characterised by a multiplicity of conflicting demands. Drawing together the concepts of expertise and identity, and using these in conjunction with a narrative approach, provides the opportunity for an innovative way to theorise and better understand the development of university teaching expertise.

I came to this study with a concern that the dominant understandings of expertise did not align with the contemporary academic workplace that I was experiencing. During my time in the university sector I have observed diversity in representations of university teaching expertise and a variety of paths in the development of that teaching expertise. These factors motivated me to look for alternative ways of understanding teaching expertise and its development.

My involvement with the university sector in Australia began in the mid 1970s when I enrolled in an undergraduate business degree at the University of New South Wales (now a member of the 'Group of Eight' research universities). The decade following my graduation was spent in marketing management followed by a lengthy 'sabbatical' involving overseas travel and several years teaching English in Crete. Returning in 1989 to Australia and a full time academic position at UNSW, I encountered a very different university environment from the one I had previously experienced as a student.

What had been teacher colleges and institutes of advanced education were becoming universities. Student numbers were rapidly expanding and not only were there more

students, they were increasingly diverse. Recruiting overseas students was seen as ‘lucrative business’ and domestic students increasingly varied in their level of preparedness for university. In addition, ‘full-fee paying’ postgraduate students were bringing a whole new set of expectations around ‘service delivery’.

There was a sense of buoyancy in the sector but there were also new challenges for academics – dealing with large classes, understanding the differing cultural perspectives overseas students brought to their studies and reconciling fee-paying students’ expectations of service with academics’ views on maintaining the ‘integrity’ of degrees. During this time I completed a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education that proved valuable in terms of providing a vocabulary to talk about my teaching and catalyst to reflect on my ideas about teaching and my teaching practice. However, there was a strong sense amongst the course participants that given the degree of change in the sector one needed to be involved in day-to-day teaching to really appreciate what was happening. Those without that experience of teaching under the changed circumstances seemed to have quite different understandings of what it meant to be a university teacher.

Experiencing the winds of change at a very personal level, I developed a range of broad concerns about university teaching expertise. First, as a university teacher, I was interested in how the significant changes occurring in universities had been impacting on how teachers see themselves and how they go about their teaching. What *does* it take to be a ‘good teacher’ in contemporary times?

Second, I was curious as to why some people changed their teaching practices in response to change and professional development opportunities, while others did not. Why do some experienced teachers continue to develop and sustain their expertise while others do not?

Finally, I have observed that much of the teaching and learning literature I encounter focuses on the individual and provides psychological explanations of teaching and learning with limited attention to social and cultural factors that from my experience

and observation seemed important in shaping the development of university teacher expertise.

Focusing solely on teaching as if it were a discrete part of academic work is of course creating an artificial distinction. However given the complexity of academic work, that focus is essential for this project to enable engagement with the experience of university teaching in a meaningful way.

Exploring university teachers' narratives helps in understanding how university teachers themselves make meaning of their choices, actions and circumstances in times of change. Telling our stories we not only try to make meaning of our own actions but also the social processes of which we are a part. Teaching expertise can be conceptualised quite differently by giving greater emphasis to sociocultural factors and by viewing teacher identity as something that is dynamic, multiple and provisional rather than fixed and unitary.

Defining expertise and excellence

Excellence in teaching and learning is currently a focus of much debate in the higher education sector in Australia and worldwide. Terms such as *teaching excellence*, *teaching expertise* and *scholarship in teaching* are gaining currency. While understandings of these terms are both taken for granted and under theorised, a number of broad comments can be made.

Excellence is commonly regarded as synonymous with expertise or intimately related to expertise and its development (Ferrari 2002). Both teaching expertise and teaching excellence are used in regard to the performance of teachers. An expert is recognised as someone displaying outstanding performance with expertise generally regarded as being built on knowledge gained through sustained practice and experience (Tennant & Pogson 1995).

Expertise can also be viewed as a labelling phenomenon whereby a particular group of people declare a person an expert (Sternberg, Grigorenko & Ferrari 2002). 'Expert' teachers can be people who have won awards for teaching excellence or who hold

senior positions within their discipline in recognition of their contribution in the teaching area. These ‘experts’ may be identified as role models for other teachers (Gosling 1996 cited in Skelton 2005).

Although expert teachers may share knowledge and experience with their peers, their public contribution would not necessarily meet criteria for scholarship of teaching laid out by Schulman (2000) in the introductory issue of the *Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*:

We develop a scholarship of teaching when our work as teachers becomes public, peer-reviewed and critiqued, and exchanged with other members of our professional communities so they, in turn, can build on our work (Schulman 2000: 49).

Expertise and excellence differ in the scope of their use in regard to teaching. Generally, the term expertise is limited to individuals whereas the concept of teaching excellence is applied to individual teachers, to departments and to institutions (Elton 1998). There is also a view that judgements about excellence in teaching should be related to student learning (Elton 1998; Parker 2006).

Whilst I have provided some starting definitions for expertise and excellence, it should be noted that both are contested concepts. Skelton (2005), in his comprehensive work *Understanding Teaching Excellence in Higher Education*, highlights the contested nature of teaching excellence and promotes the value of a critical approach in examining teaching excellence. I will draw on this work in later chapters. Throughout this thesis it will be apparent that my use of the term ‘expertise’ goes beyond its traditional use. My rationale for pushing the boundaries of the concept of expertise is a concern that in times of change and complexity expertise needs to be reconceptualised to better suit the conditions of its use.

My arguments on the development of teaching expertise will also provide a counterpoint to a reductionist approach to teaching expertise that tries to ensure quality assurance through means of standardisation. Light and Cox (2001) argue that the very teaching and learning challenge articulated by ‘excellence’ debates have often failed to address the substance and complexity of the challenge.

‘Excellence’ has often elicited approaches for developing expertise in teaching and learning which address the new state of complexity by imposing a ‘reductionist’ (and ‘accounting’) framework to simplify it. Curiously, they engage the uncertain by assuming, as Barnett notes ‘a known situation and well understood attributes’ (1997a: 41). The result is an approach that specifies increasingly narrow outcomes and competencies of expertise, establishes behavioural standards for them and insist on compliance with these standards irrespective of the professional, disciplinary and institutional context (ILT 1999a) (Light and Cox 2001: 10).

This research attempts to work with, rather than reduce, the complexity involved in contemporary university teaching.

Research questions

The complexity inherent in defining and achieving excellence means that it is opportune to ask new questions about the development of university teaching expertise and explore these questions in new ways. This study addresses the following questions:

- How do acknowledged experts in university teaching account for the development of their teaching expertise?
- How do they understand expertise?
- How do they define themselves and their teaching?
- How do the stories they provide align with the prevailing culture of teaching and learning in the university sector?
- How are changes in the contemporary university impacting on teacher identities and teaching practices?

Challenges of change

University teaching expertise is located in a world of change. It is impossible to talk about university teaching expertise without highlighting the changes that have occurred in the higher education sector, both worldwide and in Australia, in the past few decades. The university sector has been transformed with contemporary academic workplaces characterised by ongoing change, complexity and diversity. Universities are now very different places from the universities where current academics studied as students and perhaps began their teaching careers. This has had a significant impact on practices and identities of university teachers.

My aim in this section is to present a broad overview of change in the higher education sector and the impact these changes have had and will continue to have on university teachers. While these changes have brought benefits, such as greater attention to the quality of teaching, greater access to university education and benefits of electronic communication (Anderson, Johnson & Saha 2002), they have presented many challenges to those working in the sector.

Key changes in the Australian higher education sector

Globalisation, changing technology and communication, decreasing government commitment to education funding, a clash of corporate and academic values and a deconstruction of the academic profession are key actors in transforming Australian universities (Marginson 2000). Certainties that characterised earlier times have been severely challenged.

Globalisation has impacted universities in terms of their capacity to operate across national boundaries and the evaluation of their performance in a global marketplace. An essential feature of globalisation is more intensive contact between people through the compression of space and time (Marginson 2000).

Information and communication technologies are also transforming academic workplaces. Flexible delivery and off-campus teaching have recast the teaching role and academics are now expected to be familiar with information technology (IT), computer-

assisted learning (CAL) and on-line delivery (Anderson, Johnson & Saha 2002). The nature of interaction between student and university teachers has also been reshaped with email and online communication facilitating increased contact between students and lecturers. The downside of this increased communication is the way in which it impacts academic workloads. In their study titled, *Changes in Academic Work*, Anderson, Johnson & Saha (2002) found a near unanimous view that dealing responsibly with students' emails takes a large amount of time, more time than student contact in the pre-electronic era.

Government policy on higher education has also heralded significant change in the sector. From the 1980s onwards, both in Australia and worldwide, we have seen a re-evaluation of the role of universities and university education. Higher education has been increasingly viewed as an economic resource that should be organised to maximise its contribution to economic development. This has been accompanied by increasing demands for accountability from stakeholders. Universities are seen as having a responsibility to society, which expects something in return for the privileges society has granted universities.

The reconstruction of the Australian universities formed part of a larger reconstruction of the public sector (Marginson 1995). From the mid 1980's onwards the Australian Government embraced 'marketisation' and higher education policy became directed by faith in the markets and a business model of higher education. Market competition via tuition fees, industry funding, international marketing and private universities was seen as a way to produce a more efficient system. As Marginson (2004) explains:

This was a faith that the three 'C's' of competition, corporatism and consumerism would lift efficiency, performance and rates of innovation, strengthen accountability to government, students and business; and provide fiscal relief (Marginson 2004: 3).

Increased private contribution (from students) to higher education paved the way for a large increase in the number of students enrolling in university. However this has not been matched by equivalent funding to universities and growth in student numbers outpaced growth in academic staff with the student to staff ratio increasing 75 per cent over the decade from 1990 to 2001 (Anderson, Johnson & Saha 2002).

Effectively, in the shift to enterprise, the Australian Government has repositioned itself from being a patron of universities to a purchaser of higher education expecting demonstrated accountability and return for this investment (Coaldrake & Stedman 1999). The rise of managerialism, with a focus on economy, efficiency and effectiveness, has seen increasing attention to performativity in universities. Ball (2003) describes it in this way:

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement (Ball 2003: 216).

Hence, terms such as 'benchmarking' and 'world class' and 'excellence' have been appropriated from the discourse of enterprise and put to work in universities. The critical issue here is who controls the field of judgement and what are the consequences for those that are subjects of this regulation. Ball suggests that, 'Typically, at least in the UK, these struggles are currently highly individualized as teachers, as ethical subjects, find their values challenged or displaced by the terrors of performativity' (Ball 2003: 216).

How change has affected academic work

In this changed and changing university environment, university teachers face multiple challenges. Coaldrake and Stedman (1999) in their Australian Government funded project, *Academic Work in the 21st Century*, identify five main areas where the effects of change on academic work can be observed. These are:

- Growing pressures on time, workload and morale
- Increased emphasis on performance, professional standards and accountability
- A shift in staffing policies from local control and individual autonomy to a more collective and institutional focus
- Academic work becoming more specialised and complex
- Diffusion and blurring of roles

Intensification of university teachers' workloads can be seen in terms of two key aspects: more of the same work plus different work types of work being added to workloads. Rising student numbers and student staff ratios have been accompanied by a more diverse student body, with new kinds of students, often less prepared for traditional styles of university study, presenting new challenges in the classroom.

Findings of a survey of over 2,000 Australian academics in a study commissioned by the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) documents the changing nature of academic work over the past two decades. The purpose of the study (Anderson, Johnson & Saha 2002) was to inform academic recruitment and training activities.

Most academics reported being hard pressed for time with one task after another being loaded onto them but nothing being taken away.

Staff told us in the interviews that, while they have less time to work with individuals, students have become more demanding. It is suggested that this follows from students seeing themselves as customers now that most pay through HECS or fees. Academics also reported that the diversity of the

student body, ethnically and scholastically, adds to the teaching load. (Anderson, Johnson & Saha 2002: 12)

Students, now contributing an increased share of the cost of university education, demand more from universities in terms of flexibility and convenience, and quality of teaching (Coaldrake & Stedman 1999).

With developments in information technology and resource based learning, some educational functions are becoming more distanced from academics with specialist staff involved in design and production of learning materials and resources. In this situation, the academic is relegated to the role of 'content expert'.

Some academics are not comfortable with this situation, nor with the notion that they need further training to become better teachers. These tensions become particularly noticeable as teaching and learning reform leads to a more explicit separation of the functions (Coaldrake & Stedman 1999: 92).

Along with work intensity, diversity and complexity there is also greater scrutiny of individuals' teaching. It is no longer enough to be a good teacher. Good teaching must be demonstrated in relation to institutionally defined criteria.

Performativity ... requires individual practitioners to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations. To set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live an existence of calculation. The new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self, with a passion for excellence. For some, this is an opportunity to make a success of themselves, for others it portends inner conflicts, inauthenticity and resistance. It is also suggested that performativity produces opacity rather than transparency as individuals and organizations take ever greater care in the construction and maintenance of fabrications (Ball 2003: 215).

As academic work has become more complex, demands on individuals have multiplied and academic work has become more fragmented (Boud 1999). In this situation it is not

just work practices that are subject to change. Work plays a central role in how we define ourselves. Academics' work experiences and how they understand these are central in producing their identities. Ball (2003) argues that as education reform spreads across the globe it is becoming thoroughly embedded in the 'assumptive worlds' of many academic educators. This reform does not simply change what people as educators, scholars and researchers do; it changes who they are. In similar vein, Nixon (1996) comments that the reorganisation of higher education policy, structures and practices during the 1990s has impacted on the professional roles, identities, wellbeing and productivity of those who teach in universities.

With the 'enterprise' university presenting new and varied demands on university teachers, conceptions of teaching expertise and teacher identity as stable and enduring are no longer sustainable. In these times of complexity and uncertainty in universities when academic identities are being challenged competing views emerge about what it means to be an expert teacher. Developing teaching expertise is not simply a matter of acquiring new skills and knowledge – it is about taking up new identities, new ways of understanding and conducting oneself.

In times of change there are new questions to ask and new ways to ask them. I agree with Usher that:

The story of the contemporary academic needs telling ... the question of multiple and confused identities is an appropriate one to research (Usher 2002: 85).

But caution is needed to avoid sweeping generalisations and over-dramatisation of present changes though contrast with a remembered 'stable' past. To steer clear of such a position, Jensen & Westenholz (2004) argue that it is important to tell stories of the current transformation of work and identities that recognise the heterogeneity of work life and that build a theoretical agenda beyond grand-scale epochalist claims.

Taking a narrative approach to the study of the development of teaching expertise explores just some of the many possible stories of contemporary academics and opens

up spaces to consider the complex and contested nature of teaching expertise and explore teacher identities in times of change.

Mapping the conceptual territory: expertise, identity and narrative

In the thesis I argue for a contextualised view of teaching expertise that acknowledges both the dynamic and relational nature of expertise and the social and cultural positioning of university teachers. Focusing on narrative and identity I make the case for a view of teaching expertise that acknowledges the ongoing identity work involved in developing teaching expertise.

The conceptualisation of this study evolved from an initial examination of a diverse range of literature on expertise. The study of expertise, in common with much adult education literature and practice, has traditionally been underpinned by a view of self that is both individualistic and unitary. Experts are generally recognised as displaying outstanding performance with their expertise built on knowledge gained through sustained practice and experience (Tennant & Pogson 1995). A key to demonstrating expertise is the application of knowledge to specific workplace situations (Kuchinke 1996) with the performance displayed over time rather than being a single achievement in a unique situation (Ericsson & Smith 1991).

In studying expertise with a focus on the individual, the central purpose has been to understand and account for what distinguishes outstanding individuals in a domain from less outstanding individuals in that domain, as well as from people in general (Ericsson & Smith 1991). To this end, qualities of expert performance are represented in contrast to the performance of novices. Development of expertise is seen to be the result of deliberate practice over extended periods of time involving structured learning and effortful adaptation (Ericsson & Charness 1994; Ericsson 2003). However, knowledge of just how expertise is developed represents a significant gap in the expertise literature.

Studies of the acquisition of expertise from the cognitive perspective have focused on describing critical performance under standardised conditions, to analyse it, and to identify the components of the performance that make it superior (Ericsson & Smith 1991). Underlying assumptions are an autonomous self, a relatively stable environment,

and an enduring knowledge base that can be applied in a range of contexts and environments. This static view of expertise is not well suited to workplaces characterised by change, complexity and diversity.

Much of the literature on teacher expertise, influenced strongly by educational psychology, has taken a knowledge-based view of teaching with a focus on the individual teacher. 'Good teaching' is seen as being developed primarily through cognitive structuring of learning experiences in ways that facilitate reflection on theory in relation to experience of practice development (Nicoll & Harrison 2003). Little attention, however, is given to understanding learning as social practice or to considering the changing contexts of university teaching.

In the context of workplace learning, Billett (1998) argues for a sociocultural view of expertise to complement the cognitive perspective on expertise. He argues that an individual's learning is not isolated from social practice and that consequently expertise is fashioned within particular contexts and embedded in social circumstances. This reshaped view of expertise addresses a number of the key limitations identified with the cognitive view of expertise. By taking a situated view of learning, due consideration can be given to the dynamic, complex and contested nature of expertise.

Building on this sociocultural perspective a narrative approach to the study of expertise can address the process of the development of the expertise by examining the 'storying' of expertise which to date seems to be missing from the expertise literature. Telling our stories we not only try to make meaning of our own actions but also the social processes of which we are a part. As Edwards (1997) explains:

An adult educator may tell their own story rooted in their unique autobiographical trajectory, but the narrative is itself sedimented in the wider narratives of adult education, and beyond that, in the wider narratives of the culture and practices in which the adult educator are located. They live these stories; through them they construct others and are interactively constructed by them, as active, meaningful, knowable subjects acting in meaningful and knowable ways (Edwards 1997: 6).

In using identity as a frame to examine teaching expertise, I am not presenting a view of self as coherent, unified and fixed, a perspective that has underpinned much adult education literature. Rather, following Hall (1996), I take the position of identity as multiple, positional and strategic, always under construction. This postmodern take on identity avoids the concerns raised about theories based on acceptance of individual-society dualism with either a focus on the individual to the exclusion of social and cultural factors or the assumption of a passive individual moulded by external forces (Tennant 1998).

Identities are thus fashioned in narrative, as Edwards (1997) highlights:

Through narratives, selves and worlds are simultaneously and interactively made. The narrator is positioned in relation to events and other selves and an identity conferred. Positioning oneself and being positioned in certain discourses becomes therefore the basis for personal self-identity (Edwards 1997:5).

Because there are numerous available discourses, a number of subject positions are produced. Given the multiplicity of competing and contradictory discourses, identity is regarded as multiple with individuals and groups having access to a repertoire of socially available positions. The postmodern 'story of self' is that of:

A decentred self, subjectivity without a centre of origin, caught in meanings, positioned in the language and narratives of culture. The self cannot know itself independently of the significances of which it is enmeshed ... Meanings are always 'in play' and the self, caught up in this play, is an ever changing self, caught up in the narratives and meaning through which it leads its life (Usher, Bryant & Johnson 1997: 103).

This narrative view of identity brings to the fore the social situation of the self. The narrative structures that we use to organise our life are not of our own making – they are socially embedded and culturally transmitted. Thus the ability for a person to narrate their own life is both limited and enabled by the narrative resources they are able to

draw on. Thus, the self remains situated in history and culture and continually open to re-inscription as Hall explains:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’ so much as who we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall 1996: 4).

Developing reflexivity thus plays a central role in this process of developing teaching expertise. University teachers need to go beyond simply adapting to change – they need to engage with change and understand how they see themselves as a teacher and how others attempt to position them. This capacity for reflexivity – self and social questioning – is part of negotiating a trajectory through the insecurities and risks associated with change (Edwards, Ranson & Strain 2002).

Using a narrative methodology provides a way of exploring the development of teaching expertise in a dynamic and complex way that suits times of change and uncertainty in contemporary universities. Having mapped out the conceptual territory for this study I will proceed in the following section to provide an overview of how the study was conducted.

Researching the development of university teaching expertise

University teaching, like many professional areas, does not lend itself to objective measures of expertise. However social measures of expertise can be employed. While entry to the many professions involves meeting particular knowledge requirements, during a career path identified experts are more likely to have been socially selected. Social selection means that experts are performing in the role of expert because a large group of people (their constituency) consider them to be an expert (Agnew, Ford & Hayes 1997).

In this particular study, selection of six participants was based on an institutional measure of expertise: receipt of an award for teaching excellence either at the

institutional level (often named as Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards) or at the national level (currently in Australia known as the Australian Award for University Teaching). Receipt of such an award reflects peer and institutional recognition of performance. In addition, an examination of the structures, processes and practices involved in teaching awards highlights institutionally endorsed discourses of 'good teaching' (and hence teaching expertise).

In using a narrative approach one challenge was to get beyond received stories of teaching excellence. To assist in this, I turned to techniques used in life history/life story interviews to plan two interview sessions with each participant. This approach helps to make sense of 'the multiple identities that individuals can hold, create and manage over the course of a lifetime' (Tierney & Dilley 2001: 461).

Working with the data I constructed three subtly different types of narratives: personal, social and reflexive narratives. In presenting these narratives, I use three particular contemporary conceptual frames to examine the development of teaching expertise: (1) developing teaching expertise as lifelong learning; (2) developing expertise as situated learning; and (3) developing expertise as identity work. Making each frame the focus of a chapter is not intended to suggest that these are discrete framings. Whilst separation serves an analytical purpose these frames are of course interdependent as will be highlighted in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Significance of the study

Study of the development of expertise in local teaching sites is well aligned with overall trends in research in adult education. Responsibility for dealing with the complexity and speed of change is increasingly placed back on individuals (Edwards & Usher 1996) and there has been a shift away from viewing educational institutions as principal places of learning, to recognition of the power and importance of the workplace learning (Boud 1998). Given the rapid changes in the workplace, attaining a specific body of knowledge is less important than the ability to learn. In this study identity is central because of its connection to lifelong learning.

Expertise can be viewed as a lifelong learning project where identity is fashioned and refashioned over time. This marked shift away from a static view of expertise suits contemporary times. This particular study can enhance understanding of how acknowledged experts use their life experiences and make meaning of these in an ongoing process of shaping and reshaping identity. It provides new ways of thinking about teaching expertise and can open up new conversations about teaching.

In summary, using a narrative approach offers a number of advantages over traditional methods of studying expertise. It has the capacity to reflect the complexity of individual and social lives, the ambiguity and the contradictions. It can help understand and communicate subtle aspects of expertise.

This alternative view of teaching expertise throws up a range of challenges to existing professional development programs for university teachers. Stories of development of teaching expertise highlight the role of ongoing informal learning in teaching sites. In times where university teachers are confronted with ongoing change and challenges in their workplace, teaching sites need to be given greater acknowledgement as sites of professional development and institutional support. Possible ways this could be achieved will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Thesis overview: orientation for the reader

This chapter has located the study, introduced key theoretical concepts and presented an initial overview of the project. In Chapter Two, I present a critical review of the literature on expertise and highlight the limitations of existing approaches to studying expertise when faced with complex and dynamic environments. Narrative and identity, as an alternative frame to study teaching expertise, is introduced in Chapter Two and taken up in detail in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three examines narrative research approaches and explores reasons for the turn to narrative both generally and in the field of education. The implications of taking a narrative stance are discussed and the choice of a narrative approach for this study is justified. Attention is given to theorising narrative and detailing the link between

narrative and identity. Chapter Four presents a detailed discussion of how the study was conducted and a reflexive piece on this research.

Chapter Five examines understandings of expertise and maps out the structure for presenting the different styles of narratives – personal, social and reflexive – to provide the basis for reconceptualising the development of university teaching expertise.

Chapters Six to Eight form a cluster of chapters that do this conceptual work drawing on analysis of the interview transcripts arranged around the key threads of lifelong learning and reflexivity, situated learning and identity. Chapter Six presents two personal narratives and looks at development of teaching expertise as lifelong learning. Reflexivity is discussed as a key factor in lifelong learning and developing teaching expertise. In Chapter Seven, the focus is broadened from personal to social narratives and the development of teacher expertise is framed as situated learning. The question of ‘what makes a good teacher’ is also addressed by looking at contemporary discourses in higher education.

Chapter Eight develops the argument for conceptualising development of teaching expertise as identity work. Close examination is given to the way these award winners retrospectively construct the narratives of the development of their teaching expertise and how they position themselves as ‘knowers’ in the eyes of students, other academics and their institution. The ‘self-work’ involved in constructing identities that perform better (Chappell et al. 2003) is explored in detail.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Nine, brings together the strands of the analysis chapters to present an alternative way of conceptualising development of teaching expertise. The contribution of this reconceptualisation is addressed and implications for professional development programs are canvassed.

Chapter 2

Expertise: perspectives and issues

Introduction to expertise

The conceptualisation of this study evolved from an initial examination of a diverse range of literature on expertise. The term expertise is used in a wide variety of situations, has different meanings for different people, and in general has evaded clear definition (Salthouse 1991). However experts are commonly recognised as displaying outstanding performance with their expertise built on knowledge gained through sustained practice and experience (Tennant & Pogson 1995). A key to demonstrating expertise is the application of knowledge to specific workplace situations (Kuchinke 1996) with the performance displayed over time rather than being a single achievement in a unique situation (Ericsson & Smith 1991).

The study of expertise, in common with much adult education literature and practice, has traditionally been underpinned by a view of self that is both individualistic and unitary. The cognitive view of expertise which has been the prevailing perspective on expertise to date, focuses on the individual with an emphasis on internal processes. While this position has dominated the discourse of expertise, there is a growing body of work that calls for greater attention to the social and cultural factors that shape the development of expertise. This study presents a contextualised view of teaching expertise that acknowledges both the dynamic and relational nature of expertise and the social and cultural positioning of university teachers.

In this chapter I present a critical review of the literature on expertise and highlight the limitations of existing approaches to the study of expertise when faced with complex and dynamic environments. The study of teaching expertise is also examined in this chapter but broader discussion of understandings of teaching excellence is delayed until

Chapter Seven. Finally, I argue that the use of a narrative approach in the study of the development of expertise provides a way forward to address many of the limitations highlighted.

The nature of expertise: a cognitive perspective

The cognitive view of expertise focuses on stable individual knowledge and ability and considers expertise a point of attainment. In line with thinking on cognitive development, expertise is viewed in terms of superior acquisition and organisation of knowledge (Chi, Glaser & Farr 1988). When studying expertise with a focus on the individual, the central purpose has been to understand and account for what distinguishes outstanding individuals in a domain from less outstanding individuals in that domain, as well as from people in general (Ericsson & Smith 1991). To this end, qualities of expert performance are represented in contrast to the performance of novices.

Differences between experts and novices have been studied across a wide range of domains. These include fields such as chess, sport, music, typing, radiology, physics and political science. Researchers have particularly paid attention to cognitive competence. The qualities of experts highlighted can be seen as contributing to a 'knowledge based' view of expertise where experts are seen to possess superior knowledge structures. They know more than novices and organise their information more effectively than novices. A summary of the key characteristics of expert performance, based on cognitive research, is presented by Chi, Glaser & Farr (1988). They claim that the following findings are robust and generalisable across the various domains studied:

1. Experts excel mainly in their own domains. The reason for the excellence of experts is that they have a good deal of domain knowledge. This is not readily transferable to other domains.

2. Experts perceive large meaningful patterns in their domain. This ability to see meaningful patterns does not reflect a generally superior perceptual ability. It reflects an organisation of the knowledge base.

3. *Experts are fast.* They are faster than novices at performing the skills of their domain and they solve problems quickly with little error. There are at least two ways to explain an expert's speed. The first explanation is practice. Practice makes the skill more automatic and frees up memory capacity for processing other aspects of the task. Another explanation is that experts can often arrive at a solution without conducting an extensive search.

4. *Experts have superior short-term and long-term memory.* Experts' recall of recently presented material appears to exceed the limits of short-term memory. This is not because their short-term capacity is larger than other individuals' but because the automaticity of many portions of their skill frees up resources for greater storage. Experts seem to excel in long-term recall as well.

