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Teacher Emotion and Learning as Praxis: Professional Development that Matters

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Abstract: This ethnographic study analyses the diverse emotions emerging within one teacher professional development workshop that engaged teachers as creative writers. Participating teachers revealed a vibrant range of positive and negative emotions as they worked within institutional discourses that conflicted with their intrinsic beliefs about effective teaching. They revealed their emotional investment in their roles and their desires for meaningful practice in spite of pressures to abide by managerial practices. Researchers documented high levels of vulnerability, engagement and hope as participants engaged in writing as 'praxis' to experience their beliefs about effective pedagogy firsthand. These findings suggest that since teaching and learning is inherently an emotional experience, professional development needs to acknowledge a teacher's complex emotional identity and to cultivate positive emotional growth. This study is relevant to teacher educators, preservice and practising teachers as it explores meaningful learning opportunities as a basis for effective teaching practice.

Introduction

"Thanks so much for today! I am glad to be involved in something like this. We teachers are always trying to become better at what we do," one teacher commented as she left the room. Even though the workshop had ended, most participants lingered and chatted about how much they had enjoyed the session. The teacher writing workshop was a great success considering our uncertainty about whether participants would invest in their own development as writers. We positioned teachers as learners and asked them to participate in creative writing activities, as well as to write a short story under the guidance of a professional author. They were encouraged to be vulnerable by sharing their creative writing and by exploring less familiar and comfortable writing genres. Participants relinquished their power as they moved from 'setting up' to 'engaging in' learning through the creative writing process. Going into the session we had asked ourselves whether teachers would take on this opportunity to invest in their development, or whether they would reject it for being too difficult or irrelevant. Fortunately they were receptive to learning to write to become better teachers of writing.

This paper is based on a larger teacher professional development project involving a pilot group of Australian primary and secondary English teachers. This project was initiated by the executive staff of schools in one particular Sydney region, who believed that teachers

needed greater assistance in addressing students' poor writing abilities and low motivation levels. This study embraces Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) notion that effective professional development addresses relevant teacher needs, which include the emotional aspects of their work in addition to technical teaching skills. It explores teachers' emotional identities through a professional development opportunity that positioned writing teachers as learners of writing. These opportunities contrast to one-off skill-orientated and information dense professional development workshops that embody a deficit orientated view by focusing on the symptoms rather than the root causes of ineffective teaching (Nilsson, Ejlertsson, Andersson & Blomqvist, 2015). A skill-based approach has unfortunately been favoured by education policy makers and administrators, who measure student learning through high stakes standardised test scores rather than a student's intrinsic level of engagement (Zembylas, 2007). Such managerial approaches depict teaching as a skill-based occupation and regard a teacher's 'inner life' as an unnecessary luxury or "secondary to pedagogical technique and curriculum development" (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006, p.42). This undervaluing of teachers' emotional identities has had negative repercussions by lowering teacher morale.

Focusing merely on content, strategies and outcomes disengages teachers who are ultimately driven by a sense of purpose and meaning. The authors affirm the views of Intrator and Kunzman (2006), who assert that effective professional development follows an inverted model of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid, in which higher order emotional needs must be satisfied for skill and knowledge development to occur. Intrator and Kunzman (2006) argue that professional development that does not account for a practitioner's personal and professional aspirations and values has short lasting benefits, as "overloaded teachers who work in isolation will not retain what it takes to do their most inspired teaching" (p.39). Considering the negative repercussions of low teacher motivation and well-being, the authors propose that addressing practitioners' emotional needs increases practitioner well-being and quality of teaching.

The literature on teacher emotions and school reform reveal the potentially high levels of emotional stress triggered by externally mandated performance criteria (Lasky, 2003). School reforms can bring about disruptions in practice and moral conflict, particularly when they conflict with a teacher's beliefs about effective teaching and learning. Although the teachers participating in this study were not involved in major changes at school level, they were experiencing similar pressures from administrators to improve writing outcomes on standardised tests. Participants felt conflicted by the need to prepare students to meet assessable outcomes at the expense of being able to write creatively for meaning and enjoyment. In light of these conflicting tensions, the researchers attempted to find ways to help teachers to develop meaningful approaches to teach writing.

