

**Negotiating a Path to Professional Efficacy: A Narrative Analysis  
of the Experiences of Four Pre-Service Educators**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctorate in Education in  
the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

May 2005

## Abstract

Often studies examining the development of a sense of professional efficacy in pre-service educators are concerned with either the systemic viewpoint of teacher education programmes or the relationship between the perceptions of pre-service educators and what is “really” happening in the classroom. The intent of this study is to investigate the question “What do pre-service educators perceive that they know and that they need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy? solely from the vantage point of the pre-service educator. The study encompasses two specific objectives:

- to identify through narrative analysis the circumstances of the construction of and the content of the knowledge created by the pre-service educators from their experiences
- to investigate and describe the relationship of the knowledge constructed by the pre-service educators to the development of a sense of professional efficacy.

The study attempts to produce an in-depth qualitative description of the explicit and sometimes tacit perceptions of four pre-service educators as they prepared to begin professional careers. Four pre-service educators enrolled in a recently developed innovative Post Graduate Certificate of Education programme at a large urban university in South Africa participated in the study over a two year period. The perceptions of the pre-service educators are presented through an analysis of the narratives taken from interviews and reflective journal entries. The narratives are analyzed using a variety of narrative inquiry methods which were investigated and described as part of this study. The interpretation of the narratives is also informed by theoretical constructs such as professional efficacy and knowledge and private theory. Through the analysis and interpretation of the narratives the unique and individual nature of learning to become an educator as well as similarities of experience were revealed. Ultimately the broad aim of this study through the use of narrative inquiry methodology and methods is to add the “voices” of these pre-service educators to a larger dialogue and to the collective body of evidence of how one learns to become an educator with a sense of professional efficacy.

Key words: professional efficacy, narrative inquiry, abstract knowledge, practical knowledge, private theory, belief, collision, literary analysis methods, performative methods, structural analysis methods

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## **Dedication**

To John with gratitude for his support, encouragement and ever present good humour.

## **Acknowledgements**

To Professor D.M. DeKock my mentor and friend whose insight, sensitivity and enthusiasm made this work joyful.

To Jaco de Leeuw for cheerfully sharing his expertise in the technicalities of the computer world.

To the National Research Foundation and Professor J. Slabbert for partial funding of the research project.

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## **Negotiating a Path to Professional Efficacy: A Narrative Analysis of the Experiences of Four Pre-service Educators**

### **Introduction**

Every generation of pre-service educators faces new challenges as well as old dilemmas in the process of learning to become an educator. The present generation of South African pre-service educators is no exception. The largely previously undocumented stories of the experiences of South African pre-service educators told in their words and from their own perspectives adds to the collective body of evidence of how one becomes an educator (Lortie, 1975: 1). The experiences in the stories contain elements that are both universally familiar and contextually unique. The stories are full of collisions of events and personal beliefs and “private theories” (Bullough and Gitlin, 1995: 11) from within the classroom and from without. As the stories are told, the narratives of the pre-service educators become episodes in the continuing larger story of “how teachers acquire understanding of their roles and identities as knowledgeable professionals” (Samuel, 2003: 255) and are transformed into stories within a story. Analyzing the stories within a story yields insight into the specific period in their lives as well as the multiple external public and internal personal influences singularly impacting the individual experience of learning to become an educator. Some educators may share the same images and stories, circumstances and theories across classrooms, generations, genders and cultures. Some may not. Taking cognizance of the narratives, however, offers a powerful potential for comprehending, comparing and learning from the responses to the events that “mark” (Nouwen, 1975: 100) the teaching lives of pre-service educators. The potential for new awareness and enlarging the shared history of experience is the rationale for listening to the voices of educators who are in the earliest most exhilarating and at the same time vulnerable stages of their careers.

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## Chapter One

### The Research Story

The story of the development of the concept for this study is implicitly connected to the stories of the pre-service educators and explicitly to the larger story of how teachers acquire a professional identity. My interest in the stories and in studying the stories began with the conversations among educator colleagues in both the United States and South Africa which seemed increasingly to be stories of professional disappointment and frustration presumably representing a loss of a positive professional identity. In addition to personal observations, educational research (Hayward and Shutte, 2003) as well as professional and popular literature bore out these impressions of disenchantment. Woods (2002) for example, attributes the causes of these dispirited responses to the expansion of work commitments and describes the phenomenon in the United Kingdom and Europe as an “intensification crisis” resulting in high levels of work related stress and low morale among professional educators. In South Africa, David Bolt, CEO of the National Union of Educators, concurs and says that he is “absolutely convinced” that low morale in the teaching professions is a “national problem” (telephone conversation February 2002).

Searching for the possible causes of what appeared to be a spiraling sense of negativity and disillusionment within the teaching profession, I came across the notion of professional efficacy described by Albert Bandura (1977). Bandura defines efficacy (which I understood to be the antithesis of disillusionment) as a sense of personal agency - the ability and confidence to become what one wants to become. More specifically, in their study of classroom educators Johnson and Birkeland designate the term “professional efficacy” to describe whether or not educators “believe that they (are) achieving success with their students”... (2003: 593). Combining the two descriptions expands the concept of an educator's sense of professional efficacy to suggest that when experiencing a sense of professional efficacy educators will be conscious of and express confidence in their capability to be successful with their students - however success is perceived. Lortie enlarged the concept further and linked efficacy and morale asserting that “the complexities of teaching can produce doubts about one's efficacy ...” (1975: X). Thinking of the visibly low

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morale of my colleagues in several countries in terms of feelings of efficacy provoked questions: Do we as educators have a sense of professional efficacy, that is, do we believe that we have the necessary knowledge as individuals to act as educators to influence what is happening in our classrooms - to work successfully with our students? Do we maintain with confidence that it is possible for anyone to have such knowledge and that the work of educating is a viable profession (Dembo and Gibson, 1985: 179)? Is it possible to work successfully with students? Considering these questions developed further into an interest in the origin of a sense of efficacy. If an educator has a sense of professional efficacy what does it look like in the classroom, how does an educator recognize a sense of efficacy and where would it have come from initially?

Attempting to answer these questions and reflecting on my own story of learning to be an educator, the concept of a sense of professional efficacy - the confidence that I have the ability to work successfully with my learners - resonated personally. As a young beginning educator my perception of a sense of professional efficacy was equated with what had been informally called the thrill of a “teaching high.” I had heard some experienced educators talk about the sensation but never experienced it myself until well into my first year of teaching. A fleeting glimpse of professional efficacy emerged from the memory of my first year of teaching thirty odd years ago:

I was assigned by my university to a North American “inner city” public school with its layer upon layer of problems: a fragmented, transient population, an unwieldy and unresponsive bureaucratic governing system, a dry and detail oriented curriculum and fifty impoverished and restless children waiting everyday for me to inspire them! In the early months I faced those children with a panicked feeling of unreality and distance between us. Day after day I dutifully worked through the structured syllabus. Today it was time for “creative writing.” This time I left the syllabus behind and told the children to close their eyes. “Imagine that you are a giant,” I said, “as tall as this school. Your feet are on the sidewalk but you can touch the top of the tree outside our window.” Suddenly I saw smiles and nods and closed eyes everywhere in the classroom. When I asked, “What are you going to do now?” eyes opened, hands shot up - I had a sensation of everything “coming together” - and we were away briefly

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connected in enthusiasm and laughter and imaginative storytelling. It only lasted a few minutes; soon we came back again to the prescribed writing assignments. But in those few moments I experienced the feeling of euphoria - the “teaching high” that I had heard others describe. I was smiling uncontrollably and thinking. “This is it! I AM a teacher!” I knew I had far to go to stretch out those few exciting moments into a teaching career, but I also knew with growing confidence that I had experienced the way I wanted to be as an educator.

The almost too-deep-for-words, but palpable and very personal experience of the “teaching high” served as a comparison and model for later experiences of professional efficacy. In later years whenever I had that sense of “everything coming together” I knew that I was working successfully with my students and experiencing (by my own definition) a sense of professional efficacy. Living this experience translated into feelings of increasingly long-lasting confidence and an ambition to continue in the profession. The vivid memory of that experience and other teaching “highs” often provided the motivation to continue with optimism through the familiar and inevitable ups and downs of a teaching career.

Comfortable intellectually and emotionally with the notion of efficacy, at almost the same time through the work of Kate Hawkey (1997, 1998) I became aware of a trend in the university education of pre-service educators which advocates increased school-based experiences coupled with the assistance of on-site mentors. In this model, more experienced specifically trained educators act as mentors who provide professional guidance and direction to less experienced or pre-service educators primarily in a school-based setting. The framework of most mentor programmes (Reiman, Head and Thies - Sprinthall, 1992: 84) is designed so that under the supervision and with the support of the mentor educator it is proposed that the novice educator can begin to facilitate learning in the classroom, develop and recognize theories of teaching, formulate an educational philosophy and as a result feel confident in saying “I know I am an educator who can work successfully with my students.” In conversation my colleagues at school and I agreed that this method of “training” could be more beneficial in building confidence or a sense of efficacy than the “traditional training” method we had undergone of six weeks of “student teaching.” We assumed that preparing pre-service educators more effectively (by spending more supported time in the classroom)

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for what they would face in the school world would help to counteract alarm and decrease the intensity of the pressure brought on by the ever increasing responsibilities of the teaching profession. I began to focus on the preparation and education that educators undergo at the beginning of their careers as a possible factor in or source of feelings of efficacy. Based on the researched intention and personal intuitive assumptions a school-based mentoring programme seemed promising as a site of origin for the development and support of efficacy feelings for prospective educators.

The possibility of studying the experiences of pre-service educators in a school-based mentoring programme became a reality with the recent (2002) development of the innovative PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) programme at the University of Pretoria, a large urban university in South Africa. “The fundamental design of the PGCE programme is a one year school-based partnership model. The experience rich PGCE programme consists of a 60% school-based and a 40% university-based time division. One of the main components of this teacher education model is the mentoring partnership between a school-based educator and a pre-service educator. The university-based programme is designed to provide reflective experiences, learning facilitation techniques and induction into the philosophy of the country's new education system ‘outcomes based education - OBE’. An underlying assumption of the programme emerged which presumes that the pre-service teachers and their mentors will be ‘agents of change’ ”(PGCE programme co-ordinator D.M.DeKock, November, 2004: personal interviews) in an educational system that is undergoing a process of reinventing itself, by “developing and examining new ideas and assumptions about teaching” (Groswami and Sullivan cited in Wang and Odell, 2002: 498). The programme admits approximately 60 pre-service educators and mentors and undertakes to prepare experienced educators in the mentoring process as well.

Ready to design a study involving participants in the PGCE programme to investigate the role of mentoring in forging a sense of professional efficacy in pre-service educators, two events coincided to turn the emphasis of the study in a slightly different direction. First, in 2002 preliminary interviews conducted with participants in the PGCE programme revealed a tenuous relationship with the mentors which in fact continued throughout the professional

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association of the pre-service educators and the mentors in 2003 as well. One of the participants in the PGCE programme described the distant relationship of the school based mentors and the pre-service educators:

The teachers are still very, you know, skeptical of students entering their ground or subject. It's like this, you know, we're here, they are there. But you fast get used to that ... (Jak: Interview 9, 2003).

Another of the participants complained of a lack of guidance from her mentor due to a similar distant relationship:

How am I supposed to teach that (sic) children or give them guidance? I don't have any guidance. There's no one to guide you or anything because everyone thinks you can do it ... There's no one to show us ... oh this...this is what you must do in the classroom and this is what you mustn't do in the classroom ... (Nerine: Interview 6, 2002).

A third participant told about a contrasting situation with her mentor who caused anxiety by giving what was perceived as too much guidance:

I'm scared ... I'm scared that ... okay in a sense I'm now scared for ... because I'm going to be assessed on my teaching style soon and I know my mentor might be rigid and expect me to go that way...in a way she is also involved but I mean, the fact is, she wants me to follow certain structures that's the opposite of what we're supposed to do... (Erica: Interview 3, 2003).

All of the participants expressed the opinion that for them the mentoring relationships, whether distant or too involved, were not central to the experience of learning to become an educator. Further questioning the participants frequently and insistently about what they were learning from their mentors time and again resulted in negative responses. The pre-service educators did not seem to be developing a sense of professional efficacy from working with their mentors and did not want to talk about them at any length in any of the interviews. Analyzing the difficulties of these relationships would have been interesting, but the collapse of the intended study of mentoring relationships and efficacy still left the question of what is perceived as being central to developing a sense of professional efficacy when learning to become an educator?

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No longer confident about confining the research to mentoring relationships but still attracted to and interested in working with the PGCE programme, a second set of events guided the study along a different route of investigation. From readings in the classics of educational literature (Dewey 1913, Bandura 1977, Rogers 1980, Vygotsky in Moll 1993, Foucault 1969, Lincoln and Guba 1985, Hawking 1988, Bruner 1972, Polanyi 1958 and Plato in Edman 1923), unsettling questions about the nature of reality, knowledge, learning and experience arose. I learned that nothing can be taken for granted - that even the language we speak and the memories we hold are complex and creative acts whose origins have been and are still being critically examined and debated. Plato's writing exemplifies the relationship of these timeless questions to the concept of the study that was emerging. In his play *Protagoras*, written in 351 BCE, Plato writes of a young man, Hippocrates, who wants to learn to be a gentleman. He tells Socrates of his plan to apprentice himself to Protagoras who says he can teach him to be a gentleman. "You give him money, and make friends with him, he will make you as wise as he is himself" (Edman, 1926: 195). Socrates argues against the decision using several themes. The first is that knowledge is not a tangible commodity to be bought and sold; rather it is "the food of the soul" (Edman, 1926: 199). Second is the question of whether it is possible that Hippocrates can be "taught" to be a wise and good gentleman and finally how will Hippocrates know if he has become what he wants to become? The same questions can be asked of present day university programmes when looking for what leads up to the moments of professional realization of identity and the development of efficacy feelings. If prospective educators enter a programme will they leave with the knowledge that leads to an increased feeling of professional efficacy? If that is the case what would have been the intermediate processes that led to the outcome, how does it happen?

I concluded that rather than concentrate on one predetermined aspect of the PGCE programme, such as the mentoring relationship, I would listen to the "voices" (Elbaz, 1991: 16) of pre-service educators to determine their perceptions of the integral features of the experience of learning to become an educator.

### **Choosing the Research Path**

As the holistic tendency (Bogden and Biklen, 1998: 10) of qualitative research affords the

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opportunity to attempt the simultaneous study of what most likely would be a variety of variables, the most compatible methodology for an investigation of the perceptions of the pre-service educators seemed to be one chosen from the qualitative research genre. Also influencing the choice of methodology were descriptions by quantitative researchers of the need for qualitative studies to deepen the understanding of the concept of efficacy:

Qualitative studies of teacher efficacy are overwhelmingly neglected. Interviews and observational data can provide a thick, rich description of the growth of teacher efficacy. Interpretive case studies and qualitative investigations are needed to refine our understanding of the process of developing efficacy ... (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy, 1998: 242).

Further, working in the qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry with its reliance on the individually perceived conception of reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and its acceptance of the “non - manipulated variables” of the personal “context” (Yin, 1994: 8) could produce a blend of original “thick descriptions” (Gertz as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 125) of current experiences attuned to the personal perceptions of the pre-service educators. Within the framework of a qualitative narrative inquiry, from the perceptions contained in comprehensive interviews conducted while the pre-service educators are enrolled in the PGCE programme, I would attempt to discover whether and how a developing sense of professional efficacy was perceived, what knowledge from experiences in or out of the programme was fostering that development and how that knowledge was acquired.

Now it was possible to formulate the precise question for an extended inquiry: **What do pre-service educators** (such as those involved in the PGCE university programme) **perceive that they know and that they need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy?** Searching the educational research literature for answers to this question, it also became clear that a new South African qualitative inquiry into the perceived sources of knowledge that lead to a sense of efficacy in pre-service educators involved in a school-based mentoring programme could be useful for several reasons. Although much has been written internationally about pre-service education programmes both quantitatively and qualitatively from the “top-down” (Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh and Watters, 2001: 130) vantage point of mentors and teacher educators, for example, there seemed to be fewer studies in South Africa

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and elsewhere from the point of view of the pre-service educator. Recent educational research projects that have studied education programmes for beginning educators have been systemic descriptions of a pre-service education programme and its theoretical foundation and purpose (Robinson, 1998, 2001), a call for the development of methods which can be used to identify teacher knowledge in education programmes (Greene, 2001) and a discussion of “the range of competing forces impacting on the student teachers at different stages of their socialization as pupils, as student teachers within the teacher education programme at university and as practicing novice student teachers in a school setting” (Samuel, 2003:262). These deeply thoughtful, informative works written from the South African perspective, however, are not written from the viewpoint of participants who are pre-service educators on the particular point of developing a sense of professional efficacy. A study of the sources of pre-service educators' feelings of efficacy within a PGCE programme therefore may present an additional description to place alongside the “top-down” viewpoint of much of the current international research in this field and add to the passionate and “potentially significant literature on teacher identity” (Jansen, 2003: 119) emerging in South Africa.

In contrast to “top-down” investigations of professional efficacy which often examine the relationship between the perceptions of the pre-service educators and what is “really” happening in the classroom (Wubbels, Brekelmans and Hooymayers, 1992: 47) this study will rather focus in detail on the observations of individual pre-service educators themselves as they are attempting to develop a sense of professional efficacy. The importance of their own recognition of a sense of professional efficacy is paramount - regardless of other standards of measurement. Whether or not the narrator's personal judgment of professional efficacy is warranted is not considered in this study. In the end they are alone at the “chalkface” and they bear the ultimate responsibility for and consequences of determining whether they are sufficiently prepared. The recognition of professional efficacy is therefore an intensely personal construction described in as many different ways as there are educators. To ensure the portrayal of the unique individual experience and perceptions of the pre-service educators, stated content of the university course work and assignments, assessments and evaluations of classroom teaching by the university professors and the mentors as well as the context of the “collective narrative” (Nuttall, 1998: 88) of the historical and political South

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African educational landscape will not be part of the analysis except as they are introduced and described by the individuals in the interviews. The study does not provide a detailed chronology of the lives of the pre-service educators but the influential biographic factors in the context are determined by the pre-service educators as they are revealed in the interviews. Moreover, the time frame of the study purposely does not include the first years of teaching after the university programme in order to try to capture the sense of efficacy and the development and influence of the knowledge base expressed in private theories as it is unfolding.

What the study does attempt to produce (focused on the development of a sense of professional efficacy and knowledge creation) is an in-depth qualitative description of the explicit and sometimes tacit perceptions of the pre-service educators as they are participating in the PGCE programme and preparing to begin a professional career. In the interest of believability, selected narratives directly quoted from interviews and other sources are included to give firsthand impressions of events in their lives and are analyzed using a variety of narrative inquiry methods. As “the resulting narratives may have less to do with facts themselves and with their recall than with the revelation of meaning through the imaginative combination of those facts...” (Ndebele, 1998: 21) an interpretation informed by theoretical constructs such as professional efficacy and knowledge and private theory (discussed in Chapter Two) as well as an analysis of the narratives themselves is presented (Chapter Four Part One and Part Two). Chapter Two also contains an analysis of my “teaching high” story in the attempt to find a path to professional efficacy. A description of the analytic methods used to interpret the narratives is presented in Chapter Three. In the final chapter of the study (Chapter Five) some reflections and conclusions as well as a discussion of the challenges from the study are presented. The conclusions do not reflect a “grand narrative” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: xxii) of public theory of knowledge or professional efficacy acquisition but rather reflects on how “private theory” and knowledge and a sense of professional efficacy are possibly associated with or connected to one another in the lives of the narrators. Suggestions of the implications of the study are also presented. Essentially, an investigation of what pre-service educators perceive that they know and need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy is an attempt to understand and give voice to how a beginning

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educator comes to what one colleague calls her “Wow” moment - the surge of certainty and enlightenment that is her perception of efficacy - that bright-eyed classroom time when “everything is going right and you just know it's working” (S. Roux, 29 July 2002: personal communication).

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## Chapter Two

### A Theoretical Path to Professional Efficacy

#### Introduction

Before involving busy pre-service educators in an investigation of their experiences, I engaged first in a detailed study of my own development of a sense of professional efficacy as recounted in the “teaching high” story in Chapter One. I considered that I would be better able to listen to the pre-service educators with an empathy and confident understanding born of personal experience after first exploring for myself the concepts of professional efficacy and knowledge in relation to my own teaching story and in relation to the debates and arguments surrounding these issues in the research literature. My understandings of what professional efficacy and knowledge are would help to guide my approach for interpreting the development of a sense of professional efficacy and the supporting knowledge in the experiences of the pre-service educators. This chapter is an account of that exploration of my story and the process of uncovering the many facets involved in developing a description and an approach for studying professional efficacy.

The exploration first began simply as an effort to validate my own experience by comparing my personal sense of professional efficacy as expressed in the “teaching high” narrative with the definitions already available in the research literature. Then, as I found my story contrasting with descriptions in the research literature, understanding and arguing for the origins of my own perceptions and point of view prompted further examination of the assumptions underlying the concepts of professional efficacy and knowledge. From the comparison of descriptions it became clear that my experience of the sense of professional efficacy, the “I AM a teacher” moment, was a result of not only the particular circumstances in that particular classroom but also of the tacit influence of past experiences, the knowledge I acquired and larger perceptions of “the way the world works.” Consequently, exploring the many facets to formulate a description of professional efficacy involved probing what emerged as two disparate sets of assumptions - the positivist and the post modernist/constructivist - inherent in the contrasting descriptions of professional efficacy as well as knowledge. Thereafter, looking closely at my own story to produce my conception of professional efficacy ultimately dramatically widened to include examining and debating for myself assumptions about:

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- the theoretical positions concerning the nature of reality, knowledge and language
  - the existence of a body of knowledge which guarantees professional efficacy
  - accepting individual narratives as truthful and therefore warranted for study
  - the recognition of ethical issues concerning the significance of individual perceptions
  - describing spheres of abstract and practical knowledge, beliefs and private theories and professional efficacy.

Finally, as the exploration of the narrative of my own story was proceeding I began to formulate and could argue for a conception of professional efficacy and knowledge and a consequent approach for interpreting their development that was coherent with my experiences and with which I could listen effectively to the stories of the pre-service educators. In addition, I visualized my approach (and also an opposing approach) to the interpretation of the experiences of the pre-service educators using the figurative image of a path. As a path guides one's approach to a rewarding view of the flowers blooming in the vast South African veld, for example, so a theoretical path guides one's view or approach to the investigation and interpretation of professional efficacy in the narratives of the pre-service educators. Continuing the metaphor the many separate but mutually dependent components involved in describing professional efficacy (the nature of reality and language, questions of an efficacy knowledge base, ethical issues, the truthfulness of individual perceptions and descriptions of knowledge and efficacy) are imagined as separate steppingstones in the path. In one possible theoretical approach, namely positivism, the steppingstones are placed in the path so that one directly follows another leading without bending or curving to the final destination - professional efficacy. In the other theoretical approach of post modern/ constructivism, the steppingstones are placed to create a circular path where professional efficacy can be reached from either of several directions (See Figure 1). The paths both lead to descriptions of professional efficacy but diverge in the direction of their approach. They break away from each other and move in different directions when they reach the first steppingstone. The split represents the two sets of theoretical assumptions about the nature of reality.

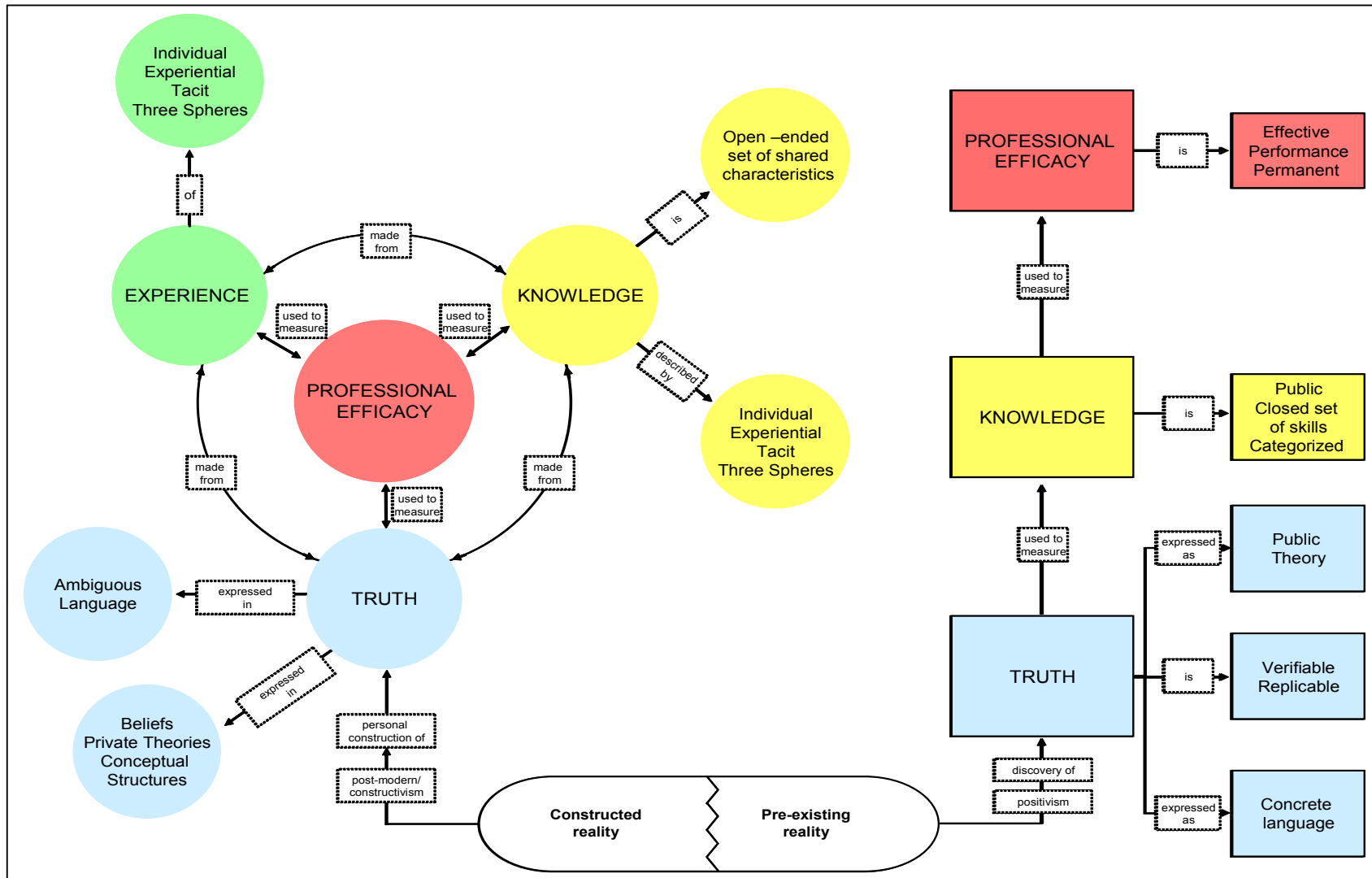


Figure 1: Theoretical Paths to Professional Efficacy

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In the path taken in this study, conclusions drawn from the close examination of my own story form the primary steppingstones (truth, knowledge and experience) of the constructed reality path. By describing the steppingstones, my approach to the investigation and interpretation of the individual stories of the pre-service educators and a description of professional efficacy emerges. Visualized as a stable formation, the path I eventually constructed and followed purposefully contains tangible, concrete descriptions and exemplars of the characteristics of knowledge, both practical and abstract, of beliefs and private theories which are the components of truth and of the experiences feeding into professional efficacy. The path with its starting point in universal questions of the nature of reality and knowledge, with its personal descriptions from the “teaching high” story and its pragmatic propositions of the ways in which knowledge and efficacy can be identified was created to attempt to provide an approach to investigating with a deeper awareness the experiences of a sense of professional efficacy expressed by the pre-service educators - where it comes from and why and how it is to be understood.

### **Rationale for the Development of a Theoretical Path to Professional Efficacy**

Recognizing the need to develop and describe my own theoretical path to professional efficacy came from the comparison of my personal expression (“I AM a teacher”) with the studied descriptions of professional efficacy in the research literature. Initial expectations of uncovering in the literature a uniform or a similar expression of professional efficacy or possibly a facile theoretical insight into the deeper meaning of my statement proved to be unfounded. Instead portrayals in the literature range from the personal “confidence in the ability to be successful with learners” (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003:593) to the competency oriented “set of skills that have to be learnt ... a knowledge base ... into which ... to be inducted ...” (Edwards and Collison, 1996: 9) to complex levels of “specificity” and categorizations:

Teacher efficacy is comprised of three unrelated factors ... labeled Personal Efficacy, Outcome Efficacy and Teaching Efficacy. Personal Efficacy pertains to a teacher's belief that he or she possesses teaching skills. Outcome Efficacy refers to the belief that when he or she implements these skills they lead to desirable student outcomes. Teaching Efficacy encompasses teacher self-assessment of their teaching ability ... (Soodak and Podell, 1996: 408).

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All of these statements are describing varying conceptions of professional efficacy and a complex, multi-faceted complexion of professional efficacy emerged. Yet there seemed to be little relation between my very personal “I AM a teacher” statement and the existing definitions. Each of the statements (including mine) describes a different understanding of professional efficacy and each of the explanations represents a different perspective. In the conceptions from the research, for example, professional efficacy is presented as either personally felt or as a functional state of being competent or as a system for analytical dissection. Competency and “category” oriented researchers evaluate and describe professional efficacy with a consistent set of “outside” measurements ignoring personal statements of efficacy often gathering data through observation and checklists (Maynard, 1997). Researchers who privilege direct personal accounts of professional efficacy focus on gathering data by analyzing what educators say about efficacy experiences (Kelchtermans, 1993). In contrast my statement does not contain overt measurable categories or a direct confession of professional efficacy, but is rather an interpreted or implied description of professional efficacy as one of role or perhaps even identity recognition. Similarly the “wow” statement of my educator colleague (also from Chapter One) does not explicitly state but seems to portray a sense of professional efficacy as a moment of intellectual clarity regarding a classroom task – “you just know it is working”. When taken individually or even together none of these perspectives seem to present a complete picture of professional efficacy or to account for the complexity of understanding its development.

This lack of a clearly agreed upon description among educators and researchers is obviously problematic when preparing to investigate and to interpret how a sense of professional efficacy develops. Without a consistently agreed upon, recognizable conception of professional efficacy, the basis for believing in the credibility of efficacy statements and their interpretation is left to character judgment or trust in individuals or research methods preferences. Interpretations of the experiences of the pre-service educators become ambiguous. Supplying credible supporting evidence becomes serendipitous. Depending on the approach to interpretation, for example, the “I AM a teacher “ and the “wow moment” statements could be discredited as expressions of professional efficacy or conversely, held up and utilized as a standard of measurement for others. The absence of a clear conception of professional efficacy thus raises its own questions of truthfulness and trustworthiness and

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calls for a transparent approach to the conception of professional efficacy.

In order to undertake a credible and transparent investigation of the development of a sense of professional efficacy and interpret the experiences of the pre-service educators consistently, therefore, one of the tasks of this study necessarily was (beginning with my own story) to search for and develop a workable description of professional efficacy and knowledge. However, while attempting to produce workable descriptions of professional efficacy and knowledge, when confronted with the variety of descriptions in the literature and among educators, the complexity of the task continually re-emerged. Despite efforts at simplification, my descriptions of professional efficacy and knowledge to be used in the study persistently involved identifying, examining and debating a series of interdependent concepts - starting with the nature of reality and finally moving through to professional efficacy. It became clear that single sentence definitions of professional efficacy would not suffice and another means of representing the theoretical approach taken in the study had to be devised. Describing approaches to professional efficacy in terms of theoretical paths, where steppingstones represent the linking concepts provided a more useful and transparent representation of the kind of search that was undertaken. Even representing the approaches to professional efficacy as separate paths is challenging, however, as the constructed paths emerged as static and two dimensional while they are conceived of as a fluid process continually in motion. Nevertheless, following the paths created by the steppingstones suggested a visual method with which to represent the difficult to capture abstract and complex process of determining an approach for the investigation of professional efficacy in the experiences of the pre-service educators.

### **Beginning the Construction of a Theoretical Path**

#### ***Theoretical Positionings***

The construction of the theoretical paths began with an analysis of the differences in the various representations of professional efficacy in the literature and among educators. Embedded in the descriptions of professional efficacy there appeared to be two critical and contrasting views of the fundamental nature of reality and the origins of knowledge. At the core of these historical ontological and epistemological debates underlying and impacting the various perceptions of professional efficacy and knowledge was the theoretical split between

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the positivist and post modernist/constructivist philosophies. The argument between the two points of view, the positivist and the post modernist/ constructivist, centres on the question of whether or not there is what Bruner calls an “aboriginal reality” (1986: 46) which can be known. Closely linked to the question of the nature of reality, the issue of what constitutes knowledge and how it is formed also arises. Formulating a workable description of professional efficacy further involved an examination of the experiences in my personal “teaching high” story from the perspectives of these underlying historical ontological and epistemological questions and issues. From the comparison of the conflicting interpretations of the nature of reality and knowledge with my teaching high story the adoption of one of the interpretations emerged. The comparison also produced the first steppingstones in the creation of the theoretical path from which to approach the study.

### **Approaching Professional Efficacy from the Positivist Position**

Approaching professional efficacy from the theoretical path containing the positivist position revealed that professional efficacy described from the positivist point of view depends on acknowledging that reality and “the truth” and the knowledge connected to it not only exist but are known and can be verified and replicated (Polanyi, 1958: 9). Applied to the field of education, within the positivist position that “reality” and “truth” exist and are accessible is the implicit assumption of the presence of a delineated, discrete body of already articulated knowledge that is the “truth” (Reddy, 2000: 269) whose publicly and rigidly demonstrated acquisition signals professional efficacy. If a pre-service educator demonstrates knowledge of these “truths” to an outside evaluator the educator can be judged to have attained professional efficacy. In the “teaching high” story, for example, demonstrating “skills” from and knowledge of the school district's inflexibly prescribed syllabus (such as “preparing lesson plans” or teaching sequential lessons on “identifying common nouns”) would have resulted in an assessment of my teaching as “successful” or “competent” by a district supervisor. My statement “I AM an educator” would not be considered evidence of experiencing a sense of professional efficacy. From this positivist point of view because there is a universally agreed upon knowledge base that must be grasped by a person learning to become an educator, the professional efficacy of the pre-service educator is measured and understood in relation to

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that standard rather than by accepting a personal assessment. As often happens in the classroom, however, consistency of competency evaluation is problematic. The next day after an evaluation the children in the class may be distracted and disinterested and professional efficacy would not be evident to an outside evaluator. The number and length of efficacy “incidents” and the performance level required to receive an evaluation of having been “inducted into the knowledge base” (Edwards and Collision, 1996: 9) appears unclear and inconsistent and even unjust.

Uncertainty about the specificity and levels of performance casts doubt about the practicality of measuring efficacy according to a pre-determined knowledge base. But conclusively validating or refuting the positivist theoretical position for the study involved searching for evidence of the existence of an indisputable “how to be an educator” body of knowledge. In the research literature documented attempts have been made to assemble a secure, conclusive knowledge base for teaching (Maynard, 2001 and Fish, 1995: 44) and to strictly define competency or efficacy (Mahomed, 1996 and Fish, 1995: 45). At present however, more prevalent are disagreements by researchers and practitioners not only as to whether there is such an absolute body of knowledge that acquired by educators will lead to professional efficacy but also how consistently and specifically demonstrated that body of knowledge must be before the assumption of professional efficacy can be made (Tomlinson, 1995:121 and Fish, 1995:73). Because of this disagreement, it appears that as yet there are, in fact, no universally agreed upon bodies of knowledge making up an educational “collective sense of goals and instructional approaches” (Richardson, 2003: retrieved on line November 2004: continuous text). Without a reliable universally agreed upon set of “skills” unfailingly applicable to every teaching context the positivist approach (consisting of external public measurements and standards and the discounting of personal statements of efficacy) is an untenable route to understanding or describing professional efficacy or to undertake as a theoretical path from which to approach this study.

