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THE COLLABORATING TEACHER AS CO-EDUCATOR IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

In this article a report will be given on a research project of the Teacher Education Department of Leiden University, The Netherlands. The research focuses on the role of the collaborating/cooperating teacher in the one year postgraduate teacher training course which is followed by candidates having their masters in a variety of subjects.

The role of the collaborating teacher is considered a crucial one. On behalf of a successful teaching practice programme it is necessary that the collaborating teacher is able to function as a co-educator. This requires in any case knowledge of what is happening at the institute. With regard to the training of the collaborating teachers the policy of the teacher training institutes in The Netherlands diverges.

Because there were doubts about the extent to which the collaborating teachers were actually functioning as real co-educators, a survey research was executed among them. The results of this research led to a more fundamental reflection on the role of the collaborating teacher within the department. It was decided to start a more extensive research programme, to obtain more clarity about the relative influences of the collaborating teacher and the teacher training institute on the student teacher.

First the theoretical background of the study is described, secondly the contents and results of the survey study and finally the current research project which focuses on the gap between theory and practice is reviewed. The article concludes by a short discussion.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Although the training programmes of pre-service teacher education are rather diverse, they have anyway something in common. They all include two components, viz. a so-called theoretical component and a so-called practical component. Within the theoretical component pedagogical content knowledge and educational theory are transmitted. The practical component includes

practical training at the institute and teaching practice at the cooperating school.

During the student teaching (or placement) the prospective teachers are given, among other things, the opportunity to gain teaching experience. This happens under the supervision of a cooperating teacher. Besides they are supervised by a university supervisor from the Department of Teacher Education during their teaching practice. The cooperating teachers play a prominent part in this 'triad' (see Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). In the basic triad of the student teacher experience the student teacher, the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor participate. Teacher education programmes need to collaborate with school based personnel. Close collaboration is essential if the teacher education programme goals are to be achieved. From empirical research of Seperson & Joyce (1973), Zevin (1974), Kilgore (1979), Zeichner (1980) and Bunting (1988) it is apparent that the cooperating teachers have a great influence on the beliefs and the teaching behaviour of prospective teachers supervised by them (Griffin, 1986). Cooperating teachers influence student teachers and seem to play critical roles in a teacher education programme (Kilgore, 1979). The cooperating teacher has more influence on the student teacher than any other person in pre-service teacher education (Emans, 1983; McIntyre, 1984; Koerner, 1992).

'Since student teachers view the student teaching experience as apparently the most important part of their professional preparation programme (Locke, 1979), it is critical that teacher educators focus on this aspect of the training programme' (Taggart, 1988:38). Also 'teachers regard student teaching as the most helpful part of their pre-service teacher education programs' (Koerner, 1992:46). Although the prospective teachers consider the teaching practice a very important component of the training programme (Lasley, 1980; Amarel & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Grimmelt & Ratzlaf, 1986; Taggart, 1988), critical observations are added its role in the educational development of prospective teachers into professional teachers (Kennedy, 1992). Sometimes there is the danger of obstructing the innovatory effect with regard to the knowledge acquisition as part of the theoretical

component of the department of teacher education, caused by the process of socialization that the prospective teacher undergoes during the practice period (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The mental pressure to accommodate to the school culture and habits, conceptions, behaviour etc. is apparently very strong. Accounting to the research results, the school experience is often seen as the reason of neglecting knowledge and abilities, acquired at the university teacher training department, by prospective teachers during their teaching practice (Wubbels, 1992). In the beginning all sort of 'wisdom of practice' dominate student teaching. In consequence of this gap between theory and practice the implementation of new instructional methods must fail, which is considered regrettable and problematic by university supervisors. The relation between theory and practice is at issue here.

