

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

WHOLE LANGUAGE AND PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE:
THE DYNAMICS OF CURRICULUM OWNERSHIP

by
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IRENE ELINOR SCHMIDT

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the way the curriculum initiative within Language Arts called "Whole Language" becomes a constituent part of an English Language Arts teacher's personal practical knowledge. The teacher's pedagogical thinking was accessed through a joint process which involved the mutual reconstruction of how the teacher's craft knowledge was influenced by Whole Language theory, and how her beliefs, values, and dominant images directed her practice and her interpretation of her practice. From this joint understanding, the role of image emerged as a dominant organizer of the teacher's personal practical knowledge. Image was found to function as an axial organizer for personal knowledge and practice as theorized in the work of Boulding. Implications for teachers' understanding and ownership over their own professional growth and knowledge as a consequence are set forth, and recommendations are made for the possibilities of the examination of the role of image in their own practice.

To Lothar, Jenny, and Jeff,
and to "Ruth".

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CHAPTER I: INVESTIGATING PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

Introduction and Rationale

Introduction

This study investigates the way the curriculum initiative called "Whole Language" becomes a constituent part of an English Language Arts teacher's personal practical knowledge. This research is premised on the assumption that "teaching is a complex and cognitively demanding human process" (Clark and Peterson, 1986, p. 293), and that teaching involves frequent judgments, decisions, and actions that are spontaneously performed by teachers as they organize their teaching practices according to their beliefs, assumptions, and experiences within a social and institutional context.

Stories have been useful in this regard to researchers in the past. Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi (1988) employ narrative to portray the knowledge of two teachers as it is revealed through their autobiographical accounts. Weber (1990) explores the stories of teacher educators' experiences in order to examine some of the emerging themes in their perceptions and experiences. Krall (1988) proposes a method of writing personal histories which she uses with her graduate students in order to reconstruct their past experiences into a more unified view of the present. Connelly and Clandinin (1987) study narrative as an epistemology of personal experience. Clandinin (1986) examined the role of image in two elementary school teachers' personal practical knowledge through interview and participation in their classrooms. Elbaz (1983) investigates the structure of practical knowledge through reflection upon interviews and observations of an English teacher wherein they discussed the teacher's thinking about her practice.

Consequently, the concept of personal practical knowledge was theorized as an investigation into the foundations of a teacher's practice; that is, an investigation into the particular amalgam of experience, knowledge and beliefs upon which the teacher draws in completing the tasks related to teaching.

This thesis is a case-study report of one teacher's personal practical knowledge and how it is constituted with respect to the teaching of English Language Arts. By employing narrative reconstructions of the teacher's practice, the research accesses information about a teacher's personal practical knowledge as she explains her beliefs, her practice, and the contextual frameworks within which she operates. As Connelly and Clandinin (1987) state: "There are many possible, plausible biographic plots in each of our lives and in the lives of the teachers and students we study. ... narrative method offers an interpretive reconstruction of parts of a person's life (p. 134)."

There are two co-narrators in this study: the writer and the subject whose personal practical knowledge is explored. The teacher chooses those perceptions of experiences in classroom life which have impacted in some way upon her consciousness and arranges them in the manner that seems best suited to clarifying her own practice. As researcher, I have recorded these perceptions, and have written a commentary about the teacher's narrative. The result is my subject's narrative within my narrative.

Narratives of this kind have followed, in the past, the researcher's assumptions about what constitutes the primary dimensions of personal practical knowledge. As developed in the work of Elbaz (1983), by means of interviews, classroom observation, and reflection upon these interviews, the narratives consisted of locating cognitive and affective aspects of her subject's practical knowledge within an assumed hierarchical framework. Elbaz employed "rules of practice", "practical principles", and "images" as levels of generality within this

hierarchical framework, ranging from specific directives to extensive, metaphoric statements.

Similarly, Clandinin's research (1986) was based on interviews and participant observation in the classrooms of two elementary school teachers. The structure of the narratives Clandinin wrote was primarily based on the assumption that the personal practical knowledge of teachers was characterized by images which had six possible dimensions:

Images may be connected to a concrete incident; have a metaphoric quality; have an affective dimension; have a moral coloring; be thought to exhibit complexity and be related to other images; and may exhibit specificity in their detailed construction and in the meaning they convey. (p. 33)

Clandinin sought to apprehend the personal practical knowledge of each teacher by describing the images and their expression found in the practice of each teacher.

In Elbaz's case, the assumption was made that practical knowledge was ordered by a hierarchical framework with different kinds of organizational procedures operating at each level. In Clandinin's case, the assumption was made that a central construct for understanding personal practical knowledge is the image. The narratives in each of these investigations corresponded to specific dimensions believed to be valid for the way teachers structure their personal practical knowledge.

The following investigation draws upon both Elbaz and Clandinin's work, as well as later, on Boulding's work (1956), as a supplementary approach which adds to the existing body of research knowledge on the concept of the image of personal practical knowledge.

Statement of Significance

In the last twenty years, increasing attention has been paid to the importance of teacher thinking as curriculum researchers seek to implement a more reflective approach to curriculum change. Researchers, in seeking to address the needs of contemporary society, have examined existing research practice and sought to uncover those aspects of schooling which previously had been infrequently addressed or had been eluded. Olson (1980) states, "I believe that new understanding [of the status quo within schools] can emerge from change efforts because these efforts challenge well-established procedures and the meanings of these practices is questioned ... a better understanding might emerge of just what the common practices mean to those who are involved. ... To understand how teachers construe their practice we need to develop ways of gaining access to the teacher's thinking" (p. 1).

In their narrative case studies of individual teachers' thinking about their personal teaching situations, researchers Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986) have examined aspects of teachers' thinking. Context specific, reflective, non-judgmental in perspective, these studies have pointed to the complex nature of curriculum implementation in the individual classroom even as the authors struggled with a way to allow the teachers' personal experience and thinking speak for itself.

In addition, Westbury (1977) addressed the need to examine the classroom setting, the milieu in which the teacher operates: "... all teachers are captives of the places and roles which are given them and their task [is] to re-enact in appropriate and workable [for them] ways the forms of their places and roles" (p. 8). Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1987), and Elbaz (1983) explore this matter of the influential nature of teachers' milieu, not through examination of the historical roots of the modern classroom as does Westbury, but through writing

collaborative narratives of the teacher's thinking and her point of view of her individual milieu. This technique results in the researcher's narrative of the teacher's "story" as told and clarified by the teacher and is one important attempt to let the teacher speak directly to her own situation.

In a related movement which lends theoretical support to these avenues of research, Schön (1987) echoes Dewey (1938) and Schwab (1969, 1971, 1973) when he addresses the matter of professional practice this way:

...the problems of real-world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures. Indeed, they tend not to present themselves as problems at all, but as messy, indeterminate situations. ... If she (the teacher) is to deal with it competently, she must do so by a kind of improvisation, inventing and testing in the situation strategies of her own devising. (p.4)

Schön argues that what he calls technical rationality, that is, professional knowledge which is testable by reference to facts, has so thoroughly shaped education that many educational activities have come to be seen in terms of instrumental problem-solving based on scientific theory and procedures.

To offset this perception, Connelly and Clandinin (1986) propose to study classrooms and classroom practice by using a narrative method which is based on the following qualification:

... the reconstruction of classroom meaning in terms of [the] narrative unities in the lives of classroom participants. The work is epistemological in character but deviates from epistemology as commonly understood in curriculum studies by focusing on personal experience rather than upon reconstructed formal logic. (p. 293)

It is this attention to personal knowledge about curriculum theory and practice that can be explored from a contextual vantage point by using narrative.

This research focuses attention upon the teacher's perspective, and allows the individual teacher to speak about teaching in a specific, personal way. Lampert (1985) recognized that teachers face teaching situations which present themselves as predicaments which carry a number of conflicting interests and which must be negotiated. These situations are not necessarily resolved in terms of a neat solution to a problem, but often present themselves as conflicts which must be mediated by the teacher, as s/he takes into account the many factors contributing to the situation. These mediations are located in the everyday teaching experiences which present themselves indiscriminately and must be continually re-negotiated.

Elbaz (1991) notes that research of teachers' knowledge requires that teachers speak for themselves.

Thus the language we have had available to talk about teaching has been not only inadequate but systematically biased against the faithful expression of the teacher's voice. Recognition of this has given rise to efforts to present the teacher's knowledge in its own terms, as it is embedded in the teacher's and school's culture. In a sense, the researcher on teacher thinking constitutes a developing conception of voice and an ongoing attempt to give voice to teachers.
(p. 11)

Statement of Theoretical Assumptions

The phenomenon of teaching involves a complex coordination of all the constituent members that influence the teaching act. The social milieu, both

within the school and without, collectively and individually--the students, parents, administration, collegial staff, the government or state education department--possess beliefs and values concerning what is to be considered worthy subject matter to be taught in schools, and what the appropriate procedures are with which that subject matter ought to be taught. The past experiences of each community have a bearing upon the contemporary teaching within its borders. Teachers are doubtless strongly influenced by this social milieu; yet there is an aspect to teaching which research has shown is of equal importance, namely, what a teacher knows. A teacher's knowledge is influenced not only by subject matter, curriculum mandates, and administrative concerns, but, to an extent that is becoming more appreciated than ever, by more personal aspects. Foremost are the values and beliefs held by the teacher, the way the teacher views her work and its importance in relation to her values and beliefs, her consequent conceptualizations about her own practices and success in these practices, as well as her personal understanding of the way in which the manifestations of her thinking are received by her students and the larger community.

Professionals bring to their practice a personal knowledge of what they value in that practice, and how they can best utilize their expertise in the performance of the practice. They pursue actions that embody their values and beliefs, unless an outside power mandates alternative action. However, practitioners are not always conscious of their own knowledge, beliefs, values, and images that organize and inform their practice. If asked to explain how they accomplished a certain performance, they are often unable to render a full account. Schön describes the ability of knowing what to do without necessarily being able to verbalize the rationale as "knowing-in-action": "We reveal it by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit" (1987, p. 25).

What is it, then, that a teacher knows about subject matter, theory, practice, students, schools, and classrooms? And how do these dynamics influence thinking and decision-making? What is the nature of the individual teacher's thinking that has created a specific belief about personal life events and their relationship to personal practical knowledge? What are the patterns of the personal connection between subject and action?

This investigation cannot hope to provide a satisfactory answer to all these questions; yet it is within the framework of these kinds of questions that we must look to provide access to the personal nature of the practitioner's knowledge. A teacher's knowledge is a governing factor within the teacher's practice. The investigation of personal practical knowledge will be of significance to the planning of future structures and strategies of both pre- and in-service teacher training programs.

Limitations

Although the data in the case-study is limited to the two narratives written by the teacher and myself as researcher within a three-month period, the narratives clearly demonstrate how a teacher understands and utilizes her personal practical knowledge in her teaching situation.

If personal practical knowledge is to be explored by means of narrative, the researcher's responses, as well as the subject's, must be in evidence in the text. The text, therefore, is a narrative of experience, professional growth, and knowing of **both** the researcher and the subject.

The narrative form has its limitations. For Lamarque, it is "a mode of cognition. It is a commonplace that 'telling stories' helps us to make sense of the world" (Lamarque, 1990, p. 150). Similarly, the narrative form is a way of providing access to the world of experience and perception. Clearly, the referential commitments of the narratives in this thesis lie within the pedagogical

domain, and are directed to correcting an imbalance in the kinds of knowledge generated by researchers. The narratives of a teacher's personal practical knowledge draw attention to the way a teacher negotiates the concerns heard from those with different vested interests in the curriculum, for example, the local community of teachers and parents, or school administration.

Definitions

The following terms and concepts are used in this investigation.

Personal Practical Knowledge

For the purposes of this research, I will define personal practical knowledge as the practitioner's knowledge of her or his own expertise, skill, and understanding developed through life experiences according to personal beliefs and values. It is a definition which takes into account features of both Elbaz and Clandinin's usage of the term.

Personal knowledge is generated by the individual within situations, societies, experiences, and theories. It operates as a resource guide for action in the present moment as well as plans for future action (Elbaz, 1983, pp. 101-102). Being contextually situated, it is revised continually as the individual interprets messages from situations and people as to the effectiveness and the personal verifiability of the knowledge (Elbaz, 1983, p. 157).

Elbaz and Clandinin On the Structure of Personal Practical Knowledge

Elbaz (1983) postulated that the study of practical knowledge would result in a structure representative of its experiential, practical outcomes. Because it is unique to the specific individual and situation, the generalizations supported by this kind of knowledge are elicited by the characteristics which permit consistent

practice. The concepts a teacher uses in her/his practice may or may not be clearly defined. For the teacher's purposes of practice within a specific context, the standard by which the importance of definition is measured is the serviceability of that concept within the situation for that teacher.

Reflecting this relationship of practical knowledge to practice, Elbaz classified practical knowledge into five areas which denote distinctions in the teacher's orientations: knowledge of self, of the teaching milieu, of subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction. The teacher's orientations are viewed as situational, personal, social, experiential, and theoretical. Elbaz considered the internal structure of practical knowledge to be hierarchical, each level being specific to the application of knowledge: rules of practice, practical principles, and images.

Rules of practice are brief, clearly defined statements or descriptions guiding action within a particular, frequently encountered situation. The rule addresses the means whereby the situation is handled, and the outcome and objective of the action are only implied.

Practical principles are less specific to the situation and indicate more the goals and beliefs of the teacher. A practical principle may be interpreted differently in different situations, yet the actions chosen in these situations may be said to be informed by the same practical principle, and the rationale for the action or practice is indicated in the principle. Those influences brought to bear upon a particular situation may frustrate or enable a rule of practice, but the intention of the practical principle will nonetheless be evident as it is based on the reflection and the understanding of the teacher. This understanding may result from past experiences, formal theory, or the internal dialectic between theory and practice.

Images are at the most generalizable as well as at the most ambiguous level in the structure of practical knowledge. They are concise, descriptive

statements which seem to apprehend fundamental characteristics of a teacher's understanding of her/himself. A teacher's images may describe directly or metaphorically some feature of the teacher's concept of self, of the classroom, of subject matter, and organizes her/his knowledge in a specific domain. Values and beliefs permeate the image, and signify the purposes of the teacher. A teacher's images are informed by many constituents: personal values, beliefs, requirements, emotions, past experiences, knowledge of theory, knowledge of school traditions. The image a teacher holds of her/his personal practical knowledge reveals a singular viewpoint toward the practice of teaching, and is employed intuitively to accomplish the teacher's purposes.

Elbaz delineates the direction each level takes in the teacher's practice, emphasizing the mediational role of each level between thought and action:

A rule of practice is a guideline on or from which the teacher acts ... She formulated it herself ... for just this purpose of eliminating the need for thought. An image, conversely, is something one responds to rather than acting from. If the rule pushes us along with a demand the image pulls us toward it, inspiring rather than requiring conformity. Without thought, the image becomes meaningless since it is open, and takes on different senses in each situation. The practical principle, however, may mediate between thought and action in both ways. (Elbaz, 1983, p. 134)

Elbaz cautions against superficially seeking evidence of rules, principles, or images in a teacher's practical knowledge, but points out that it is the way statements function in organizing the teacher's knowledge that is indicative of their level. They can operate simultaneously at times in specific situations and statements.

Building on Elbaz's work, Clandinin (1986) examined personal practical knowledge specifically through the construct of teachers' images. Observation and interview of teachers' practices and narratives were utilized in conceptualizing two elementary school teachers' images. She understood images "as the coalescence of experience" (p. 130), as the connection between the educational and private aspects of a person's life.

Six dimensions of the nature of image were developed:

Images may be connected to a concrete incident; have a metaphoric quality; have an affective dimension; have a moral coloring; be thought to exhibit complexity and be related to other images; and may exhibit specificity in their detailed construction and in the meaning they convey. (p. 33)

Clandinin submitted the possibility of two sources of images--actual events and reflection--as well as two functions of images--as part of the teacher's personal philosophy and as an aid in managing classroom situations.

Clandinin differentiated her work from Elbaz's with respect to the way metaphor was viewed in the image. Maintaining that Elbaz's use of image displayed was in the nature of a public metaphor, Clandinin investigated the private experiences which contributed to a teacher's images of her practice. Clandinin also stated that Elbaz used only the interview situation to access the theoretical parameters of her knowledge. In fact, Elbaz asserted that she used both interview and classroom observation. Clandinin's research differed in that she utilized participant observation as well as interview to uncover her private images, and in that she paid specific attention to the emotional and moral expressions of image.

Clandinin positioned the notion of image as a principal concept in the study of personal practical knowledge, and sought to bridge between this knowledge of past experiences and present practice.

Narrative

Traditionally, narratives have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Between the beginning and the end, events are recorded according to the purposes of the narrator, constructing the story by showing the course of events (Aristotle, 1963, p. 18). As a contemporary commentator states, narrative is also contextually bound. Any account by an individual for his/her actions entails positioning the action within a setting, within a personal history (MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 208-209).

To account for both order and setting, Lamarque (1990) defines narrative as "the recounting and shaping of events. ... Narration has an essential temporal dimension. ... Narrative imposes structure; it connects as well as records" (p. 131). The telling of a personal history shares many of the features with commonly shared and understood characteristics of story.

In addition, Bruner (1986) points out that narratives try to remain faithful in constructing a verisimilitude to experience. The reader's attention focuses on human intention and action, on changes and consequences that occur in the course of events. Similarly with the use of narrative in the study of a teacher's personal practical knowledge, this knowledge must be studied as the teacher views her/his experience and understanding. The narratives allow not only the teacher to speak to her/his own story, but also allows the researcher to recount her/his experiencing of the teacher's story.

Elbaz (1991) sums up the matter by saying that "the story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense" (p. 3). She claims that narrative is the most suitable method by which teachers should be

studied, and by which personal practical knowledge should be understood. Narrative reveals that thought and action are aspects of the same epistemological domain.

Elbaz warns of one major pitfall connected with the study of personal practical knowledge. There is a danger that researchers posit wholeness and unity in an individual's biography and narrative before that unity is revealed in the narratives. Personal practical knowledge emerges out of the complicated dialectical experiences of the knowledge-holder within a specific social environment. Elbaz theorizes that modern life, more likely, presents itself as disorderly and undetermined. The knowledge-holder may seek wholeness or unity but the researcher cannot predict that it will be found. (Elbaz, 1991, p. 5). Personal knowledge reflects the dialectical nature of experience. Consequently, the narratives of teachers' experiences and perceptions must be carefully scrutinized to establish whether unity is present, and if so, what the nature of this unity is.

Whole Language

Whole Language is a curriculum initiative that is "a shorthand way of referring to a set of beliefs about curriculum, not just language arts curriculum, but about everything that goes on in classrooms" (Newman, 1985, p. 1). The word "whole" in Whole Language indicates the organic relation between parts and wholes in language learning. Newman (1985) emphasizes the contextually specific and social nature of language and language learning, as well as the characteristics of risk-taking, and choice. Whole Language practices support all aspects of language: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Newman, p. 5). These concepts will be more fully developed in the review of the literature.

This introductory chapter has provided a rationale for the present research and foreshadowed briefly some of the premises upon which the research is based. The following chapter reviews in more detail the theoretical basis as well as instances of specific research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Personal practical knowledge has its roots in the 1970s when there was a movement in which the educational community thought it desirable to have greater teacher involvement in the implementation of new curriculum programs and teacher practices. It was hoped that progressive change would be more likely to occur if teachers had a greater say in the planning stages. Prescriptive programs were not as effective as they might have been when simply handed to the teacher after curriculum theorists had devised them. As Elbaz (1983) put it, "such a view committed the curriculum developer to working, if not against the teacher, 'on' the teacher, to modify her behaviour" (p. 3).

There have been numerous studies done in the last decade on teacher thinking and practice, often with a view to gaining a better understanding of how greater teacher effectiveness can be achieved. Clark and Peterson (1986) investigated teacher thinking, Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) examined the culture of teaching, Connelly and Clandinin (1985) as well as Elbaz (1983) explored teachers' personal practical knowledge. Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi (1988) studied teachers' knowledge through autobiography; Tabachnik and Zeichner (1986) inquired into teachers' responses to inconsistencies in classroom behaviours. Van Manen (1990) explored phenomenological inquiry into human experience in education. The results of these studies indicate the importance of understanding how and what the teacher thinks and does, since it is the teacher that ultimately decides what the curriculum will actually be which is delivered to her students. The teacher has a knowledge built on past experience as well as on theories she has studied or may tacitly hold. She has had to make sense of what

she ought to be doing in the context of her particular school and its community: her particular classroom, her particular students, her particular limitations, abilities and knowledge. This knowledge which the teacher has is based largely on experience. It is contextual, situation- and teacher-specific, and dynamic. The personal practical knowledge of one teacher may have commonalities with another teacher's knowledge, but because it arises out of one person's experiences it can also be quite different from another teacher's practical knowledge. What is constant is the specificity of its nature, and that all teachers have it and develop it as long as they teach. It is the essential tool without which they could not function as teachers.

Polanyi (1962) states, "... a personal act can be partly formalized. By reflecting on the way we are performing it we may seek to establish rules for our own guidance in this act. ... it must remain within a framework of personal judgement" (p. 29). The prevailing component of personal practical knowledge is a belief held by the knower that what is known is true and governable by personal criteria.

Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986) pursued research in personal practical knowledge as it manifested itself in specific teachers' contexts and as it was articulated by them. They used case study approaches and participant observation as well as interviews to arrive at their conclusions. The research was conducted with the goal of finding ways of conceptualizing teacher knowledge and of ascertaining what the teacher images were for a specific teacher in order to gain insight into her personal practical knowledge.

These studies furnished the basis for subsequent investigations into other aspects of personal practical knowledge and its relation to practice. The question of how a particular curriculum initiative comes to influence a teacher's personal practical knowledge and how it is then "translated" into practice as the teachers assumes ownership of the curriculum becomes a pertinent question for research.

Whole Language

The curriculum initiative within Language Arts called Whole Language (Goodman and Goodman, 1981; Newman, 1985, 1990; Willinsky, 1990) is a belief system about language, literacy, and learning. Learning can be viewed metaphorically as a journey each learner takes. Where that journey will lead, what will be the events and experiences or even what constitutes the starting point of the journey, cannot be legislated since each of the elements involved in the journey is continually changing in shape and dynamic. Giroux views learning and literacy as a "struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future" (Giroux, 1988, p. 65). Willinsky considers literacy "as a way of working the world" (Willinsky, 1990, p. 6). Learning and literacy is context- as well as text-dependent, and the shape learning takes depends upon such things as the learner's past experience, knowledge, values, and choices. The curriculum is no one textbook or prescribed course of studies. It is a result of the learner's observed response and the teacher's attempts to offer activities in tune with the perceived needs of the learner. The curriculum is the journey of the learner. The teacher shares the learner's position and tries to create learning opportunities which will help the student to experience all that the journey has to offer the student.

Thus, Whole Language represents a gamut of beliefs about the way language is acquired and mastered, both the written and spoken form. The study of language and all the properties of language is not atomized into separate 'skills', but rather is taught as a world of meaning in its entirety, the way language is actually spoken or written. The potential meaning of spoken or written language is therefore greater than the sum of its analyzable parts, and it is language in its entire context that is used to communicate ideas to the listener.

The teacher and learner need language in order to convey their meaning to each other, whether the teacher is the author of a book or the person teaching in a

classroom. They will, and do, find the language necessary to convey this meaning. If the language meaning can be clarified by examining aspects of it as they pertain to particular usage, then the relevant parts are examined for this purpose. The parts are not studied without usage and natural context inviting this kind of examination.

The impetus and driving force behind Whole Language lies in its collaborative and social nature. Student and teacher are active and interactive. Resource people - parents or other community members - outside the classroom setting are invited to participate in the journey, for the learning experience is inherently a social phenomenon. Meaning does not come in isolation. As in other real life experiences, mistakes are often indicators of the choices and attempts made in pursuing that which is valued. Mistakes are an important part of the process, since they mark the risks and alternatives taken in search of new learning strategies. It becomes important, then, to share the mistakes as well as successes with others, since vicarious experience can be as influential as direct experience in promoting learning.

Willinsky (1990) elaborates upon this view as he explains his concept of "The New Literacy":

The New Literacy consists of those strategies in the teaching of reading and writing which attempt to shift the control of literacy from the teacher to the student; literacy is promoted in such programs as a social process with language that can from the very beginning extend the students' range of meaning and connection. (p. 8)

This attention to shifting the control of learning to the learner, to attending to all the areas of the learner's life, is applicable to the learning teachers experience as

well as students. Grumet, in her work with teachers, states: "We work to remember, imagine, and realize ways of knowing and being that can span the chasm presently separating our public and private worlds" (p. xv).

Newman (1985) points out that as Whole Language teachers ask questions about how theory translates into practice, they naturally enter into the study of theory and practice as an ongoing activity. They provide for each other that same sense of supportive community which they are fostering in the classroom. Newman names three functions of teacher study groups: to share classroom ideas; to gain more theoretical knowledge as well as developing strategies in dealing with problems with colleagues or administrators; and to visit each other's classrooms at whatever stage they are at in developing their Whole Language curriculum. Whole Language teachers see themselves as learners as well as teachers, and they employ Whole Language strategies with each other and themselves in their own learning to become more proficient as teachers of Whole Language.