The dangers of overlooking the emotional aspect of teaching is evident in the high levels of teacher attrition. Although there are multiple factors that cause burnout, such as school culture and nature of the teaching role (Mason & Matas, 2015), teachers may experience emotional exhaustion if they cannot meaningfully engage with their work. The cost of teacher attrition in Australia has been roughly estimated at 30% of the teaching population (OECD, 2005). With regard to beginner teachers, the Queensland College of Teachers reported a much wider range of 8-50% of teacher attrition (Queensland College of Teachers, 2013). Findings from a 2007 Commonwealth Parliamentary Committee inquiry further revealed that a quarter of early career practitioners left teaching within the five year period (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007). These reports highlight the need for effective professional development opportunities that powerfully engage disillusioned practitioners who are "working in the ruins" and teaching from "stuck in places" (Lathers, 1998, p.488). Practitioners who feel

emotionally depleted by overly intrusive, managerial and hegemonic approaches to school reform may be hardened and resistant to change (Hargreaves, 1994; Woods & Carlyle, 2002). If teachers are unable to overcome their cynicism and resistance, they may find themselves increasingly emotionally exhausted and in danger of burning out. The authors consequently propose that effective professional development targets the teachers who are in most in need of support.

Literature Review

The section below explores the literature surrounding teacher emotion that relates to teacher identity, learning and 'praxis.'

The Nature of Emotions in Teaching

This paper incorporates Lasky's (2005) definition of teaching as a sociocultural act and focuses on how a teacher's sense of agency within a broader context can impact their teaching identity. It highlights how teacher identity is constructed through a practitioner's relationships to their students, colleagues and broader school community. Lasky's (2005) research into teacher identity reveals how school reforms can present a significant emotional challenge when it conflicts with teachers' intrinsic and moral beliefs about teaching. A further study by van Veen, Sleegers and van de Ven (2005) documents the positive and negative teacher emotions triggered by educational reform. Their research indicates how teachers experience anxiety, guilt, anger and shame when they feel unsupported by the school management and overwhelmed by their workload. Alternatively, it relays how teachers express positive emotions, such as happiness, when they can teach according to their beliefs about quality practice and reinforce their teaching identity.

Despite the significance of teacher emotion, it is a complex and often challenging area to investigate. Emotions are considered to be multi-componential, comprising of elements such as appraisal, physiological change, subjective experience, emotional expressions and action tendencies (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Such complexity is not often taken into account in the literature on teacher emotions, which often takes on a dualistic approach. For example, teacher emotions have been viewed dichotomously as being either positive or negative; positive emotions typically refer to feelings of pride, excitement, joy and content, whilst negative emotions include sadness, anxiety, anger and frustration (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Such a dichotomous view is believed to minimise the rich interrelatedness of emotion. Parrot (2001) depicts the interconnectivity of emotions by dividing and subdividing the six primary emotions (love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness and fear) into secondary and tertiary emotions and explains that all connect to each other. Such an interconnected view of emotions alerts us to the need to understand emotions through how they inform each other. The authors attempt to present such a view by depicting a rich array of teacher emotions evoked by engaging teachers as learners of creative writing.

Emotions as a Lens for Considering Teacher Identity

Emotions have provided an insightful lens into how teachers experience their work. Emotions are central to understanding teacher practice as they reflect an individual's personal ideology and reveal how they are situated in life (Day & Lee, 2011). Bullough (2009)

describes how emotions convey our selfhood as they are intentional; he suggests that emotions convey messages about our identity, such as "what sort of person we are, to our identity, and so are intertwined within them are our hopes, expectations, and desire" (p. 36). Emotions frame our perceptions of the world and ultimately identifies who we are; as a result, our intentions and purposes are driven by our emotions. In a similar way teachers display emotions on an ontological level as they use them to express their wellbeing, their selfhood and commitment to their profession (Day & Lee, 2011). Emotions have thus been considered as an essential part of understanding teacher work, quality and effectiveness, as teachers express their identities, aspirations and values through their emotions (Day & Lee, 2011; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009).