From recent research of Ben-Peretz & Rumney (1991) and Koerner (1992) it appears that the interaction between the teaching practice school and the university teacher training department often is not really a success. It seems to be an international, also in The Netherlands recognized problem. In a research report from the Education Inspectorate on the quality of the student teaching in The Netherlands (1991) four aspects determining the quality were named by the respondents: (1) the supervision by the cooperating teacher; (2) the relationship between theory and practice; (3) the relationship between teacher training institutions and schools; (4) the supervision from the teacher training institute. Especially the second and third aspect were regarded problematic. This gap between theory and practice has much to do with the role of the cooperating teacher in the teacher training institute and the course as a whole.

We consider the teaching practice (school experience) as an ideal opportunity for the prospective teacher to develop into a reflective professional: into a teacher who on account of available cognitions and beliefs prepares, performs, evaluates, deliberates and revises the teaching-learning processes (Schön, 1983; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kennedy, 1992). Teaching is regarded here not just as a technical instrumental activity, but as a complex cognitive activity (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986). In accordance with Zeichner (1990:116) we strive after 'attempts to bridge the two traditions of reform (teaching as applied science - teaching as reflective practice) by combining elements of both worlds'. For teacher educators it is important to know exactly to what extent collaborating teachers are able to exert an

influence on student teachers during the practicum (Kilgore, 1979).

With regard to the theory-practice problem everything goes to show that cooperating teachers during their post-lesson conferences with student teachers do not start from any theoretical background, but only refer to their common sense and 'craft knowledge' (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989): 'There was no evidence of an articulated knowledge base regarding either the context or process of teaching or the content or process of training the student teacher' and that 'craft knowledge' and 'common sense' are the basis of most discussions regarding specific clinical experiences' (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990:525). Apart from that the question remains to what extent theory and/or 'craft knowledge' have to play a role in post-lesson conferences. Zeichner (1980) also mentions this transfer problem. Many educational researchers trace the failure of transfer to the fact that the teaching practice has a conservative effect. In this way Zeichner & Tabachnick (1981) point out studies in which it is demonstrated that attitudes, beliefs and teacher behaviour of prospective teachers undergo a so-called 'progressive-traditional shift' under the influence of the practicum. The role of the cooperating teacher is one of the negative factors (Zeichner, 1980; Bunting, 1988). For this reason 'apprenticeship learning' has been criticized (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Healy & Welchert, 1990), a teaching-learning situation in which the beginning teacher imitates the teaching of a master teacher, who is considered the prototype of the vocational training course: the cooperating teacher as the ideal teacher. This is detrimental to the effect of a deeper understanding (Applegate, 1987; Calderhead, 1987) and a reflective attitude (Ferguson, 1988). However, see also Verloop (1991), who proposes more investigation into the role of craft knowledge of the cooperating teacher.

With regard to the great influence of the cooperating teacher on the educational outcomes in teacher education much research literature is already available (cf. Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). This influence is often described in the above mentioned negative way (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). However, in educational research up to now hardly any attention has been paid to this influence from the viewpoint of the cooperating teacher himself. Although the cooperating teacher is vital to student teaching, little has appeared in the professional literature about being a cooperating teacher (Koerner, 1992).

The practical component can affect the content of the teacher training course and besides the role of

the collaborating teacher as co-educator is at issue here. That sort of cooperation has not yet been realized in our Teacher Education Department at Leiden University, The Netherlands. The question is to what extent the involvement in content is important in order for the cooperating teacher to become a co-educator and therefore to develop closer links between the practicum and the content of specific college courses. It is to be expected that the teaching behaviour and the interactive cognitions of the prospective teachers should develop more after instruction at the teacher education institute if they are supervised by cooperating teachers who have received the same instruction, in that way realizing a link between pre-service and in-service teacher training. That is in fact the underlying thesis of the research project in progress, which will be described on in section 4 of this article.

2 A SURVEY AMONG COLLABORATING TEACHERS OF A UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

2.1 Context

First an outline of the situation with regard to the practicum in the University Teacher Education Department at Leiden University is given.

In this post-graduate teacher training course student teachers are trained for the second stage of secondary education or higher vocational education. This one year university course includes four distinguishable (not separable) parts: educational theory, teaching methodology, teaching practice, and research.