5. *Experts see and represent a problem in their domain at a deeper (more principled) level than novices.* Using physics problems Chi, Glaser & Farr (1988) found that experts used principles of mechanics to organise categories, whereas novices built their problem categories around literal objects stated in the problem description.

6. *Experts spend a great deal of time analysing a problem qualitatively.* They build a mental representation from which they can infer relations that can define the situation, and they add constraints to the problem.

7. *Experts have strong self-monitoring skills.* Experts seem to be more aware than novices of when they make errors, why they fail to comprehend and when they need to check their solutions. The superior monitoring skills and self-knowledge of experts reflect their greater domain knowledge as well as different representation of that knowledge.

In summary, the qualities of experts highlighted here can be seen as contributing to a 'knowledge-based' view of expertise where experts are seen to have superior knowledge structures. They know more than novices and organise their information more effectively than novices.

The development of expertise: a cognitive perspective

Taking a knowledge-based perspective, the development or acquisition of expertise is seen to be the result of deliberate practice over extended periods of time involving structured learning and effortful adaptation (Ericsson & Charness 1994; Ericsson 2003). Studies of the acquisition of expertise from this cognitive perspective have relied heavily on the use of experimental design. The focus has been an attempt to describe the critical performance under standardised conditions, to analyse it, and to identify the components of the performance that make it superior (Ericsson & Smith 1991). Underlying assumptions of this approach are a relatively stable environment, an enduring knowledge base that is applied in a range of contexts and an autonomous self. This static view of expertise is not well suited to workplaces characterised by change, complexity and diversity.

Experts work hard at becoming experts. In cognitively based studies of expertise development the focus has been on repetition/practice and experience as factors contributing to the development of expertise. The case for deliberate practice is strongly argued by Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Romer (1993) and Ericsson & Charness (1994). Their view is that the differences between expert performers and normal adults reflect a life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain. They argue that in many domains, individuals with more than 10 years of experience display the highest level of expert performance. However expert performance is not automatically a function of extended experience. It results from deliberate practice that involves structured learning and effortful adaptation (Ericsson & Charness 1994).

Deliberate practice includes activities specifically designed to improve current performance. It requires available time and energy for the individual as well as access to teachers, training material and training facilities. Because deliberate practice is not inherently motivating or financially rewarding, development of expertise also requires high levels of motivation. This level of commitment is part of what distinguishes experts from ordinary adults (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Romer 1993). Individual differences that predispose some people to engage in extended periods of deliberate practice may be found in subsequent research to reflect heritable individual differences as well environmental conditions (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Romer 1993).

This idea of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expertise has been extended by work focusing on the relationship between self-regulation and expert performance. Zimmerman (2002) argues that self-regulation practices such as goal setting, use of learning strategies and self-monitoring underlie efficient deliberative practice and lead to the development of more sophisticated mental representations through study and practice in the domain.

Studying the development of expertise: issues and problems

The study of acquisition of expertise from the cognitive perspective has relied heavily on the use of experimental design, the aim being to describe the critical performance under standardised conditions, to analyse it and identify the components of the performance that make it superior (Ericsson & Smith 1991). “Once it is possible to measure superior performance under standardized conditions, there is no need to rely on social indicators” (Ericsson & Smith 1991: 3).

In line with this view of measuring expertise three steps are proposed in studying the development of expertise. These are: (1) capturing the essence of superior performance under controlled (laboratory) conditions by identifying a collection of standardised tasks; (2) a detailed analysis of the superior performance; and (3) efforts to account for the acquisition of the characteristics and cognitive structures and processes that have been found to mediate the superior performances of experts.

These steps outlined reflect a strong focus on internal validity in the research design. Limiting the nature of tasks and conducting them under controlled conditions means statements about causality can be more confidently made and experiments replicated. However, there are a number of limitations in this type of methodology for studying the development of expertise. These include:

Use of controlled conditions limits the types of tasks that are examined. Standardising tasks may assist in measuring effects of practice and training on acquisition of expertise, but it limits the usefulness of this approach for studying expertise in real life situations. Ericsson & Smith (1991) acknowledge that a major limitation of this approach is that many types of expertise have not been adequately captured. Testing under controlled

conditions demands an 'objective' testing of expert knowledge. However in many domains it is not possible to objectively test the knowledge claims of experts. Professions such as medicine or teaching are just two examples where expertise can be highly subjective in nature. Entry to the profession involves meeting particular knowledge requirements. Yet, during a career path, identified experts are more likely to have been socially selected. Social selection means that experts are performing in the role of expert because a large group of people (their constituency) consider them to be an expert (Agnew, Ford & Hayes 1997).

Experimental research, by design, is devoid of contextual factors. Much of the expertise research has deliberately isolated expertise from contextual issues. Can the development of expertise be examined outside the context in which it occurs? If one supports the view that tacit knowledge contributes strongly to superior workplace skills and may even provide the basis for expertise (Tennant & Pogson 1995) this approach is problematic. There is now a growing trend to place more emphasis on the context-dependent and socially situated nature of expertise (Agnew, Ford & Hayes 1997).

Use of experiments cannot capture the process of the development of expertise. The short time frame over which research studies have been conducted is also a weakness. Ericsson et al. (1993) state that their review of the expertise literature shows that the highest levels of expert performance and achievement appear to require at least 10 years of intense preparation. Yet there is little evidence of extended testing of experts (Ericsson & Smith 1991). In a number of cases where tests were separated by several years, it was impossible to distinguish between the effects of testing and the improvement due to accumulated experience outside the laboratory (Ericsson & Smith 1991).

Individuals working by themselves on individual tasks is not the mode of work for the large majority of people in the workplace (Kuchinke 1996). Thus, research that focuses solely on the individual to the exclusion of their social interactions has limited application to the current workplace.

Deliberate practice may play a somewhat lesser role in creative performance than other performances (Sternberg 1998). Other factors are far more important in the development of creative expertise. These factors include pursuing paths of inquiry that others ignore or dread, taking intellectual risks, and persevering in the face of obstacles (Sternberg 1998).

In summary, there are significant limitations to using laboratory-based research to help understand the development of professional expertise. Research on expertise using standardised tasks in a controlled environment for a set time period gives us a very good indication of how people develop expertise in performing standardised tasks in a controlled environment. It has limited use in helping understand how individuals develop expertise involving complex, ill-defined tasks in a dynamic environment over a long period of time. Recognition of the importance of deliberate practice is a valid starting position for an understanding of the development of expertise in the workplace. However, while it seems undeniable that deliberate practice plays a role in the development of expertise, its role is a necessary rather than sufficient condition (Sternberg 1995).

Some of the problems encountered in researching expertise under laboratory conditions have been addressed by a limited number of studies of expertise under naturalistic settings. As expertise does not result primarily from formal education, consideration must be given to the environment in which the knowledge acquisition occurs. It has been argued that expertise involves knowledge in practice. This means that acquisition and use of expert knowledge may be quite tightly bound to a particular context (Lampert & Clark 1990).

In natural settings expertise has been examined from an anthropological perspective with a focus on expertise in everyday situations. This body of work has contributed to our understanding of practical intelligence and practical thinking. Scribner developed a model of practical thinking after more than two years research work in a US milk processing plant that employed around 300 workers in a range of job categories. She identified five attributes that characterised practical thinking (Scribner 1986 as cited in Tennant & Pogson 1995). These are: (1) flexibility: solving the same problems in

different ways, with each way finely fitted to the particular occasion on hand; (2) fine tuning to the environment: aspects of the environment including people, things or information are drawn into problem solving; (3) economy: where the least effort strategies are used; (4) a dependency on setting specific knowledge; and (5) the capacity to formulate problems rather than solve given problems.

Expanding the study of expertise to natural settings has resulted in a broadening of the scope of knowledge that experts are seen to possess. With consideration given to the context of application of the knowledge, expertise involves the acquisition, storage and utilisation of at least two kinds of knowledge: explicit knowledge of a domain and implicit or tacit knowledge of a field where domain refers to a knowledge base and field to the social organisation of that knowledge (Sternberg 1998). Explicit knowledge is the kind most frequently studied in the literature on expertise. It is knowledge of facts, formulas, principles and major ideas of the domain of inquiry. Implicit or tacit knowledge of a field is the knowledge one needs to know to attain success in a field that usually is not talked about or even put into verbal form. However, while consideration is given to context of application, the focus remains on the individual with limited attention to sociocultural factors contributing to the development of expertise.

The study of teaching expertise

From the 1980s onwards, methods and findings from cognitive psychology began to influence research on teaching. Berliner (1987; 1994; 2001; 2004), in particular, draws on the general expertise literature to describe and document the behaviour and accomplishments of expert teachers. Whilst acknowledging that the link between expert teachers and their students' performance is not as easy to establish as the link between expert chess and bridge players and their performance, Berliner (1994) argues that many of the propositions about expertise in general (Chi, Glaser & Farr 1988) can equally be used to describe teachers. Specifically Berliner claims that:

- Expert teachers often develop *automaticity* and *routinisation* for the repetitive operations that are needed to accomplish their goals.
- Expert teachers are more *sensitive* to the *task demands* and *social situation* when solving pedagogical problems.

- Expert teachers are more *opportunistic* and *flexible* in their teaching than novices.
- Expert teachers have *fast* and *accurate pattern recognition* capabilities.
- Expert teachers *perceive meaningful patterns* in the *domain* in which they are experienced.
- Expert teachers, although slower (than novices) to begin solving problems, bring *richer* and *more personal sources of information* to bear on the problems they are trying to solve.

Consistent with the general arguments about expertise Berliner (1994) claims that time and experience play a significant role in the development of pedagogical expertise. While experience alone will not make a teacher an expert, Berliner suggests that it is likely that almost every expert teacher has had extensive classroom experience.

Focussing on an expert teacher's knowledge structure and level of experience presents a static view of expertise that does not align well with a changing academic environment. It does not tell us how expert teachers developed their expertise or how they maintain their expertise in times of change. It also fails to explain why people reach different levels of expertise. An essential part of teaching expertise must be the capacity to transform that expertise in response to altered teaching conditions. Thus expertise needs to be conceptualised as process rather than a point of attainment.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) drawing on a concept in the field of intelligence measurement use the distinction between fluid and crystallised expertise to assist in understanding the development of expertise. Crystallised expertise refers to the form of expertise consisting of intact procedures, well learned through previous experience. Fluid expertise, by contrast, consists of abilities brought into play on novel or challenging tasks or tasks that the expert has elected to treat in a challenging way. They suggest that these two forms of expertise interact in a dynamic process with fluid expertise being converted into crystallised expertise and crystallised expertise providing a basis for the future growth of fluid expertise. This thinking underlies their description of expertise as a process. They argue that in domains where expertise flourishes

problems tend not to have ceilings on them. That is, there is always a higher level at which the problem can be approached. Thus problem solving becomes progressive.

From this perspective, expertise must consist of something that goes over and above the normal course of learning with experts continually pushing themselves to higher levels of performance through ongoing self-regulation. Self-regulatory knowledge, according to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) is self-knowledge relevant to performance in a domain and can be thought of as knowledge that controls the application of other knowledge. Expertise is thus dynamic (rather than a point of attainment) characterised by continuous efforts to surpass one's earlier achievement and work at the edge of one's competence.

While extending the concept of expertise to include continuous self-improvement during a career is a useful development this only addresses part of the dynamic nature of expertise. Teaching expertise is not only brought to the classroom, it is put into practice in the classroom and involves interaction with students. The quest for constant improvement may help foster the development of teaching expertise, but development as a teacher involves much more than technique. Teaching is a social activity as Olson (1992) observes:

Teaching takes place in a communal world with shared meaning. This world is held together by commitments to certain values which neophytes (or novices) have to learn. It is through belonging to the world of teaching that teachers are able to do what they do (Olson 1992: 22).

Viewing teaching expertise from a perspective of practice rather than knowledge moves the focus from the individual and locates the learning and expertise of an individual teacher within the wider social and cultural context of university teaching. Professional development becomes not just a matter of teachers developing enhanced cognitive capacities but also a question of coming to know their culture in more productive ways (Olson 1992).

Until recently, research on teacher learning and change has focused predominantly on content knowledge and pedagogy. However developing expertise is also about who we are - not just what we do (Ritchie & Wilson 2000). Attending to both personal and professional development draws greater attention to the moral framework of teaching, a factor that is underplayed in the cognitive view of teaching expertise.

Alternative positions on expertise are needed that reflect the complexity of expertise and promote understanding of process of the development of expertise over time. It is now increasingly being argued that expertise 'does not reside in the individual but rather emerges from the dynamic interaction between the individual and his physical/cultural domain' (Agnew, Ford and Hayes 1997: 221). A number of alternative perspectives are discussed in the following section.

Beyond individualism and stability in the study of the expertise

Workplace learning has been the focus of significant academic research in recent years. In the context of workplace learning, Billett (1998) makes the case for a sociocultural view of expertise to complement the cognitive perspective on expertise. He argues that an individual's learning is not isolated from social practice and that consequently expertise is fashioned within particular contexts and embedded in social circumstances.

In a similar vein, Gleespan (1996) argues that cultures help sustain an individual's motivation to engage in the protracted, effortful learning activities that produce expertise. He draws attention to three key cultural factors that can influence whether individuals will be able and willing to acquire the extensive, specialised knowledge in order to perform as an expert. These factors are:

Access to resources: Studies of highly accomplished performers in a range of domains, (particularly those starting at a young age) show that they tend to have come from environments saturated with resources, opportunities and incentives for the development of expertise in the domains favoured by members of the performers' cultures.

The role of mentors: Expertise tends to be highly specific to task situations so it is advantageous for learners to be surrounded by expert performers who share insights in

the course of practice. Mentors can model expert performance and provide accurate and credible feedback.

The role of co-learners: Learners can help each other in the development of expertise by collaborating in learning ventures and experiments, by critiquing each other's performances, sharing successes and assisting motivation. There is also, however, the potential for co-learners to hinder development. This may reflect competing interests or lack of commitment of co-learners.

The significance of mentors and co-learners is supported by studies of workplace learning. Reporting on a study of workplace learning in a mining and secondary processing plant, Billett (1994) highlights the role that mentors and other workers play in assisting individuals to come to an understanding of the knowledge required for workplace performance. Mentors and other workers are able to tell, explain and make explicit things that are not immediately observable. In these ways they are able to provide useful contributions to the participants' understanding of work tasks. Learning from others does not only involve direct instruction. Observing and listening provides, to some extent, a basis for moving from 'knowing about' something to 'knowing how' it can be skilfully undertaken (Billett 1994).

Further, mentors are regarded as being able to assist in developing attitudes to work practices that are conducive to effective work performance. This is done by modelling, coaching and exemplifying an approach to work practice (Billett 1994). Attitude to work practices is an important part of induction to any professional area. These attitudes are unlikely to be developed during formal education prior to professional practice. They are very much located in the context of practice.

Consistent with his argument that expertise is fashioned within particular contexts and embedded in social circumstances Billett (1998) presents a view of sociocultural view of expertise where expertise:

- *is relational* in terms of requirements of a particular community of practice (workplace)

- is *embedded*, being the product of extensive social practice, with meaning about practice derived over time, and with understanding shaped by participation in the activities and norms of that practice (workpractice)
- requires *competence* in the community's (workplace's) discourses, in the routine and non-routine activities of practice, mastery of new understanding, and the ability to perform and adapt existing skills
- is *reciprocal*, shaping as well as being shaped, by the community of practice (workplace) which includes setting and maintaining standards
- requires *pertinence* in the appropriateness of problem solutions, such as knowing what behaviours are 'acceptable' and in what circumstances (Billett 1998: 56).

This reshaped view of expertise addresses a number of the key limitations identified with the cognitive view of expertise. By taking a situated view of learning due consideration can be given to the dynamic, complex and contested nature of expertise. 'Knowledgeability' is routinely in a state of change rather than stasis, in the medium of socially, culturally and historically ongoing systems of activity (Lave 1993).

Adopting a situated view of the development of expertise acknowledges that teaching expertise will be judged by what is relevant and valued in a particular environment. Appraisals of teaching expertise are closely linked to cultural perceptions of what it means to be a good teacher. As Ferrari (2002) explains:

Excellence is intimately tied up with narrative, categories and rhetoric about what is excellent that are provided by our community; ideas that we must interpret and endorse in light of our own experience...we generate our own synthesis of cultural narratives and categories by selecting those that we wish to endorse and pursue and those that we wish to fight against or merely ignore (Ferrari 2002: 231).

By combining contributions from both the cognitive and sociocultural perspectives we can attempt to further our understanding of the complex phenomena of the development of expertise. Choosing to adopt a sociocultural perspective and a broadened view of self in studying the development of teaching expertise presents significant methodological

challenges. Consideration must be given to the multi-layered, dynamic and socially situated nature of this development. Positions emerging on expertise are likely to be varied and contested. Taking this perspective on teaching expertise demands a different research approach that acknowledges the fluidity and multiplicity of expertise.

In the final section of this chapter I argue that a narrative approach to the study of expertise can address the process of the development of the expertise by examining the ‘storying’ of expertise which to date seems to be missing from the expertise literature.

Narrative and identity: an alternative approach

The use of a narrative approach opens up new possibilities for examining the development of teaching expertise in ways that I will argue promote a more complex understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning in the contemporary university environment. A narrative approach offers a number of advantages over traditional methods of studying expertise. It has the capacity to reflect the complexity of individual and social lives, the ambiguity and the contradictions. It can also elicit practical and personal knowledge stories that can be used to understand and communicate subtle aspects of expertise. By examining stories of the development of teaching expertise we can explore the way in which university teachers compose ongoing narratives of identity and practice. In this way, teaching expertise can be viewed as a lifelong learning project where identity is fashioned and refashioned over time. We can also observe how university teachers embed their own narratives in broader cultural narratives.

In the coming chapter, I discuss reasons for the increased interest in narrative, generally and the field of education. This is followed by a detailed examination of both the theoretical and practical concerns in adopting a narrative approach.

Chapter 3

Narrative and identity

Introduction to narrative

In this chapter I address the broad question of whether we can arrive at a better understanding of the development of expertise by adopting a narrative approach to the study of development of expertise. However before presenting a detailed justification for this choice of methodology, I will set the scene by discussing what it means to adopt a narrative approach and ways in which this approach has been used.

Narrative research is interdisciplinary in its origins, including elements of literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological and cultural studies (Casey 1994). Narrative inquiry rests on the assumption of the storied nature of human experience (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2001). Personal narratives compose and order life experiences. By being structured and recounted through story form, experiences are accounted for and given meaning and significance (Usher 1997). Narratives also have the capacity to capture the richness and complexity of life as it is lived. They are both unique to individuals, in the sense that each tells their own story, yet at the same time culturally located (Edwards 1997).

Examining the way university teachers' story the development of their teaching expertise can help us explore how they make sense of their learning experiences across their teaching career and the social and cultural factors that shape and are shaped by their interpretations. A narrative approach to the study of expertise means that we can explore not only the meanings that university teachers make of their own actions but also the social processes of which they are a part and how they draw on these in constructing their identity as a university teacher. As Edwards (1997) explains:

An adult educator may tell their own story rooted in their unique autobiographical trajectory, but the narrative is itself sedimented in the wider narratives of adult education, and beyond that, in the wider narratives of the culture and practices in which the adult educator are located. They live these stories; through them they construct others and are interactively constructed by them, as active, meaningful, knowable subjects acting in meaningful and knowable ways (Edwards 1997: 6).

For the much of the 20th century, anthropologists, folklorists, and literary specialists have mainly assumed that personal narratives are uniquely individual, shaped more by the idiosyncratic experience than by the conventions of collective tradition. However, this belief has been increasingly challenged by the view that:

Personal stories are also shaped through the use of culturally recognized – and, sometimes, transculturally negotiated – narrative and linguistic conventions that are themselves differentially put to use by people positioned by gender, age, or class. As life story research in anthropology has shown, such stories are closely tied to cultural conceptions of personhood (Narayan and George 2001: 816).

Accepting this perspective has implications for the analysis and representation of teacher narratives and will be examined in detail following discussion of the rise of interest in narrative studies and relevant theoretical developments arising from narrative research across a range of disciplines.

Why the turn to narrative?

Renewed interest in narrative in recent times can be seen in a range of fields including psychology (Bruner 1986; McAdams 1988; Mishler 1992; Gergen 1992; Polkinghorne 1995), education (Connelly & Clandinin 1990; Goodson 1992; Casey 1994; Goodson & Sikes 2001) and sociology (Denzin 1997; Gubrium & Holstein 1998). Narrative has secured its place in social science research, as Denzin and Lincoln state, ‘Today few in the interpretive community look back with scepticism on the narrative turn. The turn has been taken, and that is all there is to be said about it’ (2003: viii).

While this rise of narrative can be linked a range of causes, Hinchman & Hinchman (1997) identify three major contributing factors. First, the disenchantment with theories, particularly in psychology, which cast the self as a passive object acted on by external universal forces. Second, a rejection of a dominant paradigm of rationality where one set of indisputable truths is applied to an abstractly conceived 'subject' of knowledge. Finally, there is the concern that traditional methods fail to capture the full richness and complexity of social phenomena.

A narrative approach, in contrast, can explore an active subject using the power of stories to create and refashion personal identity (Bruner 1986; McAdams 1988; Mishler 1992; Hinchman & Hinchman 1997). Attention to postmodern concerns can be addressed with a focus on acknowledging the subjective, multiple and fragmented nature of human experience. While many researchers still adopt a 'realist' stance in analysis of narratives, there is increasing scepticism of the notion of stories revealing a 'true' representation of the 'real world'. Increasing attention is being given to cultural analysis that examines the way in which a discourse constructs 'truth' and the consequences of accepting it as true (Edwards 1997). Conventions for talking about lives are not only implicitly coded in cultural practice, they can also be actively inculcated by institutional demands of various kinds (Narayan & George 2001). Finally, narratives are suited to representing social phenomena in their full richness and complexity (Hinchman & Hinchman 1997) and can provide a particularly rich source of knowledge about the meaning people find in their everyday working lives.

Theoretical developments emerging from the use of narrative

In psychology, the use of personal narrative has provided an alternate way of viewing individual development across the life span. Traditionally theories of development assumed the existence of a predictable sequence of development stages or tasks. A range of psychologists who advocate a narrative stance for exploring experience across the life course challenges this view of development. Rather than viewing individuals responding to external stimuli and passing through predictable, crisis-ridden stages of development (Hinchman & Hinchman 1997) they have shifted their focus to stories of self or self narratives.

McAdams (1988) argues that we understand who we are and how we fit in the world by constructing a dynamic narrative of self:

our life stories embody settings, scenes, characters, plots, and recurrent themes. And like stories in literature, the stories we tell ourselves in order to bring together diverse elements into an integrated whole, organising the multiple and conflicting facets of our lives within a narrative framework which connects past, present and anticipated future and confers upon our lives a sense of sameness and continuity- indeed an *identity*. As the story evolves and our identity takes form we come to live the story as we write it, assimilating our daily experience to a schema of self that is a product of that experience (McAdams 1988: ix).

Mishler (1992) likewise rejects staged models of development and favours the concept of identity formation rather than identity development. He also draws attention to the cultural and social complexity of adult lives where we simultaneously live in different spheres – such as work, family and social world – each with different demands. In a key study examining the work identity of artist-craftspersons using work history narratives he argues that:

Identity changes in adulthood do not follow the fixed, linear path of a universal stage model. Their trajectories involve detours, recursions, embedded cycles, that are responsive to culturally framed and socially situated alternatives... For this reason, I would argue that it is more productive to use the open-ended concept of identity formation in adults, with an emphasis on the person as an active agent and subject, rather than a passive object of universal forces (Mishler 1992: 36-37).

Identity formation thus becomes an active, constructive process rather than as a static result of how underlying conflicts are resolved. How individuals define and resolve problems becomes visible and available through personal narratives, which are individuals' retrospective 'tellings' of their history (Mishler 1992).

Gergen and Gergen (1997) view the self-narrative as undergoing continuous alteration while not possessing inherent directive capabilities. They also highlight the relational aspects of the self-narrative arguing that, 'the self-narrative is a linguistic implement constructed and reconstructed by people in relationships, and employed in relationships to sustain, enhance, or impede actions' (Gergen and Gergen 1997: 163)

Another factor providing impetus to the use of narrative has been attention to the views of under-represented groups in society. The call for recognition of the diverse range of voices of women, minority groups and people in developing countries has commonly taken the form of personal accounts (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992) that provide access to a multiplicity of stories. Viewing subjects as active agents rather than passive objects of universal stories also opens the way to the possibilities of multiple stories rather than a master narrative. This resonates with the heterogeneity and flux of current society. Even at the individual level the number of existing and possible stories is infinite.

Contextuality is central to narrative enquiry. 'Personal narratives are contextually contingent in a double sense: responsive to and embedded in both the current life circumstances of the teller and the situation of the "telling"' (Mishler 1992: 33). This focus on context resonates with debates about the situated nature of learning. Situated learning refers to a broad collection of work, which shares an emphasis on the importance of context in acquiring knowledge and skill. This perspective differs significantly from the traditional cognitive theory which views learning as a process contained in the mind of the learner and separate from experience. Instead 'the process of learning is located at the interface of peoples biography and the socio cultural milieu in which they live, for it is at this intersection that experiences occur' (Jarvis 1992: 17 as cited in Bonk & Kim 1998).

Use of a narrative approach coincides with a greater interest in process. 'Narrative models of knowing are models of process *in process* ... personal narratives describe the road to the present and point the way to the future' (Josselson 1995: 35 as cited in Goodson & Sikes 2001). It should be noted, however, that the narrator's view of the process is through a lens of the present, a retrospective account of process. The notion of process can be viewed at two levels, the individual and the social (Miller 2000). The

first level is the individual's own history as they 'process' along their life course. The second relates to historical events and social change that impact on the individual's unique life history.

Finally, a narrative approach explicitly acknowledges that it is impossible to separate the person from the professional. What happens in one area of our lives affects other areas of our lives.

Narrating the self in social context

While teacher stories have become common in education, much of the focus has been on the private sense of self. Less attention has been given to a defining feature of narrative, narrative as a social activity. Ontological narratives are the stories that social actors use to make sense of – indeed, in order to act in – their lives. They are used to define who we are; this is in turn a precondition for knowing what to do. This 'doing' will in turn produce new narratives and hence new action. Ontological narratives make identity and self something that one becomes (Somers & Gibson 1994). These narratives are shaped by the social world in two important and related ways: first through the audiences each individual encounters and second through the cultural repertoire to which each individual has access (Elliot 2005).

Narratives are not just a means of representation they are also potent tools in social interaction for cultural work. Stories are practices to get things done:

Narrative form, then, not only conjures up other worlds, whether imagined or remembered; it is also a way of artfully arranging words for social and political consequences in the immediacy of this world (Narayan & George 2001: 819).

Institutional settings can also be understood as providing resources for constructing narratives as well as restriction on what should be told (Elliot 2005). Public narratives are those attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual. Like all narratives, these stories have drama, plot, explanation and selective appropriation. Looking at the social context of narrative draws attention to the way

social identities are constructed 'by the intricate weaving of history, narrativity, social knowledge and relationality, as well as institutional and cultural practices' (Somers & Gibson 1994: 79).

Life history/life story in education

Life history has been used as a research approach throughout the 20th century. However, from around 1990 onwards researchers in education have rediscovered the usefulness of the life history interview as a way to explore understandings of teachers' and students' identities and cultures, and this form of interviewing has grown significantly (Tierney & Dilley 2001). More broadly, the turn to postmodernism and poststructuralism has contributed to renewed interest in life history work (Goodson & Sikes 2001). The subjective nature of life history work, once considered a weakness, is now viewed favourably.

The current focus on acknowledging the subjective, multiple and partial nature of human experience has resulted in a revival of life history methodology. What were previously criticisms of life history, its lack of representativeness and its subjective nature, are now its greatest strength. (Munro 1998 as cited in Goodson and Sikes 2001: 15)

The terms narrative and life history are often used together or interchangeably. For some life history is a particular kind of narrative, while for others narrative is distinguished by a focus on how we tell stories compared to a concern with what is told in life histories (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995). My view is that life history is but one of a range of approaches that can be included under the wide umbrella of narrative epistemologies (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2001) and that it will be used in different ways by different researchers depending on their ontological position.