### ***Approaching Professional Efficacy from the Post Modernist/ Constructivist Position***

Creating a theoretical path from which to approach the study of professional efficacy instead depended on moving away from the positivist approach and adopting the more pliant and flexible post modernist/constructivist descriptions of reality (and the truth and knowledge

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connected to it) as starting points. Post modernist points of view range from maintaining that there is no reality at all, to the existence of a whole reality and truth that is only partially observed by each individual. In either case the individual perception of reality - rather than one that is universally agreed upon - is foregrounded (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 82). In addition, informed by post-modernist thought, the specifically “constructivist” point of view emphasizes reality as an entity that is either a sharing of many individually constructed realities or one that is exclusively known and “built” only by the individual. Implicit in the post/modernist constructivist point of view is the perception of knowledge as personally conceived and individually constructed. From the constructivist point of view there is no previously identified body of knowledge that will or could lead to a universal judgment of professional efficacy. There is no “educational gospel” (Dewey as cited by Cochran-Smith in Bullough and Gitlin, 2001: viii) in whose language is clearly enumerated the “rules” of professional efficacy. In fact, the very meanings of words themselves (including those used to describe professional efficacy and knowledge) are understood to be problematic in their individuality.

Words do not refer to things in a real world but to concepts which are in the heads of those speaking it. If, furthermore you take into account Piaget's close analysis of the way concepts are constructed through empirical abstractions and reflective abstraction that the child accomplishes for him or herself, it becomes clear that it would be a miracle if the conceptual structure in different heads were the same ... one observes over and over again how difficult mutual understanding is. Often the meaning that others attribute to the words we use is not quite the same as the ones we have in mind ... (vonGlaserfeld, 2001: 163).

The imprecise and ephemeral nature of the language used to describe the “conceptual structures” of efficacy experiences and the knowledge underlying the experience is clearly evident in the “teaching high” story. The perception and description of professional efficacy as a “teaching high” is my individual personal experience and knowledge of reality. In the story, the existence of a “teaching high” became true for me and was my personal knowledge base. Someone else - a competency researcher perhaps with a public, positivist world view - could have observed the classroom events in the story and interpreted the experience according to a knowledge base consisting of a set of prescribed pre-determined skills, unaware of the personal significance of the events as a professional efficacy experience. In

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addition the very words “teaching high” may mean something entirely different to the readers (even post modernist readers) of the story depending on their own experiences with teaching and with “highs”!

Discounting the existence of a definitive public knowledge base or the precise language with which to describe it, arguments for adopting the postmodernist/constructivist approach to professional efficacy rest instead on the legitimacy and authority of the individual perceptions and constructions of reality and knowledge. Ethical as well as pragmatic arguments for accepting the legitimacy and studying the statements of the pre-service educators as authentic versions of reality and truth (and therefore knowledge and efficacy) significantly encouraged the adoption of a “constructivist” approach for the study. If there is an attempt to connect the constructivist theory of reality to a universal truth, it exists perhaps in the moral - ethical assertion of the value of allowing people to tell their stories in a wider forum. A kind of moral authority seems to be a feature of the valuing of personal perceptions as characterized by an extended application and appreciation in a variety of disciplines. Antjie Krog, for example, in her story/novel *The Country of My Skull* describes political and social consequences of “appreciating” (Eisner, 1998: 69) the personal perspective in the context of living in the aftermath of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings.

And I as his teacher, had to deal with this truth that was shaping his life, his viewpoints, his actions ... If it (the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) sees truth as the widest possible compilation of people's perceptions, stories, myths and experiences, it will have chosen to restore memory and foster a new humanity and perhaps that is justice in its deepest sense ... (Krog, 1998: 16).

In contrast to evoking the abstract values of justice and humanity, Bruner (1990: 26) on the other hand, supports a constructed vision of reality as expressed in personal perceptions from a pragmatic, functional standpoint. Countering the charge of “relativism” Bruner does not recommend abandoning one's own judgment but suggests instead a temporary “suspension of disbelief” by asking the practical questions “What would it be like to believe that?” and “In what kind of possible world would it be true?” Accepting the statements of perception as “true for now” is a process of setting aside one's own “reality” to deepen an understanding of the meaning of experiences as others describe them. Krog as well as Bruner is suggesting

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that understanding the reality of others has far reaching implications both moral and interpretative. The wider moral and ethical arguments for the legitimacy of individual perceptions of reality and truth are intellectually and emotionally compelling. Following these arguments the perceptions of reality expressed in the language of the pre-service educators are accepted and respected as legitimate personal “truth” and the theoretical path to approach the study of professional efficacy is decisively pointed in the post modernist/constructivist direction.

### **Widening the Theoretical Path**

#### ***Practical Considerations***

Approaching the question “What do pre-service educators perceive that they know and need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy?” from a post modernist/constructivist point of view substantially impacted the descriptions of the concepts making up the steppingstones of the theoretical path of the study. Assuming a post modernist/constructivist approach (recognizing the legitimacy of the narratives of pre-service educators as personal constructions of reality and knowledge and professional efficacy) raised the practical problem that recognizing the conceptual structures of “knowledge” and “professional efficacy” in the narratives of the pre-service educators could be nebulously haphazard and “relativistic” in comparison to positivist, public definitions and limitations. However, searching for clarification of the concepts of knowledge and professional efficacy within the constructivist perspective by looking again at the “teaching high” story it became possible to argue for “open - ended” yet recognizable descriptions of knowledge and professional efficacy based on a set of shared characteristics rather than a “closed” set of skills (Tomlinson, 1995: 15). The identifiable characteristics of knowledge and professional efficacy as steppingstones in the theoretical path although open-ended in nature nevertheless are proposed to provide stable and reliable indicators of the direction from which the path approaches the experiences of the pre-service educators.

#### ***The Characteristics of Knowledge***

Four open-ended characteristics of knowledge (as seen in Figure 1) emerged when re - examining my teaching high story from the post/modernist constructivist approach:

- knowledge is individualized

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- knowledge is experiential
  - knowledge is often tacit and implied
  - knowledge can be visualized figuratively in three spheres - practical, abstract and private theories.

### *Individualized and Experienced Knowledge*

First, in contrast to the positivist perception of knowledge as a “closed” and “finite” entity (such as “how to write a lesson plan”) into which a pre-service educator must be “inducted” (Edwards and Collinson, 1996: 9) knowledge as it is proposed for the theoretical path of the study was found to be and is conceived of as a conceptual structure “made not simply discovered” (Eisner, 1998: 7) by the individual. The knowledge of the teaching high that grew out of the experience was not inherent in the classroom or in the prescribed syllabus or in the advice of district supervisors. The knowledge grew out of my individual perception of the story telling episode. Other beginning educators could have constructed knowledge from the experience differently. The excitement of the story telling episode may have seemed chaotic and uncontrolled to someone else who would then have constructed the knowledge that classroom discussions are unproductive. My individual construction was the knowledge that the children were motivated by the class discussion. Second, knowledge is conceived of in the constructivist approach of the study as “made” by the individual only when experiencing events and situations. Knowledge in the positivist sense can but does not have to be personally experienced. It can simply be told from one person to another or perhaps even be “acquired” from reading. (“Children identify nouns by underlining them in sentences” is an example of the kind of closed skill “teaching instruction knowledge” that is not necessarily created from experience but is followed by “rote”.) Examining the “teaching high” narrative, however, illustrates the experiential nature of constructed knowledge. Before the classroom story took place educator friends and colleagues had described and named their own experiences of the “teaching high”. They could not explain, however, what it would consist of for me or what I would have to do to experience it myself. What they told me was simply information about their own experiences. It was only while experiencing the events of the story telling episode that I was able to begin to “construct” the knowledge that this feeling of “everything coming together” is for me the “teaching high”.

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Experiencing classroom events alone did not guarantee my construction of the knowledge of the teaching high, however. Creating knowledge of the teaching high from the experience also involved a deliberate change of my behaviour (initiating the story telling episode) coming from an involuntary “collision” of my former behaviour (devotedly following the syllabus) with events in the classroom. Dewey gives an account of the role of experience in learning and creating and using knowledge.

Knowledge is always a matter of the use that is made of experienced material events, a use in which given things are treated as an indication of what will be experienced under different conditions ... (54) ... when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something ... (as cited in McDermott, 1981: 495).

The experience of the teaching high did change my behaviour and future actions. Using the knowledge gained in the experience changed my expectations of what would happen under different conditions. The very next day in fact - and for many years after that - understanding the meaning of the experience became the “teaching high” knowledge that guided my behaviour in the classroom.

The understanding that I gained is what Hollingsworth describes as “an awareness of intellectual change” (1989: 160) or in other words a re-construction of previously created “conceptual structures” (DeKock, July 2004: personal communication). The actual process leading to “intellectual change” or re-constructing conceptual structures is part of the experiential process - made up of physical, emotional and intellectual challenges resulting from rigorous “collisions” of events and attitudes and feelings. The intellectual change of the “teaching high” for example was precipitated by the experience of a “collision” of my expectations and the actual events in the classroom forcing me to think again about my behaviour. Uncertain of how to teach effectively I had unconsciously expected that following the prescribed syllabus would lead me to “good” teaching. The “conceptual structure” of teaching that I had created was based on the tenets of the syllabus. However, my expectations collided with the bored, restless reactions of the children - this was not good teaching! The tension created by the collision was felt physically and emotionally as well as intellectually every time I “faced those children with a panicked feeling of unreality and distance between us.” The collision and the accompanying anxiety, however, was the necessary catalyst for my

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learning. The experience of the collision forced me to choose either to continue on with the syllabus or to re-construct my conception of teaching and change my behaviour. Fortunately in this instance the choice that I made replaced the anxiety with the euphoria of the “teaching high”. The change in behaviour and restructuring of conceptual structures, precipitated by a mighty “collision” of expectations with the happenings in the classroom was the powerful and painful process by which knowledge was individually created from a classroom experience.

### *Tacit and Implied Knowledge*

From the classroom experience where knowledge of the “teaching high” was individually created the third characteristic of knowledge, its private and often unarticulated nature, also emerges. Unlike the “public” expressions and immediate availability of competency knowledge, when examining the teaching high story individual perceptions proved difficult to access as the knowledge gained from the experience while eventually interpreted was never directly expressed. The narrative of what I was thinking at the time of the story does not directly state in exact words the knowledge gained from the experience. Because the actions described in my classroom leading to the sensation of professional efficacy were initially performed intuitively and without conscious forethought, I was hardly aware of what I was doing. I was not aware of and could not name or describe the “collision” taking place but only of an uncomfortable feeling about my teaching. On the spur of the moment I tried the imaginative storytelling activity and was surprised (although elated) at the outcome. The narrative was written and analyzed for this study many years after the events. At the time and for quite a long time the knowledge gained in the experience remained unarticulated and unidentified. Although looking back I am now aware of and can begin to interpret and express publicly the significance of the events, all those years ago the experience of the “teaching high” was swallowed up and swept along in the continual forward movement of classroom events. Schon (1983) describes the enigmatic knowledge often driving teaching practices as knowledge - in - action and points to the tacit nature of knowledge - in - action as its source of inaccessibility.

There are actions, recognition and judgments which we know how to carry out spontaneously. We do not have to think about them prior to or during their performance ... we are often unaware of having learned to do these things; we simply

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find ourselves doing them ... in some cases we were once aware of the understandings which were subsequently internalized in our feeling for the stuff of action. In other cases, we may never have been aware of them. In both cases, however, we are usually unable to describe the knowing which our actions reveal ... (1983: 54).

The characterization of constructed knowledge as often tacit or hidden does not mean that it carries a less powerful influence than “public” knowledge, however. Even though the knowledge from the teaching high story remained “hidden”, it was the personally constructed “tacit” knowledge gained in that experience, not the public knowledge of the school district (how to write a lesson plan or teach grammar) that remained a powerful influence on my future actions and the continued development of a sense of professional efficacy. However, the influence of the “teaching high” experience and the knowledge gained from it remained unexpressed and privately held until the theoretical path of the study was assembled and used to delve into the implications of the episode.

### *The Spheres of Knowledge*

Finally, a fourth characteristic of knowledge proposed for the study emerges from the teaching high story. Besides being individualized, experiential (involving a change stemming from collisions) and often tacit, individually constructed knowledge can be visualized as existing figuratively in multiple, multi-dimensional “spheres”. Rather than describing knowledge in the image of two-dimensional boxes or as linear and divided into specific, sequentially ordered “closed” categories - such as personal efficacy knowledge, outcome efficacy knowledge and teaching efficacy knowledge (Soodak and Podell, 1996: 408) where one “category” is necessary for the next one to appear - descriptions of three spheres of knowledge (practical, abstract and private theories) were found in the “teaching high” story and are proposed for the theoretical path guiding the approach to the study. The descriptions of the spheres of knowledge while open-ended are at the same time made specific by citing exemplars from the teaching high story to help identify and interpret expressions of knowledge such as may appear in the narratives of the pre-service educators.

### *Practical Knowledge*

First, from the experience of conducting the writing activity preceded by the feeling of the

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“teaching high” I constructed the knowledge of how to motivate that particular classroom of children. Setting up an interesting imaginative situation (pretend you are a giant) for the children, asking questions about the situation and then sharing ideas all became part of my specifically detailed knowledge base of what to do in the classroom to motivate children to write creatively. In contrast to a “universal competency” approach to knowledge of the classroom, it is proposed for the study that educators create and hold their own specific knowledge from their own experiences about how things work in their own classrooms, which differs from the knowledge of other educators in other classrooms. This sphere of knowledge proposed for investigation in the study contains specific detailed examples of “*practical knowledge*” (Elbaz, 1983) which is identified in the narratives as *direct statements of “how to do things in the everyday world of the classroom”* (Elbaz, 1983: 132) such as “to motivate children to write a story I first engage the children in a discussion about the topic.”

### *Abstract Knowledge*

Not only did the experiences in the “teaching high” story demonstrate an effective and pleasurable “way to do things in the classroom” (to actively engage the children in creative writing) but at the same time precipitated an understanding of a second sphere of knowledge that is an “abstract” awareness of the significance and value of the experience. Identifying the feeling of everything coming together as the “I AM a teacher” moment of professional efficacy was an epiphany of meta-awareness. In that experience I momentarily stepped back from myself and considered what was happening from a larger perspective. Physically, emotionally and intellectually I understood for the first time the way that I wanted to “be” as an educator. In addition from that experience I generated (unconsciously at the time) the general, abstract knowledge that “motivating children is important for learning.” In future classrooms (tacitly) understanding the value of motivation I would work to develop specific approaches to stimulate learning. Elbaz describes this sphere of “broader” knowledge as “a more inclusive and less explicit formulation ...” (1983: 133) than the expressions of practical knowledge. Because of the less specific, more “inclusive” nature of this sphere of knowledge, “*abstract knowledge*” is identified in the narratives of the pre-service educators as statements (usually made in the first person such as I AM a teacher) giving *an indication of the value*

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*and significance of experiences directly or indirectly related to the nature of working in the classroom.*

### *Private Theories*

The third sphere of knowledge functions slightly differently from the practical and abstract spheres. In this sphere is the often embedded knowledge whose main characteristic is the potential influence on the behaviour of the pre-service educator and consequently the development of professional efficacy. Embedded in the “teaching high” story for example is the unspoken “universal” abstract knowledge that “All real teachers experience the teaching high” which also acted as a catalyst for the personally influential knowledge that “I have to experience the 'teaching high' to be a 'real' teacher.” Because of these assumptions of knowledge, many of my later teaching episodes were unknowingly driven by a search for further experiences of the teaching high. Subsequent experiences in the classroom were unconsciously compared to the “teaching high” and my sense of professional efficacy was measured against that personally constructed knowledge.

At first distinguishing and differentiating these two kinds of knowledge - the universal abstract and the directly personally influential - in this sphere was awkward. Descriptive terminology - such as “belief” (Combs, 1982) “moral code” (Witherell and Noddings, 1991: 4) or “subjective educational theory” (Kelchtermans, 1993: 450) or “constellation of beliefs” (Feldman as cited in Gess - Newsome, Southerland, Johnston and Woodbury, 2003: 738) - is frequently used interchangeably in the literature. For clarity, therefore, in this study *a universal statement of abstract knowledge about the way the world works* (such as “All people are good” or “Our ancestors rule our lives” or “All real teachers experience the teaching high”) is proposed as a “*belief*.” On the other hand a statement that is highly personally prescriptive and directs future behaviour (such as “I have to experience the 'teaching high' to be a 'real' teacher” or “I must consult my ancestors about my actions”) is proposed as a “private theory” (Bullough and Gitlin, 1995). In the narratives of the pre-service educators, *private theories are identified as brief “I must” or “I have to” statements which act as guidelines for behaviour.* The private theories of individuals are distinguished

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from the “rules”, “principles” (Munby and Russell, 1992: 116) and public empirical experimentation of theory in the positivist sense by a personal, perhaps unconsciously carried out, testing through the collisions inherent in the experiences of teaching. For example, the statement of the private theory “I have to experience the 'teaching high' to be a real teacher” is personally testable. As I have experiences of the teaching high do I (or do I not) feel like a real teacher. Perhaps there are other manifestations of being a “real teacher” to be discovered in the classroom. Collisions of my private theory with events in the on going experiences of teaching will impact the private theory. The knowledge expressed in the theory will either strengthen or become altered over time as a restructuring of the conceptual structure takes place.

To summarize (see Figure 1) investigating the question “What do pre-service educators perceive that they know and need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy?” encompasses not only these three but all four of the characteristics of knowledge - individualized, experiential, often tacit and figuratively existing in three spheres. These open - ended characteristics of knowledge are used as heuristic tools to both identify and examine the knowledge expressed or embedded in the narratives of the pre-service educators as they engage in their classroom work and begin to develop a sense of professional efficacy. In order to expedite recognition of the knowledge that pre-service educators hold as they develop a sense of professional efficacy - in contrast to the specific skills positivist definition - a broad eclectic (Hargreaves, 1995:10) yet workable description of knowledge for the study is drawn from the four characteristics of knowledge. Knowledge is understood and proposed for this study as a complex (and ultimately mysterious) entity that is a *conceptual structure (sometimes tacit and existing figuratively in spheres) that is individually constructed as a result of collisions and intellectual changes involved in undergoing an experience of events.* This description of knowledge informed by the four characteristics is an essential steppingstone in the development of the theoretical path from which to approach the investigation of professional efficacy and paves the way for the construction of a description of professional efficacy.

### ***A Conceptualization of Professional Efficacy***

Culminating the development of the theoretical path from which to approach the study is the

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formulation of a workable description of professional efficacy - where it comes from and how it can be recognized in the narratives of the pre-service educators. In the simplest most fundamental connotation, professional efficacy is interpreted as a sense of having completed or having the capability of completing an “effective performance”. In the teaching high story the sense of professional efficacy that I experienced, however, was more than merely having the sense of completing an effective performance. In that story I experienced professional efficacy as the complex coming together of a combination of emotional and intellectual, practical and intangible factors. Emotionally the experience provoked an unexpected and indescribable euphoria. Intellectually I was able to create the knowledge that this episode was an incidence of professional efficacy. Practically I recognized and became mindful of the classroom activities that led up to the experience. Ultimately the experience evoked in me an intangible and fleeting clarity of role identity that I still find difficult to articulate. From looking again at the “teaching high” story and following the development of the theoretical path two open ended characteristics thus emerged suggesting the complexity of professional efficacy:

- professional efficacy is individually constructed and has a powerful personal influence
- professional efficacy is based on a series of effective performance episodes but is inconstantly perceived

In the post-modernist/constructivist approach of the theoretical path the description of professional efficacy proposed for the study, then, is not a closed set of specific skill accomplishments but is rather located in the open-ended characteristics that seemed to be an integral yet equally mysterious part of the experience.

The individuality of perceptions of professional efficacy are very evident in the “everyday world of classrooms” where professional efficacy as an “effective performance” can and does imply many different events - from keeping the children quiet all day - to encouraging the children to exuberantly participate in a class discussion - to experiencing the “teaching high” - depending on the evaluator and the theoretical position of the evaluator. In the positivist approach to professional efficacy, competency and category-oriented descriptions of an effective performance depend on a clearly defined body of knowledge that comes from a public, empirical reality. Yet in the teaching high story regardless of how an evaluator

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assessed my teaching performance according to the district checklist of skills - such as “projects a sense of authority” (Maynard, 1997: 79) - it was the sense of “everything coming together” that became my personal perception of an effective performance and was my standard of professional efficacy. After the “teaching high” experience my sense of an effective performance depended on the indefinable consciousness of everything coming together. Other educators may base their sense of professional efficacy on equally powerful images and memories of children listening attentively or asking insightful questions or responding accurately to examination questions. There are as many examples as there are educators - but all of the images of professional efficacy share the characteristic of being individually created and wielding enormous personal influence on teaching performance.

The influence and power of even briefly experiencing a sense of professional efficacy such as mine is felt during future teaching experiences and is described by Bandura.

Among the mechanisms of agency none is more central or more pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave ... efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to the level and quality of human functioning ... (1993: 118).

The power of the experience comes from the personal relevance of the perceptions. No one - colleagues or supervisors - could prescribe an activity that was guaranteed to provide an experience of professional efficacy, as in fact at the time the experience occurred spontaneously and was a surprise even to me. Bandura accounts for the individualization of professional efficacy:

people ... (meet) with different types and amounts of efficacy-altering experiences, providing one new source of efficacy information would not be expected to affect everyone uniformly ... (1977: 212).

Measurement of professional efficacy is privately conceived and measurable goals whose attainment signifies effective performance such as “successful working with students” are determined and evaluated by the individual within the context of that individuals' particular perception of reality.

The individual sense of professional efficacy is difficult to measure not only because it is

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personally perceived and constructed but also because of its intransigent and variable nature. Each of the professional efficacy episodes that an educator experiences has an unmistakable influence on teaching events but the strength and permanence of the influence in the professional life of an educator is difficult to measure (Dembo and Gibson, 1985 and Ashton, 1984) and challenging to recognize - particularly in the early teaching episodes of pre-service educators. The episode of the teaching high in my story was the first recognizable experience of a sense of professional efficacy. While the episode had a powerful influence on my subsequent teaching activities it lasted just a short time in the classroom that day. As it was happening and whenever I recalled the incident later, I experienced a sense of professional efficacy. But the effect ebbed and waned. At times after the story telling activity was completed and I returned to the syllabus a sense of dissatisfaction or even frustration with my classroom performance reappeared. Renewed efforts at repeating the feeling of everything coming together, however, using the professional efficacy episode as a model provided other new efficacy experiences until a series of efficacy incidents began to convince me of the possibility of building a career as an educator. At what moment the possibility of an extended career in education occurred is impossible to measure - the descriptions of the efficacy episode can only point to an approximation. Even after thirty years of teaching my sense of professional efficacy is not a permanent state of being but consists of a series of episodes and the sense that I have been capable of the “teaching high” and will be again. As the episodes increase the certainty of the sense of professional efficacy becomes more prevalent but never permanent.

Without a permanent state of professional efficacy to examine or a prescribed body of knowledge with which to measure professional efficacy, there is no one pattern of speech or one category of statements that indicates a sense of professional efficacy for everyone. Instead recognition of professional efficacy requires insight into the personal constructions of the pre-service educators. Because the narratives of the pre-service educators are accepted as reflections of their reality, access to the individual standards of professional efficacy of the pre-service educators will necessarily come from examining the narratives and searching for direct or indirect statements of professional efficacy and indications of what they consider an effective performance. Statements interpreted in the study as reflecting an individual sense of professional efficacy such as “I AM a teacher” or the

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“Wow moment” or “I know I can do it” and others will necessarily vary. In the interest of clarity, however, statements appearing in the narratives of the pre-service educators indicating a global sense of satisfaction, capability or confidence or a sense of achievement in the present and for the future are tentatively proposed to be examined as implications of a sense of professional efficacy. How the statements came to be and how professional efficacy is individually understood relies on a further analysis of the narratives and the spheres of constructed knowledge not by accepting public definitions of professional efficacy. Ignoring the complex and powerful realm of the private reality of individual perception would make recognition of professional efficacy a simpler matter but in the process the essence of the magic of teaching with its private joys and secret accomplishments would be lost.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter the differences between two approaches leading to an understanding of professional efficacy based on the concepts of positivism and post modernism/constructivism were discussed in order to make clear the theoretical foundation informing the inquiry and provide a theoretical path from which to approach the investigation. Arguments for adopting a post modernist/constructivist approach as well as the decision to respect statements made by the individual pre-service educators as warranting study are presented together to support the conclusions. The starting point for developing the path from which to approach the study is the theoretical position in relation to the nature of reality and truth. In the study reality is conceived of as individually constructed or perceived or interpreted. Because of recent calls in research forums for the development of a “formal theory of practice” the study also takes the stance that there is no empirical evidence at present for the existence of an objective teaching reality or a prescribed knowledge base that leads to a sense of professional efficacy. Without this “formal theory for practice” to act as an absolute standard of efficacy measurement, perceptions of the experience of learning to be an educator are respected as valid and true in the circumstances and the time frame in which they exist. Supporting ethical arguments from disciplines as diverse as literature and politics add the luster of moral authority to the view of reality as individually constructed. In addition the pragmatic suggestion of withholding personal judgment to create an atmosphere for the deep

understanding of the individual perspective also enhances the appeal and viability of accepting the concept of the individually constructed reality.

What does remain to be studied in the context of learning to be an educator is the relationship of the concepts of knowledge and professional efficacy derived from the constructivist view of reality. Descriptions and exemplars of terminology have been a focus of the chapter to act as steppingstones which guide the theoretical path from which the study is approached. Knowledge is described as a set of four shared characteristics rather than as a closed set of specific skills. Knowledge is seen as individually created, experiential (resulting in change which arises from “collisions”), often tacit and visualized in multiple “spheres.” An eclectic, workable description of knowledge is proposed for the study: *Knowledge is a conceptual structure (sometimes tacit and existing figuratively in spheres) that is individually constructed as a result of collisions and intellectual changes involved in undergoing an experience of material events.* In this chapter the three spheres of knowledge are identified.

- *Practical knowledge is represented in statements about “how things work in the everyday world of the classroom” - such as “When I used a storytelling activity the children became enthusiastic about writing.”*
- *Abstract knowledge is represented usually in first person generalized statements about the nature of teaching - such as “I AM a teacher. I had experienced the way I want to be as an educator.”*
- The third sphere of knowledge contains beliefs and private theories. *Beliefs are statements of universal abstract knowledge such as “All real teachers experience the teaching high” or “All people are good.” Private theories are brief “I must” or “I have to” statements which act as guidelines for behaviour such as “I must experience the teaching high to be a real teacher”.*

*Professional efficacy* is interpreted as *an influential, yet impermanent, sense of completing or being capable of completing an effective performance* - based on a series of efficacy episodes conceived of and expressed in a variety of ways (such as the “Wow” moment).

Finally, though a theoretical path containing a network of descriptions has been established, and my own story examined in detail, what is of the most important consideration is not to fit the narratives and the lives of the pre-service educators into a rigid structure but to allow

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them to speak for themselves. The theoretical path is intended to provide a venue from which the narrators can tell their stories. In this study the respected voices of authority are the individual pre-service educators. The theoretical path developed in this chapter provides a direction and a place from which to listen to them. The next task in the study is to search for the methodology and develop the methods of investigation from which will emerge a sensitive representation and interpretation of the stories worthy of the trust placed in me by the pre-service educators. As one of the participants says, “ This is my story. But it is not just my story. It’s the story of all of us and it should be told” (Erica, July 2004, informal meeting).

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## Chapter Three

### Preparing to Listen to the Stories: The Research Design

#### Narrative Inquiry Methodology

Aspiring to both privilege the perceptions of the pre-service educators and to examine their constructed knowledge in relation to the development of a sense of professional efficacy, narrative inquiry appeared as the most compatible methodology for the starting point of the study. As exemplified in the elegant works of Elbaz (1983) and Phendla (2004) narrative inquiry methodology and methods appear to respectfully and effectively represent the “voice” of the narrator/participant. In addition, their work provided examples of research that acknowledges and accepts the elusive quality of the sometimes tacit knowledge that is constructed from an experience. Rooted in the phenomenological genre of research that

'borrow(s)' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience ... (vanManen, 1998: 62).

Narrative inquiry appeared well - suited for effectively producing insight into the experiences and personal constructions of learning to become an educator. Moreover, underpinning the work of Elbaz and Phendla and narrative inquiry research in general are the views that making meaning by creating knowledge from the experiences in our lives is an essential individual process (Frankl, 1963) and that narrative is the universal, authentic way that people make and understand meaning (Bruner, 1990: 19). Both of these concepts resonate with the aims and add depth to the constructivist view of reality and knowledge that the study embraces.

Two additional aspects inherent in the theoretical foundation of narrative inquiry are consistent with the adoption of the constructivist stance taken in the study. Narrative inquiry methodology is characterized by a recognition of the complex roles of memory and language in making meaning by constructing knowledge. Reality, truth, knowledge and professional efficacy are all viewed in this study as constructed by the individual in a unique and experience - based process. However, individually created reality is itself seen to be further complicated by a dependence on the constructions of memory. Memory is not viewed simply as an objective chronological replay of past events and experiences, as in the positivist

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approach, but rather is a reconstruction influenced by both past and present events. Bruner describes this process as

Reflexivity - our capacity to turn around on the past and alter the present in its light or to alter the past in the light of the present. Neither the past nor the present stays fixed ... (1990: 109).

What is remembered and how it is remembered is revealed in what is chosen to be told and becomes the reality for the individual at that moment. Years of teaching experience have no doubt coloured my memory of the “teaching high” story, for example, and ten years from now or ten years ago the story may be told differently. Similar to the fluidity and cyclical movement of knowledge creation, each individual constructs layers of meaning and knowledge from the uniquely remembered experiences of the past and present. And only the individual reveals explicitly or tacitly the meaning of those memories. Furthermore, language is the vehicle for not only the expression but also the “shaping” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 85) of the memories which make up a created reality and so the study of language in narrative is an important tool for uncovering the personal meaning of experiences, the construction of knowledge and the recognition of efficacy. By labeling my narrative as the “teaching high story”, for example, I create a meaning for the experience that is not inherent in the event itself. Had I instead named the story “the problems of working in a city school” the meaning of the story would have been quite different. Similarly, as the pre-service educators are living through the events of the PGCE programme, their perceptions both past and present enfolded in private theories are assumed to be embedded in the narrative language of the stories of their experiences. The methods of narrative inquiry research driven by the assumptions of the methodology appear to provide a way to authentically access the perceptions of the narrators through the language of their narratives. The private theories as well as the constructed knowledge and sense of professional efficacy which are revealed by using the narrative inquiry methods are accepted as true-for-now personal expressions of their experiences, but because of the ephemeral and unique nature of memory and language are also understood to be subject to what Guy Butler calls “idiosyncratic amnesia” (1977: x).

### **Research Methods**

The profoundly complex nature of investigating the individual making of meaning, the construction of knowledge and the development of a sense of professional efficacy from

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experiences emerge further when stepping into the multiple domains of the narrative inquiry methods. Definitions of the most basic terminology of the genre are controversial and the phases of the research process from the selection of respondents to the development of an interview style to the determination of appropriate methods of data analysis are critically debated in the literature and encompass many points of view.

Narrative research is at present distinctly interdisciplinary including elements of literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological and cultural studies...A new field made up of diverse elements from a number of philosophical and practical sources the latest reorganization consisting largely of overlapping clusters of research ... Theories, methodologies and politics of narrative research are in a process of being defined and redefined as particular researchers struggle to make the various aspects of their work coherent and consistent ... (Casey, 1995: 212).

Such is the variety that some researchers have even suggested the need for a “taxonomy of narrative inquiry” (Fenstermacher, 1997: 122). The lack of a clear general consensus among researchers about what a narrative is or which methods should be used in which circumstances does not negate the value of the methodology or the methods but does make transparency of the individual design and the definitions and decisions governing the design important for credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study a narrative inquiry is defined as a form of qualitative research that takes the narratives (oral or written accounts of events, thoughts or feelings) of the participants as its data. Rather than limiting the definition of narrative to life histories or oral stories or statements of a specific length, this definition was designed with the intention of being inclusive to provide the widest opportunity for the expression of perceptions. Data in this study then is defined as both the oral and written narratives of any length about any topic collected from the pre-service educators in the form of oral interviews and their transcriptions, casual conversations, reflective journals (sometimes translated), notes from observations and an ongoing research field text/narrative. Having defined “narrative” and “data” in the interest of transparency the narrative inquiry methods used in the study also need to be explained as they were understood and applied to the data.

To provide credible evidence to support the conclusions of the investigation, an equally inclusive assortment of analytical methods for interpretation of the collected narratives was

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used in the study. However, the repertoire of individual analytical methods in narrative inquiry was initially overwhelmingly large and difficult to deal with. While the theoretical underpinnings of narrative inquiry apply throughout the genre, the methods of narrative analysis used in research studies appear as a bewildering variety of designs and applications, perhaps due to its uncertain boundaries and relationships to other qualitative methodologies. The sheer numbers of different methods prohibited using each one separately as a “search engine” in the narratives without risking the possibility of an imbalanced approach. Previous efforts made by narrative researchers (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber 1998, Casey 1995, Carter 1990) to combine the methods and provide descriptive categories have tended to focus on the particular discipline in which the researcher works. Forced to come to a broader, more basic understanding of how to use the methods to analyze and code the data in systematic fashion, for this study the narrative analysis methods were roughly regrouped into three clusters of my own conception. As part of the research design a preliminary, exploratory study of the clusters of methods was conducted in two domains, the functional and analytical. The preliminary study was conducted with a few selected narratives from the pre-service educators to become familiar with each of the clusters of methods and to enhance their productive use later in the full study of the narratives. In the functional domain the practical experiences associated with the methods are described. In the analytical domain the dynamic questions of connections and associations of deeper meaning of the experiences were examined. For clarity and ease of management, three tables to summarize the findings in both the analytical and the functional domains were constructed as well and are included in this text as Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3. Conducting the preliminary study before engaging in a full study had a direct bearing on the practical application of the clusters of methods in the full study, by enabling the creation of descriptions of the functions, characteristics, input and output expectations and underlying issues of the clusters of methods. Again in the interest of a clear representation of interpretation, each of the clusters of methods (performative, structural analysis and literary criticism) will be discussed here as they were made sense of in the preliminary study and used in the full study.

### **The Preliminary Study**

The first grouping was the *performative* (Smith, 1990) *methods cluster*. These are the methods focusing primarily on the actual interview process. Methods such as the “earliest

memory recall” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998: 86) “chronological annals” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994: 419) “repertory grids” (Korthagen, 1992: 268) “nodal moments” (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001: 19) or “critical episodes” (Elbaz, 1991) are methods used in interviews which “bring into being that which they name” (Mottier, 2000: 537) and which appear to directly effect the content of the narrative text whether through interview stance or the solicitation of specific narrator experiences. In the preliminary study both the structured and unstructured interview stance were examined along with the specific methods. When to use the methods - pre - or post interview - appeared to be the critical decision in their application. The timing of their use depends on the objectives of the research and is connected to the theoretical framework of a study. When a particular aspect of an experience is to be specifically examined a structured interview approach would be most appropriate. Directly asking a participant to describe a “nodal moment” (or significant episode) in their lives, for example, assumes a worldview of objective reality and the resulting format of the interview will consist of pre-planned questions organized to achieve the research objective. Using prepared questions while providing a transparent view of what the interviewer wants to know has several possibly obstructive outcomes, however. Answers to prepared questions may be limited in focus to the topics of the questions which may or may not be of primary concern to the respondent. As language not only expresses but also shapes the recollection of experiences, the language used in the questions may also have a strong influence on the way that experiences are perceived by the narrators. In the preliminary study, in structured interviews the tone of questioning appeared to alter and even disrupt the narration. Notable differences in the narrative language appeared. Inflexible language in the structured questions seemed to influence the language in the responses of the narrators: short sparsely worded questions resulted in short sparsely worded answers. A tension of privilege, an epistemological tension perhaps reflected in the language of the questions arose between my expectation as researcher and the interests of the narrator. The result of the planned question, structured interview was that although the requested information was obtained the experience was primarily based on the notion that the content, if not the meaning of the narrative, was controlled by the researcher.