Emotions are intrinsic to teaching as practitioners invest themselves heavily into their work through building relationships with their students and colleagues. Denzin (1984) defines teaching as a relationship building process that requires social skills, such as interpersonal awareness and emotional intelligibility; he depicts emotional understanding as, "an intersubjective process requiring that one person enter into the field of experience of another and experience for herself the same or similar experiences experienced by another" (p. 137). Teaching has additionally been defined as 'emotional labour,' as teachers are positioned as care-givers in their relationships with students (Hochchild, 1983; Mayeroff, 1990). Noddings (1984) similarly depicts teaching as a relational act or a mutual exchange between the cared for and the person who cares, which manifests in deep relationships that convey a non-objectified and sincere feelings of concern. This non-objectified acceptance of the other is defined as 'engrossment,' or a fusion of horizons, where teachers and learners are unified through a genuine meaning making process. The authors propose that teachers and students form greater connections through 'praxis,' as they can become present and completely attentive to the moment at hand (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). As the teaching relationship revolves around care, emotions are fundamental to professional practice.

Emotions and Teacher Learning

Emotions are not only central to the teaching practice, but they are also vital for teacher learning. Firstly, teachers are meaning makers who negotiate and interpret their experiences to attribute meaning to their work (Kelchtermans, Ballet & Piot, 2009). As meaning makers, teachers constantly reflect on their practices to improve it. Teaching and learning accordingly come from their inner lives and, ". . . affect[ing] not only what is taught but what is learned," to enable practitioners to live more meaningful lives (Bullough, 2008, p. 9). Secondly, the act of learning is in itself an emotional practice. Learning evokes a diverse range of emotion, such as fear, vulnerability, joy and a sense of belonging. The direct experience of learning can enable teachers to become better teachers by allowing them to enter into their students' experiences through the common language of emotion. Finally, teachers who are in an emotionally depleted state may be less able to learn. Without having their emotional energies recharged, they may lack the desire to engage in learning or may feel too emotional overwhelmed to do so. For these reasons, emotions play a central role in determining a teacher's capacity to thrive.

Despite its centrality, teachers may pay less attention to the emotional aspect of their work as they are traditionally positioned as custodians of knowledge rather than as learners; they may accordingly feel discomfort disclosing the vulnerable emotions that are inherent to the learning process (Zembylas, 2004). Post-structuralist perspectives on teacher emotion explain how overly idealistic images of professionalism have led to the management of emotion (Zembylas, 2014), in which practitioners identify "what connections they do (or not)

permit, what enable teachers and students to feel, and to engage in particular emotional practices that may be empowering in some ways and constraining in others" (Zembylas, 2007, p. 360). The authors affirm these views and suggest that repositioning practitioners as learners can disrupt and reframe teacher identity by creating spaces for meaningful transformation. As teachers experience new levels of vulnerability and authentic engagement through learning, they may be able to experience unfamiliar emotions that can reconnect them to their beliefs about effective pedagogical practice. Lasky (2003) similarly explains how positive identity formation involves teachers taking risks against status quo and working according to their intrinsic beliefs about good practice.

Emotional Engagement and Praxis

Finally, the authors assert that meaningful learning requires emotional engagement, which manifests through praxis. Professional development that cultivates renewal and transformation can be understood through the two concepts 'doing' and 'being' – doing or being in doing in the act, which Aristotle defines as 'poiesis' and 'praxis.' 'Poiesis' refers to actions that lead to a tangible outcome, whilst 'praxis' relates to actions that hold inherent value in itself (Silfverberg, 1999). 'Praxis' is associated with feelings of appreciation and contentment within the current moment, which refreshes individuals through reviving their energy as opposed to burdening them with the pressure to achieve results (Zembylas, 2004). The authors define praxis in relation to Roth and Tobin's (2002) phenomenological understanding of habitus and of "being-in/truth," in which a teacher's lived experiences generates professional conversations that leads to "new understandings" (p.1). This study accordingly depicts a teacher professional development opportunity that involves the lived experience of learning. Rather than simply focusing on the end goals of teaching, the participants could directly experience the challenges related to students' writing by participating in a series of creative writing activities. This notion of writing as praxis has been powerfully relayed by Yagelski (2010), who argues that the experience of writing is as valuable as the text that generated, "a writing in the moment . . . has the capacity to change us" (p.7). Participants in this initiative were similarly challenged to engage in the 'praxis' of writing. By doing so, they were able to surprise themselves with their rich capacity to write within a shared space of vulnerability and learning. The authors believed that such a personal experience of writing as 'praxis' would enable teachers to recreate similarly rich learning encounters for their students.