Is it a life history or life story? Is there a meaningful distinction between the two terms? Atkinson (2001) suggests that there is very little difference between a life story and life history and that the two are often used synonymously. However, Narayan & George (2001) take the view that:

The genre that anthropologists have developed to write about peoples lives is labelled *life history*, but we prefer the term life story or even life stories because it draws attention to the fragmentary and constructed nature of personal narratives (Narayan & George 2001: 817).

In line with this position, I will use the label *life story* rather than *life history* to describe the stories that teachers in this study narrate. Life stories are generally elicited through lightly structured interviews. The life story interview is a highly contextualised, highly personalised approach to the gathering of qualitative information about the human experience and can potentially take many forms.

A life story can take a factual form, a metaphorical form, a poetic form, or any expressive form. What is important is that the life story be told in the form, shape, and style that is most comfortable to the person telling it. Whatever form it takes, a life story always brings order and meaning to the life being told, for both the teller and the listener. It is a way to understand the past and the present more fully, and a way to leave a personal legacy for the future (Atkinson 2001: 125-126).

Over the last twenty years, teacher stories became a popular way to give voice to teachers and recognise their personal knowledge. The telling of teachers' stories, Elbaz (1991) argues, represents an important conceptual shift in the way teachers' knowledge can be conceived and studied. 'Teachers' knowledge is ordered by story and can best be understood in that way' (Elbaz 1991:3). Story can also accommodate ambiguity and dilemma as central figures or themes (Carter 1993). Story is a distinctive mode of explanation characterised by a multiplicity of meanings. It is a suitable form for expressing the knowledge that arises from action (Carter 1993). All these points support the value of gathering life stories in an exploration of development of expertise in higher education teachers.

However, it needs to be noted that there are significant differences in the way stories are used and the assumptions that underpin that use. Issues surrounding the use of narrative are discussed in the following section. In the coming chapter, Chapter Four, I document in detail my use of life stories in this study and the assumptions that have underpinned their use.

Issues with the use of narrative

There is still considerable conceptual diversity within narrative and no standard sets of procedures for its use. How research is conducted will reflect the researcher's interest and assumptions about the world (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992). There are three key areas where underlying assumptions needed to be clarified and articulated - the 'truth' of narratives, how self is viewed, and the role of the researcher.

Truth

While the use of life history narratives has become popular in the last twenty years, they are by no means a new or novel approach. What has changed is the ways of reading stories. The life history method was central to the 'Chicago School' in the 1920s and 1930s (Miller 2000) in exploring diverse life in the city. When sociologists such as Lewis and Shaw elicited the informants' 'own story' the focus was on the events rather than the stories told about them. Life histories were seen as reports from the front line, a powerful way of supplementing and humanising statistics and bringing to life stories of delinquency, poverty and alcoholism. Like photographs these stories were intended to be read as objective descriptions (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992).

Renewed interest in storying since the 1980s has been marked by a shift from realism to narrativity. In reading personal accounts, attention is now given to the process, product and consequences of reportage itself, not just to the scenes being described (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992). The focus is on how stories are told rather than discovering 'truth' in the data. Greater consideration is given to the constructed nature of the social world and the multiplicity of experiential realities that might be created.

In analysing interpretive practice we do not aim to derive the *real* – ‘their world’ or ‘their story’ ... Rather our goal is to make visible how practitioners of everyday life constitute, reproduce, redesign or specify locally. What the institutional and cultural contexts of their action make available to them (Gubrium & Holstein 1997: 115).

In adult education Edwards (1997) identifies a ‘shift from whether a discourse gives us a ‘true’ representation of the ‘real world’ – a continuation of the modernist scientific approach – to a way in which a discourse constructs ‘truth’ and the consequences of accepting it as true – a form of cultural analysis. Along with different and contested knowledge of truth, postmodern thinking also challenges the notion of a unified coherent self. This represents another of the key issues for discussion in regard to a narrative approach.

A coherent self?

In recent years, the modernist view of self as independent, rational, autonomous and coherent, has been challenged from a number of theoretical perspectives (Tennant 2000). Edwards & Usher (1996) highlight a clear difference between ‘the modern view and of the reflexive yet transcendental self from whom finding a stable identity is a normative goal and the post modern perspective of the self as subject to image and images in which there is a disturbingly pleasurable construction of multiple identities.’ For them, the postmodern view with many narratives and multiple identities opens up a greater range of practices and possibilities for adult educators.

While narratives open the possibilities to multiple and shifting selves they can also provide a sense of coherence and unity at the particular point of telling. In a study of women’s development in the workplace, Fenwick reported that ‘a common preoccupation of most participants seemed to be seeking a stable coherent and deeply meaningful self which they seemed to discern underneath layers of surface turmoil created by their life-choices’ (Fenwick 1998: 201). Goodson & Sikes (2001) also suggest that the more fragmentary our existence, the more unitary our life stories may become. However it can be argued, from the modern narrative perspective that autobiographic coherence is an illusion – a tactical manoeuvre (Rosenwald & Ochberg

1992) that reflects a desire for unitary self and a response to a social expectation of a representation of coherence. This social aspect of the telling of narratives points to a need for particular consideration of the role of the researcher undertaking narrative work.

The role of the researcher

When adopting a narrative approach a researcher cannot claim to be studying the field in a detached way (Connelly & Clandinin 1999). No longer is it theoretically or empirically warrantable to treat interviews as transparent windows into peoples' stable, self contained knowledge or beliefs about a topic (Freebody 2003). Interviews are far more than channels for the transfer of data; they need to be understood as cultural practices *about* cultural practices.

While interviews will vary in the degree of collaboration between researchers and participants, a researcher will always bring to an interview situation their specific interests and their own biography (Scott 1998). With the interpretive process, there will be an interweaving of two different agendas: those of the participant and the researchers (Scott 1998). All of these points serve to highlight the constructed nature of a narrative accounts. Given the active role of the researcher it is important in narrative work that careful consideration is given to the role and positioning of the researcher in the research. The collaborative nature of narrative work also imposes particular ethical responsibilities on researchers. Care needs to be taken with presentation of their accounts as extensive use of individuals' stories makes them more vulnerable to exposure than conventional qualitative studies (Chase 1996).

Justification for the use of a narrative approach

Having considered the purpose and contributions of the narrative approach a strong case can be made for the use of a storied approach to studying the development of teaching expertise. The narrative approach offers a number of advantages over traditional methods of studying expertise. It has the capacity to reflect the complexity of individual and social lives, the ambiguity and the contradictions. It can elicit practical and personal knowledge stories that can be used to understand and communicate subtle aspects of

expertise. Attention can also be focused on social, institutional and cultural practices that shape construction of identity and the development of expertise.

The use of a narrative approach is aligned with a number of key underpinnings of this project: (1) a view of expertise that is dynamic and situated; (2) an acknowledgement of diversity in representation of teaching 'expertise'; and (3) a view of self as fluid, creatively reinventing itself to adapt to life's changes (Fenwick 1998). Narrative can be characterised as a 'way of knowing' (Hatch and Wilenski 1995). The coming chapter will document how this 'way of knowing' can be used to better understand the development of university teaching expertise.

Chapter 4

Gathering stories of university teaching expertise

Introduction to story gathering: setting the context

In writing this thesis I am under no illusion about the complexity surrounding the representation of lived experience. In this chapter, I provide a thorough discussion of the mechanics of the study, detail the choices made in gathering, analysing and representing stories of university teaching expertise and highlighting the considerations involved in making these choices. The need for detailed discussion is in part due to the lack of standardisation in qualitative research methods, a consequence of the context-sensitive nature of qualitative research. Finally, I reflect on my role as researcher in this study, discuss quality standards, and introduce the key characters in the research.

Research design

I adopt an interpretive approach in this study, the goal being to better understand how award winning university teachers account for the development of their university teaching expertise. More specifically, I take a narrative approach to the method, data collection and analysis and draw on techniques used for eliciting life stories, conducting multiple in-depth interviews with six award winning university teachers.

Three key design strategies of qualitative inquiry – naturalistic inquiry, emergent design flexibility and purposeful sampling (Patton 2002) – are present in this study. The study is naturalistic to the extent that I did not attempt to manipulate and measure teaching expertise under controlled conditions. Rather participants were interviewed in their workplaces using open-ended questions. There were no predetermined categories or variables used to examine the development of teaching expertise.

The design allowed for flexibility and I adapted the study in response to concerns I had with the style of accounts emerging in the pilot interviews. I concluded that the manner in which I conducted the pilot interviews did not necessarily assist in providing rich descriptions of the development of teaching expertise.

The focus on award winning teachers reflects purposeful sampling designed to provide 'information rich' cases, cases from which a great deal can be learnt about issues of central importance to the project (Patton 2002). This sampling design aligns with the study's aim to better understand the development of university teaching expertise. No attempt is being made to project from this sample to a general population.

The process of analysis emerged through the course of the research process and could be described as iterative, as I moved back and forward between interview transcripts, the emerging research text and relevant literature. In terms of representation, the approach taken explicitly provides an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it. Further, I take the view that that: (a) multiple realities exist; (b) data reflect the researcher's and the participant's mutual constructions; and (c) the researcher, however incompletely, enters and is affected by the participants' worlds (Charmaz 2001). A detailed discussion of the different aspects of the design follows.

Selecting participants: background on university teaching awards

University teaching, like many professional areas, does not lend itself to objective measures of expertise. In identifying 'expert' university teachers, I used an institutionally endorsed measure of expertise. The selection criteria was having received an award for teaching excellence in the previous five years, either at the institutional level (Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Award) or at the national level (Australian Award for University Teaching).

Many universities offer a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence. This typically involves nomination by a School or Faculty and preparation by the university teacher of a major report on their teaching, addressing set criteria. Documentation of claims is provided through student surveys and provision of selected teaching material. A panel that generally includes student representation judges applications.

The Australian Awards for University Teaching were introduced in 1997 by the Federal Government as a way of recognising excellence in university teaching. Individual awards were introduced in up to fourteen categories (eleven discipline areas plus distance learning, indigenous education and use of multimedia in teaching). These awards served to increase the profile of teaching in universities. By acknowledging teaching, these awards directed faculty and university management to the value of teaching as an integral part of university work (Kirkpatrick & Thorpe 2000). National awards are now known as Carrick Awards for Australian University Teaching (CAAUT), named in line with the recently formed Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. These awards are currently granted in eight categories (Carrick Institute 2007). Five of these are discipline based. Additional categories are indigenous education, early career and an annually nominated priority area. Awards are made to both individuals and teams.

Current selection criteria for Carrick Awards are: (1) approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn; (2) development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field; (3) approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning; (4) respect and support for the development of students as individuals; and (5) scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching. At the time participants won their awards, criteria were expressed in the following way: interest and enthusiasm for teaching and student learning, ability to arouse curiosity and independent learning, command of subject material, appropriate assessment, innovation in design and delivery, student guidance and assistance to students from equity groups and participation in professional activity and research on teaching.

Awards for teaching excellence construct teaching and teachers in particular ways to suit contemporary political and institutional agendas. Receipt of an excellence award signifies peer and institutional recognition and thus is a justifiable method for identifying potential participants in a study of teaching expertise.

The sampling approach adopted in this study can be described as purposeful sampling where information rich cases are selected for study in depth (Patton 2002). Purposeful sampling is driven by the research purpose and is suitable where the research is concerned with specific characteristics and experiences. Cases are selected to yield insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations. Patton describes a range of purposeful strategies that can be used alone or in combination. The sampling strategies used in this study could be described as intensity sampling, criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling. Intensity sampling refers to a situation where the researcher seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest. The logic of criterion sampling is that all cases meet a particular criterion, in this study, winning a teaching excellence award. Maximum variation, as the name suggests, ensures diversity in the sample selected. For this project, I aimed for variation in discipline area, employing university, and gender.

To generate a list of potential participants I contacted a number of academics in staff development units and also searched university websites and the websites for the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) and the Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training (DEST).

In terms of selecting individual participants from these sources, I was guided by a concern for diversity within the group of participants in terms of a range of disciplines and a range of universities. I had originally planned to interview ten university teachers but I reduced this number to six as I became aware of the richness that was emerging from the interviews. The participants were drawn from six disciplines, politics, law, geography, engineering, accounting and psychology and five universities in metropolitan and regional NSW and Canberra. Two participants represented universities in each of three commonly accepted grouping of universities (Marginson 2004); the 'Sandstone' or 'Group of Eight' universities – older universities founded in capital cities that regard themselves as elite institutions; the 'unitechs' large universities of technology in each state capital which had long-standing vocational status and became universities in 1987 and; the 'new universities' institutions that also achieved university status after 1987, some being specialist regional and/or distance education providers.

While this is not a study about gender and teaching expertise, I acknowledge the role of gender in shaping interaction and identities. Thus I saw merit, in terms of diversity, in a gender balanced sample and accordingly selected three female and three male award winners.

Making contact with potential participants

Potential participants were contacted by email and invited to participate in the research. (See Appendix 1 for invitation letter). They were advised of the aim and nature of the project and the time commitment that would be involved if they participated. I informed them that they had been selected as a potential participant because they had received an award for teaching excellence. However I stressed that I was not looking to categorise people or come to any consensus on the 'expert' teacher. Rather, I was looking to explore diverse experiences and a range of views on teaching expertise.

The level of participation I requested was two interviews of one to two hour's duration each. Generally, those contacted were happy to participate. Two academics contacted did not participate. One advised that she was too busy to be involved. The other had initially agreed to participate but cancelled the first interview due to a 'crisis' at work. She did not respond to further communication. All potential participants were assured that their confidentiality would be respected.

Interviews were conducted between November 2003 and November 2004. Finding a suitable time to conduct the interview took from several weeks to an extreme of several months. Given that time pressures are a key issue for academics, I wanted to include people facing significant time constraints. This meant I was prepared to be very flexible about when interviews were conducted. On the day prior to an arranged interview, I emailed participants to confirm the appointment and gave my mobile phone number in case they had unanticipated problems arise and needed to reschedule the interview. This happened on several occasions. While this delayed data collection, I thought that given the nature of the research project, it was important that participants were in a situation to tell me their story without feeling pressured by competing commitments.

Eliciting teacher narratives through interview conversations

Two interviews were conducted with each participant. My reasons for conducting multiple interviews were a desire to establish rapport and trust and the opportunity to gain greater depth and detail about how participants talked about themselves, their teaching and their students. Also, to have a greater chance to explore how they had made meaning of their experiences over their teaching lives. I wanted to create a research environment where it was possible to explore the personal influences on their teaching and to move beyond the criteria that they would have highlighted in preparing an application for a teaching award. Multiple interviews meant that both the participants and I had the opportunity to reflect on issues between the first and the second interview. It also had the potential to reduce the influence of a bad day or a bad week on the telling of their teaching story. The decision to conduct multiple interviews and the way in which they were conducted emerged in response to concerns I had with pilot interviews I undertook.

In the two pilot interviews, I used a structured interview guide with questions focusing directly on the areas of interest in the study. I was disappointed however, with the results from the pilot interviews. To a certain degree I felt that I was receiving a ‘pitch’ for a teaching excellence award. For example, when I asked Steve what things his students would say if they were telling me about you, he responded:

I think they would tell you that my lectures and courses are well organised, thoroughly prepared, I talk with enthusiasm, that challenges are given and accepted and enjoyed and that it's fun to be there. Steve

It is not at all surprising that Steve, as a teaching award winner should describe his teaching in this way. As Baker (2001) suggests:

Interviewees can be seen to account for themselves as competent members of the social category to which the interviewer has assigned them. That is, people are interviewed *as members* of some specific category or populations ... Accounting for oneself involves invoking a social world in which one's version of competent membership could make sense. Accounting is more

than reporting or responding; it is a way of arranging a version of how things are or could be (Baker 2001: 783).

However, in using a narrative approach I wanted to try and get beyond received stories of teaching excellence. To assist in this I turned to techniques used in life history/life story interviews. Traditionally life history has been used in the quest to understand the unique voice and experience of the storyteller (Atkinson 2001). However life history now, in addition to being seen as a conduit to the detailed texture of culture and identity, is conceived as 'a way for researchers and ultimately their readers to make sense of the multiple identities that individuals can hold, create and manage over the course of a lifetime' (Tierney & Dilley 2001: 461). It is in this latter sense that I am using the life history interview.

Generally two to three interviews are conducted to elicit life stories. There is no standardised method, as different interviewers will use different questions depending on the focus of their research projects. Robert Atkinson, founder of the *Center for the Study of Lives* provides in his (1998) book, *The Life Story Interview*, more than 200 questions that an interviewer could ask in obtaining a life story. Key themes that he covers include: birth and family of origin; cultural setting and traditions; social factors; education; love and work; retirement; historical events and periods; inner life and spiritual awareness and major life influences and themes. He suggests that only the most appropriate few be used for each person interviewed.

Amia Lieblich, editor of the *Narrative Study of Lives* annual series, reports a different approach. In her co-authored text, *Narrative Research* (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber 1998), she discusses a particular method used in a study with a large number of participants. The aim is for a compromise between the desire to obtain free and rich self-narratives and the need to limit the amount of time and material generated per participant. First, participants are asked to think about their life now as if they were writing a book. Second, they are to consider where chapters began and ended and nominate starting and finishing ages for each chapter. Third, participants are advised to title each chapter. Finally, the interviewer places this outline in view of the participant and the interviewer and asks questions for each chapter on: significant episodes and

significant people, ‘What kind of person were you at that time?’ and the reason for choosing the end point of the stage. When the entire stage outline is worked out a number of final topics are introduced.

In designing this study I considered the use of the ‘chapters of a book’ device but judged it to be too limiting in allowing for the ways in which teaching stories would be told. The approach for this study was informed by the biographic-narrative-interpretive interview method (BNIM) advocated by Wengraf (2001) for narrative projects with a small number of cases. The BNIM approach restricts interviewer intervention initially to a single (narrative) opening question. Interventions remain very restricted until a subsequent late stage in the multi-session interview process. Wengraf (2001) details the method in a highly prescriptive manner in his text, *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. For the purposes of this study, I have drawn on the key ideas and executed them in a more flexible manner.

In the first interview session, I asked participants to tell me the story of their teaching life. I explained that this would provide a way of organising their experiences and commenting on their meaning without me excessively imposing my research agenda on them. I asked them to tell the story in a way that was relevant and comfortable for them. I found that the unstructured nature of the first interview meant that I was able to actively listen to participants rather than be planning my next conversational move to elicit information about a specific area of my interest. This set up a powerful dynamic in the interview and most participants talked at length with only limited prompting.

No doubt, a significant influence on this was my choice of an occupational group to research. As Goodson and Sikes (2001) comment:

In the life history context, our facility with language, our general fluency and articulacy and our ability to dramatize and tell a story determine how ‘good’ an informant we are. To a considerable extent they also determine the ‘success’ of the identities we construct (Goodson and Sikes 2001: 47).

Before conducting second interviews I ensured that I was very familiar with the material from the initial interviews. In the follow up interview, I took a more structured approach to explore their views on teaching expertise, how this had changed over time and how they accounted for the development of their teaching expertise (See Appendix 2 for interview guide). I probed the issue of changes in the university workplace and the impacts on them and their teaching. The conversation was still very much open-ended with respondents giving extended responses to questions. Not all points in the interview guide were covered with all participants. This was due to either time constraints, the issues having been covered in sufficient depth in the first interview, or my judgement that adhering to the guide, in particular cases, would distort the direction of the interview.

The duration of the first interviews ranged from one and half to two hours. Follow up interviews ranged from one to two hours. Interviews were tape-recorded (with participant consent) which enabled me to give my full attention to participants as they told their stories. Without tape-recording many of the rich details of the interviews would have been lost. Interview tapes were fully transcribed. Some of this transcription work I completed myself, but university staff, with experience in transcription, transcribed most of the interviews. I checked all transcripts by listening in full to the original interview tapes. Some material was lost through problems with taping equipment. This, however, did not impact in any significant way on the study.

The length of interviews transcripts ranged across the participants from 7,000 to 14,000 words per interview. Life story interviews commonly generate large volumes of data, as Atkinson (2001) observes:

The life story interview allows for the gathering of more data than a researcher may actually use, which is a good practice and provides a broad foundation of information to draw upon (Atkinson 2001: 129).

However, while fascinating, this wealth of material created dilemmas for me. How should I approach the analysis? How would I make decisions about what to include and what to exclude? How could I do justice to these teachers' stories?

Responding to stories of university teachers' lives

Conducting the interviews was one of the highlights of the research process and I am grateful to my participants for this. Their passion, generosity and openness gave a sense of intimacy to our conversations and I regularly came away from sessions highly energised.

A sense of shared experience and shared language created a comfortable space for the stories to be told. I found these university teachers related to me in a number of roles – as a researcher, as a fellow academic and as a research student. On a number of occasions, I took back and tried out in my own classroom some of their teaching techniques they described.

At a broader personal level, I have found that doing this research about change in the contemporary university has given me a way of understanding and coming to terms with these issues in my own workplace. Despite competing demands and never having enough time I feel a greater sense of control of the choices I am making and those I will make in the future.

While I enjoyed doing the interviews, I faltered when I came to work with the participants' stories and write my research story. I was troubled by how I would represent these stories and the inevitable fragmentation of stories. Having developed a relationship with the people participating in this research, I have some uneasiness about using their personal stories to construct my own research story. While this is an inevitable outcome of the interpretative approach adopted, I hesitated at the notion, as I saw it, of messing with peoples' lives.

Do I focus on stories or do I focus on themes? I vacillated. Do I have the right to cut across peoples' stories? Inevitably I had to make choices. With extended interview transcripts - some in excess of 25,000 words per participant (when both interviews are counted) - I had to make decisions about what to select and what to leave for future publications. How could I do justice to these peoples' lives?

Dealing with this part of the research process is well described by narrative researcher Bar-On (1996) as:

The ongoing struggle in which analysts try to describe their own understandings of the text, to prove something, while also trying to remain faithful to the experiences of the interviewee and the way they themselves have formulated them (Bar-On 1996: 17).

While I support the general sentiment of his view my position is different to Bar-On's in terms of 'proof'. I am not looking to establish a particular 'truth'. Rather my aim is to present my interpretation but leave the door open for other interpretations. While researchers have a responsibility to attempt to balance the agendas of the researcher and the researched, equilibrium can never be achieved:

Actually there is no way to make complete justice to your interviews: Once the interviews have been analysed, it is actually your text as well as theirs; the interviewees may be happy or unhappy with the way you have handled their texts, but it is still a point of view you wish to defend and clarify (Bar-On 1996: 19).

In the midst of my struggles and confusion, I found it quite liberating to be challenged by a colleague on the notion that I had someone's personal story in my possession. She suggested that what I had was someone's story told at a particular time, in a particular place, for a particular purpose; fragments of a life.

For any inquiry into one's own practice there are many possible stories to tell. For every story that is told, there are many possible meanings to interpret. Stories about practice are not mirrors of experience; like all texts, they are constructed by the author with certain intentions in mind. When one is writing about oneself, no description seems adequate to the experience, and yet without description, what is learned remains private and unexamined (Lampert 2000: 68).

There was no way I could possibly attempt to tell a definitive story of someone's teaching practice. The teaching stories were told to me in a specific context, an interview situation, at a specific time in a specific place. If we look at practice being located in lives, the complexity and diversity of the stories that could be told becomes evident. Denzin (1999: 98) compares life stories to pictures that have been painted over. When the paint is scraped off the old picture something new becomes visible. 'There is no truth in the painting of a life, only multiple images of what has been, what could have been, and what is now.'

In telling their stories, participants make judgements about how they want to be known and tell their stories accordingly. Following Riessman (2001), my position is that participants do not reveal an essential self as much as perform a preferred one, selecting from the multiplicity of selves that they traverse as they live their lives. I came to realise that what I would draw together for closure in this research study is just one reading of those life stories at a particular point in time.

From interview to research texts: analysis of teacher narratives

There are a myriad of ways that narratives can be analysed. For instance, attention can be given to the structure, the content, the language used or the way in which narrators position themselves and others. Before detailing how a variety of forms of narrative analysis are used in this thesis, I will document the moves from transcription to the narrative analysis including the process that led to the choice of three theoretical frames to underpin the detailed narrative analysis.

Following an initial close reading of the transcripts, I conducted a preliminary analysis to generate broad themes, in a systematic way, using NVIVO, a computer-assisted qualitative data software. My coding of the data no doubt reflected my interests and perspectives. Some of the broad themes identified were: continuous learning/continuous improvement in teaching, the importance of relationships with students, the impact of personal values and beliefs on teaching practice.

From this initial foray into the data using NVIVO, I wanted to proceed with a more holistic form of analysis. Drawing on the broad themes from the first crude analysis, I tried to connect the emergent themes with current theoretical and practical debates in higher education. In this way the generation of themes was an expansive rather than a reductive process.

What emerged during this process were three potential frames for examining the development of university teaching expertise. These three frames were: developing expertise as lifelong learning; developing expertise as situated learning; and developing expertise as identity work. Originally I had conceptualised the first frame as informal learning but as the project developed, I realised that extending this to lifelong learning (which would still include informal learning) would be more productive.

While I examine these as discrete framings during the process of analysis, that they are, of course, interdependent as becomes apparent during the presentation of findings. However, separation serves an analytical purpose, allowing close examination of parts of the whole. Use of theoretical frames provides a rationale for inclusion of some things and exclusion of other things, an inevitable process.

With the complexity involved in narrative analysis, it difficult to focus on a range of narrative practices simultaneously. However, the practice of ‘analytical bracketing’ facilitates a focus on one aspect of narrative practice (for example how the story is being told) while temporarily deferring concern about what is being told (Gubrium & Holstein 1998). I have done this by choosing the most relevant form of narrative analysis for each of the three theoretical framings. Chapter Six has a focus on the structure of two contrasting stories as part of an exploration of the development of expertise as lifelong learning. An examination of plot lines provides a way to explore events and choices across a lifetime. There is also the opportunity to move beyond the life plot of the individual and consider basic narrative structures shared across communities and societies.

Focussing on the content of narratives can cut across individual stories and illuminate shared patterns across a group of people. In Chapter Seven, I use the frame of situated learning to examine the social embeddedness of teaching expertise and highlight the local and cultural resources that narrators draw upon to tell their stories. 'In addition to being implicitly encoded in cultural practice, conventions for talking about lives can also be actively incalculated by institutional demands of various kinds' (Narayan & George 2001: 817).

In Chapter Eight, I return to a holistic form of analysis and look at the manner in which two of the participants fashion their teacher identities, positioning themselves and others in their narrations. In constructing their narratives, these teachers invent a place and positionality for themselves within their universities, attempting to position themselves as 'knowers' in the eyes of students, other academics and their institution; charting the progress of their movement towards legitimacy as expert teachers.

Having looked at the various components of the analysis in this study, I will now discuss the bringing together of the research story.

Weaving a research story

Qualitative researchers are challenged to constantly consider their role as researcher. With the interpretive process, there is an interweaving of two different agendas: those of the participant and those of the researcher (Scott 1998). The researcher brings to the research their own biography and their knowledge of the process of doing research. As a researcher there is no doubt that I would be infiltrating the text (Mishler 1992). The more relevant question is in what way would I be infiltrating the research text.

Weaving a research story is a complex balancing act. The university teachers I interviewed, as researchers themselves, were at ease in an interview setting and were highly articulate research participants. People tell stories with a view to their audience and in my study a range of activities were in play. Participants were performing their identities as 'expert' teachers as well as supporting me as a research student. They were also conversing with me as a colleague. Researching as an 'insider' has advantages in terms of shared language and experience, however I was careful not to assume that our

meanings were always shared. The interviews also provided an opportunity for participants to take time out and reflect on their lives. Denzin (1999: 99) suggests that most stories ‘slowly unwind and twist back on themselves as persons seek to find meaning for themselves in the experiences they call their own.’

To a large degree the stories presented in this research reflect a positive view of teaching in universities. While there are feelings of loss in certain areas, the broader picture is one of shaping and reshaping self and teaching practice to meet changing circumstances. However, one participant, who I call Sandra, was highly critical of current university education and saw my study as an opportunity to expose these problems. While one of the main aims of my study is to look at changes in the contemporary university and how they are impacting on teacher identities and teaching practices, my agenda is not to promote a return to the ‘good old days’ in university. Set out below is our initial email correspondence setting up the first of the two interviews.