As one aspect of this study is to examine the often indescribable private theories embedded in the experiences of learning to become an educator, an unstructured method of interviewing

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was determined to be more productive. In the preliminary study and in the full study directly asking for a description of a private theory was not effective. Using a non-directive, conversational listening stance (Rogers, 1980) in unstructured preliminary study interviews, on the other hand, allowed and encouraged the narrator/respondent to control the focus and the content of the conversation in the interviews. Giving the “locus of control” (Ross, 1995: 229) to the narrator assumes a constructivist view of reality and increases the probability of revealing a private theory by moving the content of the discussions closer to the individually constructed reality. The flexibility of the conversational style of interview provided a personally more comfortable, less intrusive approach which also seemed to reduce the narrator/researcher control tensions and the atmosphere in the interview sessions became more relaxed and informal. When using this method rather than a formal set of prepared questions, conversational techniques such as motivating information sharing, sharing professional stories, assuring confidentiality, asking spontaneous clarifying or content related questions and making supportive comments were used. The informal approach resulted in the emergence of episodic and anecdotal “little stories” (Walker, 2002) rather than chronological biographies (Reddy, 2000). Although the little stories are often piecemeal and not chronologically or logically ordered, they represent what the narrators wanted to speak about, when they wanted to speak about it and how they wanted to speak about it.

The unstructured interview approach did open up ethical and analytical challenges, however. Maintaining a balance between merely listening to what is happening in the narrators’ stories and stepping in to offer guidance and moral support was difficult to sustain. Because of the narrators’ frank and generous ways of describing their experiences the privilege of witnessing their passage through this intensely demanding time in their lives was a moving experience. Negotiating the fine line between empathetic listening and interference was at times problematic and the sometimes highly charged emotional contents of the interviews were not to be ignored. In addition to the unpredictable emotional content of the interviews and the relationships, encouraging narrators to talk about their experiences in their own way increased the unpredictability of language use and some language issues emerged. Unfamiliar colloquial language appeared in some of the conversations as well as mother tongue language, cultural and age differences between the narrators and the researcher. Through trial and error several methods were developed in the course of the preliminary study interviews

to cope with the possibility of misinterpretation such as: allowing the narrators to say the word in their own language and asking the transcriber to translate, applying a translation from the context, studying more than one statement for evidence of an idea and repeating back what the narrator had said for clarity of understanding. Table 1 represents a summary of these considerations when using the performative methods cluster.

**Table 1: Influences of the Performative Methods Cluster**

CLUSTER	METHODS	FUNCTIONAL DOMAIN (Input Actions)	ANALYTICAL DOMAIN (Possible outcomes)	REFERENCES
Performative	Structured interview	Prepared sequence of questions to elicit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• earliest memory recall</li> <li>• chronological annals</li> <li>• repertory grids</li> <li>• nodal moments</li> <li>• critical episodes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assumes objective reality</li> <li>• transparent researcher control of content and meaning</li> <li>• limit and focus of information</li> <li>• influence of interviewer language</li> </ul>	Lieblich et.al. Clandinin and Connelly Korthagen Bullough and Pinnegar Mottier Lincoln and Guba Elbaz
	Unstructured Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non - directive listening stance</li> <li>• identifying significant episodes</li> <li>• conversational approach</li> <li>• reality check</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• constructivist multi - layered view of reality assumed</li> <li>• narrator control of content</li> <li>• unpredictable language use</li> <li>• emergence of episodic and anecdotal little stories</li> </ul>	Lincoln and Guba Rogers Walker

Despite the measures to enhance effective communication, interpretations of meaning were always an underlying issue of concern first identified in the preliminary study of the performative methods cluster but remaining as well throughout the full study. Mutual understanding proved difficult to measure and perceptive sensitivity difficult to practice consistently, leading to the question of whose meaning is represented in the descriptions of the perceptions of knowledge and professional efficacy and the private theories of the participants. Both the narrator and the reader/listener are influenced by their own experiences and bring their own meanings and language to the events. The two perceptions of meaning become entwined and interdependent compounded by the differences in mother tongue. Understanding that as a researcher I can never disappear from the interpretation, distinguishing whose meaning and whose “voice” is revealed in the interpretation is a subtle

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process, one that is addressed in both the preliminary and the full study by applying each cluster of methods to the narratives and “cross checking” interpretations gleaned from each of the clusters of methods.

In the preliminary study, applying the second grouping, *the structural analysis methods cluster* (Gee, 1999) to the data moved the investigation into the actual text and focused on an exploration of the concrete, technical aspects of the language in the narratives. Based on the theoretical assumption that embedded, tacit or hidden meanings of a text can be revealed through a closer analysis of the language, the methods including discourse analysis (Mottier, 2000), individual word choice analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998), situated meaning of language (Gee, 1995) and external and internal text analysis (Cortazzi, 1993) offered a contextual approach for interpretation of the narratives. These methods could reasonably only be applied by looking at the context of the texts after the narratives had been collected. Experimenting with the methods in the preliminary study, a logical progression of application from a whole text analysis to an individual word unit analysis was derived and thereafter used in the full study. First, excerpts from the narratives, which were long enough for a detailed analysis were chosen and then categorized or “coded” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 203) according to the general topic of the “discourse”. Increasingly refined analysis of the excerpts was carried out using methods such as the “situated meaning of language” (Gee, 1999:51) or an “internal evaluation” of the passage through “individual word analysis” looking in even greater detail at the expression of meaning through “intensifiers, modifiers, quantifiers, wh - exclamation, repeated lexical items, gestures, heightened story stressors, vowel lengthening, pitch range and intonation’ (Cortazzi, 1993: 47). A summary of the methods appears in Table 2.

In the preliminary study, internal analysis of the individual word units of the passages in the narratives often revealed connections and patterns of language use. The pattern could then be used to support conclusions drawn from the whole passage analysis or signal the emphasis of a perception through repetition. The structural analysis methods for examining the texts were continued in the excerpts with increasingly specific techniques until the results of the analysis become redundant (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 202). In addition, using the methods in the structural analysis cluster facilitated a manageable approach to the myriad of fine details in the narratives. Following a natural sequence of analyzing larger to smaller “chunks” of

language segments resulted in a familiarity with the mechanical aspects of the language of the narrators and provided the groundwork for an investigation of other elements of the language.

**Table 2: Structural Analysis Methods Cluster**

CLUSTER	METHODS	FUNCTIONAL DOMAIN (Input Actions)	ANALYTICAL DOMAIN (Possible Outcomes)	REFERENCES
Structural Analysis	Whole Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content</li> <li>• discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• external examination of general topics</li> <li>• analysis of long excerpts</li> <li>• categorize forms of discourse styles: expressive, referential, persuasive, narrational</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content dependent</li> <li>• interpretation of global meaning of text</li> </ul>	Polkinghorne
	Individual Word Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• situated meaning</li> <li>• syntax</li> <li>• semantic</li> <li>• grammar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• internal examination of specific narrator semantic and syntactic choices</li> <li>• identify intensifiers, quantifiers, word patterns and content of word choices</li> <li>• analyze technical and mechanical aspects of language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gathering of evidential detail to support interpretation of global meaning</li> <li>• emergence of meaning embedded in language</li> </ul>	Polkinghorne Gee Cortazzi

In the preliminary study, the third grouping the *literary criticism methods cluster* (Polkinghorne, 1988) appeared as an entirely different aesthetic framework of analytical methods suggesting an artistic appreciation (Eisner, 1998:31) of the figurative language, plots and themes of the text. Looking again at the whole text as well as individual words in the narratives, the literary criticism methods focused the investigation on abstract and symbolic language as well as general meaning in the whole text in the analysis. Unlike the structural analysis cluster of methods, however, in the literary criticism cluster of methods a logical progression of application appeared to be to move from the smaller “chunks” of language in individual word analysis to the larger “chunks” of language in whole text analysis. Individual word analysis first revealed visual images in the abstract language, which perhaps by transcending the boundaries of language could later be found to allude to global interpretations of meaning. When coding the figurative language images in the narratives, for example, often an affective quality or tone would emerge which could be further examined and expressed in plots of stories or themes. To identify plots, the connecting logic for a sequence of events, the stories in the narratives are identified first. The stories collected in the

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narratives of the pre-service educators appeared in both the preliminary and full studies in a variety of forms:

- the conventional “little story” complete in one telling with a beginning and an end,
- descriptive “vignettes” often used to illustrate a point,
- articulated interior monologues or “self-conversations” (Plummer, 1995: 57) and
- on-going stories that appeared and reappeared in the interviews.

Surprisingly each separate form of story seemed to be organized around historically generated plots that could be identified and used for analysis. Plot characterizations such as the “progression of character plot” (Polkinghorne, 1988:) or “the romance, the tragedy, the comedy and the satire” Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber , 1998: 88) provided broad categories for simplified coding of the passages in the narratives. Finally, identifying themes or “universal statements” (van Manen, 1998:107) in the narratives was undertaken by closely examining the collection of narratives yet again and revisiting the results from the application of all of the analytical methods clusters to the data. Gathering evidence from the images, the playing out of plots, reviewing the content of the discourses and the emphasis placed on particular expression or the selected retelling of particular episodes or kinds of episodes resulted in the generation of themes which seemed to bring to the surface the underlying hidden meaning of much of the collected data. In the full study, the generalized nature of the themes reconsidered along with the results of the analysis of the three clusters of methods especially supported the process of the interpretation of the private theories that were previously unarticulated but seemed to be driving the actions and descriptions of actions of the pre-service educators. The whole text and individual word analysis methods and the results of their use are summarized in Table 3.

In the preliminary study each of the clusters of methods showed a flexibility in their varying degrees of specificity of analysis allowing for global or detailed investigations of the narratives as the content dictated. The methods also provided a bank of evidence for the formation and support of interpretive analysis and seemed to expose a richer interpretation of the experiences of learning to be an educator through the revealed thoughts and feelings of the narrators. In the first cursory readings of the preliminary study, the narratives had seemed to be simply superficial descriptions of their experiences told in colloquial language. Later re-reading selections from the narratives from the perspectives of each of the clusters of

methods encouraged a deeper understanding of their meanings. The comprehensiveness of the conclusions of the preliminary study made it clear that applying all three clusters of methods is essential and would be necessary for thorough analysis of the data in the full study.

**Table 3: Literary Analysis Methods Cluster**

CLUSTER	METHODS	FUNCTIONAL DOMAIN (Input Actions)	ANALYTICAL DOMAIN (Possible Outcomes)	REFERENCES
Literary Criticism Analysis	Individual Word Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>figurative language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify individual examples of figurative language: metaphors, similes, comparisons, images</li> <li>analyze abstract and symbolic language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evokes visual images which transcend language</li> <li>possible multiple interpretation of images</li> <li>images support interpretation of meaning</li> </ul>	Polkinghorne Plummer Lieblich et.al. van Manen Eisner Bruner Walker
	Whole Text Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plot</li> <li>Theme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify little stories, vignettes, self - conversations and on - going reappearing stories</li> <li>identify connecting logic of sequence of events</li> <li>identify universal statements in the narratives</li> <li>reality check</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plot conception indicates narrator's interpretation of meaning</li> <li>researcher generates themes using variety of evidence types</li> <li>risk of misinterpretation</li> <li>temporal nature of thematic expressions</li> </ul>	Polkinghorne Plummer Walker Lieblich et.al. van Manen Eisner Bruner Lincoln and Guba

Even with a comprehensive and varied process of coding and analyzing the stories of the narrators, in an interpretive research approach such as narrative inquiry challenges and cautions are inherent in the genre. First is the awareness that a narrative inquiry does not present a complete picture (Kelchtermans, 1993: 451) of the narrator or the events leading up to or beyond the anecdotes in the narratives. On the other hand, a narrative study does not presume to present a complete picture of an experience but could be considered valuable nonetheless as part of the larger whole. Second is the consciousness that the perceptions and private theories of the participants will most likely change with time (Bruner, 1986:130). They can only be captured, if captured at all, as the perceptions of the moment. The participants may have different or changed private theories and perceptions of knowledge and efficacy in even a few months time. But acknowledging that the data does have circumscribed time constraints does not necessarily make it less believable within those limits. Thirdly, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2) have pointed out the contexts of the

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narrative are specific and particular and therefore in danger of being self-indulgent or speculative. Nevertheless, connecting interpretations of the data to the interests of a wider audience without losing the personal flavour of the voices of the narrators is a precarious undertaking perhaps best left to the intentions of the reader/listener (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 297). Yet, ambiguities of meaning are part of the mystery of human understanding and as Bruner maintains, a narration is not the meaning itself but is a “guide in a search for meaning among the spectrum of possible meanings” (1986: 25). Human experiences are complex but the purpose of a narrative inquiry into those experiences is to allow us to begin to explore what would otherwise remain unexplored.

### **The Research Procedure**

The full study of the perceptions of professional efficacy in the experience of learning to become an educator was carried out after completing the preliminary study exploring the strengths and limitations of narrative inquiry methodology and methods. The broad aim of this study through the use of narrative inquiry methodology and methods is to add the “voices” of pre-service educators to a larger dialogue and to the collective body of evidence of how one learns to become an educator with a sense of professional efficacy. More particularly, to answer the question **“What do pre-service educators perceive that they know and that they need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy?”** the study also encompasses two specific objectives:

- to identify through narrative analysis the circumstances of the construction of and the content of the knowledge created by the pre-service educators from their experiences
- to investigate and describe the relationship of the knowledge constructed by the pre-service educators to the development of a sense of professional efficacy.

### **Participant Narrators**

Four pre-service educators (three women and one man) enrolled in the PGCE programme were chosen (without having met them) to participate in the study. The number of narrator/participants was limited to four to allow time for a longer period of frequent interviews in which to build a rapport (Weider, 2003: 9) if not a trusting and confidential relationship. The participants were chosen for their diversity of individual cultural and

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linguistic experiences. In addition to cultural and linguistic difference their different temperaments and family backgrounds subsequently emerged. Two are confident while one is shy and another anxious and worried. One is from an extended family and three are from nuclear families. One is from a family of teachers another grew up on a sheep farm. One grew up in a small town and another in a suburb of Johannesburg. The additional differences among the participants appeared significant. Anticipating the possibility that the narrators could express similarities of interpretation of the PGCE experience, it seemed prudent to focus the investigation on people who initially might be expected to reveal divergent perceptions. The external and internal contrasting circumstances of the narrators were intended to add depth to the interpretation of their shared context. Before the data collection began, the participants were asked to sign an agreement which explained the purpose of the study and requested the collaboration of the participants in reviewing the data and its conclusions. Participants in the study were aware that I was working with one of the directors of the PGCE programme and may have seen me as part of the university hierarchy. The agreement was intended to accord some control over the procedure for the participant and to equalize the balance of power in the relationship (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). The agreement was also an attempt to maintain ethical standards and sensitivity within the research relationship by insuring the right to privacy of the participants and informed consent for any publication or presentation.

### **Narrative Data Collection**

The narratives of the four pre-service educators were collected from a series of interviews, from writings in the reflective journal required by the university to develop a “critical reflective practice in which they move from a kind of diary of events to a critical assessment of their daily progress” (DeKock, personal communication November, 2004) and from conversations which took place during an informal visit to the classrooms of each of the participants. Three of the participants were interviewed at the university usually at the end of a classroom teaching day for an approximately one hour session. The fourth participant asked to be interviewed at his home at the end of the teaching day, preferring that to the university setting. The interviews were conducted at the university or at the participant's home to insure an uninterrupted period of time for the interview and to provide a quiet place for reflection and discussion by distancing ourselves from the school setting. Interviews were conducted at

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intervals over the full year of their enrollment in the PGCE programme (two in 2002 and two in 2003). Each participant was also interviewed once again three months after completing the PGCE programme to validate or correct previous perceptions. The extended interview schedule over two years was established for a number of reasons. The first year of the study, 2002, was also the first year that the PGCE programme was offered at the university. It was a concern that impressions offered from the participants may have more to do with the “newness” of the programme than the experiences of learning to become an educator. A second year of interviewing in 2003 with two new participants provided comparisons of perspectives from the programme after the initial “teething” problems (such as scheduling) were eliminated or smoothed over. The pre-service educators participated in a series of interviews rather than one or two long interviews in order to capture what was happening as the year progresses and to establish the immediacy of feelings of efficacy before they may have changed with more teaching experience. An extended schedule of interviews provided time for patterns of topics of conversation to emerge naturally without the intrusion of a relative stranger “hurriedly” prying for information. The extended interview schedule also allowed time in the full study for the development and refinement of the communication techniques first attempted in the preliminary study of the narrative inquiry methods.

Additional sources of narratives for analysis were collected from the reflective journal kept throughout the year by the participants. Three of the journals were read (in translation in two of the cases) only once at the end of the PGCE programme. The fourth journal was read mid-year as well as at the end of the year. The journals were not read on a regular basis, as it was inconvenient for the participants to be without the journal for any length of time. Each participant was also visited once for half a teaching day in the schools where they had been assigned to teach. Although these visits were not formal “observations” (notes were kept, however,) and were not meant to “check up” on what was “really happening” in the classrooms as compared to what I was being told, the visits to the schools were limited in time and occurred only once as each of the participants found the visits stressful. The visits were rather intended to serve as a point of contact with narrators, to increase my awareness of the conditions under which the narrators were working and to be able to discuss more knowledgeably what was happening to them. Notes about the school visits were kept in a field text which also contains statements of my personal observations about mood, intent,

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impressions and reflections on a variety of topics - the interview process, events in the lives of the narrators, readings in the literature, for example. The field text was meant to create an awareness of the possible influences of my own life of created reality as an educator on the interpretations of the perceptions of the lives and stories of the pre-service educators. After the narratives were collected, a multi-step “combing” of the data for coding purposes was carried out. The narratives were read and re-read (put on cards and colour coded) from the point of view of each of the three analytical methods clusters. The results of all of the analytical methods were compared, grouped and combined to form interpretations of the private theories, the constructed knowledge and the perceived sense of professional efficacy of the narrators. To give as much control as possible to the pre-service educators and to attempt to lessen the risk of misinterpretation, each participant was shown the interpretations and asked to read, correct or clarify the analysis in a “reality check” at two junctures (once in the middle and once at the end of the year) as the interviews progresses. In one final “reality check” the participants each collaborated in a negotiation of a satisfactory interpretation of the relationship between feelings of efficacy and knowledge creation and private theories.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter the methodology and methods and the rationale for using narrative inquiry have been discussed due to the often confusing and conflicting descriptions of the genre. Because of the differences in definition and uses of narrative inquiry prevalent in the research literature the conclusions drawn from an exploratory preliminary study were presented to explain in detail the conception of narrative methodology and methods as they are applied in the full study. The notion from narrative theory of how individual memories past and present are shaped and also expressed in language is linked in this chapter to the constructivist framework of the study and a definition of narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research taking the narratives (oral or written accounts of events, thoughts or feelings) of the participants as its data was presented. For clarity, the numerous methods of the narrative inquiry genre were categorized into three groups, the performative, the structural analysis and the literary criticism methods clusters and the characteristics, functions and underlying issues of each of the clusters were described. Finally the objectives of the research and procedure for reaching the objectives were outlined including choosing and interviewing the participants in the study as well as the collection and analysis of the narratives. In summary,

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the purpose of all of the discussions in this chapter is to make clear how the voices of the narrators will be heard and their perceptions recognized.

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## **Chapter Four**

### **Listening to the Stories**

#### **Part One:**

#### **Classrooms, Collisions and Private Theories**

##### **Introduction**

In this chapter the four pre-service educators who participated in the study are introduced and the data that was collected from the interviews and the journal entries is presented. The data is presented not in lists or tabulations but in the narrative form of stories of negotiating the path to professional efficacy. The stories derived from the data in the interviews and the journals of the pre-service educators (see Chapter Three: page 46) are written in the third person. However, the stories frequently contain long passages taken directly from the interviews and journals in an effort to emphasize the importance of the perceptions of experiences as the pre-service educators express them. The pre-service educators are referred to as the “narrators” of the stories to underscore that it is their stories which are being told. The story format for presentation of the data was chosen to attempt to approximate the spirit of the intensely “lived experiences” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 128) vibrantly present in all of the narratives of the pre-service educators. The story of each pre-service educator/narrator is told separately in two parts.

- Part One chronicles the circumstances and experiences impacting the pre-service educators and their reactions to teaching.
- Part Two chronicles the relationship of the experiences to the development of knowledge and a sense of professional efficacy.

Although not told precisely sequentially, piecing together episodes and events from all of the data from each of the pre-service educators, the stories are loosely organized in a chronological fashion. At the end of Part One is a figure illustrating the process of the construction of beliefs and private theories from the collisions experienced by the narrators. At the end of Part Two is a figure illustrating the relationships of the experiences of the pre-service educators to their development of a sense of professional efficacy.

In Part One, the stories relate how each of the narrators arrived at the decision to become

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educators (each of the stories is subtitled with a directly quoted “mission” statement (Korthagen, 2004: retrieved on-line November 2004: continuous text) and then what it was like for them in the classroom and in the PGCE courses. In events that they have chosen to narrate and describe, the experiences that impressed and moved the pre-service educators are detailed and analyzed. The analysis and interpretation (gleaned from using the three clusters of analytical methods) of the often implied significance of the experiences accompany descriptions of the events - so that the data and the analysis of the data are simultaneously presented in the stories. The unfolding of each of the stories follows a roughly constructed pattern emphasizing the development of the knowledge expressed as the individual beliefs and private theories of the pre-service educators.

The pattern originally emerged while coding and re-coding the hours of transcribed interviews and journal entries. In one of the many readings of the data a vivid image of “collisions” (involuntary clashes of behaviour and events) suddenly captured what seemed to be happening in the lives of all of the pre-service educators. Reanalyzing the data yet again in the light of the discovery of this new image revealed parallel sequences of the development of beliefs and private theories. At first the collisions were categorized generally as “personal background” “professional” and “university”. However, after closer examination, each of the pre-service educators appeared to have experienced unique “collisions” within those categories influencing the development of their individual beliefs and private theories. Within the stories, interpretations of the beliefs (statements of universal abstract knowledge) and private theories (brief “I have to” or “I must” statements which appear to act as guidelines for behaviour) were then derived from an analysis of the events surrounding the collisions and the language used to describe the collisions. The stories are each told using the individual forms of “collision” imagery and implied statements of beliefs and private theories as the central and essential symbols in the process of learning to become an effective educator.

As many events as possible in the lives of the narrators and as many results from the analysis as possible were presented in the stories. However, limited space prohibited a description of every single experience or analytical result. (All of the interviews are available upon request.) Episodes that were not chosen - such as an isolated disagreement that one narrator had with a

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PGCE colleague concerning the colleague's irritating moods - were not included because the event did not seem indicative of a significant and continually reoccurring situation in the narratives. Incidents that did not reoccur or were mentioned only briefly were interpreted to be less relevant to the development of a sense of professional efficacy. Similarly, isolated images or structural anomalies of language that do not seem to be part of a general pattern such as the use by one narrator of the colloquial term "worked myself into a coma" (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1) were not noted in the text of the story. On the other hand where interpretation was supported by more than one set of data - such as three statements indicating one theme - usually only one incident is mentioned in the story to avoid the impression of heavy-handed persuasion. The incident or statement that is presented is one that has been chosen for its variety of expression and for its portrayal of the distinctive appeal of the personality of the pre-service educator - for example in one of the stories the narrator appeared to emphasize the importance of an incident through an unusually long "little story" which also demonstrated her genuine affection and concern for her learners. The individual style of expression of each of the pre-service educators thus adds depth and charm to the stories as well as being an important element for analysis.

All four of the pre-service educator/narrators in this chapter graciously gave up their time in the midst of a extremely demanding schedules to describe their experiences and tell the on - going story of learning to become an educator. Their reasons for doing so were several. Each of the narrators was interested in analyzing and contributing suggestions for improving the PGCE course in order to help develop and refine the components for future students. Furthermore, all of the narrators are planning at some time to continue their studies beyond the PGCE programme and were interested in the research process of the study. Each wanted to contribute their story to the study and emphasized their agreement with the importance of its objectives. Participating in the study, they also generously said, increased their own understanding of the experience of learning to become an educator as well. It helped to talk about what was happening to them. Several of the narrators said that they enjoyed the opportunity to unwind and discuss classroom events with an interested and impartial outsider. One narrator said, "You are helping me to reflect ..." (Disa, 2002: Interview 2) and another said that the interviews were a "lifesaver" (Erica, 2003: October Seminar informal meeting)

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through the times of discouraging doubt. All of the narrators were moved by the intent and seriousness of lengthy and detailed analysis of their spontaneously spoken words and paid rapt attention to the explanation of the interpretations of their perceptions. Their stories told and written in bits and pieces became whole for them and for me through the process of narrative analysis.

Finally, each of the pre-service educators in the stories has been given a pseudonym - the name of a flower. Flower names were chosen as the image for each of the narrators because of their quality of freshness - vibrant and vital and at the same time new and inexperienced. The pre-service educators, like the flowers they are named for appear fragile but are endowed with an indomitable hardiness that carries them through the exhausting year of learning to become an educator. In South Africa itself flowers are a dominant image - the multicolours of the “rainbow nation” are echoed in the thousands of varieties of flowers (some in fact can be found nowhere else in the world) growing in abundance in the country. Just as there are a myriad of flowers in the veld, so there are a myriad of perceptions of learning to become an educator expressed in a myriad of ways.

### **Nerine’s Story:**

**‘I want to be this brilliant teacher who’s meaning something in the children’s lives.’**

Nerine participated in the university programme in the first year of its existence from January to December 2002. She was interviewed seven times over the year always at the university after she had been teaching in the morning and attending university classes or completing university assignments in the afternoons. In the evenings she would work at home to prepare lesson plans “learning tasks” (DeKock and Slabbert, 2004: 12) for the next school day. The eighth interview was conducted at the school where she was employed full - time after completing the programme. Because of the pressure of her busy schedule the interview sessions were each about 45 minutes long. Her reflective journal was translated and read at the end of her time in the PGCE programme. I visited her for one morning at the first school where she was assigned to teach. She is described in the field text as a

tall, attractive young woman in her early twenties. Her first language is Afrikaans but

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we conduct the interviews in English. She says that she is not shy and is not concerned about the confidentiality issues of the interviews. ‘What I say to you I’ll say to anybody else ...’ (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1).

She did sign a confidentiality agreement, however. (See Appendix I) At the time of the interviews she was living with her parents and several brothers in a suburb of the city in a “security complex” (a high-walled, gated community) was not married and had no children. Nerine’s conversational style in the interviews was lively and fluent and gave the impression of a person with a dramatic flair. An analysis of the content and language of her narratives using the methods of the performative, structural and literary criticism clusters showed a high incidence of figurative language use and theme presentation, a less frequent use of discourses, situated meanings of words and interior monologues and only one instance of a critical episode. Nerine characterized herself as a “perfectionist” and “organizational freak”, a “structured person” but one who can be “too emotional” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 5). She also describes herself as a self-reliant person. “I like being independent too much. I’ve got problems ... because I’m too independent ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2). Often when we met she was tired and distracted: “Nerine seemed tired and discouraged today. She had dark circles under her eyes” (Field text, 8 May 2002). In every meeting, however, the dominant impression of her was that she was intent on becoming an educator and passionately wanted to fulfill her mission as a “brilliant teacher (who is) really meaning something to the children ...” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2). Her sense of determination never left her and as difficult and exhausting as the year was for her, she never mentioned that she thought about quitting the programme.

Nerine spent a turbulent year in the university programme experiencing and expressing feelings (in vivid figurative language) from confusion to exhilaration amidst “angels” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1) and “hooligans” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2) “nightmares” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2) and “miracles” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1). Hers was a year of what she described significantly as “collisions”.

You are actually colliding in the middle because you are this very polite, mannered person working with very unpolite and unmannered little people...The awkwardness starts when you collide with them now...you are trying to get things to your side but

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they don't want to go there ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 4).

Nerine's story is full of the collisions of events and beliefs and private theories from within the classroom and from without. Some of the beliefs and private theories she brought with her from past experiences and some developed or were revealed as she progresses through her first teaching experiences.

From the very beginning of Nerine's story of becoming an educator, the image of "collisions" of one kind or another is an influential force in her life. For example, Nerine's decision to become an educator was based on her love of the act of teaching. "I always loved explaining things and I was also just this tutory type of person ..." (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1). She often expressed a desire to make a difference in the "big scale of things" (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1) through her teaching - a theme which often reoccurred in her narratives. However, Nerine's commitment to becoming an educator was not taken lightly. Her father disapproved of her choice of teaching as a profession.

My father didn't want me to teach. He's an accountant and told me there's no money in teaching. But I love what I am doing ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1).

She describes her childhood as "really nice" (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2) so to please her father but against her own inclinations (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1) she completed an Honours degree in psychology, spent several years overseas and trained for a "glamorous" (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1) and well-paid job. In what could be described as a "critical episode" (Elbaz, 1991: 17) she says:

I decided to study Hotel and Catering. This was the biggest mistake of my life. I am not cut out for the hotel industry. I love staying in a hotel and love going on vacation but no I don't want to work there ... For me personally it's a waste of time making sure people get their margaritas ... I went home and told them I'll kill the next person that asks me for something frivolous. Then I decided that I'm going to do what I want to do even if they don't pay me ... This I love it ... you actually see that in the big scale of things you have done that much ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1).

Nerine's choice of profession was what she called a "self-discovery" (Nerine, 2003, Interview 8). Her parents were not educators and did not support or encourage her choice. After experimenting with other fields of study she remained instinctively drawn to teaching and

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had to convince her family of the strength of her genuine commitment to becoming an educator.

In addition Nerine did not have inspiring role models in her early school life, just the opposite. Throughout the interviews her language when describing her early schooling was vivid and searing, conveying a sense of outrage at the injustice she witnessed.

I hated every second of my primary and high school. I hated it ... I remember there was one teacher ... If I see them now I will tell them that you have ruined the biggest part of my life because they constantly screamed and they make you feel small before other children ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1) ... In High School, the teachers they didn't want to do anything ... I noticed this and thought to myself, if they did just a little bit of preparation, then the classes will be better ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2) You didn't go against a teacher even if you know that he or she is wrong ... Otherwise it was just a nightmare ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2). They didn't care about the children actually, I noticed this ... the discipline was scarily strict ... (Nerine, 2002" Interview 1).

Nerine did pass Matric and moved away from home to attend University. Her studies went well. She enjoyed the University work in comparison to high school as she says, "You had more independence in your learning ... you could give your opinions ..." (Nerine, 2002: interview 2). The difference between her school and university days was the dignity with which she was treated. From the collision of the two outstanding memories of her own schooling and her struggle to convince her parents of the seriousness and value of her career choice comes a suggestion that Nerine believes there are no circumstances in which it is acceptable to make another person feel "insufficient". In other words: "*No one has the right to diminish another person.*" Because of her very personal experiences of being diminished and made to feel insufficient this belief is converted and re-emerges as Nerine's private theory that "*I must never diminish another person*". Nerine's choice of early childhood stories to retell and her many repetitions of vehement words such as "hate" and "kill" and "nightmare" contrasted with the affirmative language used to describe the university time point to a deeply held conviction. Nerine never directly expressed her private theory in these exact words but when shown the interpretations, she confirmed its legitimacy saying, "Dit is

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waar.” (This is true) (Nerine, 2002: Interview 5).

Nerine’s unarticulated private theory, that she must never diminish another person, is just one part of the heady mixture of experiences, events and collisions that characterized her first year of learning to be an educator. The pattern of collisions continued through her long-term practice teaching assignments in two urban primary (Grade R - kindergarten - to Grade 7) schools. Her first school was made up of learners from mixed racial and language backgrounds living in mostly lower income circumstances. The language of instruction was Afrikaans, but Afrikaans was a second or third language for many of the learners. Her second school was a predominately upper income school of Afrikaans speaking children. In each school she would spend ten weeks teaching Grade 6 and Grade 7 Life Orientation classes of about forty children. She was assigned a mentor from each of the schools but one mentor suffered a family crisis and did not have time to work extensively with Nerine and the other was often busy with administrative duties. The months spent with the children at these schools exploded with collisions. Nerine was not sure that she could cope.

It’s very easy to say in books and stuff you must walk in their shoes but how can you? I come from a privileged Afrikaans background out of the old apartheid system. I don’t know what black kids go through in the new South Africa without money. I don’t know ... I’ve never lived in a ... I’ve never lived in M---. And just as they will never be able to put themselves into my life, it’s very difficult for me ... We don’t even have a clue what they are going through ... so I don’t know ... I don’t know how all that is going to work out ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2).

Nerine’s profound sense of confusion and insecurity was expressed in the images woven throughout her narratives. She spoke of “gray areas” (Nerine, 29 July 2002: Journal entry) and being “lost in a forest” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2) as if she were in a “country I don’t know a lot” (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8).

The feelings of uncertainty expressed in these images began when Nerine entered the Grade 6 and Grade 7 classrooms and encountered the collision of her unspoken expectations of herself as an educator and the “reality” that she found in the classroom.

How difficult can it be standing in front of the kids and just teaching ... (Nerine,

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2002: Interview 1). It sounded very easy but it's not. It's one of those things that sound incredibly easy. What can be so difficult to teach thirty children sitting in front of you? So when you stand in front of that class you just realize it's probably one of the most difficult things anyone must learn ... What I expected of teaching and what is actually applied is two worlds apart ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 3).

Elaborating the difference between what she was expecting and what she actually experiences was difficult for Nerine. But by using the image of separate worlds in this passage Nerine emphasizes the enormity of the gulf between her expectations and her experiences. As with the private theory gleaned from her school experience she was unable to directly put into words what she had expected of teaching, except to say that she wanted to be “brilliant” and somehow different from the teachers of her childhood (Nerine, 2002: Interview 8).

Using the collection of narrative analysis clusters of methods, however, helped to elucidate the differences between her expectations and the reality of the classroom. Further analysis of her narratives gives insight into the variety of some of the sources of the clashes and collisions that unsettled her when she entered the teaching world. One of the most frequently discussed and emotionally charged challenges in the classroom that Nerine encountered was her growing awareness of the multiple roles of an educator.

You are six things in one. Now you're a teacher for the one, then an emotional advisor for the other and a spiritual advisor for the other one and it's just how to handle all of that role (sic) to be most effective ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 3) ... You are their everything ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 4).

In this passage her choice of the word “role” to describe her perceptions of teaching has a particular contextual “situated meaning” (Gee, 1999: 51). Nerine uses the word “role” to connote responsibility. Nerine's frequent emphasis of her sense of the enormity and importance of her work as an educator taken in conjunction with her new mindfulness of the many responsibilities of an educator is interpreted as an indication of the development a new belief and consequent private theory. As she got to know the children in her classes she “realized” that not only must she not diminish the children in her care but she perceives that she must be all things at all times for them. Her belief that an *“Educator takes responsibility*

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*for the lives of the learners*” subsequently implicitly translates in her own classroom into a private theory that “*I must take responsibility for the lives of the learner.*” An “expressive discourse” (Polkinghorne, 1998: 31) written in her journal where Nerine seems to judge herself and her colleagues against the standard of this evolving private theory supports this interpretation of the development of her private theory.

The uninterested attitude of adults angers me. It is our responsibility as adults to help the children and what do we do? We turn our heads and pretend not to see...children just begging for attention and all they get is teachers that scream at them. It embarrasses me tremendously but I'm also guilty of this, we are in a vocation in which we just aren't allowed to do this ... These children are our responsibility and if we don't see it that way ... we shouldn't be in the profession ... (Nerine, 17 May 2002: Journal entry).

Nerine considers that she and some of her colleagues have fallen short of her expectations for herself in the classroom. She realizes that she can't be the “perfect teacher” because the “children are not allowing me to be that” and she becomes distressed. “It's very frustrating at times” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2). As an educator Nerine wants and perceives a responsibility to be “meaningful” to her students in both the emotional and academic spheres of their lives. What she wants to be able to do and what she perceives she is able to do, however, collide.

The collision of ambition and ability is very evident in her journal entries and throughout the interviews. Nerine expresses most often her dissatisfaction with the difficulty of fulfilling the emotional role of counselor or spiritual advisor or “mother” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 3) that she perceives to be a large part if not the largest part of her responsibility. The cause of her difficulty seems to be a series of collisions with events and attitudes. In this affective role her intention of not diminishing another person as well as providing a nurturing environment for the learners collides with what Nerine sees as a pervasive societal perception of the children.

I know that even though lots of people think they are black and poor and only a housemaid's child, that they will never become something. I want to change that vision they've got of themselves ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 3).