The practicum covers half of the one year course: 850 hours of study. The University Statute in The Netherlands requires during the practice period minimal 250 hours of classroom practice, of which 120 are independently executed lessons. The curriculum is an alternating model: 7 weeks university (tutorials), 8 weeks school, 7 weeks university, 8 weeks school, etc. University and school activities are as much as possible correlated to each other.

The practicum takes place at two different schools, one for each half of the school year. At each school the student teacher is supervised by one or more cooperating teacher(s). They are teachers in the same subject area, who have a special appointment for this task: two non-teaching hours per student teacher. They often consult with the prospective teacher and the university supervisor about the progress of the learning process of the student

teacher. At the university, meetings are organised where the learning experiences of the student teacher are discussed. The university supervisor usually visits the teaching practice school once or twice to attend and to discuss lessons.

During the teaching practice period the student teacher focusses on the following subjects.

- Teaching activities.
- Pupil counselling.
- Developing subject matter.
- Research activities.
- School organisation.
- Participation in school activities, in-school and out-of-school.

Teaching activities, and the preparation for them, takes up about 75% of the total.

The teaching practice during the year consists of the following phases:

1. Preparatory phase (school A): interaction between university and school is important in this phase. Tutorials and practice at the institute prepare for the teaching practice: observing lessons, practise lessons. Observations and experiences from the teaching practice are discussed during tutorials.
2. First teaching phase (school A): practising under circumstances that at the beginning are not too difficult, with available teaching materials. Much time is spent on post-lesson conferences, guided by the cooperating teachers, who ultimately give an evaluation report. This period covers 8 weeks.
3. Second teaching phase (school B): the prospective teacher develops her own teaching style and competence, if possible resulting in a teaching qualification. In this phase independent teaching by the student teacher is all important. At certain moments there are supervision conferences on the basis of a log-book. This period also covers 8 weeks.
4. Research phase (school B and/or A): The research question arises from the teaching practice; it is practice-oriented educational research. The collaborating teacher helps the student teacher with the choice of research

subject and with the implementation during at least three weeks at school. The supervision is in hands of the university tutors.

Based on the programme goals the teaching practice is completed. Criteria for assessment are: subject matter as it is taught at secondary school, functioning in daily classroom practice, the capacity to see the relationship between own one's behaviour and the total school's aims and to see one's own classroom situation in perspective. In other words, student teachers must learn to be technically competent as well as reflective and self-critical - these teachers must be able to reflect on their own situation.

The most important task of the cooperating teacher is to supervise the student teacher during practice teaching. In the initial stage the prospective teacher will need systematic supervision, in due course supervision can be less tight, depending on the progress being made. To improve the nature of the supervisory conferences (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989; Ben-Peretz & Rumney, 1991) in order to train a more reflective teacher, newly appointed cooperating teachers have to take an introductory course 'Counselling skills for collaborating teachers: observation training and practicing pre-/post-lesson conferences'. The course can be seen as an in-service training course.

2.2 Sample

As mentioned in the introduction there were some doubts about the collaborating teachers functioning as co-educators in the real sense of the word with relation to ideas and professional knowledge. In order to obtain more detailed information about these questions it was decided to conduct a survey research in which all cooperating teachers of the Teacher Education Department of Leiden University were interviewed about their role in the teacher education process, both ideally and factually.

There are 75 teachers from schools located in the neighbourhood, who function as collaborating teachers for the teacher training institute. Response to cooperating teachers' questionnaires was 52% (N=39). With regard to some potentially important variables like type of school etc. there were no differences between respondents and nonrespondents. The analysis of the questionnaires yielded in summary the following results. The various questions are reduced to the following denominators: (1) the perceptions with regard to their own role, and (2) the perceptions with regard to the required skills.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Cooperating teachers' perceptions of their own role

Through description of these perceptions the ideas of the collaborating teachers with respect to whether or not they are functioning as co-educator can be expressed.