Dear Sandra

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study aimed at furthering our understanding of how university teachers develop expertise and whether views of expertise are changing in light of the changing nature of academic work...

Dear Cathi

I would love to participate in your research but my greatest obstacle is the very issue you are researching. I have such a massive teaching load that I almost have no other life anymore ... If we can find a suitable time I would be delighted to assist you with your work, as I believe it is one of the most important issues for the community to address. The changes that have crept into the tertiary system over the past 15 years or so are threatening the very heart and soul of education.

The passion and disillusionment evident in this email correspondence were also present in the two interviews I conducted with Sandra. Given the strength of Sandra’s sentiments I felt concerned that she had a markedly different view to mine about the purpose and the possible outcomes of my research. I did not want to feel I was misleading her. At the end of the second interview I felt compelled to raise this with her. I mentioned that not all the stories I was hearing were negative and that I was

interested in how university teachers were dealing with change. She seemed surprised that others were not as disillusioned as she was. She wished me well with my research.

Protecting participants is an ever-present issue for qualitative researchers. People let researchers into their lives and with that access comes responsibilities. Pseudonyms are used for all participants. These were introduced at the transcription stage and over the course of the study I have come to know these teachers as their pseudonyms. I concur with the sentiment expressed by Denzin (1999) that:

We must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project, or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise. The promise being that we protect those who have shared with us (Denzin 1999: 101)

Protecting the anonymity of participants meant at times providing less contextual detail that I believe readers would like. One strong desire I have in weaving this story and other research stories is to provide access for readers so that they can engage with these stories and make their own readings. What I don't want is to present a sealed discussion which privileges my reading.

The many quotations from their text provide the reader with ample material for making different interpretations than the ones I have made. The life stories, as well as the social realities that shaped them, are open to future interpretations from new perspectives, and, therefore open to challenge (Gullestad 1996 as cited in Nielsen 1999: 49).

To give the reader a portal to enter the world of the subject and attempt to understand and share their experiences, traces of the subject must be left if only as fragments in text. As Denzin (1999: 99) suggests, 'Texts must always return and reflect the words that persons speak as they attempt to give meaning and shape to the lives they lead'. Through reflexively connecting my experiences with those of participants in my study, I have learned much about myself as well as the social and cultural factors shaping teachers' experiences in the 'enterprise' university. I would also like to think that this

work could contribute to conversations about how changes in the contemporary university are impacting on teacher identities and teaching practices.

The power the author has is the ability to develop a reflexive text. Such a text enables the reader to understand the author a bit better, to come to grips with the individual whose life is retold, and to reflect back on their own lives. A reflexive work of the kind I have argued for leaves a writer and a speaker and a reader vulnerable. Vulnerability is not a position of weakness but one from which to attempt change and social fellowship (Tierney 2003: 315).

Both researcher and researched can be seen as active creators of knowledge where the aim becomes that of *exploring* what reality could become, rather than simply *explaining what it is* (Simons & Usher 2000). In the subsequent readings of my research text, what I imagine is an intertwining of threads of the lives of participants, researcher and readers.

Setting quality standards

Questions of validity, reliability, and generalisability have no place in a narrative study such as this. Validity addresses the concern of whether accounts are ‘accurate’ or ‘valid’ representations of reality. This may be relevant if I was taking a realist perspective. However, I take the view that multiple realities exist and that data reflect the researcher’s and the participant’s mutual constructions. Thus, concerns of ‘truthfulness’ and ‘validity’ are replaced by concerns with communicated situated experiential realities. As Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 9) observe, ‘The validity of answers derives not from their correspondence to meanings held within the respondent but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible.’

Reliability, in the traditional use of the term, looks at consistency across repeated investigations, in different circumstances and with different investigators. However, in narrative research, it cannot be expected that answers on one occasion will replicate those on another because they emerge from different circumstances of production (Holstein & Gubrium 1995).

Generalisability refers to the claim that results can be projected to a wide range of specified circumstances beyond those studied in the research. No such claims can be made for this study. However, while:

No story by a teacher can be regarded as typical or representative,...within each individual narrative, there will be episodes, experiences and emotions with which teachers can readily identify ... One of the signal virtues of the personal/biographic approach is that the narrative is grounded in an actual place-time and deals with highly concrete matter and specific affairs. (Thomas 1995: iii).

The lack of relevance of traditional concepts, such as validity, reliability and generalisability, does not mean that all narrative studies are judged to be of equivalent quality and that standards can not be set for narrative research. A range of characteristics, drawing on Garman (1996), have been the guiding principles for this study:

Verite: Does the work ring true in terms of consistency with accepted knowledge in the field? Or if it departs, does it address why?

Integrity: Is the work structurally sound? Does it hang together? Is the research rationale logical, appropriate and identifiable with an inquiry tradition?

Rigour: Is there sufficient depth of intellect, rather than superficial or simplistic reasoning?

Utility: Is the work useful and professionally relevant? Does it make a contribution to the field?

Vitality: Is it important and meaningful? Do metaphors, image, visual communicate powerfully?

Ethics: Is there evidence that privacy and dignity have been afforded all participants?

Verisimilitude: Does the work represent human experiences with sufficient detail so that the portrayals can be recognisable as 'truly conceivable experience'. Does this research render accounts that readers not only read but feel and believe?

All that remains for this chapter is to introduce the characters who will grace the stage for the remainder of this thesis.

Introducing the ‘characters’

As discussed earlier in this chapter, protecting the anonymity of research participants means that, in some situations, readers are given less contextual detail than they would like. That may well be the case with this study. Where I encountered a tension between contextualisation and anonymity, I leant in the direction of anonymity.

Given the limited number of award winning teachers in Australia, I have removed information that I felt would make participants identifiable. Techniques used in general in narrative representation to reduce scope for recognition of characters include fictionalising unique identifiers and constructing composite characters. I have chosen not to do this. Hopefully, like readers of literature, readers of this work will build their own portrait of each character. All of the names below are pseudonyms. Some brief background material on each of the characters follows:

Carolyn

Following undergraduate and doctoral studies at metropolitan universities and a short period tutoring, Carolyn took a lecturing position at a teachers’ college that was later to become one of the ‘new’ universities in the Dawkins’ reforms of the late 1980s. She has been active in academic leadership, particularly in learning and teaching, at that university. She has witnessed significant change in both her institution and the sector over the years particularly in the area of accountability of university teachers. Her teaching has primarily been at the undergraduate level. An ethic of care and respect underpins her philosophy of teaching.

David

David, at the time of the first interview, had just completed his tenth year of teaching. Following doctoral work David spent four years outside the university sector. He describes that role, developing exhibitions, as a form of teaching but very different to university teaching, with a very different audience. He was approached to take up a teaching position at his current university with what he terms, an offer he couldn’t refuse. The importance of innovation, student feedback and peer learning are key themes in the discussion of his teaching. His final years of schooling were formative in shaping his views on teaching and learning. In what he calls the ‘heady’ final years of

the 'Whitlam era', when anything seemed possible, he attended an alternative school where, 'we employed the teachers and we had a big say in how things were taught'.

John

John commenced his university studies as a part-time mature age student, the first in his family to attend university. His initial experience of university teaching was casual tutoring while doing a part time honours degree. However, he dates his first teaching experience back to when he was a twelve or thirteen year old asked to take over coaching a group of eight and nine years olds in a sporting club. He went on to play and coach sport at elite level and developed a coaching accreditation system that has been implemented across a range of sports. His coaching experience has shaped his views on university teaching, particularly the need to inspire and motivate people, leading by example. Central to his approach to teaching is showing people by doing and encouraging. He structures learning experiences that reflect this and aims to include all class members in both learning and teaching. He firmly believes, however, that structure should be balanced by elements of surprise and fun built into every class. Innovative teaching techniques and industry knowledge figure significantly in his design of learning experiences.

Joy

Joy completed her undergraduate studies in Australia before heading overseas for professional experience later followed by doctoral work at a North American university. It was as a doctoral student that she had her first teaching experience, which often involved team teaching with colleagues from a range of departments. Back in Australia she has been at her current institution for over 15 years teaching very large undergraduate classes as well as specialised postgraduate courses. She was a pioneer in her institution in the use of online learning. Key themes in her teaching story are the desire to engage students and empower them to take control of their own learning and the importance of preparing students for the challenges of professional practice, both intellectually and emotionally.

Sandra

Sandra has worked at her current institution since the mid 1990s. Prior to this she taught on a casual basis at two other institutions for a few years. Sandra came to university study as a mature age student in her early thirties combining her study with raising a family. Her teaching has been mainly on cross-disciplinary programs. She has won teaching awards at both an individual and a team level. She expresses a great love of education, which she maintains requires discipline and dedication. She has strong views on the need for preserving quality and tradition in education

Van

Born overseas, Van came to Australia to study as an undergraduate student and completed doctoral studies before commencing teaching in the mid-1980s at a teaching only, technology-focused institution. Apart from two years in the late 1980s, when he returned to industry, he has worked at this same institution. When he returned to teaching in 1990, the institution had recently attained university status broadening its mission to include research as well a teaching. Van is an acknowledged leader in his field of research in addition to his recognition as a teacher. The need for highly interactive teaching is a key theme in his discussion as is the need for assessment that is half theory and half practice. He is a strong supporter of project work.

Chapter 5

Reconceptualising the development of university teaching expertise

Introduction

Across the higher education sector, both nationally and internationally, the primary importance of excellence in learning and teaching is being recognised...Teaching in higher education is a complex undertaking and defining and achieving excellence in learning reflects that complexity (Carrick Institute 2006).

Excellence in teaching and learning is currently a focus of much debate in the higher education sector in Australia and worldwide. The complexity inherent in defining and achieving excellence means that it is timely to ask new questions about the development of university teaching expertise. While expertise and excellence are closely linked, the scope of their use in regard to teaching differs (as outlined in Chapter One). Generally, the term expertise is limited to individuals whereas the concept of teaching excellence is applied to individual teachers, to departments and to institutions (Elton 1998).

The use of a narrative approach, detailed in Chapters Three and Four, opens up new possibilities for examining the development of teaching expertise. Different takes on learning can be incorporated in such an approach to the development of expertise: learning as attainment (eg. qualifications, attendance at courses), learning as accumulation of knowledge and skills, learning as participation and learning as construction of knowledge and self.

The following section examines teachers' understandings of the development of expertise as ongoing informal learning embedded in everyday teaching practice.

Participants' accounts of their learning about teaching resonate strongly with the work of Eraut (2000) on informal learning, particularly the shift from reactive learning to deliberative learning. Eraut argues that the majority of learning does not occur in formal contexts such as organised learning programs. He uses the term non-formal learning (rather than informal) as a contrast to formal learning and proposes a typology that spans from one extreme of implicit learning to the other of deliberative learning with reactive learning as a category in between.

Implicit learning involves acquisition of knowledge where there is no intention to learn and no awareness of learning at the time it takes place. Reactive learning describes learning that is near spontaneous and unplanned. The learner is aware of it but it may not have been planned. The articulation of this learning into an explicit form could be difficult without further time set aside for more reflection and thus becoming more deliberative. Deliberative learning involves more systematic reflection on experience and a greater degree of planning of learning opportunities.

Developing teaching expertise: no end to the search for mastery

In telling their stories of teaching expertise, all but one of the university teachers (Sandra), cast themselves as constant learners, always learning, able to learn from anyone, their students, other teachers (inside and outside universities) and able to learn from their mistakes.

*I think the main, the key thing seems to be the ability to reflect on what works and what doesn't and to learn. So again that's a matter of learning from your students so to be monitoring what they're getting out of courses and to have the means to learn from them, how to improve a course. **David***

Coming to the study I had anticipated that the participants would identify particular 'epiphanies' or turning points in the development of their teaching expertise. However, while given the opportunity to identify critical moments, what emerged from the interviews was a much more 'everyday' existence. It may be that these individuals make a career of informal learning because learning is part of their identities; they learn

at work because they like to learn from whatever is around them (Fevre, Gorard & Rees 2000).

This learning they engage in could be described as informal learning embedded in their everyday practice. The way they describe their activities suggests a sense of awareness about what they are doing and interest in and commitment to improving their practice. Carolyn, for example, uses a cricketing analogy to describe her understanding of the ongoing nature of development of teaching expertise.

Every time you have that moment when you have an exchange with a student and you learn something or a lecture that didn't quite work and then you think yeah! Or when I'm sitting here talking to you and I say, 'Oh, that might be a way of dealing with that.' Yeah, I think it's pretty much a kind of continual, you know, it's the run chase isn't it. There's no point waiting 'til you score a hundred. You've got to do it run by run. Carolyn

The issue of awareness helps to address the questions of why some individuals are more likely to develop expertise while others, exposed to similar experiences, do not. Carolyn makes this point in regard to the difference between experiences and expertise and the importance of being conscious about what you do.

And, if you go at it like that, so that every piece of experience is also a piece of research, is also something you reflect on, it's also something you build on, it's also something you either repeat cause you say, 'Hey that really works. I want to do it again.' Or you tweak or you throw out, or you seriously rejig. So it's a totally dynamic continuum. And if you are in that dynamic continuum, the longer you're in it, the more experienced you become. But it's the process of having been in that kind of dynamic continuum that is making you the expert. You can teach for 40 years and never think about what you do; but do the same thing when you retire as you did when you started. You haven't become an expert. Carolyn

So in developing expertise individuals need to find a balance between the planned and the spontaneous, to have goals for their learning but also take advantage of learning opportunities as they arise. While Carolyn talks of using every piece of teaching as a

piece of research, John and David told of setting up more formal ways of gaining feedback and reflecting on their teaching.

For David, constant improvement is central to his teaching philosophy so in every subject he teaches he has an ‘external’ person conduct mid-semester course evaluations. Students are asked what helps them learn and what could be improved to help them learn more. The following day, David goes back to the class and talks about what he can and can’t do. He regards it as a good discipline to explain his position to the students and believes they respond to the immediacy of the feedback and the fact that it can be applied to *their* learning not some future cohort of students.

John shares the aim of constant improvement and in team-teaching a large subject, instigated weekly meetings of all subject teaching staff to plan and review teaching sessions.

*We used to have a little form that we’d fill in and everybody would bring it to the meeting and say, ‘Now, what were the good things? What were the bad things? What were the improvements? If we were to do this again what would you do?’ And that’s the sort of thing we did in the first half hour and in the second half hour we focused on the following week’s tutorials. And so this whole, what we did was created a continuous improvement type idea that basically – OK, we’re not in a mode of just rolling out and doing the same sort of things year after year here. We’re actually trying to improve what happened each time. And do it systematically, so we recorded it. **John***

John and David’s activities can be read as deliberative learning with planned goals and planned learning opportunities. Feedback plays an important part in improvement of performance. Improvement depends on the performer receiving some message, or making a self-diagnosis, that suggests some alterations to his or her performance that are feasible and have a net positive effect. In contrast to deliberative learning, reactive learning and some deliberative learning are unlikely to be consciously recalled unless there was an unusually dramatic outcome (Eraut 2000).

As well as drawing attention to aspects that might be improved feedback can contribute to confidence (Eraut 2000). Feedback can give positive reinforcement about development of expertise. Feedback can also draw attention to what has been learned.

*It's sort of all about this whole idea of knowing what you know – because you often don't appreciate that. The point at which you start to appreciate that you know more than you think you do is when people start coming to you for advice or students leave the room and say, 'Gee that was good John' or 'Thanks John' or whatever. And it's just those little things, you know, that you feed on and you puff your chest out and think, I can do a bit better next time. Or I can take a bit more of a leap next time. **John***

The role of intuition and making sense of this intuition was also commonly mentioned. Making connections between the known and the unknown is an example of something David described as intuitive and an important part his teaching.

*It came to me intuitively but I guess, as I got more mature as a teacher, I realised I was doing it. And I think one thing that I think is important, and I've started doing it more, is being quite explicit about what I'm doing. Quite often I'm telling students that's what I'm doing. **David***

For John exposure to educational theory provided a foundation for what he felt worked.

*Being involved with educators, outside accounting and outside of higher education, I think came at a good time because it really grounded in some sort of rational theoretical way sort of the stuff that I intuitively felt worked for me in a coaching technique. **John***

Participants told of developing over time, the capacity to talk more explicitly about their work. One particular aspect contributing to this is having a vocabulary for talking about aspects of experience which have been previously difficult to discuss and having concepts and theories which help make sense of experience and understand issues and alternative perspectives (Eraut 2000). A range of activities that participants mentioned is likely to have contributed to this capacity. These include: reading about teaching and

learning, discussion with other educators, attending conferences, and professional development courses.

The teaching awards that these teachers won also have played a role in making the tacit explicit. In applying for the awards, these teachers reflected, in detail, on their practice and surfaced and codified their tacit knowledge. In promoting their excellence in teaching and competing for an award they also needed to create an impression of professional control over situations which would inspire confidence in them (Eraut 2000).

Recognition of the importance of deliberate learning is a valid starting position for an understanding of the development of expertise in the workplace. However, it suggests well-defined goals and tasks in a fairly static environment. To better understand the development of teaching expertise in contemporary times a more complex range of issues need to be considered.

Reconceptualising the development of university teaching expertise

This task will now be addressed as I present a socially situated view of teaching expertise that acknowledges both the dynamic and relational nature of expertise and the social and cultural positioning of university teachers. Taking a relational approach helps avoid setting up particular binaries such as ‘teacher centred’ approaches and ‘student centred’ approaches to teaching and brings to the fore the ongoing work that shapes teacher-student relationships and the role of emotions in much of that work.

Chapters Six to Eight form a cluster of chapters that work at reconceptualising the development of teaching expertise. Drawing on a diverse range of theoretical resources, this presentation of the analysis of university teacher narratives is arranged around three key frames. While these three framings reflect a conceptual analysis, the selection of these particular frames has emerged from a detailed reading of the interview transcripts. The three particular conceptual frames to examine the development of teaching expertise are: developing teaching expertise as lifelong learning, developing expertise as situated learning and developing expertise as identity work. Making each frame the focus of a chapter is not intended to suggest that these are discrete framings. They are,

of course, interdependent as will be highlighted in the concluding chapter of this thesis. However, separation serves an analytical purpose, allowing close examination of parts of the whole.

A common thread running through these chapters is the importance of reflexivity. I will argue that the capacity to develop and sustain reflexivity is central to the development of teaching expertise in times of change, uncertainty and competing demands. The capacity for reflexivity – self and social questioning- is part of negotiating a trajectory through the insecurities and risks associated with change (Edwards, Ranson & Strain 2002). Mastery of subject knowledge, while still an important foundation of teaching expertise, must be supplemented by a teacher's capacity to be reflexive and to manage both the self and the social encounters in which teaching and learning take place. Viewing teaching expertise in this way parallels a more general trend in assessing educational outcomes. Increasingly the focus on outcomes is as much on the characteristics, subjectivity and orientations of students as on skills and knowledge (Chappell et al. 2003).

This perspective on the development of teaching expertise is underpinned by some critical assumptions about expertise that differ markedly from those of the cognitive perspective. A summary of these differences is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Differing perspectives on the development of teaching expertise

Cognitive perspective	Reconceptualisation
Expertise as relatively <i>enduring</i>	Expertise as <i>dynamic, fluid, contested</i>
Expertise acquired through <i>deliberate practice</i> over extended periods	Expertise developed and sustained through <i>reflexive practice</i>
<i>Stable environment</i> allows cumulative learning 10 years approx for expertise	<i>Ongoing change</i> necessitating flexibility and learning across lifespan
<i>Structured learning</i> – involving effortful adaption	Diversity in learning practices – <i>informal learning</i> important
<i>Individual</i> activity	Activity embedded in <i>social structures</i> and <i>cultural contexts</i> of interpretation
Focus on <i>what</i> is learnt	Focus on <i>how</i> learning takes place
<i>Professional</i> growth	<i>Professional and personal</i> growth
<i>Autonomous</i> self	Identity <i>fashioned</i> and refashioned
<i>Personal</i> change	<i>Personal and social</i> change connected through reflexive process

I am not proposing to discuss these differences in detail at this particular point, rather to flag them as part of the scene setting for detailed discussion in the coming chapters. Key differences are a connection between the personal and the social in contrast to a focus on the individual; a dynamic fluid and contested view of expertise rather than a static and enduring one; and a position of identity as multiple, positional and strategic, always under construction rather than a view of self that is autonomous, coherent, and fixed.

Chapter Six looks at development of teaching expertise as lifelong learning. While there has been significant debate about the ubiquitous term of ‘lifelong learning’ it can do useful work in this thesis by providing a frame to examine the changing nature of the development of teaching expertise. In exploring the fashioning and refashioning of expertise as a lifelong learning project, I draw on the work of Edwards, Ranson & Strain (2002) on lifelong learning and reflexivity and examine in detail the storying of the development of expertise.

Different types of narrative structure (plots) are examined and there is discussion of how development can be conceptualised as change, storied in a particular way. Two stories are presented that demonstrate how development is storied in quite different ways. A victory narrative, Mark's story and a tragic narrative, Sandra's story are contrasted.

Sandra's story is of particular interest as it is a story that is quite different from the others in the study, yet speaks powerfully to many of the themes of this thesis. It reinforces the need for an alternative perspective on development of expertise to supplement the traditional cognitive view. Sandra's situation cannot be explained or understood using a cognitive perspective on expertise and provides a foreshadowing of issues to be raised in Chapter Six that focuses on the social and cultural aspects of teaching expertise.

In Chapter Seven I take up the frame of developing expertise as situated learning. By taking a situated view of learning, due consideration can be given to the dynamic, complex and contested nature of expertise. I argue, following Billett (1998), that an individual's learning is not isolated from social practice and that consequently expertise is fashioned within particular contexts and embedded in social circumstances. One reading I make of participants' stories, is that teacher self and teaching expertise are not only brought to the classroom but are created in the classroom (or teaching space) and can often involve negotiation. This highlights both the relational nature of teaching expertise and the role reflexivity can play in developing teaching expertise.

Recognising the power of discourses in how people understand themselves and their experiences, I look at how participants, in describing their experiences, draw on the prevailing discourses in higher education as they account for the development of their teaching expertise. I also examine the way university teaching awards act to endorse certain aspects of teaching practice and ignore others. What is readily apparent is that there are competing discourses that university teachers are attempting to negotiate. For example, the increasing dominance of quality assurance appears less concerned with development of teaching expertise and more concerned with audit and risk minimisation for universities. This has resulted in shifting demands on academics where the target of

practice is no longer individual student/client relationships but documenting academic performance in terms of institutionally determined criteria (McWilliam 2004). Shifts such as these go to the very heart of what it means to be a university teacher. These concerns are taken up in Chapter Eight.

In Chapter Eight, I examine the complex relationship between the development of teaching expertise and the production of particular kinds of teacher identity. I discuss how identity work can be seen as reflexive process where teachers engage in both self-monitoring and monitoring of their relationships with others. Working with two teachers' stories I illustrate the ongoing process of this reflexive 'self project', fashioning and refashioning identity in the movement towards legitimacy as an expert teacher.

While John's and Joy's personal stories are unique to them, they draw on characteristics of socially and culturally legitimated identities in accounting for themselves. This highlights the delicate interweaving of the personal, the social and the cultural in the development of teaching expertise and the construction of teacher identity.

The detailed analysis in Chapters Six to Eight begins to come to terms with the complexity of university teaching expertise and its development under the conditions of change, currently being experienced in the higher education sector. This reconceptualisation provides a basis on which to explore strategies for supporting university teachers in developing and sustaining their expertise in times of change.

Chapter 6

Personal narratives: the development of university teaching expertise as lifelong learning

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the premise that developing expertise can be seen as a lifelong learning project in which a university teacher incorporates events and experiences into an ongoing narrative of self. Given the rapid change in universities and other workplaces, attaining a specific body of knowledge is less important than the ability to learn. Learning has become a lifelong activity. Edwards and Usher (2001) describe it in this way:

Lifelong learning ... is not, as many would see it, a secure ground on which to stand but rather is better understood as a process of constant travelling that is never completed and where destinations are always uncertain and constantly changing...one never masters completely...there is no end to the search for mastery. Proficiency may never be final or complete. This is as much the case for those who work in education and training as elsewhere. They themselves, we ourselves, are lifelong learners as much as those who come to learn with us (Edwards and Usher 2001: 284).

From a policy perspective, the consensus appears to be that lifelong learning is both necessary and desirable (Field and Leicester 2000). However, lifelong learning is an elusive and contested concept. Coffield (1999), in a critique of lifelong learning, identifies a range of guises under which it appears. These include: an instrument of change; a buffer against change; a means of increasing national competitiveness and of personal development; a social policy to combat social exclusion; a strategy to develop

citizen participation in social, cultural and political affairs; and as a form of social control.

In this thesis, I am adopting a particular take on lifelong learning. Following Edwards, Ranson and Strain (2002) I present a perspective on lifelong learning, where reflexivity is taken to be the locus of that learning. The capacity for reflexivity - self and social questioning - is part of negotiating a trajectory through the insecurities and risks associated with change (Edwards, Ranson & Strain 2002). To be reflexive is to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in it, scrutinising 'what I know' and 'how I know it' (Hertz 1997). Reflexivity forces us to come to terms with why we have chosen a particular course of action, how we engage with our students, and the implications of bringing and enacting our own biographies in a classroom setting. I argue that developing reflexivity plays a central role in developing teaching expertise. University teachers need to go beyond simply adapting to change – they need to engage with change and understand how they see themselves as a teacher and how others attempt to position them.

From this perspective lifelong learning is not so much about a universal experience of accumulating skills and knowledge to adapt to change over lifespan. Rather it is about diverse and situated learning experiences involving social and self questioning and engagement with change, both shaping and being shaped by it. This reflexive project of the self involves the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised biographical narratives (Giddens 1991). Examining the way teachers story the development of their teaching expertise can help us explore how they make sense of their learning experiences across their teaching career and the social and cultural factors that shape and are shaped by their interpretations.

An initial way of analysing narratives is by a structural analysis where the focus is on analysis of the narrative as a whole. Given the complex nature of narrative analysis, it is difficult to focus on a range of narrative practices simultaneously so Gubrium and Holstein (1997) recommend the use of 'analytical bracketing'. 'Analytical bracketing' facilitates a focus on one aspect of narrative practice (eg. how the story is being told) while temporarily deferring concern about what is being told. In this chapter, I will

focus on plot structures and leave until later chapters, issues such as the local and cultural resources that narrators draw upon to tell their stories.

Narrative structures for storying the development of teaching expertise

Plot or narrative structure is an important organising device for exploring the notion of conceptualising the development of teaching as lifelong learning. Plot is a central concept in any discussion of narrative. It provides the scaffolding for constructing a life story. As Polkinghorne (1995: 7) notes, 'Plot is the narrative structure through which people understand and describe the relationship among events and choices in their lives.' Ricoeur (1981) argues that plot is the most relevant narrative structure for an investigation of the temporal implications of narrative. Plot has a connecting function that makes a series of events into a story, configuring events into a unity (Polkinghorne 1995).

While the content of a life plot is unique to the individual, general characteristics of the plot line will be shared. There is no single categorisation used to describe plots but a range of different types of plot can be distinguished. The systems for characterising plots will reflect both the particular perspective of the researcher and the particular interests of the discipline (Polkinghorne 1988). A number of such categorisations can be identified and are discussed below.

Coming from a literary perspective, Northrup Frye proposes four basic narrative structures giving form to human experience (Frye 1957 in Polkinghorne 1988). These are: (1) the romantic, in which an aspect of life is configured as a quest or a pilgrimage to a desired end; (2) the comic, in which progress towards the goal occurs through evolution or revolution; (3) the tragic, in which one falls away or declines from an achieved goal; and (4) the ironic, in which events overwhelm the person.