As well as clashing with societal attitudes Nerine encounters obstructive attitudes in the

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children themselves. Despite several months of continual efforts to encourage the children she is appalled when she meets with the opinions that the children have concerning their appearance.

Today they got their school photographs. They all look beautiful and what do they do, they sit and tell me how every ugly they are ... They have the most beautiful photos and all they do is tell me how ugly they look ... These children do not realize that there are literally millions of types of beautiful. They do not realize that you can be beautiful in different ways without having blond hair. I realize now for the first time that more black women should be role models ... It is a great problem that definitely won't be solved in a day particularly in South Africa ... (Nerine, 18 May 2002: Journal entry).

In this passage Nerine develops the theme that there is more than one way to be beautiful and her outrage is evident in the repetition of the children's statements about being ugly. In addition she is frustrated with the impossible physical and emotional circumstances that some of her learners must endure and her private theory of responsibility collides with her powerlessness to change their circumstances.

Yes, I've got one boy, U--- his sister got pregnant when she was sixteen. The boyfriend then killed himself when they were seventeen. Then the social workers came and took the baby away from his sister and gave it to the parents. The parents is (sic) raising this baby. The mom had a stroke. They've got a little sister. Her brainstem is calcifying and he told me she can die any moment because the doctors can't determine how far the brainstem will calcify because it won't get information between the body and the brain anymore. So they can't determine that and she's getting these fits and it's very bad. And, you know what, he is as tall as me. He's twelve, not even twelve yet. He's as tall as me - very big. People is always making jokes, teasing him and everything and he is this angel. You must see his work it is always perfectly done. He's this polite person who is always coming up for everyone who's hurt or bullied. He's just this beautiful person. I think to myself I don't think there's lots of children in that school who's got worse living circumstance and his sister's a drug addict. She's total cocaine or ...addict. He told me the other day, before, a month ago, he told me he's got this piggy bank and he thinks he's got about R50 in it

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now and they are poor so R50 is a lot of money. Then on Monday he came to me, last Monday and he told me his sister stole his piggy bank. And I think to myself this poor kid, but he's an angel. He is friends of everyone and there's this little boy T--- who's always getting bullied. U---'s always helping him. And I thought to myself, such a lovely kid ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 1).

In one of the longest and most complete “little stories” in the narratives, Nerine portrays U--- as a romantic hero (Polkinghorne, 1998:15) an angel who is “progressing” against all odds toward overcoming a terrible environment and marvels at his fortitude. Her perhaps unconscious decision to tell the story in such extensive detail compared to others of her stories (Witherell and Noddings, 19: 1) strengthens the interpretation of her conviction that children are not insufficient.

Fulfilling the responsibilities of the academic role of learning facilitator is equally challenging for Nerine. In her quest to be a brilliant educator, her private theories collide with the behaviour of the children and her inexperience in the classrooms of a South Africa transformed from single culture groupings and authoritarian postures. She often seems to be working “against the grain” (Cochran - Smith, 1991) of her own intentions. First and foremost Nerine collided with the sometimes inattentive or unruly or even rude behaviour of the children

The reason why I do not want to be unnecessarily strict is quite simple. It upsets the children terribly. Many children get screamed at day and night ... Emotionally it is not good for a child. Many of them just want love and acceptance ... I do not want to violate these children by also shouting at them at school as well, a place that is supposed to be a safe haven for them is becoming for some children a place that they fear ... (Nerine, 2 May 2002: Journal entry).

Nerine wants the children to listen to her calmly but does not want to scream to get their attention. On several occasions, however, Nerine resorted to screaming at the children which surprised and alarmed her.

I never thought that I am the type of person to yell, but today I was proved wrong because not only did I scream but I thought that I could just take certain children and physically throw them out the window ... (Nerine, 16 April 2002: Journal entry).

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Her own unexpected feelings of anger with some of the children seems to be in direct confrontation with the perceptions expressed in her private theories. Her reaction is a mixture of feelings. At times she is despondent and self accusatory and at other times she becomes angry because the children are “making her feel” insufficient. The teacher is expected to be respectful of children but children do not seem to be respectful of educators. “It's not fair,” says Nerine (Nerine, 2002: Interview 4).

A second source of conflict in the academic role for Nerine is the cultural and language diversity in her classroom. In the historical context of her own “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975: 65) in a uni-lingual and mono-cultural school, the classrooms in which she now works are unfamiliar ground.

You must cater ... for three different cultures ... also you must remember that you have this specific work to teach all of these kids and everyone of those children learn in a different way and you must try to accommodate everyone's way of learning but sometimes it's just ... it's just nearly impossible ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2).

Moreover, the teacher-directed, largely authoritarian style of the classrooms that Nerine attended in the apartheid era collides with the philosophy of the outcomes based education style of teaching, promoting a learner centred approach. The independence of the learner is now a national educational goal and is in contrast to the conformity of the past. Although Nerine prefers the “new” methods of teaching, she finds that:

It doesn't come easily to me. I work myself to death not to give the answers to the children ... I think it is because I spent years and years in an education system that was based on the old paradigm. Now suddenly I have to go against everything that I was ever taught (Nerine, 18 May 2002: Journal entry). I find it very difficult not to answer their questions. When I listen to them and hear how wrong their thinking is I just want to chip in and explain the concept correctly to them. Today I caught myself once or twice that I got involved in discussion with a learner but then tried to extricate myself by putting specific questions to them ... (Nerine, 6 August 2002: Journal entry).

Her private theory holding Nerine responsible for the academic progress as well as the emotional well being of her learners in the new educational system rubs against the “old

paradigm”. She struggles herself in the university courses with lecturers who do not give explicit instructions and who purposefully will not answer specific questions about the meaning of terminology such as “practice theory of teaching” (Slabbert and DeKock, 2004: 8). The ambiguity in her own learning as well as in that of her role as academic facilitator of her classroom frequently brings Nerine back again to images of “being in the dark” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 3).

Throughout her narratives are “problem(s) ... posed for solution (or) dilemma(s) ... of ... teaching that present ... two or more logical alternatives, the loss of either of which is equally unfavorable ...” (Cochran-Smith, 1991: 299). As Nerine says, “One experiences so many problem situations in which you don't always get something out of it ... (Nerine, 10 June 2002: Journal entry). The two private theories (*I must never diminish another person* and *I am responsible for the lives of the learners*) implicitly guide her behaviour and are being tested in collisions of all sorts at the same time. Her sense of unbalance, confusion and dismay seemed at times to leave her precipitously close to defeat. “Sometimes there's days that you feel like being so negative but you can't let it because otherwise you'll just drown in all that negativity ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 5).

### **Disa’s Story:**

**‘I love to inspire people to be beyond what they think they can be.’**

Disa also participated in the PGCE programme in the first year of its existence in 2002. The PGCE programme was planned to be completed in one year, but Disa studied for eighteen months due to ill health. At the beginning of her PGCE year while playing soccer her jaw was broken. She is a dedicated and enthusiastic player and was chosen to play for the university team. After her injury she was hospitalized for a period and then her jaw had to be wired shut in order to heal. We first met shortly after the wires had been removed, but she had missed several months of the course and spent only a short time in her first school assignment. In the first interview session she also mentioned that her sister had just passed away and Disa said that she still didn't “feel herself” (Disa, 2002: Interview 1). Disa was living amongst friends in a student hostel (dormitory) on the university campus, visiting her

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home and family in another province during the holidays when she had the money. She was interviewed five times throughout the course of her study, four times in the first year and then once during her extended school based assignment in 2003. We met for the interviews at the university after she had been teaching in the morning and attending university classes in the afternoon and before her soccer practice in the early evening. She didn't give up her soccer playing even after the injury as she said that playing soccer helped her to “focus” (Disa, 2002: Interview 1). Disa signed the confidentiality agreement and agreed to participate in an interview schedule even though it would prove to be quite inconvenient for her. Periodically throughout the year Disa had financial difficulties which needed to be sorted out and she was very conscious of her tight budget. “I think I'm gonna be short of money” (Disa, 2002: Interview 1). She was late or missed appointments for interviews several times due to a difficulty with transportation. Disa did not have access to a car and had to rely on the somewhat unreliable public transport often having to travel long distances out of her way to reach her destination. Several times after the interviews I drove her to her soccer practice. As we drove together she chatted cheerfully and waved and called out the window to her friends as we passed them along the way. The fifth interview was conducted in 2003 at the school where she completed her teaching assignment for the university. Just before the final interview I observed her for several hours in the class with the children. Her reflective journal was read at the end of 2002. In the field text Disa is described as a

slight, very pretty young woman in her early twenties. She says that she is shy. ‘The first thing about me is that I am very scared ... I grew up in a certain way. I wasn't allowed to say anything. My brothers and sisters had to say things for me’ ... She is seSotho speaking but is teaching in English ... (Field text entry August 2002).

In all of the interviews Disa appeared energetic and full of movement. She jumped up to answer her cellphone at least once in every interview. While talking on the cellphone she paced around the room. When sitting she bounced her leg up and down and when speaking used her hands to gesture often touching me to make a point. She was soft-spoken and she smiled and laughed frequently during the interviews. Her conversational style although somewhat hesitant due to her recent acquisition of English was equally energetic. In conversation she gave the impression of a person who is eager to explore new ideas. The analysis of her narratives using the performative, structural and literary criticism cluster of

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methods showed that the most frequent structural component of her language was the use of questions. She rarely used figurative language and indicated only one critical episode. The dominant impression of her was of a warm and friendly actively enthusiastic person intensely interested in and wanting to talk about teaching rather than her personal situation or circumstances.

Despite her cheerful demeanor Disa had endured traumatic circumstance in her life before coming to the university. She arrived at the university as an undergraduate with the intention of becoming a psychologist. A family crisis that she described almost immediately in the interviews still pained her deeply and this “critical episode” was a decisive influence on her choice of study and career.

The other thing that made me want to do psychology is ... my ... cousin died in '96 and we were very close. We were like twins. Like twin sisters and she killed herself. She committed suicide. And the other thing that makes me wonder is what makes her to do that. What did she do to her parents? Why should she want to finish her beautiful life in this tragic way? I looked at psychology ... With this I can be able to understand what happened in there...She never had a very easy life ... Things would just go wrong with her ... Well when it is all done, you go up a hill, you don't go down there ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

In this passage Disa expresses her strong emotions in the questions that she asks. She began a search for answers to her questions while studying psychology but the search continued to haunt her both professionally and personally.

Disa finished her undergraduate degree in psychology but because of financial circumstances could not continue with her plans to become a psychologist and she had to decide what to do next. At first she had no intention of becoming an educator. Because her own experience at school as a child was largely unpleasant and at times frightening for her, she was not interested in becoming part of the education system Disa spoke at length about the severe circumstances of her early schooling. In the schools that Disa attended as a child she was expected to accept and obey without question what adults, especially males, told her otherwise there could be physical consequences.

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The school where I was, it was a very good school but they used to whip us, jisse! Ja, the thing ... the thing is that is how it has to be done at that time ... You had to give the child school and the child had to listen to you ... My worst teacher was this other guy. When you made a mistake, he will take your hand and pew! on the table. It was horrible! It wasn't very good because he was teaching us Northern Sotho. We know Northern Sotho so ah! He was really very terrible! He was a dictator. He just stood upright like this, if you go like this (she slumps in her seat) he hits harder ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

When not physically frightened Disa found her schooling to be boring and tedious. She was unenthusiastic about the curriculum and the way it was taught.

I was ... I was really bored ... she (the teacher) gives stupid things. They teach us very stupid things. I hated maths and ... And I didn't know it was something that ... because those teachers they were just stupid ... they couldn't relate to the real problems that we have ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

Even though Disa chooses to retell these experiences only once in all of the narratives and does not dwell on them, when they are retold she emphasizes strong feelings and a sense of the stifling confinement of not being allowed to move or speak in the classroom. For an active, energetic person such as Disa the physical restrictions of her school days were especially distressing and these early experiences are always in the background of her thoughts about teaching. In this passage and throughout her narratives, she uses language that is concrete and usually without figurative embellishments but rather reinforced with physical gestures. The forceful, direct language she uses in the few passages about her early schooling, “dictator” and “horrible” and “terrible” and “stupid” as well as slapping her fist on the table give a formidable and heavy impression of her experiences.

Also adding to the restrictive atmosphere, much to her disappointment, the community in which Disa grew up supported the school and its relationship to the children. She grew up in a small rural community in another province with her parents (who are educators) and a large family of brothers and sisters.

Where I came from you used to walk something like an hour to school. I used to walk an hour there and an hour coming back. It was six o'clock I get out of home. No

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matter what the weather. The only time I couldn't go to school was ... because my house is the other side and there's this big river over and the school is on the other side ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

The community was a close knit one and family oriented but at the same time had very strict and confining standards and codes of behaviour.

The problem that we have is ... children get ... children get molested. But because of the thing of saying you cannot tell the people about it. You can't do that. How about the name of the family? What are people gonna say about that? So it is kind of like everybody has trapped it inside the house and keep it there. Um, female abuse and all that, it is very high but people don't want to speak about it. You can't say anything. If a man says this, that's it, keep it that way ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

The culture of the community in which Disa grew up appears to her to be conservative and unwilling to consider innovation or improvement. Members of the community seemed to Disa to be more concerned with preservation than progress, reputation than individuality or independence and even preferred silence to justice. As Disa says that's how it was at that time. From her perspective now in this passage, Disa uses the first of the many questions in her narratives to portray and at the same time critically examine the attitude she lived with in her community. Disa's use of the word “trap” in this passage is significant also as it adds to the sense of physical limitations and inhibitions in her childhood circumstances.

On the other hand, in a “collision” of sorts in Pretoria as an undergraduate at university Disa made friends and studied with professors who removed the restrictions of her earlier childhood and opened up a way of life and learning that was new to her and that she found potentially empowering for herself, her community and her teaching.

... and then I have this friend of mine. He ... he's a marvelous teacher ... I started liking maths here at Varsity. I will ask him why didn't I see this when I was still young, you know? And that guy just do it like that (she clicks her fingers). And I think those are the teachers I needed. Not the one that went to the teaching programme ... why don't they hire those people? (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

Disa's realization that education did not have to be the way it was when she was a child changed her mind about becoming an educator.

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I don't know ... I didn't want to be a teacher at first ... But when I ... when I came to Pretoria and I've been exposed to all those different cultures and different methods of teaching, I felt as if back home the people are still very far behind with all these things ... that is the thing that made me want to be a teacher ... I just felt there's a short of real educators who are well trained to do the job. They just ... read everything in the book and give it back because I'm from a very...what can I say ... a very ... is it called ... a disadvantaged community, where we don't have facilities, where like kids are ... become pregnant. Everything is boring at school, lots of drop outs and so ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

The collision between her experience of education as a child and her experiences of education as an undergraduate at the university was powerful enough to change her mind about the possibility of learning to become an educator. When it became feasible for Disa to enroll in the PGCE programme although not completely convinced she hesitantly decided she would take advantage of the opportunity.

Almost immediately when Disa began the PGCE course she realized that, unlike her own schooling, education could be challenging for the children and intriguingly could also be challenging for her as an educator and a person as well.

So I think the person who challenged me most was Professor ... (One of the PGCE programme developers). Ja, influenced by her because ... even when ... when in our training, it was not all about training to be a teacher. It's about training to be educators and also about improving your own life, developing yourself. Right along with your teaching ... and I said: okay and a little bit of something inside me just started ... To me it just kind of just brought up that I was dying inside me cause I hated teaching and all you know? And now I'm glad. I'm glad I'm in this programme! ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 2).

Disa has seen in these several experience in Pretoria that there are different ways to approach education and the differences are powerful for schools and classrooms and for herself. The combination of wanting to improve, to “start” herself as a person and an educator, wanting to help to improve her community who seem so “far behind” as well as considering the devastation caused by the sister who didn't “go up the hill” and accept the challenges in her

life but instead “went down there” seemed to crystallize into a belief that *Everyone is capable of becoming more than they think they can*. Her sister could have chosen to fight her problems. The community can choose to provide better education for the children. The exhilarating perception that Disa can “start “ herself again now becomes the implicit private theory that *I can become more than I think I can*. And one of the few figurative uses of language in her narratives, the image of “going up a hill” becomes her metaphor which describes the struggles - the collisions in Nerine's metaphor - that are encountered in the process of becoming more than one thinks one can.

Because of this private theory Disa begins her PGCE year of learning to become an educator with a “mission” to help her community, her learners and herself to grow and develop into the vision that she holds for them and for herself. She acknowledges that

It's always been in my heart to teach and ... inspire. I love to inspire people to be beyond what they think they can be ... I just felt it is just what has to be done. It's what teaching is about ... I'm trying hard to come up to that. That is like my goal ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 5) ... then I will be able to go back home and ... and ... try to improve the situation at home ... So I felt there's an opportunity for me to go back and give back to the community whilst they couldn't help themselves ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

Her personal and emotional commitment to her mission is evident in the “situated meaning” of her use of the word “heart”. Her heart is the place where she keeps her purpose. Interestingly she does not choose the phrase “it's always been in my mind” with the concomitant intellectual connotations to describe her intentions. Rather, for Disa teaching and inspiring is perceived as an emotional experience. The heart in this passage is the symbolic, figurative centre of caring and compassion.

In fact, a “theme” of the work of the heart (helping and caring for others) running throughout her early narratives supports her commitment to her mission, to her belief that everyone can be more than they think they can and her private theory that she can be more than she thinks she can.

I think my dad, ja ... he's the kind of person, him and my mother don't have something

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to eat, but somebody has to have something. When I grew up I used to stay with people that I didn't even know their parents but I used to call them my brothers and sisters cause he took them outside the home and he place them in our home and we'd take them to school, give them food, give them everything ... I remember it was ... I was so angry with him, I think it was last year, I didn't come to school because we didn't have money at home because he takes my money and gave it to somebody else and I was like ... Ah, how could he do that? I'm your child and you know ... But in the end I realized that that person needed the money more than I did because if he managed to get whatever that he wanted that time, now I am able to get to do whatever I want to do now because of him giving him that money. God has provided for me also to come and continue with what I wanted to do all this time ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

The “little story” has a happy ending and a moral lesson that in the end helping others will benefit everyone involved. At first Disa was angry about not having the money for her studies but discovers that she can “climb the hill” and overcome the problem and in the end both she and her brothers and sisters could do more than they thought they could. Supported by personal experiences and a family culture of giving to others, Disa intuitively feels that as an educator she can express her caring and willingness to help by inspiring others and herself in the classroom to be more than they think they can. Much like in a romantic progression story, Disa herself is the heroine who will accept and even enjoy the challenges of fulfilling her goal.

But in her zeal, Disa encounters hills/collisions along the way to inspiring others and herself to be more than they think they can. In her community, in her work at school and most of all in molding and changing herself she faces obstacles which need to be overcome to achieve her goals. When thinking about how to inspire her community to be more than they think they can by improving the education of their children, Disa recognizes and speaks of at least two barriers that she faces. First, the schools in her community are desperately under resourced and cannot afford to hire new teachers to inspire the children.

How can you do it if you don't have the facilities? I mean, they're paying some of the school fees some like R100 a year. So there's no way you gonna be able to hire new

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teachers, exciting teachers. They're just depending on the government and the government doesn't give them any posts. So it's ... it is really very hard for them ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

Second, perhaps even more troubling for Disa is the attitude of the educators in the schools in her home community.

You know so everything just changes but still ... not much has changed. The whole ... the whole thing just ... the OBE thing just came and then when you look at home all the teachers just resent OBE. And maybe that is another reason why I wanted to go and do it, you know. And what ... they don't know exactly what to do because the government says: fine this HSS, a combination of History, Geography and Life Orientation sometimes you'll find. So it's fine, go ahead! And there's not a specific book and if you remember these people, they were trained to go and look back at the text books and what can I say, just give it back the way it is ... So they still have that mind of saying: I can't do this! And it's not going to work for me. Ja, and now with this OBE thing, the people that came and teach OBE sometimes they are useless also cause I had my mother tell me that. Look they don't tell them anything ... It's not going to work and then people they gonna jus ... ggg ... ok ... la la la they talk about yesterday's things ... My mother did this and you go like: it's not working for me and you go back and do the same old thing that you used to do. This is what is indeed happening in classes ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

In this expressive discourse Disa describes again in even more detail the circumstances of the schools in her community. She appears deeply concerned about the situation but does not yet have any answers or come to any conclusions except that she wants to go back and help. In this passage she seems to be thinking out loud in a passage of “self-conversation” and making comparisons between her home schools and the schools that she has visited in Pretoria. She criticizes the schools of her childhood and sees a need for changes in the system. Disa perceives change as progress and growth and development all of which she wants to inspire in others and in herself. Her sense of wanting to help and inspire children in her community who attend these schools provides a motivation for her efforts to learn to become an educator - to be more than she thinks she can be.

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Disa has earnest ambitions, but for now as she is participating in the interviews she works and struggles in the classroom in the schools assigned to her in Pretoria. Her first school assignment was in a middle to lower income Indian community in the inner city. However, due to her accident she spent only a few days there. The largest part of her teaching practice was spent in two well - resourced upper income suburban schools. The majority of the children in these schools speak English as a first language and the medium of instruction was English, a second language for Disa. Disa was teaching in the intermediate phase (Grade 4, 5, and 6) and she primarily taught HSS (history and the social sciences) a subject she thoroughly enjoyed. Disa commented on the well-behaved children and the interest that the parents in this school take in the education of their children. In these circumstances she also has some “hills” to climb both professionally and personally, however. Her original vision of teaching and what she finds in the classroom are not the same and collide.

Well my ... no my picture of teaching ... children looking to me, just being so quiet, nobody talks. And when they have to work, they all work! And it's not like that. And whatever that fascinates you, doesn't even fascinate them. I thought like, I would go there and we would all work toward this...do the work we must do. They just do as I do! Noooo! They don't. You find some with difficulties at home ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 2).

The collisions of the classroom come, in fact, not from the behaviour of the children but in the content of the curriculum and engaging and “challenging” the children in the curriculum. Disa feels that restrictions are being placed on the children much like those she faced herself as a child. She is required to follow the syllabus and curriculum that has been organized by her mentors in the grade level and she chafes under the limitations and prescriptions. Disa dislikes the “paperwork” and the “worksheets” that the children are required to complete. She expressed her frustration in the many questions she asks as she describes her work with the children.

Why don't I just make a copy of it and place it in my book? Why do I have to keep writing stuff in my book and wasting time? (Disa, 2002: Interview 2) ... Why do we have to give them extra work of writing down? I want them to be independent learners, how I'm gonna do that? The dirtiness of pollution, they did that in science. Why do I have to redo it again? All of them have to do the same thing, you know.

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Why? Why do you have to be like that? Why don't you allow them to be ... express themselves more? The world changes! Why are you giving them the things of last year? Why don't you look for something that will be relevant to them this year? (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

These questions have no answers in her narratives but indicate the direction of her critical thinking about teaching. Through these questions Disa is expressing her developing vision of teaching and education: children who are allowed to express themselves to become independent learners of a curriculum that is relevant and that reflects the changing world in which they live. Disa is beginning to perceive that successful teaching is not forcing children to spend endless amounts of time writing or repeating work that has already been discussed.

Disa's frustration builds as knowing what she wants to do (to inspire her learners to become more than they think they can be) and how she wants to be (spontaneous, energetic and fascinating) collides with what she finds she is actually able to accomplish in the classroom. Although she partially credits a restraining curriculum and structure in the classrooms, she takes the bulk of the responsibility for what she sees as failures in the classroom on herself. The steepest “hill” she has to climb seems to be her decision that she will have to make changes in herself to be more than she thinks she can be. Due to her past experiences, even the fundamental role of educator is problematic for her. From the very beginning, Disa was uncomfortable with “playing the teacher role.” She was nervous before she entered the classroom for the first time as an educator and she describes her preparations for the experience.

The weekend before someone gave me some things about playing ... playing the teacher role warra warra ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 2) (how) ... to stand in front and take a chalk and write over the board ... (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

The recommendations that she was given were disturbing to her, however. In this passage, she uses the image of playing a role to describe a style of teaching that she rejects. She compares the work of the “chalk and talk” educator to that of an actor playing a role. Her image implies a perception of a lack of sincerity or authenticity in the person who teaches by lecturing only. Dissatisfied with that role and also “shy” (Disa, 2003, Interview 5) she says “I hate standing in front of the children to teach them ... I do ...” (Disa, 2002: Interview 2) but

nevertheless she determinedly forces herself to forge a comfortable position in front of the class “I must not be embarrassed in front of all of the kids ...” (Disa, 2002: Interview 2). She continually has to work “against the grain” of her natural inclinations which are in conflict with the development of a professional personae.

As Disa continues to struggle with what she perceives are her own limitations and the limitations of the educator role, she also persistently confronts her organizational and time management skills and her self-consciousness when functioning in cultures different from her own. As she stands in front of the class taking on the facilitating of learning Disa finds it difficult to organize the material for her learning tasks. “I've got this big idea inside of my head but just to put it on a very logical ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 4). She has difficulty managing her time. “My day started on a very low point. Erica had to pick me up. Unfortunately I was late and I know this is my weak point ...” (Disa, 23 July 2002: Journal entry). She also has difficulty organizing the learners in the classroom. “I wanted them to do the work individually at first, then to switch to co-operative learning. But I failed to do so I asked them to just start by doing it in groups ...” (Disa, 23 July 2002: Journal entry). Using harsh words such as “fail” frequently when describing her own attempts as well as words such as “mess” (Disa, 31 July 2002: Journal entry) and “pathetic” (Disa, 2002: Interview 3) indicates the intensity of her efforts sometimes leaving her feeling depressed and discouraged.

I arrived very late at the school due to transport problems. I felt so tired and emotionally drained that I didn't feel like going to the class and facilitating learning...It was the longest day of my practice ... I tried to encourage them, but I failed because I was feeling emotionally down ... (Disa, 31 July 2002: Journal entry).

Within the school environment Disa also struggled with relationships among her colleagues. She purposely took on the challenge, the “collision” of being the only seSotho speaking teacher in a school full of English speakers.

I just wanted to take a finally school and see, you know, one black kid in a lily-white school. I wanted to see what came of that. That's one thing I thought, you know, and you know my English is ... is my second language. I started speaking English right here in Varsity ... You know, and I was like oooh God, how am I gonna do this? You

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know the cultural differences ... How you relate to the different cultures ... It ... it has been a major shift to me, honestly I don't want to lie because the previous schools, I didn't spend much time with the teachers ... It ... at first it was like, God, I ... I ... I'm part of the staff, ah ... oh ... how do I have to act? You know because I'm different, I'll just have to put it that way. The way they do things is not the way I do my stuff, you know. The way they talk, the language is different and now I have to sit and go ... when they talk about their husbands I have to nod and say, oh yes, ah ... The first three months I was like, how am I going to cope with this? You know the thing of racism and all? But ... (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

The poignant questions she asks in this passage point to her earnest efforts to make sense of the complex experiences that she is undergoing. Her appeal to a higher being appears not as a figure of speech but a genuine request for help in understanding the ideological collisions with the community of her childhood, collisions with a structured curriculum in her practice teaching school and the collisions of her personal professional challenges. All of these experiences of collision leave Disa with questions about her ability to become the educator she wants to become.

### **Erica's Story:**

**'I want to make up for the pain and suffering. I want to make the world a better place to live.'**

Erica is an attractive Afrikaans speaking woman in her mid forties who is thoroughly bilingual (Afrikaans and English). Soft spoken and articulate, she has short black hair and large expressive blue eyes which are set off by a very pale complexion. She wears colour coordinated slacks and shirts often "accessorized" with teddy bear pins, Aids ribbons or a cross. She entered the PGCE programme in 2003 as the oldest student in the course. We began the interview early in the school year almost immediately after the week-long orientation seminar that introduces the programme. She was interviewed seven times in the course of the year that she was enrolled in the programme and once in 2004 when she was completing a temporary but full time teaching assignment at a primary school. The eighth interview was not tape recorded as we met at a coffee shop so that her children could join us.

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All of the other interviews were tape recorded and conducted at the university on a bench near her classroom. Each of the interviews was conducted late in the afternoon after she had been teaching all day and had attended a university class. In addition to the eight interviews I also visited Erica at the second school to which she was assigned and “shadowed” her from the early morning until lunch time - meeting her colleagues on the teaching staff and her younger colleagues in the PGCE programme. I also attended the end of the year PGCE group seminar where as part of a team Erica had prepared and gave a presentation on an assigned topic. Throughout the year I asked Erica to allow me to read her written reflections but was never able to do so. She declined my request finally by saying that after she had reread them she found her writing to be of poor quality and would prefer that I look at her prepared portfolio as she felt that she had done better work on that assignment. In the interviews her conversational style was fluent and articulate and often impassioned. An analysis of her narratives from both her interviews and her final portfolio using the performative, structural and literary criticism clusters of methods showed a high frequency of expressive discourse and descriptions of critical episodes with an infrequent use of figurative or descriptive language.

It was often difficult to arrange meetings with Erica, as she is a busy person despite an air of calm and unflappable good nature. She expressed a preference that the interviews not be conducted on Friday afternoons as she said that that is her special day for her family. Erica has been married for almost twenty years to an industrial psychologist who maintains a private practice at home and also lectures at the university level. She is the mother of two girls - one in high school (age 15) and her “baby” (age 12 - Erica, 2003: Interview 6) who is in Grade 7. Erica assumes full responsibility for the running of her household and is also very involved with extended family members one of whom is a cousin who was critically ill at the time of the first interview and who subsequently died during the course of the year. When I thanked her for giving up her time to participate in the study she said, “You know what they say - ask a busy person” (Erica, 2003: Interview 1). In the field notes written after each interview it was noted that Erica also frequently seemed tired with dark circles under her eyes. She often did not feel well and complained of a continual stomachache.

I've got this tummy ache ... constant tummy aches ... like a child that's stressed.

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Mmmm, ja, well I've ... I've got spastic colon so ... that sort of plays up once a year but now ... every day, every night every morning ... and what I eat ... it doesn't matter what I eat, if I eat beans or stop drinking milk or whatever. It's still there. Ja, I've actually ... I can't believe ... the last time I had it was maybe in June last year, but now it's everyday ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 2).

She also contracted a “flu” for several weeks during the year (Erica, 2003: Interview 5) but continued with her teaching assignment, reading for and attending classes and taking care of her family (including a visit from her in - laws) all of which she found difficult and extremely tiring.

Despite her fatigue and ill health and busy schedule Erica was generous with her time and the interviews often lasted 45 minutes to an hour. As each interview progressed she appeared to relax and laughed and smiled frequently. In the interviews Erica demonstrated a perspective with a “world view” as she articulated her opinions in frequent “persuasive discourses” concerning a wide variety of social issues ranging from the war in Iraq to the position of women in society.

It's an unnecessary thing ... it's going to affect education and, if you think about all the children in Iraq. And they're going to be a lost generation because, if you think, education is not going to take place there for awhile...it's not our children ... but children are our children...the world's children are our children ... It upsets me ... war upsets me ... when I think about war, I become a feminist because it, I don't know it always feels to me like it's men that start wars and women and children that suffer at the end of the day. I think if there were more women in leadership positions, there would have been more harmony and peace on earth because men are testosterone driven. They need to fight ... it's ... a(n) evolution thing ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

In fact, Erica expressed curiosity, interest and enjoyment in learning and talking about many facets of life and areas of study. She appeared to be well read, often quoting and recommending books she had enjoyed or authors writing on the ideas that we discussed. She remarked that she enjoys learning for the sake of learning.

I'm sorry but I love senseless knowledge. I mean like reading Chappies papers and ... I mean, I need to know what the sheep looks like with worms, how ... how to help a

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sheep ... a cow that's struggling ... I will never use it but I feel quite chuffed because I got all this senseless knowledge. I think it is such a pity that people don't learn ... philosophy and things ... even if it's just for fun ... gives you the pure enjoyment ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 2).

As with many of her thoughts Erica relates this love of learning to her experiences in her own life and with her own children. She feels that she has passed on her enthusiasm to her daughters who both do very well academically at school. She says that she also finds that some of the many extracts of “knowledge” that she has gathered are actually useful when helping her children with their homework for example ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 2).

In our initial conversations Erica's relaxed manner and “motherly perceptions” (Erica, 2003: Interview 3) revealed her enthusiastic interests in a variety of subjects but concealed the depth of her concerns and passions. However, as time passed the overall impression that Erica presents (particularly when comparing her interviews with her written portfolio) is that of a complex, warm and sensitive woman with a strong social conscience who seems to view teaching as an extension of her caring as she says, in a statement of her mission as an educator:

I wanted to make up for the pain and suffering. I want to make the world a better place. I incorporated the tremendous unemployment rate in the country ... teaching them values and caring for unemployed people ... I've always been like that ... I'm a ... tremendous animal rights activist ... And I teach in my Sunday School ... Ja, I've always had this focus. Ja, ja since I've been a child I've always come up for the underdog ... I will always bring in the social thing, always ... that's social issues. People must be treated fairly ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 5)

Erica enters into education acutely aware of the suffering of others and the discrepancy with which people have been treated. Consequently she disciplines herself almost harshly to avoid unfairness. She would not allow herself to take advantage of her position as an older student (with many more responsibilities than her younger colleagues) to “cut corners” in her work, home or study life. “My whole purpose is to study this year and not be, you know, not have it the easy way. If there's an easy way?” (Erica, 2003: Interview 1).

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Erica did not come to the PGCE programme the “easy way” either. As an older student Erica has an extensive and rich history of childhood, school and study and work and family experiences, which she draws on and describes in our interviews. Like Disa and Nerine, Erica experienced many conflicts and collisions along the way to making the decision to become an educator. Looking back on her childhood, Erica maintains that the sometimes painful memories of her early experiences exert a strong influence on her later life. The powerful and stark image she describes is one of hard work and responsibility with no escape into childhood from the ever-present pressure of the possibility of colliding with destruction.

I grew up on a farm, a large sheep farm. And ... the nice thing about working in the corporate environment, you can get extensions and things like that but ... if somebody, if a sheep is dying on the farm ... you save it. You don't say sheep, wait till tomorrow and we'll save you ... or if you need to harvest on the farm ... if you don't harvest today ... whatever's going to get ... tomorrow the mealies will rot or it will rain or something will happen ... I think from a very small age I've been installed that tremendous sense of responsibility. Wait ... it needs to be done! If it's time for the wool to be shorn ... you can't ... if the rain comes you try and keep the sheep dry, you don't leave them outside and hope that the sun's going to shine tomorrow ... I was brought up by a very strong, strict father who, we never went on holiday, there was no play everybody worked on the farm. It wasn't a thing like children play and adults work ... even though the job was small everybody worked. You worked, you eat, you know ... all the lambs ... some of the sheep chuck away their lambs especially when they give birth at a young age and such. And these lambs had to get a bottle before I go to school, so at 5 o'clock I'd heat the milk, get the bottle and in the evening ... they had to get a bottle again and my mom insisted that they get a bottle at four in the afternoon and at ten at night ... there were sometimes twenty of these lambs and we were three girls and my mom and dad, so...even though you were small you had to feed them at ten o'clock ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 2).

Using strong, blunt language, such as “dying” and “rot” and “chuck away” and “insist” with no mitigating softer language in this “persuasive discourse” (Polkinghorne, 1988: 31) Erica gives a sense of the relentless nature of her childhood and the almost oppressive atmosphere of work and no play. She never openly criticizes her parents except to say that her childhood

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was “difficult” (Erica, 2003: Interview 1) but credits her admittedly almost unrealistic sense of responsibility to her upbringing.

And I mean, how many young students along the way were constantly missing due dates, constantly requesting for extensions ... I think it's a extreme sense of responsibility ... I think it comes from you parents ... I think it's a deep seated thing that comes from your parents ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 2).

In this passage she contrasts her own upbringing characterized by hard work with no respite to the irresponsible work habits of her young colleagues. She describes her life on the farm using harsh language but on the other hand she gains her own sense of responsibility and work ethic from the uncompromising demands of her parents. Erica values the work ethic in herself, however, or at least has made it a part of her life and speaks of instilling a sense of responsibility in her daughters (Erica, 2003: Interview 2). When repeating the word “constantly” in the second passage she seems to imply a disdain for the students who do not fulfill or at least take seriously their obligations, missing a deadline is something that Erica would not allow herself to do. But her sense of responsibility was not gained without distressing collisions between her father and herself.