Whole Language and the Text

Whole Language approaches the text differently. The text is read, perhaps with a previous lesson occurring prior to the reading. Here ideas for themes are explored through brainstorming, mapping, or a writing experience. Perhaps several texts are offered as a choice for the students to read as part of the study unit. Students engage in group discussion about the text, interacting with each other, the teacher, their own knowledge and experience, and other texts. Each participant would be a resource in finding out as much as possible about the text. Comparisons, contrasts, cross-references to previously read texts, to previous student writings, exploration of related new texts, private and public reading-- these are some of the experiences that occur. Responses would cover a wide range of written forms from which the student would choose in order to show her understanding as best she can. Personal creativity and artistry would be

encouraged. Because it is learner-centred, and because, as Newman (1985) states: "meaning ... is constrained and modified by the interpretive community" and "is socially constructed and context-dependent" (p. 4), there can be no one correct format nor text which will satisfy all students' needs. It is a process of growth, a journey which never ends for the learner as long as he is alive and wants to learn.

Principles of Whole Language.

As a summary of the major principles which lie behind Whole Language, K. Goodman and Y. Goodman (1981) have defined seventeen key principles of Whole Language. A paraphrase of those pertaining to the reading process are:

1. Meaning is formed during reading and listening, as the learner constructs meaning from the text based on previous learning and experience.
2. Prediction, selection, confirmation, and self-correction are all part of reading. Meaning must be a product of reading in order for it to be effective. Efficient reading minimizes the reader's energy input.
3. Grapho-phonetic, syntactic, and semantic systems interact in order for language to have meaning and be comprehensible, and should not be separated in instruction.
4. Understanding the meaning of the text is the aim of listening and reading.
5. To express the meaning of the text is the aim of writing and speaking.
6. The listener/reader's previous understanding is highly influential in the understanding of the text being read or to which the learner is listening.

Those principles pertaining to learning and teaching are:

7. Learning is functional and no distinction should be made between in-school and out-of-school language experience; literacy is part of natural language learning.
8. Development of form is motivated by development of function.

9. Skills are not learned in sequence nor within a skill hierarchy, but rather as part of meaningful language use.
10. Literacy is developed as a response to the surrounding world of the learner, and occurs from infancy on.
11. The learner chooses what is meaningful out of the environment. The teacher can only attempt to approximate and anticipate the student's needs through observation and an understanding of cognitive development.
12. The learner attends to meaning and use of language; the teacher attends to use and development.
13. Through prediction and guesswork, the teacher tries to create a context wherein meaning can be maximized by the student. This is a risk-taking enterprise.

Those principles pertaining to the use of instructional materials are:

14. Texts must use functional language, be meaningful and relevant to the learner.
15. Texts must be presented as a whole, with exercises and tasks that do not fragment meaning out of context.
16. Predictability of texts and materials will dictate the extent of difficulty found by the learner.
17. Understanding the meaning of the whole text is the focus of instructional intention.

Two ideas stand out as one reads through these principles - the learner is at the centre of all decisions made about the curriculum; and the importance of using language in context to derive meaning from a given text. The dynamic, organic nature of Whole Language learning both defines and defies definition, for it is learner dependent, experience--both historical and present--dependent,

context dependent; yet Whole Language learning bears the trademark of these two central ideas.

Curriculum Theorists and Whole Language

In each case, curriculum theory relating to Whole Language is found in the works of the noted progressive educators - initially in the work of Dewey (1938) and Kilpatrick (1932) - and latterly in the work of theorists writing under the influence of Dewey's thinking; for example, Schwab (1969, 1971, 1973), Pinar (1975), and Schön (1987) to name a few of the key figures.

Dewey: The Principles of Interaction and Continuity

The idea of seeing the learner as someone caught in a dynamic tension between the experience and beliefs which are constituent parts of his present knowledge, and the necessity of choosing an action in the present situation, is the basis for much of modern progressive education. This dynamic tension is something Dewey (1938) explored, for example, in his classic work Experience and Education.

He raises the issue of the relation between the processes of education and experience. Resistance to the human impulse to see beliefs as "Either-Or", to the notion that education is either growth from within or controlled behavior imposed from without the person, to the view that learning has a static nature, brings with it a corresponding openness to the alternative of engaging in the dialectic between the past personal experience of the learner and the matters of present concern.

Dewey describes his view of the two principles necessary to progressive education: the principles of continuity, and interaction. The principle of continuity of experience states that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those

which come after" (p.35) Dewey uses the term "habit" here in a biological sense to mean all the attitudes which have become a part of a person's learned responses to life situations and experiences. He states that habit, in this sense, is a fact of life and must be considered within the idea of the principle of continuity of experience. He uses the principle of continuity of experience as a basis for looking at the educative quality of an experience . "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p.38). The educator must determine what is the direction indicated in the experience in order to guide the learner towards greater maturity. In doing this, s/he shows, by example, what she has learned from her own past experience as well as affirming the social nature of experience. "The greater maturity of experience which should belong to the adult as educator puts him in a position to evaluate each experience of the young in a way in which the one having the less mature experience cannot do" (p. 38). The surroundings within which the learning experiences take place are also an implicit consideration for the educator.

Dewey explains his idea of the principle of interaction as the interaction of the individual with the situation he is living in, composed of people or objects. This interaction is an experience arising out of context because of the negotiation that takes place between the individual and the environment. Dewey refers to this process of negotiation as transaction. Whether the objects or people with whom the individual is interacting are imagined or real, the process is still a transaction, and therefore an experience. Interaction and continuity work together in experience - "the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience" (p.44). The process of continuity and interaction is never ending as long as the individual is alive and learning.

How do Dewey's (1938) principles of continuity and interaction relate to the Whole Language belief system? Both take an organic and dynamic view of learning, both emphasize the importance of meaning arising out of context, both

acknowledge the importance of the learner's experiential repertoire in learning. "What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue" (p. 44).

Dewey does not go so far as to state that the learner should play a key part in the decision-making process to determine her own curriculum, whereas Whole Language advocates the curriculum should be strongly influenced by the learner. Whole Language stresses the responsibility of the learner for the learning process, and the teacher's responsibility for nurturing and guiding this process through careful observation and dialogue with the learner. Dewey speaks theoretically of what progressive education is, what experience is, and the importance of the teacher understanding continuity and interaction in a practical sense. However, he prepares the groundwork for the Whole Language initiative.

... experiences in order to be educative must lead out into an expanding world of subject-matter, a subject-matter of facts or information and of ideas. This condition is satisfied only as the educator views teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. (p. 87)

Whole Language theorists also devote considerable attention to theory, but it is a theory of practice. Dewey seems to speak more generally about learning as an abstraction, while Whole Language speaks more specifically about learning in the classroom and the shared task between teacher and learner to ensure that meaning is being created. Dewey emphasizes the importance of the role of experience in learning. "Unless the problem of intellectual organization can be worked out on the ground of experience, reaction is sure to occur toward externally imposed methods of organization" (p. 85).

Dewey points out what happens when education is seen merely as a preparation for the future, and isolated, compartmentalized subject matter is learned. The learning does not tend to become part of an increasingly progressive refinement of experience and knowledge, nor does it become educational for the successive learning experience. Whole Language theorists would agree. Subject matter is learned along with all the other contextual factors. The present situation and experience of the individual, not the unknown future, is what dictates what is relevant and worth knowing. "We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future" (Dewey, 1938, p.49).

Kilpatrick: Student Ownership of Learning

Kilpatrick (1932), a contemporary of Dewey's, believed also that the role of experience must play an important role in education, that school must be a place of life experience where students actively engage in a meaning-making that reflects their interests, and shows individual growth in the sense of which Dewey spoke. Their activity must be seen by the students as belonging to them. Students and their learning should be the focus, with the teacher's controlling role becoming progressively less necessary as the student gains control over her own learning. The curriculum should be experiential in nature, using subject matter as a means to gain the desired growth but not as an end in itself. Learning occurs as the many factors of the learner's context influence and interrelate to form the specific incident, which is also a part of other learning taking place. Kilpatrick saw that multiple learning experiences occurred simultaneously. Here we can hear Whole Language ideas clearly. The emphasis upon the responsibility of the learner to "own" her learning experience, to choose those things that are relevant to the individual experience, to make meaning within personal context--these lie

at the heart of Whole Language belief. It becomes increasingly clear that Whole Language is, indeed, a belief system. It is a way of viewing all of life, whether that life occurs in or out of the classroom.

In Whole Language, we have these ideas of continuity, interaction, relevancy, school as a place of life experience, learning as a collaboration between teacher and student, language as a function as well as an expression of experience. If these ideas are taken as "rules" of classroom theory translated into practice, the picture one gets of Whole Language is that of a dynamic, constantly active process governed by the growth of the learner consciously engaged in the learning process.

Schwab: The Problem of Theory and Practice

The problem of practice and theory--which informs the other, which sets the parameters for the other--is a problem Schwab (1971, 1973) addresses through his arts of eclectic and arts of the practical. Schwab (1971, 1973) criticizes the long-standing tradition of theory dictating the process to practice. He advocates employing the arts of eclectic and arts of the practical as part of the remedy. The arts of the practical are arts which do what theory cannot do, namely, address the peculiarities of the real-life situation. While theory deals with abstractions and generalizations, practice must deal with the unique characteristics that pertain to a specific situation in a specific milieu with specific expectations and limitations.

Schwab (1971) also addresses the problem of theory from outside disciplines dictating to curriculum what should only be dictated by pedagogical theory. How can a theorist from psychology know what the questions are in education? She can only know what the questions are in psychology. The arts of the eclectic are the means used to prepare theory to be of use in the practical domain, examining the very structure of theory, looking for reasons why it appears to give a discipline the appearance of being a whole entity in itself, and seeking other possible theories

that could operate together in tandem. A plurality of theories which enlighten and inform each other is needed to create a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each and to utilize each apart or as complementary approaches to the practical work of learning.

Dewey's influence runs throughout Schwab's work, and is especially noticed in statements like " ... curriculum is brought to bear not on ideal or abstract representatives but on the real thing, on the concrete case in all its completeness and with all its differences from all other concrete cases on which the theoretic abstraction is silent" (Schwab, 1969, p. 11), and "problem situations ... present themselves to consciousness, but the character of the problem, its formulation, does not. This depends on the eye of the beholder" (p. 18). This crediting of the individual experience and specific context is something Dewey considered essential to progressive education. It also is one of the tenets of Whole Language. Schwab's contribution in the area of Whole Language belief is the importance of not only the contextual characteristics of a learning situation but also the importance of educators having the knowledge of the various theories that influence their practice, being able to identify the elements that can contribute to education and those that cannot. Theoretical knowledge has a powerful influence on the process of deliberation, but without the counsel of practical knowledge the deliberation remains in the theoretical arena.

Pinar: The Importance of Individual Experience

This tandem emphasis of practical knowledge and applicable theory is an emphasis which is echoed in the concerns of the curriculum field. Whole Language sees curriculum as that transaction that takes place as meaning is sought by the learner from the text. Pinar (1981) speaks of curriculum as "currere"--the experience or journey of the learner is the actual curriculum. This is another way of defining Whole Language curriculum. He sees curriculum "in

dialectical relation to consciousness" (p.436) as a way of drawing attention to the concrete experience of the individual and the dialogue that results with the story of one's experience and the self. Pinar (1981) fears the sacrifice of individual experience to a public notion of what an experience is, the resulting distortion of experience, the loss of the concrete to the abstract, so that the abstract becomes dominant and more real than the concrete. Action is then referent to the idealized abstract. Pinar maintains that there must be a dialectic between consciousness and matter. To live in critical reflection biographically and historically means release from the present status quo, and the freedom to become part of the next shift in a culture's world view as well as its material structure. Any efforts that are made in the direction of retrieving the concrete experience of the individual from abstraction are efforts in the direction of changing political as well as material and social structures that dictate a culture's world view.

The journey of the learner, then, can be seen as critical reflection and dialectic (Pinar, 1981), as deliberation (Dewey, 1938; and Schwab, 1969, 1971, 1973), as meaning through interaction with text (Goodman and Goodman, 1981), for the journey is all of these and more.

The Teacher Practitioner Point of View

Dewey (1938) insists that curriculum theory must seek out the practical as the key to unlocking applicable theory. Practice is only in part based on theory. Classroom practice is the individual teacher's activities, decided upon by the teacher, that have been arranged, improvised, and adapted to suit the particular situation which she believes she is facing. She must make sense, not only of the curriculum, but also of the context in which she finds herself--cultural, social, intellectual, administrative, and physical. An idea is only an idea until it becomes actualized, when the practitioner decides that it is suitable for the occasion. Experience is that part of the teacher's personal practical knowledge from which

the particular set of images and cognitive constructs which make up the individual teacher's knowledge arise. Practical knowledge, in Clandinin's words, " ... opens the way for looking at knowledge as experiential, embodied and based on the narrative of experience" (Clandinin, 1986, p. 19). In adopting a teacher practitioner point of view, rather than a researcher's point of view about the teacher's characteristics, teachers are given credence as professionals who are in charge of their own classrooms and the meaning created in those situations. Rich (1985) echoes both Schwab (1969, 1971, 1973), and Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1987). "Whole language teachers know their children. They are well-versed in child development, understanding learning theory, and keep up to date with research. ... in their own classrooms they are in the business of theory making. They shape reality together with their children and filter their developing knowledge through the screen of prior knowledge ..." (Rich, 1985, p. 723).

The above discussion clearly raises matters of relationships - the relationship between theory and practice, between Whole Language beliefs and practical, contextual considerations, between curriculum as planned program and curriculum as a journey, as a search for the commonplaces where the theoretical and the practical mutually inform each other.

Methodology

This study explores the nature of one teacher's thinking, and how she conceptualizes the curriculum initiative called Whole Language as a constituent of her personal practical knowledge. Embedded within this investigation is also an examination of the way her pedagogical images function as organizers and negotiators of her practice.

Procedure

As in Spradley's (1979) work on ethnographic studies which seeks to investigate a culture from within, this study seeks to investigate the teacher's culture from the teacher's personal vantage point. Through shared narratives, the research subject and I have reflected upon her pedagogical thinking, what it is she claims as her personal practical knowledge, in what way she sees her knowledge influenced by Whole Language theory, and what her beliefs, values, and dominant images are which direct her practice and her interpretation of her own practice.

In order to conduct the study of one teacher's personal practical knowledge, the procedure consisted of four repetitions of the following cycle after a preliminary audio taped interview: non-participant field notes taken as I observed her teaching in her classroom; the construction of a written narrative of what I observed which I then shared with her; her written response to my narrative, explaining and clarifying my understanding of her practice; my written response and further inquiry of her practice and knowledge; and again, her response in clarification of her practice and knowledge. I visited her classroom four times and constructed four narratives in the above fashion. The purpose of the preliminary audio taped interview was to allow Ruth to give the basic statistical

background information needed in order to help define her present teaching situation--the number of years of teaching experience, any relevant information about her training as a teacher, the physical setting of her teaching setting and the present milieu of her school and community, her in-service involvements and extra-curricular school activities. She was invited to clarify, disagree, and explain her practice at any time throughout this process. She also was aware of her right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. The narratives were written in consultation with the teacher being studied--a Grade Seven Language Arts teacher who for the purposes of this study I will call Ruth.

CHAPTER III: THE NARRATIVES

The Interview

Introduction

I came to Ruth's home to tape our first interview together. Ruth and I were about to embark on a study of her thinking as a teacher, to uncover how she came to make the educational initiative known as Whole Language part of her Language Arts practices. We had become acquainted through sharing various Language Arts committee duties together, and had found we had common interests and views of how Junior High Language Arts should be taught. I asked Ruth to participate in my study because I felt that we could reflect together, and that perhaps we might create the time needed to search out how her practice came to be what it was.

I had viewed the thesis question as an academic question that would be answered in a relatively straightforward manner. That is, I expected my subject to state her understanding of Whole Language theory, and proceed to tell and show me how she tried to realize the Whole Language goals she had selected in her classroom. Having read Elbaz and Clandinin, I planned to implement a similar structure with my observations. In exploring how Ruth came to hold Whole Language beliefs as part of her personal knowledge, I hoped to search out images--as a metaphoric form of guidance for action, as had Elbaz; images as the coalescence of experience, as Clandinin had done. These approaches were systematic in nature, and provided a structure with which to explore Ruth's personal practical knowledge.

And so I began my first interview with Ruth. All of Ruth's narratives are recorded as she gave them, with the exclusion of students' names.

The Interview: November 19, 1990

Our first interview was conducted in Ruth's home after school.

Irene: Okay. It is November the 19th, 5:30 p.m. Ruth and I are in Ruth's home, and I'm going to ask Ruth some questions I have prepared as part of my study on Ruth's personal practical knowledge. How Ruth's Whole Language beliefs inform her personal practical knowledge. The following are the questions I will ask Ruth. I will give Ruth time to reply, but if asked to restate the question, I will ask Ruth to try and answer the question as it stands, as best she can. The entire interview will be on audio tape and a transcript will follow without any editing.

Irene: Okay, Ruth, first if all I would like to ask you some questions about yourself, some background information. How many years have you been a teacher?

Ruth: Fourteen years.

Irene: And at how many schools have you taught?

Ruth: Two.

Irene: Can you tell me where you received your training?

Ruth: University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba.

Irene: Which degrees do you hold?

Ruth: I hold my Bachelor of Education, Secondary.

Irene: What kind of in-service training do you attend?

Ruth: I attend a lot of, uh, Gifted and Talented, Exceptional Children in-service training, Peer-Coaching--would you accept Peer Coaching as

well as an in-service ... that sort of thing in general. Those would be the three main areas.

Irene: Who or what has had the most important influence on how you see yourself as a teacher? (Ruth looked questioningly at me so I repeated the question.)

Ruth: This is really difficult. (laughter) Um, I think, maybe not answering this, um, directly, but, uh, how I see myself as a teacher, the influences would be as I, I, as I go through teaching year by year, the in-servicing that I've done, I think make me start to question what I'm doing in the classroom, I think that's a very important influence on how I see myself as a teacher and as I learn new things from in-servicing, I start questioning myself and making changes in my ... the way I view things and the way I go about things. And I guess that's exciting. Um, particular people I wouldn't say, you know, I don't have any particular "who's" have made an influence, but the "what's" I think is just the in-servicing training that I've made myself go to, to learn.

Irene: Mm hmm. Um, the second part of that question: Who or what has had the most important influence on how you teach? The first part was on how you see yourself as a teacher, and the second was on how you teach.

Ruth: I guess I would say the same thing because it's, it's interrelated. I think it basically it influences the how I teach first and then as I'm questioning, as I'm gaining more confidence in what I'm doing in the classroom, that influences how I see myself. And what I do.

Irene: Mm hmm. Good. Um, what are some of your personal qualities that help you do your job well? (It will be noted that I seemed to give approval of what Ruth was saying. Ruth had looked questioningly at

me for some indication that she was being helpful in the interview. My "good" was my way of telling her that she was doing well. I need to qualify my "good" and establish that it was my way of reassuring Ruth that she should feel free and be encouraged to tell her narrative. It was an unfortunate choice of expression.)

Ruth: I think I like, um, questioning things, I think I like, uh, uh, being with uh, people and kids, and I think I'm able to talk with kids at their level and that has helped in the past ... um, a sense of humor, roll with the punches, although at times that's difficult, but I think teaching at a junior high level, especially, you kind of need those qualities. And it's, you know ...

Irene: Why these qualities in particular?

Ruth: Maybe it's because I teach junior high, and I see a need for, um, I don't know, I guess I've always felt that I was suited to the junior high mentality, a little bit whacko, you know, a little bit willing to take risks, a little bit of ... able to show myself to the kids, and try to get away from "I'm the authority, I know everything". Rather, instead of doing that, let's learn together, sort of thing, or, you know, even though I'm your teacher, I'm still learning. I may not be learning the same things you're learning, but I'm still learning in my, my own way. A sense of humor so they see the ... that the humanness, you know in a person, and I think it's an important quality as, as you go through life, to, to maintain a sense of humor. So I guess that's why these qualities I see as important to Junior High.

Irene: What do you find difficult as a teacher?

Ruth: Can you give me more specific things? What do you find more difficult ... Oooh, now, can I answer that as students, or with fellow

colleagues, or, or, both? Can you give me that much? Ah. Um, what do you find difficult more difficult as a teacher, in dealing with kids or ...

Irene: I said, what do you find difficult as a teacher.

Ruth: As a teacher.

Irene: And that you can answer in any way you, you want to.

Ruth: Hmm. I don't know if there's anything in particular that's difficult.

I, um, um, I'm trying to think of the kids, right now, and um, I think sometimes trying to get them to see proper forms of behavior in, in classroom, and getting them to understand why. I don't think I consider myself a severe disciplinarian, and I go about it trying to talk to the kids, trying to reason with them, trying to show them, uh, appropriate behaviors? And I guess I find that more difficult because I guess in the long run I'm a bit soft, you know, I'm, I'm not going to bring my ruler down, or I'm not going to send them to the office immediately, I'd rather talk it through with them, and sometimes that's a bit frustrating. And I know at times I have to force myself to be harder than what I think my nature implies. I think sometimes kids think I'm a, a pushover. And, uh, maybe that would be probably the most difficult thing I've had to deal with as a teacher, not so much losing control of the kids but just getting them to come to a realization of appropriate behavior in terms of talking it out with them rather than discipline, punishment sort of methods. And you have to come a long way, you know, you have to keep at them. It's a much, I don't know, harder way of doing it, but I think it's a more effective way in the long run, for most kids. There are some kids that have to be dealt with severely, I guess, ... want colleagues too?

(laughter)

Irene: Whatever you want to put in there.

Ruth: Um, one of the things I find difficult in dealing with, uh, colleagues is, uh, I guess, different approaches to education, and I know at this point in time, a number of my colleagues really feel threatened by Gifted and Talented, and a variety of things that they have to cope with. And I have a problem, I do understand their point of view, but I don't know why they're threatened, and as a result I'm trying to struggle with seeing more of their point of view rather than , like we're supposed to have those meetings, and a variety of things, and a number of them don't want it, you know, they just want to, they feel it's one more thing added to their plate. And I guess I find it difficult trying to be an encouragement to them to try Gifted and Talented stuff, and also see their point of view. I find that very difficult at this point in, this point in time. So that's colleagues, that's kids.

Irene: How do you handle situations that are difficult for you?

Ruth: I do a lot of thinking on my own, I guess, I uh, like to analyze problems, I like to brainstorm for solutions, I like to gripe (laughter) to myself, (laughter) um, I do some reading up on things, I talk it out with colleagues, uh, in terms of kids, um and, and there are some people I can talk to in terms of other colleagues too. I guess, uh, I'd say those are the basic things. I do a lot of self-analysis, I guess, and, and trying to brainstorm for possible solutions, and how I can do things differently. I'm always looking for how I can do things differently, because I don't think, as a teacher, we have to do the same things year after year. So, for me, if I want to learn in my classroom I want to change different things. I, I don't want to do the same things year after year. So I, I guess that's one way I, I handle difficulties, too. One group of kids differs from another group of kids.

I've had two years, just recently, the last two years, in which there're absolutely no troubles. This year, it's a different bunch of kids, and there are more difficulties in, in dealing with them, discipline-wise, um, environment, their home background is different, and your constantly having to examine yourself and what you can give those kids, how you can change things to make it the best possible learning environment for them.

Irene: What would be the ideal teaching situation that would be, that would best make use of your personal characteristics?

Ruth: I've never really thought about an ideal teaching situation. I, uh, I think I've got it really good here, (laughter) I do. Um, I've got a good variety of kids, um, I like the way I feel comfortable with the way administration supports, or um, really supports and has confidence in what we do as teachers in our classroom. I know there's other places where, um, you know, they're told exactly what to do. And, and they have confidence in me and in what I'm doing, and in my judgement. And I think that's a very important quality to have, and an ideal situation. Um, sometimes I think it would be better for my personality if I could teach all the subject areas rather than departmentalization. Sometimes I think that, and other times I think it's nice to know a variety of kids too, you know, so I'm kind of, sometimes I, I'm in conflict, you know, at the end of the year where you're saying what shall we do differently next year? I kind of wish for "get rid of the departmentalization, let's teach everything to the kids and really have an integrated sort of approach between the subject areas". That's something, I was just thinking that now, I would like to see a more integrated approach in terms of the subject areas, and I've tried something with the Science teacher this year in

terms of integrating L.A. and, and Science, and it's worked out well. It has a lot to do with, uh, process rather than content. And, uh, I feel really, um, very happy with the results, and, and what the kids have gotten out of it. And basically the fact that the kids see that, um, uh, learning isn't just "I'm learning English in English class and I'm learning Science in Science class", they see the crossover, they see the interrelationships between the two subject areas and they see that, uh, everything is important, you know, it's not just "I have to do Science in Science. Yeah, I have to do English. I'm using English in Science, I'm using communication skills. I need to know those things".