Gergen & Gergen (1993; 1997), adopting a constructivist perspective on identity outline three forms of narrative based on the change that the protagonist undergoes in relation to their goal. Stability narratives link events in such a way that the individual remains essentially unchanged in relation to their goal. By contrast a progressive narrative shows advancement towards to the goal while in a regressive narrative the protagonist ends up

further removed from their goal. In addition, Gergen and Gergen make a distinction between the regressive and the tragic narrative. They suggest that a regressive narrative is unidirectional while a tragic narrative has a progressive narrative (sometimes implied) followed by a regressive narrative. They also argue that narratives of the self are not possessions of the individual; rather they are products of social interchange. 'There is an important sense in which the very meaning of an individual's actions from moment to moment is derived from the manner in which they are imbedded in ongoing relationships' (Gergen and Gergen 1993: 41).

McAdams and Bowman (2001) classify narratives in terms of their orientation towards redemption or contamination. Redemption stories contain sequences of redemption, where good follows bad, while in contamination stories bad follows good. They argue that redemption and contamination are ancient story forms that are appropriated into contemporary life narratives in ways that reflect culturally anchored hope and fears, development issues, and the psychosocial ethos surrounding individual life. Patterns can also be seen in the way life transitions are viewed by individuals. While redemption sequences help to produce a progressive narrative of self, contamination sequences suggest that progress will not occur, resulting in stagnated or fixed life plots (McAdams & Bowman 2001).

Life transitions may be viewed as changes for better or worse depending on how they are viewed and storied (Sfard & Prusak 2005). Sfard & Prusak (2005) suggest that sometimes what is experienced initially as tragedy or loss is later emplotted as epiphany or insight leading to growth. She also argues that stories of victories and loss have a particular tendency to self-perpetuation. In some narratives contamination sequences are so numerous and so salient that they become the signature of the life-story plot. 'In stories dominated by contamination protagonists seem unable to grow, to progress' (McAdams and Bowman 2001 p. 23).

Narratives of educational research are usually victory narratives according to Lather (1994 as cited in Stronach and Maclure 1997). McAdams and Bowman (2001) suggest that people who are relatively satisfied with their lives and feel that they are making important contributions to others, may be prone to narrating their lives in a redemptive

turn, which in turn may enhance further their contributions and sense of well-being. The capacity to find personal benefit in negative events may provide a useful coping strategy for dealing with uncontrollable negative events. In the two stories examined in the following section, a victory narrative and one of loss are contrasted. They could also be classified as a progressive narrative and a tragic narrative. In these narratives development is storied in quite different ways.

Developing expertise and lifelong learning: a progressive narrative?

Development can be conceptualised as change storied in a particular way. Usher (1998) takes the view that ‘development’ can be seen as something that is created by discursive practices (particularly those of psychology) rather than something found in life. Following Ricoeur (1981), he suggests that developmentalism is a narrative that enshrines the notion of order into the plot of life and by doing so makes the world (experiences) ordered. However, this autobiographic coherence is an illusion – a tactical manoeuvre (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992) that reflects a desire for unitary self and a response to a social expectation of a representation of coherence. The framing of this study and the focus on the development of teaching expertise in the interviews is likely to have reinforced participants’ understanding that there was an expectation that they would render a cohesive account.

In times of change the capacity to re-story experience may be an essential part of lifelong learning and refashioning expertise. McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich (2001) describe it in the following way:

The experience of life transition is one that is narratively constructed rather than imposed by social reality. People choose to make changes or they make changes in the experience of their lives in response to external events. Sometimes there is no awareness of a stage of being in transition. At other times, people are unaware of having undergone a time of change until they look back and see that they and their lives have changed inexorably changed. They may wonder, ‘How did I get here?’ Such a question invokes a need to re-story their life – to make sense of the events – so that they form

a coherent narrative that ends in the psychological place where they now find (construct) themselves (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2001: xvi).

While many people choose to make changes others resist change. Individuals will vary in the personal and social resources available for them to undertake this re-storying. The two stories that follow reflect contrasting views on change and agency.

John's story: a working class boy struts his stuff

John's story is one where change is seen as opportunity, the full import of which is only understood retrospectively. Of the six teaching narratives in the study, John's story is the one that has been crafted with most attention to the coherence of the story. The interviews took place not long after John had spent considerable time reviewing his life and this is reflected in the way he narrates his development as a university teacher.

Because I was willing to change and I had tendency to get bored and I wanted to put those challenges out, I just did it. I just did them. I didn't have a view that this is what the end game was. But in hindsight, if I could paint a picture of what it all looks like, because I just know now, in middle life, I've come to understand John Brooks. I've come to spend a lot of time, as we do, going through our mid life crisis and trying to understand what is it that drives you. And just reflecting back on all these things, I realise that it actually makes sense

John's story can be read as victory story, a progressive narrative. He traces the beginning of his teaching story to his experiences as a twelve year old. At that time he was significantly involved in sport. When a number of instructors left his sporting club he was asked to take over the teaching of a class of nine and ten year olds.

I really enjoyed it and I think what happened there was – I don't know whether [it was] the nature/nurture thing. Did I have a natural predisposition to want to do this stuff? Or was it because I was nurtured and I was given the opportunity at a very early age?

John continued to play and coach sport at elite level and developed a coaching accreditation system that was implemented across a range of sports. He also developed

programs for physiology, psychology and sociology of coaching, activities that he claims prepared him for his later work as a university teacher.

That all formed the basis for how I progressed into an academic teacher. What did I learn from that? I learned that you have to inspire. To motivate people you have to, I guess, lead by example in some sense. And I think that is still me. Trying to show people the way by doing and encouraging. I think it is also about being genuinely inquisitive and realising when you are in a situation where you are teaching you are also learning. They're a duality.

John tells of making this connection between his early experiences and his university teaching only when he was preparing his application for a teaching award.

I didn't appreciate it at first and it was only when I started writing up material for these awards and stuff that I realised all of what I've done is translated the coaching and sport environment and what I've learnt from that into a higher education role. The importance of having a structure to the class, having some solidity, something for people to feel secure about, and having some predictability about it. But then have some nice surprises.

While John came to university teaching with confidence in his ability to teach it was not all plain sailing.

I must say that the first year was harrowing – my confidence was completely blown away. My one thing was I had a lot of friends here in Sydney. At university I was totally intimidated. All these people that I looked up to and I read their articles and were high echelon academics. And I just remember sitting in a coffee room too scared to open my mouth. And just in reflection ... I realise that I was not quite depressed, but not very much – not myself. I lost confidence.

This experience highlights the importance of relationships and recognition in narratives of self. Calhoun (1994: 20) argues that, 'Problems involving recognition – or nonrecognition by others are integrally related to personal self-recognition.' In John's situation we have no evidence that his colleagues failed to recognize him as a 'worthy'

academic. However, his perception of his position in relation to other academics influenced his self-recognition as an academic.

At this point in the story a redemptive turn is introduced. John tells how his industry experience and consulting work gave him knowledge that other academics did not have. Being able to contribute something to fellow academics and gaining their respect was of great importance to him.

I was passionate about the stuff I was teaching and I started consulting. I was doing some work with [a local company] at the time and I came back one day and it struck me – I was talking to some colleagues and they were actually, these people that I respected were actually listening to me, and I said, ‘I’ve got something here, I can actually give these guys something’ ... I just remember that really vividly. So that [I] puffed the chest out, [and thought] I can do this and away I went.

This moment that John remembers so vividly marked a turning point in how he identified as a university teacher. It can be described as a redemptive sequence. His uncomfortable situation – feeling inferior to his academic colleagues – is redeemed by his capacity to offer them industry knowledge and contacts that they don’t possess. (The way John positions himself in relation to other academics will be taken up in more detail in Chapter Eight).

I thought I was actually contributing something back to the academic group in terms of the case studies I was developing, I was giving them contacts to industry, I’ve brought in industry people. And that what’s happens to me. The chest comes out, I start walking taller, straighter, and all of a sudden this humble working class boy gets to strut his stuff. I get a buzz from that.

This storying resonates with the premise of Mc Adams and Bowman (2001) that people who are relatively satisfied with their lives and feel that they are making important contributions to others, may be prone to narrating their lives in a redemptive manner. This in turn may further enhance their contributions and sense of well-being. In

responding to the question of what stood out, looking back on his life as a teacher, John is resoundingly positive.

Things that stand out, I guess the feeling – probably the reaction is happiness and fun, you know, it's been an enormously and positively enriching experience for me ... I guess what stands out ... is teaching gives you the unique opportunity to meet lots of people. And I'd like to think that I was at least helpful in getting people to learn and to appreciate that they can learn from each other... I facilitate in a way that allows them to appreciate that there's a lot to be learnt from the person next to you. And to appreciate difference.

His personal values underpin his teaching philosophy. Helping others is also a constant theme – something that he feels comes 'naturally' to him in all aspects of his life.

I guess I have a unique set of experiences. But some of the elements I think a lot of teachers would have. And I think partly it's to do with having a natural propensity to want to help and assist and coach ... So there's a wider social, philosophical theme that sort of under-rides, underlies me, which is me as a person. It's through the various experiences I've had – it's a natural extension of me. And it appears now – a natural extension. It may not have been back then but it is now. And how it's helped me have, be confident enough to be able to drive into, to be successful in other areas as well. So yeah, so the whole concept of teaching and learning and stuff just infiltrates every aspect of my life.

John's attributes his success in life to passion, hard work and commitment.

So that's why I feel like from the outside perspective I've gone from coaching, to working in a business environment, to teaching in an academic environment, to managing a research organization. And it looks all over the place but there's a thread, a theme that runs through the whole lot. And as I said, because I think, I've paid a lot of attention to get in on top of what I'm doing and been fairly demanding of myself, doors have opened and I've just run through them. And often without much reflection, until recently.

He places significant value on enjoying what he is doing at any particular time and he downplays the idea that he has chased future goals and positions.

People have said to me or implied in some way or directly said to me that I'm career minded. And I'm not sure how to respond to that. I guess I have been successful but I don't really see myself as chasing the career. I enjoy doing what I do and doors open and things happen and I'm quite happy to leave myself in the hands of these things... So I managed to construct a life, not instrumentally but almost haphazardly, opportunistically that sort of fits with what I really ... Because I had a passion for what I did really well I got to positions where I could actually change things. I could change a course. I could influence the teachers on the course. I could actually go and teach other teachers at other universities and even in other disciplines.

John's embracing of change and his sense of agency makes a strong contrast with the way Sandra stories her teaching life.

Sandra's story: loss and betrayal

In recent years, Sandra has won university teaching awards both as an individual and as part of team. The awards were for teaching on cross-disciplinary programs. When I first meet Sandra late in 2003 she was disillusioned with university teaching. It was difficult to arrange to meet because of her heavy workload. She was, however, keen to participate (as demonstrated by her email response below) because she thought it was important that stories like hers were told so that the word would get out about how teaching conditions in universities had deteriorated.

If we can find a suitable time I would be delighted to assist with you with the work as I believe it to be one of the most important issues for the community to address. The changes that have crept into the tertiary system over the past 15 years or so.

Before Sandra commenced telling the story of her teaching life she wanted clarification that she would not be identified. (For this reason I have left out some details that would better establish the context but that could possibly identify Sandra). When reassured that this would be the case, she replied, 'So I can say the truth.'

Sandra gave a short sketch of her career, from work to study as a mature age student, a five-year break when she had four children, followed by an honours year where she achieved first class honours and a short time working in a related profession. She left that job because she felt morally compromised. Part time teaching followed until she saw a full time academic position advertised that closely matched her specific background and skills. She was offered this job and for the past ten years has worked at that university. When asked how she has found her teaching experience she told of love followed by loss.

Gruelling. I love it, I really love it ... I think what I love is doing something that assists people in what they need. So I enjoy teaching students from that point of view ... but I don't love it anymore. I can honestly say that it's been drained now of all the good things that I loved it for and I'm almost now happy to not do it at all. So as more options get offered for doing more research or administration. I'm opting for that way because I don't feel anymore I can do it and deliver what I believe is a good education. And I don't think it's possible and I'll tell you why.

Sandra describes a situation where she is responsible for a large compulsory subject with many of the students from overseas.

They've got to do this subject and they can't see the relevance and I can't either. Of course it's relevant to someone who is going into business in the city here ... but if they're going back to Hong Kong, China and Singapore. And they are asked on their evaluation, and they mark you down on the evaluation, and they say, 'I can't see why you make me to do this.' They say, 'Who is making us do it' or 'You made me do this. I can't see it is going to be relevant to me working back in China.' And I think, 'Yes, that's right I can't see it either, but I didn't enrol you.' It's that loss of control over what you do, and there's almost no fun in it anymore. Not that it's a fun thing but I enjoyed it.

Sandra fondly remembers her own educational experiences.

I enjoyed the whole idea of passing knowledge to people and I certainly enjoyed the way my education was, when I did it in the wonderful days, where you had little tutorial groups of twelve. Twelve was a big tutorial and they expected you to

read. And you didn't dare come in without reading and knowing and that was the way I did learn. I might have been pissed off some days when I didn't have time to do all the reading and then I lost marks but it was a wonderful discipline.

Tensions arise constantly between Sandra and her students because they have quite different ideas on what constitutes good teaching. She sees her role as facilitator of discussion whereas she believes that the students are looking for her to supply them with the necessary subject knowledge.

And they say, 'Yes, we don't want questions, we only want answers.' And of course it's a tutorial based on discussion and you find that you can't discuss anything with anybody because nobody has read anything. And they all say they were working and they get angry because they see my role as standing there, just putting data up on the board. 'We don't need to talk, just stick everything up there.'

Sandra positions herself as an embattled participant in the process, trying vainly to defend 'good education' in the face of difficult circumstances. She talks of the continual pressure on her from the administration and from students, and the student anger that she believes results from her being a 'good teacher', trying to get them to work. On numerous occasions in her story she refers to negative student evaluations and how she is being judged unfairly.

I'm just in a filtered form of teaching all the time. And then this expectation I'm going to spoon feed them is putting pressure on me all the time ... I can't have a good relationship with students anymore because they're in a state of anger because I'm trying to encourage them to do some work. But [they are] clearly not into coming here to do some work. And so then the university go and do these crazy stupid evaluations asking students what they think of the teacher who's got no resources and who's got a situation like this, without asking the teacher, 'How are you coping with an administration that ignores this problem and a bunch of students who inappropriately are placed in a course that's got no relevance to them.' How are they going to think the subject's alright?

She feels that her reputation as a good teacher is threatened by what she sees as the commodification of education and she feels powerless to do anything about the situation. She feels betrayed by the institution and the whole education system that stymies her capacity to utilise her expertise.

So it's going to bring down my good name. I feel compromised, I feel my good background in teaching and my desire to keep that is totally compromised and they are conditions beyond my control. I'm not interested all that much anymore and I suppose I'm getting older. But it's not so much getting older. I love it; I could do it till I drop, because I love it that much. But I'd just rather write books now or do something else. I want to do something worthwhile and useful and I don't feel that I can be useful in this situation. I don't think anyone can, but someone else might be happy to do it and do just what they [the students] want.

Sandra laments that she can no longer do something positive for people. At this point the whole mood of the discussion changed and she became quite animated when talking about writing a new course.

I do love writing though and I'm loving putting this course together because I know exactly what needs to be put there and changed, and I'm hoping that once this gets a run things will be a lot better. It's giving them an interest to participate ... participate with each other to learn and I think this might overcome some of the problems. It's a massive change though.

Eleven months passed before I was able to schedule a suitable time for a follow up interview with Sandra. By this stage, she has introduced the revised course. One of the first things she said in this interview was that there would be a newspaper article to be published the following week about the new course. She had also written a book about it. I mentioned that in the previous interview that she was hoping things would be better with the new course. I asked if this was the case.

I feel worse. I love teaching but I feel I don't actually ever want to do it again. Because I think more and more – I was just talking to someone else today who was saying that students are now not students anymore in the old sense of when we were students. This idea that the student has become a consumer ... They don't

want to be here. They virtually think that – they come in with an attitude that they've paid for the degree to be handed to them. And they're now openly telling you to your face that they'll just cheat wherever they can because all they're interested in is getting through. So then learning to me, the whole you know, sacred sort of way that I see learning and knowledge is just flawed now by the government's policies. I'm not interested in being part of it. Cause I actually think it's so wrong.

Sandra's view of learning and knowledge as sacred provides a departure point for exploring her sense of betrayal and disillusion with current university education. In examining knowledge and learning as 'sacred', I will draw on the work of Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry (1989), informed by Durheim and Eliade, looking at the properties of sacredness that people invest in material and experiential consumption and the boundaries drawn between the sacred and the profane.

Sacredness can be best understood by contrasting it with the profane. Sacred, whether referring to people, places, events, or experiences, denotes something that is set apart from normal activity and that demands awe and respect. Profane by contrast, refers to the ordinary and part of everyday life that do not share the 'special' nature of the sacred. Profane, in this context, is not taken to refer to the vulgar or the offensive. Traditionally, the sacred/profane distinction was a fundamental way of structuring social life with the sacred residing in the sphere of religion and the profane residing in the secular world. However, in contemporary life, the sacred/profane distinction is no longer limited to the religious/secular distinction and has now been used to explain properties and manifestation of the sacred in broader aspects of life.

Profane objects are treated casually rather than reverently and are not the focus of devotion (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry 1989). What is sacred for one person may not be sacred for another. Sacralisation can be accomplished in a range of ways. These include imposing one's identity on possessions (or experiences) through transformation and also through pilgrimage and self-sacrifice. Sacred status can be lost through habituation or encroachment of the profane. A lack of separation between the sacred and the profane, especially through commodification, results in desacrilisation.

Returning to Sandra's story, she talks of the wonderful days when she was student. She loved her education but the rewards did not come easily. One suspects that she feels that she invested a lot in her education and made sacrifices to achieve at the level she did. Learning has a special status in her life. She sees learning and knowledge in a sacred way and is disillusioned by the way government policies have changed the nature of university education, defiling its 'sacredness'. She contrasts the 'wonderful' days of her own education with the current situation that she finds intolerable.

I went through a university system where, as a mature age student, I loved my education only it was really gruelling. I didn't get a first class honours degree easily and with four children it was very hard. And when I finished my degree, I was the only first class honours in the whole year and that was considered a good year. There were some years where you didn't even get one as opposed to here, I have to sit here, I'm one of the people that feels very degraded with my degree as I have to sit there and watch them hand out 20 or more first class honours degrees knowing that back then one was just, and if you got two, it was a fabulous year. But you would never look at 20 people marching up with first class honours degrees. It's just ridiculous!

Changes in the university environment have meant that the sacred is no longer protected from the profane world of commerce.

Once you make education a commodity and you start selling it, it becomes a product. And once you make that a product you're talking about people who, everything that education is about, they've turned it the opposite way.

Sandra is concerned that current students no longer respect learning and knowledge in the way she believes that they should. This has implications for her relationships with students. Instead of being partners in a learning relationship they are exchange partners in a commercial transaction. With students seeing themselves as consumers, she talks of changing power relations between students and teachers.

They say, 'I'm the customer, you do it well for me and that's what I'm paying for' and well to them its handing it all to them in their lap.

It is not only in coursework degrees that Sandra identifies this degradation. Even more concerning for her, is that honours degrees no longer hold their sacred status. She believes that what was once achieved through hard work and sacrifice is now widely available, like a giveaway in a supermarket item.

I marked an honours thesis of one of the students, that's the other thing they let anyone do honours. They give these things out like they're off the back of cornflakes packets, so that's it totally degraded other people's honours degrees who really have done a lot of work.

She talks of universities as having become 'skills factories' and uses a fast food analogy to further her point that a university education is no longer special and how this has had detrimental implications for university teachers.

People who've gone through years and years of training to be the top chefs in town, who no longer can operate at the top restaurants, because they're told the system now is, we come down to the lowest common denominator. You can call yourself what you like, and you can put your sign up and call yourself, top gourmet restaurant, but you're actually going to be served McDonalds. You'll be the same as that guy, and that guy, and that guy, and there'll be no differentiation.

Sandra's story can be seen as a regressive narrative. Her evaluation of her teaching, looking back and looking forward, tells only of a declining position. A constant theme in our first discussion was how she was being drained, drained of pleasure, drained of satisfaction, drained of respect for what she was doing; a continual withdrawal of all that was good about the job. Her sense of satisfaction was 'fading off bit by bit'.

I can honestly say that it's been drained now of all the good things that I loved it for and I'm almost now happy to not do it at all ... It's not even the money, I think it's to be satisfied with what you're doing each day and they're draining things one by one of that satisfaction.

There are no defined crises in her story, rather a debilitating sense of loss on an ongoing basis. For Sandra winning the teaching awards marked the high points in her university teaching life.

It was lovely to get the teaching awards but more than that it was lovely to know I'd done the sort of thing that attracted the teaching awards. It was more the effort of putting together something that was good enough to attract a teaching award and that probably would have been the high point if I could work towards that. I felt very satisfied with what I'd done with the students and that's fading off bit by bit.

However, from that point of winning the awards onwards, changes in the university environment have significantly affected the way she feels she can conduct her teaching. She talked of the innovative assessment that was central to her winning the individual teaching award but no longer an option because of 'bureaucratic rules'.

It just put them more in touch with what's actually happening, instead of just doing it over a book. And the Associate Dean wouldn't let me do it because I needed three-hour blocks to do it ... He made me break them up and do it one hour over three times a week. And so I had to stop doing it. So for the short time I could do that but see, again, bureaucratic rules come in and stop something very innovative. So I had to stop doing it because I couldn't get the three-hour blocks. I still have students who were in those classes saying, 'We'll tell everyone to go and do that subject, it's just the best subject.' Unfortunately we don't do it anymore.

There didn't appear to be much room for negotiation about the delivery of this subject.

And when I asked, 'Why do we not have this flexibility, when the university is pushing the idea of flexible learning', I was told, 'We can't trust lecturers when they get a three hour block. They'll just teach for two hours and the rest would be coffee time.' I said, 'I think perhaps we might trust them eh, let's trust that some might do it. Well, let's rely on the students to say if they think their time is being wasted.' No it wasn't good enough. I lost that one.

She is also disillusioned by what she sees as students' lack of interest in learning and wants to go back to the good old days when she was a student, when students wanted to learn.

*Now the problem is these students are not going to learn, they're not going to want to learn. I know what they want, they want me pulling it out and giving it to them and telling them what's on the exam. I'm not going to do that, so. I don't want it. Unless you change the structure and give me the real students to work with, who I would be delighted to work with. People who want to learn, and learning to me is they've **got** to do some work.*

She does not see it as part of her responsibility to adapt her teaching to accommodate the increasingly diverse needs of students now attending university. In fact, she does not even acknowledge her current students as 'real' students. This is a problem that has been 'thrown at her' because students have been turned into consumers

And that's not because I think badly of the students, but I don't see they are really students in the old sense that we think of a student. Students need to relearn what it is to be a student.

In Sandra's view, there is no room for compromise. Learning and knowledge is no longer sacred and she will not be party to the profane.

I've got two teaching awards and it's a shame really to lose people with teaching awards from the teaching side. But I don't want to do it under compromising circumstances. I'd rather teach, if I could, but not in this environment. It is not possible to deliver the quality product I believe needs to be delivered. I literally can't do it in this environment. And if I can't do it, I don't want to do something inferior.

The powerlessness that Sandra feels poses a direct threat to her identity as a 'good teacher' and her sense of integrity.

My job is a living lie because I do not believe some of the things I'm forced to do, with the new structure in education, are in any way the best things for students. Now I really want to do my job as it's best for students because I've got children myself. And I tell you what! It makes me very damn angry that universities are forced into this situation.

As Sandra tells her story, blame is directed at the university administration, the students and the Government. Her response to her situation is deeply emotional and the picture she paints of her teaching environment is hostile and unremitting. She made a massive change to the focus and content of the course she teaches but that has not bridged the gap with the students.

But I can't find a mechanism to get the content across. And that would be central to really get the quality out of it. I'm very happy to design things, but the design for the best possible learning that they can do, but in it they won't give you the facility for the resources to allow it to happen. It's like the small group. There's no such thing as a small group anymore. And even if there is, the government system has eroded the idea. So I don't want to sit there, you can't get them interested, and as I said [the students] watching their clock saying 'I've got to go.' Most of them don't turn up. They say, 'I've got jobs. I can't come.' And so you do lose heart, lose heart, and they lie, they cheat ... they're usually unhappy with that sort of part, if you really try to teach them. They start complaining on the evaluation sheet. They just want questions and answers. And if you don't give them that they're going to complain about you.

The excerpts selected to plot Sandra's story represent just a small portion of the transcripts (approximately 18,000 words) from the two interviews I conducted with her. Within these excerpts, nine contamination sequences can be clearly identified.

Enjoyed education the way it was when she first went to university ⇨ Now changes in teaching and learning at universities mean that she no longer wants to be a part of it. She feels compromised.

Worked very hard to earn 1st class honours ⇨ Now 1st class honours is much more commonplace. She feels 'degraded with her degree' watching 1st class honours students receive their awards at graduation.

Loved teaching ⇨ Now teaching been drained of all the good things that she loved it for. *Developed an innovative subject* that she says was highly regarded by students (and contributed to her winning a teaching award) ⇨ Subsequently she was unable to continue the subject because of timetabling constraints. She states that the university administration does not trust academics to deliver a full three-hour time block.

Received teaching awards ⇨ Now she feels compromised by conditions beyond her control that reflect on her good reputation as a teacher and compromise her desire to keep this reputation.

Views learning and knowledge as sacred ⇨ Now she believes that current government policies are debasing the value of university education.

Recognised as good teacher ⇨ Now she doesn't want to continue teaching because she feels that she can no longer deliver what she believes is good education. She does not want to be party to a decline in standards in universities

Loved putting a new course together because she knows "exactly what needs to be put there and change" ⇨ Students are not responsive to the changes she has made. She finds that she "can't discuss anything with anybody because nobody has read anything". Because students don't want to work she finds herself unable to teach.

Wants to do something useful and worthwhile ⇨ Now she believes her efforts in teaching are not being appreciated by students or the university administration.

Sandra holds three parties responsible for the contamination of her teaching life – students, the university administration and the Government. Sandra speaks of students in terms of a 'generalised other' For example, "*They've* got to do this subject and *they* don't see the relevance." "*They* don't want to be here." "*They* say, 'I'm the customer', and "*they* say 'Yes, we don't want questions, we only want answers.' " "*They* all say they were working and *they* get angry." "*They* say 'I've got jobs, I can't come.' " And "*they* lie, *they* cheat." The only individual student that she talks about in this story is the student that she believes did not deserve the first class honours degree that he was awarded.

Sandra's story is striking for its absence of any positive comments about current students. Within the entire transcript of the two interviews there are only two positive references to students and both of these end with a comment of contamination. The first is following nostalgic commentary on a student group from her early days teaching,

And the development of their minds was fabulous to watch. And there was that love for stimulation and then, yeah, [they'd] throttle each other to see who could come back with the most information about whatever a topic was we were trying

to do. And you know, they'd just loved coming up with heaps and heaps of stuff. And they got very creative ... I still hear from them you know. You wouldn't now. Most of them don't know my name now.

The second is a reference to her son who is at university and reportedly working hard. However, even this story has an element of contamination as she quotes her son talking about his university experience, 'I don't want to know everyone's cheating and I'm working my heart out, and they get away with it.'

In Sandra's eyes, her current students are not legitimate students. She refuses to recognise them as students because they do not fit the identity she ascribes to a university student.

And that's not because I think badly of the students, but I don't see they are really students in the old sense that we think of a student. Students need to relearn what it is to be a student ... I know what they want, they want me pulling it out and giving it to them and telling them what's on the exam. I'm not going to do that. I don't want it. Unless you change the structure and give me the real students to work with, who I would be delighted to work with.

This lack of positive commentary on students is in stark contrast to the other teachers' narratives where relationships with students provide the primary rewards from teaching. It is these relationships that energise and sustain them. The role of teacher-student relationships will be examined in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The university administration is strongly criticised by Sandra for inadequately resourcing staff and being seemingly uninterested in whether or not teachers are coping with high student numbers. 'So then the university go and do these crazy stupid evaluations asking students what they think of a teacher who has no resources and who's got a situation like this.' What is noticeable in her discussion of her interaction within the university administration is her passive role. 'The Associate Dean *wouldn't let me do it ... he made me break them up...* for a short time I could do it but then *bureaucratic rules come in and stop something very innovative.*'

In her relationship with her university there is a lack of trust as evidenced in the quote below.