Context of the Praxis Writing Workshop

This study explores the emotional context of a teacher professional development workshop that engaged teachers as creative writers to improve the ways they taught writing. It is part of a broader pilot research project that investigates how teachers in one particular Sydney region implemented the new *English K-10 Syllabus* (2012), which was initiated across all New South Wales (NSW) Australia. This study addresses one aspect of this study, which was to help teachers assist students who were underperforming in the nation-wide literacy test, the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Research into effective programs for student writing led to the National Writing Project (NWP), which is regarded as a highly successful initiative. NWP proposes that teachers need to themselves to better understand their students' experiences. Its success is evident through 200

professional development sites across the United States and its 8000 program, which caters for up to 100,000 teachers (Friedrich, Swain, LeMahieu, Fessehaie & Mieles, 2008).

This study adopted the principles of NWP with a small pilot group of teachers. A total of eight teachers were recruited from four local primary (Kindergarten to Year 6) and secondary (Year 7 to Year 12) schools in the Campbelltown area in south western Sydney, NSW. Participants were nominated by the principals of respective schools and were involved in full day writing workshops where they wrote creatively and critically reflected on their teaching and writing practices. The writing workshops were delivered by a writer in residence and two researchers from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). A total of five workshops were presented over the period of one year. The data for this study was collected from the second teacher writing workshop as it provided an in-depth snapshot of the rich and diverse emotions emerged when teachers engaged in writing as praxis.

Method

This case study of a teacher professional development workshop involves an ethnographic approach. The researchers made detailed notes of the emotional dynamics of the workshop by observing how participants engaged with the workshop facilitators, each other and the workshop activities. These observations took place over a full day and were recorded on the researchers' mobile devices. Whilst making these observations, researchers were conscious of Taylor's (2013) recognition of "that which is resolutely mundane within everyday pedagogic practice" (p. 698) and attempted to give attention to the unremarkable in order to discern the "constellation of human-non human agencies, forces and events" (p. 698). The teachers did not take part in the research process to focus wholly on the creative writing activities. Ethnographic studies are construed as a way of capturing the detailed nuances of teacher emotion (Denzin, 1997). Ethnography enables the careful capturing of the voices and embedded emotions of the research participants and facilitators; it has therefore been commonly used in the education field for interpretative and qualitative research (Gilbert, 2001). Researchers can employ ethnographic approaches to take note of and to highlight the complex emotions surfacing in a professional development experience (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). As a research methodology grounded in critical post-structuralism, ethnography encompasses factors such as subjectivity, emotionality, and verisimilitude, to account for the ambiguity, paradox and complexities surrounding research into emotion. It acknowledges that the study of emotions in education is more appropriately treated in an interpretive manner (Denzin, 1997). The authors similarly attempted to interpret and attribute meaning to teacher actions and comments to explore teaching as a complex mixture of "tacit and intuit components of teacher cognitions [and emotions]" (Verloop, Van Driel & Meijer, 2001, p. 447).

Primary data sources include field observations of the workshops and a survey of participants' views on the biggest challenges to effective writing instruction in their classrooms. From analysing this data, the researchers sought to investigate teacher emotions and its implications for teacher professional development. This case study depicts the 'emotional ecology' of a teacher writing workshop to demonstrate how practitioners emotionally connected and engaged in the learning encounter (Hargreaves, 2000). Zembylas (2007) defines emotional ecology as the emotional knowledge of a teacher or learner within a given context that includes "the rich connections to emotional experiences and relationships with others" (p. 357). The case study approach was adopted to explore in depth the teacher emotion that emerged (Creswell, 2007). The researchers acted as the facilitators of the professional development workshop and were able to observe, record and experience the

emotions that teachers displayed by being a part of the social world that is studied (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This enabled researchers to attain a deeper insight into the emotional content underlying participant comments and actions. The ethical issues were addressed as participants were de-identified by being referred to as 'teacher' or 'practitioner.' Ethics approval was obtained from the University, as well as from the Education Office attached to the participating schools.