Irene: 'Kay, uh, to what extent do you use these personal qualities you've mentioned, in school projects, such as drama productions, teacher committees, other things?

Ruth: Now we're talking about these personal qualities that I stated earlier, right? Like sense of humor, and, and that kind of thing? Well, I, I don't know. I don't see myself any differently on committees than I am in the classroom. Um, I carry with me, I think, a sense of humor, a sense of, uh, I think I'm a lot quieter with adults than I am with kids. Um, and I guess that's a quality that I don't show in the classroom. I don't think the kids would understand or see me as a quiet person. Kind of crazy and, and uh, that sort of thing. But at, at a committee level I, I am quite quiet. Although I think, too, at a committee level, I'm thinking of Gifted and Talented again, I'm, um, trying to encourage our fellow staff members to try to grow and, and learn new things. Um, feel confident with their own abilities, but also let's stretch it a little bit more, and I can see myself doing that in the classroom as well as working with my colleagues.

Irene: Okay. Are there some principles which you believe are basic to the way you run your classroom ... to the way you organize your classroom? I'll say that again. Are there some principles which are basic to the way you organize your classroom?

Ruth: I don't know if they're principles, um, there're things I like to follow. I think the classroom should be, um, an atmosphere of, um, of comfort, an atmosphere of learning, that we are going to get some business done here, but we're going to keep that comfort level, um, we're learning together, we're stretching our brains. Uh, in terms of organization, I don't know if you mean the structure of the classroom, or, or what?

Irene: Well, I guess whatever way you interpret.

Ruth: Yeah, yeah. I guess the principles as just keeping a comfortable environment where the kids feel free to ask questions, feel free to question what's happening, um, have fun learning, I think, a', and be able to, um, not just accept, um, or want, I want the right answer sort of thing, um, that they're, they're willing - risk-taking, I guess, risk-taking. A comfortable environment for risk-taking so that they can stretch their thinking, and not just be thinking "well, what does teacher want me to answer". I think that's basically in terms of organization, um, how I run it. Now someone coming into my class might say "huh, well, it's not very organized". But, um, it's the choice of activities that I give the kids, it's the choice of, um, say seating arrangement, or things like that, that, um, it is organized in that way to encourage thinking, en ... encourage risk-taking.

Irene: How would you describe your own classroom to someone who is not in the teaching profession?

Ruth: Hmm. (laughter) I know someone walking past might think, 'cause the noise level is a bit higher, you know, than if you'd go into a Math class or, or something like that, something more structured, um, the kids would be talking, the kids--and working, like I do a lot of group work--um, a lot of times, the kids will be not sitting at their desks but sitting in, in groups in various corners, maybe out in the hall, it's, it's active. I don't think there's any sort of "just sit and get" sort of things going on, although at times there has to be. Um, so someone coming in, who's used to the way I went to school, would kind of go (inhaled breath) "what's happening here?" until they actually take a closer look a' and see that there is a lot of things going on.

Irene: How would you describe your own classroom to another teacher?

Ruth: The same way. (laughter) I think someti' ... although they're very understanding and they realize, you know, they can see the products that the kids have come out with, I don't mean just finished products in terms of, uh, a written report or anything, but just the way, um, maybe kids are thinking, or the way they are expressing themselves, that there are some things going on there, that may not at first glance appear that they're going on. You know, um, say we do drama and the kids are climbing the desks, pretending it's a mountain. Now another teacher who walks by might go (inhaled breath) "what on earth is she doing?", you know, "has she, uh, she's totally lost control of these kids", but when those kids come back down from mountain climbing, they've experienced something, and uh, I think my colleagues are very understanding, in fact, they make kind of jokes, you know, um, about that, and I know my next door neighbor is really very understanding and uh, he um, is very

supportive. So I would describe it in the same way to my colleagues. But I've been there thirteen years, in this school, therefore they kind of know my approach, and my approach has changed over the years. I mean, I was very structured at the beginning. Very, very structured. Sit in rows, do this, here's a worksheet, do it. Right? But that, to me, isn't learning. ... You want me to expand. Where's my question? (laughter)

Irene: I can only give you the next question.

Ruth: Okay. Do you want me to expand on that other one? I can, I just don't know how much time you have to go on.

Irene: I have as much time as you need.

Ruth: Oh, well sure. (a few garbled words) ... So do you want me to get into this, this difference here? Or is that into another question, or, or ...

Irene: Well, if you want to. (We speak at the same time here, for a couple of sentences.) ... Not so much that, but I have other questions, but I don't want to ... (garbled words)

Ruth: Okay, okay. Maybe I'll just leave it then.

Irene: What do you think are important features in the way that staff members relate to each other? ... What do you think are important features in the way that staff members relate to each other?

Ruth: I think open communication. Um, being able to express your opinions without feeling threatened or without feeling that, uh, um, "I know a lot". Okay, for example, I do these written anecdotal reports. And I know I, I've done them maybe for five years now and sometimes I feel the staff members might feel threatened by them. Because I do them, they feel they have to. And I think it's very good if I can just say to them, "I don't expect you to do this. I need to do this for myself, to make me feel that I'm doing my job, and I'm giving the

right information to the parents, or accurate information to the parents, and when they feel threatened by that, I think it's just good to be open and honest. You know, I'm doing this, and give them the reasons, and not because I'm trying to brown-nose, you know, with the principal or superintendent, or whatever. And um, likewise, agree to disagree. You can agree to disagree on educational philosophy, and just learnt to appreciate each other for what we offer our students. What I offer my students is different from what other teachers offer their students. And just because I do things my way, I shouldn't look at what they're doing critically. Or with, you know, the a' ... authority approach. Um, there's teachers on staff who are very good at, um, you know, the structure, the structure, getting kids to, um, um, they articulate very well, and they're excellent models for the kids in terms of articulation, with the ideas. I don't see myself as a model of articulation of ideas. Um, as you can tell by all the "ums". (laughter) Uh, and this teacher told me he felt threatened because I was doing all this G and T stuff in my classroom, and I said to him, "You show the kids, you're doing G and T stuff by articulating so well and showing the kids a model of verbal, you know, wonderfully, oh I don't know how to put it, the ideas come out so clearly. You're an excellent model for that. So why are you feeling badly?" So I guess, an appreciation of each other's characteristics is important. Um, not being jealous of one another, not feeling threatened by one another, uh, learning to share. Well, you know, I'm involved in Peer Coaching, uh, I really firmly believe in Peer Coaching, and uh, learning to help one another improve. I think that's really, you know, again, getting back to the ideal setting in school, I think that would be wonderful, if teachers would get into, uh, a sort of peer coaching

thing. I mean, not forced, but if they voluntarily saw that they, everybody can constantly improve, constantly grow. And, um, that'd be a wonderful staff to teach on. No threat of, of sharing ideas. No threat of expressing yourself.

Irene: Mm hmm. 'Kay, the other part of the question is, uh ...

Ruth: There's other parts? I can't believe it!

Irene: There's other parts.

Ruth: Okay.

Irene: What do you think are important features in the way that staff members relate to administration?

Ruth: I think the same thing. I think the honesty, I think the, um, the openness, and of course, that's going to depend on how the administration relates to the staff members.

Irene: Mm hmm.

Ruth: I'm not afraid of my administration, to see what I am ...

Irene: Mm hmm.

Ruth: So my principal can come into the classroom, and yes, we have Miss____ 's desk turned upside down. You know ... Um ... um, or the d', um, they're piled high, you know, in the ceiling, um, I'm not going to put on a false front for him, because that is, uh, robbing him of, I think, my qualities that make me effective in, in most ways, and, and that comes along with it. I'm not going to be someone I'm not, and, um, I really appreciate the support the administration gives me in that way. I feel comfortable with it. I feel that, um, they accept me for who I am.

Irene: Give me some good positive examples of the way staff members relate to each other, and some positive examples of the way they relate to administration.

Ruth: I don't know how concrete I can get. Um, I know when I - this is from personal experience - and, um, I know when I go out, say for example, and do a Peer Coaching session, um, my staff members come back and they'll say, " That was a great job." They're not afraid to give compliments. They're not afraid to, uh, say, uh, you know, I really like what you did." And I think what we have to do more of, is saying what we like, what we saw in each other's classes. I go past, uh, a teacher's classroom, and I see, um, something that's fantastic, I shouldn't just, um, pass by and go, "Yech, I wish I'd thought of that." You know, "That's great. I'm really happy I, I see this in your classroom." sort of thing. So that's a kind of general thing, but they have been supportive as well. Like I get kind of, um, depressed about some of the stuff, you know, 'cause I feel their concern, about, say, Gifted and Talented. I, I understand where they're coming from. But overall they've been supportive, and uh, I have many staff members, you know, when they're having a down day, I guess this is more personal stuff, but if you're having a down day, come and talk about it, you know, feel open to talk, not just professionally, but personally. And a lot of the fellows on staff, I feel like they're my brothers. I really do. It's kind of a, a family feeling, even though we're getting kind of large in Junior High, it's still kind of a family feeling where there's brothers and sisters, and we can share. That's my, my thing. I don't know if other people feel that way, but I know that, in the past, I, like I never expected to be here so long. And the reason I'm here so long - it was hard to leave. I don't think there's a place, anywhere else, where there, the closeness is there. And when I talk to other people, they don't have that support in their schools. They can't

believe it. In fact, my girl friend looks at me, and she says, "I don't believe what you're saying here. That this happens in your school."

Irene: Mm hmm.

Ruth: So it's kind of neat. It's, uh, a good feeling. In terms of staff and administration, uh, I think, again, we've tried to, you know, where there's compliments deserved, I think, uh, the staff has given the administration compliments. I don't think there's enough all the time, because I think people are afraid of, of looking at, at that as, "Oh, I'm brow-nosing," or, you know, trying to, uh, "worm my way up the ladder" so, so to speak. So people kind of hold back. We're, people are always wanting to gripe, they don't want give, uh, compliments when they're due.

Irene: Mmm. What is Language Arts for?

Ruth: I, I see Language Arts as, um, well, there's many, many things. Communication, teaching the kids how to communicate with each other, um, teaching the kids how to pick up ideas, thinking skills, I think really play, I mean, thinking skills are very important in any subject area, but I really see Language Arts a real vehicle for encouraging the kids in their thinking, and encouraging thinking skills, "straining the brain". I really see that as a, a vehicle for that. So I'd say, communication, thinking skills, um, showing the kids how they're going to learn in the future. I, I like it because there are some facts, I guess, that the kids need to know, but it's so much more a process oriented thing than just learning this information and go for in memorizing, you know.

Irene: What do you hope your students get out of studying Language Arts?

Ruth: I think a, a love of learning. Um, wanting to investigate, um, for example, you're showing them a variety of literary forms, I, I'm hoping that, uh ...

(At this point the audio tape cut off.)

Ruth: ... this is only Whole Language?

Irene: Uh, the tape cut us off, um, we didn't realize it, so I'm going to ask that question again. The last question. What do you hope your students get out of studying Language Arts with you?

Ruth: Now I've forgotten what's on the other side. (laughter)

Irene: That's okay. Just answer it again.

Ruth: I guess a love of learning, a wanting to investigate to continue their learning, and as I said on the other side of the tape, um, if you're studying, say a variety of literary forms, you're trying to get the variety there for them so they can see what's out there, rather than just say, well, we're studying the short story here, this is everything you need to know about the short story and that's it. You want them to investigate more short stories, you want to inves', them to investigate more novels, and want to read them, not just "Ah, I have to do this because teacher's doing it", or "teacher's making us do it". I forgot what else I was going to say.

Irene: Well, maybe it'll come up in one of the other ones.

Ruth: Okay.

Irene: What do you think Whole Language is?

Ruth: I think a lot of what I've said, um, earlier, um, plays into Whole Language. I think the process, the thinking skills, um, the integration of the reading and the writing and the listening and the speaking is Whole Language. Um, through writing and reading the kids are working out their ideas and everything else kind of

(laughter) ... no, that's not ... mmm, say that again, that Whole Language is ... (laughter) What do you think Whole Language ...

Irene: What do you think Whole Language is ... (jumbled words, talking both at once)

Ruth: Yeah, that, what I said, the integration, the reading, the writing, the listening, the speaking uh, and spelling is thrown in there and handwriting and thinking and all of that, but you're, you're showing the kids that, uh, there's a purpose to those things, you're not just studying those things (Ruth's phone rang) 'cause they're on the curriculum or, or whatever.

Irene: The phone is ringing. Stop the tape. ... Okay. Want me to ask again?

Ruth: One more time. How many times have you asked this?

Irene: Three.

Ruth: Right.

Irene: What do you think Whole Language is?

Ruth: A process. Process of - I keep repeating - thinking, uh, communication, uh, expressing one's ideas, holding one's own opinion, uh, and being able to support that opinion, through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and showing the kids that all of those are interrelated you know, we just don't write for the sake of writing because teacher needs ten marks in the mark book. We're writing because we're expressing an opinion, we've talked about it before we write, we compare notes with someone else in terms of what they think, how their view might differ from our view, um, it's a whole, whole thing. It's not just "I'm going to do literature now, and this is literature, guys. Read this." It's, uh, integrated with the writing, it's integrated with spelling, it's just ... that's my view, um, I don't have a fancy definition. It's more ... to me, Whole Language is more a gut

feeling and yet I know what I want to do with my kids and yet, when someone asks me to define it, I find it very difficult to define. Because everything is so interrelated.

Irene: Given what you have said, to what extent do Whole Language principles inform your Language Arts teaching? ... Given what you have said ...

Ruth: Mm hmm.

Irene: To what extent do Whole Language principles inform your Language Arts teaching practice?

Ruth: I think I, um, I really, I try to follow Whole Language from what my perception of what Whole Language is ...

Irene: Mm hmm.

Ruth: Uh I don't, I try to thematic units in English where I'm integrating all of those skills and I look for activities to, to show the integration of this. And if I have to pull a formal lesson in, that's fine. But we're not learning nouns, say for the sake of learning nouns. We're learning nouns because it came up, somewhere in our writing or somewhere in our, our reading, or, or in whatever. Um, everything is integrated, everything overlaps in what I do with the kids. And this has really changed over the years, because I was very, very structured in terms of saying, "Well now, kids, this is literature, and next period, we turn to spelling." Um, it's all interrelated, and I think the kids learn more from that. They see more of a relationship, and they can carry on with what they've read, they can transfer that to their writing, they can transfer that to their, uh, speaking and their listening.

Irene: Tell me how you define evaluation.

Ruth: Um, I think evaluation for myself, or, the way I use evaluation, is to show the areas, uh, to show the student their, their strengths, and the areas they need to work on. I don't want evaluation to just be a mark on their report card, and uh, what I've done in the last five years is I've made my own report card. That is, basically, anecdotal comments, and I make comments under, uh, each of the four main strands of Language Arts plus I add my own. Um, I do the reading, the writing, the speaking and the listening, and then I add in spelling, um, basically because I think parents are concerned about spelling, and they don't know what we're doing with spelling, and I don't think they, they understand. They're, they're from the school where "this is unit one, guys, we learn all these words that have no relationship with what I'm doing". And the kid gets thirty out of thirty, and wow, they're a fantastic speller, but their writing, their writing is atrocious. You know, the spelling in their, their written work is atrocious, yet they can get thirty out of thirty on a spelling test.

Irene: Mm hmm.

Ruth: I have a really hard time with that. Um, so, I, uh, include spelling on my report card, or my evaluation. I had study and research skills because I think those are skills that the kids, those are skills that you need through life. Um, being able to find, locate information, uh just use of time. How you use your time? Are you using it effectively? I include thinking skills on the report card, and I want the parents just to know, if the kids are, or if I see any, if I observe any, um, "straining of the brain", or the kid just going to want a teacher's answer, you know, are they willing to take a risk at, at, um, getting other answers. I want that to be noted on the report card because I

think kids have been robbed on report cards in the past. Um, kids have been, oh, for an example, last year, I had a kid, who absolutely would bomb out, Grade Seven, because he had very, um, say perceptual problem in terms of writing. This kid could not spell "the" the same in, in the same paragraph. You know, he would spell it three different ways. That was the word "the". This is a Grade Seven student. Now looking at that, you would say this kid is a total failure, I know a few years ago we would look at that and now that, that there's more emphasis on speaking, on the oral, on the drama, you know, um, he can articulate his ideas very well. He listens very well. He picks up information just very quickly because he has these, these are his strengths. So, why should that kid have that comment on the report card, you know, so that's why I kind of couldn't live with it anymore, with the mark on the report card. There had to be more. There had to be more explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of the kids. When I write my report cards, I think of how I can help them, I need to inform the parents, but I think, after all, it, it needs to help the students first. In terms of evaluation in the classroom, I'm, I'm talking about report cards now, and that's not the only kind of evaluation. I try to have conferences with my kids, I, and if I hand back a piece of work, I, I tell them what I like about it, what can be improved upon it, and also want them to reflect on, on what I've said, and, um, just talk about how they feel about that piece of work. Now that takes time, and, sometimes while you're talking to one student and you've assigned something else to the rest of the class, the noise level gets up, and sometimes you're really frustrated, but I think it's worthwhile, rather than just saying "Okay kid, this is worth an A". the kid doesn't know what he's done to deserve the A. "Teacher was

in a good mood, (laughter) she gave me an A." You know, or, a C. What make sit a C paper? The kids need to know this. Why? What they can do to improve it.

Irene: Well, the next question is: How do you evaluate your students, but I think you've answered that.

Ruth: I guess so. Yeah, yeah.

Irene: To what extent do Whole Language principles influence your evaluation procedure?

Ruth: I think I see the students having, uh, the idea that it's, uh, student-based, you know, it's not a certain set of criteria that, uh, the curriculum has outlined. I mean, I want the kids to accomplish certain skills, but I think you're always looking at the individual student and how he or she is, is um, is growing. Um, for example, a child has difficulty in, um, the listening skills section. Which, what are you looking at? Like how are you going to help that child improve? Now would you restate that question 'cause I think I'm losing it.
(laughter)

Irene: Okay.

Ruth: Again, please, I'm not really right on the mark here. (a couple of jumbled words)

Irene: To what extent do Whole Language principles influence your evaluation procedure?

Ruth: I, I'm trying to look at various areas of the students, I guess, rather than just specific things. Um, again, and then the needs of the individual student, okay? Um, that's basically I think the two main areas.

Irene: Alright. Have you ever had to defend Whole Language to parents, or teachers? And if so, what did you say?

Ruth: I've never had to. I've had a very positive response with parents. I've had parents come in, and after I've shown, after I've sent home this report card, because I make a list of the things that we've done, too, I include that, and I'll just say "Students have, will have experienced this", or, "will accomplish this by the end of the first term", and parents come in and they say, "You accomplish much more than what I did in school", and I've had parents who have been teachers come in, and those are the ones that really appreciate what has been happening, and they'll just say, "I can't believe that you could do all of this in, in one term. Um, how do you do it without losing your mind?" You know, um, fellow colleagues sometimes like to get the slam in about "Oh, those kids can't spell". I get that. I think that's a criticism, or "These kids can't read the textbook", and my defense is, I, I tell them how I see English, how I see Language Arts, and I also tell them that we can teach Language Arts in any subject area. When are you going to start doing it? (laughter) Another, another thing that I do is I try to integrate some of the stuff, so with say, um, they'll come back and say, "Aah, these kids don't know how to do a research report", I'll say, "Okay, give me a topic. What are you taking in, in Science?" "we're taking astronomy." "What is something you would like the kids to research?" So that's the teacher's decision, and I'll say, Fine. I want to teach the kids library skills, research skills, thinking skills, organizational skills, all this writing, you know, uh, proofreading, editing, these are the skills that I want to teach them in Language Arts. This is a wonderful vehicle. Let me use my Language Arts periods to do this. And, and, and you get your astronomer's report, and I get my process." So, I, I do tell them,

though, any teacher can teach spelling. You just have to set your mind to it. (laughter)

Irene: Do you consider Whole Language instruction here to stay? Or is it a passing educational fashion?

Ruth: I hope it's here to stay. I know people think of it as a fad, or a fashion, and they'll say, "Well, this too shall pass." Um, I hope it stays, because I really think it encourages thinking, and encourages, it helps kids to prepare for the future far more than learning, um, the structure that we had to learn when we were in school. Gets them to question, and I think it, it, or it helps. It's a vehicle to get the kids to question things. To question life. To experience life. Far more than sitting behind the old textbook here and learning parts of speech and, and various things like that. Just for the sake of learning parts of speech, for example.

Irene: Rate its chances of survival. Rate Whole Language's chances of survival.

Ruth: How do you want me to rate it? Percentage-wise, or ... I don't know. I, I, I re', I hope it survives. I really do, because I don't want to go back to the other way, I think my career as a teacher is over, because I, I don't see myself, um, doing textbooks, doing um - and when I say textbooks I don't mean I don't use textbooks, but I mean going page by page by page by page and just saying, "Well, because it's November the nineteenth, we're on here. You know, and tomorrow we're going to be there." Aah. And I think if it goes back to that, that's when I quit teaching. That's my threat. (laughter) Percentage-wise.

Irene: Okay. Thanks a lot.

Ruth: You're welcome.

Reflections

As I proceeded with the interview, I began to be aware of how the questions were my questions. Ruth was trying to fit her personal knowledge into my framework with some difficulty, qualifying her answers with her own terms. For example, when Ruth was asked what Whole Language was, she found it difficult to define: "... to me, Whole Language is more a gut feeling and yet I know what I want to do with my kids and yet, when someone asks me to define it, I find it very difficult to define. Because everything is so interrelated" (First Interview, p. 50). Looking back over this interview, I had the sense that, had Ruth been asked to frame the interview with her own questions, the entire conversation would have taken quite a different tone. There was a lurching in the pace of the interview, as if we were trying to walk with an impediment. I had promised myself that I would try and be as faithful as I could to Ruth's voice, and I refused to minimize or disqualify any of the data she offered. The data must be available in its totality, even if it meant that I must change my original conceptual framework. If I was to find out how Whole Language became a constituent of her personal practical knowledge, then I must allow her to reveal her knowledge as she saw fit. Ruth had the answers. Her thinking was the territory I must explore. I did not own her personal knowledge. Therefore I should have been prepared for "culture shock", but as most explorers can avouch, one is never entirely prepared.

I can see now that the initial question was simply a way to get into the issues involved in real teacher thinking, but once I had begun, I discovered gradually that I had opened a kind of Pandora's box which unleashed many questions instead of troubles, and my search for a way to understand another kind of thought had begun.

In the first interview, I asked Ruth "Who or what has had the most important influence on how you see yourself as a teacher?" She answered, "This

is really difficult ... the in-servicing that I've done, I think makes me start to question what I'm doing in the classroom ... I start questioning myself and making changes ... in the way I view things and the way I go about things. And I guess that's exciting. ... I don't have any particular "who's" have made an influence, but the "what's" I think is just the in-servicing training that I've made myself go to, to learn" (First Interview, p. 35). As I reflected upon this, I realized that this resembled Schön's (1987) notion of "knowing-in-action"; that is, "the knowing is in the action. We reveal it by our ... performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit" (p. 25).

As if our narratives were weaving a tapestry of her thinking, Ruth established the warp of our narratives in this first statement about what influenced her, what motivated her, and how she continued to have a powerful sense of personal ownership about her practice. She was driven by a desire to learn and she wished for students to have the same desire; hence her attendance at in-service training sessions. Learning was the catalyst for change, and therein lay both the reward and the stimulus for more learning. My narrative of how I came to understand Ruth's thinking was the woof of the tapestry of our shared narrative. If this 'narrative tapestry' was to be truly interwoven, I would have to attend carefully to the attributes of Ruth's thinking, and weave my observations and discoveries into what I perceived to be there.

At this point I re-examined Elbaz's work on the structure of personal practical knowledge, with close attention to any resemblances to her concepts of rules of practice, practical principles, and images which I might find in Ruth's narrative. Because I had not as yet observed her at work in her classroom, I searched for what might be candidates as practical principles for her practice. From her statements on how she questions herself in her practice (First Interview, p. 35), I suspected that she might hold the importance of questioning ideas and actions as a practical principle. There appeared to be many more. She

spoke of "talk[ing] with kids at their level, ... a sense of humor, roll[ing] with the punches ... so they see the humanness ... let's learn together" (First Interview, p. 36) which I also sensed could all be practical principles.

I recognized several concepts which seemed to indicate imagistic possibilities: "talk to the kids ... trying to reason with them ... getting them to come to a realization ... I talk it out ... how you can change things" (First Interview, p. 35-38). Ruth seemed to have a definite conviction about the importance of negotiating and questioning together with others in her work space. Because of this sense of conviction, as if these activities were a moral undertaking, I was alerted to the possibility that they could belong to Elbaz's view of the most generalizable level of ordering knowledge--that of images.

Attempting to also emulate Clandinin's search for image which is more than public metaphor, which takes into account the private experience, I detected an image--Ruth, the holistic learner, which I chose to refer to as theme at this point in my investigation. Ruth radiated a sense of personal ownership, of basing her narrative on important personal beliefs throughout the entire narrative. I was not sure that there was a clear distinction in terms of that which organized Ruth's world--public or private.