The other thing too they just shuffle you from this subject that's not necessarily a system that puts you on what you're really good at. You might find yourself any day teaching something that you absolutely have no idea about.... I think that happened simply because they want to exploit people. They want to put on as little as possible staff and stretch everybody across everything.

She also suggests that the university administration does not want to hear about the difficulties academics are encountering, particularly with overseas students. 'These students are worth a lot of money to us. Don't rock the boat!' She acknowledges, however, that the situation extends beyond her own university. 'Now they totally exploit the whole thing in the interest of money and not necessarily the university but the whole structure of the government making it a commodity.'

Sandra is quite explicit about her feelings of powerlessness 'It's that loss of control over what you do.' This passive stance contrasts with her strong convictions regarding what university education should be and her own teaching. For example, 'I'm loving putting this course together because I know exactly what needs to be put there and changed.' She projects a strong identity in terms of herself as a teacher. However forces beyond her are creating teaching conditions that she finds untenable. She is frustrated with the situation that she finds herself in, she believes, through no fault of her own. Others are responsible, in her eyes, for these problems.

In essence, Sandra is attempting to resist the tides of change rather than negotiating a path through these. Her attempts to do this are increasingly unsuccessful and resulting in significant personal cost. Her story can be seen as a tragic tale. She has ridden the highs of her own education experiences, including being rewarded for her hard work with first class honours, loved her early days teaching with small groups and had the satisfaction of having made the effort of putting together something that was good enough to win a teaching award – the nominated high point in her teaching life.

However, the glory days did not last; the romance of the teaching award was disrupted. Receiving a teaching award provides no guarantee of a 'Hollywood' ending to this or any other teaching story. With massification and internationalisation specifically affecting Sandra's teaching life, her story takes a downward slide.

Sandra has experienced a change from small group to large group teaching and a student cohort that is markedly different from those she encountered in her early days of teaching. What worked for her in her early days of teaching no longer works and she is reluctant to compromise on her ideals in regard to teaching. Feeling increasingly constrained by the teaching environment in which she works, Sandra appears unable or unwilling to access the personal and/or social resources to re-story her teaching life and refashion her expertise in response to changed circumstances. University teaching holds little attraction for her these days.

Re-storying and lifelong learning

Do the stories we tell of our lives determine the quality of our lives? Do we come to live our stories? Bruner (2004) argues that, 'we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives.' He also proposes the concept of 'development of autobiography'. By this he means, 'how our way of telling about ourselves changes, and how these accounts come to take control of our ways of life' (Bruner 2004: 695).

In times of change and uncertainty, the capacity to re-story our lives would seem to be an essential part of lifelong learning. But why do some teachers re-story their lives while others appear not to change in response to changing circumstances? One key factor may be developing a reflexive understanding of how teaching knowledge is generated. More broadly we could examine the personal and social resources available for university teachers to re-story their lives. Lifelong learning is not just an individual practice. It needs to be viewed as a practice shaped by its socio-cultural, institutional and historical context (Edwards, Ranson & Strain 2002). In Chapter Seven, I explore the importance of these contexts in a discussion that frames the development of teaching expertise as situated learning.

Chapter 7

Social narratives: The development of university teaching expertise as situated learning

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the fashioning and refashioning of expertise as a lifelong learning project was explored. Attention was given to the plot lines in self-narratives of the development of teaching expertise. In evaluating the usefulness of this perspective I highlighted the need to broaden the focus of discussion from the individual teacher to a wider acknowledgement of the social forces and cultural factors that shape and are shaped by the development of teaching expertise. That will be done in this chapter by a focus on the content of the narratives (rather than the structure) and an examination of the discourses these teachers take up in telling their teaching stories. While Chapter Six presented two extended narratives, in this chapter I will work across the stories of all six participants and provide illustrations that support the case for viewing the development of teaching expertise as situated learning.

An individual's learning is not isolated from social practice and consequently expertise is fashioned within particular contexts and embedded in social circumstances (Billett 1998). In other words, 'We enter upon a stage we did not design and find ourselves part of action that was not of our making' (MacIntyre 1965:23 as cited in Erben 1996). Narratives of self, the telling of our learning experiences, are collectively shaped even if they are individually told (Sfard & Prusak 2005). This is not to suggest a deterministic view where individuals have limited freedom to create, change and influence events. Rather, as Usher (1998: 21) comments, 'actual biographies stand at the intersection of the individual and the social, of agency and culture.' Telling our stories we not only try to make meaning of our own actions but also the social processes of which we are a part. Edwards (1997) explains it in this way:

An adult educator may tell their own story rooted in their unique autobiographical trajectory, but the narrative is itself sedimented in the wider narratives of adult education, and beyond that, in the wider narratives of the culture and practices in which the adult educator is located. They live these stories; through them they construct others and are interactively constructed by them, as active, meaningful, knowable subjects acting in meaningful and knowable ways (Edwards 1997: 6).

Using situated learning as a frame for examining the development of teaching expertise provides a way of exploring the social embeddedness of teaching expertise. Prevailing discourses in higher education can also be examined to illuminate how ‘our “taken-for-granted” notions of learner, learning process, skill, and work activity actually are highly constructed and much more dynamic and interwoven than we sometimes acknowledge’ (Fenwick 2001: 10-11).

Situated learning: an overview

Situated learning is based on the notion that knowledge is contextually situated and is fundamentally influenced by the activity, context and culture in which it is developed and used (Brown, Collins & Duguid 1989). From a situated perspective, learning is not about the acquisition of abstract knowledge and learners are seen not as passive recipients of knowledge. Rather, they are active agents in and with the world, where agent, activity and world mutually constitute each other. The focus is on the relationship between learning and the social situations in which learning takes place. Where learning is understood as contextualised, the active, transformational and relational dimensions of learning are stressed – the learner and the environment are mutually constructing and constructed (Scott 2001). With learning being viewed as an aspect of social practice the whole person (not just a cognitive entity) is emphasised – engaging with specific activities and specific communities (Lave & Wenger 1991).

From a situated perspective, learning and development are viewed as progress along paths of participation and growth of identity. This is in contrast to a cognitive perspective, where learning and development are viewed as progress along a trajectory of skills and knowledge (Greeno 1997). Looking at university teaching from a cognitive

perspective a 'good teacher' has robust knowledge about their discipline and knowledge about teaching as a profession. Put simply they know 'what to teach' and 'how to teach it'. There is an implicit assumption here that teaching expertise is relatively static and transferable to a range of contexts. In contrast, viewing teaching expertise from a situated perspective acknowledges the localised, contextual nature of learning and the social and cultural positioning of learners. Ways of knowing are 'inherently culture-bound and will reflect the dominant values of the particular culture in which they are located' (Usher 1996: 29). Under these conditions teaching expertise is dynamic rather than static.

Understandings of teaching practice

Understandings of teaching practice are diverse, complex and contested. A key difference that can be noted is whether the focus is on the individual practitioner or how practices are constructed in particular social, cultural and historical contexts. The following perspectives illustrate this difference in concerns. Drawing on their own professional practice experience in health and education, with a focus on the individual, Higgs and Titchen (2001) identify four key dimensions of practice 'doing', knowing', 'being' and 'becoming'. They advocate professional practical knowledge that encompasses: (1) propositional knowledge from research-based and theoretical knowledge (2) professional knowledge gained from professional experience and (3) personal knowledge derived from personal experience.

A more multi-dimensional view of teaching practice is proposed by Kemmis (2005). While acknowledging the need to understand the individual practitioner, he argues that, 'beyond the individual person of the practitioner, practice is also socially, discursively, culturally and historically formed' (Kemmis 2005: 5). A broader perspective on teaching practice, moving beyond technical skills, is also promoted by both Carr (2003) and Noddings (2003). Carr makes the case that education and teaching can be seen as both fundamental and mysterious. He suggests while (school) teaching may require mastery of some skill-like procedures, more broadly it is a form of moral association in which all human agents are engaged. But that does not necessarily make the teacher's task easy. He counsels that:

The real burden of self-development on the shoulders of those who have chosen to devote their entire working lives to the personal growth of others, may be much larger than their professional training has often led them to suppose (Carr 2003: 266).

This moral and relational aspect of teaching practice as also highlighted by Noddings (2003: 249), ‘We affect the lives of our students not just in what we teach them by way of subject matter but how we relate to them as persons.’

The purpose of this brief discussion highlighting different views on teaching practice has been to highlight the complexity and situatedness of teaching practice. Teachers and students bring to the classroom different backgrounds and understandings of teaching and learning based on discourses they are currently exposed to and have been exposed to in the past. If teaching expertise is seen as relational and dynamic rather than fixed and enduring, the development of teaching expertise can be viewed as an ongoing ‘process of becoming’ through practice.

To examine the conceptualisation of the development of teaching expertise as situated learning, I will focus on four key issues in the remainder of this chapter. These issues are (1) teachers’ own learning experiences; (2) discourses around higher education; (3) the understandings of teaching excellence that arise out of these discourses; (4) student-teacher relationships and the emotional terrain of teaching.

University teachers’ own learning experiences

Teachers’ own learning experiences, both positive and negative, shape their views on teaching in significant ways. The old adage ‘We teach as we learn’ is enduring and is clearly demonstrated in the interviews in this study. Drawing on one’s own learning experiences can partly be explained by the lack of formal training in higher education teaching. University teachers are recruited for their disciplinary expertise rather than their teaching expertise. A further contributing factor is that university teachers are frequently in situations where there is no clearly defined response available. In making ‘judgement calls’ they draw on personal experience to inform their choices.

Memories of personal educational experiences can evoke strong emotions, both positive and negative as well as clear views about types of learning situations to be encouraged or avoided. The narrated memories of early education experiences form part of the picture of understanding of the values that underlie teaching practice. Participants in this study were quite explicit about this link because as part of the interview process I specifically asked them about influences on their teaching. In other situations, university teachers' values and practice may be shaped by early experiences but with little awareness of these underlying influences.

The small selection of memories discussed below highlight the diverse influences that shape what these university teachers regard as 'good teaching' and the development of their teaching expertise. The way that teachers draw on their own experience can also be conceptualised as assembling and deploying their own experience (du Gay 1997) as learners in delivering 'good teaching' to their students.

The quotes in Table 7.1 illustrate the way personal biography shapes views on what constitutes 'good teaching'. University teachers bring much more than knowledge and skills to the classroom. As Wenger (1998: 145) suggests: 'There is a profound connection between identity and practice. Practice enables the negotiation of being a person in that context.' The left hand side Table 7.1 contains specific quotes about positive learning experiences that have influenced these teachers' constructions of good teaching. For Joy, David and Carolyn quite specific details are given whereas Van comments more generally on his industry experience and how this has influenced his university teaching practice. Moving to the right hand side of the table, parallels between teachers' own experiences and what they consider to be 'good teaching' can be clearly recognised.

For Joy, creativity and performance are an essential part of 'good teaching'. She sees them as fundamental for engaging students and 'keeping them on task'. Like Miss White who produced 'a new thing every day' Joy likes to bring 'novelty' to what she does and reciprocate 'the freshness that students bring to her'. Teaching as performance is a constant theme in Joy's narrative. For her 'good teaching' requires a 'flair for entertaining' and metaphors reinforcing this view of 'teaching as performance' are

common in her story. From her earliest experiences of what teachers did she ‘was aware of the preparation side and how the rehearsal of teaching happens.’

David identifies his high school experience as critical in shaping his views about the importance of peer learning. His story highlights the importance he sees of being engaged, learning as part of a community and following the areas for which you have a passion. All this is more important than just getting good grades. This is echoed in his views on good teaching that stress the ongoing nature of learning, the collaborative nature of learning and learning as a way of bringing about social change.

Table 7.1: Positive learning experiences shaping views on ‘good teaching’

Positive learning experiences	Views on ‘good teaching’
<p><i>What stands out – two teachers I think, Miss White was about 80, I’m pretty sure, when I was about 3 years old and I used to race out and meet her at the bus in the morning. So I was too young to go [to school] but what I used to do was watch her draw on the blackboard and practice the music and generally have that feeling that she took time to prepare and that the class was coming and she had all of those things ready. Joy</i></p> <p><i>So I was aware of the preparation side and how the rehearsal of teaching happens, and also thought that it was such a gift that somebody would do all that drawing on the blackboard ...Yes, and there would be a new thing every day. So it was not something that was staid and I guess that also impressed me that every day she came and did something that hadn’t been done before. It was very, very creative. Joy</i></p>	<p><i>I think the thing is to bring novelty you know to actually know that even though some things have been around for a long time, you meet the students with the kind of freshness that they bring to you...So over the years I might have taught similar things but every year the students are different. They come from a slightly different culture, a slightly different way of seeing things. Joy</i></p> <p><i>Good teaching is a flair for entertaining, for learning. That’s really, really important! So that students will engage and be on task. I like catching them out... when I used to take on the game show type things or the Oprah Winfrey or Jerry Springer or whatever else I would come up with. The thing was that the students didn’t even realise that in there was all of the stuff that they were going to have to take away. Joy</i></p>
<p><i>I went to an alternative high school and we were encouraged to do some teaching so I taught some of my peers at high school ... I went from being a very withdrawn student who said nothing but did reasonably well in the existing system to someone who didn’t do quite as well in terms of my final mark. But I was much more engaged in my learning and taught courses in things I loved. So that’s perhaps one reason I had the confidence and interest to become a teacher later on. David</i></p>	<p><i>Good teaching is intuitive. It’s based on constant learning... It’s based on peer learning because we all teach each other. It’s about thinking outside your box ... It’s about social change. David</i></p>

Positive learning experiences	Views on 'good teaching'
<p><i>My father was a highly innovative educator... and he published in that area and conversation around the meal table from almost when I can remember, I think I was about four ... Why do you have to set exams? What experiential learning can students do? So that was all in me that education is exciting, interesting. You've got to think about how it works. You're allowed to question everything rather than just say well that's how it's always been done. Carolyn</i></p>	<p><i>(Good teaching) I think is the continual questioning, continual reflecting, continual seeking for balance.</i></p> <p><i>One of the core things of my tutorials is that there is never an answer, there's only another question and I always say to the students. "If you come out of my tutorials with more questions than answers I have succeeded. Don't feel uncomfortable at the end of the tutorial if know more about what you don't know than about what you do know. At least you've started thinking". And you talk about golden moments, you know, one of the nicest things was in one of those feedback things where somebody wrote, "I think this subject should be renamed 'Thinking 1'". Carolyn</i></p>
<p><i>When you come to university with an industry background you know what it is critical to know...</i></p> <p><i>Although I knew everything at that time (from a theoretical perspective after graduating with a PhD) I could not fly anything. But when I worked outside for quite some time I started to put things together. Van</i></p> <p><i>After he (the chief designer) showed me it would take me half an hour (compared to the 3 days for the chief designer) because the way I put things together - I would look from the theoretical context. Van</i></p> <p><i>In the sense that the experience of being outside pulled me back and I worked out a way to combine theory and practice. Van</i></p>	<p><i>So, it's exactly what we are trying to get the student to do. Have a strong theoretical background, yet at the same time knowing how to apply. And that's the difference...we actually create that sort of environment now (at our university). Van</i></p> <p><i>When I went back to teaching I did exactly the same thing (as in industry) so all my subjects are 50% theory and 50% practical and it fits (the university's model) very well. Van</i></p>

Carolyn nominates her father as a critical influence on the way she thinks about teaching. Discussion about teaching and learning were an everyday part of her home life and she grew up with the idea of education as exciting and as an arena where everything

is open to question. Her view of teaching as dynamic and involving ‘continual questioning’ mirrors the views on education that she was exposed to through her father.

For Van, the comments in Table 7.1 are about the outcome of his workplace learning. He discusses how industry experience helped him to ‘combine theory and practice’ to make things ‘fly’. It took several years work experience for him to start to ‘put things together’. This is exactly what he wants to bring to his students, ‘a strong theoretical background yet at the same time knowing how to apply.’

The examples above have demonstrated the role of positive personal learning experiences in shaping teaching practice. Negative learning experiences can also have a powerful impact on understandings of ‘good teaching’. This is illustrated in Table 7.2.

Constant themes in John’s story are that students must be ‘ready to learn’ and the importance of structure and balance in classroom sessions. He tells of learning the importance of these aspects of teaching practice through his frustration with his own educational experiences studying sport at an elite university in Japan. He tells of a particular event where, ‘The timing was all wrong’ and he and the other students were not ready to learn. He makes sure that this does not happen in his own classes. Joy’s views on teaching have been coloured by her negative educational experiences at school. While she excelled, she felt alienated in an authoritarian system that did not connect with students. Central to her teaching practice now is ‘affirming the world of the student’ wherever possible. Even when teaching very large groups she aims for an ‘illusion of intimacy’ by tuning in and connecting with the worlds of her students.

Table 7.2: Negative learning experiences shaping views on ‘good teaching’

Negative learning experiences	Views on ‘good teaching’
<p><i>I spent a fair bit of time in Japan [studying sport]. The university where I was staying at, their particular technique was you gain through pain so you basically worked really hard...It was an elite university for this. In the last half an hour we'd actually do some technique. And can you see the problem here. We were totally stuffed and we weren't ready to be taught. The timing was all wrong. John</i></p>	<p><i>So I learnt...that you basically need to ready the body, ready the mind for maximum things. So you can actually extend it for too long - that actual teaching period or the technique-learning period. I learnt that if you crack the right situation it's all about the context, it's all about structuring an activity or a set of activities that will lead to something, but allow you to be engaged. John</i></p>
<p><i>The teaching I had never emphasised anything about me – you know, like I went through high school and I can remember almost crying when one teacher said to me in my final year that we were all young and we were all worthwhile. Joy</i></p> <p><i>My teaching up until then had been very authoritarian. And it had just been a matter of keeping on putting things out but never being seen and I think that even though I did well in that system I didn't enjoy it. Joy</i></p>	<p><i>So a key for me has always been [to] know as much about my student as possible, as well as [to] know as much about the subject as possible so that I can make those things meet. Joy</i></p> <p><i>I just try different things on...affirming the world of the student in the content and as much as possible engaging them in not only the delivery ... but also in the ways I examine. So as much as possible I'll do authentic type of assessment tasks so the assessment will have some relevance to what it is they do with the information rather than just retain the information. Joy</i></p>

Individuals' biographies contribute to diversity in teaching practice. However, while experience represented in narrative may seem personal, it is anything but merely personal (Smith & Watson 2001). The university teachers in this study have given these accounts of their teaching life at a particular point in history. The descriptions of their actions, relationships and feelings made at these particular moments of time are retrospective and delivered in terms of different contexts from which they were originally enacted. Effectively, present discourses, narratives and texts constitute the backdrop to any exploration of the past (Scott 2001). Discourses in higher education

will be examined in the next section followed by an examination of understandings of teaching excellence that arise out of these discourses.

Discourses around university teaching

It is important to examine the discourses that these teachers have drawn on in the telling of their stories because:

A discourse affects how people view themselves, each other, their own experience, and their possible choices. It frames life in a particular way (Fenwick 2001: 9).

Discourses are forms of regulation of social meaning and social actions. Different institutions produce different discourses that set up positions for individuals to occupy (Lee 1992 as cited in Garrick 1998). Different discourses potentially create spaces and new possibilities for being a university teacher as well as closing off other options. The power of discourses depends on:

How far they are able to confer 'commonsense' or 'taken for granted' understandings which have specific historical or cultural origins. Language plays a central role in this process ... As learners start to incorporate the language, and the work within these categories for self-description ... they are internalising the 'normalising gaze'; coming to understand themselves in these terms (Harrison 2001: 161).

In Chapter Five I discussed how the university teachers in this study presented themselves as constant learners, engaged in self-monitoring of their work, embracing student feedback and implementing continuous improvement. The following quotes illustrate this.

What we did was created a continuous improvement type idea. We're not in a mode of just rolling out and doing the same sort of things year after year here. We're actually trying to improve what we happened each time. And do it systematically so that we recorded it, actually trying to improve what happened each time. John

So again that's a matter of learning from your students. So to be monitoring what they're getting out of courses and to have the means to learn from them, how to improve a course. David

I want to actually teach this group of students this year in this way. I don't actually say this worked then, it's going to work now. I've found too often that two groups of students require two different ways of going about things. Joy.

In examining these comments it can be seen that these teachers draw on discourses of lifelong learning and enterprise. Lifelong learning has become a dominant discourse in educational policy. It is presented as both a way for individuals to resolve uncertainty and adapt to change, as well as a basis for optimising the effectiveness of social and economic systems. Within this discourse, learning is viewed as an individual responsibility with the implicit threat that not to do so is to risk social and economic exclusion (Edwards, Ranson & Strain 2002). In conjunction with lifelong learning we see the construction of 'enterprising subjects' who live their lives as an 'enterprise of self' pursuing a passion for excellence. Rose (1996) explains it is this way:

Contemporary regulatory practices ... have been transformed to embody the presupposition that humans are, could be, or should be enterprising individuals, striving for fulfilment, excellence and achievement. Hence the vocabulary of enterprise links political rhetoric and regulatory programs to the 'self-steering capacities of subjects themselves ... Enterprise here designates an array of rules for the conduct of one's everyday existence; energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility ... The enterprising self is thus both an active self and a calculating self, a self that calculates *about* itself and that acts *upon* itself in order to better itself (Rose 1996: 154).

Developing teaching expertise can be characterised as a process whereby adults 'discipline' themselves as learners of a particular type in a particular way. Their attempts at continual learning based on self-monitoring and feedback represent a form of self-regulation. Techniques for profiling and recording achievement, such as preparation of teaching portfolios, teaching award applications and other institutionally

recognised and/or prescribed documents, can be read (following Foucault 1983 in Harrison 2001) as techniques for shaping particular ‘disposition and habits’ by “bringing learners under their own critical self regulating gaze, whilst that gaze is informed by the powerful discourse of individualism, self reliance and autonomy” (Ransom et al. 1997 as cited in Harrison 2001:162).

Language plays a central role in this process with certain values and certain kinds of identity being brought into view. The spaces in which university teachers are invited to insert their experiences and performance are already inscribed with certain expectations and understandings (Harrison 2001). Effectively, the processes for recording achievement legitimate particular teacher identities.

While on one hand, many university teachers understand themselves in terms of excellence and enterprise, they are exposed to the competing discourses of efficiency and quality assurance. Drawing on the discourse of managerialism and responding to the effects of massification in universities, university teachers are constantly being urged to ‘do more with less’. Joy talks of the conflicts she experiences and the ways she works through these, either by resisting university efficiencies (at personal cost) or by developing new teaching strategies in some form of compromise.

So I'm not a good teacher when it comes to how teaching is regulated. I really do think I just prefer to take the time...

*Practising what I preach... is often at variance to the university policy. So the University will be saying actually if you could do a two-hour lecture and one-hour tute that would really help out with accommodation and with casual staff and all sorts of things. So I was interested not only in what the ideal situation is but also if I am going to have large classes how do I make those effective. **Joy***

While efficiency is sought, increasingly it is quality assurance that is the focus of teaching and learning policies in universities. From the 1980s, higher education in both Australia and the UK has experienced much higher levels of government scrutiny with education increasingly viewed as an economic resource that should be organised to maximise its contribution to economic development. With this shift from elitism to

enterprise, the Australian Government has gradually repositioned itself from being a patron of universities to a purchaser of higher education expecting demonstrated accountability and return for this investment (Coaldrake & Stedman 1999).

This demand for accountability has seen the rise of an audit culture and has coincided with a shift in the discourses of quality from 'excellent standards' to 'quality assurance' backed by external validation (Vidovich 2001). As Salter and Tapper (2000) highlight:

The politics of governance in higher education are now embedded in a discourse which assumes the external regulation of academic activity to be the natural and acceptable state of affairs (Salter and Tapper 2000: 82).

One example of such government influence is the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, implemented by the Australian Government in 2005 to reward universities for demonstrated excellence in teaching. This fund has generated controversy for the ways in which teaching excellence is measured but it will continue to drive conceptions of 'good teaching' at an institutional level. Existing data sets, the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) are used to establish measures of teaching quality on an institutional basis.

In 2006 funds were awarded to 14 of the 39 institutions assessed. Five institutions shared \$30 million in additional funding for best demonstrating excellence in teaching and learning. Funding was distributed on the basis of a \$1 million base grant with an additional amount calculated on the basis of the provider's undergraduate student load. A further nine institutions shared approximately \$24 million in funding in recognition of high achievement in teaching and learning.

Funds for 2006 were allocated based on 2003 and 2004 data (DEST 2006). The performance indicators in the evaluation were: graduate full-time employment, graduate full-time study, graduate level of satisfaction with generic skills, graduate level of satisfaction with teaching, overall graduate satisfaction, student progress rates and attrition/completion. The Graduate Destination Survey and the Course Experience Questionnaire, both existing nationally coordinated, surveys of recent university graduates were used to provide the data on particular performance indicators. Three

indicators were derived from the CEQ and contributed 55% of the overall institution score and two from the GDS making up a further 22 per cent of the score.

There have been significant concerns in the sector about the validity and transparency of the performance indicators and the adjustment methodologies used to address the differences in characteristics of universities and their student populations. Given the significant use of the GDS and the CEQ, Kerri-Lee Harris and Richard James from the Centre for Higher Education, the University of Melbourne critically analysed the measures used to rank universities and distribute funds (Harris and James 2006). They raise a number of issues in relation to the CEQ, which they argue, has had a deep influence on conceptions of good or effective teaching, at least from a management perspective. Two matters are particularly relevant to discussion of development of teaching expertise. First, is a concern relating to the complexity of measuring teaching quality:

The feedback on performance provided by the CEQ is often ambiguous. Much of what is valued in university teaching is difficult to measure, given the often high levels of abstraction of learning outcomes and graduate capabilities, and important information is lost when it is quantified and codified at a blunt aggregate level (Harris and James 2006: 11)

Second is the potential consequence of narrowing of expressions of teaching expertise:

[While] the CEQ contains items that indisputably relate to well-established good teaching practices...the CEQ is necessarily a broad, generic instrument that might be criticised for being bland, superficial and unlikely to detect importance nuances of the educational environment in specific contexts. There have been concerns that the CEQ is not an appropriate instrument for measuring the quality of problem-based or enquiry based learning environments (Harris and James 2006: 7-8).

University teachers seem to be confronted with a paradoxical situation. In times when flexibility is being exhorted, there is the threat of a narrowing of identity options for academics as powerful and prescriptive imperatives emerge to satisfy the demands for accountability in universities. While the measurement of performance in universities may be contested, its influence is not likely to abate. Increasingly performance measurement will be a factor shaping institutional understandings of what it means to be a 'good teacher' and this will have flow-on effects for teaching practice and construction of university teachers' identities.

Understandings of teaching excellence

In a wash of contending discourses, what does it mean to be an 'excellent teacher'? To explore this question further I will discuss a framework, developed by Skelton (2004; 2005), outlining four understandings of teaching excellence drawn from higher education discourses. He labels the understandings: traditional, psychological, performative and critical and stresses the temporal character of these understandings.

Skelton's work draws on an Economic Social and Research Council (ESRC) funded study interviewing twenty 'excellent' teachers (in England and Northern Ireland) who were awarded National Teaching Fellowships in 2000. Further interviews were conducted with members of the National Advisory Panel (NAP) which was responsible (with assistance from the Institute for Learning and Teaching) for devising the criteria for 'teaching excellence' which underpinned the award scheme. The research is informed by an understanding of 'teaching excellence' as a contested concept with different definitions of what it means to be an 'excellent' teacher located within a shifting social, economic and political context. A brief description of each of these types follows:

Traditional

A traditional understanding of teaching comes from an elitist perspective and is concerned with excellence and ranking. From this understanding, teaching excellence requires 'suitable raw material' to work with and is not well aligned with mass education and student diversity.

Performative

From a performative understanding, teaching excellence is achieved through demonstrated evidence of that excellence. The focus is on monitoring and measuring teacher activity. Key aims are economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Relevance to institutional strategic goals and the needs of industry and commerce are also important. A key feature of teaching excellence in the performative university is the capacity to attract students to courses that compete in a global marketplace.