They were asked how they experience the contacts with the teacher training institute. To this question 62% answered in a positive sense and 38% in a negative one.

In the category 'negative' among other things the following answers were given: 'It is not always clear to me who is the first responsible supervisor of the student teacher'; 'In the interaction between institute and school the student teacher is sometimes the only mediator'. Asked for possible points of agreement between their ideas and ideas of university supervisors, 37% answered 'yes', 33% answered 'broadly the same' and 30% answered 'no, not at all'. From the remarks among other things the following: 'Different ideas can be stimulating, in the sense of supplementing each other'; 'Both components of the teacher training course are considered to be more or less independent of each other'; 'I am not acquainted with the content of the teacher training programme at the institute'. With regard to the most important question as to the interviewee's opinion of being in the real sense a co-educator, 70% feel co-educator and 30% do not. The negative remarks often refer to the gap between theory and practice. The suggestions point towards intensification of the co-educators' role by way of more interaction between institute and school, delimitation of responsibilities, an active role in the teaching programme at the teacher training institute or at school (participating in teaching and decision-making), and last but not least in-service training in educational theory and teaching methods/pedagogical content knowledge.

2.3.2 Cooperating teachers' perceptions of required skills

The cooperating teacher has to meet certain requirements. Asked for the most important requirements or qualifications, the following qualifications ranged as to priority on the basis of total frequency, were mentioned:

1. Teaching experience.
2. Subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.
3. Enthusiasm about the school subject.

4. Flexibility.
5. Critical of own functioning.
6. Listening skills.
7. Organisational skills.

The low priority of specific supervision skills call for comment. It is possible of course that the cooperating teachers take the mastery level of these skills more or less for granted or that they consider themselves in the first place subject teacher and colleague of the methods teacher at the university. These outcomes conform to Stakenborg (1981), who carried out research on in-service training for collaborating teachers.

Furthermore, asked for the need of in-service training and, if the answer should be positive, how (teaching method) and what (educational content), 26% was in want of in-service training, while 74% was not. The organisational suggestions were: meetings for collaborating teachers, in-service training course, training just for new collaborating teachers, sessions with information and role playing. As regards the content the following was mentioned: practicum-evaluation, observation and reviewing of lessons, discussion-technique, recent developments in pedagogical content knowledge.

2.4 Conclusions

The results of this investigation indicated that in any case almost one third of the collaborating teachers did not consider themselves as co-educator in an integrated teacher education programme. Moreover, it was shown that an equal part was not in touch with the training programme of the university teacher training department. The outcomes of the questionnaire analysis are clear.

The cooperating teacher likes to work as a real co-educator, but the 'different worlds' prevent so far this ideal. Up to now too little reciprocal transfer is utilized. About a third of the cooperating teachers in function feel the co-operation as insufficient, they do not feel jointly responsible, so long as the teaching programme is not clear to them. The nature of the relationship between university and school is decisive for a good schoolexperience. Only a well-regulated interaction offers prospects of success for the cooperating teacher to function as a co-educator. One possibility would be the involvement of collaborating teachers in specific parts of the university teacher education program. Given the fact that many prospective teachers have deficiencies with respect to specific secondary school subject matter topics, this would make for an obvious area for involvement of collaborating

teachers in the university teacher education program.

3 RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

With reference to the results of the survey research, it was decided to start a more extensive research programme, to obtain more clarity about the relative influences of the collaborating teacher and the teacher training institute on the student teacher.

