

CASE STORIES OF BRIDGING NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Can narrative inquiry methods contribute to the professional development of teachers as writers, researchers, and teacher leaders? I began my work as a teacher educator in a Midwestern university with the belief that reading research, writing reflective-reflexive responses to research, dialoguing with peer pre-service teachers in class sessions, and conversing with in-service teachers during field experiences would draw pre-service teachers into an inquiry-based approach to developing theory for practice. My working definition of reflective-reflexive writing encompassed and continues to encompass a multi-layered process through which learners summarize the salient points of research, analyze the research by making connections to other research and by asking questions for further inquiry, reflexively examine prior experiences that substantiate the research or refute it or produce insights, engage in critical self-examination for personal and professional bias, and consider alternatives for future practice based on the research (Moss 2004:180-183). These typed reflective-reflexive responses include pre-service teachers' understanding of educational research and narratives of connective personal experiences. I never grade these. I respond in the margins in a dialogical format, asking questions for clarification and sharing my own connective experiences in response to my pre-service teachers' narratives. Their products become narrative data that I analyze to gain insights into how pre-service teachers experience the learning assignments in my courses, their meaning making processes, and what kinds of readings engage students in critical self-reflection for bias.

I believed that my research would inform my pedagogy for pre-service teachers and professional development for in-service teachers, and that I would constantly use narrative methods to research my pedagogy and professional development practices to gain an understanding of my pre-service teachers' experiences with my teaching behaviors and practices and to create space for them to contribute to my understanding of what they perceived to be meaningful in learning to teach. I saw it as a way to democratize my authority and promote a rigorous, collaborative, inquiry-based approach to teacher preparation and professional development. At the same time that I designed my undergraduate courses, I designed a research proposal to collect data from students' reflective-reflexive narrative responses and end-of-the-course critical self-reflective narrative responses to survey questions as a way to research and develop my pedagogy and to move portfolio assessment in the direction of critical teacher development (2003: 51-52).

I engaged in ongoing analysis of my students' analyses of research and narratives of connective experiences, and used their insights and mine from the analysis to inform my decisions for curriculum development. I believed my teaching practices, especially the reflective-reflexive inquiry process to sustain a commitment to an open passageway between scholarship and practice, were grounded in my understanding of narrative research methods, developed by such scholars as Jean Clandinin, Michael Connelly, Tom Barone, and Donald Polkinghorne.

Narrative Connections between the Personal and Professional

Narrative inquiry is a medium for constructing teacher narratives of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991: 258-281, 1994: 413-427). Clandinin and Connelly (1988: 269-282) used narrative inquiry as a research methodology to examine for teachers' personal practical knowledge of teaching. They identified the relationship between the inquiry process and the

result product (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:2). The narrative researcher uses narrative inquiry to construct teachers' narratives of experience, analyze teachers' narratives of experience for practical knowledge concerning teaching, and use narrative to present the findings of the study.

In 1995 Clandinin and Connelly used the metaphor of a landscape to describe teachers' professional knowledge as contrasted to personal practical knowledge of teaching (4-5). They identified "in-classroom" and "out-of-classroom" places (14) where teachers' lives were lived in relationship with their students or in relationship to professional colleagues. I used these principles to inform my pedagogy for personal and professional development among pre-service and in-service teachers.

Using the knowledge gained from Connelly's and Clandinin's narrative analysis of the way teachers weave between personal and professional knowledge landscapes, I perceived that pre-service teachers enter higher education with personal practical knowledge from their home lives, churches, spiritual growth organizations, clubs, neighborhoods, and political affiliations that will influence their teaching identity. Just as classroom teachers weave between their personal and professional knowledge landscapes, pre-service teachers weave between their construction of professional education knowledge landscapes and their personal practical knowledge landscapes where they are influenced by social norms.