Psychological

This understanding dominates the higher education literature and understandings of learning with its focus on the interaction between individual learners and teachers. Teachers are encouraged to be ‘student centred’, seek to understand the individual needs of students and start from ‘where the students are at’. The interaction between student and teacher is understood in a decontextualised way. Once learners have been categorised teachers can make selections from their ‘tool box’ of available processes, techniques and activities.

Critical

A critical understanding of excellence in teaching acknowledges the dynamic and contextualised nature of teaching. Excellent teaching will look different in different contexts. Teaching is not a ‘common sense’ activity and is worthy of exploration. Issues and understandings are open to question.

Having outlined these four understandings I will examine how they are demonstrated in the various participants’ stories in my study. A traditional understanding of teaching excellence can be seen in a range of Sandra’s comments about her students (Detailed in Chapter Six). Her students don’t provide what Skelton terms ‘suitable raw material’. ‘Real’ students are what she needs.

Unless you change the structure and give me the real students to work with - who I would be delighted to work with. People who want to learn. Sandra

Joy takes a quite different position. In representing herself as a teacher, she contrasts herself with other teachers who use appeals to tradition and maintenance of standards.

I think that for many teachers it's easier not to be involved with students you know like to just sort of steep yourself in your tradition and to say that failing students actually means that you've got some standards, and that this is the way we want something to be and if you don't fit that. I see a lot of that... Especially now that we're all very, very busy. You know it's sort of like putting up some boundaries and saying this (laughter) you've got to cross this otherwise... I've never been like that. I don't think I ever will, you know. I always try and look at remedies for things. Joy

Working from a traditional understanding contributes to ongoing tension between Sandra and her institution and her students. It appears an ill fit with the diverse student body that currently attend university. Joy does not support this traditional understanding herself, but comments that in times of high workloads many teachers retreat to the cover of tradition as a coping strategy and use the maintenance of standards as a way of limiting engagement with students.

While a performative understanding of teaching excellence is increasingly the focus of policy and institutional procedures, at the individual teacher level there is resistance and questioning of the value of this performative approach. Dominant understandings of teaching are not accepted uncritically; 'There is always room for refusal, resistance, and alternative practices' (King 1995 as cited in Smyth & Shacklock 1998: 114). Teachers 'creatively engage with these understandings and take up, reject or modify them in light of their own values and concerns' (Skelton 2005: 7).

There is scepticism among university teachers as to the value of this accountability and the impact it has on quality teaching. Carolyn has strong views on this issue. At the time of the second interview, Carolyn had been recently appointed as a head of school, so she speaks on this issue as both a teacher and a manager of teachers.

I mean if I'd studied teaching in this modern world of quality assurance my teaching wouldn't be half as good as it is because I started teaching in a world where I could really get out and experiment and test boundaries and learn from my students in a magnificent way. Carolyn

We've moved into an era of mistrust and everything has to be quantified. Quality assurance and we spend more and more of our time filling in bloody forms proving we are doing our job which just gives us less and less time to do the job. I mean it is interesting now having a little bit of experience of management I don't actually think that any of my staff are performing one speck more effectively because we have all this performance management in place ... I have great staff who are largely extremely enthusiastic about teaching, extremely enthusiastic about research and the odd one that isn't won't be changed by performance management. They will just become very skilled at performance management. But that's the world we now live in. Carolyn

All of the teachers in this study spent their early years in a university environment quite different to the one they now experience. As such their understandings of teaching are likely to be historically shaped. For beginning teachers in the contemporary environment, values and priorities may be different. Malcolm and Zukas (2002) detailing their work on teacher identity and the impact of scrutiny and regulation, report that of the teachers they interviewed:

Those with the most experience in teaching adults are also the most likely to have their own well-developed ideas about how and why they teach, and to resist the imposition of standardised ideas about their teaching practice (Malcolm and Zukas 2002: 4).

In contrast, a younger teacher (with two years experience) shows no surprise at the QA processes he and his colleagues are exposed to. He indicates personal benefits from the process in terms of helping him belong to his workplace community. A similar picture emerged in a study of Australian business faculty academics and academic managers from three universities (Sappey 2005). Younger academics were more supportive of the

student-customer concept and more comfortable with the performative value of education.

While the performative understanding of teaching excellence has come to the fore in recent time, particularly in the eyes of university management, psychologised understandings are still common in teachers' stories. 'Psychologisation' of teaching and learning is a term used by Malcolm and Zukas (2001) to express the way in which the particular ways of 'knowing' about teacher, learners and educational practices dominate higher education. Frequently learners appear as anonymous, decontextualised, and degendered with their principal distinguishing characteristics being 'personality', 'learning style' to 'approach to learning'. This focus on individual learning styles can be seen in Carolyn's description of a project she was working on at the time of the interviews. The research originated from her experiences in studying conflict resolution.

They do what is called the DISC exercise ... it basically diagnoses people as Direct, Influencing, Stabilising or Conscientious... So I was using this exercise in the same way with [a group of students] to get them aware that people are different and it was working quite well and then at some point I thought it would be interesting to correlate that with what they thought would make a good tutorial ... What came up was real hit you in the face stuff – like 3 out of the 4 types really liked interactive tutorials and the fourth did not... They were looking for something that was much more directed, much more structured, much more sort of staid... The stabilisers basically want it to be entertaining and interesting. They write down notes – they all like discussion, not [being] forced to participate.

Carolyn

While psychological understandings give little regard to context, critical understandings of teaching excellence acknowledge the dynamic and contextualised nature of teaching. From a critical perspective, teaching excellence is focused on the broader purpose of higher education and the underlying educational values that inform teachers' work (Skelton 2005). David's comments on his teaching outlined below illustrate this:

Teaching is a way of social change and teaching is a way of changing society attitudes and outcomes... that's something I'm still committed to in my teaching.

I talk to my first year students about the work I've done with indigenous people and other ways of teaching and learning and seeing landscapes, in particular. It's about social change – so it's about sustainability, is about ecological integrity, economic fairness, social equity so I take students through. These are some issues we go through in the course. David

With psychologised understandings of teaching excellence there is a cognitive focus on the relationships between teachers and learners; relationships are a means to an end and that end is facilitating learning. However, authors such as Noddings (2003) see a deeper role for relationships. She argues that teachers must be committed to establishing relations of care and trust if teachers are to meet their responsibility for the development of their students as whole person. (She indicates that this is more critical with school students but that even university teachers bear some responsibility for their students in this regard). Further she suggests, 'Relations of care and trust also form the foundations for the effective transmission of general and specialised knowledge. But relations of care and trust are ends in themselves, not simply means to achieve various learnings' (Noddings 2003: 250).

Traditionally the discourse of caring has been very much a part of teacher identity even if it has had to compete with preoccupations with transmission of high level knowledge, and discovery/production of new knowledge. With intensification of workloads, university teachers are experiencing increasing tension in attempts to be both 'caring teachers' and 'productive academics'. To complete this chapter's discussion of the situated and complex nature of the development of teaching expertise, the following section explores teacher-student relationships and the emotional nature of teaching work.

Teacher-student relationships: the heart of teaching practice

The stories told by the universities teachers in this study support a case for a greater emphasis on the relational and emotional aspects of university teaching. It was apparent from these teachers' stories that the quality of teacher-student relationships is an important factor in sustaining and re-energising university teachers in times of change, heavy workloads and competing demands.

There is nothing new in the suggestion that good teachers understand the need for caring relationships with their students. Work such as Noddings' (1984) speaks to the central role of care in teaching. However, given the intensification of work in universities I believe there is a need for greater examination of the ways in which university teachers negotiate the multiple obligations they face and the emotional work involved in this negotiation process.

In this study, there was rarely an instance where teachers spoke about their teaching without reference to the students involved. Discussion was not around 'I did this' or 'I did that'. Rather it was about what teachers did and how students responded or that students had particular needs, concerns or difficulties and particular teaching practices were necessary. In describing her development as a university teacher Joy identifies the switch of focus from content to the students as an important stage.

I think as a beginning teacher I was so nervous and anxious and that all the time, that I wouldn't have been, I wouldn't have had the better communication skills that we need as a teacher. That I would probably prepare about the 'stuff' or the competence rather than for the 'whom'. I think probably my timing would have been out, the rhythm of teaching, the listening to the students. Even though I used to ask them things.

Within these relationships there were strong emotions expressed, mostly positive but also negative. Good teaching experiences were charged with positive emotions of joy, excitement, elation and satisfaction. Bad teaching experiences engendered frustration, anger, disillusionment and despair. This was powerfully expressed in Sandra's story in Chapter Six. Emotions also play a significant role in engaging students and contributing to vivid in-class performances.

Emotions are central to teaching. Hargreaves (1998) drawing on a study of emotions and teaching in Canadian schools makes the following comment. It could equally be applied to the university teachers in this study:

Teachers' emotional connections to students and the social and emotional goals they wanted to achieve as they taught those students shaped almost

everything they did, along with how they responded to changes that affected what they did. Teachers wanted to become better so they could help their students more effectively. The emotional bond that teachers had was central to how they taught them (Hargreaves 1998: 845).

Care was the defining theme when Carolyn was asked how she would like to be remembered as a teacher. It was also her desire for that caring attitude to be reciprocated. She wanted to be remembered as:

Somebody who cared about their subject and their students and their professionalism. Somebody who had integrity and authenticity. Somebody who was real. Somebody who the students actually cared about. Carolyn

Students' entitlement to an attitude of respect and dignity is a given for Joy. Listening to students and affirming their world underpins much of her teaching practice.

One of the things that I liked to do for the students is provide a structure and culture for them to thrive in. And also extend an attitude of respect and dignity. So that I don't ever say what they can't do, but I try and build on strengths. Joy

I just have a great feeling that you have to be optimistic and you have to give people hope and also sort of allow them integrity, like to integrate what it is that's going on for them, and to listen to them. Joy

Work such as that of Connelly and Clandinin (1990), Elbaz (1991), Thomas (1995) and Nias (1996) explore the emotional qualities of teaching. Yet as their work draws predominantly on philosophical, psychological and literary foundations they tend to treat teachers' ways of knowing as mainly personal matters of moral choice, commitment and responsibility. 'This has been at the expense of considering how sociological, political and institutional forces shape and reshape the emotional landscapes of teaching for good or ill, in different ways under different conditions' (Hargreaves 1998: 836).

Guilt, Hargreaves (1994) suggests, is a key feature in the emotional lives of teachers and others who work in caring professions. He sees teacher guilt as much more than a private trouble. He argues that it is socially generated, emotionally located and of practical consequence. He identifies four paths leading to teacher guilt: commitment to goals of caring and nurturance, the open-ended nature of the job, the pressures of accountability and intensification, and the persona of perfectionism. All four factors are present in the stories told in this study of award winning university teachers. For example:

There is so much stuff I now just don't do because I can't do it because it's not humanly [possible] with the sort of numbers because of the time constraints and some of them - I think it's quite tragic. Carolyn

One of the sad things is that you don't have the time ... and so I probably make as many mistakes as the next one, but I try to limit that. And I don't think universities now – are really building into the workloads what it really takes to teach well. Joy

Teachers respond in different ways to these structural constraints. There are risks of 'burnout', cynicism and exit from the profession. For Joy there is a balancing act in being approachable and protecting herself.

To always be approachable and yet build some boundaries so that they don't gobble me up - which they don't do. Joy

The concept of 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983) is also of relevance to university teaching. Emotional labour describes the work of those employed in service sectors to project the expected emotions in that professional interaction. With teaching emotion can be positive in terms of creating a sense of excitement and energy excitement. However, it can also have negative consequences in situations of work intensification where a person identifies too wholeheartedly with the job and risks burnout (Hochschild 1983). Emotional labour can take a toll on teachers where the projected emotions are manufactured. Here the teacher may engage in self-blame about this insincerity and experience cynicism and detachment.

As part of their relationships with students, teachers need to be aware themselves, and make their students aware, of the broader context within which their relationship takes place.

Our power is limited because we teach in a larger cultural, social and institutional context. We must not pretend – to ourselves or to our students – that we can single-handedly create classrooms that are immune to the pressures of these contexts (Tom 1997: 15).

In discussion of teacher-student relationships, the focus is generally on student needs. It is worth remembering that teachers will also have needs ‘As teachers we do have needs in the teaching relationship, and it is appropriate for them to be met in this relationship. We learn and grow with students: as they learn so do we’ (Tom 1997: 13). The rewards from teaching, both intellectual and emotional, predominately come from relationships with students. It is the strength of these bonds that sustain and reenergise teachers.

... the very positive energy that I got back from people when I was teaching. In other words, learning that I'm valued, people respect me and value me as a member of society. John

Relationships are also a significant feature when teachers in this study talked about change in universities. They generally spoke of change in terms of how it affected students and how it affected their relationships with students.

Managing these relationships needs to be considered as a key factor in developing university teaching expertise. Given the central importance of the teacher-student relationship, Tom (1997) advocates that it should be framed as a ‘deliberate relationship’ to signify that it has been thoughtfully and deliberately created. She describes it in this way:

As a teacher I am creating a relationship in which students can learn. Thus my actions as a teacher are done on purpose and for a purpose. The

deliberate relationship is a consequence of my awareness of acting in a relationship for a specific purpose (Tom 1997: 12-13).

This notion of deliberate relationship can be linked back to the theme of reflexivity, the importance of which is argued throughout this thesis. A reflexive approach to teaching can assist in careful examination of the complex dynamics in the teacher-student relationships.

What makes a ‘good teacher’?

Constructions of the ‘good teacher’ are diverse and complex. Teachers in developing their expertise work with a range of understandings of teaching expertise and engage with these understandings in shaping their own teaching practice. In this chapter I set out to highlight the complex and dynamic nature of the development of teaching expertise. This has been demonstrated by an examination of the contexts that accompany the development of teaching expertise. Given the situated nature of university teaching practice and the development of teaching expertise, there can be no universal, enduring story of the development of teaching expertise, nor can there be a single model of what constitutes ‘good teaching’.

While individual teachers will have unique experiences in developing their teaching expertise, we need to look beyond the individual’s perspective. Reflexive learning processes do not take place exclusively ‘inside’ the individual. They depend on communication and action with others because learning is embedded within societal structure and cultural contexts of interpretation (Alheit & Dausien 2002). Individuals, however, will respond in different ways in similar contexts. As Edwards (2005: n.p.) reminds us, ‘Context is not an open backcloth upon which we wander, but is made in different ways by actors through our wanderings.’ In Chapter Eight I will examine this agency as part of a broader discussion of the development of teaching expertise as identity work.

Chapter 8

Reflexive narratives: The development of university teaching expertise as identity work

Introduction

In this chapter, university teachers' stories are examined as reflexive narratives and the development of expertise is conceptualised as identity work. I return to a holistic form of analysis, presenting extended narratives, and look at the manner in which two of the participants fashion their teacher identities, positioning themselves and others in their narrations. This can be seen as reflexive process where Joy and John engage in both self-monitoring and monitoring of their relationships with others.

In constructing their narratives, these 'expert' teachers represent themselves as particular types of teachers with identity being actively constructed both through a process of 'sameness' and 'otherness', identifying or not identifying with other particular narrative characters in a process of defining who they are in relation to others. They create a place and positionality for themselves within their universities, attempting to position themselves as 'knowers' in their own eyes as well as those of students, other academics and their institution. In these stories they chart the progress of their movement towards legitimacy as 'expert' teachers.

In conceptualising the development of university teacher as identity work I draw on particular theorisations of identity. I am not presenting a view of self as coherent, unified and fixed, a perspective that has underpinned much adult education literature. Rather, I draw on the work of the following authors, Giddens (1991), Rose (1996), Hall (1996), du Gay (1997), Edwards (1997), Bruner & Kalmar (1998) and Chappell et al. (2003), that share an understanding of identity as multiple, positional and strategic; always under construction.

The following sections of this chapter address the theorising of identity as a reflexive project, the implications of taking such a position, and the dynamics of the construction of identity. This conceptual basis is then put to work in an analysis of the way in which two award winning teachers, Joy and John, narrate the development of their university teaching expertise.

Theorising identity as a reflexive project

Contemporary individuals, experiencing a much wider range of life options and possibilities than previous generations, are increasingly being expected to take greater control of their life choices than was the case in the past. The dynamic process through which individuals make meaning of their lives and incorporate these meaning into future action forms the basis of Giddens' concept of 'the reflexive project of the self'. Giddens (1991) describes self-identity as a reflexively organised endeavour where:

The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in a context of multiple choice ... Each of not us only 'has', but *lives* a biography reflexively organised in terms of social and psychological flows of information about possible ways of life (Giddens 1991: 5, 14).

The self is not passive entity, determined by external influences. The subject as understood by Giddens is highly self-conscious, constantly engaged in identity work and seeking narrative coherence, if only on a transitory basis. The reflexive project of self generates programs of actualisation and mastery.

Reflexivity plays an important role in connecting personal and social change (Giddens 1991) and surfacing possible choices. Identity, viewed in this way, is not an object to be examined but a reality constructed in the interactive moment (McNamee 1996). Thus, it is always a work in progress, an individual enterprise played out through social interaction. Identity is not something that the individual 'is' but something that emerges through relations (Jensen & Westenholz 2004).

Narratives display ‘the imprint of the culture and its institutions on the individual’s sense of identity’ (Eakin 1999: 3). The self remains situated in history and culture as Hall (1996) explains:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’ so much as who we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall 1996: 4).

Identities can also be seen as products of discursive diffusion, meaning that people have a tendency to recycle strips of things said by others even if they are unaware of these texts’ origins (Sfard & Prusak 2005). Institutional narratives, for instance around quality assurance and teaching awards, have a particular capacity to supplant stories that have been part of one’s identity.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) argue that in times of change learning plays a critical role in shaping identities because learning is our primary means of making reality in the image of our fantasies. In discussing identity they distinguish between actual and designated identities. They define actual identities as the stories about the actual state of affairs, e.g. *I am* a good teacher. Designated identities are narratives presenting a state of affairs expected to be the case, if not now, in the future, e.g. *I want to be known as an excellent teacher, I can become an innovator in the use of flexible technologies.* Learning they argue, is often the only hope for closing the gap between actual and designated identities. Designated identities, while giving significant direction to one’s deeds are not necessarily a matter of deliberate rationale choice

University teachers, however, can and will resist, in varying degrees, dominant discourses. Malcolm and Zukas (2002) detailing their work on teacher identity and the impact of scrutiny and regulation, report that of the teachers they interviewed those with the most experience were also the most likely to resist the imposition of standardised ideas about their teaching practice.

In Chapter Seven I discussed the way teachers drew on their own learning experiences to shape their views on ‘good teaching’. Following du Gay (1997) this could be conceptualised as assembling and deploying their own experience and identity as learners in delivering ‘good teaching’ to their students. Du Gay (1997) argues (in relation to service workers) that people are not born with the capacity or disposition to provide ‘quality service’. Rather they are worked on or in turn work on themselves to become the sort of people that would offer ‘quality service’.

The idea of being ‘made up’ suggests a material-cultural process of formation or transformation, that is ‘fashioning’ whereby the adoption of certain habits or dispositions allows an individual to become – and become recognised as – a particular kind of person. To be made up as a worker is therefore to acquire a particular assemblage of attributes and dispositions that defines a particular set of work activities at any given period or in any given context.

Contemporary individuals, Rose (1996) asserts, are incited to live as if making a project of themselves with a site within which individuals represent, construct and confirm their identity. Chappell et al. (2003) drawing on Rose (1996) identify a range of ways of relating to oneself and the accompanying practices that contribute to constructing identities that can *perform* better. These include knowing oneself, controlling oneself, caring for oneself and (re)creating oneself. This ‘self-work’ will be explored in detail in the context of Joy’s story later in this chapter.

Implications of conceptualising identities as constructed and reflexive

If identity is viewed as constructed and reflexive rather than a fixed entity, what implications does this have for how we understand university teacher identities? Three key issues can be identified in addressing this question.

First, there is no fixed single ‘teacher identity’. Because there are numerous available discourses, a number of subject positions are produced. Given the multiplicity of competing and contradictory discourses, identity is regarded as multiple with individuals and groups having access to a repertoire of socially available positions

There is no ideal university teacher to which new teachers must conform. As Malcolm and Zukas (2001) suggest:

'becoming an educator' is actually a process of realising that there is no fixed, external 'pedagogic identity' into which novice teachers must try to fit themselves... Pedagogic identity is not a secret formula to be learned, or a ready-made garment in which we can clothe ourselves. It is the product of a process of identity construction, undertaken in the contexts of 'knowledge-work' and overlapping forms of community membership (Malcolm and Zukas 2001: n.p.).

Relating this perspective to the development of teaching expertise lends support to the argument in this thesis that there are multiple expressions of university teaching expertise and multiple paths in developing teaching expertise.

Second, we need to understand teacher identity not in the abstract but always in relation to a given place and time. As Sarup (1996) suggests:

Our identity is not separate from what has happened ...When asked about identity, we start thinking about our life-story: we construct our identity at the same time as we tell our life-story (Sarup 1996: 15).

Representation of identity is an ongoing process and an important aspect in the construction and negotiation of identity is the past-present relationship (Sarup 1996). The past will be interpreted and reinterpreted in the light of the present. Subject formation is a never-ending story, played out compulsively again and again. However, these identities are not created from thin air, they are available to use through culturally available narratives. Identity work aligns to pre-existing and socioculturally shaped subject positions to reproduce dominant beliefs, interests and values (Ivanic 1998 as cited in Chappell et al. 2003).

Third, teacher identity is not merely a personal choice – it is subject to affirmation by others. The development of teaching expertise involves becoming an authorised and an authoritative teacher within a scholarly community. University teachers come to

understand themselves as subjects within a public community. The term social acceptance is used by Shotter (1989) to describe the fact that we must talk in particular established ways - that is, account for ourselves - in order to meet the demands placed on us by our need to sustain our status as responsible members of society. Where certain ways of talking are considered legitimate and others not, our understanding and experience of ourselves will be similarly constrained.

These three key issues are aptly brought together by Holmes (1995:8) describing the fashioning of identity as:

a continuing process by which a person seeks to attain and maintain uniqueness and individuality (personal being) while also being socially recognised (social being). This involves the 'appropriation' by the individual of the characteristics of socially and culturally (and therefore discursively) legitimated identities. From this follows a stage of 'transformation', making personal sense of the socially acquired understanding, in terms of personal experiences. The 'publication' of the actor's claim to the identity, the public expression of the characteristics associated with the identity leads, if successful, to 'conventionalisation' into the personal biography and social order (Holmes 1995:8).

The process of identity formation involves a dynamic relationship between the individual's sense of self and the social processes that to a significant degree determine what count as the criteria for being ascribed a particular identity. Thus, an identity cannot be decided solely by an individual, as a personal act of choice and will, but must always be subject to affirmation.

Constructing identities: an interactive process

If constructing identity is an interactive process what are the dynamics of that interaction? To help address this question I will draw on work of Bruner and Kalmar (1998: 308) who claim that self is not something just there, but rather 'something constructed out of sense and memory by acts of imagination.'

In explaining how this construction happens, they identify two functions that the self performs. The self serves both to bring people together, through placing them intersubjectively into a social matrix, while simultaneously separating them through individuation. Developing within the social environment involves a shared conception of what particular acts, beliefs and expectations may be anticipated of others and what they may expect of us. From this comes an understanding of what activities may be legitimately pursued and those that will incur censure. Alongside this, the process of individuation serves to distinguish one's *own* self from *other* selves.

These opposing functions, they argue, are reconciled through narrative, telling ourselves about our own self and about other Selves in the form of a story. In the telling of this story the Self becomes a product of discourse. This relates to the constraints about *how* one may talk about oneself.

Self-narration seems shot through with 'impression management', the nature of which seems to vary with different interpersonal settings... In time, we learn to script even our 'to-ourselves-only' self-tellings to fit such socially imposed reticence and taboos... Cultures and subcultures, of course, characteristically provide us guides for such self-presentation in dialogue (Bruner and Kalmar 1998: 316-317).

The idea of narrative identity emerges from the way that people are constituted in narratives as particular types of people. Identity is constructed through the process of sameness or otherness. In telling their narratives of the development of teaching expertise, university teachers narrate the teacher identity they have constructed for themselves.

As argued earlier there is no standard teacher identity 'cloak' to be taken off the shelf and wrapped around the developing teacher. There is a complex relationship between the development of teaching expertise and the production of a particular kind of 'knowers'/'teachers'. To explore the development of expertise as identity work, I will examine John's story and Joy's story. Both stories chart the progress of movement towards legitimacy as expert teachers.

Joy: the Duracell bunny

Joy, in narrating her development of teaching expertise, tells of struggle and mistakes as she attempts to become the kind of teacher that she aspires to be. She moves from fear and anxiety about being exposed as an impostor to having the confidence to empower her students. In analysing Joy's narrative and examining the ongoing self-work she engages in, I draw on the different ways of relating to oneself introduced earlier in this chapter: knowing oneself, controlling oneself, caring for oneself and (re)creating oneself. These 'techniques of self', practices by which individuals seek to improve themselves, can be seen to play an important role in the development of teaching expertise.

A constant theme in the story of Joy's early teaching experiences is the fear of being exposed as a fraud. She is constantly assessing how her performance measures up to her perceptions of the ideal teacher. Monitoring herself, and coming to know herself, Joy readily identifies deficits in her teaching in the early days.

When I first started the anxiety would have been enough for me not to even know where my skin finished and [the class] began. Very vulnerable. And a lot of the over preparation and going to all lengths to cover all bases would have been to actually try to measure up to being the expert, while constantly entertaining being an impostor anyway.

Taking up the discourse of enterprise, Joy can be read as an 'enterprising individual' striving for fulfilment, excellence and achievement, 'going to all lengths to cover all bases.' Rose (1996) describes it in this way:

Enterprise ... designates an array of rules for the conduct of one's everyday existence; energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility...The enterprising self is thus both an active self and a calculating self, a self that calculates *about* itself and that acts *upon* itself in order to better itself (Rose 1996:154).

Despite her hard work, Joy sees herself as an impostor. This however, is not uncommon for beginning teachers. Brookfield (1995) labels this the ‘impostor syndrome’ and describes it in regard to both students and senior professionals taking professional development courses.

At the beginning of a course or program, they wrestle with deciding whether or not to continue when they see how capable all the other students are. When they contrast what they see as their poor abilities with what they regard as the sophistication of their peers, they wonder if perhaps a mistake has been made (Brookfield 1995: 229).

He observes that many teachers experience the impostor syndrome at various times. Joy describes it in this way:

Having a sense as though everybody knew more than I did. And then being really quite shocked and surprised that they didn't. [Thinking] everybody's going to be able to see I am the impostor... somebody must have made a huge mistake... I'm not a teacher yet you know ... So I think, you know, there was always that working hard to overcome the [feeling] everyone's going to detect it and I shouldn't be here. And that continual surprise about lasting.

Organisation and subject content were initially her key concerns and criticism from students was a key factor playing on her mind.

The sole purpose of teaching well was in the fear of student evaluations. Like what they say about me is going to be so important. If they say I'm not organised or I'm not fair or biased, then that's going to be really, really terrible. Awful.

She tells of a focus very much on the subject matter, slavish with the content, rather than considering the students she was teaching. Her main focus appears to have been achieving her aspiration of positioning herself as subject expert.

I think as a beginning teacher I would have been so good, at trying to keep it all the same and not make any modifications, as though the thing that I learnt in the book was more important than the people I was teaching ... I think as a beginning

*teacher I was so nervous and anxious and that all the time, that I wouldn't have been, I wouldn't have had the better communication skills that we need as a teacher. That I would probably prepare about the **stuff** or the competence rather than for the **whom**. I think I probably my timing would have been out, the rhythm of teaching, the listening to the students. Even though I used to ask them things.*

In her early days of teaching Joy is was very conscious of how her students would see her:

I think when I was a beginning teacher I would think about what I was going to wear and how I was going to look so that I would be that person they would expect to see. Whereas now I think I could teach in my pyjamas and I don't think it would make all that much difference. So I think you know that's not what matters anymore. So it's sort of more just getting that communication going really well.