Clandinin (1986) views image as the coalescence of experience (p. 130). I found Ruth to be speaking out of experience but I wondered if the images which Clandinin found in teachers' knowledge served other purposes as well as locations where an individual's perceptions of experiences consolidated as image. Clandinin describes and names these locations as images, but, in examining Ruth's narratives thus far, I began to question the nature of the role of images within personal practical knowledge.

What struck my attention when our interview was completed was, that with every new question in the interview, Ruth answered with a variation of her original statement:

... as I go through teaching, year by year, the in-servicing that I've done, I think make me start to question what I'm doing in the classroom, I think that's a very important influence on how I see myself as a teacher and as I learn new things from in-servicing, I start questioning myself and making changes ... I don't have any particular "who's" ... the what's ...To learn (First Interview, p. 35).

Elbaz's work in searching out the images from her subject's personal knowledge appeared to be instructive as she paid attention to levels of ordering knowledge according to contributions made to consistent practice. Because Ruth's narrative already sounded a central theme of learning and questioning, I sensed that the consistency with which Ruth constructed concepts--be they rules, principles, or images--would also signify how Ruth organized her knowledge.

I examined Ruth's narrative further. She stressed the importance of being a learner, of being a role model for her Junior High students, of showing the humanness and the humor in learning. Yet it was this very humanness that frustrated her as well, because she viewed learning as also requiring disciplined behavior.

I guess I'm a bit soft, you know, I'm not going to bring my ruler down, or I'm not going to send them to the office immediately, I'd rather talk it through with them, and sometimes that's a bit frustrating. And I know at times I have to force myself to be harder than what I think my nature implies. I think sometimes probably the most difficult thing I've had to deal with as a teacher, not so much losing control of the kids but just getting them to come to a realization of appropriate behavior in terms of talking it out with them rather

than discipline, punishment sort of methods. And you have to come a long way, you know, you have to keep at them. (First Interview, p. 37)

Here I found the possibility of an image of Ruth as the negotiator. I also found a transition in Ruth's thinking, as she described her goal of trying to persuade her students to adopt a questioning process and an attitude similar to hers, as if learning were a life skill. She seemed to regard her way of believing in learning as part of the curriculum she negotiated with the students.

Ruth went on to talk about difficulties with colleagues whom she saw as feeling threatened by new initiatives in education, like "Gifted and Talented". She saw new initiatives in terms of food, and borrowed from the image of dining and trying new food--"one more thing added to their plate"--in relation to these new initiatives. New initiatives were seen as nourishing, perhaps strange, but exciting to be sampled. She told how she handled situations that were difficult for her. She mixed strategies--brainstorming, griping, personal reading, self-analysis, constantly having to examine yourself and what you can give those kids--as she sought to relate how she tried to adapt to each new class she taught, to each new situation in her work. The reflective nature of Whole Language teaching as it was situated in specific yet always unique circumstances also attested to the Whole Language orientation Ruth displayed.

Integration was a strong theme that recurred again and again in Ruth's narrative. She longed for consolidation, for synthesis, for unity and wholeness, and implied that learning was fragmented due to the separation of the subject areas into specialties. Again, the Whole Language tenet of understanding the whole as opposed to understanding parts which might later be assembled into a whole was echoed here in Ruth's wish for holism and integration.

This theme of integration was carried further as she highlighted her belief that learning was a subtle and at times an ambiguous enterprise, as she

recounted the anecdote about someone passing by her classroom, and upon hearing and seeing children talking noisily in groups clustered in and out of the classroom, asking "What's happening here?" Her situation demanded "a closer look" in order to "see that there is a lot of things going on". She stated:

I've been there thirteen years, in this school, therefore they know my approach, and my approach has changed over the years. I mean, I was very structured at the beginning ...Sit in rows, do this, here's a worksheet, do it. Right? But that, to me, isn't learning (First Interview, p. 43).

She reacted to what she called "structured" learning. She seemed to mean rigid, non-negotiated, rote learning. She yearned for schooling which followed an organic growth model, both for her students and her colleagues. Her interest in Peer Coaching was a voluntary teacher self-growth model which would help teachers to reflect upon and improve their own practice. Whole Language beliefs rest upon the affirmation that the learner must learn voluntarily, and play an active role in shaping the learning process.

She stated the importance of being "genuine", especially with administration, for she saw her personal qualities as a gift which should not be hidden--"...I'm not going to put on a false front for him (the principal), because that is robbing him of, I think, my qualities that make me effective in most ways..." (First Interview, p. 45). Another underpinning of Whole Language principles is the belief in the essential uniqueness of each learner and each learning experience. Here I saw Ruth, as learner, applying this belief to herself as well.

The theme of staff as family was emphasized.

And a lot of the fellows on staff, I feel like they're my brothers. I really do. It's kind of a family feeling, even though we're getting kind of large in junior high, it's still kind of a family feeling where there's brothers and sisters, and we can share. (First Interview, p. 46)

Again, she emphasized her longing for holism in collegial relations.

I began to suspect that something very important to the way her themes functioned in Ruth's personal practical knowledge was beginning to emerge out Ruth's narrative. The emphasis on holistic learning as a personal growth model, as a way of being and becoming, was the first indication I had that a powerful concept was emerging through Ruth's narrative.

To state that these were her themes which guided her practice and that Whole Language was definitely identified in the language used to describe these themes, was only a temporary measure. She never voluntarily referred to Whole Language theory specifically, never labelled herself as a "Whole Language teacher" per se, yet had agreed to be interviewed as a Whole Language teacher. She had many of the markings of a Whole Language teacher, yet she did not choose to label herself in this manner. She had embarked upon this study as a Whole Language teacher, yet she did not personally identify herself with any particular theoretical label. By admission, she seemed to believe that many theories had influenced and instructed her, yet she was not dominated by them, echoing Schwab's ideas about arts of the eclectic and the practical. She saw her thinking as her own. Ruth's narrative continued to revolve around the "axis" of the theme of Ruth as learner and negotiator, no matter what was asked of her. It was as if this was her universe. She could only speak to that which lay within her own sphere. She was occupied with clarifying her own values and practices, and any attempt at impartiality concerning her values and practices at this time was

not possible. She was speaking and continued to speak from deep within her own consciousness. In retrospect, it appeared as if there really was nothing of greater value to her to discuss.

Ruth told me about her concept of evaluation. She had designed her own report card because she felt that evaluation was an integral part of learning. The student should find her strengths and weaknesses recorded in the evaluation record and serve as a guide for further learning. The student must feel responsibility and ownership of learning as a personal enterprise. The only way to accomplish this was to share the evaluation process with the student. Ownership of evaluation was to be co-owned and not jealously guarded by the teacher. Ruth felt that this was part of her personal value system, but I noted that it was also an integral part of the underpinnings of Whole Language theory.

Knowing as Part of the Process

For Ruth, Language Arts was a vehicle for communication, for growth, for identifying the self at a given moment in time and space, for becoming, for being. More important yet, her knowledge was not a static entity; Ruth was very aware that she was knowing. She did not see herself as possessing knowledge, but rather she was possessed of certain truths, knew that these truths had evolved out of life experience, and was eager to continue the process. Not only did she see herself as a teacher of learning as process, she believed she was a student of knowing who also would grow in her knowing with the right kind of nurture, just as her students.

The First Visit

The Visit: January 10, 1991

Ruth, I came to your school yesterday, January 10th, for my first visit to your classroom. I have not been in your classroom before, except for one after-four meeting last year, so I had no idea what it would be like. I did remember that you had the traditional kind of desks, and that they were in rows at the end of the day. (Knowing our division approach to janitorial cleanup, I do not assume that desks are in a certain formation because that is necessarily the teacher's first choice.)

I found you in the hall, your head poked into a classroom, another teacher inside the classroom, and at least half a classroom full of students looking a bit unhappy. I could tell immediately, from my own teaching experience, that this was a discipline situation. I heard you say, "Well, there were cracker crumbs all over the place! It was a real mess!" A few students defended their part, or lack of it, in this situation. You obviously were on duty, so it was your responsibility to speak to the students, and report the problem to the homeroom teacher. He listened while you stated what you had seen, and that someone obviously was responsible. I tapped you on the shoulder to let you know I was there, since the bell was about to go. You then left the situation to the homeroom teacher to follow up in his own way.

As we headed up the stairs to go to your classroom, you laughed and shook your head. A boy passed us, and you said, "There's another one!" You said something to the effect, "Oh it's one of those days. I just hate these scenes. You should have seen the mess. Oh well."

The classroom was filled with laughing, boisterous students. I knew this was a lively, high-energy class I was going to visit, even as we approached the

door. We agreed I would sit at your desk, which was placed at the back corner of the room, and which you said you never used during class anyway. There were six rows of desks arranged in the traditional classroom style, except for the teacher's desk.

You quietened the class down. As part of this process, I noticed you bantered with them. Some boys were laughing and saying that someone had a whoopee cushion. You asked who this was, and laughed with them. The joke was that the boys said another student had made a sound like a whoopee cushion. You joked and said you had been known to have had a whoopee cushion in your room. You waited for the class to quieten a bit more, then introduced me to the class, reminding the class that you had told them I was going to be coming to visit. You asked them if they remembered what they were going to do today. One person said something about working on reading poetry. You agreed and reviewed where each group was going to go, and the way the students were going to go about preparing their oral group presentations.

The students got up and went to their groups after a bit of discussion and half-hearted protests. You quietly repeated the assignment. When you felt they were becoming too boisterous, you waited silently. Then, after a pause, you said. "You're talking all at the same time. Remember there's one of me, and how many of you? Yes, you'll go in the same groups. Go over it again. I'll give you ten minutes. So, at twenty after you're going to come back here, and I'll see what you've done with it."

A few boys bantered about their group assignment, and soon the room was cleared as the majority of the students went into the hall after they had picked up their poems. Three girls were talking to you at the door, and seven boys remained in the front of the room, sitting together with their poems in hand. These boys immediately began reading their poem "Foul Shot". It was clear that each boy knew which line(s) were his, and the group corrected each other if they thought

someone was not saying it properly. There was a bit of negotiation about how they were going to say certain lines.

A teacher's assistant had come into the room earlier, had greeted me, (I had thought she was an older student at first) and you now discussed something with her up by the door, after the previous group of girls had finished their discussion with you, and had proceeded on their way into the hall. The assistant, it later became clear, was there to help a handicapped girl who was also a part of the girls' group with whom you had talked.

You now turned to the boys' group, and said, "How about practising it now the way you're going to present it?" One boy asked, as they lined up before the blackboard, "Facing the board?" You responded, "No, not facing the board." The boys rearranged themselves, and negotiated the saying of the title. After a few tries, you stepped in and asked, "Can I tell you something? You don't turn your back to the audience." The particular boy to whom you were referring said, "Okay".

There was some more discussion amongst the boys about the poem, you were listening, and then you commented, "___ had a good comment. And so did _____. OK, _____". _____ proposed a different method of presentation. You acknowledged this, the boys discussed it. The idea of using a real basketball came up. You asked how it would be used, and encouraged the boys to decide as a group. They agreed. They wanted to immediately go get the basketball. You told them to say it first, and then someone could go and get the basketball from the gym. ___ announced the poem's title but the boys were still talking amongst themselves. You said, "___, you want to wait till the group is ready...There is no star. When you're waiting to present, there should be no distractions." There was some more discussion of how the movement in the poem should be done. The boys rehearsed the poem again. You then suggested trying the poem without so much movement, which they did.

The three girls came in whom I mentioned earlier were the last group to leave the room. You told them they could come in, but they had to be quiet. The boys complained, but you said the boys needed an audience, so the girls could stay. You then reminded them that there were only two minutes left, and went into the hall to tell the others there were only two minutes remaining. The boys went through their poem once more. The presentation showed more control, less distracting movement this time. The girls clapped when the poem was done. The boys negotiated the basketball idea. You asked the boys to sit down, and went to get the others.

When all were settled in their seats, one of the students complained that you called them kids. You acted surprised and apologized. The students did not seem to take this complaint seriously, but it seemed rather that it was something to say. The students talked amongst themselves, and you appeared to be waiting. Then you passed out halfscap. When the students asked what that was for, another student gave a silly reply. You ignored them.

When you had the attention of the class, you explained what they were to look for while the presentations were going on. You noted that they did not have a copy of the presenters' poem. Therefore they should listen with concentration. When the presenters were done, the students were to write down the main idea they got from the poem, or any mental picture or image they had of the poem, or to write down things they liked about the poem presentation. You said you wanted some reaction to each poem presented. A student asked how they would know what the poem was called, and you said you would write the name of the poem on the blackboard before each presentation. A student asked what he should do if he couldn't think of anything. You answered, "Just try." You also said to the class that later they would be given a chance to choose a different poem.

You then asked "High Dive" to come up front from your seat in one of the student's desks at the back of the room, saying "You're the lucky ones. I know."

The group of three boys and two girls came up and presented their poem quietly and with dignity. The audience watched carefully. The presenters tried to use their voices expressively but seemed timid, and one character jumped at the word "jump" in the poem.

When they seated themselves, you said "thank you" and clapped. No one else clapped. You said, "Oh! Something we can do as an audience is clap our applause." Everyone clapped.

You asked the students to take a few minutes to write an evaluatory statement down, and you wrote something down as well on your paper. A boy seemed to ignore what you said. You spoke his name, "___" and then said, "You'll be waiting for the next poem, right?" He nodded. There was a minute of writing time. A boy raised his hand. You realized he didn't have a paper. You apologized "Sorry ___." as you gave him a paper.

You went to the front of the room and said, "Okay, if you're finished, the next group is "I Love All Gravity Defiers" ", which you also wrote on the board. Three girls and two boys came up and spoke their poem. This time all clapped as you thanked the group. Again you gave a few minutes for the students to write their response.

You shushed the class talk a bit. You stared at the boys who had repeatedly been trying to get away with talking, not writing, and generally not taking the class too seriously. Someone asked what the next poem was called, and several boys gave silly answers. Again you were quiet, and just looked at the offenders. You said "sh" again. Then, because they were not paying attention, You said, "Guys, you know you're not giving a very good impression. I'm not ashamed to say this in front of Mrs. Schmidt. I think your attitude is real stinky. You're trying to make yourselves look big? Uh,uh. Think about that. You're making yourselves look foolish." The rest of the room was in absolute silence while you scolded them.

Then you asked "Foul Shot" to go up. Some stools were in the way and you asked some students to move them, which they did. The entire classroom was much subdued now. A girl put up her hand and looked at you. You told her "Not yet". The group of boys that I had watched rehearse before now said their poem with quiet expression but also with dignity. Much more control was in evidence. You thanked them when they were done, and the class clapped with you.

You called up "The Women's 400 Metre" and wrote it on the board. You sat down, and asked ___ if he had written something for "Foul Shot". He said he had, although he had his head turned to the boy behind him most of the time. The three girls whom I mentioned previously now presented the poem, and the handicapped girl stood with them. They told her when she was to say "Bang", which she did. The girls were quiet but did not blush or act self-conscious. You thanked this group and the class clapped with you. As the class wrote on their papers, there were still a few students looking around but the class atmosphere was calmer than it had been.

Someone asked you if that was it, and you agreed. Then you went to the front of the room and said that the students would know how well they had done by the comments written about them. You asked for some comments about the first poem. ___ said they spoke "nice and loud", ___ made a positive comment although I did not catch the words, ___ agreed it was nice and loud, and you pointed out that this was good, so that everyone could hear.

At this point the bell rang. You said you were out of time, and that the last person in each row should collect the poems. Some students began to head for the door, but you stopped them and said, "I'm not dismissing you yet. Sit down." The students asked what they should do with their papers. You said they should not put them in their binders since they would only fall out, but rather in their pencil cases or somewhere where they wouldn't fall out. You then asked where they

were off to, and they said "German". You said "Okay" and they proceeded to get up and head out the door. The period had ended as well as my first visit.

Ruth, I enjoyed the visit and felt right at home in your junior high setting. There were many things I did not get down, but we chatted about the idea that if I made perhaps several visits where not all classes would be the same classes, I could get a better feel for your approach to teaching, and not worry about trying to pack all the information into a few sessions.

Could you clarify any places in my narrative where I did not accurately reflect what went on in the class? Also, I have some questions I would like you to answer.

Would you consider these students your "typical" Grade Seven students? You mentioned earlier to me in the hall that this year's classes were not like last year's classes.

What are some goals you have for this particular class?

Why did you choose to deal with the restless boys the way you did? Is this what you meant when you said you prefer to talk to them rather than threaten them?

What are the arrangements you have made to help the handicapped girl? How do you integrate her into class activities? I thought the instance where she was given a sound effect in the poem reading worked well. How do you modify your Language Arts program to meet her needs?

Where were you heading with this particular poetry assignment? Was this an effort to integrate the reading, speaking and listening skills of which you spoke in our first interview?

You mentioned several times the importance of the human face you would like to put on learning. Am I correct when I say that I saw you make a patient effort to allow the students to "be themselves" within your classroom expectations?

You spoke about why clapping is important as if you were sharing some information with them. You did not scold them for not clapping. Is this a reflection of your desire to show them you are also a learner? When some students made silly comments, you did not scold them until they, finally, through repeated behaviour had "asked for it". I noticed you did not raise your voice although I could tell you were displeased.

When you first came into the room, you joked with the students about a whoopee cushion. I noted your sense of humor was always close to the surface.

I'm trying to find the specific local flavor of your classroom as I view it with your ideas--on teaching, on Whole Language, on Language Arts--in mind. You spoke of Whole Language as being a way of teaching process, of integrating the four strands--speaking, listening, writing, and reading--of showing the students that what they do in school is a part of the whole of life. You often referred to teaching students to think, and that Language Arts was a way of doing that. I think you called it "straining the brain". Can you tell me how you work this into your plans for this particular class?

Perhaps these questions are enough for now. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Irene

Reflections

My first visit to Ruth's classroom was a glimpse of Ruth and her students at work with oral poetry rehearsals. The poetry was practised in groups and the students were asked to respond to each other's presentations by writing the main image or idea they had from each presentation. The presentations were not meant as finished products but rather trial exercises to enable the students to play with various methods of performing and meaning-making. It was also a time where Ruth was able to model appropriate applause for the students. Even after some

boys were scolded for showing off and not applying themselves to the task of responding to the poetry, the students continued to carry on with goodwill. Ruth's commentary was that this class was not typical of her usual Grade Seven classes, that these students were generally rowdier and more physical with each other. They also liked to insult each other frequently. She stated her goals for this class as being attitudinal in the main--more of a positive attitude toward each other, a greater taking of personal responsibility rather than blaming another student. A handicapped student who had been given a sound effect to make in one of the poem presentations was mentioned by Ruth as being integrated as much as was possible.

In Ruth's response to my questions which followed my observations, I noticed Ruth answered my questions about Language Arts in general, but no mention was made of Whole Language specifically by her, although I had included it as part of my questioning. I thought at the time that perhaps it was merely an oversight on her part.

Ruth's Reply: January 15, 1991

Irene, thank-you for your observations. I can see where this project will encourage me to reflect on my teaching practices. It's going to be a tremendous learning experience for me.

These students are not my typical Grade 7 students, and as you know, I am finding it difficult to adjust to them. Overall as a class, I find them far more immature in their behavior (e.g. comments, "goofiness") and less willing to take on responsibilities. Yet, there are some students who act more mature in their girlfriend/boyfriend relationships.

Their attitudes are quite a bit different from previous years. They seem more cynical and are satisfied with minimum effort put into their work. (What's the point?" attitude.)

They are far more physical--punching, general rowdiness, etc. --and love to insult each other/ put each other down.

However; there are also quiet and timid students as well who co-operate and are positive.

Goals --more in general attitude towards others

--more positive towards other students and their work

--more responsibility taken rather than blaming it on someone else

Restless boys--I've tried many ways of dealing with these boys (e.g. detentions, calling parents, etc.). I feel more comfortable with talking to them. (They like to get a "rise" from their teachers, then brag about it after.) But more important, I want to start thinking about their behaviors, and situations.

___ is integrated into as many class activities as possible. 3 L.A. periods plus 4 L.A. periods where she is working on a "Reaching Folder" with the T.A. During the other periods she is in Sp. Ed. Class activities: group work/ discussion, listening to stories/ presentations, writing stories, Readers' Theatre, poetry.

This was the class's first poetry assignment. I wanted to introduce them to oral poetry. We had practised on a couple together as a class. My first goal was enjoyment--getting them to realize that it could be enjoyable.

2nd goal--integrations of the strands

3rd goal--stressing thinking skills--it does not have to have 1 interpretation or right answer. Getting them (the students) to think about what they are reading and put themselves into the material. (This is difficult--students have to be shown how to do this because they have relied on teacher's interpretation.)

Yes. However; patience slips quite a bit.

I try to talk things out with the students to encourage them to see for themselves why something is appropriate or is not appropriate.

Humour in junior high is extremely important.

I need to think about this last question a bit more.

Ruth

Reflections

Two of Ruth's instructional goals were explained in this reply: the enjoyment of poetry, and the ability to project oneself into a text and "see for themselves". In order for these two dynamics to occur, she sought to create a situation which would allow the students to engage in a conscious personal encounter with the content of the text.

Ruth's attitude towards the task and the students was invitational and negotiatory rather than authoritarian. She valued humor as a way of accomplishing these goals. Again, Ruth was claiming the territory of engaged, voluntary, conscious learning as the domain she wanted for her classroom. Just as the nature of her goals were of a personal, experiential nature, so the nature of her narrative of her own thinking thus far was resolutely personal and experiential.

Her practice was governed by the beliefs of which she had spoken in the first interview: belief in negotiating with the students rather than dictating to them, sharing humor with the students as an aspect of that negotiatory process, belief in a personal sense of responsibility for learning--both personal and collectively.

The importance of the role of the affective element of Ruth's image of learning, in terms of her perception of herself and her students as learners, was strengthened in my understanding after this correspondence: an encounter with learning must be enjoyed, consciously experienced, encouraged and humorous. Ruth translated this into a negotiation process conducted with her students and located within the context of the milieu of her classroom.

The consistency of theme within her narratives of her experience seemed to indicate a way Ruth had of recognizing and organizing experience and context. I realized that the thematic nature of Ruth's perceptions of her knowledge was crucial in the structuring of Ruth's personal practical knowledge, and that these themes, in fact, corresponded to the metaphoric images Elbaz and Clandinin sought in their research. However, the central organizational role Ruth's themes played in her practice had not been profiled as anything more than another level of the structure of personal practical knowledge.

The remarkable consistency with which the theme of responsible, negotiated learning characterized Ruth's thinking in her narratives thus far seemed to be indicative of a central feature of the structure of her personal practical knowledge.

Boulding's Concept of Image

In seeking for supplementary research on the role image plays in knowledge, Boulding's work (1956) provided further insight.

Boulding identifies image as a way of naming subjective knowledge. An individual's concept of knowledge of the world is an image of the world; the way an individual would describe what s/he knows of her/himself is an image of the self. The possession of knowledge is subjective and is valid for the individual knowledge holder but is not necessarily a publicly-held knowledge.

The image organizes behavior, and can, at times, be changed according to the messages, or structured experiences, that reach the image holder. The effect of messages received by an individual is largely determined by the value scales of the individual. The image structure consists of internal discriminatory relationships between the values of the individual and the messages received, providing the image with cohesion. These relationships determine the way the individual holds a personal image of knowledge and redefines this personal

knowledge as messages are received and interpreted. Shared images are designated "public" knowledge; private images are "private" knowledge. Common images develop through discourse between knowledge holders who share value systems.

Elbaz or Clandinin's definitions of image were not sufficient to identify what I observed in my investigation. There was a dynamic at work in my subject's knowing that was something more than descriptive metaphor or coalescence of experience. My subject's knowing seemed to be driven by an organizer, similar to Boulding's definition of image. I observed this phenomenon at first as simply a theme in my subject's thinking upon which her decision-making and practise seemed to be predicated. But the central role which this theme occupied seemed more accurately to be an axial image which organized my subject's personal practical knowledge. The image of which I became increasingly aware appeared to play a determining role, not a consequential role. Pursuing the role image played in Ruth's thinking began to take priority as one way of accessing her knowing.

I wondered if Ruth would confirm these observations, and if she would reveal some other factors about her personal practical knowledge. I also noted that I would have to inquire further afield in defining the characteristics of image as Ruth revealed them to me.

The Second Visit

The Visit: January 16, 1991

Ruth, I came to your room at 12:57 and found the same students that I had visited January 10th busy chatting up the last few minutes of their noon break. I felt that the students were a little more restless than they had previously been when they saw me. One called to me across the room, and asked if I was a substitute, while another said I was your double. I told them I wasn't a substitute, but I could possibly have been. They busied themselves discussing whether I really was a substitute or not. I seated myself at your desk at the back, and soon you entered the room, closing the door behind you.