Her father was a forceful presence in other spheres of her life as well. While at the school of which her father was a founding member and strong supporter, her sensitive nature collided with strict atmosphere of the classroom.

Oh yes ... I was quite good at maths, I actually in Grade 7 ... I got the highest marks in maths. And I always wanted to be a doctor. And then in ... Grade 9 ... I got this maths teacher and I lost it at the beginning of February and ... I was so scared of him. He used to have a big cane and ... he used to hit the kids. And he never hit the girls but he hit the boys and had them stand in front of the class and used ... you had to bend and he used to actually whack them. Then my maths went ... my maths just flew out the window there. Because of the teacher and he and my father had an excellent relationship. My father was on the Parent Teachers Committee and this guy was sort of one of the big forefathers of the thing. Um ... it ended up that my father didn't believe me ... I was the bad one, I was stupid, I couldn't do maths and this guy when I asked him ... 'could you please explain this to me?' and that gruff answer, 'what don't

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you understand?' ... That I'll never forget that ... and I might have been a doctor today ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

The contrast of her polite language (“could you please”) when asking for help and the abruptness (“what don't you understand”) of the teacher's reply sharpens the sense of Erica's collision with her surroundings now at school as well as at home. Using the figurative language “just flew out the window there” reinforces the abruptness and finality of her loss. In addition Erica also witnessed the collision of her father's strong views with the forces of political change erupting in the country. She recalls several “critical episodes” from this time in her life.

I remember being in Grade 7 when the Soweto riots started. I remember my very Afrikaner racist father remarking at dinner table, “Hulle gaan ons nog almal vrek maak” (They are going to kill us all). I was frightened and confused ... I clearly remember the influences on my life during the apartheid years when military training was compulsory for all white males. I was in Grade 8 when one of my first school friends died in the war in Southwest Africa and how scared and confused I was. At school we had to march, have bomb drills and learn how to use a firearm ... (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 10).

When it was time for Erica to leave school and choose a career the combination of collisions she had both undergone and witnessed directed her choice and was, in fact, the result of another angry collision with her father.

I think my favourite teacher probably was a Mrs. N. that taught me English in Matric and she gave me such a passion for English literature and English poetry and when I decided to do teaching was ... at that age ... I wanted to become a language teacher, teach Afrikaans and English. And then I had a bit of a conflict with my father ... I decided no, I'll do nursing. Nurses get paid a salary while they're studying and I don't want anything of anybody ... I had a difficult childhood and a difficult father. I wanted to get away from it all, wanted to be independent and earn my own salary. Nursing was the better choice ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 1).

The collisions with her family at home and at school were so profound (“whenever I dream, I am still back at school ... I haven't been in school for twenty-two years and I still dream.” Erica, 2003: Interview 2) that she chooses her course of study as a means of leaving home

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rather than doing what she had wanted to do - either to become a doctor or an educator. Her early career choice “goes against the grain” of her original ambitions. Instead “in the grave and frightening atmosphere of the Medical Corps and feeling almost untouchable ... (but) ... doing community health amongst the children of the Defense Force members I could see the influence of war on children's lives ...” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 10). By this time Erica had married and had two children and she continues the story, “I remember how scared and confused I felt when Mandela was released as I was the mother of a baby and a toddler then and I worried about their future ...”(Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 10).

Her political views were changing, however, and Erica's uncertainty about the political scene collided with the new ideas that she was exposed to when she entered the Rhodes University satellite campus in East London. The young family had moved to East London for her husband's work and Erica began to study again.

Luckily I changed. I developed and became aware of the harsh and sad things we did to our fellow South Africans. I did sociology at Rhodes and luckily they taught me about slavery, apartheid and globalization and suddenly I started reading furiously and became a passionate arguer of the atrocities of apartheid ... I sometimes reflected on how I could be part of a system that took away the rights of the learners' forefathers and that spurred me on to be the best educator that I could ... I am so grateful that my perspective changed, that I realized what it was all about. If only I knew beforehand I would have not chosen to be part of an unfair and oppressive system at all ... (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 10).

Erica describes her change in lively, vivid language - “luckily” and “passionate” and “grateful” and “furiously” and “atrocities” - that is in marked contrast to the repetitive blunt language she used to describe her childhood. Away from her childhood home she seems to take pride in her development from an unsure and confused almost neutral apologist for apartheid to a strong opponent. Her new found academic interests deeply changed and moved her and generate another series of collisions for Erica, however.

Erica had developed a strong interest and aptitude for the social sciences and would have liked to continue with the studies but collided with her husband over what she should study

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and eventually where she would work and live. Erica intended to complete a liberal arts degree. Her husband disagreed and wanted her to study for a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

I have always loved philosophy and sociology but due to a certain course that my life has taken I studied towards a B.Comm ... My husband said, 'You study a B.Comm, you don't do a BA. You do a B.Comm if you want to study!' Ah and I battled. I mean all the financial subjects, all the economics, whatever. I just battled to pass them ... And I've been traveling with my husband because you know we ... he gets sort of a study grant if your husband lectures or so and so I've been all over the place ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 1).

While earning her B.Comm degree due to a shortage of qualified teachers Erica had the opportunity even without a teaching qualification to teach high school computer courses in East London. She found that she enjoyed teaching immensely.

Well ... I've always ... I've always craved teaching ... you know! I've always ... actually loved that year we taught. Unfortunately my husband got a post here so we moved back to Pretoria again so I had to leave it and I never cried so much or so hard in my life ... because I remember always remember praying and saying: "God please, please could you make me a teacher. I got this year and the year passed so quickly and this thing. But God you know you...but God I really like teaching, why did you do this thing to me? You know? (Erica, 2003: Interview 1).

This was the only passage in Erica's narratives in which she referred to crying or to her prayers. The intensity of her emotions as she pleads for her teaching is unmistakable in these references. Her language is raw and slightly incoherent as she reacts powerfully to the context created by her collision with what she perceives to be immovable circumstances. There was no respite. Giving up her work as an educator in East London and returning to Pretoria, Erica worked in the computer department of a large firm and then became a manager in a nursing home. However, after several years she says she felt "burned out" (Erica, 2003: Interview 1) and finally much to her delight her husband suggested that she study to qualify as an educator at the University of Pretoria.

Perhaps as a result of the steady stream of conflicts and collisions throughout her life from childhood, to young adulthood to maturity, on reflection Erica regarded herself at the

beginning of the PGCE programme as a person with little talent and little confidence. In the preface to her portfolio Erica introduces herself and the many experiences and collisions that she has had before entering the PGCE programme.

I came along with quite a busy CV; I will not say an impressive CV, as it just is a reflection of somebody that has been so restless, insecure and irresolute. I have always had the incredible hang - up of being regarded as stupid and after marrying a husband from a very academic family it just increases matters immensely. This makes me a compulsive reader and an extremely harsh personal critic ... I have also been the product of a very harsh and critical father who only weighted Math and Science as important leaving me feeling dumb and incompetent and suffering of severe performance anxiety ... (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 1).

Erica writes publicly in her portfolio (which is read by many people) a very frank description of herself which is full of heavy, negative language: “irresolute”, “compulsive”, “dumb”, “incompetent” and “severe”. She also uses the word “product” to represent herself which implies her sense of the power that the circumstances in her life have had in shaping her and her powerlessness to control these circumstances. The plot of her story thus far plays out as a tragedy where the heroine has been thwarted and nearly overcome by events and feelings of inferiority.

Several experience in the university reinforce the trajectory of the tragic plot of her story. First, in the course of her university work Erica's sense of being overwhelmed is fueled and confirmed by her interpretation of one of the assigned readings. She strongly relates to the writings of Erickson and analyses her life according to his writing.

And I was thinking about the phase that I'm currently in. I rather like Erickson's phases in conflict ... it's just sort of self-actualization, more or less ... it's almost ... that final stage that you're in now before you sort of accept ... that at the end it starts to get more deeper, more religious and so on but now you're still fighting about what you can still learn, what you can still do ... I actually think ... we sort of missed that phase, I mean we continue much longer with this phase than we are actually supposed to. Ja ... he was mentioning something that people sometimes when you now starting to get to this phase and you're still fighting and trying to learn things and trying to

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accept things and so on, he says you become the perpetual adolescent. You never accept you're constantly trying to look back ... And I was quite scared when I sort of read this ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 6).

Erica agrees and identifies with the image of “conflict phases” in her life (collisions) but criticizes herself for not being in a phase where she no longer experiences collisions. Also at the university compounding this self-criticism and consequent lack of self-confidence, the difference in her age and the age of her colleagues (in their early to mid twenties) in the programme is a source of concern for Erica.

I enrolled in the PGCE programme feeling very old. I remember losing my way and after asking one of my fellow students for directions she replied, 'Kom tannie, kom stap saam met my en ek sal you wys waar dit is ... ' (Come, aunty, walk with me and I will show you where it is) ... my husband's famous words echoed in my head. 'If you miss the ride when you are young you will never make it again.' I entered the lecture room facing all the twenty somethings and suddenly I felt scared and unsure ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 3).

She feels that her experiences have not necessarily helped her but are rather hurdles and challenges to overcome. “I was much older than the rest and for that reason had so much more baggage to carry along” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 1). As the oldest student, Erica perceives also that she had an obligation to be more successful in the programme. “You know I feel that because I'm the oldest sometimes it feels that I'm one of those token people ... you know ... all eyes on you ...” (Erica, 2003: Interview 2). Worried that she is behaving like an adolescent and sharply aware of her age Erica begins the PGCE programme with an acute self - consciousness.

The number and complexity of these factors - her childhood collisions with the demands of her critical family's powerful work ethic, the collisions with the math teacher at school and of her own career preferences with the dictates first of her father and then later her husband, her guilt over her association with the apartheid politics of the past and her perceived inability to have settled on a career, and her obviously mature age as compared with the youth of her colleagues - all have combined to become part of and form Erica's belief that *The world is full of suffering and should be a better place* and her tacit private theory connected to that belief

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that *My work and my life have to be perfect to make up for the suffering*. As Erica prepares to enter the classroom assigned to her she brings with her the determination that in all areas of her life the responsibilities and tasks to be completed must be carried out not to the best of her ability but faultlessly. At home as in school and in the world as in her studies in order to prove herself successful and not stupid and to make up for the pain and suffering of the “underdogs” (which she well understands) she must not take the “easy way” but rather produce perfect - mistake-free results. Part of her success will have to be the establishment of an equilibrium. To achieve perfection in her life, Erica must be able to balance the amount of time and work that she spends in each area of her life. Erica uses the image of a pendulum to describe the balance and lack of balance in the lives of many people - including her own.

See, too, I think people the rat race is getting too much for everybody and I was thinking about this thing. I think people are like pendulums...they need to really move to the one side to be able to go back to the other side ... over ... to ... the extreme ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

As in the cases of Nerine and Disa, Erica does not explicitly state her private theory in these exact words. However, using the narrative analysis methods to analyze the content and language of her narratives her self-imposed standards of performance become clear. The pendulum can be seen as a metaphor for the collisions in her life. The swings in the pendulum from one extreme to the other represents the phases of conflict she had experienced in the past and the difficulty in achieving the balance that she will need in order to reach the fault free perfection she demands of herself. During the year of study in the PGCE programme Erica will have to balance her family life, her teaching life, her university classroom life and her concern for the troubles of the world. In each of these areas Erica collides with her overall need for balance in her life as well as colliding with the circumstances at home, at school and at university challenging and making difficult the fruition of her private theory that she must perform perfectly.

As Erica tries to balance her life, the perhaps unconscious but undeniably dominant theme in her narratives is the importance of her family. In every interview her children, her husband or her parents and siblings and cousins are spoken about. Her private theory of the necessity of living a perfect personal life causes frequent and varied collisions within this theme,

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however. The image she has of the time she is needed in the family and the role she must play crashes against the amount of time she is actually able to spend with the family and her success in handling the protective nurturer role of motherhood. Her need for time to study and prepare for teaching often collides with the needs of her family and Erica's need to be present as the perfect parent.

And now here ... it's tough, hey ... I mean it's full and a day or two ago my mom had a bad fall and she injured her hip and my mom-in-law had a big operation and my cousin is dying of lung cancer ... I just thought ... and my kids ... I feel sometimes like they're falling apart and I've got all this guilt trips and I really felt like ... how can I do this to all the people in my life ... because they're not getting the attention that they used to get in a way and I'm being selfish and I really want to drop out of the course and so ... but ... other than that I'm really enjoying the course and I've found that many of this things they teach me was the way I approached my kids ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 1).

However, even when Erica spends time within the family circle she continues to collide with her father and feels torn between various family members as well as the time she needs to study.

My dad's constantly bickering with my kids. And I'm a real mother hen, you know, because I'm always ... I feel like a tennis ball, I'm always in the middle trying to protect my kids ... But, I decided, when everybody does their resting at night, I'll sort of keep the midnight fires burning, you know. I hate this gap in my life. I feel so guilty. And even though I really didn't sort of orchestrate any of these things I feel exceptionally guilty ... I tried my best you know ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 5).

The images in this passage of a “mother hen” of the “tennis ball” and of “the gap” are indicative of the ongoing collisions in her life as she tries to live the perfect life. She sees her role primarily as a mother but with all of the conflicts becomes a “tennis ball” which is similar to the image of the pendulum - being moved back and forth from one extreme to the other or being caught between colliding forces in the “gap” she can't control.

In addition to balancing her time for study and the needs of her family, Erica has to juggle the time she spends physically away from home (while she is at school) with the requests of her

family to devote time to their activities. Her perceived obligations to her family collide with the explicit obligations of her school and professional career.

I had such a very bad experience at the school ... did I tell you about the parents meeting that I missed? On Monday we were there for a meetings ... So she (the principal) announced that we had a parent meeting between 2 and 4 on Saturday afternoon. Now that's not a problem to me but I already promised my daughters ... I never go to their sports meetings because they always play during the week. But this one Saturday that she had it on a Saturday, I promised to be there and I went to her and I said, 'You know I really promised my child that I will be there ... ' but that look, 'how can you put your child before my meeting?' it went along the lines that I had not been very professional ... and I was upset because ... I've got lots of mistakes but I am professional ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 7).

Perhaps the most poignant of the family episodes during the school year was the death of her cousin from cancer.

I excused myself from school. I was just going to sit in class and my family really needed me ... But it was bad, you know. He carried on all day really struggling to breathe and eventually, half past ten he passed away. So it was a bad week. I'm going to the funeral on Wednesday morning. And ... um ... ja, that was my week ... And I felt guilty because I went ... Shouldn't I have stayed at school? ... Things like that, you know ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

The uncertainty of the rhetorical question - shouldn't I have stayed at school? - and her frequent mention of a sense of guilt in the narratives reinforces a sense of Erica being caught in the collision of events precipitated by her private theory. Even in the face of life and death Erica still feels the pull of one obligation over another leaving her off balance like the swinging of a pendulum or the bouncing of a tennis ball. Where her family is concerned she does not appear to have a sense of completing a task without looking over her shoulder at what she is not doing.

Erica does not express a sense of guilt when involved in collisions of her private theory (my life/work must be perfect) within her professional life as she does in her family life. At school the collisions seem to be more systemic or structural and philosophical in nature. Erica was

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assigned to two high schools in the course of the PGCE year. The first was a large, high - income predominately Afrikaans language medium government school. The second was a smaller, mixed income private English language medium school with a learner population of predominately setTswana or seSotho speakers as well as learners from neighbouring countries such as Angola and Mozambique. In these two high schools Erica was assigned to teach business economics. In the PGCE programme Erica has learned about and identifies with the “new” learner centered approach to education. She found in fact that she has been raising her own children using the outcomes based philosophy. However, in the classroom she collides philosophically with the expectations and the traditions of the “old” teacher-centred way of teaching.

We are called agents of change but I don't know, well, what they would like us to do is ... I ... that's my perception of it ... is that we go out into the schools and cause a paradigm shift from the old 'chalk and talk' structured very disciplined way of teaching and sort of a whole turnaround to OBE and peer assessment and ... freedom of discovery and research and encourage kids to try things, do things, test things instead of just giving it to them and say regurgitate what I've given you. And I can't see myself being an agent of change because the system is so caught up in the whole way of doing it ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 3). You know this PGCE course is excellent, but it's going to take a loooong, loooooong time for the real world to get in touch with the PGCE course. I don't know which is going to come first. I almost see a political system ... we're almost ten years along the line of the new government and it's only now that our economy and things are looking like they're sort of adjusting to the new style of government. So I wonder if PGCE is going to take ten years ... to get there ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 5).

Erica perceives that the world of school is in collision with the aims of the PGCE programme and the collision between the old and the new way of teaching while not causing the guilt prevalent in her family world does seem to shake her confidence. “As I am a product of 'chalk and talk' ... I fear to fall back into the same ways and methods of my education ...” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 2). If she is to measure herself against the new way of teaching she feels at a disadvantage. Her background and the reality she finds in the school collide with her desire to teach perfectly in the new paradigm. Again in this narrative Erica

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uses the word “product” to describe herself as subject to events beyond her control. But to be the perfect educator now she must find a balance between the philosophies or a way of negotiating and accommodating the differences.

Erica discovers that finding a way through to a balance is blocked by several other problems keeping her from being the perfect professional. The first are her mentors. At the private school she finds her mentor (who is younger than she is) unresponsive. At the Afrikaans medium school Erica likes and admires her mentor but clashes immediately with her teaching style.

My mentor's sweet but what's scary is, you know we are supposed to do things quite different now according to Outcomes Based Education, do real life problems and be creative and do group work and so on but she's already ... um ... done her lesson planning and she's made transparencies and she's burnt them in and they're step one, step two, step three. And now I'm trying to sort of convert this woman and say...next term you know we're supposed to be doing real life problems it's going to be difficult ... So she said ' well I've already done the lesson, you can take the lessons and you can use the transparencies.' Now I don't know how to get over to this woman because she's so structured ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 3).

Second, the assessment practices that she required to follow at the schools are not what she has understood to be part of the new methods and she is caught again between the two systems.

(I) ... had to set up class tests, hundreds of them and mark them and of course they're totally against the assessment practices that we are being taught ... You just grab three little questions and you see to it that counts out of twenty and then you quickly ask it and mark it and so on ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 3).

As a result of the assessment practices Erica finds that the children themselves are not responsive to the new way of teaching but are “so conditioned into the old structure ...”(Erica, 2003: Interview 5). At both schools the learner in her classes want answers to “class tests” to be immediately available in their books or in their notes – “spoon feeding away ...” (Erica, 2003: Interview 5).

Finally, the most distressing obstacle to successful teaching for Erica is the system of “discipline” in her second school assignment which collides with her sensitive nature and her feeling for the “underdog.”

And they're screamed at all day! Ahh! It's terrible! They ... they've got so much tensions, informal detentions and detentions and more detentions and ... hearings and the parents are called in and ... These kids are so scared. Discipline is not something that grows from the heart, it's because you're so damned scared, you know. I have been thinking about this thing ... Kohlberg in our learning theories has got certain stages of discipline. And the last stage is sort of a ... a discipline that comes from in ... a sort of moral value thing ... and he actually says that some people actually never reach that stage ... And ... one of the early stages of discipline or acquiring discipline is that you're so damned scared. And I feel this is the case and this is the way the ... the kids are sort of disciplined or enforced, they will never get to a higher stage of discipline ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 7).

This passage contains the only profanity that Erica ever uses in her interview or her writing. The use of the word “damn” signals her intense dislike of the extreme disciplinary measures taken in this school. As a result of the strict discipline the children are afraid in the classroom which effects their learning and her success as an OBE educator.

They haven't really got this thing to plunge in and try it no matter what, they are not allowed to try things. They do so poor ... they're too scared to try. Ja, because they are taught sort of punitive ... everything's punishment in, you're not allowed to do this and you mustn't do that and it's detention this and detention that. So now we need to teach these children that they plunge in real life problems, you're allowed to make mistakes and these kids are so scared ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 7).

Although Erica sees the problems in the schools as structural and system wide she still reacts personally and physically to the circumstance in which she finds herself. “Because I'm so sensitive to people's feelings these children's stress just plopped onto me and I just couldn't handle it. And it just cracked me, you know ...” (Erica, 2003: Interview 7). The contrast between “plunging in” and “being scared” is a sharp one. The repetitive language and rhythm of this passage echoes the relentless language of the description of her childhood. Erica can and does identify with the fears of her students remembering how the critical

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episodes with her math teacher and her father changed the course of her life.

The empathy that Erica expresses for the children at the highly disciplined private school reflects her incorporation of collisions from the personal experiences from her school days into her professional life. Similarly while learning to become an educator, she does not suspend her interest in the world around her and its connection to her life and the lives of her learners. She purposefully remains aware of the collisions in the larger arena and is determined to do so to inject the “moral universe” (Paley, 1999: 89) into her classrooms. “We need to teach children values again ...” (Erica, 2003: Interview 4). In the course of the year she grapples with several issues or “value themes” in which society seems to collide with her perspective, disrupting her sense of balance and ability to lead a perfect life. She speaks again and again of her concerns with the issues of racism and her upbringing.

Really you know, I've seen ... my husband is a ... he's a racist, terrible, and I was brought up in a strict Afrikaner home. But there lots of ... I really believe there are lots of things we can learn ... I mean this Ubuntu culture ... you're a person ... I'm a person through you ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

She criticizes what she perceives as the materialism of society and her theme is that money is not the only measure of the value of an activity or a profession.

I thought you know that everything that hasn't got money value is falling apart, police service, medical service, teaching all those kinds of serving professions because they don't have money to them because...people are like donkeys, they need a carrot ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

The role of women in society still concerns her. “I think even though things have changed there is still that subtle influence that women are not made for maths and science and computer studies ...” (Erica, 2003: Interview 4). Finally the death of her cousin brings her thoughts to the theme of the way that society handles death and grieving.

The world's a tough place ... I think that we have lost focus ... we can learn from our African ... fellows cause they really mourn ... they really live through the dying and that's why I think ... death to them is a natural process of life because they live death ... we sort of sweep it under the carpet and move on. And then that dust stays under the carpet ... where they...they mourn. They bury people. The family gets together.

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Everybody's welcome. They eat. They slaughter cattle and so on. I don't think you should take it to the extreme. But I think you give yourself chance to grieve, to live through it. Because else you'll never be a productive person for a long time. You will not be hundred percent productive because you'll always grieve for a long time ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 4).

All of these themes implicitly contain the contrast and the collisions between Erica's point of view of what should happen in the world and what is actually happening. Different cultures should be accepted for what can be learned from them, but are not. Professions should be valued for what they contribute to society, but are not. Women should be accepted as capable in the sciences but are not. Not only grieving but all of the collisions expressed in these themes cause unbalance and prevent people from being “one hundred percent productive.”

The importance of being “one hundred percent productive” in Erica's life is most visible in her course work at the university. Here she can concretely and externally evaluate herself with marks and due dates and work completed. The collisions that she experiences in the school and classroom setting and in the “value themes” reflect differences of philosophy and perspectives that make it difficult for her to function with “passionate” conviction. Ironically, she does not demand perfection from her learners, but at the university she can and does (at first) demand of herself a flawless performance. No matter what is happening around her Erica expects to turn in perfect assignments as she has in the past.

I never had to extend a date for an assignment. I remember doing my first year Management ...we still had a very old computer with an old datamatrix printer and I don't know what I did wrong but I lost everything ... And I started re-doing this thing at one o'clock in the morning and my husband was lecturing ... he was lecturing me Management and he said, 'Come to bed. I'm your lecturer. Don't worry about it ... you can type it tomorrow ... nobody needs to know that you handed it in a day late or whatever' and I said, 'No ways .. .the assignment needs to be in tomorrow morning and you will have it tomorrow morning.' And I worked until four o'clock that morning and I've never missed a due date ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 2).

Besides timeliness, in the university setting she is also faced with the assessment of her work by her professors. Just as her learners do not like to “plunge” into the unknown Erica herself

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is almost physically afraid of assessment both the traditional and the unknown requirements of the university courses. Her desire to prove herself not to be stupid, not to “disappoint” her professor (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 2) collides with the process of assessment and results in a kind of performance anxiety. “I lack creativity due to my bad experiences with formal assessment and the tremendous experiences I have with test anxiety ...” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 2). Even though she feels that she does not perform well in assessments which therefore do not reflect her true capabilities, she still places a great emphasis on marks as a valid measure of her worth. Erica still relies on her marks as a concrete representation of her achievements and they like everything else in her life must be perfect. Ultimately this vulnerability that cannot be controlled by perfection leaves Erica with continued doubts about her worthiness as an educator.

**(Jakaranda) Jak's Story:**

**‘I like to work with people and explain things to them. Everyone has to start somewhere.’**

Jak, like Erica, entered the PGCE programme in 2003. He is an Afrikaans speaking young man (one of the few men in the course this year) in his early twenties. He is slightly built with blue eyes and blond hair, which he wears almost, shoulder length or tied back in a ponytail. He occasionally wears an earring in one ear. His clothes during most of the interviews were casual - shorts or slacks with a T-shirt and “flip-flops”. Jak participated in eleven interviews throughout the year. The first several interviews were conducted at the university in an empty tearoom after he had been teaching all day and attending his university class. During these interviews - where he wore “professional clothes” - slacks and a shirt and shoes - Jak referred to and appeared conscious of the time as he lives a long way from the university and wanted to begin the drive home before the traffic became too heavy. Jak drives his own car to and from the schools to which he has been assigned and to and from the university for his classes. The remainder of the interviews in 2003 was conducted at his home. Jak preferred to be interviewed at home and seemed more at ease and comfortable there. He lives at home with his mother and father in a northern suburb of Pretoria. His brother, a dentist, also lives in Pretoria and visits his family frequently. His mother who

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works as a hospital administrator was at home during several of the interviews and was friendly and gracious, offering drinks and food. One interview was conducted on a Saturday afternoon and his father and brother were at home watching a rugby match, they too were friendly and hospitable offering to move so that we could have our interview. Several times Jak was visited by friends and often received cellphone calls from his friends during the interviews. Their spacious home is in a neighbourhood which is nestled against the foothills of the Magliesberg mountains has a swimming pool area and is surrounded by a security fence. He was interviewed then on days when he did not have university classes but went directly home after school. The interviews were conducted late in the afternoon in the lounge area of the home after he had returned from school and had a short afternoon nap. The comfortable lounge was filled with family photos - including ones of Jak and his brother in academic gowns at their university graduations. The interviews were conducted in English although Jak said that he felt his English was “not so good” (Jak 2003: Interview 1). The eleventh interview was conducted in April 2004 after Jak had completed the PGCE course and was at the end of his first term of teaching full time at an Afrikaans language medium high school west of Pretoria. Jak was always very co-operative in all of the interview sessions. He brought his reflections to the interviews several times during the course of the year as well as at the end of the year for me to read and as they were written in Afrikaans translated several passages that were of pressing concern to him. He allowed me to read his portfolio and to view a video he had made of his school. In addition I spent a day with him at the second school in which he was assigned to teach. As with Erica, I attended the end of the year seminar for which Jak had prepared a presentation with his PGCE colleagues on an assigned topic. Several times Jak mentioned, particularly after a difficult day at school, that he almost phoned to discuss his frustrations. He often went to the gym to work out his stress sometimes spending an hour and a half there. In a statement of his “mission” for teaching, Jak says that he wants to become an educator not for the

...love of the kids. I don't like kids that much but I love working with people and teaching them. I think that I will be better as ... a student lecturer than a teacher but everyone have (sic) to start somewhere. So this is where I'm gonna start ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

Jak's conversational style in English in the interviews and his writing style in Afrikaans in

his journals were direct and unembellished. An analysis of the language and content of both the interviews and the journals using the performative, structural and literary criticism clusters of methods showed that Jak used very few figurative images and only one critical episode but used a high frequency of short sentence and clause constructions with a “subject-verb - object” pattern. The overall impression of Jak is one of an unpretentious, “no-nonsense” practical person who is friendly and direct and who is comfortable in his surroundings.

The comfort of his surroundings is important to Jak so much so that unlike some of his friends and colleagues (and many young people around the world) he is not interested in leaving the country to experience other cultures.

I would rather be ... happily in this country ... I can't see myself alone in a different country ... with different people. I'm very attached to ... people close to me. Just things ... I really know and to go into the unknown ... I think that will be ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 2).

In addition to preferring the security of the familiar Jak is very afraid of flying. He says, “I'm so scared of flying ...”(Jak, 2003: Interview 5) that leaving the country would be difficult. Besides having a warm and supportive home life that keeps him in his country, as a learner Jak also had pleasant early school experiences providing models for him of what he considered a well run school.

I think the schools I've been in were ... very good discipline to very good discipline ... For example, the school (where) I was in high school ... everything went, you know, smoothly. It was the ... perfect school, the perfect school if I can ... put it that way ... But that came from the principal as well. The principal was so strict. Everything was ... must be in place and must be perfect and ... it was. And for example if I can just take a stupid example, about the swimming gala. You had to wear your tie and everything and ... every school child in the school must be there with his tie and jacket and everything and that was ... done so formally and you won't say that's a high school gala. It looks more like something you'll find overseas or something like that ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

Although usually enjoying and happy with his school life - signified in this passage by the

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choice of the words “perfect”, “good” and “runs smoothly” and the comparison to his perception of an overseas function - he did experience one collision with a teacher who belittled him.

He was very horrible from the first day even though I wasn't in his class because ... one day my hair was too long when I came to school and from that day he tried to nail me ... In Matric I had English ... in his class ... so we get into his class ... he tells me no I am not a Higher Grade candidate. I should go down to Standard Grade. But he don't pull you away from the class. He tells you in front of the whole class ... three weeks before the end of our ... year the end of our classes he chases me out of his class and told me never to come ... don't even bother to come back to class anymore. So I told him, 'Don't worry I won't' and I never came back and I ... I passed Matric, better than I did in his class as well. I couldn't listen to that man as well. He irritated me so because of his way of ... treating people and so that they don't want to even listen to him ... He was a ... I don't know the English word ... bombastic kind of person ... Maybe I didn't do homework or something like that because I wasn't interested in his class at all ... he was the worst one of all ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 2).

This was the only troubling incident that Jak mentioned in his narrative of his earlier life. But even this experience has a happy ending. At the conclusion of the “little story” Jak is the “hero” who triumphs and overcomes the obstacles presented by the teacher, vindicated by receiving higher passing marks in his exams than his teacher had predicted. Jak's satisfaction with his schooling included his tertiary education as well. He received an undergraduate degree from the University of Pretoria and he says in the first interview that he experienced “one of the best years of my life...that years...it was a good experience...” (Jak, 2003: Interview 1).

Even though Jak felt comfortable and enjoyed his years at home and at school and at university, as did Nerine and Disa and Erica when he began to search for a meaningful career he struggled with a series of false starts and collisions.

From my first year in university, every year, I had problems with ... choosing subjects and deciding on what course I was going to do. Even when I started looking for work, I didn't know in what ... what field I was going to be ... And one of my friends is like

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that, you know, this year I'm going to do that, next year he's going to do that...he always irritated me so much because he chose a simple subject ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

Unsure of what career path to follow Jak finished his degree at University and ventured into the field of computers, which he soon gave up and then accepted a well-paid position in a corporation - all within the space of one year.

I did my BA degree ... just BA general, then I started with a Diploma in IT but that wasn't for me ... And I started working at the pharmaceutical company last year as a quality control ... but that wasn't totally for me ... and ... the ... circumstances was really horrible there ... The pay ... was good ... the salary was good, everything was nice but circumstances you are under was totally horrible ... I worked at that company for four months. I couldn't sit and work with this paper work the whole day, seeing no people, talking to no one and so on ... I couldn't. I would rather work with people than sit at my desk the whole day. I couldn't do that ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

Unhappy with his career choice Jak thought about what kind of work he would like to do. He remembered that while he was at university he had helped to pay for his education by working part time as a sales person. He describes the work as a “critical episode” in his life.

I've worked as a salesman while I was studying for about two years. And, you know ... it was a hi-fi shop so with home theatre too. And I like to explain to people how the stuff work and so and that's also a bit of teaching ultimately ... That's where that grabbed my attention ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 1) ... I like explaining stuff to people and everything ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 5).

With the support of his family he decided to try the PGCE course. “I always had the education thing in my head so I just took a chance and took the job and started this year ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 1). The uncertainty he felt is reflected in the choice of the words “took a chance” and was echoed by his mother when she asked “Do you think he will be able to get a job after this year?” (Jak, 2003: Interview 3). The enormity of the decision for Jak to again try a completely new course of work is expressed in the effect that this decision had on him. “I think that process made me stronger to do this because if I didn't go through that, this course ... every time I say to myself when things get too tough, it isn't as tough as last year ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 1).

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Jak's use of the words “tough” and “strong” in his narrative reflects a sense of determination that contrasts with his indecisiveness at university and in his later attempts to choose a career path. For Jak, the collision of his uncertain future, the driving compulsion to decide what kind of work to do and the perhaps implicit expectations of his family, friends and lifestyle was alleviated in the decision to become an educator. The correctness of the decision was confirmed for Jak in new feelings of satisfaction.

I think about the challenge I have in front of me and preparing myself for that ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 2) ... It was a good feeling now for me just to set my mind for this is it now and I have to do that ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

Jak resolves that education will be his life's work. The result and also the cause of the somewhat painful process leading to his decision appears to be his agreement with the cultural and family belief that *Everyone should have a career goal*. Conforming to this belief Jak adds his own implicit private theory that *I must challenge myself with a career goal and stick to it no matter what*. After a year of indecision Jak has committed to this course and he is resolute that he will not change his mind again. “Last night I told my mom, I just have to do this. I just have to pass, no matter what ... And I just have to do the best I can. Hopefully I'll pass ...” (Jak, 2003: Interview 5). When asked why he feels so strongly committed to learning to become an educator he is unable to explain directly what has motivated his tenacity.

Just this is ... a real tough situation. I don't have a choice. I have to, so, I can't run away from that. Ja, I have to do this. I can't run away from this ... I have to finish this year and I'm in this situation now, so I just make the best of it. I don't want to quit this ... I think I already told you I quit my job and everything to be here and that's a good part of that. But also the fact, you know, I set my mind to ... just to finish this thing this year, just to finish the certificate and ... start teaching next year. My mind is so set on that fact, I don't want to do ... want to quit or run away or ... Even though I won't be teaching, for example, if five years from now I won't be a teacher anymore, I want to finish this now ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

Jak appears to view quitting as “running away” - a kind of failure perhaps - an option that is now unthinkable after his two previous attempts to establish a career direction. His frequent

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repetition of “no choice”, “I must” and “I have to” in this passage as well as in the narratives throughout the interviews, indicates the seriousness with which he intends to pursue his goal. Connected to this goal and running throughout Jak's narratives are “themes” or corollaries to his private theory supporting the private theory and acting as his guidelines for ensuring the accomplishment of his “mission” as expressed in his private theory. The corollary themes or guidelines include: being “in control” (Jak, 2003: Interview 8), surviving by “coping no matter what” (Jak, 2003: Interview 5), not wasting time or resources (Jak, 2003: Interview 3), never losing hope (Jak, 2003: Interview 5), “not running away or giving up” (Jak, 2003: Interview 5) and using time effectively - avoiding repetitions and complexity as simplicity is preferred (Jak, 2003: Interview 8). When Jak encountered collisions throughout the year between his desire to stick to his goal and events both at the schools, in his personal life and at the university these guidelines seem to be the motivation for many of his decisions and at the same time evolved themselves from the collisions. Jak often describes the collisions that are precipitated or produced by the corollary themes as “chaos” (Jak, 2003: Interview 9) while his private theory and its corollaries represent his preference for his life and his work to “run smoothly.”

In the PGCE programme Jak was assigned to two schools in the year to teach EMS (economic management studies) in the senior phase (Grades 7, 8 and 9). His first school assignment was a large Afrikaans language medium school where almost half of the learners took part in a feeding scheme. The children from the surrounding areas who attended the school spoke either English, Afrikaans, setTswana, iXhosa, or sePedi as their first languages. In the second school the language of instruction and of the majority of the learners was also Afrikaans, but Jak was required to teach some classes in English. His second school assignment was a better resourced school than the first and had an added feature of being an “open campus” - the learners were allowed to be outside on the school grounds when not attending classes. At both of his schools one of the first and continuing collisions that Jak encountered was the management of the classroom structure and “discipline.” In order to complete the PGCE course Jak perceived that he would have to manage his classes well.