The research project starts from the principle that teacher action is regulated by cognitions. It is focused on the cognitions of prospective teachers. The teachers are considered professionals who in practice is continuously deliberating whether or not to use particular competences (Fenstermacher, 1986). On the one hand they possess conceptual knowledge taught in the teacher education programme, on the other hand beliefs, implicit theories. In the teacher-thinking research (Halkes & Olson, 1984) the teacher is considered a reflective professional, who makes continuously deliberate choices on account of available knowledge and beliefs. In developing vocational preparation cognitive training or conceptual instruction is crucial: the skills need to be explicitly defined to the novice and the skills need to be demonstrated to the novice (Joyce & Showers, 1988; Kennedy, 1992). An attempt is made to develop in a cognitive way the occupational qualification of prospective teachers. The knowledge offered is not a prescription, but rather a frame of reference and is to be considered an 'enrichment'. Gliessman & Pugh (1987) and also Verloop (1989) show that the thoughts and actions by prospective teachers can be changed through conceptual instruction. Other educational researchers doubt the value of only this instructional method for the acquisition of teaching skills (Vansledright & Putnam, 1991). Of course practical work and feedback are important. That would be attended to if the cooperating teachers are given the same conceptual instruction, so that in the teaching practice the components 'practice and application' and 'structured feedback' appear to full advantage. Moreover, this prevents 'apprenticeship learning' (Feiman-Nemser, 1990).

This research project is actuated by the gap repeatedly observed between theory and practice: problems in the transfer of knowledge from the teacher education department to teaching practice. For that purpose it is relevant to explore possibilities to correct this faulty transfer by drawing the cooperating teachers firmly into the training programme. On account of various empirical studies from which the great influence of

the cooperating teacher on the student teachers' beliefs emerge, we expect this to be the case with most of our cooperating teachers.

In this research project an instructional module is used that (better than the data-driven instructions in the past) excellently transfers instruction to the prospective teachers with all their individual differences: an interactive video disc on 'Group instruction' (Verloop e.a., 1990). Furthermore, the stimulus material will be composed of carefully selected instructions to some core elements of instructional strategy, concerning the curriculum subjects Dutch (mother tongue), classical languages and foreign languages. An intentional choice was made for a cross-curricular and a pedagogical content subject (Shulman, 1987), as these same content areas have a place in the teacher training course for the same target group: a realistic learning-teaching setting (cf. Tamir, 1988).

A short overview of the research project in progress now follows.

3.1 Hypothesis

The main research hypothesis claims that the **beliefs** of prospective teachers develop more in accordance with theoretical concepts if during their teaching practice they are supervised by a cooperating teacher who has received the same conceptual instruction and who applies this during the teaching practice. The same holds for the **interactive cognitions** of prospective teachers and for the **teacher behaviour** of prospective teachers.

3.2 Method

The sample consists of 30 post-graduate students Dutch, classical languages and foreign languages studying at the Teacher Education Department of Leiden University and their cooperating teachers.

The student teachers receive two different sorts of theoretical instruction (see Figure 1): (1) instruction in explaining subject matter to a group according to Ausubel's learning theory; (2) instruction about teaching reading comprehension according to recent cognitive-psychological studies in reading comprehension strategies: interactive textual analysis. This happens in the first 7 weeks of the training.

The instructional module 'Group instruction' presents on the analogy of Joyce & Weil (1980) an instructional adaptation of Ausubel's learning theory (1963), the Advance Organizer theory, into 12 core components (Verloop et al., 1990). The instructional module 'Reading comprehension

strategies' shows the core components of the conceptual knowledge about reading comprehension and study skills 'in action', focused on the interaction of top down and bottom up strategies (Dole et al., 1991; Hendrix & Hulshof, 1993).

First the student teachers are given a written summary of both theories. Then they see in action the most important concepts of both theories resp. by means of an interactive videodisc and a videotape.

The main objective of this conceptual instruction is to develop beliefs with respect to these two subject matter domains. Also we hope in this way to develop cognitions and behaviour of student teachers. During the first teaching practice period they can try to transfer the subject matter content into practice.

Just like the student teachers the cooperating teachers receive the above mentioned theoretical instructions, however only after the first teaching practice period. In continuation of this knowledge acquisition they are asked to use the core components of both theories during their supervision of the student teachers in the second practice period. This is possible in two ways: (1) introducing the subject during post lesson conferences; (2) using the core components in their own lessons while the student teacher is present in the lesson. Now the beliefs, the interactive cognitions and the behaviour of the student teachers can be examined and through that the influence of the collaborating teachers.