The class settled down quickly, and you asked about the state of the arrangements for the Milk Carnival coming up on February 15th. I noticed you had the date and the different work categories listed on the blackboard - workers, booth, organize, and cleanup. You asked ___ to make her announcement about matters needing to be done. She mentioned that a black and white cow needed to be made and that volunteers were needed. There was discussion between the students about this. When ___ interrupted ___ to ask ___ about the date, you stopped him, and created time for ___ to ask his question. You asked ___ if she was to get back to another committee, and when she thought the cow should be made. There was more discussion about how the cow would be made and other tasks that needed to be accomplished in time for the deadline. You mentioned that more volunteers were needed for the cleanup committee. You had to ask several times before you got enough people to fill the committee. Someone asked for an explanation about the Milk Carnival. You realized that some people had been away the day the announcements had been made, so you quickly reviewed the

plans. There was a knock at the door which you ignored until you had finished explaining. Before the students were dismissed to go to class, you allowed a minute for any further questions. The class was then dismissed. ____, the handicapped girl I remembered from my last visit, paused at the door to talk to you briefly.

The Grade Eights came in. While you were attending to people at the door, they chatted and bantered back and forth in a relaxed fashion. They looked at me with curiosity momentarily, then proceeded to their own affairs. I could not help but notice a calmness in their manner, quite different from the clamor for attention the previous Grade Seven students had shown. They appeared focused, yet relaxed. Some boys came to the desk where I sat and picked up I Am David. A girl reminded the boys that they were not going to read today. The students found their places, and I noticed they did not all sit together - there were more desks than students in this class - but in a somewhat scattered formation.

You began the lesson by announcing that the task today would be spelling and definitions. You also told the class that they would be reading the novel I Am David while Mrs. ____, the substitute teacher, was with them on Thursday and Friday since you were going to be away. The class was reminded that they would be given a test on spelling and definitions as well by Mrs. ____.

You proceeded to begin review of "the wonderful words on the board from Light in the Forest", as you put it, but then looked at me, and stopped the lesson to introduce the class to me. You seemed fond of these students, and said, "We've had lots of good times together." The students laughed, and one mentioned something about the time Ms. ____ had done something with the desks. One boy suggested to you that they tell me the story about the desks. You asked whether I wanted to hear this, and added that you had told lots of "desk stories" on the way to the hills one fall afternoon last year. Naturally, I was all ears to hear this story.

After two boys debated for a moment who would tell the story, the fellow who had initiated this idea decided he would tell.

This is what I understood. "One day during a class with Ms. ____ (Ruth) someone said something Ms. ____ did not appreciate. She reprimanded us, and as we did not take her scolding seriously she became angry and said we would clean up all the desks that were in disarray in the room." (The student did not fill in the details as to why the desks were in disarray, or what exactly was the nature of the nasty word(s) in question.) The point that the students wanted to make, apparently, was that Ms. ____ was angry, and sent them out of the room. They thought this was funny, and laughed in the hall. Ms. ____ came out and scolded them. "You think this is funny, do you?" She then made them come back in, and then found that she, herself, was putting all the desks back in her anger. "She threw the desks around! And she had said we had to do it!" They chuckled. I looked at you to see your reaction. You merely looked sceptically at them, somewhat like the classic mother-pose in some picture saying "tut, tut".

You proceeded to get down to work. There were words written on the front blackboard, and you instructed the students to review the words with their partner while you would move around to the different groups and tell each group the words to which you were going to especially hold them accountable. They were to use the words in meaningful sentences, warning them not to be silly, but rather to use the words properly. Stories were to be written using these sentences. The dictionary meaning and the thesaurus also were to be used. These instructions were listed on the other side of the front blackboard. I didn't get time to write all the assigned words down.

Assignment:

1. Review pronunciation.
2. Review spelling with a partner (5 minutes).
3. Review the meanings.

4. Write a story.
5. Do the dictionary entry.

You then proceeded to point to each word and asked the class to say the word aloud. Two words were cause for explanation - "invalid" (could be said two ways, with two different meanings), and "insidious" (the pronunciation was clarified). The students were reminded to spell the word, write the word, and then proceed with the other tasks as outlined on the side blackboard. There was a list of "ten things we do with the dictionary".

Dictionary Entries

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Entry word | 6. Sentence |
| 2. Pronunciation/syllabification | 7. Forms of the word |
| 3. Part of speech | 8. Synonyms |
| 4. Etymology | 9. Antonyms |
| 5. Meaning in your own words | 10. A picture of the word |

You asked the students to go to their partners as well as get their spelling binders. When someone asked about going to another location to practice the words, you said they would stay in the classroom, reminding them also to speak quietly. They would have until 1:30, at which time you would call them back to a whole class setting. You erased the words from the board, answering the student who asked how they would know what the words were by reminding him that the words had been copied down previously by the partner in the spelling binder.

The students did what you asked of them quickly, yet I sensed they were at ease and enjoying themselves. You traveled about from group to group telling them the words they were for which they were accountable, crouching in order to speak to them at eye level. In observing the class, I found everyone attending to the spelling exercise. One boy was not sure if he had copied the word down correctly and you spelled it, explaining also how to use the word. Some girls still were not sure how to use the word "insidious", and you spent some time

explaining and giving different examples of the way the word could be used in context. This conversation struck me as being of a more collegial nature than a teacher-student kind of conversation.

We heard some names called to the office over the intercom, and you shushed the class to listen. When you heard the names, you said, "Oh, oh" and grimaced. The students talked about what they thought was the reason for the call to the office, and then went back to their task.

At 1:30 you called them back to their original seats, the bell rang, and you went to the front of the classroom to hand out pieces of paper which you had ripped in half. You thanked the students for using their time wisely, and then said, "There's one thing I should have told you. The word "encumbrance" - the "er" is wrong. I was checking after lunch. I noticed something very different for what we had. I know you can change it now. Actually it's something I didn't know. I got it from encumber. Something you can learn." You then asked them to draw a picture that showed the meaning of the word, rather than writing the meaning. You told them you were not going to say all the words, but rather just select a few from the list. The class groaned when they heard they had to draw a picture rather than write, but you held to your assignment, and they quickly settled down to draw the dictated words.

There was a brief light-hearted banter about the fact that you recycled the papers so much that the available writing space was becoming smaller and smaller.

You reminded them to keep the book closed, that they were challenging themselves.

Dictation began in the traditional way, except you said, "Draw" instead of "Write". There was a question as to what to do if they didn't know a word, and you suggested they leave a space. After the third word, ___ asked how many more there were to be. You answered, "You know what, ___? Since you're off to a

great start, you give me the next word." A girl called out "bolster" but you shushed her, and reminded her it was ___'s turn. He said he couldn't think of any. ___ then chose "invalid" which you accepted, but you reminded ___ that you were still coming back to him for a word. Someone else chose "formidable", another objected, but you insisted the class respect the choice of word and draw it. You had made a connection to the word's pronunciation and meaning in French earlier in the lesson, and now you reminded them to think of the French as well as the English meaning, to make a link between the two if they could. ___ came up with "traverse", and after the class had drawn this word, ___ offered "ostentation". You then reviewed the list of seven words dictated.

At this point I realized that this must be a double period, and that I needed to leave. I motioned silently to you about my leaving. You saw my signal but did not "break stride" in the flow of the task. You asked the students to share their pictures with a partner, explaining the meaning of the word picture. If a person had a blank, the students were instructed to help each other with the word meaning, and not to merely leave the space blank.

Accompanying me to the door as the students got together to talk about their work, we agreed that we would discuss the date of the next visit the following week since you were going to be gone until after the weekend and would not have time to respond to this visit's narration before Monday.

Ruth, I really saw a quite different side of you with this class of Grade Eights. The classroom atmosphere was much more relaxed, and I instinctively felt that you enjoying the students much more than you had the previous class. They seemed to be at ease as well. There was banter but it never threatened to get out of hand. There was discussion and chatting, but that, too, seemed to melt into the assigned tasks naturally. The talk was productive and focused.

What especially struck me, as I look back, is that you shared the time and the work with these students. Yes, you took the role of instructor, but I felt that

this was more for the sake of convention than control. Could you tell me more about your ideas about this matter of teacher-student relationships? There seems to be something at work here in your classroom which I intuitively feel I need to understand in order to discover what is at the heart of your Language Arts teaching beliefs and practices. Could you also tell me whether the way you interact with your class is integral to your idea of what Language Arts is, what Whole Language means to you, and the way it should be taught?

You said earlier that you had not always taught as you do now, nor always held your present beliefs. How have you changed? For example, how would you have taught this class differently in your first years of teaching? What has caused you to change your approach?

I like your idea of drawing pictures to show the meaning of the word. Do you often use art as a way to clarify or express meaning, instead of writing? Is this important to your view of what is important in Language Arts practices?

The "desk story" was fun for me to hear. Even though you did not exactly applaud the story, you certainly seemed to have no qualms about letting the students tell me about a time when you became angry. I did ask the student if the transgressor ever said "the word" again, and the student said it wasn't exactly a word, it was something said a certain way, and "no", that was never said again. I had responded to the students with the notion that then the exercise had worked after all, and they nodded in agreement. I've noticed, in previous discussions, that you often refer to the importance of having a sense of humor. I've seen it twice in class now. Why is it so important to you, especially, as you say, in teaching junior high?

It seemed to me that each student was important to you, and that you had built a relationship with each student, almost as if you were a fellow student, rather than a teacher. You spent time with each student. Is this teacher duty, or is there something more at work here? How did you achieve this rapport with the

students in this class? Again, I come back to your views about Language Arts, and Whole Language. There seems to be a relationship here. Can you clarify your view of student-teacher relationships?

You often remind students about the need to respect the person whose turn it is to speak, and to allow that person to complete what it is she/he wishes to say. Do you stress this because you feel the students should learn common courtesy, or is this linked also in some way to your views on Whole Language/Language Arts?

In some ways, your lesson was a traditional Language Arts lesson, in that it was a spelling lesson. You said earlier that you try to integrate the four strands--speaking, writing, listening, reading. In what way was this lesson a part of this integration?

There is one last idea I'd like to address, before I send this off to you, and that is the way the two classes reacted to my presence. The Grade Sevens reacted with uncertainty as to what their relationship to me was. It seemed as if they needed to "have the upper hand" by initiating talk that didn't in itself have to have any meaning, but perhaps was a way for them to "figure me out". They seemed to need to hear themselves, not only with me, but also with you. Is this perhaps just a part of being that age? Is this something junior high students generally need to do--to hear themselves, to assert themselves? The Grade Eights, on the other hand, also noticed the stranger in the room, but were content to let me be until such time as they either needed to know more, or they needed to interact with me. I did notice the one Grade Seven student, who had asked me if I taught his sister upon my first visit, and whose seat was right in front of the teacher's desk where I sat both times, telling someone I was not a substitute because I taught his sister and seeming to be proud of the fact that he had a connection with me. He did not behave as boisterously as the others. I am wondering if, or what, the different "personalities" of each class has to do with a teacher's approach, and with the atmosphere of the room. The teacher is the same person, is she not? Does she

show different sides of her personality towards different classes? Then what is the link between "people characteristics"--of the teacher, of the students - and how we go about teaching? If we say that life cannot be compartmentalized easily, that one aspect of life is integrated into another in everyday living, as Whole Language teachers, how do we go about making sense of different "people characteristics", different students' characteristics, as we teach? Or does this have nothing to do with the way we understand Whole Language and teach as Whole Language teachers?

Perhaps I have not stated this clearly, but I am trying to understand how Whole Language becomes a part of what you know and what you do as a teacher in a very specific way. This relationship thing seems to be important at this point. To say what our ideas are about Whole Language, is one thing. To say how we work out our ideas in these real day-to-day situations in which we function as Whole Language teachers, is another. How we understand something must influence how we enact it, clearly. But how is it that you decide to use one tone, one approach with one class, and another tone, another approach, with a different class? Are they both getting a Whole Language approach to Language Arts? What is it that you decide, and on what basis do you decide what it is you will actually do in the classroom, when faced with these two different classes, for example?

One last thing I was curious about. You corrected your spelling of "encumbrance" as if that was a part of the formal lesson. What is your thinking on impromptu problems that arise in the class? You made it a natural part of the lesson. Is this one of the ways that you share the learning with the students?

Well, Ruth, I've really dug right in, haven't I? This, too, is part of my own search for how a teacher actually does hold Whole Language beliefs in an everyday school situation. I'll be carrying on this discussion in my own thoughts, as I wait to hear from you.

Your colleague in Whole Language teacher knowledge,

Irene

Reflections

Ruth seemed more relaxed with this class, and the family metaphor came to mind as I watched Ruth move from cluster to cluster of students, discussing their words with them. Again, in my comments after my written observation, I mentioned how I was trying to understand how Whole Language had become apart of her practice and knowledge.

Again, in Ruth's reply, I noted that Ruth did not mention anything about Whole Language and how she made use of Whole Language theory. She did discuss how reading about the Gifted and Talented initiative, learning styles, and right brain/left brain theory had been sources she drew on as she tried to plan for her particular classes. She made a statement that she echoed again later in our writing: "I guess I pick out what I think I can use in my classroom situation" (Reply, p. 96). She also stressed that learning was constant. The principle of always being open to learning, whatever the situation, was an important practical principle for her practice. These principles were compatible with Whole Language principles, yet she saw them as her own, and was preoccupied with finding ways to achieve them.

This was a point of interest that would proceed to grow with me. When I would attempt to get Ruth to reflect upon how Whole Language became a part of her thinking and practice, she would skirt the question, and answer with explanations about process, about getting the students to think critically and creatively, about responsibility, about integration. The specific directives could be labelled rules of practice, and the statements dealing with "more responsibility taken rather than blaming it on someone else" or "I try to talk things out with the

students" point to Ruth's purposes, falling into the practical principles category. Ruth employed more of Elbaz's practical principles in her narratives thus far than rules of practice. She wrote more about her purposes and goals than explicit rules to follow in a specific situation. It was Schön's "knowing-in-action" which was consistently evident. This knowing-in-action was characterized by a sense of purpose directed unswervingly towards the goal of seeing her students appreciating learning as intrinsically valuable.

I was increasingly becoming aware of Ruth's strong concern for the fostering of the nurturing process --the right approach for each student--in her personal knowledge. Not only was she aware of the importance of learning content within context, but she was also aware of her students' needs to learn within the context of their own unique learning styles and cognitive abilities.

Ruth's Reply: January 23, 1991

Dear Irene,

Thank-you for your patience in waiting for me to respond. I did write my response earlier, but was just not satisfied with the information I gave you. I sometimes feel that an oral interview would be faster (and easier for me). However, writing does clarify my thoughts, and as I said earlier I am learning a great deal from the experience (some positive/ some negative).

1. Student/Teacher relationship--I think this has always been, even when I taught more "formal" L.A. programs. My "philosophy"--we're in this together--let's work together to learn. Despite the type of class, I do try to establish this type of relationship. Some classes are more difficult and will try to take advantage. I find this works much better over the year. My personality does not fit in with the instructor with absolute control. I do see that this "working together" fits in Whole Language, but even more than that, I see it as what teaching is, whether it is science or social studies or maths.

2. I don't think the student-teacher relationship has changed. However, the "what" has. In my first years of teaching more emphasis would have been placed on the correct spelling and test results rather than helping students understand and use the words. I would say I stress thinking more rather than memorization. My greatest influence would be G & T in-services and in-services dealing with higher level thinking. (Joyce Juntune--idea of drawing pictures--makes the students think, shows their understanding and challenges them to communicate their ideas clearly to others.) These in-services made me question the importance of memorization without thinking.
3. I use art and drama as much as time permits in addition to writing. It's amazing what students pick up when they can draw it out or act it out. It's also amazing what students shine in these areas when they've been having difficulties with written assignments. I have used this approach a great deal. I guess I first started using it when I realized some students were having difficulties in understanding the work we were covering. I use it now because it works well with both ends of the spectrum. It helps those who may be having difficulties but it also challenges those who have not thought in that way before.
4. Humour is important to keep one's sanity. As you know from your own experience there are many days where there's been no change in responsibility, work, etc. and it seems like it is still the beginning of Sept. (or worse yet, the students have regressed). There are many annoying situations where one could blow up, but what's the point. It's only harder on you. I'd rather see the humorous side. More importantly, humour does establish a comfort level with the students. You need to be careful however, that it doesn't become silly. Also some classes will get carried away with it. I have to be careful with the way I use humour with my Grade 7s. They could get really

- carried away and then they lose the purpose. The Grade 8s are different. We can laugh about anything (e.g. desk-throwing) and then get back to work.
5. Each student is important as an individual. I've had most of this class last year in Grade 7. I don't think I do anything consciously. I enjoy young people. I don't see it as a duty, but it should come naturally if you enjoy and are concerned about young people (maybe that sounds too naive or wishy-washy).
 6. Both! I do believe school and my classroom are places where courtesy should be practised. However, I also want to give my students time to speak and time to listen to others. They definitely need practice in listening to others. Also, not just in L.A. class but outside in the hall, at break, lunch, etc.
 7. Although I do not teach spelling formally, I like to incorporate it in other strands. The spelling words were based on the reading assignment. I want my students to be able to use these words in their own speaking. Reviewing the meanings by drawing and then sharing with a partner--thinking, speaking, listening. Group writing a short story with these words--all four strands. Dictionary entry--research, study skills.
 8. As I have told you before, I am still struggling to figure out what works with the Grade 7s this year (and it's February soon). The teacher is the same person--definitely, but at times certain teacher qualities bring out certain student qualities and vice versa. I am constantly updating and changing things I've done last year and which were successful, because they haven't worked out with this bunch. I sometimes think I'm being too sensitive. Yet, I need to know I'm meeting each group's needs.

Ruth

Note

Ruth and I had chatted about my thesis question and I had asked Ruth to respond in further detail about how she came to be aware of Whole Language

ideas, and how she saw the theory of Whole Language being worked out in her classroom. Ruth promised to write but I did not receive the promised letter for a few weeks. I became anxious, worrying that Ruth had lost interest in our project. I knew Ruth had some worrisome preoccupying interests in her personal life at the time, so I decided to write her once more, and wait for a reply.

Further Correspondence On Second Visit: February 19, 1991

Dear Ruth,

I was becoming anxious about your response to my last narrative, and was relieved that you had not given up on our venture. When I met with you yesterday to discuss the next arrangement for a response to your response and another class observation, we talked a bit about the difficulty of this task upon which we have embarked. The writing of our narrative is proving to take some time. As you said, oral interview would be easier in some ways. Yet I am conscious of the fact that we agreed to write a joint narrative. This was to be a sharing process. As researcher, I want to be as true as possible to the original intent of this study. Oral interviews would have left more of the interpretation up to me. In written responses one to another, you have much more control over what it is you want to say, and any subtle meanings you wish to bring across.

You stated at the end of the introductory paragraph of the last letter "I am learning a great deal from the experience (some positive/some negative)". Could you expand on this a bit? Does the fact this is not your best teaching year (as you mentioned in yesterday's conversation) have a bearing on this, or are the two not related?

I'd like to review some of the emerging ideas that seem to be important to you. You see your teaching philosophy or belief to hinge upon the notion of teacher and student experiencing shared learning, as opposed to the instructor being the one in control of the learning going on in the classroom. Learning by thinking

through ideas instead of rote learning, trying to push for 'higher levels of thinking', communicating ideas clearly--these themes recur in your discussion.

I see you stressing the expressive aspects of communication as well, in the oral poetry lesson as well as the group short story spelling lesson. Is there a particular personal agenda you have for the students with regards to the expressive modes of communication? Using all possible modes of expression in the making and sharing of meaning--art, creative writing, oral presentation, dialogue--is a deliberate thrust of your L.A. program for which you try to provide occasion for practice. From what belief or philosophy does this stem?

In the last letter I wrote you, I asked you what caused you to change your approach from more of a rote emphasis to a thinking emphasis. I still need to understand more about what or how your thinking changed. What was the change agent that effected a turnaround or shift in your teaching emphasis?

Humor seems to serve several purposes: establishing a comfortable tone in the classroom, providing an outlet for expression which is constructive in a possibly destructive situation, and a coping mechanism for living with the 'givens' of a situation which is not satisfactory to you.

Perhaps the use of humor is part of a larger belief that people, be they students or whoever, deserve to be heard. A strong emphasis on respect for others comes through in all our discussions--verbal or written.

Can you name other specific people and/or experiences you have had which have served to alter your teaching practice? I realize that you do a lot of testing out of your own ideas, and what worked for a class last year might not work this year, so that you are searching for the right tasks to meet the students' needs of this year, but often the initiative for these tasks stems from a source in our past. This could be something someone said, a role model we have seen and have admired, something we have read or seen or heard. I know you can't identify all the influences, but could you dig into your past experience, and name the key

moments or figures that come to mind? To what extent does your working context modify or support your beliefs about teaching?

Do you think Whole Language teachers are sometimes seen as "too sensitive"? Is there something in the philosophy of Whole Language that could tend to create that kind of image?

I'll stop here. Please correct any observations I have made which are not descriptive of the way you see your personal practice and knowledge.

I'll visit your class as soon as you have straightened me out on any or all of the above matters. Till then,

Irene

Ruth's Reply: February 20, 1991

Dear Irene,

I am trying to respond to your response as quickly as possible. (Right now I'm in the middle of lunch duty.)

In response to "positive/negative"--I think most of my comment was related to the way I was looking at things that day. What I do find in this research has caused me to think more about what I'm doing in class. That's good/positive. However, at times we don't like what we see. It can get discouraging. How do we change what isn't working? How do we find the energy? (this feeling depends on the day, mood of the students, whether the fire alarm has rung at 9:00 a.m.)

I would agree with your summary (paragraph 3).

Paragraph 4--I believe students should experience as many modes of expression as possible. I guess most of this has come through experience where I've seen students limited by only being able to use 1 or 2 particular modes. Creative kids are often overlooked because of this. I want my students to have opportunities to succeed; by giving them a variety of modes to use, the chance of success is greater. I want to encourage growth in all areas for my students. Who

knows what area could have great potential for one student in the future (either in the way of interest or talent)? I would say Renzulli, Treffinger, G&I in-servicing, plus Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain have been influences in this area.

Paragraph 5--Over the years--integration of special needs and students who could not 'handle' the lecture/rote way of doing things--I found there were students who could just not handle the "regular" program. This caused me to ask how I needed to change to meet their needs. How could I reach them? I started using different ways and found that it benefited all students, not just the "slower" ones. I would say that Teaching Through Learning Channels and other "learning style" in-services have influenced me.

Paragraphs 6 & 7--Yes!!

Paragraph 8--G & T reading--Renzulli, Treffinger

Learning Styles--Kathleen Butler

Right Brain/ Left Brain Theory

Right now, I would say these have influenced me the most. I saw how/what they said could help me with some of my students. I guess I pick out what I think I can use in my classroom situation.

Paragraph 9--I don't really agree today. Let me think about this one!

Ruth

Ruth wrote an addendum later that day.

Ruth's Addendum: February 20, 1991

Dear Irene,

Just finished drying dishes and a few more thoughts came to mind.

Another factor or reason for me changing my style of teaching is again from experience with the students. Students who could memorize grammar rules or spelling words did well on "tests"; however, they did not transfer or use their knowledge in practical situations. Why? How could I get them to think about what

they were doing and internalize. Here is where I found some answers in activity-based learning and learning channels.

Also I just realized I didn't respond to the last page of your "Second Visit to Ruth".

I think it is important for the students to realize that "teachers" or adults can make mistakes. To help them or encourage them to "buy into" learning, we as teachers must show ourselves as learners. Learning is constant! I like to put this out to my students. Therefore, anytime they catch me or I catch myself making a mistake, I use it.

Ruth

Reflections

Ruth appeared to choose those in-services that reinforced the Whole Language principle of shared learning--shared experiences between students and teacher, learning that is accessible to a variety of modes of comprehension, and learning styles. The concern for slower students which Ruth expressed, as well as her interest in helping students to think independently, emerged as part of the central theme of negotiated learning.

Throughout her narratives thus far, Ruth demonstrated a steady focus upon her belief that learning must occur within a negotiated, supportive, and responsible context--"My "philosophy"--we're in this together--let's work together to learn. Despite the type of class, I do try to establish this type of relationship." This focus influenced her interpretation and perception of individuals as well as ideas within her pedagogical milieu. This was what she knew. This was the way she knew. Her narratives thus far bore a remarkable consistency in this regard.

Image

Increasingly I was becoming aware that the term 'theme' was more descriptive than definitive in identifying the way her knowledge was structured. Van Manen (1990), in his work on lived experience, defines theme in terms of experience and practice. "Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point. ... is at best a simplification ... themes are intransitive. ... Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience" (p. 87). For the purposes of my investigation, it seemed to me that I was uncovering an aspect of the way in which Ruth knew her teaching practice--not a description but the aspect itself. Therefore I abandoned the term 'theme' in favor of what I sensed was a more accurate term, namely, 'image'.

I adopted the term 'image' as Elbaz (1983) and Boulding (1956) had developed the definition. Whereas Elbaz's definition of image was useful in distinguishing the shift in terminology from theme to image, Boulding was useful in supplementing the definition of image and thereby locating it in a central or, as I call it, an axial position, as it functions in organizing the perceptions of the knowledge holder.