Our mentor is also going to assess us three times per school, so that's ... that will be important for me. If he sees that I can't handle the kids or discipline them or

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something I will get lower grades and ... perhaps I won't even pass so that's very important for me so I will do whatever it takes just to keep up appearances there ... (Jak, 2003, Interview 3).

Before he began teaching, Jak had expected to establish a casual atmosphere in his classroom. There will be lots of conversation in class ... I think that I will be strict but not ... but there will be a lot of conversation in my class. I don't like this classroom's stiff atmosphere and that type of thing ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 1).

However, when Jak enters the schools, conditions are not what he expected and he encounters “chaos” in the classroom. He finds the children noisy and inattentive to the learning tasks he has prepared. “They won't listen. If they are busy talking you can just forget ... they will turn their backs on you ...” (Jak, 2003: Interview 3). In the classroom despite his hard work his teaching does not “run smoothly” and Jak often does not create the atmosphere he has intended.

Trying, trying the whole day and not succeeding, Ja, shouting the whole day and achieving nothing out of that ... it feels like you walk into a corner and you can't get out of it ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 3).

In this and other passages rare, but striking images represent Jak's perception of being out of control in the classroom and accentuate his sense of the necessity of being in control - a corollary of his private theory. When trying to “control” the learners in his classes he describes the sensation as similar to a physical experience of being “walked into a corner.” His feelings of frustration when colliding with the learners’ behaviour are expressed in a similarly physical image in another passage where he says that he feels as if he has had “his hands cut off” (Jak, 2003: Interview 3). In both of these fierce images an almost violent sense of powerlessness is conveyed.

As a result of the difficulties erupting in the classroom and the strength of his feelings of being trapped in a corner, Jak discovered that he could not tolerate the “chaos” and his intolerance collides with his previous visions of himself as a casual educator.

I thought I was going to be a ... quite ... you know, happy-go-lucky teacher but I'm actually a pain in the class, you know? and I'm a perfectionist in the class which I'm not at home and everything have to be perfect in my class and I'm very strict. I've

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never thought I will be that way. I've never thought I will be like that. For instance, I can't handle a paper on the floor in my class. They have to clean it up. Every now and again if the pupils started irritating me in my class, they have to clean my class ... for ... their ... punishment ... They have to clean up my class. I never thought I will be something like that. That's the kind of teacher that's always irritating me ... For instance I enjoyed classes when I was at school that was a bit, you know, lively classes you can walk around and chat with that one and do a little bit of work and so on. But now ... I didn't even like it if ... a child stand up in my class. You know, they must sit at their desk and work. Okay, I think I'll calm a bit later on. I hope so because it ... can't go on like that because I'm very ... I'm too strict I think in the class ... I really can't believe that I will be so strict with them but that's the only way that's worked for me at this stage ... yes well now it comes so natural for me as well ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 3).

Jak speaks almost matter of factly about his situation but his amazement and the emotionally charged content of the experience is evident in his repetition of the words “never” and “I can't believe”. In later interviews Jak describes in greater depth the difficulty of the collisions in the classroom.

I'm too soft tempered to be that strict. Because the other day we ... I walked into a class and I just walked out, finished laughing and when I finished laughing, I walked into ... back into the class again. I don't know. I just ... can't keep on going like that ... I normally walk out, finish laughing and walk back in so the children can't see. The kids don't know. I don't want them to know ... when you laughed then it's this big mistake you make and then they know you ... have some soft spot in you ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).

Although Jak seems surprised at the way he has behaved in the classroom contrasted to his “soft” nature, his behaviour does seem coherent with his private theory that he must stick to his goal with the corollary of maintaining control. Jak has dual collisions to contend with - his strict classroom demeanor collides with expectations of a casual classroom and the chaos in the classroom collides with his almost “teeth-clenching” determination to pass the PGCE programme. To reach his goal of completing the programme Jak must sustain a tight control over his surroundings (no papers on the floor), the children (they must sit and work) and

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himself (he must not laugh in front of the children).

There are consequences, however, to the dual collisions. First, Jak finds teaching “exhausting” (Jak, 2003: Interview 3). Maintaining control of the classroom to secure a positive assessment from his mentor and professors is taxing. Second, he persists with his efforts to gain control despite the reactions of the learners in his classes.

... the kids hate me at this stage. Some don't even speak to me, greet me, nothing but I don't care ... this year I just have to pass this course and ... I have to keep my books clean with the mentors and ... the professors ... and I don't care what the kids ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 3).

Despite his outward determination to single-mindedly pursue his goal, in his journal Jak expresses doubts.

I experienced problems with the learners' discipline again today. I wondered yet again and asked myself whether I would be a good and successful teacher. On days like today it feels to me that I may not be able to be. Inside me, I know I can but on such days a person feels dejected and wonders about these things ... I believe that the situation will improve as soon as I have my own lectures and soon as I can go on my own. After the afternoon class I felt positive again about what is expected of me and by talking to the others in my class I had the energy to attempt it again ... (Jak, 18 March 2003: Journal entry).

Feelings of apprehension have apparently accompanied more than once the collisions inherent in establishing control of the class. Even while expressing misgivings, however, Jak continues (as the hero of the story) to emphasize the “positive” energy which encourages him to try again - to not give up hope or run away. Thinking of the future as well as the support of the other PGCE students helps him to “refocus” on and reinforce his private theory of sticking to his goal.

Jak can and does look ahead to his ultimate objective, but is hindered in the present by what he perceives to be the contextual factors which make management of the classroom difficult and contribute to his collision with the “chaos” in his surroundings. First, Jak perceives that support from the school for classroom management is not satisfactory. He does not agree

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with the system of merits and demerits used in both of his schools.

The discipline in the school ... the way ... the discipline system that points that get deducted and how they work that ... because the children will actually just laugh at you, hey, if you deduct some points and so on ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 6).

Second, expectations from the school administrators are also a source of collision. Jak is required to remain at the school until the end of the working day even when he has finished teaching. After teaching Jak wants to prepare his learning tasks for the next day, mark his learners' work and complete the university assignments, but he finds that he is unable to work in the staff room. "You can't work ... do your work in the staff room. So I'm just wasting time just by sitting there and chatting and doing nothing basically so ... sometimes I go ... I get home early." (Jak, 2003: Interview 8). He is frustrated when he perceives that his resources - his time in this case - are not being used effectively. Third, Jak is uncomfortable with the language of instruction in the second school.

So I have to teach ... one English and one Afrikaans class. So I have to teach English and Afrikaans and my English is not that good so they is going to ... I already bought mathematics books this morning to just to ... top up my English you know, that concepts and words and so on I have to use just to because I don't know the ... words in English ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8). I'm stressing about that ...my English is not up to standard. So that was a bit of a problem ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 9).

Jak perceives that he cannot do his best work when not speaking Afrikaans. He wants to be able to teach successfully which now requires that he improve his English, even though not as comfortable with English as he is with his own familiar language.

Jak experiences a similar discomfort when he perceives that the teaching philosophy that he studies at the university collides with the previous and even the present practice in the schools. He is familiar and comfortable with the way that he was taught during his own school years and expected to replicate his "apprenticeship of observation". However, his memories of teaching from his childhood collide with the "new" way of teaching espoused by the university professors.

I come to study education. I don't know what it's all about. I thought it was ... about you work out your lessons ... And now you're just basically the co - coordinator or

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facilitator of that class. It's totally different ... cause for twelve years I'm used to ... the other way of doing things and now I have to change to the new OBE thing. Over ... a period of a month or two I have to change my whole attitude and begin again and I think that's what the toughest part of the year is ... is to get insight to do that ... .(Jak, 2003: Interview 2).

If Jak accepts and becomes proficient in the new learner centred “facilitator” approach to teaching he perceives that he will collide with and teach “ against the grain” of the old “teacher - centred” approach still prevalent in the schools.

We have to give the kids real life problems. So I spoke to my mentor about that ... he tells me, no they ... it won't work at their school and I know it won't work at their school, but we have to do that and ... that will come into our portfolio, everything will be checked, we will be assessed on that and that ... then I can't do that and what am I going to do at that school? ... That's a very tough situation for me ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4). We don't know what their way of teaching is of the teachers that are mentors at the school. And perhaps there can be clashes ... what we're doing and what we're expected to do ... that's where the most problems start ... we have to do most of the work ourselves to convince the mentors why we're doing this ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 2).

Jak again perceives that he is not in control of this situation. He is “backed into a corner” with “his hands cut off.” He is facing what seems to be an unsolvable dilemma that will affect his assessment. On the one hand he is required by the university to organize specific kinds of learning tasks in the classroom, while at the same time he is required by the school to abide by the teaching patterns and styles already established in the school. At the core of the dilemma is again the specter of assessment and his frustration is expressed in the rhetorical questions “What am I going to do at that school?”

As the year progresses the question of what Jak will do in the school most often centres on the children - collectively and individually. In addition to the collisions with the behaviour of the children and all of the factors (inattentive children, lack of administrative support, teaching in the second language, teaching against the old school tradition) that are involved in those clashes, Jak is confronted with the environmental, cultural, physical, educational and

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social factors that he perceives affect the children themselves and prevent their lives from running smoothly. Initially Jak notices that there are many children in his classes who seem to do no work. (“I promise you, nothing ...” Jak, 2003: Interview 10). Consequently he is not able to give marks to many of the children as they did not complete any assignments. Some of the children, for example, answered only four out of the twenty questions on his test. “I am worrying more about this test than the children are ... I wake up at night ...”(Jak , 2003: Interview 10). He has had to give “noughts” to many children and the collision between passing his own course in the face of a poor assessment rises again. He is concerned that “this will look bad when I give it to the university ...” (Jak, 2003: Interview 10).

As Jak works with the children over the course of the year, however, the reasons that many of the children do not complete work becomes apparent to him. He becomes aware of the many problems interfering with the successful education of the children. Although not stated explicitly, in long passages of expressive discourse, Jak reveals a growing sensitivity to the circumstances which he perceives affect their successful learning. One of the problems is the presence of a large number of different cultures and languages in the same classroom making it difficult to present effective learning tasks.

And another problem is, when we took the survey, our register classes were the Grade Six ... when we took the survey they wanted to know all of the different home languages ... what the home languages for the specific learners is. Now there were ... Afrikaans, English ... Xhosa, there were Tswana, there were siPedi and Sotho. So that's six different ... cultures basically in one class and that can't work. One or two is ... or maybe three different cultures. I can say, okay, ja you can still, but six ... the variety is too big for and imagine if I have to prepare a real life problem to them. How can I prepare a real life problem to six different cultures with six different backgrounds? It's basically an impossible task to do ... ( Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

The physical conditions that the children struggle with particularly in his first school assignment also affects the discipline and successful learning in the classroom.

Some are very, very poor. The mentor says they have this what they ... call a food kitchen ... where everyday, some of the kids ... there are four hundred kids in that school that every day...receives a meal at the school because they doesn't have any

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food at home ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 3) Some of them guys doesn't have ... fathers doesn't have work and the mother. Father and mother's both at home, they just send the kids away to school to get them off their shoulders ... they isn't interested in the ... child's growth or education or nothing. That's the school's job and that's where the chaos starts cause the parents don't care, why should the school care, so, that's the attitude ... Ja, that's the kids ... (Jak, 2003, Interview 4).

Jak is also becoming aware of individual children and their problems and these are expressed in “little stories” and “descriptive vignettes” about the children and the happenings in the classroom.

There's one kid ... his background ... he doesn't have parents sometimes at night at home ... what I just could figure out today's is his younger sister were at home yesterday because he told me his parents didn't sign his test. They weren't there ... sometimes he comes ... in break time to ask for food, you know, that's the type of kid he is ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).

Drug, sexual and physical abuse problems also plague some of the students in his classrooms. One of the longest stories in the narratives is of a learning task that Jak had planned to familiarize the children with the appearance of various harmful drugs. He brought small plastic bags with “street” drug look-alikes in them to show the children.

I wanted to get them to a topic where ... for cigarette smoke ... To get them to that topic so I told them, no 'what is the most common drug found in this school' and at this stage? They told me dagga. So I was a bit thrown at that. So I said, 'okay, yes except tobacco ... except dagga' so then they said 'tobacco.' Ja, there is a problem with dagga at school. I never realized that. Okay now this is supposed to be marijuana or dagga ... and the one kid took a look at this ... they took a look at this bag and like, 'this isn't dagga sir'. This looks so real and they took a look at it and said, 'no it isn't.' I said 'okay.' But this really looks real actually. They knew ... Then they took my tablets and they were sending it, you know, just having a look around in the class. So there were many more inside this bag and I told them this were mandrax. And at the end of the period there were about two times more than this tablets in and I just told them, okay if they stole my tablets, they must drink it because it's good for them ... it's vitamin B. So this one they know wasn't really heroin. This one they were a bit

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skeptical for cocaine. But this one is actually baby powder. Okay and they were a bit skeptical with this one as well ... the different kinds of tablets as well and so on. But they know more than they're supposed to be. Grade 8's, thirteen turning fourteen ... there's a drug dealer every afternoon in front of that school and nothing do anybody do about that because if they open their mouths they ... are scared for their lives so they keep quiet ... everybody just keeps quiet ... that was an eye opener for me ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 9).

After working with the whole group on this learning task, Jak also has conversations with individual learners. As he gets to know his learners they confide in him and the immensity of the problems becomes apparent to him.

The one girl that my mentor says is being abused ... she just stated that to me. She says things to me the whole time like, if I have a friend who is that and that and that ... The one girl in my class ... but she's really you know so cocky a little girl. Now I had a form that I had to fill in, do they know somebody that do drugs, do they mix with people who use drugs and so on like that. You should see their answers. 'Yes I know people who use drugs. I don't mind it. I go to parties where drugs are' ... So I'm thinking she must use that as well. So she told me, no, she used T-----, that diet thing regularly. So I spoke to her and I said to her, 'But you're not fat why do you use that?' No, otherwise she will become fat. But that things are really bad for her for a person ... you can buy it over the counter. But it is still very, very ... how can I say damaging to you to use that long term even if you're just use it ... this type of thing ... also speed up your metabolism. It does ... it gives you a lot of energy actually keep you awake and give you a lot of energy ... but it's damaging to you and there is ... you can get addicted to that, ja. So I don't know. And she's a little girl in Grade 8. No, I can see that coming but not happening right there ... The thing is with this girl ... she's the one who told me ... her friends use ecstasy and dagga. And I told them ... ecstasy is going to kill everybody. They told me no, she ... one of her friends is using that for so long and nothing is happening. Ja, so I took out the book that state what side effects ecstasy had and eventually death and she still  *fights*  with me about it ... it feels like you can do nothing. They won't listen. They have their own mind already made up about it. It will take a lot of hours and convincing to go through each drug and

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everything ... it concerns ... to change their mind ... And I don't have time for that ... two to three periods, that's it ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 9).

In all of these passages he repeats the actual words that he and his students exchanged. The conversations are so shockingly memorable to him that he can quote verbatim what was said. He also expresses a sense of incredulous surprise as he learns of the social world that his learners inhabit and the young age at which they are exposed to the life threatening dangers of the street. The description that Jak has chosen of the characters in his story (their young ages, their fear of exposing the drug dealers and their stubborn inexperience and naiveté) lends credence to presenting the stories as tragedies where the circumstances will overcome the learners. Part of the frustration that Jak expresses is also the collision of the discovery of the tragedy of these life-threatening problems affecting his learners and the time that he has to confront them. He perceives the lengthy process needed to convince the learners of the danger to them and he regrets the short amount of time allocated to a vital part of the curriculum. He does not want to waste his time and his time is being used ineffectively when so limited that he can accomplish nothing to help his learners with the chaos in their lives. The importance of using time well - a corollary to his private theory - is also apparent in the collision of the learning tasks that Jak has created for his learners and the ability of some of the learners to respond.

They write something down. I don't understand what they have written ... what they're writing down. I've asked for a specific answer, just one word, so they write a whole sentence but they can't formulate a sentence, even though they are in Grade 7 ... he's too far behind in one year's time to ... get along with them ... up to standard ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 7) ... he's in Grade 7 ... and he can't even write ... he talks normally ... he couldn't explain it to me ... this looks like something between Greek and German or something like that and he's in Grade 7. He's probably going to be passed on to Grade 8. What's going to happen to him? ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 9).

The sense of urgency is apparent in his repetition of the words “in Grade 7.” The short sharp sentences in the narrative convey a sense of alarm and the rhetorical question at the end of the passage is a surrender to the inevitable tragedy he has predicted. Jak had gone beyond worrying about his own future to worrying about the future of his students. But the awareness contributes to his feeling out of control.

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I don't feel in control really. I know what the university expects of me and the school but, you know I want to do my own thing in the classes. I'm not my own boss in the class basically ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).

The implication is that if he could be his own boss he could use his time carefully to assist the learners with the problems they are facing.

In the midst of the collisions at school, Jak faces a private personal crisis which he never names but deeply distresses him. Because he feels emotionally vulnerable, he takes time off from school and does not want to see anyone for several days. Later he is worried about the absence from school.

I'm feeling a bit stupid for ... the mentor's sake and for ... the professor's sake, to book off from school ... Maybe they think I'm just loafing or something but it's really something I have to do, hey ... I couldn't really ... I mean ... I was at a stage Monday and ... yesterday which I just couldn't cope anymore. And sitting at the school with this emotional stuff and so ... So I just thought no way ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 5).

Jak resolved the crisis by talking over his plans with his father whom he said helped him to put things in perspective. They went for a walk together to the top of the mountain near his house and Jak said, "I decided what is important and just keep focused on that ..." (Jak, 2003: Interview 5). As his private theory dictates even a personal crisis cannot deter him from his goal. In the aftermath of the personal crisis his professors offer him a different school placement to ease his discomfort.

I can get another school but then I thought about it and if I'm not ... capable of doing what I have to do in that school and they're sending next term other students to that school and they can cope, that's ... actually a negative thing against me. So I thought, no I'm not going to do that, I'm going to stay there and I'm going to do my best and going to show them I can do that ... so I'll take them and tackle them and see how far I get with them ... yes that will be my worst nightmare for that time but I'm gonna do that, just to show everybody...I can actually do it ... ag, I go and do my best and hope for the best. That's the only thing I can do. So maybe I'll learn out of that ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 5).

Again the private theory that he must not run away or quit something he has started shapes

his decision to continue teaching despite the collisions at school and in his personal life. His absolute determination to “tackle” the circumstances is expressed physically and he continues to have hope despite the “nightmare” image.

At the same time that Jak faces collisions and chaos in his teaching and his personal life, he also encounters collisions with his work at the university. He is uneasy as the course is not what he expected and he is uncertain about what is required of him. In order to achieve his goal he would like to know clearly what he must do. “I’m very worried about the assessments yes. Ja, the assignments and I don’t know what to expect and ... I just hope I’ll pass ... ”(Jak, 2003: Interview 8). What he wants to do is simple but the process appears complicated to him.

Today was again focused on practice theory and that our practice theory should reflect our actions in the class as facilitator. I am unsure about how I’m going to achieve this and I have no definite answers to this ... (Jak, 28 February 2003: Journal entry) I don’t understand how it fits in and also is it going to make a better teacher of me if I know special perspectives? It feels as though I don’t know where to grab or to let go (Jak, 3 March 2003: Journal entry). After the class I felt dejected. None of our questions were answered and we must find the solutions to the questions ourselves ... I was very negative and did not know what to expect and it confused me very much ... (Jak, 6 March 2003: Journal entry).

Jak is also frustrated with what he feels is a waste of his time discussing information that he cannot use.

Useless information, yes. Yesterday we had a class on global perspectives and I can’t understand where we have to ... okay, it’s important to know if you do education and like that but to do that into the classroom ... you know this year’s very short ... and we just have to know how to control that classroom situation and ... to go off perspective doesn’t really protect us as a teacher ... we already have a background of that ... so it ... is a waste of time ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 2).

What appears to Jak as repetition is also colliding with his sense of the urgency of his goal. He is frustrated with a professor whom he thinks wastes his time as well.

I’m getting on a stage where I’m fed up with that classes, really I am. You know it’s

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basically the same things over and over again and assignments and tasks and concept maps and ... we go out, have class for three or four hours in the afternoon ... we sit there for three hours, some of that lecturers absolutely waste your time, really. They can do it in an hour ... at that stage, I just want to go home ... But you know and they going on and on and on with us ... we tried to cancel ... that one subject of ours ... he gave some of the students in my class negative marks for ... for some of the assignments ... so we decided we not gonna do it and ... and I would rather do nothing and get nought than do something and get negative marks. Ja, so I decided no that's just a waste of time, I'm not gonna do it ... we can't fail if we don't do that so ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).

He began the course with high marks but says now that he is “improving backwards” (Jak, 2003: Interview 9) and again is unsure about what to do.

I'm so unsure ... the other day in the gym I was thinking ... perhaps I should go for ... try to get it with honours ... I mean distinction. So it is a possibility. I can perhaps make it. I can fail. I can just pass. The thing is that you're not sure ... you're not sure with this school ... Because previously I gave in my portfolio. Everything was done to me accordingly to high standard and I received 55%. So I don' know ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 10).

The most difficult tasks from the university for Jak are the “concept maps.”

I had my own way of thinking, so I did my own stuff for that ... they were hammering more on a lot of concepts just than a few basic concepts. Some of the stuff I didn't even understand it ... they had too many concepts under learning task design. That was inappropriate for me and that's straight so that you can see that and understand that ... That's my basic philosophy. I don't want to make something so complex for myself that I won't understand it if I look at it. If I can't see that concept map for six months now, I look at it, I must understand it right away ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 2).

Jak is uncomfortable as he expresses a continual sense of being confused and unsure, characteristics of “chaos.” The corollaries to his private theory have sometimes been “violated” during the course of the year as he perceives that his time is being wasted, that his own way of approaching assignments does not meet the requirements which are unclear and that complexity is valued over simplicity and “straightness”. All of these many collisions

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leave Jak poised on the edge of chaos but determined to achieve his goal.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter the first part of the stories focused on the narrators' experience of collisions during the process of learning to become an effective educator. The stories were reconstructed from the data in the interviews and journals of the pre-service educators. The accumulation of data in the interviews and journals was analyzed using three clusters of methods (performative, structural analysis and literary criticism) and the results of the analysis were included in the stories. The explicit or tacit experiences of collisions and statements of individual beliefs and private theories were presented in each of the stories of the pre-service educators as well as their idiosyncratic images, critical episodes, structures of language use, themes and plots and figurative language.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the stories reveal the similarity of the process of the construction of beliefs and private theories from the collisions encountered by the pre-service educators, perhaps leading to a better understanding of the intricate process of the development of a sense of professional efficacy. Each of the narrators came to the year of learning to become an educator and to the classrooms with directly or indirectly stated strongly held beliefs that had developed from or were supported by experiences of collisions in their homes and families, their school lives and their first work opportunities. When the narrators entered the schools at the beginning of the year, the beliefs became private theories that acted as guidelines for behaviour in the classroom. As the year progressed the narrators perceived and experienced collisions of those private theories with a variety of events and circumstances at school and at university and sometimes at home or in the community at large as well. In a complex chaotic process the collisions appear to challenge the narrators to reconsider (often tacitly) the private theories guiding their actions. The result appeared to be a revision, however slight or substantial, of the private theories for Nerine, Erica and Jak. For Disa, on the other hand, the collisions resulted in the affirmation of her private theories.

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Although each of the pre-service educators appeared to experience a similar process of collision and development of beliefs and private theories each story contains unique, individually pertinent details and styles of expression. In Part One, the uniqueness of the expressions represents the differing individual constructions and complexity of the reality of learning to become an educator. Within those realities are embedded the “truths” of their experiences interpreted and expressed in the beliefs and private theories of each pre-service educator. However, working with the clusters of narrative analysis methods brought the deep “reality” and “truth” created by and guiding the behaviour of each narrator closer to the surface for interpretation and description. Although the realities were elusive and difficult to capture nevertheless from the analysis of the narratives emerged Nerine’s construction and attempts to implement her role as a responsible educator and Disa’s struggles to satisfactorily define her role. Also emerging from the analysis are both Erica and Jak’s concerns with passing the PGCE course and their entirely differently constructed motivations - Jak to establish a career and Erica to fulfill a long postponed ambition.

Part One also expresses the complications and the challenges inherent in the collisions of private theories and circumstances confronting the pre-service educators. The development of the private theories and their testing through collision experiences is diversely expressed but uniformly intense. The intensity of the experiences is sometimes overwhelming for the pre-service educators and the stories thus far seem to end on a note of confusion and possible catastrophe - as Nerine says going on the “road to nowhere” (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8). But the stories are not finished and the potential for negotiating the path to professional efficacy seems to exist in the very collisions that are so distressing.

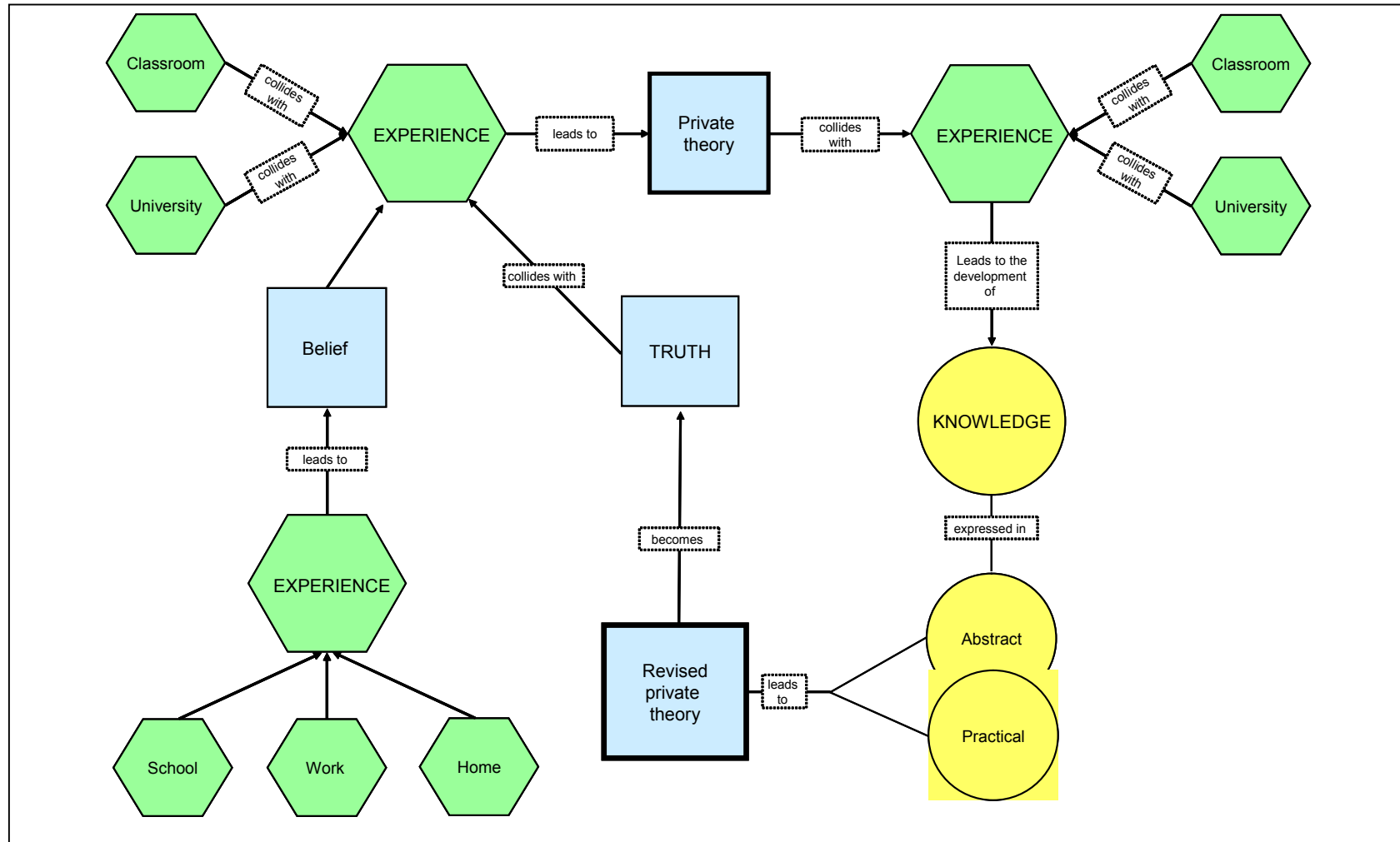


Figure 2: Constructing Private Theories

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## Chapter Four Listening to the Stories

### Part Two: Professional Efficacy and Knowledge

#### Introduction

This chapter resumes the presentation of the data from the interviews and the journal entries of the pre-service educators to answer the question “What do pre-service educators perceive that they know and need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy?” As recounted in Part One, the stories thus far related how each of the narrators made the decision to become an educator and the beliefs with which they entered the teacher education programme. Their experiences in the classrooms were described in a loosely chronological sequence. Each of the pre-service educators had experienced collisions in their lives leading to the development of individual beliefs and private theories influencing their behaviour in the classroom. Nerine constructed and was guided by the private theories “*I must never diminish another person*” and “*I am responsible for the lives of the learners.*” Disa constructed and was guided by the private theories “*I can be more than I think I can.*” and “*I must teach authentically about life.*” Erica constructed and was guided by the private theory “*My life and work must be perfect to make up for the suffering in the world.*” And Jak constructed and was guided by the private theory “*I must challenge myself with a career goal and stick to it no matter what.*” When the private theories were “tested” through collisions yet again each of the pre-service educators experienced changes and disruptions emotionally, intellectually and even physically and an atmosphere of doubt and anxiety often prevailed. Nerine expressed feelings of confusion and the sense that all of the pieces of the puzzle of learning to become an educator were not fitting together. Disa questioned her own abilities and the role of all teachers in inspiring learners. Erica struggled to find a balance in her life between family and school and university and to find the confidence to make mistakes without alarm. Jak was adamantly and insecurely concerned with passing the PGCE course and sticking to his career goal decision. In Part One the pre-service educators’ individual paths to professional efficacy were engulfed in uncertainty.

In Part Two of the presentation of the data, however, their paths become clearer and glimpses

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of professional efficacy and the individually created knowledge bases begin to emerge in the stories. The importance of the process of the formation of private theories through the experience of collisions to the development of a sense of professional efficacy - and the knowledge supporting it - also becomes apparent. The process of the construction of private theories and its apparent relation to the development of professional efficacy is conceptualized in Figure 3 in the summary of the chapter. In each of the continued stories the pre-service educators cultivate their own standard of professional efficacy. They measure the effectiveness of their performances by these standards derived from their private theories and the collisions that they have experienced. In addition, the knowledge that is created by the pre-service educators in the collision process supports their standards of professional efficacy. The practical and abstract knowledge that is created enables the pre-service educators to shape their subsequent classroom behaviour so that it is congruent with their standards of professional efficacy. Examples of both practical knowledge (direct statements of how to do things in the everyday world of the classroom) and abstract knowledge (statements which give an indication of the value and significance of experiences directly or indirectly related to the nature of working in the classroom) are clearly recognizable in Part Two of the stories of the pre-service educators. The abstract and practical knowledge bases that are created support the accumulation of personally meaningful evidence of efficacy experiences throughout the school year, until eventually individual constructed statements of professional efficacy began to emerge in the narratives. Direct or indirect statements of professional efficacy in the interviews and journals of the pre-service educators reflect episodes of a confident, global sense of accomplishment and achievement based on the individual standards of professional efficacy.

As the individual statements of a sense of professional efficacy are expressed the variety of the possible paths to professional efficacy and their impermanent nature is once again made apparent. In the story of the “teaching high” from Chapter One, for example, my statement of professional efficacy, “I AM a teacher” (made after a year of full-time classroom exposure) differs from the kind of representations that the narrators in the study articulate. The statement “I AM a teacher” expresses efficacy as a sense of awareness - of understanding how a “real” educator feels. Becoming aware of the sensation of “everything coming together

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“ I felt capable of working successfully with my learners in effective performances. The knowledge that I acquired was created to support my ability to recapture the sensation of everything coming together - my personal standard of professional efficacy. The individual efficacy statements from the narrators, however, are different expressions of a sense of professional efficacy. In these narratives three forms or “genres” of professional efficacy seem to emerge:

- transformation/coherence
- transformation/independence
- worthiness.

Although an analysis and interpretation of the efficacy statements yields these genres of professional efficacy, the process of developing a sense of professional efficacy for all of the narrators was not easily captured or even articulated in the journals or the interviews. A sense of professional efficacy in the stories of the pre-service educators was in fact conspicuously impermanent and ephemeral. There seemed to be no “aha” moment or exact date when the pre-service educators in the study suddenly and irrevocably recognized themselves as educators with a sense of professional efficacy. The narrators could not in fact make clear why or how or when they gained a sense of efficacy - except to say that whenever or however it occurred, it took place in the classrooms of their teaching practices while learning to work with the children. Continuing the stories and examining again the relationships among and across the constellation of influences on the narrators undertakes to provide a further, deeper explanation of how the narrators perceive a sense of professional efficacy and what the narrators perceive that they know and need to know to experience that particular sense of professional efficacy.

### **Professional Efficacy as Transformation and Coherence**

In the stories of Nerine, Disa and Jak a sense of professional efficacy as a transformation emerges. Each of these three pre-service educators expressed experiences consciously or unconsciously of being changed, of becoming a person at the end of the year who is in some way different from the person at the beginning of the year of learning to become an educator. In the postmodernist/constructivist theoretical perspective of the study the sense of being transformed is perhaps indicative of an awareness (tacit or explicit) of an intellectual change

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which has occurred from the re-construction of knowledge. The narrators began their work in the PGCE programme with unique, individually constructed conceptual structures described in their beliefs and private theories. The conceptual structures although difficult to articulate were deeply held and were an important component in the personalities and behaviour and perhaps even the identities of the pre-service educators. As these conceptual structures were tested through collisions in and out of the classroom, knowledge in the form of revised private theories and new patterns of behaviour emerges and the narrators feel “changed”. Each of these three narrators perceived the transformation as a positive experience and an important aspect in the recognition of the development of professional efficacy. As with all of their experiences, however, the sense of transformation is individually conceived and played out. The sense of professional efficacy as a transformation or intellectual change that Nerine constructs includes for her a necessary sense of coherence. The sometimes raging whirlpool of experiences of learning to become an educator that she encounters in her classroom and in the university courses eventually calms and comes under control. She is able to construct for herself an understanding of the relationship between events that makes sense to her and she begins to sail on smoother waters.

### **Nerine**

From the beginning of her story Nerine, diminished by what she perceives as the “frivolous” and inconsequentially trivial work in the tourist industry wanted to transform her life into something meaningful. Unhappy with the way that her life was before learning to become an educator she is determined to change the direction of her life - to believe in herself and her work as meaningful. However as she works toward leading a meaningful life as an educator, the collisions she experiences increase, as does the lack of coherence in her life. Throughout the period of collisions in her year of learning to become an educator, Nerine experiences a sense of disequilibrium and confusion and her narratives are filled with images of being unhappily and sometimes angrily lost - at sea and in a country she doesn't know very well. The collisions she experiences however difficult and painful are fruitful, nevertheless and move her further along to the development of her sense of transformation and coherence. The confusion and dissonance of the collisions compels Nerine to give up her teaching or give up her beliefs and private theories or to begin constructing a practical knowledge base for coping

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in the everyday world of the classroom and an abstract knowledge base to bring transformation and coherence to her behaviour in the classroom.

Courageously and tirelessly like the hero in her story of the little boy who is an “angel” (Chapter Four Part One: page 59), however, Nerine works through the dilemmas and collisions and overcomes and rises above her challenges. Glimmers of hope expressed in brief sentences at first appear sporadically in the interviews “I’m not that unsure any more....” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 5). Gradually the statements lengthen until in the final interviews she regularly expresses a growing sense of confidence.

Something is working ... it’s a feeling of euphoria ... how can I say that? Very ... it’s a great feeling ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 5) It doesn’t feel like you’re here with a knife and you’re just cutting away bushes and hoping you’re ... you’re getting somewhere ... It feels like I’m going somewhere. But I also feel at the moment everything is now ... I’ve got more experience now so everything is making a bit more sense and you’re getting the bigger picture now. It’s like I said it’s a puzzle. Like in the beginning now ... it’s just like all this hundreds and thousands of pieces and you didn’t know where ... what to do with it. Now you’ve started like ... organizing it and looking at it first and working with it and now suddenly you can realize where the puzzles start fitting into each other ... (Nerine, 2002: Interview 7).