The researchers used inductive thematic analysis by coding the researcher notes into core themes that revealed the types of teacher emotions. They incorporated Glaser and Straus's (1967) grounded theory approach, which refers to a process where repeated information in qualitative data is grouped into codes and categorised to represent developing themes. This theory reflects the researcher's role in interpreting the "implicit meanings" of participant interactions and encounters to make sense of the data as a whole (Charmaz, 2002, p. 678). Finally, the emerging themes were elaborated and clarified through ongoing discussions and reference to the literature on teaching as an emotional practice.

Findings and Discussion

The researchers analysed the field notes and teacher survey responses according to the key categories of teacher emotion. Four main groups of emotions were identified. The first group of emotions relates to the energy, excitement and passion that teachers expressed about their intrinsic beliefs concerning teaching and writing. The second refers to emotions, such as inner conflict, frustration and discouragement, which emerged when teachers felt they were unable to teach according to their beliefs about effective writing instruction. The third group conveys the vulnerability, engagement and hope teachers expressed as they engaged in the creative writing process. Finally, participants expressed generosity, gratitude and inspiration as they actively participated in a giving and receiving relationship within writing and learning community. These findings reveal that teachers experienced a wide range of interconnected positive and negative emotions as they reflected on ways to navigate the tensions of teaching writing.

Energy, Excitement and Passion: Why do I Teach?

The first group of emotions revolve around purpose and passion. Teachers' passionate comments about teaching and writing revealed how they were emotionally invested in both processes. Teachers saw themselves as artists who were skilled at their trade and expressed great enthusiasm and energy about their work. Bullough (2008) argues that these questions about deeper meaning are essential as teachers are responsible for helping students live a positive, meaningful and valuable life. The writing workshop facilitator often provoked such discussions about meaning by asking questions, such as, "Do writers write merely for financial gain?" This question prompted a group discussion on what motivated individuals to write and teach, where one participant replied how teachers and writers aimed create beauty, "Isn't it for the same for all artists, actors, craftsmen? You do it to create meaning and beauty!" and another stated, "You do it for understanding of the world!" Comments about beauty, meaning and craftsmanship revealed that teachers associated strong emotions to their work. Participants regarded teaching as a 'vocation' rather than just a job; they were able to find commonality between teaching and writing by perceiving both as aesthetic acts. Since teachers derived purposefulness through generating quality teaching and learning

experiences, they experienced frustration, discouragement and helplessness when they felt that these core beliefs being compromised.

Inner conflict, Frustration and Discouragement: How Can I Teach What I Believe?

The second group of emotions highlighted the tension between the ideal and actual practice of teaching writing. Participants felt troubled and discouraged at having to "teach towards the test," as they regarded this to be 'bad' teaching. Kaplan (2008) argues that practitioners can experience strong emotions of resentment and unresolved anger when they are pressured to work against their beliefs about effective pedagogy. He proposes that teachers and students need to engage in conversations around intrinsically motivated learning as the pressure from high-stakes and standardised tests increases. Participants engaged in such discussions by reflecting on the damaging effects of overly prescriptive writing approaches. To better understand teachers' needs and concerns relating writing instruction, the facilitator conducted a survey on what participants perceived to be their greatest concern in regards to teaching writing. Teachers were given post-it notes to record their answers. A total of 49 post-it note responses were collected and grouped under general themes (Table 1). The highest number of responses (24 in total) related to difficulties of cultivating creativity within an overly rigid curriculum and an exam orientated school culture. As a whole, practitioners related challenges in: valuing students' own voice and providing adequate scaffolding; developing independence and risk-taking, providing enough freedom in tasks; finding a balance between fostering creativity and preparing students for the NAPLAN; developing assessment criteria that links with the syllabus without limiting creativity. These responses are displayed in the table below (Table 1).