Elbaz defines image as a brief statement which describes in the process of capturing an essential aspect of a teacher's perception. Image serves the function of organizing knowledge, and is infused with a judgement of value and expresses purpose. Boulding defines the individual's subjective knowledge structure as image. The dimensions of image, as Boulding develops them, are extensive. The images we hold govern behavior; the meaning of the messages or structured experiences we encounter is the change produced in the image; images are in themselves resistant to change but may change nonetheless, depending upon the nature of the messages received and their relation to the image; images can be images of fact or images of value; images can be shared by a group of individuals;

images have a reflective character, able to consider time and relationships; images have a considerable capacity for internal growth and development.

Boulding maintains that the image bears a similarity to the gene. The image, like the gene, is able to reproduce itself upon the matter with which it comes into contact, and is able to organize matter into patterned structures through the transfer of information which he views as a "teaching-learning" activity.

The way in which Ruth organized her personal knowledge seemed to me to correspond with the organizational function which both Elbaz and Boulding had recognized, and which Boulding had developed in depth.

The centrality and organizational capability of Ruth's "axial" image, so named at this point because of the dominance of its position in her thinking, became clearer to me as I investigated the manner in which Ruth's knowledge functioned. Learning was a life skill, a tool which could be useful for success. In an attempt to summarize this image into one phrase, Ruth as "learner-negotiator" seemed appropriate. Clearly, Ruth employed the image in a discriminating fashion, appraising the messages she received from, not only her own collegial context, but also from her students. She saw herself as a learner-negotiator, and wished her students to also see themselves as learner-negotiators.

I now anticipated my third visit to Ruth's classroom with a clearer view of Ruth's image of her own knowledge. The matter of image as it pertained to Ruth's practice and personal practical knowledge remained to be clarified as I engaged in further observation and correspondence with Ruth.

The Third Visit

The Visit: February 22, 1991

Ruth, I came to your classroom just in the nick of time, as the 1:00 bell rang. (Well, your school bell is more of an annoying sound of metal striking metal once. A metallic version of one blast on a horn.) The last of your homeroom students were going into your room as I entered. You were not there yet. Some students asked me if I was their substitute. I said no. Somebody else recognized me and said I was Mrs. Schmidt. Some stared at me out of curiosity as I proceeded to your desk at the back of the room. There were about four or five students sitting right by your desk, and immediately came up to me and asked me what I was doing there. I said I came to visit and to watch. I asked where you were, if this was the homeroom class, and if you took attendance. (They were watching me so I was trying to think of something to say to them.) One boy said yes, this was homeroom, they didn't know where you were, and yes, you took attendance but didn't call their names out. They looked unconcerned about your whereabouts, and were a friendly, curious lot.

I noticed that you had rearranged the rows of desks so that the "front" for the students was to the left of the teacher's desk, instead of straight ahead of it. The teacher assistant was in the shorter row to the extreme left of the desk, chatting with your special needs student. The class was alive and buzzing with what seemed to me to be an air of goodwill and enjoyment. The students probably did not think about this, but I did, because the "mood" or "tone" of the class is so important. You can sense immediately when you walk into a room of Junior High students what is the general level of satisfaction with life. Today, it was definitely congenial. All the students were in their desks except for two. They walked

around the room to the assistant who then took one of the boys to the door. He disappeared down the hall. You appeared at that moment, had a discussion at the door with the assistant (it appeared to be about the boy) and then you both came in. You quietly went to a boy sitting at the front of the room and asked him to go to the bathroom and check on the absent lad to see if he was alright.

You stood quietly at the front of the room, as if waiting. You looked as if you felt perfectly at home waiting for the bell with them. Some students talked to you. You seemed to be reflecting a bit as I tried to read your facial expression.

You then spoke to the whole class about a couple of announcements. You asked the class if they knew it was Mr. ___'s birthday. There were some cheers and whoops from several quarters, and some discussion. One person asked who he was. You explained he was the white-haired gentleman who also happened to be the principal, and encouraged the students to wish him a Happy Birthday if they passed him in the hall. You also told the class you had been in the office on a playground matter. Someone piped up, "Did he really get it?" I didn't hear your response, but you obviously had not encouraged the student to pursue the matter.

You quietened the students' noise level, and asked them what they had next. Some answered "Social". You then asked, "What did we forget? How about the milk coupons?" There was some discussion about the fact that the usual papers were gone, and you said, "Now it has to be little bits of paper." You handed out these little bits of paper to the students who had their hands raised. The bell rang and as the students filed out, you accepted other papers they handed to you. I noticed some students singing quietly to each other as they left. "There she was just a-walking down the street, singing do wah diddy dum diddy do ...".

A different class came in. I assumed they were Grade Sevens, judging from their size. A different teacher assistant also came in. A few boys came over to where I was sitting, and asked me if I was their teacher. I said no. One of them said, "Just writing notes about us?" I answered yes.

You addressed the whole class with a few reminders. Someone pointed out my presence, and you said, "Of course. That is Mrs. Schmidt. She is here to observe our class, and she writes things down about what you do and what I do. Later we discuss them. She and I are learning a lot about teaching. It's quite interesting." You then addressed me and said this was the ___ class, Mr. ___'s class, and that you were working on some characters. Turning to the class, you proceeded to organize the work to be done. It was clear that you were picking up from a previous class, and what needed to be done was some clarification about the group work, and what to do about some problem areas.

You said you would like ___ to come up to the front in a bit (this was one of the boys that had engaged me in conversation before) and told the class you wanted them to see what he had done in the last class because it had been done very well. But first you wanted to address the question of what kinds of things they should be looking for in their characterizations. The students raised their hands and called out aspects they saw as important - acting, walk, facial gestures, personality, sound of voice (someone said that maybe a character could sound as if she had a sore throat to which you agreed), expression. When "expression" was offered, you asked if that would be part of anything already on the board, after which there was a bit more discussion.

Someone asked if they were going to be presenting to another class, or something. You did not answer this directly, but said that they had come along so well that you thought by Friday (a week) they could present to some audience. You did not define the audience, and no one pursued it at that time. You mentioned that Friday might seem a long time to them, but what else were they going to bring along? Immediately there was a cry of, "Oh! Props! Costumes!" You agreed.

You then said you had left a list on the board since some students had not been in class yesterday. (I was so busy writing I didn't get down what was on the board.) The assistant and ___ agreed that they hadn't come up with a "France".

You listened, and went on to address a couple of things that had happened yesterday of which you had not approved. You said after you had left the first group, it had fallen apart. You then asked the students, "If that happened to you, what would you say?" Someone answered, "I wouldn't like it." You asked, "Why?" Someone answered that it would be frustrating. You repeated the answer. You went on then to say, "If you're a character, and it's not your turn, and you see the other characters doing something on stage that you don't like, what should you do?" There were some answers offered, and you confirmed them, adding, "Maybe you should say, "This doesn't work, guys" ."

After this bit of correction and re-direction of group focus, you negotiated with the class as to whose turn it was to go out of the room. You then asked ___ if he would now be interested in showing how he had done Saxo. [Saxo was a character in the novel they were discussing.] The students encouraged ___ to go up front, which he did with a few more cheers. He went out of the room, entering again as if an older, muscular man. He carried a toy pickaxe over to the stool, and sat down in character. The class cheered boisterously, and you asked, "Couldn't you see Saxo in that?" The class agreed and cheered again. You thanked ___. As he went back to his seat, another student said it had looked more real without the toy pickaxe yesterday. The size of the toy contradicted the mimed weight of it as he had acted it out.

You asked those who had been in the pit yesterday to raise their hands, and then appointed ___ to check if the pit was being presently used. As the class waited for ___ to come back, you mentioned that the group that would remain in the class would need to use the front of the room for a stage. You asked everyone to move their desks back, which they did promptly. ___ came back and said that someone was using the pit. You told the group that was going out of the room to then use the stairwell, and that you would be with them shortly.

A student said, "Kay, ____, rip up there and do your commercials." You asked if they had to do anything first, before they started. There were some negotiations. The assistant joined in the organization of this next part. It became a three-way discussion. The result was a stage setup of three stools with two boys and a girl on them, facing the "audience" and a boy sitting cross-legged in front of them. (I discovered later that he had the imaginary microphone.) What followed was apparently an interview scenario, like a talkshow on television. The centre boy asked the girl, then the boy, what they thought of Rudy [another character in the novel]. I gathered you had been reading the story of Rudy, the boy who aspired to climb the highest mountain in his area. (I can't recall the title right now. It's on the Grade Seven textbook list.)

The boy and girl sitting on either side of the centre stool where the "interviewer" sat were supposed to be the parents of Rudy. Each was asked about what kind of boy Rudy had been, what his school grades were like, whether they thought he would ever become a mountain climber. They replied with answers that sounded very contemporary and realistic, saying Rudy had not been a great student--C's and D's--and that he didn't concentrate in school. His "mother" said he broke a lot of dishes working in the kitchen, and this caused her a great deal of frustration. You left the room at this point. The interview had come to a bit of a lull in the momentum. The assistant asked the group if they could think of what they had done yesterday. There was some discussion. I noticed the assistant was very relaxed and the interaction between her and the students seemed natural and spontaneous as she tried to help them.

A student said he would do a commercial, which he did in a whirlwind of energy, demonstrating his air shoes with vigour. He ended his pitch with arms thrust up into the air as if in victory.

Then a stool was taken away and two other boys went up. The assistant asked one of the boys if they had a pair of oversized shoes. The boy said no, and she

said she would bring a pair of her husband's that would do for the part. The boy who had done the commercial was now the interviewer, holding an imaginary mike to each "guest" in turn. I did not quite figure out which characters they were supposed to be but they were asked why they hadn't wanted Rudy to climb mountains. In reply to one answer, the interviewer challenged the character and said, "You never saw Rudy climb a mountain. How would you know? What was he going to do if he didn't climb mountains?" The answer was that he was a dishwasher. The questioning then went on to how Rudy had learned to climb mountains. The answer was that he had first started by climbing smaller ones, and then, when he felt he could do it, he got ready to climb the Citadel. The interviewer said he would now take questions to the audience. He addressed ___ in the audience, and reminded him he was on national television! There was a fast exchange of question and answer which I did not get down. I saw you slip back into the room. The interviewer said, "And that's the end of our show! Join us next week!" The group applauded and cheered.

You asked what they would like to improve. The group, including the assistant, agreed they were happy with the way things had gone. There was some discussion about the events in the book, especially the order of events in the climbing of the Citadel. Someone thought that each rehearsal had to be the same as the previous time, to which you disagreed. The lights in the room were flicked on and off. Someone was concerned that this would disturb me. I said it was okay.

You said they should start from the top. Lights went off and on again. The interviewer came in. This time two different students were on the stools - a boy and a girl. He asked the two how long they had been going together. The girl said, "Always. " There was some banter in the room about this, and you said, "You've been going together for so long, it feels like always." The boy on stage said, "Last time she said ... schooldays." Again, there was bantering and discussion. They started again, and you said, "Your audience wants more." The girl asked, " What

am I supposed to say?" You responded with reference to the emotions the character may have felt. She then said, "I was sorta worried he'd kill himself, and he would fall off the Citadel." The interview continued, and again interrupted to discuss how Rudy would have felt climbing the Citadel. Some students thought he would have been depressed, some surprised at the height to which he had climbed.

You addressed ___ on the other stool. "What would you say, ___? You're on national T.V.?" He answered, "I was so surprised." Some students tried to help think of things Abe could say. He seemed to be having a hard time. You reviewed what already been suggested. There was another discussion. You tried to get the students to think of how to say more in their answers. ___ asked, "How can you get more with four questions?" The assistant offered a suggestion, and you agreed that was good. You asked ___ if he could be more specific. ___ wasn't being particularly responsive to all these promptings, and looked rather lost. The assistant then said, "___, just think if you were the son of a famous climber and you'd gone farther than anyone had gone before."

At this point the bell rang. You said, "Oh, oh. Class is over already." Then the other half of the class came back in to gather their books.

I was glad that I had been able to observe a creative drama exercise, since you and I had often shared drama ideas as well as had team-taught a Play . Creation together. I could not keep up with the quick exchange of comments in the various discussions going on, so I went for the gist of the conversation.

I noticed the repeated emphasis on group discussion, and group consensus where possible in light of your lesson objectives. You often asked the students where they thought they could improve. When they answered, you repeated their suggestions, often writing them down on the board as well. It seemed to me that these students were particularly well-versed in group responsibility and the importance of attending to the task at hand. At one point, I recall a girl using the

phrase "time on task". This struck me as being a teacher phrase which this girl seemed to have adopted.

The responses of the students to the interviewer "in character" were quite genuine and believable, I thought. The whole class seemed quite intent on being true to not only the characters as they had perceived them from their readings, but also to what actual people in real life situations would do and say. The assistant entered into the exercise wholeheartedly, and "thought along" with the students.

___ seemed to be one student having difficulty with this exercise. Does he have the language skills, or the cultural background for this kind of engagement?

I felt that there was a maturity in accepting responsibility for the learning going on with this class that I had not noticed with other classes. Has there been some growth taking place? Is this class unique in this regard, in comparison with the other Grade Seven classes?

What, if anything, do other students or teachers say about the students in the hall or stairwell working on their presentation? Is this a common occurrence in the junior high section?

What were your thoughts about this class?

Looking forward to the next conversation,

Irene

Reflections

I had another example of Ruth's use of improvisation to help the students to think critically about characters in a novel they had read. Her openness to creative expression was substantiated, as she pressed students to find their own interpretation and answers for a character's actions. Taking ownership and responsibility for answers seemed to be understood as the preferred practice, even as the teacher assistant asked Ruth questions. Ruth frequently turned the

questions back to the students for their answer, avoiding the delivery of the "teacher's answer"--another practical principle which she employed.

Image

Ruth's image of "learner-negotiator" was clarified further by her emphasis upon creativity and responsible independence. She encouraged students to be accountable for their own thinking. This aspect of her knowledge determined her choice of classroom activity.

I contrasted this to the way Ruth had earlier, in the first interview, described the change in her practice and beliefs since her early teaching days. The image she had of herself as a learner-negotiator provided her with the goal of teaching her students to also be learner-negotiators. Her practice had changed when she had become aware of a 'better' way to accomplish her goals. Boulding states that messages can influence the individual to reorganize as well as clarify the image (p.10). In addition, the image, like an "inward teacher", imposes its own form and will on the matter around.

Knowledge also grows because of inward teachers as well as outward messages. ... the business of teaching is ... that of co-operating with the student's own inward teacher whereby the student's image may grow in conformity with that of his outward teacher. (Boulding, 1956, p. 18)

Ruth's desire to "to talk things out with her students" could be viewed in Boulding's terms as her attempt to cooperate with her students' inward teachers in order that their images might conform more closely with her image of self as learner-negotiator.

Ruth's Reply: February 22, 1991

Dear Irene,

I was very pleased with the way the day went and wanted to share with you some background information on the class you observed today.

This class has a great range of personalities and abilities:

- E.S.L.
 - modified program
 - difficult to motivate/incomplete or unfinished work
 - work hard but difficulties comprehending
 - quick to catch on / but language can be a barrier
 - very perceptive, confident in giving responses
- (just to name a few!)

What I noticed about this class when we were reading the novel is that they loved to stop and act out parts, or they loved to stop and act out their predictions. What I usually do after the novel is read and the characters discussed is have the students "produce" a talk show.

In the past, I have had the students break into groups and then write down the questions a talk show host might ask each character, and then what they thought the characters would say. After they had written their "script", they would then practise it until it was "memorized". They could add music, sound effects, ads, (basically whatever they wanted). This way of doing things has been successful. It gave students the experience of working together as a larger group; students get a taste of drama; they can be creative with their costuming, ideas, etc. However, it can also fall short--after too much emphasis was placed on memory (students were too concerned with memorizing pat answers without "thinking" deeper into how the character must have felt). Also kids who were

good at writing had no trouble with it, but what about kids who avoided it or who had a hard time expressing themselves?

Working with you with improvisation/play creation last year and working with Linda this year has given me some very practical ideas. Why not use more improvisation to get more students involved?

Reasons for using this method:

- 1) stretching all students' thinking (not just memory)
- 2) having students experiencing what characters must have felt like--
understanding of character
- 3) having students experience another mode of expression
- 4) allow students an area in which they may have an interest or in which they may shine (e.g. ___--great difficulties with reading/writing, yet he had some very intelligent/creative responses. Same with ___.)

--give these students a sense of accomplishment - hopefully success in these areas could also encourage them in other areas.

Oh ah ... my mind now has gone blank ... I think it's supertime. I'll keep reflecting.

Ruth

Addendum: February 25, 1991

Dear Irene,

I enjoyed reading your observations from Feb. 22. I wrote a few thoughts down on Friday after your visit. Some of my responses today may sound repetitious.

As I mentioned in the earlier response, ___ has been in E.S.L. I'm not sure how many times a week he still goes; however, we've been trying to involve him in as many L.A. classes as possible. He has listened to the book and has done some assignments on his own. Actually, he has come far since the beginning of

his year. He would refuse to participate, so right now I'm pleased with what participation he is showing. He has shown a basic understanding of the plot of the book and the major traits of the main characters.

___ (in the other group) has done very well with this exercise. Also an E.S.L. student, she has really put herself into the role of Rudi's mother. I think it gives her another way to express her ideas (more freedom with her ideas than on paper).

This class of students is really not unique. It does have its "immature" and "irresponsible" days. At times these same students can get carried away and silly. The other two classes are the same way. Yet there are these periods where you do see a growth take place. That's exciting. And I would say, there has been growth since the beginning of the year (even though there are days when you wonder if anything has been happening!).

We are very crowded. There is not the room space; therefore, the hallway is used quite a bit. Teachers don't seem to mind as long as the students are on task and not shouting.

I really enjoyed this class because I saw the students thinking and encouraging each other.

Ruth

Reflections

In this lesson, Ruth was striving for "real" characters, prompting the students to imagine themselves in the assigned character's shoes. The class was actively engaged in oral language, and class participation was extensive. Ruth stated that she was pleased with this class, and when I asked her why she had chosen an improvisational drama type of activity, she noted that this was one way of obtaining a greater measure of student involvement. She was particularly concerned with those students who needed to be challenged to think "deeper", to

be creative with costuming as well as dialogue, or needed to have another mode of expression besides writing. In her February 25th writing, she commented on how much she had "enjoyed this class because I saw the students thinking and encouraging each other." She found confirmation of the nurturing/critical thinking aspect of her image of self as learner-negotiator.

This was something of great importance to Ruth. Her happiness, her motivation, was a direct result of students thinking and encouraging each other--the growth image and the family image. Here was Ruth saying: "This is important. If you want to know how I think as a teacher, this is it." By this time, I found it hard to dredge up the old question which was not Ruth's (I now realized it without a shadow of a doubt) but only belonged to me: How does Whole Language become a constituent of Ruth's personal practical knowledge?"

Ruth had so much ownership of her beliefs and values, her experiences, that I suspected the direction for my investigation lay in her very evasiveness. So far she had not told me directly what I asked of her. It was as if she was saying: "I do not speak from theory but rather out of practice and experience. Certain beliefs are important to me and these I pursue in my school practice. If I have invested in any theories it is because they reflect my beliefs. This is what I know; therefore, this is what I practice. I can only speak from my own frame of reference, my own knowing." Repeatedly, she illustrated Schön's knowing-in-action.

Image

This slow awareness of Ruth's many-sided axial image which I experienced was being confirmed at every turn in our correspondence. The image was a directive for interpretation and perception of experience--much more than a coalescing of experience (Clandinin)-- and provided a metaphoric guidance for action (Elbaz). Ruth's axial image of herself as "learner-negotiator" organized the

messages or information with which she was inundated throughout her day. It was noteworthy that this image served in an organizational role, ordering her experiences and actions according to their relevance to this image.

To what extent was Ruth successful in achieving an acceptance of her image of self as learner-negotiator in her students? When her students entered into her lessons with a show of enthusiasm or signs of improvement in a specific area, Ruth was excited. She realized the unpredictable nature of signs of students' growth. Her happiness stemmed from visible signs that a student was accepting some aspect of her image of learner-negotiator.

Boulding maintains that "The image not only makes society, society continually remakes the image" (p. 64). Ruth, within her classroom, was directing the shape of her classroom society, but clearly, her students were shaping her image as well. The image seemed to be undergoing some kind of scrutiny or reflective pondering at any given place in Ruth's responses. This "mulling over" appeared to serve Ruth's purpose of planning how to further her image of self as learner-negotiator; on the other hand, the matter of the effect of the children upon her image was clearly also a consideration.

By definition, in order to share a "public" image, all parties involved must share that image. Ruth frequently alluded to the progress, or lack of it, which her students were making in her class. This had to do with exhibiting responsible, independent behaviors as much as learning certain language skills. She rearranged strategies or sought new ones in search of a greater "success rate". The image which Ruth strove to establish as a classroom image was involved in a constant exchange of action and response. Her private image was not a fully-accepted public classroom image.

In a similar fashion, perhaps the students' private images of themselves as well as their own social "Junior High students" image had, over the years, effected some shifts or alterations in Ruth's image of negotiator-learner. The

changes in her practice which she had mentioned, according to Boulding, would be due to the effect of the messages given by teacher and students to each other.

The Fourth Visit

The Visit: February 28, 1991

(Ruth, I came ten minutes late because I had attended a student meeting in my own school.)

At 1:10 the classes go to their assigned rooms to study the designated subject. From 1:00 to 1:10 the students are in their homerooms with their homeroom teachers. Knowing this, I waited outside your door until the students came out.

There were groups of students already waiting outside of classrooms down the hall. Your class arrived shortly. I had not seen these students before. There were two women also waiting with them. I tried to distance myself from the stance of 'teacher' and observed your next class as they gossiped, laughed, pushed each other around, ridiculed each other good-naturedly, and generally exhibited what I have come to expect as 'typical' Junior High student behaviour.

I walked into your classroom, noticing that you were deeply engrossed in talking to a teacher assistant, and then some students. I didn't think you noticed me as I sat down at your desk and you headed to the front of the room. I heard some students calling you by name and clearing their throats noisily. I assumed they were signifying to you that there was a newcomer in the room. I noticed that one of the women who had been waiting outside the room before was now sitting beside a blonde boy at the back, engaged in discussion with him. The other woman was sitting at the front of the room, in the far corner. I also noticed that there were fewer students in this class in comparison to the previous class.

When the class settled down, you introduced the class to me, again mentioning that you had said earlier that I would be coming. This was Mr. ___'s

class. You told me that they were working on the same talkshow interview project which the previous class I had visited had been undertaking. (I want you to know that I was thinking about this talkshow format which you are using, and I came to the conclusion that this might be just the thing for which I was searching as one possibility as an assignment for my own class. We have read and viewed Midsummer Night's Dream and I was casting about for a novel format in which we could show our comprehension as well as work out an analysis and synthesis of our understanding.)

You told the class to get together with their alter-egos. For example, the two Klauses [novel characters] get together. They were to make a list of what their characters might wear, what they might bring to the next class. You asked where ___ was, and someone answered that she was sick. There was some murmuring. You said, "I'm not asking you to marry them", and the students voiced their "relief". You asked where the two Emils [also novel characters] were, and then checked to see who was missing. Someone asked, "Do we have to make a list?" You answered with a question in the form of a choice. "What would you rather do? Write a list? Or can you remember everything?" The student answered, " Remember it." You then said, "Alright, would you push your desks together, and talk for ten minutes." I overheard some girls close to me. "___, can I sit in your desk?" ___ answered, "Sure."

You headed towards the blonde boy who was sitting at the back with the teacher assistant. "___, where are you at?" ___ looked quietly at you. You talked to the assistant. I couldn't overhear this. I did gather you were arranging the work that ___ was going to be working on. I later saw him reading out loud from what looked like a young child's book.

The other woman came to you and handed you a piece of paper. She went back to the front of the room and sat down to join in the discussion in which a boy and a girl were engaged. You then migrated to another group. As in the previous

class, you worked your way from group to group, checking where they are at, and asking questions.

Students were sitting in scattered groups of two or three around the room. There were two girls sitting close to me. They seemed to be discussing a sheer shawl one of them had brought. The one girl got up, modeled the shawl in different postures for her partner, and then they wandered over to some boys sitting in the adjacent group, and joined in their discussion. Some groups eyed me furtively as they discussed.

A boy came to you as you were hunched down talking to one group, wanting your advice on something. I caught bits and pieces of this conversation. He wanted to know whether his character would wear a jean jacket, whether this was something that might be worn in the sixteenth century. You asked a question, and he answered, "I can see them wearing a jean jacket!" There was more discussion between the two of you, and then he went to get a book. He pointed out the cover picture. "Isn't that a jean jacket?" You did not seem to be sure of his choice. You asked about something, and ended with, "How would your mother feel?" He answered, "No, we're just putting paper on it." You then nodded, agreeing with his plan. "Okay, okay."