In view of the fact that in the survey study many cooperating teachers stated that they would appreciate becoming more involved in the university teacher education programme, we consider the training of cooperating teachers in the educational theories as worthwhile and natural activities.

With respect to the operationalization and testing of the dependent variables the following.

1. Beliefs

The issue here is in particular the development of student teachers' beliefs on account of

- acquisition of subject matter in general and the role of the teacher in those circumstances;
- acquisition of reading strategies in particular and the role of the teacher in those circumstances.

It is investigated what the beliefs, the educational philosophies, of the student teachers are with respect to these subject domains.

One of the procedures for investigating the relationship between knowledge acquisition and beliefs consists of questioning the student teacher about their beliefs before and after conceptual instruction. Also concept mapping is used to examine the growth of student teachers' knowledge concerning group instruction and reading strategies (Beijerbach, 1988).

2. Interactive cognitions

Here the cognitions of the student teachers when teaching are at stake.

The technique used to elicit and to determine the student teachers' interactive cognitions is stimulated recall. In this procedure the student teacher uses the videotape as an aid to externalize as much as possible of the thought processes as they occurred during the lesson (Verloop, 1989).

3. Teacher behaviour

The issue here is the theory-consistent behaviour of student teachers with respect to a limited

number of essential elements of the two educational theories. To ensure that the instruments depict the degree of theory-consistent behaviour of the teacher, instrument construction has to start from the elements (the core of the Advance Organizer theory and the Reading Comprehension theory) of the two theories. One of these instruments has already been developed and tested (Verloop, 1989).

4 DISCUSSION

Our small-scale qualitative survey among our own collaborating teachers is to a great extent in agreement with the conclusions of studies of Guyton & McIntyre (1990) and Koerner (1992) concerning the same subject. The problems described by them also apply to the Dutch situation. Guyton & McIntyre mention among other things: the lack of a theoretical and conceptual framework, a craft-oriented process that is guided indirectly by theory, lack of communication, the triad as a very unbalanced relationship. Koerner claims that the lack of communication created adversial feelings toward the university and questioning of the expectations that come from the university. Also the conclusions that collaborating teachers want to have meaningful participation in teacher education and

	teacher training institute (sept-oct)	practicum (nov-dec)	teacher training institute (jan-feb)	practicum (march-april)
	conceptual instruction in:	observation of:		observation of:
post graduate student teachers	the use of advance organizers	beliefs		beliefs
		interactive cognitions		interactive cognitions
	the teaching of reading comprehension strategies	behaviour		behaviour
collaborating teachers			conceptual instruction in:	
			the use of advance organizers	the teaching of reading comprehension strategies

Figure 1: Research design

that they would be able to take more responsibility for the student teacher's supervision are consistent with the Dutch findings. Borko (1989) remarks once more that collaborating teachers do not always have the expertise to be teacher educator. Kennedy (1992) identifies four forms of expertise: application of technical skills, applying concepts/theories/principles, critical analysis, deliberate action. Supervisors must infuse content into novices' deliberations about experiences and actions. Content (professional skills, concepts, theories and principles) provides the standards for judging others' practice (Kennedy, 1992:72) and this can broaden the actual discussion during supervisory conferences. We do not consider this an attack on the student teachers' contribution. Kennedy wants cooperating teachers selected on account of their content knowledge and their ability to teach adults, rather than their years of experience teaching or their formal degree. It has been in that case definitely established that the cooperating teachers must be trained. A more insightful understanding of the educational theory, showing directly how the theory 'works' in practice, results in a more deliberate application of this theory in practice, just because of the fact that the gap between theory and practice is smaller here (Verloop, 1989). The next questions are: must the cooperating teachers hold the same ideas as the university supervisors? To what extent are 'neutral' theories at issue here? The ideas or implicit theories of the cooperating teachers are therefore of course very important. This agrees with our provisional conclusion with respect to the training of collaborating teachers: per meeting with collaborating teachers we open the discussion on a theoretical subject.