Main areas of concern	Teacher responses
Scaffolding vs stifling creativity, engaging students	- Risk to creativity , do we want 'writing clones' or creative writers , predictable formulaic vs challenging and individual - Death by text types, teaching structured text types - the how to, too prescriptive- - How much detail is needed, when is it enough and when do we stop, valuing students' own voice vs scaffolds, when do we remove the training wheels (stage..?), scaffold vs freedom in writing, scaffolds- when do we pull the students back? - How can we develop independence and risk taking, strategies to improve risk taking, enabling students to take risks - Assessment - developing assessment criteria that links with syllabus without limiting creativity, finding a balance between fostering creativity and preparing students for NAPLAN - Supporting student needs, teaching students to be independent learners, improving the 'I-can: thoughts and therefore active engagement, engaging students in the writing experience, fostering an appreciation for reading and writing - Catering for varying needs and learning levels, differentiation
Structural pressures, constraints Classroom management	- Managing changing rules, expectations, e.g. new syllabus, changes to compliance, school policies and procedures, consistency in policies and procedures - Teaching to ensure students achieve in tests, assessments (external pressure) - Resources and expertise, money - Time, time - fitting creative writing into the English curriculum vs spelling and grammar, finding time to model creative writing for the students, finding balance, time management, working smarter not harder
Teacher learning, teaching strategies	- Meaningful professional development - Extending students' vocabulary - Strategies - building a repertoire of strategies, approaches to teaching elements of writing - Rewriting process - how to engage children and show them how to edit and rewrite

Other	- Classroom management - engaging students in learning with minimal behavioural concerns, classroom management - managing challenging behaviours, special needs - Marking - checklist for workbook, marking, lack of consistent standards in marking, keeping up to date with marking - Working with parents - criteria for parents (1 stamp good, 2-very good, 3 excellent), letters to parents about journals, parents decrease interest - Assessment - self assessment, peer assessment - Technology - using technology authentically to enhance writing (not just for word-processing, technology issues

Table 1: Areas of concern identified by teachers about current teaching practices

Teachers were deeply troubled by the potentially damaging impact of 'over-teaching,' with one participant asking, "Do we want writing clones or creative writers?" The writing facilitator described how an over-emphasis on teaching the language and structural features of text-types such as narrative and recounts was like "putting the cart before the horse," and proposed that students who enjoyed writing could learn to write in any given style. He mentioned how a fixation on structure hindered the learning process and cited examples of high-performing student responses that were technically perfect but "lacking soul." Teachers recognised that students had been conditioned to seek security via prescriptive learning approaches. One participant mentioned how it was 'clever' not to put word limits on student writing to encourage creativity and autonomy, as she reflected, "It is good to just get them to write, instead of telling them how much to write," but another teacher retorted that this would be futile as students would automatically ask how long their writing would need to be.

Teachers proposed that 'over-teaching' made students dependent on scaffolds and standardised answers, with one participant acknowledging, "I think kids are saying, I can't write according to the way you want me to, that is text types, or exam conditions," and another mentioning, "Sometimes I tell students to use a better word, but it is getting ridiculous, we are turning them into thesauruses." The writing facilitator also explained how schooling rewarded learners who mastered 'the formula' rather than the individuals who took risks with their learning, as he stated, "This inability to take risks may occur with a child who gets that initially a great mark. They may be afraid to get a lower mark so they may stick with the formula for success." These conversations revealed that teachers felt torn between the need to cultivate successful test-takers and the desire to inspire critical and creative thinkers. They were deeply concerned about formulaic approaches to teaching writing that were enforced by an outcomes-driven learning climate.

Vulnerability, Engagement, Hope: How Can I Learn and Grow?

Vulnerability and hope emerged as teachers engaged in learning to write as 'praxis.' One of the main components of this initiative was to redefine teachers' identities as both learners and writers. This project followed a major principle of the National Writing Project (NWP), which outlined how effective teachers of writing needed to be writers themselves (Bratcher & Stroble, 1994). Participants expressed a mixture of excitement and vulnerability when they realised that they themselves would write. Although they all taught writing, most did not write much due to the lack of time. Even the teachers who were undertaking further higher education courses admitted feeling unsettled by the prospect "becoming the student." Participants liked the idea of being able to focus on their own learning, but felt vulnerable at the potential for scrutiny. This was demonstrated by comments such as, "So this is how our students feel" where teachers expressed 'a-ha' moments about the vulnerability of learning. In fact, teachers felt doubly exposed as they believed that they required a certain level of writing proficiency. The lack of teacher confidence in their own writing abilities was evident

through self-effacing comments such as, "I don't know if I did it properly." The writing facilitator highlighted how irrelevant such comments were considering the significance of risk-taking, openness and 'getting it wrong' within the creative process.