Two girls at the front were laughing about something. One of them had a fake black beard on, as well as a Santa cap. The girl with the shawl from the other group was still re-draping the shawl around her shoulders while talking to the boys. You went to the girls who had the beard, and spoke briefly to them. Then you asked whether they had ten minutes. The girls nodded.

You shushed the class, and asked them to listen. You said that some good questions had come up. You reminded the class to continue to think about readily available costumes, and not to buy new articles, but rather go to the local thrift shop and look for appropriate items. You stressed the importance of making group decisions about these things. You mentioned that someone had a neat idea.

"Go back to the sixteenth century and ask yourself what they wore. When did blue jeans come in?" Someone answered, "1301." You smiled, and said, "Must be nice." There was more discussion. You then asked, "Do you want to make the characters present day? Or make it in the future? Ask your group." There was more discussion about appropriate clothing. You reminded the students to be polite when asking for clothing for the talkshow. "Don't say 'gimme'." You asked if there were any other questions which had come up in group discussion. Someone answered, "No." You asked the class, "Which group did we put ___ in?" There was discussion about this. Then you resolved the uncertainty, and said, "___, do you want to go in ___'s group?" He nodded. You responded, "Okay."

Indicating some students, you announced, "This group is going to go either to the pit or the stairwell. The rest of you, stand up and push the desks back." The assistant who had been with ___ went out with him. The other assistant had told you a few minutes earlier that she had worked with both groups, and it didn't matter to her where she went. So you both agreed she could stay in the room.

There were noises coming from the class. You addressed the group now remaining in the class. "Who's making sound effects, sounding jolly, and waving hands?" A boy answered, "We are." You answered, "We don't need them." He replied, "Sure we do." You said, "Sh, ___. Once more, and you're gone." ___ looked down, and ceased his sound effects.

You asked the group to get going. A boy went out of the room, re-opened the door, and announced triumphantly, "This is 'The ___ Show', and I'm ___! Today we'll be interviewing Captain John Winter from Banner in the Sky." The girl with the beard went up to the stage area, and sat facing ___. He asked her a question about how "he" felt about an incident, and she answered but the words were difficult to understand because of the beard. You interrupted, and asked her, "What do we have to watch for?" ___ said something which I was not quick enough to get down. You asked him if he had a suggestion. He pointed at

something. I did not get this down clearly. She took off the beard and the Santa cap. ___, whom you had asked to speak, said, "Talk about what to say instead of 'Hi, how are you?' every time." You asked, "What else could we say? ---?" ___ said, "Welcome to the show.

" ___ was saying something which obviously displeased you. You said, "___, out." ___ tried to explain his innocence and that he wouldn't do it again. Again you said, "___, out." He tried again to get out of this punishment. You said, "Out." He tried once more. You said, "Out." ___ rose reluctantly. As he went to the door, you said to him, "After school you come and see me. Okay?" He nodded, "Okay."

The interview on stage continued. It was a quick back-and-forth question and answer series of exchanges. The characters could be heard distinctly now. ___ summed up the short interview with, "Okay. That's about all." You said, "Okay. Some comments from the group?" Some suggestions were to slow down, to do more at the beginning of the show. You asked a girl what she meant by doing more at the beginning. The girl answered, "Slow down." You then asked, "What are you doing?" She said, "Stretching it out."

The assistant joined the group discussion by pointing out that the interview was not like a real discussion, just a series of questions and answers. You then asked the two students up front, "Could you talk about it a bit? Make it sound like it's natural." They began the interview questions again. You stopped them. "Try that again. I'm going to send ___ to the back of the room. No, ___, no punishment. Say if you can hear them." ___ went to the back. He looked pleased and there was a bit of laughter from the group. Again, the interview proceeded. There was a question from ___ about age. The girl answered, "Twenty-nine." ___ paused at that answer. You said, "No, I liked that. There was surprise in your eyes. Was that the wrong answer?" He answered, "Yeah." The girl said, "I

should have said, "Ten." You asked ___, "What's your response?" The interview continued again.

After a bit you asked ___, "How's the volume, ___?" He mumbled, "Louder." You said, "Tell them that." ___ spoke up. "A little louder." ___ said, "I can't think of anything to say." You responded, "What did we say you should do when you're finished?" ___ returned, "That's all. Thanks for being on the show." The assistant said, "Maybe the guest could say, 'Thanks for having me on the show.'" You agreed.

___ began the next interview. ___ was called up. More questions and answers. I had noticed a chubby boy that had been sitting on the side of the room throughout the first interview, picking at something with some kind of small tool he had in his pocket. When he saw ___'s position as volume monitor at the back of the room become vacant, and you asked who would take ___'s place, he promptly volunteered and hopped off his chair as soon as you gave him permission.

One of the answers ___ gave to one of the questions was, "He was a jerk, and I didn't like him." You asked ___, "Are you going to let him get away with that?" ___ answered, "Sure." You asked, "You are?" More discussion. You asked the boy at the back if he could hear. He said he couldn't hear the interview. There was more question and answer. When there was a lull, you asked ___, "Are you going to make a comment or leave it?" The answer was, "Leave it."

You asked the characters, "Should you have more expression on your face?" The answer was, "I don't know." You asked, "How would people react to that?" The characters seemed to be losing momentum. You asked, "When it gets draggy, what should you do?" ___ answered, "Thank him for being on the show." You agreed, "Yeah." The bell rang. You reminded the group to get their clothes ready for next class.

___ came into the room. He said to you, "I can't be here after four." You said, "Yes you can." He argued, "No I can't." He apparently needed to go

somewhere. You said, "Yes." He said, "No," and gave his reason. You said, "This will be short. Quick and painless." ___ nodded, and answered something which I could not hear. The next class was already coming in.

Ruth, I had some difficulty in getting many of the questions and answers down. I tried to get the gist of the class down. There were quite a few times when I would have liked to have recorded the exchanges--between ___ and the two characters he interviewed, between ___ and you. I found myself recording reactions more than anything. Sometimes I got sidetracked watching students.

In contemplating your talkshow project, I was wondering why you chose this particular format, and not some other, to give the students a chance to express themselves verbally and dramatically.

Would the students be satisfied with their first try at the talkshow if you didn't stop them and give them guidance?

How does the talkshow format support your beliefs about how people learn language?

What about ___? What are your thoughts about ___ and language skills?

What are your expectations of the group leaving the room?

Please continue to write about your thoughts, reasons, beliefs, and whatever else can help me to understand your work.

Thanks for this, the fourth visit. Are we progressing in our collaboration?

Irene

Reflections

On my fourth visit, Ruth had another class of Grade Seven students who were engaged in preparation for a talk show as well, similarly to the previous class. The matter went smoothly enough, except for a rambunctious boy who was trying to attract a lot of attention. Ruth arranged to meet him after school. This was an opportunity for me to see how Ruth negotiated the discipline she had

mentioned earlier. She did not negotiate long, and allowed no recourse or escape to the lad. When asked about him in my observations, she spoke of him as being a boy who lived by his own rules. She knew there could be no negotiation with him. Ruth encouraged appropriate responses, and often answered a student's question with another question. The onus fell on the student to try and come up with a satisfactory answer. I had noticed this pattern of turning the question back to the inquirer before.

Ruth mentioned in her response to my observation that she chose the talk show format because students often wanted to give a simple answer, and not examine their characters in depth. Her prompting left them no alternative but to try and understand the character's reasons for action.

Image

In the impromptu exchange of ideas which occurs frequently in a conversational setting, spontaneous responses and reactions are expected behavior. In everyday situations, there is no time to develop an answer to unanticipated questions or events. These are the moments when a practitioner must act instinctively. That which a practitioner knows must be of service at this time.

There were several instances when Ruth had to draw upon her image of her knowledge reflexively. As she interacted with her students her knowledge underwent revision. For example, when she reprimanded the student for his inappropriate behavior and insisted he stay after four o'clock to talk to her, Ruth's usual interpretation of her image of personal learning underwent modification. In this case, Ruth did not "talk it out", nor did she allow the student to be excused from a discipline procedure, and he complied. Ruth's axial image was presumably reinforced in the fact that he did comply. Ruth's image of her knowing was directive in defining her choice of action. Ruth's concept of her

knowledge of teaching, disclosed in her axial image, was continually either confirmed or challenged by the response her actions precipitated in her students. Though the essential image did not seem to change, the way the image manifested itself in her actions varied according to the situation.

Ruth's Reply: March 5, 1991

Dear Irene,

As you know, this has been a very draining and upsetting start to the week. I am having great difficulty concentrating and sorting out my ideas. I hope I can give you enough information.

1. Reason for the Talkshow choice--I wanted something more than just memorizing lines from a scene. A number of students watch talkshows (e.g. Arsenio Hall) and are keen about them. I didn't want the kids just to write something down and memorize it. Although with practice there has been some memorization, the show changes each time the kids present it. I think there is also more thinking involved.
2. I think students, if left on their own, would probably get a bit of "fun" from it. However, I know that there would be more "yes"/"no" type questions and answers. I need them to expand and examine their character more than what they want to.
3. I've linked it to "real-life" situations. The students see language/communication being practised.
4. ___ is different. He has his own set of rules and hears only what he wants to hear. He has difficulty concentrating when other people are presenting. He does quite well in his own presentations.
5. I check up on them from time to time. Most groups have worked quite well on their own, and continue to encourage/demand the same expectations from each other.

Ruth

Reflections

There was a deviation from our usual talk about process, about students' thinking and attitudes in Ruth's response to my observations based on my fourth visit. I knew Ruth was experiencing difficulties in her personal life. Although this was the first time she felt at liberty to mention them in her narrative, she had hinted at this to me verbally before. I wondered how this would affect her interest and ability to carry on with our shared narratives, knowing from my own experience that emotional upsets can often threaten to wreak havoc with professional or academic work. Perhaps Ruth was more adept at pushing personal matters aside while working. But Ruth admitted openly that this had been "a very draining and upsetting start to the week. I am having great difficulty concentrating and sorting out my ideas" (Reply, p. 123). This was why we decided to write in each other's physical presence, to help her focus and respond to my observations. Ruth could not concentrate when she was alone, and so we wrote to each other over coffee in a local restaurant. I felt that was perhaps also a more supportive environment for her at that time.

She had mentioned to her Grade Eight class that day that she was upset and that they should try and cooperate with her. She noted that she had experienced their concern for her, and that they had "kept checking to see if I was okay." She reflected on how the talk shows had gone, and that she was pleased with the "thinking in progress" she had seen. She had observed "group spirit" and students having to have patience with each other. She mentioned changes she would make the next time she would engage in a "talk show".

I asked her about the student who had to be sent out of the room. She gave me an extensive analysis of his situation, mentioning family expectations as having a lot of influence upon the way he saw himself and role in the classroom.

Her description of this student began with how he saw himself--" ___ is different. He has his own set of rules and hears only what he wants to hear." Her image of self as learner-negotiator was indirect contrast to what she perceived his image to be--"his own set of rules". This student was not a negotiator at this point.

Ruth's Further Reply and Our Correspondence

Although I wanted to write, I found it difficult to focus my thoughts and concentrate on the questions. I felt that I was giving a sketchy impression rather than details. We decided that it might help my writing if we could meet and write face-to-face. Irene wrote down questions which I had to respond to immediately (rather than procrastinating and not getting it done).

Irene: How were your classes today?

Ruth: Good. The Grade 8s--I told them I was dealing with a personal problem and I was upset. I needed their cooperation. They were very cooperative and concerned-- like, what is wrong with this teacher? They kept checking to see if I was okay.

Irene: And the Grade 7s?

Ruth: Finally on their last practice before presentation.

Irene: I thought it was to be on Friday.

Ruth: Scheduling problem. M__ (a mime troupe) came in and used the periods that had been booked for presentations. That was the class you saw. The other two were for this week. I had difficulty in scheduling a double period. I had to trade with a science teacher. I need a double period for each group's presentation, plus time to eat our Swiss snacks--Banner in the Sky food : farmer sausage, cheese, Swiss chocolate, hot chocolate, and tea.

Irene: Do you pay for this?

Ruth: Yes. Three classes, twenty-five kids each.

Irene: Can you reflect on the Talkshow Project a bit, now that you're nearing the end?

Ruth: Reflections on the Talkshow Project

Overall, I'm happy with the way the students responded to the project. This group of Grade 7s enjoy drama and oral activities. It was a chance for some of the quieter students to have their part. Also for students who dislike writing and rarely complete written assignments without much poking and prodding from me--it allowed them to shine and feel some success.

I saw kids questioning others and giving constructive suggestions to their group. I am pleased with the way most groups kept a group spirit and working together. Students had to practice patience with each other--if one student was having difficulties with a question, the others were challenged to help him/her without showing their frustration that he/she " didn't get it". Sometimes that took a lot. However, students got a chance to appreciate how the other person in the "spotlight" was feeling.

I saw thinking in progress. Not just a pat answer. Each time the groups practised, the questions changed, responses changed. That's exciting to watch and hear--the realization on the part of the students that questions can be answered in many ways--not just the way the teacher sees it. (However, 'facts' from the book had to be maintained--e.g. age of a character).

I often heard the students discussing what the character would/would not say, based on what they knew about his/her actions in the story.

What I would change:

--I would keep the improvisational start. It worked well with this bunch.

Time and location of practices/space

--shorten the period of time

--ideally--one group should not be working in the hall or stairwell--too many distractions.

--sometimes I thought there were too many group members-- when the host was interviewing one character at a time, it got too long for some of the group members. They found it difficult to attend to what was happening. They became easily distracted and then became distracting to the group.

--with twenty-five students I would try three or four groups.

--I also would like to think of ways to engage those disruptive students more--perhaps they could try their hands at being the host or co-host--For some it might work. (This year, the students chose their own parts. Most of the students who chose or were chosen by their group to be hosts were quite strong personalities with leadership skills)--What would happen if the "___'s" were placed in the role of the host? I would like to find out!

--Next year--I would have to "size up" my students first before attempting it. Some years it works, others, no.

Irene: About ___. I thought the incident with ___ was intriguing because the subject of working with a difficult child could come up. Can you tell me who ___ is, and how you try to meet his needs?

Ruth: ___. I see ___ as: quite intelligent--can contribute intelligently to class discussions.

--self-centred--very concerned with his own little world--e.g. playing with his pencil case, reading magazines about video games.

--loves to read--reads adult books--e.g. Children of My Heart by Gabrielle Roy.

--can be very silly--"sound effects"--the other students can get easily frustrated with him.

--he has had many run-ins with teachers because of his behavior.

--wants to do things his way-- e.g. assignments - disregards instructions

--is satisfied with minimal effort--hurries to finish assignments

--wastes a great deal of class time and then says not given enough time--sits and talks--set period deadlines-- It has to be done before you leave the room.

*I have had no major run-ins with ___ up until this class. However, I find humor or a bit of teasing works. (I think he is used to having his own way at home, as did his older sisters.)

--does things very quickly and carelessly--"Final drafts" after proofreading with partner and teacher often have more "mistakes" than the first or second drafts--It's the teacher's fault.

Irene: How does ___ fit into your Whole Language scheme of things?

Ruth: I don't think ___ fits in. I'm still looking for something that will trigger his interest more. e.g. He refuses to accept help with his spelling in his written work. Attitude--I'm a poor speller. That's that!

Irene: We haven't talked about your teacher expectations to any great extent. Can you tell me about what you expect from your students? For example, in the Banner in the Sky project? How do the students know when they are on the right track? How do they know they have met the expectations?

Ruth: Expectations--Talkshow.

- no yes/no answers--Answers are detailed and show thought.
- asking how the characters would feel--a reaction in that situation
- showing how they see the character--talking/walking like him/her
- encouraging each other--working cooperatively as a group
- being on task--not goofing off
- analyzing what they've said--Does it make sense? Does it fit in with the knowledge of the story?
- volume, expression,looking at the speaker/audience
- organization and preparedness--costumes,smooth-running
- get them to be self-evaluating
- I walk around and check. Make comments and suggestions --point out what is strong, ask them how they view their responses/performances--reinforce through positive comments

Irene: How will you go about evaluating this project?

Ruth: Evaluation.

- videotaping the students--I would like the students to self-evaluate after seeing themselves on the video
- checklist of the following:
- Content/quality of answer--accuracy to the book, shows thinking, creative/ in line with the character
- performance--value eye contact, prepared
- costumes, acting like the character/ props (character portrayal)
- use of time given
- cooperation/encouragement of group
- mark and then a comment of why they would give themselves that mark

Also written comment--what they did well/ what they were happy with? What would they do differently? What could they work

on? How did they feel up there? Did that come across in the video? If so, how could they work on nerves, etc.?

My evaluation would be similar--They could compare their perceptions with mine.

Irene: As I think about our study of your personal practical knowledge, I keep coming back to the purpose of this study. I want to explore how Whole Language beliefs become a part of, and are integrated into, your particular personal practical knowledge. Can you write about that a bit?

Ruth: I don't know if I went to a Whole Language Conference and just said I'm going to consciously adopt this. I think as I worked with my kids and tried to meet the needs and interests of junior high students, my style and thinking evolved into a Whole Language approach. Attending more conferences just gave me more ideas I could adapt to my situation.

Irene: Did you recognize something in what was said in the Whole Language conferences that smacked of your own practice? What was the link between your personal practical knowledge and the Whole Language theory you heard presented?

Ruth: I can't remember specific things--1983 C.E.L. conference in ___ and just what they were saying seemed to fit my students--stress on process and growth--not expecting kids to just know and do--importance of practice, not just give the assignment and grading (Presenters were talking about K-5 students at that time and sometimes the presentation seemed too geared to primary grades. I saw good ideas which could be adapted to junior high.)

Irene: You know, I've always wanted to see a Whole Language in-service geared directly to Junior High or High School. Have you ever attended one geared to these levels?

Ruth: People are hesitant to present Whole Language at the 7-12 grades. I have never seen a specific in-service at these levels. (Most presenters feel comfortable with K-6 and then say adapt to meet the needs of the older student. Even books are geared to the primary kids.) It's disappointing. I think teachers are content oriented and cannot see it working in their classrooms--will get in the way of what I have to teach. I don't have time for process. With regressing back to standardized exams, I see teachers going back to content rather than process.

Irene: What I've noticed about the way you teach is that you turn a student's question back to the student. The student is forced to make a decision and take ownership.

Ruth: I never realized I did that as much as you say. I consciously make an attempt of challenging the students to think for themselves. (I keep this in the back of my mind) but I didn't realize that I do that often.

The first time I had my eyes opened about how immature, "spoonfed", teacher reliant students can be was when a little girl came up to me and asked what color of construction paper she should use for a cover of a project. (Color did not matter--any color would have done.) I told her she could choose which ever one she wanted. She cried. I realized that students need a safe environment where they feel comfortable with making decisions. However, over the years, I have realized that some students do need a starting point or affirmation of what they're doing or what they've decided--(encouragement).

Irene: You told me this coming Friday was Evaluation Day. How do you arrive at a student's grade? You mentioned in our first interview that you have been writing anecdotal reports as well as filling in the required report card. Will you be proceeding in the same manner again?

Ruth: Parents and students need to see some type of mark or grade. Although I do mark assignments, essays, projects, participation, etc. I place more emphasis on written comments about the student's strengths and weaknesses in the L.A. strands. (I'll give you a sample of what I have sent first term.)

This takes days to write.--time and thought about each student--1/2 hour/kid. I've had colleagues try to convince me to drop it--saying parents don't take the time to read it. However, at parent/teacher interviews, parents have shown appreciation--"You really take time with my kid, or you understand my kid." For myself, I do this because I want to be as accurate as possible, not just a general letter grade.

It's difficult after writing eighty-five reports, to keep each individual student in mind and not be repetitious.

*Because of time and personal upset this term, I'm not sure whether I will be able to send this type of report.

Essays.

Not a one shot thing--Students need to learn the steps--research and note-taking, drafts, proofreading, editing, revising--final draft.

--I give marks for steps--it helps kids to keep with the limits

--I've read each essay at least three times before evaluating the final product

--With drafts, students proofread with partners, with me, and the last draft I place a mark with final suggestions--students can take suggestions and improve this essay and their mark even after I've put a grade on it.

E.g. Paragraph 1--check spelling of five words

--check use of commas

--check use of possessives

*If I read/mark their papers--they don't think about their mistakes or how they can improve. Looking through their work to find the "errors" I've commented on, they seem to take far more responsibility for their learning. This has worked well--kids were asking questions, using dictionaries, were even finding mistakes which I had overlooked and were correcting them.

* ___ refused to look for his spelling errors even after being helped. In a way it bothered me because he didn't want to improve (attitude rather than inability to spell). He did the assignment at home using "Spell-Check".

Irene: At this point in our study, how are we doing in our task of writing the narrative of your personal practical knowledge? I am conscious of the fact that this must be as true to your knowledge and experience as we can possibly make it.

Ruth: As far as I know, we are. I feel comfortable with your observations and my responses to them.

Reflections

It was in this writing that I returned to my thesis question, and Ruth now seemed ready to address it. Perhaps I had asked it so many times, she felt that she must attempt some kind of answer to "accommodate" me. She stated that she

had never adopted Whole Language categorically, but rather that her teaching approach had evolved into a Whole Language approach. Upon hearing formal Whole Language theory, she adopted those ideas that suited her. She could not remember specific things but recognized that what the speakers at the C.E.L. (Child-Centred Experience-Based Learning) conference were saying matched her own situation: the stress on process and growth, the importance of practice and not merely product, "not expecting kids to just know and do". The Whole Language theory image confirmed her own.

I perceived that Ruth was saying a good deal more here than merely "this is me, this is how I operate, these are my beliefs and values which govern my practice". Ruth sincerely was trying to show me how she thought, to let me in on the activity in her mind that resulted in her practice. She believed in what she was doing almost as if it were a framework for living, and depended upon a description of her hopes and goals to clarify her knowing-in-action.

Ruth stated that she had become a holistic thinker and teacher. It happened that she was exposed to formal Whole Language theory, that it was promoted as an important initiative within curriculum. The point is that, whether Whole Language theory was recognized as a valid teaching approach by current pedagogical leaders or not, Ruth stated that she would still have naturally practised a holistic teaching style. A part of Whole Language theory was adopted into Ruth's thinking when she discerned that this part matched that which she already knew out of her practical experience. "I think as I worked with my kids and tried to meet the needs and interests of junior high students, my style and thinking evolved into a Whole Language approach. Attending more conferences just gave me more ideas I could adapt to my situation" (Ruth's Reply, p. 131).

She stated at the end of the first interview that, should Whole Language be denied validity as a curriculum initiative, she would rather give up teaching. For Ruth, the evolution of her beliefs and values manifested themselves into her own

unique theories about what teaching ought to be, about what the students needed, about her role in the classroom, about her colleagues. Her commitment to these personal beliefs about the way pedagogy functioned suggested that Ruth saw teaching as something of a vocation.

Image

The focus of this last correspondence again illuminated Ruth's axial image of herself as learner-negotiator: decision-making; taking responsibility; supportive, non-threatening opportunities to think critically--these were the essential themes that constituted the central image around which the narratives of her practice revolved.

Ruth was concerned for the child who had become emotionally upset because she had been asked to choose for herself which color of construction paper to take for a project's cover page. This anecdote was in Ruth's memory because it had played an important role in the evolution of her knowing. The student's dilemma again modified Ruth's image of learner-negotiator, reinforcing her resolve to affirm decision-making, and to give students a starting point for decision-making.

This was another instance of how the messages surrounding Ruth were interpreted by her to strengthen her belief in responsibility in learning. Had she had different beliefs, the experience with this student who was not comfortable with making her own decisions may very well have confirmed an entirely different belief framework, a different image of learning, and precipitated a different teaching practice. Ruth interpreted this experience as confirmation for the need to support students in independent thinking.

Perhaps as important as confirmatory messages was the example of contradictory messages Ruth was receiving from the student mentioned earlier. She stated that he did not fit in to the way she organized her knowledge. She was

trying different strategies to find out where his interests lay. In Boulding's terms, Ruth's image was resistant to these messages, and she was seeking alternative strategies which her student might interpret with greater receptivity. Ruth's image was not accepted by this particular student. This example of "image conflict" was the first to appear in our narratives. The situation I had observed in class did not appear to be the first incident of conflict between Ruth and this student. In her description of his learning characteristics there was a marked discrepancy between her values and his perceived values. She had ended the encounter with him by arranging a private meeting after school. Boulding points out that in the gene's capabilities to engage in a teaching-learning operation, it is a better teacher than it is a learner (p. 37). Yet he affirms that images are changed by learning processes (p. 55). Ruth and her student were engaged in a learning process. Each was communicating personal messages to the other. Each was influencing the other's image.

There was the possibility of yet another example in this last correspondence of image-conflict. Ruth had a problem in carrying on with her teaching practice as she had suffered an emotional upset in her private life. Her image of self as negotiator-learner was accepted by her Grade Eight class to the extent that they sympathized with her and cooperated with her. Their negotiation was by mutual agreement. However, her practice was affected, as can be seen in her description of the day. She seemed to no longer have the same physical energy in the face of the personal problems, and counted on an already established rapport with the students to make the class a success. In this case, the Grade Eights seemed to confirm and reinforce their class image of negotiator-learners.