I intentionally engage pre-service teachers to become conscious of the role their personal development plays in their professional development, and their professional development plays in their personal development. The process of reflective-reflexive writing and open dialogue in a professional learning setting is grounded in narrative methods and intended to engage pre-service teachers in the merging of personal and professional self-consciousness for developing reflective teaching practices to meet the needs of diverse students (Moss, 2004: 172-173, 188-182); Moss, 2008a: 217, 222). I refer to this as critical self-reflection, which I have defined as

the examination of personal and professional growth towards becoming a scholarly teacher committed to democratic ideals of equality and social justice for all students. Evidence includes awareness of voice and participation in one's development, ownership of one's portfolio, and examination of self for cultural biases and participation in inequitable practices with the intent of changing toward practices that promote a greater participation of all students, and the development of critical citizenship for democracy. (Moss: in press)

This examination is done through reflective writing to more fully understand one's thinking and changes in thinking. Freire (2005:3) has pointed out the critical role that writing plays in this self-reflective process that begins with reflection and moves to writing for subsequent reflection. This writing is a narrative analysis of thinking and experience and prepares the writer for improved living, learning, and teaching. It would be consistent with Freire's philosophy to say that it prepares pre-service teachers to love, which is essential in the teaching and learning relationship. This love includes engaging their students in the rigorous process of studying to learn. This studying includes reflection and writing.

Developing the Context for Narrative Inquiry and Personal and Professional Development

Although I have engaged in ongoing critical narrative inquiry of my teaching practices and professional development practices with classroom teachers for nearly seven years, and recently presented my use of critical narrative ethnography in *Crossing Boundaries and Building Learning Communities: Critical Education and Narrative Research as Praxis* (forthcoming, 2008) as a viable option for teacher empowerment and reform of education, I was a first-year assistant professor when I agreed to the request of my Dean of Education that I collaborate with a writing instructor in the English Department to write a National Writing Project (NWP)

grant proposal to start the Appleseed Writing Project (AWP) on the campus where I teach.

The National Writing Project (NWP) is inspired by the belief that inquiring teachers of writing can be developed into teacher leaders. This fit with my overall philosophy of critical inquiry-based learning and my belief that scholarly reading, reflective-reflexive writing, dialogue, and inquiring into one's teaching practices through narrative methods could play a role in the professional development process. Ann Lieberman and Diane Wood, in their book study of the NWP, found that "fundamental to the NWP approach to professional development is the practice of teachers teaching other teachers" (23). This concept plays out during intensive summer institutes, where teachers write and demonstrate their knowledge of teaching writing in a writing workshop process, read research about writing and teaching writing, and engage in inquiry concerning writing, their personal beliefs about writing, and their practice of teaching writing.

Teachers pose important questions such as the ones Nancie Atwell points out in the second edition of *In the Middle*, "What else can happen in minilessons besides me minilecturing? What behaviors do I want to see in the workshop? How do I encourage them?" (23). Examples of questions explored in the AWP summer institute include: How do I engage my male students in writing? How can I effectively assess writing portfolios? Where do grammar, capitalization, and punctuation fit in writing workshop? How can I make grading fair and meaningful to students' writing development?

Ralph Fletcher and Joan Portalupe outline the components of writing workshop but are the first to admit that "planning for the writers' workshop offers particular challenges for the teacher" as it "requires a responsive kind of teaching" (125) on a daily basis. Teachers must plan based on the students' day-to-day experiences and writing development, and this may seem impossible to teachers in districts with prescriptive teaching and testing practices. The summer institute is a place to explore the power of

writing through writing workshop and imagine a culture of writing in the classroom.

In practice, the annual summer institute creates a setting for classroom teachers to engage in writing workshop practices, and read and reflect on writing theory. Participants come to the summer institute with several inquiry questions concerning their own classroom practice and examples of successful writing lessons. They read and reflect on professional literature and reflexively examine their own practice, considering how to improve writing instruction through writing workshop, which is an inquiry and community-based writing process approach.