Despite these pressures to 'get things right,' practitioners were eager to enrich their teaching through redefining their roles as learners. They believed that such a positioning could help them to become better teachers by allowing them to relate to their students. The shared space of vulnerability also encouraged teachers to experiment, take risks with and share their writing. The benefits of shared vulnerability is evident in teacher writing programs that demonstrate how teachers are transformed as they "[express' doubt[ing], . . . find solace in the ability to question their assumptions, argue for their beliefs, and reveal their feelings in both open conversations and personal writing" (Kaplan, 2008, p. 341). Teachers could play around with their ideas without criticism and with the support of their colleagues. They found these conditions highly engaging and were quickly immersed in their writing. Their deep levels of engagement were demonstrated through how they would continue writing during their breaks, despite the facilitator's pleas for them to leave the room, "You can go, have a break, you earned it!"

Participants also revealed how they engaged in writing as 'praxis' by becoming immersed in the lives of their characters. For example, a teacher was observed as being focused on her character to the point that she related to him as an actual person. She morally engaged with her character and expressed empathy, stating, "I feel sorry for him." This led other teachers to respond with humour, "Are you still wrestling with your conscience?" Risk-taking and going beyond one's comfort zone was another aspect of learning and writing as 'praxis.' One teacher described the risk of writing as someone from the opposite gender. She was able to surprise herself by being able to authentically enter into an experience she had not lived. Her risk taking was immediately affirmed by one of the researchers, who commented, "When you were reading your writing. It sounded very much like a man's personae." Learning was thus made visible through the ways that teachers became 'lost' in the writing act by entering into another's experience.

Generosity, Gratitude and Inspiration: Learning as Giving and Receiving

As teachers became vulnerable through sharing their writing, they formed a community of practitioners who were bonded by gratitude, generosity and inspiration. Gratitude was demonstrated through the 'gifts' of vulnerability and trust given as participants and the facilitators disclosed their insecurities about their writing skills. Omissions of weakness from the facilitator and participants helped others to disclose their self-doubt and fear. For example, the writing facilitator admitted that he sometimes "felt like a fraud" despite being a prize-winning author. His own experiences of self-doubt made him aware of the importance of providing affirmation, as he often responded to teacher hesitation with statements such as, "Who am I to judge you?" He incorporated bad examples of writing to evoke humour so that teachers "could have fun with it" rather than feeling pressured to perform. This generous act of self-disclosure enhanced teacher engagement. Teacher involvement was most clearly demonstrated through their acceptance of the facilitator's challenge to produce a publishable piece of writing. Although some teachers responded fearfully by looking away and avoiding eye contact, one teacher articulated the group's unspoken desire for challenge by commenting, "It is not something that I would like to do, but I think it would be great to do it." She was able to acknowledge both the fear and the deep longing for rich and meaningful experiences that bound the participants together.

Teacher responsiveness also elicited acts of giving from the writing facilitator, who expressed gratitude by offering extra support. Feeling touched by the teachers' enthusiastic responses, he offered to invest his personal time to edit their work. One researcher commented how this was, "an amazing opportunity that is senseless to waste" and another made a similar comment to teachers, asking, "How often do you have the chance where you have an expert writer to work with you?" The facilitator's act of giving was triggered by the joy he received at seeing how deeply teachers were engaged. He compared these participants to a group of science teachers who were constantly checking their phones. Gratitude was also expressed by participants as they could glimpse new possibilities for being through seeing others engage in writing as 'praxis.' Through 'gifting' each other with their unique perspectives, they disclosed rich possibilities for being and seeing. In a writing prompt of a beautiful woman, one teacher creatively reflected on the sadness of passing time and the loss of youth. She presented her evolving ideas as a conversation between the older and younger self, "Excuse me, it is me," depicting the struggles of an old woman who was coming to terms with her aging body. The teacher disclosed a richness of rich and creative persona that extended far beyond her professional identity. Positioned as a learner and writer, she was able to reveal a person who was compassionate and empathetically aware of another person's deep loss. She provided an example of being present through 'praxis' rather than 'poesis' through dwelling deeply in her fictional character's experiences. After hearing her writing, one researcher commented that she could see this teacher "in a new light" and "got a sense of depths about her." As teachers took risks with their writing, they revealed themselves to be ethical and imaginative beings who could inspire similar practices in others.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the emotions surfacing within the space of a teacher professional development workshop where teachers engaged in writing as 'praxis.' From the field notes and teacher responses to workshop activities, it was evident that teachers expressed an array of strong emotions in regards to how they taught writing. Emotions can convey powerful messages about a teacher's inner state. In particular, negative emotions can reveal the debilitating effect of eroding professionalism, which Nias (1999) describes in terms of feelings of, ". . . guilt and loss of self-esteem through the betrayal of deeply held values can be emotionally damaging as appropriating or resistance" (p. 225). This erosion of one's sense of purpose is detrimental as teachers may opt to leave the profession when they no longer find it meaningful. Participants similarly expressed frustration, disempowerment and vulnerability when they felt unable to translate their beliefs into practice. They articulated feelings of frustration and discouragement about the ways that a high stakes learning culture prevented them from teaching writing meaningfully as 'praxis.'