In The Netherlands there is a tendency to increase the practical component of the teacher education programme and so the role of the cooperating teacher. Accentuating field experience and 'learning-by-doing' implies that theory can also be transmitted in professional schools by well-trained cooperating teachers and university supervisors together to allow for the student teachers to reflect on- and in-action. The most extreme, be it unlikely, consequence would be relocating the whole of the teacher training to the practice school. Whatever form teacher education will take, it seems crucial to monitor and investigate the role of educational theory in the preparation of prospective teachers carefully and continually.

End Note

1. This article is based on a paper presented at the International Conference on Teacher Education

FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY, Tel Aviv, Israel, June 27 - July 1, 1993.

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A MEETING OF MINDS: JOURNALS

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(Written dialogues between students; written dialogues between staff and dialogues between staff and students)

It is a circuitous and often lonely journey being educated and educating others. I have found journal writing to be a buffer against the isolation by recording moments along the path and lingering from time to time on a fresh idea or a memory. Reflective journals fill my bookshelves and feed my professional practice as I continue to map my journey.

This is why when I first heard I would be teaching a new subject entitled, 'Reflective Learning and Teaching' with a three year journal component I felt confident. I knew I could share my own use of the professional journal with these pre-service teachers, excite them with my love of writing and send them forth on their way. When I got my group I gave each student a letter of introduction and a small plant to care for which could represent their growth throughout the course. I then talked endlessly about what a journal was and how they could document their journey towards becoming a teacher. The discussion led to topics they could consider, issues they could explore, and observations they could record. I discussed the materials involved: the book, the pen, then I asked them to write at least three times a week and date each entry.

I eagerly awaited the day when I could read each reflective morsel my students had written. Yet after supping on two or three journals I felt quite parched and empty. The ideas they expressed seemed so minimal and uninspired. I understood that I had a large task before me. It was necessary to try and understand what 'writing' and 'reflective thinking' meant to my students.

I began reading all the articles I could find on reflective practice. I reviewed the notion of the Reflective Practitioner and the two kinds of action Dewey defined with regards to teaching practices. He referred to reflective action as active, persistent and carefully considered, in contrast to routine action which is guided by impulse, tradition and authority (Wedman and Martin, 1991, pp. 39-40). In routine action, pre-service teachers are trying to learn existing methods so they can teach them. In

reflective action, however, they are critically analysing existing methods in order to determine whether or not they should be continued or used at all.

Many researchers, while recognising reflection as central to practice, have noted its difficulties for teachers. There seem to be two key aspects to the difficulty. One is cognitive in nature: the ability to look back and learn from one's experience. The second is organizational in nature. Teachers lack the time and structural opportunities to reflect. (Paltorak, 1993, p. 288). Pre service teachers have an added difficulty as they are not used to having choices and making decisions. "For most students, the wish to avoid uncertainty coupled with ... an unreflective deference to authority makes it impossible to participate in such a process." (Shon in Andrews, 1990 p. 59). With this knowledge in mind, I knew I had to provide my students with the assurance that there was no 'right' way, provide clear direction as to how they might begin and allow time for reflection to surface. I also wanted to get other colleagues at the university to value reflection so that a greater number of tasks incorporated critical thought. If these pre-service teachers, could exercise reflective thinking regularly over an extended period of time there was a greater chance they would reap the benefits and continue to exercise its use as practising teachers.

I wanted my students to critically evaluate their existing knowledge and practices as well as future content and practices. I knew that by helping them learn to write from the, 'I believe' position their views and in time, their voice would ring clear. This was a tall order yet I felt certain that the journal was the place to begin. It was in the walls of the journal, where students would be seeking to explore ideas rather than blindly adopting linear methods and procedures. Finding the paths into helping my students at the beginning of journal writing was my first goal.

As well as reading about reflection, I re-read pages from my own notebooks. One entry in particular seemed significant:

"June 10th.