In Nerine’s journals and interviews a sense of professional efficacy as a transformation and coherence emerges from the images that she uses. Her sense of coherence is expressed in the multiple images of the puzzle pieces fitting together, of getting the bigger picture and arriving at a destination. “Describing the indescribable” (van Manen, 1998: 50), her sense of transformation is also subtly expressed in an optimistic tone of voice, like a sigh of relief, when even through her extreme fatigue she says, “I can now do things that I didn’t even know I was learning ...” (Nerine, 2002, Interview 4).

The specific reasons for her sense of professional efficacy (and transformation and coherence) are not directly and clearly articulated or itemized in this passage or in any other passages in the narratives. There is no chronological or sequential checklist of accomplished proficiencies in her stories. However, continuing to review the narratives using the three

clusters of analytical methods brings the areas in which Nerine expressed satisfaction at her own performance into sharper focus. A number of important efficacy building episodes seems to contribute to her growing sense of professional efficacy. The efficacy episodes that she does describe with satisfaction are linked to her private theories (“*I must never diminish another person*” and “*I am responsible for the lives of the learners*”) and the private theories appear to have become her individual standard of professional efficacy. Scattered throughout the interviews are passages that seem to exemplify her perception of her progress as an educator who takes responsibility for the lives of her learners in both the emotional and learning domains of facilitator roles. In her role as emotional counselor she measures her success in the attitude of her students:

- “It was just like the way they started to trust me also. So I think I was successful in that part ... I think I’m more confident in working with them on an emotional base far more than on an academical base but emotional I’m quite confident to work with the kids ...”(Nerine, 2002: Interview 5).

And she feels that she has developed an emotional bond with her children:

- “I had the real feeling for the time that I am part of these children’s lives. Someone that can mean something to them. What makes me sad is that many of these learners will experience a feeling of loss in a small way when I leave. I myself will have a great feeling of loss when I leave because the learners have totally become such a big part of my life. I have become very attached to them and even though I sometimes feel that I want to throw them out of the window they are teaching me so very much about myself ...” (Nerine, 17 May 2002: Journal entry).

As an educator who takes responsibility for facilitating the learning of the children in her classes she measures her accomplishments by the performance of the children during her learning tasks.

- “At the end of the period I checked to see whether they remembered the 5 steps and they did. They learned something today, I am sure of it. Their faces/attitudes and “words” all pointed to it. Whatever anyone says I know that this learning task was 100% success for both classes. It is a wonderful feeling to know that I was halfway on the right path. There are probably 600 better ways to present this learning task but my way was also successful. This I will feel good about myself

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today because this is a feeling I've not experienced until now ...”(Nerine, 15 May 2002: Journal entry).

In addition Nerine is becoming an educator who can work with the children without diminishing them. She felt herself to be diminished as a child and perceived her learners to be delicate and susceptible to harm. She is now capable of guiding and managing her classes without shouting:

- “I don't shout at them. I actually shout to be heard ... But I'm not ... I don't actually shout ... I don't scream at anyone particularly in that classroom ... I must say this year ... I don't scream at one child or I don't even talk to one child specifically by name if they've done something wrong. I usually give speeches, big at the speech giving these days ... No I will never let that happen. Not at all ...” (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8).

Perceptions of progress and success accumulated and Nerine completed her year at the university and chose to remain in the profession. She accepted a teaching position for the following year, 2003. In a final interview in her new full-time position as a teacher, she exudes a sense of satisfaction with what she is able to do. “Because I now totally believe in myself...” (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8). Her narratives in this interview all seem to reflect a quietly contented sense of professional efficacy.

However, even though Nerine has experienced a sense of professional efficacy at various times in the course of the PGCE year, she could not directly or specifically attribute the development of her confidence as an educator to what she perceives that she knows or that she needed to know. She did say emphatically looking back over her year of learning to become an educator, that whatever she learned came from her time spent in the classroom.

I must be honest with you. I find you actually learn how to teach the first day you walk into the classroom ... it's a totally different world ... You learn how to teach the day you walk into that classroom ... Last year gave a good groundwork for what you must do but I really think that the day you walk into that school where your first teaching is done, is the day you learn ... how to start teaching ... (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8).

Attempts at describing the practical and abstract knowledge which helped to promote the

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successful classroom events and Nerine's sense of professional efficacy therefore had to be extracted from her narratives using and comparing the results of the three clusters of narrative analysis methods. In the process of analyzing the narratives a number of brief descriptions of "the way things work in the everyday world of the classroom" (Elbaz, 1983: 132) were discovered interspersed throughout the interviews and were interpreted as her practical knowledge base. Similarly a number of general "I" statements about the nature of her teaching were found and interpreted as indications of her abstract knowledge base.

The statements which form what is interpreted as the practical knowledge base that Nerine constructed describe what she did and what she discovered in the classroom that helped her to gain the emotional trust of the children, to manage her classroom with little or no "screaming" and to facilitate the learning of her students all of which she had used to measure her success. To gain the trust of her children and become part of their lives she found that she profited from knowledge that she constructed of their environment and cultural circumstances and how they learn. She also recognized the existence of a classroom culture separate from the wider outside culture.

- "One afternoon a child told me if she just knew how to protect herself, her life would be a little easier ... I never thought cognitively about the learner's environment. I am embarrassed to admit that I have never thought about the fact that a child's environment contributes to the child maximizing his potential or not ... I understood the learner better and did not just see him as someone in a vacuum but as a person with all these powers influencing his life. If we want the child to maximize his potential, we will have to bear in mind all the aspects of his life and work on that too ..." (Nerine, August 2002: Journal entry).
- "They've created their own culture but I think some of the older people will go totally will fall on their backs and die if they see it ... It started in South Africa. It's not just, in my opinion, it's not just with the white people but with the black people too. South Africans do not like mixed race relationships ... I don't know why. It's not really accepted in South Africa and um, but in the schools it's normal, for the kids, they also don't see each other as you are black and I am white and you are brown. They just see each other as their friends ... I'm thinking these kids are going to have a whole bunch of other problems that never even crossed any of our

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minds ...” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2).

To manage her classroom so that the learners would be calm enough to listen to the instructions for the learning tasks without screaming at them Nerine benefited from the practical knowledge that she constructed:

- “If the children walk into the class in an orderly fashion I start with more discipline ...” (Nerine, 18 April 2002: Journal entry).
- “I have also realized that I cannot sit during a learning session because the children immediately start making a noise ...” (Nerine, 18 April 2002: Journal entry).
- “I learnt this week that you must explain everything step for step otherwise they don’t have a clue and total chaos erupts ... little things like you have to write the date on the board otherwise you have 300 kids asking you: Ma’am what’s the date today? Things like that ...” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 2).

As she attempted to facilitate “maximum” learning in her students Nerine constructed knowledge about the motivating influence of authentic learning and about the concentration span of her learners.

- “Their attention span is so short that you must not overload it. Today, I gave them one thing to do and then waited for them to finish and then I gave them the next task, etc. A lot more learners paid attention ... Another thing that worked very well in the two classes was the transparency...” (Nerine, 6 May 2002: Journal entry).
- “One should start with the learning task immediately. If you do not start immediately, you lose their concentration and it is almost impossible to get their attention again...” (Nerine, 13 May 2002: Journal entry).
- “It is true when it is said that a learning opportunity should physically fit in with the children’s lives otherwise they are not really interested. They started thinking for themselves and are learning because they want to and not because I instructed them to learn...” (Nerine, 5 June 2002: Journal entry).
- “It felt as though a light had gone on for me ... Suddenly I paid attention to my learners’ concentration levels. I treated them the way we were treated at university. I never realized that learners tire, lose concentration and then become disruptive...” (Nerine, 5 June 2002: Journal entry).

All of this practical knowledge allowed Nerine to experience successful teaching with her

learners in both the emotional and academic sphere. When she identifies and understands the environmental, cultural and intellectual life of her learners she could create relevant learning tasks. Learning how to manipulate the environment she could present the learning tasks to attentive learners.

The abstract knowledge that Nerine constructed, on the other hand, related specifically to her two private theories (I must never diminish another person and I am responsible for the lives of my learners) and represent her conclusions from the year long testing of those theories.

- “Reflection makes it clear to me that I cannot single handedly take the responsibility for maximizing the potential of the child ... I can help the child to learn but that the responsibility to learn lies with the child...” (Nerine, 10 June 2002: Journal entry) .
- “I’ve never felt like that before and it’s also something I realize. You will love them but you won’t like them necessarily. You would want to help them but that doesn’t mean you would have to love them...” (Nerine, 2002: Interview 5).
- “I’m a softie ... I’ll never have a quiet class ...” (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8).
- “You won’t be the super ... teacher that everyone ... every teacher period will be a success. There’s a lot that’s not successful but somewhere along the line you know something stuck with one kid...” (Nerine, 2003: Interview 8).
- “I am still developing my style. I haven’t developed it last year - now I’ve stopped. Everyday I think of things how I do it and then I change the way I do it and next time I will probably do it different again ... everyday I do something different than the previous day...”(Nerine, 2003: Interview 8).

Her practical knowledge of the way things work in the everyday world of the classroom offers a professional security. She can go into the classroom confident of her capability of knowing how to work successfully with her learners. Perhaps more far reaching is the abstract knowledge that is reflected in adjustments made in her private theories. Nerine appears to have begun a revision of her notion that a brilliant teacher is emotionally and academically responsible for the lives of her learners. She now maintains that she is a partner in the emotional well-being and learning of the students and is not the sole caretaker. And she acknowledges that not loving a learner does not prevent her from treating the learner with

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respect, even those she would like “to throw out the window”.

The abstract and practical knowledge that Nerine constructed is just one part of many interdependent parts of negotiating the path to professional efficacy. As shown through an analysis of her language in the narratives of Chapter Four Part One, Nerine experienced many agonizing collisions of her private theories with events in the classroom. In Part Two her narratives appear to reveal that challenged by these collisions she slowly, but steadily and still often painfully constructed new practical and abstract knowledge. The knowledge she created from the collision experiences allowed her to reconstruct or revise her private theories in a process of transformation and coherence development. A series of efficacy episodes built on the practical and abstract knowledge she constructed then were manifested in Nerine’s emergence as feeling transformed. She perceives that she is changed from a person who screamed at the children and wanted to “throw some of them out of the window” into an educator who appreciates the difficulties of the learners and who will miss them when she leaves. She is transformed from a person who was overwhelmed by the enormity of teaching in a learner centred classroom (when she herself was schooled in the “old way”) and angrily asking for more guidance into an educator who facilitates what she perceives is a coherent and meaningful lesson on “stress” and whose learners remember the important points of a class discussion. Nerine perceives that she is transformed into an educator who is capable of effective performances with her learners on her own terms. To acquire a sense of professional efficacy perceived as a transformation and an awareness of coherence Nerine explicitly needed to know how things work in the everyday world of the classroom and tacitly how to manage a classroom without diminishing her learners and how to “mean something” at some times in the lives of at least some of her learners. Supplied and seemingly content with the assemblage of hard earned practical and abstract knowledge bases, Nerine perceives that she has changed and is transformed into an educator who knows what to do in the classroom. The pieces of the puzzle that are learning to become an educator “fit together” and she seems prepared and eager to move ahead with a developing sense of professional efficacy to the next stage of her career.

### **Professional Efficacy as Transformation and Independence**

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Like Nerine, both Disa and Jak express efficacy statements indicating a sense of being transformed and changed. Their transformation narratives similarly appear to consist of the complicated processes involved in constructing knowledge, forming and revising private theories and building efficacy episodes through collision experiences. Unlike Nerine, however Disa and Jak appear to include a sense of independence in the experience of professional efficacy as a transformation. Both of these pre-service educators express a sense of being ready to work without supervision in classrooms of their own. Although both Disa and Jak appear to perceive a similar sense of professional efficacy as a transformation and a readiness for independence and follow parallel paths to professional efficacy, their steps on the paths are uniquely individual and personal.

### **Disa**

In the first part of her story Disa had hesitantly entered the PGCE programme after her early school experiences in an impoverished rural area left her dissatisfied with education and educators. She was bored, unchallenged, physically, intellectually and emotionally restricted and sometimes even frightened at school with little hope of improvement. When Disa enters the PGCE course and begins the year of learning to become an educator she believed that her mission would be to inspire the children to become more than they thought they could be. As she begins to work in the classroom, however, through the collisions she faces Disa realizes that she must carve out a new role for herself as an educator. She discovers that to become an educator who inspires children she will need to become a professional - a changed and independent person - who does more than play the “chalk and talk” role of the teachers in her own schooling background.

Transforming from a shy person who lets others speak for her into an educator who is independent enough to manage her own classroom and inspire the children in the classroom is not an easy process, however. In the midst of the intensity of the multiple collisions that Disa encountered while trying to become more than she thought she could, she slowly constructed a knowledge base which eventually helped her to formulate a second belief and related private theory. The evolution of the second belief and private theory was important for Disa in the process of learning to become an educator not only as a standard by which to

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measure professional efficacy but also as an impetus for transformation and acceptance of her role. The construction of the new belief and private theory represented a changed understanding for Disa of the role of the educator and allowed her to begin her transformation into a professional educator in earnest.

Disa does not, as Nerine did not, directly articulate her accumulated knowledge or her private theories. But a content analysis of the narratives in her interviews and journal reveals that, like Nerine, she created knowledge in both the practical and abstract domains. The long list of practical knowledge statements that she constructed demonstrates Disa's efforts to understand and perform the role of educator in the everyday world of the classroom. She constructed much of her practical knowledge to improve and transform her own organizational and management skills in the classroom:

- “It is important to balance your learning tasks, if you integrate the whole thing together, if there's a section of...of drawing maps, if there's a section of ...of maybe it might bring that sense of say, okay this is it ...”(Disa, 2002: Interview 4).
- “Co-operative learning must be well structured and functional. There must be order in the classroom ...” (Disa, 23 July 2002: Journal entry).
- “Observation skills is (sic) the most important thing for an educator ...” (Disa, 23 July 2002: Journal entry).
- “Giving instruction. Being able to be clear in my instruction. Not just giving them work because one thing I've realized is that they are used to instructions saying: Do this!” (Disa, 2002: Interview 2). Be specific and precise with my instructions ...” (Disa, 30 July 2002: Journal entry).
- “You have to get feedback on what you've been doing...” (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).
- “As you go through the process of teaching and stuff, you need to consolidate what you have been doing with the learners...” (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).
- “Explain key concepts that are not familiar to the learners...” (Disa, 30 July 2002: Journal entry).
- “Meet the learners outside of the classroom, as discipline begins there...” (Disa, 30 July 2002: Journal entry).

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- “Manage time...” (Disa, 30 July 2002: Journal entry).
  - “Wrap up what is done in the class by the end of each activity or lesson...” (Disa, 30 July 2002: Journal entry).
  - “Ensure that all learners are focused on the same section of work...” (Disa, 30 July 2002: Journal entry).
  - “I must have a set of outcomes on my mind...” (Disa, 5 August 2002: Journal entry).
  - “As an educator I should always organize and explain material in ways appropriate to learners’ abilities... (Disa, 6 August 2002: Journal entry).
  - “The minute you fail to motivate your kids then ... you cannot manage your classroom ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 4 ).
  - “I don’t believe that you are supposed to learn everything in silence ...” (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).
  - “I always group my kids in different cultures and different genders ... because they think differently and they relate to certain things differently ...” (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

Disa also constructed practical knowledge about the way an educator behaves in the classroom:

- “Be spontaneous and friendly. When you are nervous you’ll look strict and stern ...” (Disa, 23 July 2002: Journal entry).
- “The way you live it affects you ... the first two weeks in the schools I was just wearing casual like jeans, T-shirt, boots that’s what I was wearing. My relationship with the learners, it was sort of ... it was like they were seeing me as their friend. Like, whassup man ... But the last two weeks I was very formal ... the way I speak the language, not with authority like do this or I’m gonna kill you but with ... with the distance of saying: you’re just out there and I’m here and we are all going there!...” (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).
- “There are so many things at home that cause the whole misbehaviour in the classroom ... Talk to the kids ... What’s ... what’s happening at home? Are you okay? How is Mummy? How is Daddy? and with that, the child says, ‘Wow she cares ... you know ... she wants to know what is happening in my life’ ... you will

see the change of behaviour. I've seen it with so many kids..." (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

- "Don't ever shout because once you shout, the kids realize you're no longer in control ... If they keep on making noise, I stand quietly and look at them and all of them, they look and realize ... always what I say is 'guys let's focus on what you want to do and let's do it'..." (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).
- "When you teach there are a lot of things to consider. You cannot close your eyes and do only one thing you need to try all sorts of techniques available..." (Disa, 6 August 2002: Journal entry).
- "Professionalism can have a positive influence on your classroom management and also maintain learning..." (Disa, 16 September 2002: Journal entry).

On the other hand, in the abstract domain the knowledge base that Disa constructed from her experiences describes the nature of being an educator.

- "Teaching is ... you have to start inside. Then what is inside will come out. You can't, you can't. They can give you all these books and stuff. You can read them all but you can prepare ... you know ... you can prepare yourself but if it's not here ... it's not going to be there. You can and put everything together but it's not going to be there until you go back and say 'Why am I doing this? Do I really want to be here?'..." (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).
- "Be yourself. Don't be someone else. Be yourself and with your sense of humour, go into the class and do what you know best ... and let the kids relate with your personality..." (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).
- "My conclusion was that if you keep on challenging the learners beyond this potential, they themselves ... and you don't wait for them to learn ... they themselves the learning itself will come in time. You were just giving them guidance but they will go out and ... and really look ..." (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

Disa has now intellectually and emotionally discarded and abandoned the "chalk and talk" performer concept of the role of the educator and articulated for herself what she can become as an educator. She does not have to "play a role" that she does not believe in but can and does independently define her professional parameters.

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The practical and abstract knowledge base that Disa has constructed from her experiences and her collisions both support and compel the creation of a new belief about the role of the educator and the implicitly related private theory. The belief and the private theory that Disa brought with her when she entered the teaching profession express the function of the educator, that is to inspire others and herself to be more than they think they can. The role that all educators should take in the classroom is the thrust of her new belief. Disa now can directly express her belief that *The role of the educator is to teach authentically about life* (Disa, 2002: Interview). By extension her private theory *I must teach authentically about life* emerges.

When you teach children, it's not about teaching them the subject, it's about teaching them about life ... That's my belief about that ... it's reflecting what is inside ... And all these things that we live in, we put them together and we live with them ... Ja, it's not just about content but it's about teaching them about how life is. Can they withstand the challenges when they grow up ... I believe in building up and creating something different and empowering them to be what they wanna be ... when they grow up and they can come up with something more better than what we have now ... ja, it's about making them be what they are created to be... (Disa, 2002: Interview 2).

The belief and private theory coming from the culmination of her professional and personal experiences make it possible for Disa to be comfortable in the role of educator which had so troubled her at the beginning of the year. Teaching authentically means not only facilitating relevant learning tasks for the children but also approaching the teacher stance as a professional person who is naturally and genuinely present in the classroom.

As the narratives progress Disa appears to grow in confidence as an educator and statements of a burgeoning sense of professional efficacy appear. One indication is her general sense of being capable and ready - even anxious - to work on her own.

I want to be in my own classroom because I feel like I'm ready to ... to take over, but ... you know if I have to be under someone else, I have to work under her own rule and she doesn't allow me to explore, you know ... ah, I feel I'm ... I feel ready, you know, to create my own culture in ... in the classroom ... You know that the kids can follow ... you know because when you're doing your practice, you have to follow

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somebody else ... If you have your own class you can take what you've learnt and just ... go with it and see if it will work or not ... you're worth something in the school... (Disa, 2003: Interview 5).

As she struggled to become more than she thought she could be personally and professionally, Disa clearly expressed her satisfaction with her own development and growing confidence. She is not afraid to speak up for herself anymore. "I'm not shy anymore, not at all. I can speak. I can speak my mind. I can do whatever..." (Disa, 2003: Interview 5). She now feels that she has learned to manage her time more efficiently.

I've developed in the sense of try to manage ... to be able to manage my time, be organized, be able to speak out, be able to say to the people: Okay this is what I want and stick to it! I think I've improved a lot ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

She had been worried about her ability to cope in a culture so different from her own and feels confident now that she has the ability to flourish in the company of diverse kinds of people.

God has given me the ability to be able to connect with different people and classes and all that. I connect with them very well. We click. I can say that ... Ja, I just managed to fit right in ... (Disa, 2002: Interview 1).

In contrast to the image of restriction and confinement and the determined efforts to repeatedly "climb the hills" in her teaching practice Disa significantly presents a new image of freedom.

I feel so at ease, everything started to fit in the puzzle. I started to enjoy what I am doing ... I actually felt free to do what I wanted ... (Disa, 2 August 2002: Journal entry).

Previously restricted especially by her own shyness, her frustration with her own organizational skills and the "worksheet" approach to teaching, in the final interview Disa now appears relaxed and confident and is an educator beginning to experience a sense of professional efficacy.

There is also evidence of efficacy in the narratives to support the confidence that Disa displays. Episodes and events in her classroom are measured against her private theories (*I must become more than I think I can* and *I must teach authentically about life*) and become

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evidence of her development of a sense of professional efficacy. When the children respond to her teaching with questions she feels that she has challenged and inspired them. Throughout her narratives, Disa uses questions to think deeply and critically about what is happening to her and what she is doing and she perceives that questions are a sign of intellectual growth. She is gratified when the children too are asking questions.

I don't know ... but I feel for the first two ... I don't know for the first two lessons that I gave, I think I was challenging so many of them ... If they always coming and asking questions, always digging deep. Digging deep and ... and ... more interested than just: 'okay fine we did this boring thing' ... I enjoy questions. I don't give them answers... (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).

In addition she measures the progress of her own effective performances with the learners by the creativity and originality of the children's work rather than having them repeat back to her what she has said. She takes pride in their work.

They themselves, they came up with all this ... this stories. Exactly they learn more than working when I say: 'okay draw the map of Northern Province like this and then over here' ... then ... Ja. To me, I find that is very satisfactory ... I'm so impressed with what I did... (Disa, 2002: Interview 4).

She measures her success when the children respond and when she can also respond as authentic learners in a classroom discussion: "In all the classes they responded very well, the discussion was very beneficial because I also learned things I didn't know..." (Disa, 8 September 2002: Journal entry). Disa judges her organizational skills as successful when she remembers to give clear instructions and to move around the classroom and she sites an example of her skill.

My instructions were clearer - the learners know what was expected of them. I moved around the classroom and assisted the learners. They were challenged because they were all actively involved in the activity ... (Disa, 11 September 2002: Journal entry).

Disa feels that her discipline methods are also successful as she sees changes in the behaviour of her learners. She wanted her learners to be able to handle the challenges of life (unlike her sister/cousin) and she perceives her learners as strong and able to withstand problems and uncertainties.

They have been labeled by teachers and they actually behave the way the teachers

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label them. But as we go inside there as educators, they are treated as normal people. Nobody listens to what they want to say. And I give them the chance to think and they go like: ‘Why is she treating us like this?’ And they definitely changed their behaviour when they came to classes. They automatically changed ... If you treat them like people and you expect much out of them, they’ll really want to work hard to do that expectation of yours ... It worked, it worked. The first two weeks I was there it worked!...(Disa, 2002: Interview 3).

Finally, in one of the longest passages containing a “little story” of a specific child, Disa relates how she broke through barriers to successfully “reach” a learner in one of her classes.

There was this other one ... I’m glad ... I don’t know ... I just felt thankful to God that I managed to get through you ... I couldn’t touch him like that. Every time I go to try, he will look down at me ... I didn’t know what to do to help. I honestly didn’t know what to do to help ... the whole of the Khoi - San lesson it was a dream. I didn’t know how it was ... he doesn’t know how to handle me or do something. Everything ... every time when I talk ... when we would work in a group, he doesn’t wanna work in a group. He wanna be alone ... Everybody’s busy working and then he’s just sitting like that and I went to him and say: ‘What’s wrong?’ And then he says, ‘I don’t wanna work.’ I said, ‘Okay you don’t wanna work.’ And I said, ‘Okay fine. Could you just do me a favour and just draw how you want a Khoi - Khoi home to be?’ He did this thing and came and showed me. And I thought, ‘Whoa this is a miracle.’ I was so happy. I was extremely, Whoa! Happy. Okay ... what did you do? I don’t know what I did. But it touched me a lot... (Disa, 2002: Interview 3).

From a shy uncertain person beset with memories of unhappy school days Disa blossomed into a self-confessed educator touched by the growth and responses of her learners. In Chapter Four Part One, thriving on the challenges of the classroom collision experiences Disa tests (tacitly) her original private theory, “*I can be more than I think I can.*” In Part Two she creates the abstract and practical knowledge that is somehow necessary not only to confirm her private theory but also to act as a catalyst for the construction of a new belief and private theory, “*I must teach authentically about life*”. Efficacy episodes resulting from the construction of abstract and practical knowledge endorse her sense of transformation. The result of the process is the development of the sense of professional efficacy as

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transformation. Through the continuing challenges of the collision and restructuring process, Disa perceives that she has been observably transformed from a shy, quiet young person who allows others to speak for her into an educator who can independently take the lead in the classroom and direct her learners in an organized learning task. She has been transformed from a person not sure if she could be comfortable in the school surroundings to a person who is determined to continue and expand her teaching in her own classroom. She has been transformed from a person who disliked and distrusted education and educators into an educator who can define her own role and live up to it to her own satisfaction. She has been transformed from a person who was not sure what she could accomplish into a person who became more than she thought she could. For Disa to experience a sense of professional efficacy perceived as a transformation and independence she needed to know explicitly how to develop herself as a professional person and implicitly how to define and describe her role as an authentic educator in the classroom. In her own life she became more than she thought she could be.

### **Jak**

Jak also perceives a sense of professional efficacy as an experience of being transformed and gaining independence but unlike Disa comes from what he considers a secure and contented background. He is satisfied with his schooling and holds up one of the schools that he attended as an exemplar of a good or even “perfect” school. He appreciates the culture in which he grew up and the familiarity of his surroundings. The customs and mores of his community are important to him and he takes on as a belief the perhaps unspoken but still influential cultural and family expectation that *“Everyone should have a career goal.”* After an indecisive period of study at university and an unsatisfactory and short work experience Jak arrives at the PGCE course with the perception that thus far he has not lived up to the expectations of his family and friends. He wants to transform himself from what he sees as a person with an indeterminate past to a person with a predictable and securely controlled future. Jak's steely determination serves him well in the months of his school teaching assignments where he collides with events and circumstances at what he perceives is a particularly difficult school, at the university and with the community at large. All of the

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collisions Jak experienced were initially perceived as obstacles to be overcome on his way to achieving his goal - that of passing the PGCE course no matter what. He consciously made decisions about his behaviour according to how it would effect the attainment of his goal. Collisions were perceived as threats to his goal fulfillment but were in the end the means to his development of sense of professional efficacy as a transformation and increased independence.

Through all of the chaos of the collisions at school, in his personal life and at the university Jak remains a “hero” who overcomes the obstacles in his story to reach his goal in a “happy ending.” Near the conclusion of the year in a strong efficacy statement he expresses a sense of the remarkable effect of the PGCE course on his life in all of these spheres. “I can’t believe there’s a course or a one year course can change you in ... in a year ... year’s time that much ... I see the world from a whole different angle now. It went well I think. I will remember this...” (Jak, 2003: Interview 10). The new perspective includes a sense of accomplishment particularly about his teaching experiences and the difficult first school assignment.

Ja, I did it definitely ... Ja, I’m proud of myself actually ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 10).

I feel more confident ... the first day I didn’t know what to expect ... I stand up in the class ... and it was calm ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).

Jak not only stuck to his goal and completed the course but feels that he has chosen the correct profession. He says that he enjoys teaching and is ready to continue on his own.

When I thought today ... I actually thought about that today, that my worst day at this school is still better as the average day of the work I had then ... What I like about teaching? Working with people and...working with your mouth ... that’s what I like and never a dull moment actually ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 6). I think the time is right for me now to go and teach on my own ... (Jak, 2003: Interview 9). I think I’m ready now. I’m starting to send my CV out to different schools in Pretoria. If there’s nothing come up by the beginning of December I’m going overseas... (Jak, 2003: Interview 10).

The experience of the course has even effected or at least coincided with Jak’s sense of efficacy in relation to his fear of living overseas and flying. During the course of the year he

flew for the first time.

That was the first time I ever flew in my whole life! Hey! But one of my friends is working for SAL and I waited for him in Durban and I flew back with him ... The first time in my life ... It was nice! I was so scared, that was one of my big ... you know my big phobias in life, but now, I will do it again. I will! ... I never thought I will be going overseas but just ... by doing that ... there's hope for me... (Jak, 2003: Interview 5). One of my friends is flying for SAL. I want to fly with him to London just for three or four days when he goes there ... just to see how London looks like because I'm thinking of moving there next year ... I just want to go and have a look. Ja, I am not afraid. (Jak, 2003: Interview 5).

All of these statements of efficacy in his narratives express the positive outcomes of his determination to succeed. From collisions with the “chaos” of all of the circumstances surrounding his goal choice Jak emerged “unafraid” with a new sense of independence.

Although not explicitly stated Jak appears to base his sense of professional efficacy primarily on having survived and passed the PGCE course. He is proud of the fact that complying with his corollary themes he didn't run away or give up hope. Although he never overtly defines the moments resulting in a sense of professional efficacy, nevertheless throughout the narratives he described experiences of success in the classroom which inspire him to continue teaching. He developed an emotional attachment to the staff and learners at the first school assignment initially so frustrating for him. “The last twelve days ... it was quite ... actually sad leaving the school... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8). In fact, Jak went back to visit the school and was gratified at the reaction to his return.

So we went in there and ... just go and greet everybody and so on. The ... kids went bizarre when they saw me. You can't believe that. Screams and they can't get them in the class and stuff like that. The other teacher my ex-teacher told me, ‘No, you must ... just ... go’ so that she can get the children in the class. And it just gave me a wonderful feeling after that ... I had a look at the work and remembering some of the names and so on. No, ja, I miss some of them ... Ag, I think it was nice to go back ... Ag, I will go back again sometime again ... and it's actually nice just to see them again, ja, I some ... one time said, no I don't ever want to see that school again...

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(Jak, 2003: Interview 9).

Jak presented lessons that he perceived were successfully completed. Lessons that contained useful content and that did not waste the learners' time.

One chapter I did was entrepreneurship ... I did lots of small concepts and so on with them. And the other one was ... the role of the manager and I did stuff in the class that I think was more to Grade Eight or Grade Nine to some extent work but I feel like ... if they know that, they can go a lot further ... more than the basics ... And you know the children really did the trouble ... the work can go on further ... Yes this did improve ... because I hammered it ... it into them, I really did... (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).

Jak also developed a relationship with some of his students.

I don't know me and A--- understands ... each other. So he's willing to come and speak to me about his problems. Like that other guy as well, D---- Every teacher suffers with him in his class. I don't know why ... he's actually getting marks in my class ... he's doing good. The last marks were out of 37, he received 27 out of 37. So it's good in my books ... I'm the kind of ... in this class I can shout at him and 'go sit down and do your work' and we walk out of that door, he starts chatting with me again. There is really no hard feelings at all ... that's very rewarding... (Jak, 2003: Interview 10).

He is able to be more playful with the children.

I told that guy that's giving me a lot of grief, but he's actually kind of cute ... the other day ... he had a cricket bat ... in his class ... and they were doing nothing in his register class and I told him, give me his cricket bat. He said 'no' so I said 'give it to me.' So he gave me the cricket bat and I tell him 'give me the ball' and I fight about a long time with him just to ... get him to give me the ball. He gave me the ball and I throw the ball up and hit it with the cricket bat and tell him to go catch that. But the look on his face ... that I was playing cricket in his class, you can't imagine that. Ja, he never thought that I will do that... (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).

The successes that feature in Jak's narratives represent resolutions of the collisions and the "chaos" that he experienced. Jak wanting at all costs to pass the PGCE course at first perceived the learners as hurdles to overcome in pursuit of his goal. As his private theory was

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revised he began to see the learners as interesting people. He is touched at the reaction of the children to his return to visit them. He did not anticipate their warm (“bizarre”) response to him or that he would enjoy the children - at one time he thought that they hated him. He forms successful teacher - learner relationships with some children - even a child that others find difficult - and he feels they are learning from him as evidenced by their high marks on his assessments. He is satisfied with his choice of curriculum that he considers effective and important. Finally, at times he can relax the strict atmosphere in his classroom and establish the beginnings of a more casual, playful climate.

From his experiences in the PGCE courses and the school based teaching assignments Jak developed a knowledge base - both practical and abstract - that helped him to achieve his goal and the successes on which he tacitly built a sense of professional efficacy. He attributes the acquisition of his knowledge largely to the time spent in the classroom at his two assigned schools.

They can't teach you how to discipline in a class, you have to experience that for yourself (Jak, 2003: Interview 8). You think you know it. You think you know it until you step into that class ... and then you know you don't know ... everything. It's just experience ... it comes with experience... (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).

The practical knowledge base that he spoke about over the course of the interviews, acquired from his experiences in the classroom, include legal aspects of teaching, specific teaching techniques and knowledge of the circumstances of his learners.

- “HIV/AIDS has an impact on schools.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 1).
- “The way HIV/AIDS is treated can have an impact on schools.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 1).
- “You cannot tell anyone in the school who has HIV/AIDS or you can lose your job.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 1).
- “Children in Grade Seven, Grade Eight and Grade Nine are going through an identity crisis.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).
- (To) “write on the chalkboard (while) still keeping eye contact - if you are right handed stand with your left shoulder to the board and write like this and still have eye contact.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).

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- (The) “way to move in a class (is to keep) eye contact.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).
  - Children in the schools are exposed to difficult learning and environmental conditions such as poverty and drug and physical abuse. (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).
  - (If a child is talking in class) “I say, ‘You stand up.’ I ask him what’s his name and come to the front ... and he must stand there the whole period.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).
  - “If a child doesn’t want to work I ask him to leave ... so out.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 8).

All of the practical knowledge that Jak articulated echoes the corollaries of his private theory. The practical knowledge base was simply expressed and helped him to cope with the everyday world of the classroom without wasting time or losing control. At the same time there is a sense of growing wonder in the accumulation of a practical knowledge base that was new to him and “opened his eyes” dramatically.

The abstract knowledge base that Jak constructs is an extension of the sense of wonder and concerns his emotional reactions to the children and a subtle revisiting of his private theory.

- “Children with problems stages these days with the kids and I enjoy working with all of them - their self-identical problems but that’s interesting for me.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 4).
- “You have to experiment with different ways of teaching, of handling the kids ... trying to discipline ... in the class and so on and when you get something that works for you ... you know you achieve something.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).
- “This is school. This ... this is teaching ... It will be better for me myself to get my education at that school ... cause I’m prepared for everything else outside ... it’s like a medical doctor ... which was sent to a very bad hospital and then to a good hospital and then they had both experiences. But if you’re in that bad place, it’s not nice ... but there is a learning experience for my new school.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 7).
- “I like working with that class ... that kids is just on another vibe than the rest I know. I like to be with them at this stage, work with them. That’s what I like. I maybe not really overly fond of kids but ... it’s changed this couple of last

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months.” (Jak, 2003: Interview 10).

The abstract knowledge that Jak has created alters his view of his experiences and slightly changes his private theory that he has no choice but that he must pass the course at all costs. He is still steadfastly committed to passing the course but he no longer sees all of his experiences as related only to whether he will pass or fail. He considers the identity challenges that his learners face as interesting rather than obstacles to the achievement of his goals. Similarly, he has recognized that he can learn from the difficult school experiences, that the knowledge gained will benefit him as an educator regardless of what happens in his assessments. Jak appears to be comfortable with his identity as an educator who is learning his profession for the benefit of learners.