These emotions can be felt intensely as teachers invest themselves heavily into their work and their levels of success may affect their self-esteem. Moral integrity is accordingly a core aspect of teacher identity and practitioners can feel demoralised when they find themselves compromising their personal and professional integrity (Kelchtermans, Ballet & Piot, 2009; Nias, 1996). Considering the high cost of negative emotions, it is vital that practitioners are able to navigate their emotional and ethical concerns (Day & Leitch, 2001). Without such opportunities, teachers may, ". . . eventually lose the sense of meaning in their work" (Zembylas, 2004, p.187). These conversations about meaningful professional development are vital as teachers still regularly participate in experiences that overlook their emotional needs and identity. Bullough (2008) describes one example of a professional development opportunity that missed the mark by focusing merely on, "best practice'-

strategies proven to raise student test scores" without mentioning a word on "teacher well-being" (p.22).

Teachers' personal investment in their profession was further evident as teachers passionately talked about teaching as a vocation. Such a strong sense of personal meaning enhances positive teacher emotions by attributing value to their work (Day & Qing, 2009). This ability to share their emotions brought a feeling of recognition and solidarity amongst the participants. Nias (1996) explains the value of moments when an individual's practice aligns with their beliefs. She describes how a teacher's optimism, self-efficacy and esteem can grow when they are able to live out their beliefs and values in their classroom. This positive phenomenon has been defined in terms of 'goal congruence' and 'goal incongruence', where the former leads to positive emotions whilst the latter generates negative feelings (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Bullough (2009) similarly depicts internal consistency as a vehicle for positive emotion or happiness, relaying how, "[Happiness is] closely related to meeting expectations and to how large a gap exists between what a person hopes to achieve and what is actually being achieved, which leads toward questions of identity, of what sort of person the teacher is thought to be and takes him or herself to be" (p.35). This study enabled such moments of 'goal congruence' as teachers could directly experience learning to write as a critical and creative process, which was the approach they inherently valued.

Such initiatives are particularly crucial in the current climate of teacher and student performativity, which measures learning through standardised test scores (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). Teacher learning as 'praxis' turns the tide against the growing levels of teacher powerlessness and frustration; it empowers teachers as emotionally vibrant, complex and dynamic practitioners. The authors argue that professional development that engages teachers in authentic learning as 'praxis' will inspire better teaching and learning practice. For writing teachers, this means creating experiences where teaching, learning and writing is not separated from the process of living or being, where teachers assist students to "write true words about their lives and their world" through watching this process unfold in their teachers' lives (Yagelski, 2009, p.12).

Finally, developing and retaining quality teachers is a growing concern in Australian schools. To develop positive and resilient teachers, teacher preparation courses should focus on the 'matters of the heart' that may initially draw individuals into teaching. Teacher educators should additionally prioritise cultivating and supporting 'good teachers,' who are able to use both their "head and heart, both reason and passion" and teach meaningfully within an increasingly outcomes focused school context (Shoffner, 2009, p.788). Such an approach to teacher education and ongoing professional development can help redefine teacher retention so that it goes beyond the physical bodies that remain in the classrooms, to encompass the quality teachers who emotionally thrive through the "maintenance of motivation and commitment" (Gu & Day, 2007, p. 1314).

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