I wondered if Ruth's personal upset was related, in part, to an internal conflict with the image she had of herself. There was a marked slowing in the pace of her responses to my correspondence. I wondered if this image of which she had seemed to be so sure had been put into check in some way. Because this

problem altered the tone of our correspondence noticeably, and because, according to Boulding, the image is value-dependent, I puzzled about the implications of this situation. The fact that she was not sure she was going to send her anecdotal reports this time indicated a phenomenon powerful enough to interfere with her usual practice.

This was the last class I observed. The next part of this investigation takes a closer look at the function of image within personal practical knowledge.

CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Reflections on the Image and Personal Practical Knowing

The Function of Image

Boulding (1956) defines the subjective knowledge structure as image, reasoning that the only way the individual comes to know anything is through an image of whatever is under consideration at any given moment. Individuals are located in a "field of personal relations", and "in the midst of a world of subtle intimations and emotions" (pp. 4-5). These locations inform the individual's subjective knowledge or image of the world. He goes on to postulate "that behavior depends on the image" (p. 6). The image is constructed as a result of the past experience of the image holder. Messages reach the individual as structured experiences, and the "meaning of a message is the change which it produces in the image" (p. 7). In Boulding's terms, experiences are messages which impact upon the image, which, in turn, serve to inform the genetic framework of a person's knowledge according to the interpretation of the experiences by the knowledge holder. The resulting function of the image in Boulding's view is essentially different than either Elbaz's or Clandinin's theorizing of the image in personal practical knowledge.

Boulding holds that knowledge is a belief of facts as well as values:

There are images of "fact" as well as images of "value". One of the most important propositions of this theory is that the value scales of any individual or organization are perhaps the most important

single element determining the effect of the messages it receives on its image of the world. (pp. 11-12)

We have seen what it is that Ruth values in herself and in her students.

In investigating personal practical knowledge and the personal sense of commitment I had witnessed in Ruth's thinking, I found Polanyi (Polanyi, 1962) to be instructive. Knowledge development results as commitment and beliefs inform the individual's interpretation of experience. Polanyi links knowing and doing as ways of extending the self into the particulars of a situation. Intellectual commitment hinges upon the beliefs of the individual-- "what in good conscience I conceive to be true" (Polanyi, 1962, p. 64).

The arts of doing and knowing, the valuation and the understanding of meanings, are thus seen to be only different aspects of the act of extending our person into the subsidiary awareness of particulars which compose a whole. The inherent structure of this fundamental act of personal knowing makes us both necessarily participate in its shaping and acknowledge its results with universal intent. This is the prototype of intellectual commitment. It is the act of commitment in its full structure that saves personal knowledge from being merely subjective. Intellectual commitment is a responsible decision, in submission to the compelling claims of what in good conscience I conceive to be true. ... This hope and this obligation are expressed in the universal intent of personal knowledge. (Polanyi, 1962, p. 64)

Ruth's knowing bore the trademarks of Polanyi's references to commitment. I had noted earlier that Ruth's beliefs about teaching Language Arts seemed to dogmatically border on conviction of their truth. In Polanyi's

terms, her beliefs were the source of her knowledge. Ruth sought to define herself in each situation which she encountered. Throughout our narratives she could be seen to be searching her conscience in her commitment to what she believed to be true.

It was apparent that, for Ruth, teaching is a moral undertaking. I wanted now to go so far as to suggest that she saw the Whole Language initiative to be a morally correct one and, as she went about solving the problems in her everyday practice within the structure of her commitment to learning and responsibility in learning, she viewed her work as a learner as a consequence of her articles of faith.

Boulding's theory of knowledge rests upon his idea of the image as representative of knowledge. Boulding states that growth in personal knowing occurs "through an interactive internal organizing principle" (p. 18), much like the gene is an organizing agent. It is significant that Boulding also refers to matters of faith in the image that is a way of knowing.

We can only say that there are elements in the image which are capable of organizing the life and activity of the individual. It is these organizing elements which constitute faith: the faith of the experimental scientist in his method; the faith of the believer in his God; the faith of the crusader in his cause; the faith of the soldier in his nation ... Where life is disorganized, where there is dissatisfaction ... then there is a search for change. Where a faith is discovered that has this organizing power, it is likely to grow and to prosper. ... Faiths are the genes of society. Their operation is as potent and as mysterious as that of the gene in biology. (p. 172)

Ruth made definite statements about what she believed: the need for students to see the teacher as a learner; the need for respect amongst learners; the need for integration between subject areas; the need for nurture and encouragement as well as discipline; the need for critical and creative thinking; the need of every learner to be shown strengths and weaknesses which would indicate the direction of the next step in the learner process. These could be seen as her "articles of faith" which organized her practice.

The messages she received from her students, from colleagues, from administration, from in-service training and reading, from personal life experiences outside of school, were in a dynamic relationship with her image. Her essential image did not change, but the way in which she assessed the particular situation in which she found herself, the manner in which she chose to speak to the individual student, to present herself and her image to the class before her--these manifestations of her image were variable.

The other element in our narratives was the apparent merging of Ruth's private and public image. Ruth made a reference to the fact that she had a personal upset in her life, and she asked her Grade Eight students to bear with her as she tried to negotiate the emotional toll and still teach her students. She stated that her students showed concern for her, and that this made it easier for her. Ruth was dependent upon the confirmation she received from them. This was the nurturing family aspect of her image.

She seemed to require encouragement from me as well. We had to write within each other's physical presence in order to complete our narratives. I needed to show support, and Ruth needed to have companionship in order for her to work. It was a cooperative labour in which we were engaged. I thought to myself at the time that this glimpse into our friendship and how Ruth engaged the help of her co-learners as part of her coping strategies may have never surfaced as an important aspect of her personal practical knowledge if Ruth had

not felt free to mention that she was preoccupied with a problem. Perhaps Ruth and I worked well together because I supported Ruth's image with the messages I was giving her.

This personal tone uncovered subtleties about Ruth's knowing of which I had not previously been aware in Clandinin or Elbaz's research. Ruth's non-professional life was not separated from her professional life except in conventional terms of location. Ruth's personal affairs affected her practice. Because her knowing was determined to a large extent by her personal belief system, and because this belief system was the basis for her image of what she knew, both in and out of school, all the events that occurred in her day were interpreted and organized through the image she held of herself and her way of knowing. Her practice was, both in class with students or out of class in correspondence with me, a consequence of her belief in learning and the image she held of her knowledge.

Whole Language and Personal Practical Knowing

The investigation of how Whole Language became a part of Ruth's personal practical knowledge of teaching had taken a quite different turn from what was originally expected. The language had changed from talk about theory and practice, to talk from within the context of the narratives where the emergence of Ruth's image began to alter the way in which I conceived personal practical knowledge to be operative. As Whole Language was learner-centred and contextually-based, so personal practical knowing also appeared to be centred upon the individual and the interpretation of the individual's experiences.

Definitions of Whole Language are difficult to formulate because the learner as well as the context cannot be definitively secured; the definition of personal practical knowing can only be defined insofar as the factors influencing

the knowing can be described. Both concepts are based on the acknowledgement of the fiduciary framework the individual possesses.

Polanyi describes personal practical knowledge as an organic process, "a knowing and a doing". It is a "knowledge" at any given instance but is modified and re-interpreted by the individual as part of the ongoing process of entering into the next experience. Individuals are in the process of living all the time; they are also in the process of knowing all the time, although they may not be conscious of their knowing all the time. Similarly, Whole Language emphasizes the organic nature of learning and language.

Upon looking back upon the development of my own knowing about Ruth's thinking, Whole Language, and personal practical knowledge, the similarities in orientation toward knowledge and learning as organic process are not surprising. However, as I was in the midst of the investigation, these similarities were not evident to the extent they are now. The realization that knowledge was a static concept and knowing was a continuing process, and therefore that I could not speak of knowledge other than in Boulding's terms of image because of the informative nature of image upon knowing--this realization occurred slowly as Ruth spoke out of her knowing, out of her beliefs.

The fact that Ruth's narratives focused on a central image, not deviating but rather elaborating upon how this image manifested itself in her practice, caused me some confusion at first. My own image of what personal practical knowledge was, based on Elbaz and Clandinin, was challenged with the messages I was receiving from Ruth's narratives. My own belief in learning as a journey encouraged me to re-orientate my image of personal practical knowledge as personal practical knowing. Once I had decided that this interpretation was credible as far as my own belief system could determine, and was shared as a public image by Boulding and Polanyi, I pursued Ruth's knowing with this interpretation.

The Last Narratives

Ruth and I decided to write "one last time". As you will see, we could not yet say goodbye to this project. We met over coffee.

The Narrative: March 12, 1991

Irene: It's been a hectic day for me. How about you?

Ruth: It's been a hectic two weeks what with I.E.P. meetings in the morning and after school. We have a large number of "special needs" students in Grade 7 this year, and I find it very draining to keep up with all of them. These kids' problems range from learning to behavioral to emotional. Right now I feel tugged on all sides.

What frustrates me tonight, coming from the I.E.P., is teachers who expect kids to automatically know how to do things (e.g. how to get organized without giving them strategies/coping mechanisms).

Irene: Elaborate. Could you tell me what triggered this statement? Explain the context.

Ruth: One of my students this year has difficulty with paying attention--day-dreaming--and as a result doesn't remember what has happened in class. Rather than trying to give the student ways/strategies to help his attention/note-taking, the teacher replied, "Well ... I told him once ...".

Irene: So in an I.E.P. you are working with other teachers in order to come up with a program more "tailored" to meet the needs of the individual student?

Ruth: Yes.

Irene: We haven't talked a whole lot about you at work within a larger social/ collegial milieu. When I visited your classroom, I noticed you collaborated to some extent with the teacher assistants in your room. I haven't noticed any collaboration with your colleagues. Is this because it's happening behind the scenes, or happens in certain kinds of situations? Set me straight on this.

Ruth: There have been times of collaboration. For example, earlier this year, one of the Grade 7 Science teachers was working on an astronomy unit in which he wanted the students to do a research project. We planned out what we wanted the students to do. L.A. periods were used to go over research skills, sources of information, note-taking, drafts, revision and proofreading. Evaluation was done by both of us --a mark for science and a mark for L.A. I think the kids learned a lot by going through the process, especially the realization that English was also a part of science.

I would like to see a lot more of this going on. However, this would require teachers' time outside the regular schedule. Time needed to plan is hindered by our timetables. Teachers find it much easier to do it on their own.

I would say that collaboration does occur in certain situations. (L.A. teachers have shared ideas informally over coffee.) We also do a lot of discussing about the students (achievements, behavior, etc.). Communication (about kids, problems, success stories) does happen on almost a daily basis (over coffee).

Irene: I would like to know the way your particular collegial/ administrative/ community milieu influences you and affects the decisions you make in planning your classroom work.

Ruth: I feel like my colleagues support me and trust my decision-making. I think wherever possible I've encouraged the integration of subject areas which would lead to collaboration on unit plans, hopefully.

What I do in my classroom--they say, "That's fine for you but that's not my style." e.g. anecdotal report cards. And I say, "If it's not for you, don't feel threatened." I'm not doing it for my colleagues; it's my way of giving an accurate report to my parents and students. The same with integration of special needs students. A criticism of this is that people are too caught up in their subject areas. e.g. content rather than process.

Irene: Why do you think people are caught up in content rather than process? Is this part of a larger framework for teachers?

Ruth: It is part of the larger framework. Teachers feel the need to cover the curriculum within a certain length of time. There is pressure for the marks. I feel this is pressure from society (grades are still important). People don't feel they have time for process and for the kids to make mistakes and learn from them. e.g. giving an essay, marking it without giving the student a chance to see his strengths and weaknesses and make improvements for next time.

Some teachers would like the end product without the pain and frustration. e.g. want to give the kids a project, not go through the intermediate steps. e.g. the pain of helping kids with sources--often this is lumped into the L.A. teachers' job description when all teachers (regardless of subject) should be doing this.

Irene: In my own teaching experience, it has taken (and perhaps is still taking) me a while to incorporate more of the intermediate steps. Because I can't recall much teaching of process in my own

educational background, I have few models to pattern my own teaching of process.

Ruth: I agree. During my own "schooling", teachers would tell us they want a project in, say for example, "Australia". Go do it. They did not give us any direction/ guidelines/ process. For some kids, we found out on our own by working it through (we developed our own way). But what about the other students who didn't have a clue as to how to start. What did they do? Ended up with zero? And I used to do that with my own students until I started asking myself, "What was the purpose? Did I just want a bunch of facts or did I want my students to know how to do something, regardless of the topic? What was I really trying to prepare them for?"

Reflections

Ruth's narrative showed her frustration as the image she held of learner-negotiator was at odds with a colleague's approach. She was in the process of undergoing a re-interpretation of her image once more as she received messages which conflicted with her beliefs. This conflict seemed to indicate a strengthening of her belief in her image, and a greater determination to try and relate to what Boulding called the students' "inward teachers". Her description of her knowing-in-action was enhanced by this incident where a colleague's practice contrasted sharply with her values and her image.

Image

Ruth was in a quandary about how to resolve her inability to convince her colleagues of the merit of her beliefs. Her image would either manifest itself in a different manner in this kind of situation, or the image itself would change if the messages presented were powerful enough to convince Ruth that change was in

order. Change would hinge upon a modification of her belief in the value of learning and negotiating.

A Postscript

Ruth and I ended this correspondence at this point. It was time for Ruth and I to leave. Perhaps the fact that I believe learning is a journey as long as life exists, perhaps because I wanted reassurance that Ruth had said everything she wished to say, perhaps because I knew that, once this investigation was over, we would not make time for reflection and writing our narratives, perhaps because I valued the nature of this kind of learning experience--for whatever the reasons were, Ruth and I agreed to correspond a last time, to reflect upon the process as a postscript to our narratives.

The Narrative: April 15, 1991

Irene: Ruth, could you reflect on the process in which we've engaged in this study?

Ruth: I think I've learned a great deal about myself in the classroom--how I come across to the students, how I react to them. More important to me is finding out how certain themes/ideas are emphasized throughout my teaching. For example, when you pointed out that I answered the students' questions with more questions--I didn't realize I did that as often. These are personal benefits.

I also can link the process--the observing, the dialogue --with Peer Coaching. I actually see this as a wonderful way for a teacher to think about what he/she is doing-- verbalize what he/she is doing/share knowledge/experience with a colleague.

It got me thinking about why I did certain things--made me more aware of my decision-making. I could see with raising

consciousness in teachers about what they were doing in the class could lead to more effective decision-making. These are benefits for a teacher.

Irene: Are there any areas left which you feel might still be insufficiently examined--areas in your teaching, your beliefs, values, or "rules" by which you teach?

Ruth: I can't think of any specific areas that have been left out. Last time we started to talk about community and colleagues. I was to write about them but I didn't get around to it. (So what else is new?)

On community - I am aware of community values and reactions to certain topics and select material with this in mind. At times this has been extremely frustrating. For example, I may have to pass up a novel or story with a good plot or characterization because of the "language". With older kids, it is easier to explain the use of language. However with Grade 7 and 8 students, it's a bit more difficult. They get too caught up with the "naughty words" and miss the idea behind plot, theme, etc. I know that I've avoided stories with "controversial ideas" because of fear of community response. I feel guilty about this in some ways because I think students should learn to read and think critically. By avoiding "controversial types" are we overprotecting them? Another frustration I have is having few books, stories at the 7 and 8 level that have females in the role of the hero--stories that don't have the female out to get her man.

On colleagues--I do feel a part of a junior high team-- in terms of discussing kids' needs, strengths, weaknesses, etc. However, in the recent years, discussions about L.A. have mainly been with the resource teacher and sharing sessions with L.A. teachers from other schools. I've found a lot of great ideas from a L.A. committee. People

with whom I shared and exchanged ideas have moved away. I still do share some ideas with colleagues. However, not to the same extent as I did in the past (perhaps different interests, both professionally and personally). People who share L.A. after school have a deep love for L.A.--sharing/talking stimulates you even after a tiring day. People who do not have this love or who have other priorities don't feel the need to spend the time talking.

I've always thought that departmentalization is emphasized too much at the grades 7 and 8 levels. This has allowed us to keep isolated in our subject areas. e.g. "I'm the maths teacher--I don't have to teach the students to write in complete sentences. Let the English teacher do that." I would like to see more of us at the Grade 7 level teach most of the subjects to our own rooms. I think students would see more of a connection among the various "separate" subjects. It would also get teachers sharing more info.

A recent positive experience in integration and collaboration--occurred with a G & T unit we had to plan. The junior high teachers had to get together as a group and plan out a unit on the environment. Each teacher was responsible for a certain section to present to the students. Although there were a few grumbles and gripes to start with, when we evaluated the process, most of the teachers were vary happy with the exchange of ideas and working as a group. (They appreciated the different points-of-view and thinking that each contributed to the group.) They want to do more of this type of planning in the future. I find this exciting.

Irene: You refer to yourself as a learner. What have you learned from this process? Has this process served your interests as a L.A. teacher in any way?

Ruth: I realize what the purpose of your visits and the process of our dialoging was. I have learned things about myself as a teacher. However, in order for it to be beneficial for me as a learner, it would have to be an ongoing process.

Irene: Do you feel I have "uncovered" at least part of the narrative of your teacher thinking?

Ruth: Yes, I do.

Reflections

Ruth reviewed many of the aspects of her knowing in this narrative. She summarized her own learning in this project, pointing out that her "raised consciousness" would be helpful in working towards more effective decision-making. I was reminded of Polanyi's "knowing and doing" in the way she linked her own knowing with her practice.

Her belief concerning integration was confirmed and strengthened as a result of the positive experience she had with colleagues in planning an integrated unit together.

Image

To my mind, there was no doubt that Ruth did have an axial image of learner-negotiator, for she did not deviate from this image but continuously elaborated upon different aspects of the image. My understanding of knowing as a constant process was also confirmed, for each experience Ruth related subtly modified her knowing as she continuously made meaning for herself out of these experiences.

In this last narrative, Ruth was able to point to a situation where she was willing to "water down her approach" in order to act in concert with community values rather than risk confrontation. She chose to omit books from classroom

reading that would have helped serve her purpose of transmitting her message to the students to be learner-negotiators. This could be viewed as an example of her negotiatory practice. For Ruth, negotiating meant compromise in certain situations.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

Dewey might have understood Ruth's negotiation of the curriculum as a measure of the continuity of experience and as an integral part of her images of knowing. "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). Pinar might conceive Ruth's knowing as curriculum, as a reflection of the dialectic between consciousness and matter. Goodman might have noted Ruth's emphasis upon interaction and process and called it Whole Language.

What would Ruth call this research? No doubt, she would concur that it is learning, and that learning is continuous. Knowledge is never static. "I'm still learning in my own way ... the humanness, you know, in a person, and I think it's an important quality as you go through life to maintain a sense of humor" (First Interview, p. 35).

"To understand how teachers construe their practice we need to develop ways of gaining access to the teacher's thinking" (Olson, 1980, p. 1). Ruth granted access to me of her thinking for the purposes of this study. She viewed herself, her students, and her colleagues as learners. She was concerned that her students should be aware of the importance of self-discipline within a nurturing, non-threatening environment; that learners "strain the brain"; that learners develop their ability to take the risks involved in critical and creative thinking; that learners learn to be independent thinkers. These practical principles emerged from her axial image of learner-negotiator.

In addition, Ruth had beliefs which applied to specific circumstances. Students should encourage each other; students should share their learning;

students should feel a sense of responsibility to each other for their learning and behavior; students should share available space equally; students should be given permission and encouraged to take risks; students should use all modes of expression available to the students; each student had the right to know her/his strengths and weaknesses and be given opportunity to learn how to improve; students should be given a comfortable environment within which they can take the risks of growing and learning.

After the first interview, the following narratives revolved around the key ideas she discussed in the interview. When all was said and done, like the opening chapter of a novel, the themes and motifs of the story could be discovered within the first interview. The subsequent narratives revolved around Ruth's image of knowledge as learning and negotiating, an image so central to Ruth that it seemed to function as the organizer for her entire belief system about teaching. Every response she made was derived in some sense from her axial image.

Ruth's knowledge was not static, but rather homeostatic; in other words, she possessed personal practical **knowing**. She knew in action. Ruth did not see herself as having completed her learning. Her knowing changed, was modified, added to, subtracted from, elaborated upon, but it was always derived from the organizing framework of the image of learning and negotiating. It was Ruth's unshakeable faith in this image that gave power to Ruth's teaching practice.

If the findings of this investigation are accepted, if the act of learning is one act of many in a continuous process where learning is a perpetual activity, if subjective knowledge can be understood as our image of the knowledge we hold, then we must re-assess our view of what teaching is, of what learning is. One of the researcher's tasks becomes a matter of finding ways to investigate the images held by practitioners.

Ruth saw the merit of corresponding together as beneficial to her ability to critique her own practice only if it were to occur on an ongoing-term basis.

Certain epiphanies did occur in Ruth's knowing. For example, she came to understand her own style of questioning; she had not previously realized that, when asked a question by a student, she would turn the question back to the student in order that the student might take responsibility for the answer. Clarifying her beliefs and the practices she had developed based on those beliefs served to reinforce Ruth's beliefs about what was important in her teaching.

Ruth stated that she was not always pleased with aspects of her practice which were brought out for discussion in this investigation. I can only conjecture that Ruth was in the process of re-evaluating her practice in light of her beliefs, and that her knowing was continually re-shaping in the adjustment process.

The subjective stance creates the possibility of discussing contextual factors, as they play an important role in the practice of teaching. The nature of the discussion requires that both researcher and subject disclose their personal thinking as it relates to teaching. Within the parameters of the universe of discourse which the researcher and subject create through their narratives is the possibility of exploring aspects of teaching which would not be revealed in an empirical investigation as they cannot be scientifically proven.

As in fiction, the reader must accept the experience of the narrative within the context it sets forth. Personal practical knowing can only be explored through personal context. Accountability is integral to the structure of discourse; in narration, accountability places a demand upon the participants to be as authentic as possible to their knowing. As teaching is a subjective enterprise, so research on teaching must inquire into the nature of its subjectivity.

Biographical reflection focuses upon the singular nature of knowing and the image of that knowing by which the practitioner recognizes and organizes experience. Professional growth requires reflection upon knowing-in-action. Biographical reflection directs the responsibility for the scrutiny of practice to the practitioner who is embedded within a personally-experienced milieu. As the

practitioner examines her or his own experience, the possibility of a shared experience through narrative is created.

In our end was our beginning. As Ruth and I opened the first pages of our narrative, so we closed our narrative--with a discussion of Ruth's knowing. Of greatest concern to Ruth was her own accountability as a teacher. Her own knowing evolved as she probed the beliefs out of which her practice emerged.

And I used to do that with my own students until I started asking myself, "What was the purpose? Did I just want a bunch of facts or did I want my students to know how to do something, regardless of the topic? What was I really trying to prepare them for? (The Last Narrative, p. 148)

In co-narrating this investigation, Ruth and I have explored, not only Ruth's thinking, but also the central role of the image in her personal practical knowing. As far as I could ascertain, Ruth's thinking and knowing was organized by the axial image she held of self as learner-negotiator. This image seemed to inform both the cognitive and affective domains in her knowing. She described her knowledge in terms of this image.

Suggestions

For the practitioner, the process of reflection engenders action empowered by personal knowing. Professional growth manifests itself in changes made in practice; it cannot be administered, for it depends upon the intellectual commitment of the practitioner. As reflection is practised, it, too, becomes a part of experience, re-shaping the individual's personal knowing.

If professional practitioners are to develop a sense of ownership over their own growth and knowledge, they must engage in self-evaluation and reflection

upon--not only their own action and experience--but their own practical knowledge. If they begin to understand their own concept of the world in terms of their personally-held image that acts as an organizer for their actions and as an interpreter for the messages they perceive as a result of their experiences, they can also begin to define as well as critique their practice more clearly.

As part of the ongoing search to refine their practice, teachers critique and adapt theory to their own specific practice; however, they also need to explore their own assumptions and beliefs, to acquaint themselves with the dynamics of their own personal practical knowledge. Becoming aware of subconsciously-held beliefs or of intuitive responses to theory, being cognizant of a personally-held concepts of the world and sharing these concepts with colleagues, allows practitioners to act with greater authority and control over their practice. When private images are presented and discussed with others, they become public images.

Personal practical knowing displays an intellectual commitment to a belief system, to the foundations out of which knowing evolves. This commitment renders the act of knowing as a responsible act--that is, responsible to a personal belief system. When the belief system is discussed and shared between practitioners, the commitment is extended to include another's understanding. The commitment becomes a site of struggle as well as public commitment amongst these practitioners as well as a private commitment. Changes which result from this kind of public dialogue have the possibility of greater impact upon a profession such as teaching.

Since concrete experience is the pivotal location from which explorations into theory and knowing can be conducted, methods used to investigate pedagogical phenomenon need to be able to speak to both of these domains. Narrative biography is one method by which both the concrete and the abstract can enter into a dialogue within the profession.

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