Joy estimates that it took around five years to gain mastery in her teaching

So I've probably got better at it over about 5 years. It took me at least that long to not think with a focus, so I'd get one thing right and then over commit in something else, and then 'Oh drat'. And so, to get the flexibility sort of took much longer I think. But I think after 5 years I was pretty much OK and running. It was more the first two years where I found that I used up a lot of energy and it was very bad to be young, yeah.

As she gained confidence Joy increasingly shifted her focus from the subject content to interacting with her students. The story below reflects her increasingly relaxed relationship with students while reinforcing her 'enterprising self'.

I would ask them to be in touch with me and of course on email they can be in touch with you any time day or night an so they don't actually appreciate the fact that lecturers have lives. So if I was there and something came through I would just answer it straight away and so I got some nicknames that were kind of fun 'Duracell' (laughter) like the Duracell bunny because I would be kind of working around the clock. When work came in I'd just send it straight back. So students

liked that. Students also then start keeping records to see who gets the prize for getting a response at the most ungodly hour of the night (laughter)... The Duracell bunny alerted me to the fact that it was better to answer their things in reasonable hours than when they come in even if I am up at 3 o'clock in the morning not to let them know that (laughter).

Despite having difficult times in her early teaching days, Joy talks throughout her story of being aware of the need to care for herself. This involved practices such as going for a drink with mates, keeping her sense of humour or easily forgiving herself.

Over time, Joy (re)creates herself as a teacher, reworking her identity from that of subject expert to empowering students, helping students use knowledge as a way of getting on in the world.

I guess letting go of the know-it-all was important. And taking up, not just a philosophy that people have to learn, but actually knowing that they do and they do everyday ... Then me as teacher, I want the expert voice to actually be taken from me and given over ... So yeah my expertise would definitely be in not being needed as someone to answer questions, but someone to consult on the best way to go about getting there. And also to actually be part of the audience that celebrates somebody's growing awareness, and the beauty of words. So I'm sure that that's pretty central to my idea of teaching... So the final product for me is empowering the student, watching the student see that knowledge is a way of getting on in the world and being more able to make decisions.

Talking about the influences on her teaching Joy draws connections between teachers she admired and her own teaching practices:

I admire those teachers who actually said I could do something rather than 'I'm an expert and tell me how many reasons why'. And so the best teachers to me have been those who have walked their talk as I say and have actually succeeded on their own merit and they haven't really required me to shine the torch for them yeah. So I try, I don't even try, I just assume that the students are going to take off and be brilliant you know, I wouldn't have accepted them into the program if I

didn't believe in them (laughter) yeah and so yeah and to be here for when they have the troubles and things like that. To always be approachable um and yet build some boundaries so that they don't gobble me up which they don't do. Yeah, they're very, very respectful my students.

Looking across Joy's teaching span what can be observed is ongoing self-work as she fashioned her teaching expertise.

John: not like other academics

In Chapter Six, John's story was examined as an example of a progressive narrative. In this chapter I use his story to explore the issues of social acceptance and individuation. Coming to terms with anxiety around difference is a recurring theme in the early stages of John's story. He repeatedly highlights the ways in which he is different to other academics but concurrently talks of his insecurity arising from differences in social class and academic experience.

I must say that the first year was harrowing - my confidence was completely blown away ... I was totally intimidated. All these people that I looked up to and I read their articles and were high echelon academics and I just remember sitting in a coffee room too scared to open my mouth... I lost confidence.

He uses his industry experience – a point of difference – to make a contribution to his community.

and it struck me – I was talking to some colleagues and they were actually, these people that I respected were actually listening to me, and I said 'I've got something here, I can actually give these guys something.'

Following a shaky start, he comes to valorise his difference to 'other academics'. As well as having industry experience he differentiates himself from 'other academics' in terms of his attitude to risk and his positive outlook. In his narrative, John positions himself as a risk-taker and characterises learning as an adventure. While being careful to be respectful of fellow academics who have won teaching awards he is conscious of and describes the differences between their style of teaching and his own.

I'm happy taking risks so if you look at quite effective teachers that are less risk adverse and want to be very structured and methodical in what they do and want to maintain some control, I'm probably at the other end of the spectrum where I see I want to be able have that structure, impose some sort of structure, so there is something that they know and then provide a variety and fun and actually put myself in the situation where I don't know what the outcome of this is going to be or put myself in the situation where, gee I might be a bit challenged here, how am I going to respond?

In discussing the development of his teaching expertise John draws attention to the influential role of contacts with educators from outside the university sector.

being involved with educators ... outside of higher education, high school teachers and primary school teachers, professional teachers and stuff like that. I think came at a good time because it really grounded in some sort of rationale theoretical way sort of stuff that I intuitively felt worked for me in a coaching technique.

He resists any notion that teachers should adopt a superior or removed position in regard to their students:

the good sort of teachers I guess that I've got along with and I've learnt a lot from are the people that are prepared to sort of breakdown those traditions and put themselves, not on a pedestal but out there, exposed and feel comfortable wearing the risk of being proved wrong or maybe taking the learning environment, the learning that's going on in the class in the direction you don't anticipate.

John is critical of what he sees as the conservatism of many academics and the lack of positive feedback within university communities.

I find this generally with academics. They tend to be, it's the whole ... black hat syndrome – De Bono. You put your black hat on and when you go into a research seminar and just criticise and find all the holes and gaps. Never say, 'Well I saw you do that but perhaps you could try this or maybe this is another way of saying

that' in a constructive way. So if they can't find anything critical to say they don't say anything (laughs). You know what I mean (laughs). So in general, you just don't, as you know, in the academic role it's very rare to get positive feedback

Feedback is important to John. The excerpt below highlights his pleasure in receiving positive feedback following a development workshop with his colleagues. At this day-long session, John led his colleagues in a form of meditation – focusing on the feelings of a pleasurable past experience – to prepare them to move into a learning mode. He described this as ‘hypnotising’ them.

I find it really powerful because you come from this feeling of that was a really good time in my life and I've got all the positive vibes going now lets do this and these were accounting academics so I had feedback afterwards, I got really amazing feedback, and that's what encourages me. So they say 'You are out there' but I guess what I am saying is that I don't think everybody should be like this. I'm not saying this is what you should do but all I saying is that I'm demonstrating that I'm giving an example of me taking a risk. That could have just flopped and you could have looked at me and said 'What are you doing, get real?' but I'd say 'It worked didn't it?'

Within this story there are a number of themes of interest; John having power over groups of academics, John's enjoyment of his public demonstration of his risk-taking (and it paying off) and the positive feedback this generated and finally his declaration he doesn't think everyone else should be like him.

John uses comparisons with other teachers to clarify his own teacher identity and claim it as his own. However, while marking out his difference, social acceptability remains important. John uses his different experiences and skills to gain respect and social acceptance in his academic community. Effectively his industry experience provides a ‘warrant’ for his claims for recognition.

Constructing 'expert' teacher identities

Reading these two teachers' stories as reflexive self-projects highlights the ongoing fashioning of teacher identities. Engaging in both self-monitoring and monitoring of their relationships with others on a continual basis, these individuals position themselves and others in their narrations. While their stories tell of unique personal experience these individuals draw on characteristics of socially and culturally legitimated identities to make sense of their experiences and chart their transformation to 'expert' teachers.

The following and final chapter, brings together the strands of the analysis from Chapters Six to Eight that present an alternative way of conceptualising development of teaching expertise. The theoretical contribution of this reconceptualisation will be addressed, as will the implications for university teachers' professional development.

Chapter 9

The development of university teaching expertise: A multi-faceted story

Towards a more complex view of university teaching expertise

A theme throughout this thesis has been the complex, dynamic and situated nature of university teaching expertise. My aim in this thesis is to work with, rather than reduce, the complexity involved in contemporary university teaching. I hope that in doing so I can provide a counterpoint to the reductionist approach to teaching expertise that tries to ensure quality assurance through means of standardisation. Further, that a deeper understanding of the complexity associated with the development of university teaching expertise can inform thinking about professional development and university teachers.

Traditional understandings of expertise focus on the individual and regard expertise as knowledge based, stable and enduring. The expertise literature whilst providing a useful starting position for this study does not take us far enough in understanding how expert teachers develop their expertise or how they maintain their expertise in times of change. It also fails to explain why people reach different levels of expertise. An essential part of teaching expertise must be the capacity to transform that expertise in response to altered teaching conditions. Expertise therefore needs to be conceptualised as process rather than a point of attainment.

An important contribution of this study is the use of a narrative approach to study the development of university teaching expertise. Bringing together the concepts of expertise and identity, and using these in conjunction with a narrative approach, provides the opportunity for a new way to theorise and better understand the development of university teaching expertise.

Understandings of university teaching expertise emerging from this study

Given the provisional nature of narrative work and my selection of particular theoretical frames to interpret the stories in this study, I am labelling what has been learnt from this study as ‘understandings’ rather than ‘findings’.

Lifelong learning is critical in developing and sustaining expertise

The dynamic nature of university teaching expertise is demonstrated in the personal narratives these award winning teachers tell of the development of their teaching expertise and the refashioning of this expertise in times of change. They speak of the importance of always learning, being able to learn from anyone, their students, other teachers (inside and outside universities) and being able to learn from their mistakes.

This central and ongoing role of learning supports the conceptual framing of the development expertise as lifelong learning. Much of the learning they engage in could be described as informal learning embedded in their everyday practice. Lifelong learning in this study is not portrayed as a universal experience of accumulating skills and knowledge to adapt to change over lifespan. Rather it is about diverse and situated learning experiences involving social and self questioning and engagement with change, both shaping and being shaped by it.

This reflexive project of the self involves the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised biographical narratives, narratives that in this study are focused around the development of university teaching expertise. Highlighting the critical nature of reflexivity helps to address the questions of why some individuals are more likely to develop expertise while others, exposed to similar experiences, do not. Development can be conceptualised as change storied in a particular way. The capacity to re-story teaching lives emerges as an important part of lifelong learning and refashioning expertise in times of change. This is clearly illustrated in Chapter Six with the contrasting narratives of John and Sandra.

The development of university teaching expertise is situated and relational

The narratives told in this study reflect the situated and relational nature of university teaching expertise. While these ‘expert’ teachers’ stories tell of unique personal experience they draw on social and cultural resources to make sense of their experience. The development of university teaching expertise is not just an individual practice, and development as a teacher involves much more than technique. University teaching is a practice shaped by the socio-cultural, institutional and historical context.

Working across the stories of all six participants in Chapter Seven highlights the role of teachers’ own learning experiences and the discourses around higher education in shaping understandings of university teaching expertise. These stories also reinforce the central nature of teacher-student relationships. There was rarely an instance where teachers spoke about their teaching without reference to the students involved. In describing her development as a university teacher Joy identifies the switch of focus from content to the students as an important stage.

The quality of teacher-student relationships appears to be an important factor in sustaining and re-energising university teachers in times of change, heavy workloads and competing demands. Relationships are also a significant feature for teachers in this study when talking about change in universities. They generally speak of change in terms of how it affects students and how it affects their relationships with students.

‘Expert’ teachers engage in identity work on an ongoing basis

There is a complex relationship between the development of teaching expertise and the production of a particular kind of ‘teacher’ identities. ‘Expert’ teachers engage in identity work on an ongoing basis. The narratives of Joy and John (in Chapter Eight) demonstrate the way they position themselves and others in their narrations. This can be seen as a reflexive process they engage in, both self-monitoring and monitoring of their relationships with others.

In constructing their narratives, these ‘expert’ teachers represent themselves as particular types of teachers with identity being actively constructed both through a

process of ‘sameness’ and ‘otherness’, identifying or not identifying with other particular narrative characters in a process of defining who they are in relation to others. They create a place and positionality for themselves within their universities, attempting to position themselves as ‘knowers’ in their own eyes as well as those of students, other academics and their institution. In these stories they chart the progress of their movement towards legitimacy as ‘expert’ teachers.

The stories narrated in this study reinforce three key factors in regards to ‘university teacher’ identity. First, there is no fixed single ‘teacher identity’. There are multiple expressions of university teaching expertise and multiple paths in developing teaching expertise. Second, we need to understand teacher identity not in the abstract but always in relation to a given place and time. Third, teacher identity is not merely a personal choice – it is subject to affirmation by others. The development of teaching expertise involves becoming an authorised and an authoritative teacher within a scholarly community.

Drawing together the threads of these understandings the development of university teaching expertise can be conceptualised as a multi-faceted story. These facets, like the facets of a cut gemstone, can cast light in multiple ways.

First, it reflects the individual, social and cultural contributions to what is regarded as teaching expertise. The different types of narrative constructed in this study – personal, social and reflexive highlight these different contributions. Second, the term ‘multi-faceted’ captures the notion that in different contexts teaching expertise will be reflected in a different light. Expertise is neither enduring nor independent of context. Third, facets of expertise can be reworked over time to produce a more highly regarded expression of expertise. Reflexive practice plays a key role in developing and sustaining expertise. Fourth, different observers will subjectively judge expressions of expertise in different ways. The use of the term ‘story’ also serves to highlight that this is my particular representation of university teaching expertise, not a claim for a universal truth about the nature of teaching expertise.

Understanding the development of teaching expertise in this way calls for a re-examination of professional development for university teachers.

Rethinking professional development for university teachers

In times of ongoing change and challenges in their workplace, academic development is an important resource for university teachers. Stories of the development of teaching expertise in this study illustrate the complex, dynamic and situated nature of teaching expertise and highlight the role on ongoing informal learning in teaching sites. This suggests that greater acknowledgement needs to be given to the local and ongoing nature of professional development. Boud (1999) argues that most academic development takes place in locations where academics spend most of their time and that the practice of academic development needs to be grounded in the nature of academic work.

Universities are starting to shift more of the responsibility for professional development in learning and teaching back to faculties and schools. However, this often appears to be done in an ad-hoc manner with limited resourcing. With the rise of the 'audit culture' in universities from the late 1990's, regular attendance at professional workshops has now become a key indicator of 'quality' academic performance. Centralised programs have the advantage of being more visible (for purposes of audit) and less complicated institutionally in terms of planning and implementation, monitoring and control than distributed activities at the local level. The findings of this thesis call into question an overdependence on generalised professional development workshops removed from sites of teaching practice.

Academic development units have become agents for facilitating policy changes in universities including quality assurance and performance management (McWilliam 2002). However, it has been noted that academic developers are required to balance supporting academics in their development while at the same time meeting institutional accountability requirements (Brew 2002). This may lead to tensions where academic staff view academic developers as facilitators of management imposed change. Given the broadened role of academic units, many units now spend much of their time and

resources administering QA instruments to serve the institution's quality management needs (Lee 2005).

There has been little systematic research examining the influence of centralised teaching development units on teaching quality in Australian universities. In 2002, a report was commissioned by DEST¹ and conducted by Dearn, Fraser and Ryan examining central provision of activities related to professional development for university teachers and the attitude of key university stakeholders towards the professionalisation of the teaching role of academics. This study identified 32 out of a total of 38 Australian universities as having central teaching development units (also known as education/academic and professional development units). The majority of these units (28/32) provided some form of induction programs for university teachers. Other roles included providing seminars and workshop programs, administering teaching evaluation surveys and delivering formal programs about teaching in higher education.

The uptake of these formal programs by university teachers has been limited. In any one year it would appear that enrolments in these formal programs constitute less than 0.5 per cent of full time equivalent (FTE) academic staff in Australia (Dearn, Fraser & Ryan 2002). This low response is not confined to Australia. It has been noted that high attrition and low numbers in most university teacher training programs is a worldwide phenomena (Gibbs and Coffey 2000 as cited in Dearn et al. 2002).

Despite these low levels of participation, a case can be made that formal programs still have an important role to play in a number of key areas: (1) induction of new staff; (2) introducing teachers to a range of theoretical frames that provide ideas and language to explore their teaching experiences; (3) where new systems are instituted on a university wide basis, for example a new on-line learning system; (4) in areas where disciplinary diversity is productive for planned outcomes; and (5) where programs are needed that challenge the taken-for-grantedness of local ways of operating.

¹ Department of Education, Science and Training – the Commonwealth Government department with the responsibility for Higher Education in Australia

However, if attention is focused only on centralised programs a narrow picture of the development of teaching expertise is formed. As Andresen (2000) observes:

vast numbers of teachers manage to acquire and/or develop this knowledge [teacher knowledge] at a very substantial level of expertise, without formal instruction or training whatever (Andresen 2000: 146)

To support all teaching staff in the conscious development of expertise, both formally and informally throughout teaching lives, initiatives at the local level must be addressed. While these activities may be more diverse and complex to initiate and maintain, they are essential to address the challenges of change and issues of teaching quality in universities.

Supporting the development of teaching expertise at sites of practice

Central to this thesis has been the argument to broaden the focus on expertise from a knowledge-based perspective to one that acknowledges the dynamic, situational and relational nature of the development of university teaching expertise and the ongoing identity work that is involved in developing and sustaining teaching expertise.

Examining the narratives of award winning teachers, the diversity in their expression of expertise is apparent, as is the role of ongoing learning in sustaining expertise. As Schuller (1991: 18) suggests, ‘Arguably, the single best indicator of good practice is whether the educator is learning and developing directly as a result of his or her teaching.’

If the development of teaching expertise is conceptualised as a lifelong learning project, the ‘learning’ in that lifelong project needs to be conceptualised in more complex ways than focusing on acquisition of ‘teacher knowledge’. Consideration needs to be given to learning as social practice situated in particular communities as well as to the provisional nature of knowledge.

Learning ... is not a process of individual knowledge construction within a socially and culturally stable situation, but is fragmented, uncertain and

changing precisely because it is constructed in this increasingly fragmented, uncertain and a changing world (Light and Cox, 2001: 45)

This uncertainty highlights the need for reflexivity in the development of teaching expertise. As discussed in Chapter Eight, the development of teaching expertise can be seen as a dynamic process through which university teachers make meaning of their teaching lives and incorporate these meanings into future choices and forms of action. Both self-monitoring and monitoring of relationships with others are ongoing activities in the development of teaching expertise and the fashioning of teacher identity. To support the development of teaching expertise consideration needs to be given to creating spaces both private and public for this reflexive practice.

Before proceeding to discuss in detail potential initiatives at the local level to support the development of teaching expertise, it is important to outline four key principles that I argue should underpin these activities: (1) an acknowledgement of learning as central to sustaining and reshaping expertise in times of change; (2) a view of learning that recognises uncertainty and complexity; (3) a recognition of and respect for diversity in the development and expression of expertise; and (4) the need for all university teachers to develop an informed personal perspective on 'teaching excellence' and what it means for their practice (Skelton 2005).

Practical approaches to supporting the development of teaching expertise

Suggesting ways to support the development of teaching expertise is by no means a straightforward undertaking. Commenting on establishing 'productive reflection' in workplaces, Docherty, Boud & Cressey (2006) highlight the need to attain a balance between the formal design of conditions for productive reflection and the provision of flexibility for the development of informal practices. Three areas of activity, however, provide scope to support the development of teaching expertise in sites of teaching practice. These are: (1) writing about teaching; (2) developing learning communities around teaching; and (3) developing 'deliberate relationships' with students.

Writing about teaching: private and public

Many authors attest to the power of writing in coming to know and understand oneself and others. Given the argued importance of reflexivity in the development of teaching expertise, writing both public and private warrants greater attention for the role it can play in professional development. Laurel Richardson, for example, comments that:

Writing was the method through which I constituted the world and reconstituted myself. Writing became my principle tool through which I learned about myself and the world. I wrote so I would have a life. Writing was and is *how* I come to know (Richardson 2001: 33).

In Chapter Six, personal narratives of the development of expertise were examined and attention was drawn to the ongoing refashioning of expertise, a lifelong learning project, always in play. John and Sandra's stories highlighted the need for teachers to have the capacity to re-story in times of change, to produce new and different understandings of self and other. Private writing about teaching is one way to provide a space for challenging existing understandings and develop new perspectives. Van Manen, in his book *Researching Lived Experience*, speaks to the power of writing in developing self-awareness:

Writing teaches us what we know, and in what way we know we know what we know. As we commit ourselves to paper we see ourselves mirrored in this text. Now this text confronts us ... Writing creates a distance between ourselves and the world whereby the subjectivities of daily experience become the object of our reflective awareness (Van Manen 1997: 127).

Journals and teaching portfolios provide private reflective writing spaces. However, there is also opportunity for a greater sharing of experience through public writing, for instance in a writing group. This would provide a structure to develop public writing to further scholarship of teaching. Central to the idea of scholarship of teaching is 'an artifact', a product, some form of community property that can be shared, discussed, critiqued, exchanged, built upon' (Shulman 1993: 7). Texts produced in writing groups could provide a basis for discussion within local groups and opening much broader

conversations about particular aspects of teaching and learning through conference papers and journal articles.

The value of writing groups has been discussed in regard to research writing at the departmental level to address demands for increased research productivity (Lee & Boud 2003) and within research degrees (Aitchison & Lee 2006). However, little attention has been given to writing groups focused around teaching and learning as a way to support the development of teaching expertise and build scholarship of teaching. The arguments that Lee and Boud (2003) advance, in regard to research development as local practice, can equally be applied to teaching practice. They argue that questions of change pose threats and opportunities to individuals, often challenging the fundamental conception of self and self-worth and attention needs to be given to the emotional dimensions of development and change. They advocate bringing academics into productive relationships with each other, to identify and support fundamental values and activities. They present writing groups, a practice that exemplifies peer learning in the workplace, as one way to address the need for a contextualised, local approach to academic development.

The development of teaching expertise has been conceptualised in this thesis (Chapter Eight) as identity work. There is a tendency to think of academic identity in terms of a local context, but Lee and Boud (2003) observe (in regard to research) that for academics in an era of rapidly accelerating globalisation of higher education, the peer-reviewed journal becomes a key site where identity is performed and recognised. With increased emphasis on scholarship of teaching and teaching as community property, a similar case can be made for teacher identity work taking place on a wider stage.

Developing learning communities around teaching

In Chapter Seven, I drew attention to the situated nature of the development of teaching expertise and discussed learning as social practice. While teaching is often thought of as an individual activity, increasingly there are demands for university teachers to be more accountable and accept more public scrutiny of their teaching practice. In addition, opening up new spaces and new connections in teaching practice is often more

productive and pleasurable in the companies of others. Existing and new perspectives can be tested and extended as MacIntyre (1987) observes:

...one can only think for oneself if one does not think by oneself ...It is only through the discipline of having one's ideas tested in ongoing debate...that the reasoning of any particular individual is rescued from the vagaries of passion and interest (MacIntyre 1987: 24).

The development of learning communities, gatherings of teachers with similar interests can foster a collaborative and reflective culture around teaching practice. Writing groups, discussed above are one example of a learning community. Learning communities could be large or small, formal or informal, centred around interests such as assessment design, online learning or preparation of students for professional practice.

'Deliberate relationships' with students

The central role of relationships with students was examined in detail in Chapter Seven. Managing these relationships needs to be considered as a key factor in developing teaching expertise. It is surprising that little attention has been given to the need to reflexively examine these relationships. Tom (1997) uses the term 'deliberate relationships' to describe thoughtfully and deliberately creating a relationship in which students can learn and where over time teachers can support students' increasing ability to claim power. Her work is underpinned by a concern with surfacing power relationships between faculty and students. Part of this deliberate relationship is 'transparency of practice' which involves; (1) explaining to students what we are doing – or what we think we are doing – and why we are doing it; (2) moving from unconscious or hidden norms of action to explicit establishment/negotiation of ground rules; and (3) analysing power dynamics. Two other concerns are that the needs of teachers be met (as well as students) and respecting the whole person, both student and teacher.

The three approaches that I have discussed as ways to support the development of university teaching expertise are all underpinned by the notion of reflexivity, self-monitoring and monitoring of relationships with others on a continual basis.

Concluding comments

With increasing emphasis on accountability of university teachers, greater attention is being given to measuring teaching quality. However this push to assure quality may have the consequence of narrowing expressions of university expertise. The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, currently being used by the Australian Government to reward universities for demonstrated excellence in teaching, has generated controversy for the ways in which ‘teaching excellence’ is measured. Nevertheless, it will continue to drive conceptions of ‘good teaching’ at an institutional level.

If staff development and performance management are aligned with national priorities and measurable outcomes, it is possible that we may see a loss of teaching expertise in the sector. If teaching expertise is dynamic, complex and relational how is this captured in abstracted measures of ‘good teaching’ disconnected from specific sites of local practice? The arguments made in this thesis about the nature and the development of university teaching expertise provoke the question of whether it is time to balance the focus on measurement of teaching excellence with greater attention to supporting the conscious development of teaching expertise, both formal and informal, in sites of teaching practice.

Appendix 1

Email invitation to participate in the study

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERTISE

Dear

In writing to invite you to participate in this project which aims to further our understanding of how university teachers develop expertise and whether views of expertise are changing in light of the changing nature of academic work.

You have been selected as a potential participant on the basis of receiving an award for teaching excellence. I am interested in hearing the stories from a range of university teachers in a mix of disciplines. I am not looking to put people in boxes or coming to a consensus on the "expert" teacher. Rather, I am looking to explore your diverse experiences and range of views on teaching expertise.

This research is being undertaken to complete requirements for a professional Doctorate in Education at UTS, Sydney. Participation in the project would involve two interviews.

In the first session I would like you to tell me your life story as a teacher/ the story of your teaching life. This provides a way of organising your experiences and commenting on their meaning for you, without me excessively imposing my research agenda on you. I want to let you tell the story in a way that's relevant and comfortable for you. In the follow up interview, I'd like to explore in detail particular issues from your stories and those of other participants. On completion of the study, I will be happy to share with you findings of the research.

If you like to participate in this project please contact me by email or phone 0407 xxxxxx so that we can arrange a meeting time that is convenient to you.

Kind regards
Cathi McMullen

Appendix 2

Guide for second interview

Introduction

- ❖ What stands out for you in your life as a teacher?
 - What kinds of things have been important?
 - What has helped shape your views about yourself as a teacher?
 - What memories stay with you?
- ❖ What is life as a teacher at university like now?

Teaching Philosophy

Having talked a bit about your experiences I'd now like to ask you about your teaching philosophy?

- ❖ What is important to you with your teaching?
 - What are your main aims as a teacher?
 - How do you go about achieving these aims?
- Looking at what you see as being important;
- ❖ Is this different from how you viewed things early in your teaching career?
 - How has it changed?
 - What has led to these changes?

Expertise/development of expertise

Now, moving on to teaching expertise. You were nominated for an award for teaching excellence;

- ❖ What does it mean for you, to have expertise in teaching?
 - Can you describe for me some examples of your teaching practice or critical incidents that show your expertise.

Probe: Qualities you demonstrated in performing this expert practice.

(Link to varying types of knowledge that constitute expert practice)

Can we now look more closely at those qualities you have been telling me about?

- ❖ Did you have those qualities when you commenced teaching?
When do you think that you started to develop them?
What experiences were important in developing these qualities?
Tell me about those experiences.
- ❖ Were you aware at the time of the significance of these experiences or has this only become apparent at a later stage?
- ❖ Have there been other experiences, such as ones in your personal life, that have affected the way you go about your teaching?
- ❖ Have you attended any formal courses that have helped your development as a teacher? Tell me about your experiences and how they influenced your teaching?
- ❖ What have been your worst experiences as a teacher? How have they influenced your teaching?
- ❖ What have been the high points in your teaching career? Tell me about them.
- ❖ Do you think the role of teachers in higher education is changing? Do you think we are seeing changes in what is considered expertise in teaching?

Probe

Relationships with others

- ❖ Is there any one person who has strongly influenced who you are as a teacher?
- ❖ Tell me about that person and the influence they have had.
- ❖ Are there any other people who have significantly influenced the way you teach? Tell me about them.
- ❖ Is there anyone that you really admire as a teacher? Why?
- ❖ Describe for me the best university teacher you experienced as a student?
- ❖ How much has your teaching been influenced by the school /faculty/institution you are located in?
- ❖ What advice would you give to someone starting as a university teacher?

Conclusion

- ❖ What do you think has most shaped your development as a teacher?
- ❖ Where do you think your most significant learning has occurred for you?
- ❖ What has helped your development?
- ❖ What wouldn't you do again?
- ❖ Are there any other points that you would like to add about expertise in teaching and how you have developed this?

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