In the final interview after his first term as a full-time educator Jak is still colliding with the children in his classes and the administrators of the new school. He tells stories of inattentive children and an administrator who is not supportive (Jak, 2004: Interview 11). The familiar collisions do not deter him, however, and his plan for the future contains a commitment to continue teaching and working in the field of education. He is now looking for a new position for next year at a different school where he can put into practice the knowledge that he has so determinedly acquired from his experiences. With his successful completion of the PGCE course comes a confidence gained from challenging himself, making a career choice and sticking to his goal. He looks forward to continuing his career, setting new goals both personal and professional and meeting challenges successfully.

The process of developing a sense of professional efficacy that Jak underwent appears similar to the experiences of Nerine and Disa. In Chapter Four Part One, Jak collided often with the many obstacles in his path to professional efficacy. In Part Two, from the collisions of private theories comes the development of abstract and practical knowledge and the building of efficacy episodes contributing to Jak’s sense of professional efficacy as a transformation. Because he appears to have been (unknowingly) forced to restructure and transform his original private theory, he now perceives that he has changed and become a very different person. The transformation of his knowledge base expressed as a revised private theory is represented in the observable changes that Jak identifies in his life. Jak is

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transformed from being a person who did not know what to do with his life to becoming a person who has a plan and successfully completed the first challenges towards reaching his goal. He is transformed from a person who saw the challenges in the classroom as obstacles to the achievement of his goals to becoming an educator who learns from a tough situation. And Jak is transformed from a person who preferred safe and familiar surroundings to becoming a person who is willing to take some risks and explore the wider world. He is transformed from a person whose future was unclear to a person who is in control of his future and is now ready for independence. For Jak to experience a sense of professional efficacy perceived as a transformation and a desire for independence he needed to know explicitly how to negotiate the changed role of the educator in the classroom and tacitly how to meet the challenges that confronted him in his effort to achieve his goal. As Jak says, “There is hope for me.”

### **Professional Efficacy as Worthiness**

Erica expresses a sense of professional efficacy that is different from the notion of efficacy as transformation presented by the other three narrators. Although she appears to have experienced the same process in the development of a sense of professional efficacy as the other narrators, hers is a struggle to prove herself as a person who is deserving and merits the work of being an educator. As a mature adult with teaching and parenting experiences in her background she is not yearning for a transformation but for a validation and confirmation of her existing knowledge and abilities. As shown in Chapter Four Part One, she enters the course hampered by a lack of self - confidence and personal confusion due to conflicting loyalties. Her involvement in and her needs from the PGCE course goes beyond the acquisition of a professional qualification or a sense of professional efficacy in the classroom. Instead, a sense of professional efficacy for Erica has the almost impossible task of providing an important estimation of her worth as an educator and even more as a measure of her worth as a person. It appears that unless the PGCE programme and her classroom experiences can provide Erica with an indisputable, permanent sense of her own worth as a professional and as a person she will be unable to cope with the demands of her long held dream of becoming an educator. However, a sense of professional efficacy is never permanent and the outcome of Erica’s story is ultimately and inevitably precarious.

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**Erica**

Erica's initial sense of unworthiness comes from many of her experiences before entering the PGCE course. Erica felt frustrated and defeated by events and sometimes with herself. Her childhood and school experiences were dominated by a strict father whose presence intimidated and often angered her as he frequently set high standards of behaviour and criticized her for not reaching them. At school she faced an equally strict as well as unsympathetic teacher who actually changed the direction of her career. As she grew older, married and had children she perceived again that her confidence in herself was threatened this time by the academic family into which she married. Once again she has the perception that she is unable to meet the standards set by those close to her - and she perceives that she is unworthy. The profound remorse and sadness she experienced for the pain caused by apartheid (and perhaps also the difficulties in her own life) is expressed in her belief that *"There is too much suffering in the world."* An enormously empathetic and sympathetic woman, Erica translates that belief into a mission statement for her life and work that *"I must make up for the pain and suffering. I want to make the world a better place to live."* Interpreted in relation to her belief that there is too much suffering in the world and her mission statement which expresses her desire to alleviate some of the suffering, her mandate is to make herself worthy by providing perfection in all that she does. Through her perfection the world will be a better place for her family, her learners, her community and country and herself. Predictably, demanding perfection of herself resulted in many collisions throughout the year of her becoming a qualified educator.

Despite the collisions Erica precipitated by the complexity of the demands of her private theory (my life and work must be perfect) Erica experience successes in the year of learning to become an educator and the previously downward spiral of the tragic plot of her story began to take an upswing. Throughout her narratives Erica had revealed indications of a growing confidence. For Erica the benchmarks of professional efficacy came from her assessments as well as events in the classroom. Despite her initial aversion to assessment, Erica's marks throughout the year for her portfolio, teaching skills and university studies were consistently high. "I was so pleased with the event. I had a crit lesson and received a

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well deserved 80%.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 4). After her second overall assessment from her professors in June she said, “I did get ... the highest marks, there were a few 70’s, a few, and I was one of them ...” (Erica, 2003: Interview 7). Informal evaluations and compliments from her colleagues also added to her sense of efficacy. Her mentor at the first school noticed her approach to teaching and expressed admiration.

My mentor complimented me by telling me that she is going to give more attention to problem-based learning. I felt that I was a change agent for problem-based learning ... I never realized I was going to learn so much. If this is education I am really hooked ... (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 17).

One of her younger colleagues also admired her work.

My peer told me that she had actually learned helpful hints and information to enrich her own life, which was a lovely compliment. My other peer ... used my learning task as an idea for her own teaching which was a compliment to me ... (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).

As Erica worked through the year with her younger colleagues she discovered that her age was an advantage in the classroom.

I’ve not had discipline problems. Definitely my age is helping me with this thing. Because I hear the other students ... I thought somewhere along the line something is counting for me ... today ... I say, ‘come in you’ve got work to do, you’ve got lesson so and so’ ... something is working in my favour because I think my age was sort of counting against me all along ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 3).

Most pleasing to her of all were the assessments from the children in her classes.

I had the kids evaluate me ... it was so pleasant. I got such good reviews. Excellent, you know. Things that came out is, I teach my subject with passion and I’m very patient and I don’t mind to explain things and when they tell me things, I do listen and ja ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 6).

The most compelling evidence for the growth of Erica’s sense of professional efficacy perhaps is in her reaction of enthusiasm and sheer pleasure to the children in her classes and to the learning tasks that she provides for them.

I love the kids to bits even the naughty ones. I actually like them more sometimes. Ja, I love them to bits. I never knew ... I didn’t experience this before ... but I found

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when I look at these kids, I'm filled with love. I love them so much, you know. I stand in front of them and I think ... do you really know how much I care for you? You know that feeling? (Erica, 2003: Interview 6).

The combination of written assessments, approval from her mentor and colleagues and the joyful teaching that happened in her classroom seemed to leave Erica with a sense of professional efficacy - of being capable of performing effectively with her learners - demonstrated in a desire to continue teaching.

As Erica was building a sense of professional efficacy she was also constructing a knowledge base. The successes of these lessons were built on and built a foundation of practical and abstract knowledge that was never explicitly described but was revealed through a content analysis of her narratives. Not in any sequential order but scattered throughout her professional portfolio are statements of the practical and abstract knowledge that she has constructed from her classroom experiences.

- I did a group work thing ... that was quite positive. I'm totally against group work. And this was so positive, that I'll do group work again. I don't know. It's chaos usually but this wasn't chaos. I've never tried it before. It's my perception that it's chaos and I don't like group work and I don't want to do it. But I did it and I had fun and the results were excellent. No, I was so clever, I was excellent. I am so thrilled with myself, because I know kids ... It just worked out excellently. And the kids actually ... they thought this was fun. I enjoyed that so much ... And I even asked them things that I hadn't asked ... 'who's your target market and why did you choose this target market' and so on and they were on the edges of their seats all along ... and the next time they came in there and they said, 'Miss, Miss are we going to do another one today?' ... it's like life, if you don't want to do something or you don't want to go somewhere, those things normally end up to be the greatest ... (Erica, 2003: Interview 6).
- "I have personally experienced that 'sensitive issues' are better shared using peer education, role models and maybe heroes, like for example, Mr. Mandela. The learners were more comfortable in discussing sensitive issues with their peers." (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 12).

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- “I have experienced that it can happen, one can have a problem that the learners start working at immediately and will keep busy for the whole period.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).
  - “If one plans a problem that needs to be solved in sequential steps it must be planned in such a way that no other sequence can be followed.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).
  - “Individual tasks need to be solved individually and group tasks must be planned carefully as you need to have definite rules and plans for group dynamics. You cannot marry the two methods suddenly at the drop of a hat.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).
  - “State beliefs and expectations re: lateness, group/individual work to the learners.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).
  - “Consolidate learning by stopping the lesson at the end of five minutes, tell them to summarize.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).
  - “Keep that little bit of distance away from the learners ... a professional distance.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 15).

The practical knowledge base that Erica constructed and wrote about concerns validating the “new” methods of teaching and how to use them successfully in the everyday world of the classroom. Her practical knowledge base confirms her opinion of the efficacy of the “new” paradigm for teaching.

Interestingly, unlike Nerine, Disa or Jak, the abstract knowledge base that Erica constructed is larger than the practical knowledge base and contains global as well as personal issues.

- “Assessment ... is an integral part ... of the Learning Task Design.” (Erica, Portfolio Section 1).
- “I also believe that a portfolio is never complete and as this is a first experience for me it is far from perfect. It must be regarded as a lifelong process of learning towards the maximization of my own potential as an educator.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 2).
- “I have learned from my lecturer that I am allowed to make mistakes as long as I learn from them” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 3).
- “Educators have the important role of not just learning students but saving lives.”

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(Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 8).

- “I have discovered that no situation is unique to South Africa, not even violence in schools, which in some instances might be the legacy of apartheid.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 10).
- “It is also important for South Africa for the educators to cultivate a culture of tolerance, respect and acceptance of diversity and if this is done successfully we can rewrite history and look towards a better future.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 11).
- “I feel that I have learned by not giving up when I felt stress and uncomfortable feelings from the learners.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 14).
- “Do not be scared to do and try something completely different from anything done before.” (Erica, 2003: Portfolio Section 16).
- “I was always the world’s greatest panicker. I think that when you get to a certain age, you’re much kinder to yourself ... these young students that study with me ... I don’t envy them their age at all.” (Erica, 2003: Interview 1).
- “So I have compromised a bit ... I’ll go sort of midway...I’m doing a bit of this and the old style and so on. I tried to incorporate the style they taught us with this transparency stuff. I’ve always been anti-behaviouristic theory but...behaviourism has proved to work in some situations and there are some things that kids actually need to be drilled and punished and they need to know certain concepts so the one I hate the most I even have found some things I can use ... Now I’ve got peace of mind.” (Erica, 2003: Interview 6).

These reflections of abstract knowledge allowed Erica to begin to revise her private theory in several areas of her life. Now she acknowledges that her classroom does not have to be perfect, she can experiment, plunge in, make mistakes and learn from them. Learning to teach as is evident in her portfolio is a process not a “product” to be marked. Unsure of her worth and terrified of assessment Erica had perceived her learners as “underdogs” who would need her motherly protection. As she begins to revise her private theory she has even accepted assessment as an important part of learning. For herself she had learned that she can compromise, accept the stressful feelings of her learners and move on and she now even enjoys the advantages of her age. She also learned that the world is not perfect anywhere.

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While the legacy of apartheid is disastrous other societies are also dealing with momentous problems. In some areas of her life Erica appears to have found a balance and expresses a new peace of mind.

The statements of practical and abstract knowledge and the evidence of successes and even joys in the classroom indicate that Erica has gained a sense of professional efficacy. However, her sense of her success and accomplishments and even peacefulness came crashing to an end after Erica completed the programme. Upon completing the PGCE course Erica was unable to secure a full - time contracted teaching position which puzzled and frustrated her. She had instead spent an unhappy term relief teaching full-time in a primary school where she found the children unruly and had experienced her first problem with classroom management. The deputy head (who hired a relative of his to replace her) told her that he hoped her replacement would be a better teacher than Erica was. She overtly expresses a statement of confidence only once, seemingly in a kind of defiance after declaring in this last interview that classroom teaching is not for her. Discouraged and disheartened she based her final efficacy statement on a cheering letter she had received the day before. In the letter it was announced that she had not only completed the PGCE course but completed it with distinction. Erica said, “I *am* a quality educator. They don’t know what they are missing.” (Erica, 2004: Interview 8). Her statement, “I am a quality educator. They don't know what they are missing” interpreted in consideration of the many twists and turn on her road to becoming an educator is an almost defiant declaration of worthiness. Against all of the difficulties (collisions) that Erica has faced and continues to face she emerges ultimately as a person who maintains that she is deserving of the work of being an educator. Because of the affirming evidence of efficacy, the knowledge base that Erica had constructed and her revision and softening of her demanding private theory, her decision to leave teaching came as a surprise. However, the one area that wasn’t addressed in her bank of practical or abstract knowledge, in her supportive evidence of efficacy or in her revised private theory was the collision between home and family and the work at school and at the university. She was able to accept mistakes, a less than perfect performance and compromise in her professional and university life but did not indicate that she could accept the same in her family life. In her final interview after she had decided to leave teaching she had chosen

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to remain at home to help her husband with his private practice. She said that although they have a strong marriage there hadn't been enough time lately to communicate well with each other. She also said that her daughters were growing up and would soon be leaving home. Erica wanted to spend some "stress free" time with them. She ended with the idea that in the future she may study further and would like to work individually with children, perhaps as some kind of educational counselor.

Although seemingly powerful, the feelings of efficacy generated in the PGCE course were not strong enough to overcome the circumstances of her family life or the disappointments of her brief full-time employment as an educator. Erica, too, had experienced the collisions which resulted in the beginnings of the revision of her private theory. As evidenced in Chapter Four Part Two she had begun to construct a practical and abstract knowledge base forming the foundation for efficacy episodes. Despite the affirming events occurring throughout the PGCE year Erica decides to leave the teaching profession after a disastrous first term of full time teaching. Perhaps the disparity between the "softening" of her private theory and her continual reliance on external assessment as a measure of worthiness may signal a disturbance in the process of experiencing a sense of professional efficacy that is powerful enough to keep the pre-service educator in the profession. Or perhaps the lack of extension of the "softened" private theory to the sphere of family life may have influenced her decision. In either case to experience the beginning of a sense of professional efficacy as worthiness Erica perceived that she needed to know explicitly how to make the new way of teaching work in the classroom and implicitly how to accept a less than perfect performance from herself as worthy and how to balance all of the responsibilities of her life equitably. Perhaps too, the decision to stop teaching is temporary and she will return once again to the profession which saw the beginning of her sense of professional efficacy as worthiness. As the pendulum swings in her life, the importance of the motherly obligation to care for her home and family tipped the balance in Erica's life to one side, at least for now.

### **Summary**

In this chapter the stories of the first year of learning to become an educator were completed. The development of a sense of professional efficacy supported by episodes of effective

performances and a practical and abstract knowledge base was examined. The importance of the creation of private theories and the testing of the private theories in the individual construction of the sense of professional efficacy became apparent as it repeatedly occurred in the narratives of each of the pre-service educators. A clear pattern in the development of a sense of professional efficacy thus appears to have emerged from the narrative analysis of the stories of these four pre-service educators. Figure 3 attempts to capture the pattern.

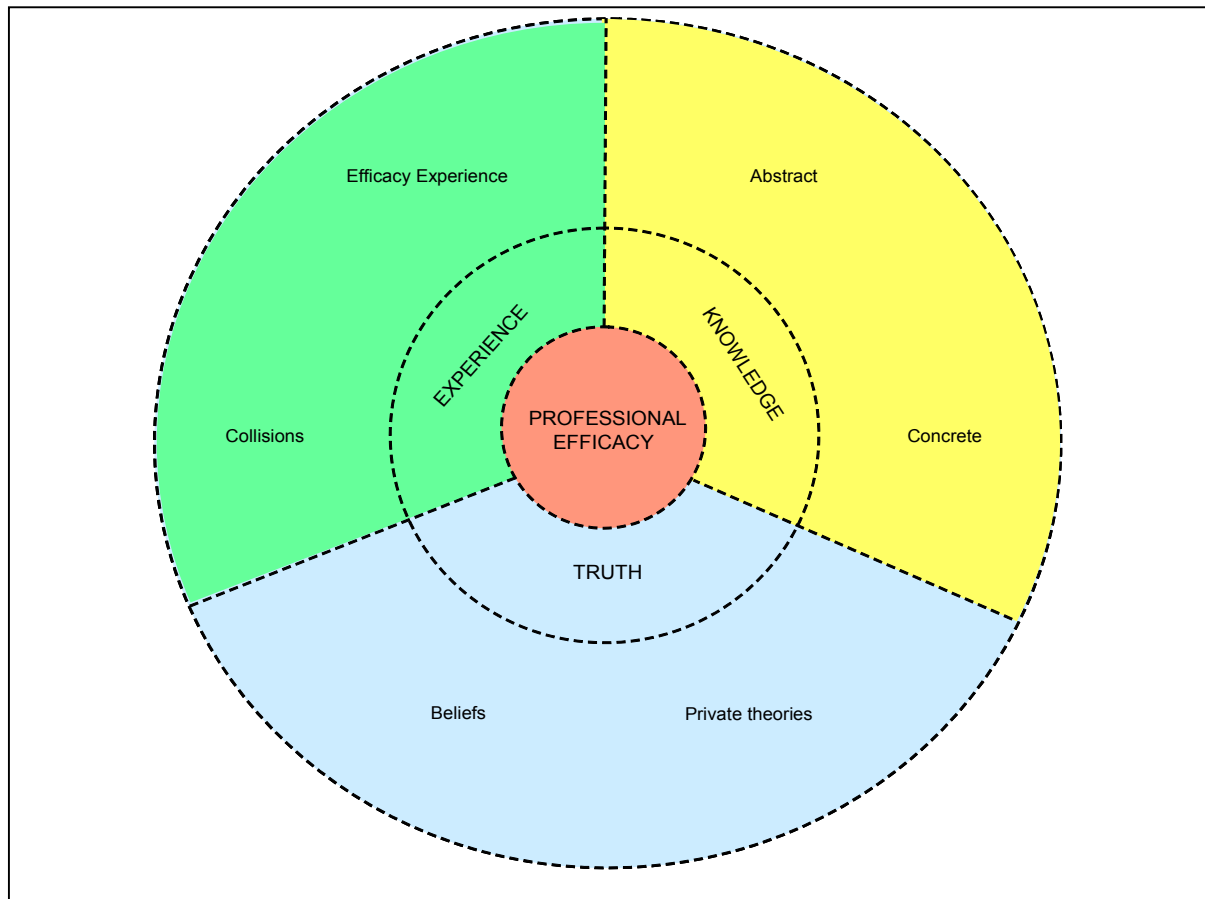


Figure 3: The Path to Professional Efficacy

In a continuing and cyclical process (indicated by the circles and the dotted lines in Figure 3) each of the narrators entered the PGCE programme with beliefs that were constructed from previously experienced collisions in home, school and work. When entering the classroom the beliefs became private theories influencing or guiding the actions of the pre-service educators. Collision experiences then occurred between the actions guided by private theories and events in the classroom. The collisions precipitated the development of abstract and

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private knowledge and efficacy episode experiences which in turn precipitated and supported the revision or transforming or affirmation of the private theories. The cycle begins again when the revised or affirmed private theories are re-tested in collisions.

Despite the similar process of professional efficacy development and the similar context provided by the PGCE programme, the content of the private theories, the collisions, the knowledge bases and the constructed sense of professional efficacy, however, proved to be as dissimilar and as individual as the narrators themselves. Three separate genres of professional efficacy were generated from the analysis of the narratives of the pre-service educators:

- transformation and coherence
- transformation and independence
- worthiness

Nerine constructed a sense of professional efficacy as an experience of transformation - of being changed - in addition to an increasing understanding of the coherence of teaching roles and activities. Disa and Jak constructed a sense of professional efficacy as a transformation and independence - a readiness to assume classroom responsibilities on their own. Finally Erica constructed a sense of professional efficacy as a validation of her worthiness as a person and as an educator.

Not surprisingly in order to negotiate the new role of educator, all of the narrators did develop a practical knowledge base that explicitly described elements of what the narrators perceived that they know about how things work in the everyday world of the classroom. But although each narrator constructed a practical knowledge base the elements in the knowledge bases varied because of and according to the beliefs and mission statements and especially the private theories and collisions which were implicitly at the core of the process. Nerine needed to know how to manage a classroom without diminishing the learners and how to mean something in the lives of the learners. Disa needed to know how to develop herself as a professional and how to define her role as an authentic educator in the classroom. Jak needed to know how to meet the challenges that confronted him in his efforts to achieve his goal. Erica needed to know how to accept her work and life as less than perfect and to balance all of the responsibilities in her life without guilt. For each of the narrators as well the abstract

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knowledge base that they constructed was made up of what they perceived that they know and needed to know about the nature of the playing out of their own beliefs, mission statements and private theories in the classrooms. Each of the individual pre-service educators appear to have been involved in reciprocal, complex and enigmatic processes to construct their own knowledge, truth and perceptions of experience on the path to professional efficacy.

The remarkable tenacity of the pre-service educators as they all successfully completed the rigorous PGCE course is a testament to their strength and commitment. Each in their own way has added to the collective narrative of learning to become an educator. From their individual stories some general conclusions about the relationship of the development of professional efficacy and the experiences of learning to become an educator emerge and form the final remarks of the study. Also included in the final remarks are reflections on the relevance of working with narrative analysis methodology and methods, a discussion of the challenges in this research study, and some tentative suggestions for the PGCE programme drawn from the experiences of the four pre-service educators.

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## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Reflections: Learning from the Stories**

The experience of conducting a narrative inquiry investigation into the sources of professional efficacy of the four pre-service educators has generated some conclusions, some suggestions and some questions for continued reflection concerning both the manner in which the study was carried out and the knowledge that was constructed as a result of the study. The contributions drawn from the use of narrative inquiry in the study may be of interest in the field of qualitative educational research and research methodology as the study attempts a novel approach for the use of the narrative analysis methods. The knowledge constructed from the detailed examination of the experiences of the pre-service educators may be of interest to educators and mentors of prospective educators and to people who will themselves consider becoming pre-service educators as the study attempts to give voice to the pre-service educators who in their own unique and compelling fashions have contributed to the universal search for a sense of professional efficacy.

### **Using Narrative Inquiry Methods**

In the field of educational research, the study presented an attempt to devise a new structure for the use of the narrative methods for analysis. Questioning the usefulness of the structure was, in part, the purpose of the early preliminary study but the suitability of the structure was also informally and continually assessed throughout the entire study. In the new structure the many methods of narrative inquiry were organized into groups or clusters. Organizing the methods into clusters appeared to be a useful and appropriate approach for their application to the data. Developing a scheme of approach to the methods of narrative inquiry gave a framework within which experiences could be documented as they occurred. Clustering the methods provided the descriptive attributes that encouraged thinking about the large number of individual methods in terms of grouping characteristics. As the characteristics of the groups of methods were identified the uses and the underlying assumptions of the groups of methods could be examined, compared and contrasted. The comparisons revealed that the clusters of methods while diverse in the specific concentration of focus were also similar in many ways. For example, the methods appeared productive with a variety of story types, could be used pre or post interview and could be applied to whole or partial texts.

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Each of the clusters of methods showed a degree of flexibility in their varying degrees of specificity of analysis allowing for global or detailed investigations of the narratives as the content dictated. The methods also provided a bank of evidence for the formation and support of interpretive analysis and seemed to expose a richer interpretation of the experiences of learning to be an educator through the revealed thoughts and feelings of the narrators. In the first cursory readings, the interviews had seemed to be simply superficial descriptions of their experiences told in colloquial language. Later rereading the narratives from the perspectives of each of the clusters of methods encouraged a deeper understanding of their meanings and the coherent retelling of the stories. From the analysis grew an appreciation of the sometimes embedded expressions of the motivations, aspirations and attitudes toward events and the construction of their beliefs, private theories and sensations of professional efficacy.

Also from attempting to devise and evaluate a new organizational structure for the use of the narrative analysis methods grew a recognition of the importance of researcher integrity and transparency in a narrative analysis investigation. Issues such as the influence of interview stance, the analysis and interpretation of the data, the impact of the choice of narrators and language differences and matters of reliability, credibility and trustworthiness are not as yet unequivocal in the genre of narrative inquiry. Although because of the lack of standardized guidelines conducting a narrative analysis investigation appears to be an individualized effort, some advantages do emerge from the attempt to create a new organizational research structure. The advantages of developing and describing a new organizational structure include:

- personal clarification and knowledge construction
- contributing suggestions for an organizational structure that can be reviewed and assessed by other researchers
- providing the reader with a clear idea of how the study took place.

Finally, a question for reflection arises from the methodology and methods used in the study: of what use are the results of applying multiple, carefully chosen varieties of narrative analysis methods to the data in a study? The results of using the methods do appear to be

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relevant and appropriate in educational research especially where much of what is experienced in the classroom is complex and difficult to express directly. The objectives of the study, to identify through narrative analysis the circumstances of construction and the content of the knowledge created by the pre-service educators from their experiences and to investigate and describe the relationship of the knowledge constructed by the pre-service educators to the development of a sense of professional efficacy, are all complex concepts largely unarticulated by the narrators. Using the clusters of methods helps to delve into the complexity, describe the experiences from the perspective of the participants and allow the powerful voices of the narrators to be heard. At the same time using the clusters of methods generates an understanding of circumstances that is composed of an accumulation of examinable evidence and analytical methods that is available for critical review, further interpretation or replication.

### **Creation of a Body of Knowledge**

Using the narrative analysis methods in this study generated the creation of a body of knowledge about how these four pre-service educators perceived the experience of learning to become an educator and of their development of a sense of professional efficacy. Some general conclusions and possible implications emerge from attempting to meet the objectives of the study and answer the question: What do pre-service educators perceive that they know and need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy?

The first objective of the study was to identify through narrative analysis the circumstances of construction and the content of the knowledge created by the pre-service educators from their experiences. As confirmed by the narrators themselves the narrative analysis methods were an effective tool for identifying the circumstances and the content of the knowledge created by the pre-service educators. However, even after identifying the separate circumstances of construction and the content of the knowledge created by the pre-service educators no one uniform answer to the question of what these four pre-service educators perceive that they know and need to know to develop a sense of professional efficacy emerged. Instead, the individuality of the contents of the beliefs, mission statements, private theories, abstract and practical knowledge bases, collisions, episodes of efficacy and

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statements of efficacy was startlingly evident. The unique personal quality of the content and the circumstances and experiences of each narrator seems to emphasize yet again the enormous complexity of learning to become an educator and of teaching others to become educators. As evidenced by the diversity of knowledge construction and content among these four pre-service educators it would appear that to authentically provide experiences which assist in the development of professional efficacy teacher education programmes have to embrace and at the same time challenge the personal nature of knowledge construction in many domains.

The second objective of the study was to investigate and describe the relationship of the knowledge constructed by the pre-service educators to the development of a sense of professional efficacy. Even though the content of the constructed knowledge was not the same, a relationship between the knowledge and the development of a sense of professional efficacy emerged that was similar for each of the narrators. The pre-service educators entered the PGCE programme and the classrooms with a set of personally constructed “truths” - mission statements, beliefs and private theories which were then tested in the collision experiences that they encountered. From the testing process practical and abstract knowledge was constructed enabling them to review - consciously or unconsciously - the validity of their private theories. The narrators then measured their professional efficacy - again consciously or unconsciously - by comparing their behaviour to their private theories. When the behaviour “fit” the private theory, an episode of a sense of professional efficacy emerged - as when Nerine managed her classroom without diminishing her learners or Disa provided authentic learning tasks that challenged her learners or Erica realized that she could make mistakes. The complex process presumably will be repeated again and again as the revised private theories are tested in new classrooms under new circumstances leading to the construction of new knowledge and new episodes of a sense of professional efficacy. Learning to be an educator who can recognize and analyze and confront personal beliefs and private theories as well as the resulting collisions seems to be a steppingstone in the development of a sense of professional efficacy. Introducing the pre-service educator to the crucial role of the collisions of beliefs and private theories with the realities of classroom events becomes an important aspect in the preparation of pre-service educators.

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Although it is impossible to determine if the development of private theories and the resulting collisions delayed or accelerated developing a sense of professional efficacy, the process appears to have been an essential one in the professional and personal lives of these four pre-service educators. In addition to and perhaps as a result of the relationship between knowledge and experience and professional efficacy construction present in all of the stories of the pre-service educators, the dominant form of professional efficacy that appeared in the narratives was a sense of transformation. Of the four narrators, the three narrators who chose to continue in the teaching profession appeared to have at times experienced a significant sense of professional efficacy as being changed or transformed - each in their own unique way. This sense of being changed while learning and striving to become an effective educator reinforces the need for a teacher education curriculum that goes beyond content material and professional skills. As Nerine said, the adjustment to the everyday world of the classroom is more than standing in front of the children and talking. For three of the pre-service educators in the study learning to become an educator was and continues to be an invigorating and intense, life-changing process. To support and encourage pre-service educators, teacher education programmes need to promote an understanding of the profundity and significance of the experience through critical reflection and analysis of the deepest beliefs of individuals toward their practice.

Even though the PGCE programme itself has not been evaluated or specifically discussed in the study, the part that the programme played in supporting the life changing process and the development of the sense of professional efficacy is undeniably present. Several features of the programme which seemed to support the development of a sense of professional efficacy include:

- the extended teaching practice in two separate lengthy school assignments where the narrators all said they learned to become educators and where they created their own descriptions of professional efficacy.
- fostering of a “supported collision” process where participants are encouraged (and forced!) to take risks in the classroom and in their university studies and the ensuing mistakes are tolerated and even welcomed by the university staff.

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- the discipline of the compulsory daily reflective journal writing. Thinking and writing critically about the events in the classroom and in the PGCE course provided a safe place for the pre-service educators to record the successes and failures in the classroom and to explore the abstract and practical knowledge that was being constructed from these experiences. Although irritated at times with the amount of written work to be completed all agreed that the reflection journal was an important part of the programme and several had plans to continue the practice in their professional lives.
  - the collegiality of the PGCE group itself made bearable the often intense experiences in the schools - sharing stories with colleagues facing the same circumstances (even though from different points of view) seemed to dissipate the pressure and provide some reassurance and renewed energy.

### **The Role of the Mentors**

For the narrators in this study at least, reassurance seemed a necessary ingredient to sustain the energy needed for a long year of collisions. Reassurance does not mean copious amounts of praise but rather to make clear and then to repeatedly remind the pre-service educators that (as the study shows) in the general, intense progression of experiences towards professional efficacy they will undergo “collisions” and that disequilibrium and “collisions” are a natural and essential part of the process. However (as the study shows) the completely individual and complex nature of the construction of a sense of professional efficacy makes reassurance about and support of the process lengthy and time consuming. The university staff are limited in the amount of time that they can spend with individual pre-service educators. The majority of the responsibility for reassurance and support through a discussion of the progress toward the interpretation of professional efficacy (including beliefs, mission statements, private theories, collisions, and knowledge) conceivably falls on the educators who work most closely with the pre-service educators - the mentors. The mentors who are “responsible” for only one or two pre-service educators are on site, working daily and living within the same circumstances as the pre-service educators. Only the mentors can provide the immediate and long term attention and support and reassurance that is needed by the pre-service educators. Educators in the schools also have heavy teaching responsibilities and little time to spare. However, if educators are to have a hand in building up the profession, the monitoring and

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nurturing through mentoring of novice educators is crucial.

The role of the mentors in the professional lives of the pre-service educators in this study was for the most part negligible, but the need for a broader role of collaborative sharing and reflective critical analysis is acknowledged and envisioned. The pre-service educators in this study viewed the mentors as powerful potential implicit sources of knowledge due to their current and practical experience in the classroom. All of the participants in this study welcomed the chance to discuss the events in their classrooms individually and regularly during the interview schedule of the study. Anticipating similar discussions with their mentors, the pre-service educators expressed disappointment when they did not occur. While the reflective journals that the pre-service educators are required by the university to keep are helpful in clarifying the events of the classroom, the underlying meaning and connections of events are tacit and often eluded the participants in this study. The role of the mentor should then include:

- sharing and modeling the development of their own practical and abstract knowledge bases and discussions of the collisions that are occurring - why they are happening and what they mean.
- helping to identify beliefs, mission statements and private theories that are carried into the classroom and
- teasing out the role of individual mission statements, beliefs and private theories in constructing knowledge and a sense of professional efficacy.

As such the role of the mentor will be challenging and implies the need for further research. Mentoring is not a matter of do what I say and do what I do and you will become an educator (as Plato demonstrated) - mentors will have to “suspend disbelief” to listen to the perceptions of the pre-service educators while at the same time guiding them to effective practice.

A useful starting place for a mentoring relationship that is a collaborative sharing of reflection and analysis could be the unstructured interview. Used throughout the study the non - judgmental approach to unstructured interviewing appeared helpful in building a rapport and a trusting relationship. Allowing the pre-service educators to control the content

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of the interviews meant that their genuine concerns of the moment were available for discussion. As the year progressed the topics that the pre-service educators chose to discuss moved away from the initial scattered sense of being overwhelmed by the challenges of the classroom and the requirements of the PGCE programme to becoming more focused on the act of teaching. Using the unstructured interview encourages the appropriate and fruitful timing of professional discussions. Coupled with references to the daily reflective journal the unstructured interview could also be used as a collaborative reflection sharing and analysis of experiences leading towards a conscious process of self development - for both the mentor and the pre-service educator. Then as the collisions that are occurring are identified from the perspectives of the pre-service educators, an authentic problem solving relationship could be built. Mentoring requires sustained engagement and commitment. But as long as the mentor is aware of the process of the development of a sense of professional efficacy the effort could form the basis for meaningful professional conversation and communication in and about the classroom.

### **Research Challenges**

The research design and procedure of this study was not without challenges. First, although the cultural and age differences between myself and the narrators may have encouraged a fresh view of their circumstances, the potential for misunderstanding may have been greater and may have gone undetected. Secondly, I purposefully began interviewing the narrators without knowing specifically about the PGCE programme content. The lack of content knowledge allowed me to approach the interviews with genuine curiosity. But as a result several issues that I thought were initiated by the narrators, such as the “multiple roles of educators,” I later learned were generated by discussions in their university classes. However, I also realized that the issue of the role of the educator, however it originated, must have been one of importance to the narrators as they often brought it up for discussion in their interviews. Finally because of the complexity of the narrative analysis methods, the preliminary study was necessarily focused on gaining an understanding of the functions and outcomes of the methods. The preliminary study of the methods was conducted using the data from the first year of interviewing with two of the narrators. In retrospect, an alternative approach to the study might have been to interview only one narrator during the first year to

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become familiar with the methods of interviewing and data analysis and then in the next year to interview a wider variety of pre-service educators. Other choices for narrators could have included pre-service educators in similar programmes at different universities or pre-service educators at the same university but in different programmes, such as the Bachelor of Education degree programme. A further comparative study of pre-service educators' perceptions of the knowledge that is needed to develop a sense of professional efficacy across different teacher education programmes would perhaps be useful in programme development and decisions.

### **In Conclusion**

Telling the stories of the four pre-service educators is intended to contribute to the meaningful professional conversation and communication in and about the classroom. The narrators who participated in the study are representatives of this generation of South African pre-service educators whose lives have been lived consciously or unconsciously in a time of personal and professional upheaval and change. Their stories are told to be available now for prospective educators and mentors and educators of educators to read about, to empathetically

“appreciate” and to examine the rigours of their entrance into the teaching profession. The stories are told now so that when educational reforms are proposed for this generation of educators the nature of learning to become an educator if not experienced firsthand is available for imagining and becomes part of the decision making discussion. Ultimately, however, the stories of Nerine, Disa, Erica and Jak were told so that the flavour of learning to become an educator and developing a sense of professional efficacy would be available for now and for the future as part of our collectively shared history as educators.

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**Appendix**

## Confidentiality Agreement

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Ann Rogan and \_\_\_\_\_ agree to enter into a contract together.

We will participate in a research project that will attempt to describe the experience of learning to become an educator.

We also agree that confidentiality will be maintained by

1. Keeping the names of the participants and the schools anonymous.
2. Discussing our conversations only with appropriate people (i.e. degree advisors)
3. Sharing information about what will be written and/or published.

The work together will consist of interviews over the school year, classroom observations and sharing documents.

Either person at any time may stop participation in the project.

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(Ann Rogan)

(Participant Narrator)