Following the summer institute, participants have opportunities to continue their development by participating in book studies, teacher research, writing project workshops and research, and by developing programs such as youth writing camps. Ongoing assessment of the impact of the AWP on teachers' development as writers and teachers of writing, as well as developing teachers as researchers are my areas of leadership as a co-director of the AWP. Similar to the way that I have used narrative methods in my teacher education classes, I designed multiple inquiry projects to engage participants in the writing project under study in ongoing reflective-reflexive analysis of their experiences in the initial summer institute and subsequent experiences in classroom teaching and leadership in continuity programs. Thus, narrative plays multiple roles in AWP professional development, beginning with the application and portfolio of writing and teaching writing.

The Role of Narrative in Portfolio Assessment

This reflective-reflexive development begins with the application process. Teachers' initial contact with the AWP is one of engagement in narrative writing for assessment. As part of the application process, teachers submit a portfolio that includes a personal literacy autobiography, a narrative of teaching with example lesson plan and student work, and a writing product (personal, academic, or professional) from any genre. Summer

institute facilitators and co-directors of the AWP analyze the narratives submitted in the application process for voice, teaching for engagement of children in writing, and writing ability. The various narratives of experience in literacy development, teaching, and writing become a kind of base-line data set. More importantly, the narratives initiate the beginning of a relationship between the summer institute facilitators, co-directors, and prospective participants in the process of becoming a community of writers.

The Role of Narrative in Group Interviews and Selection Process

Potential summer institute fellows participate in a group interview process with facilitators and co-directors, who have read their literacy autobiography, narratives about teaching, and writing samples. Although we have a few standard questions, such as why they want to attend the summer institute, how they approach teaching writing in the P-12 classroom, and what their interest is in writing professionally, the narratives in their portfolio provide us a way to connect to their experiences before they arrive. Sometimes we ask questions about what we read in their literacy autobiography or teaching lesson to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees. Narrative plays a role in building a writing community, and the process begins during the interview process, when the interviewers tell stories of their personal experiences in the writing institute and engage the interviewees to tell their personal stories of experience writing and teaching writing.

The Role of Narrative in Writing Development

During the summer institute, facilitators engage fellows (the title that the NWP gives to participants) in writing in response to demonstration lessons. A demonstration lesson, or demo, refers to teacher presentations of craft lessons to fellow teachers. Some of these lessons result in teachers capturing ideas within their writer's notebook, and others result in the further development of

existing writing pieces. Most participants find themselves engaged in remembering personal life incidents and developing crafts to tell those stories of experience in prose or poetry.

Penny Sholl, a white, fourth-grade teacher in a rural school district, was engaged by Co-Director Terry Springer's demonstration, Life Maps, and remembered her fear for the safety of herself and family members when they were caught on top of a mountain just as a blizzard hit. After drawing a timeline map of memorable life experiences, fellows wrote about one event. Penny developed her story over time during the summer institute, adding sensory detail, vivid verbs, and descriptive adjectives following subsequent demos and several rounds of meeting with her writer's group and revising. Penny chose her ski story and accompanying poem as two of her pieces to publish in the anthology.

Snowbird

Sun shines.
Light fluffy powder dusts
tree trails and jumps,
buffeting gusts of howling winds.
Curtains of snow hide perils in waiting:
rocky cliffs, drop offs,
narrow ledges,
black diamonds.
Aim down, out of the tempest,
back and forth across the mountain,
safe at the base
giddy with relief.
Sun shines.

In a letter to her principal, Penny told him how she had used *Guiding Readers and Writers: Grades 3-6* by Fountas and Pinnell, a book he gave her in 2001 when he moved her from ten years in

kindergarten to fourth grade, as a model for developing reading and writing workshops in her classroom. She reminded him of a professional development workshop he sent her in 2002 and the many books on writing that he bought for her to use in developing focus lessons when teaching writing. Penny concluded her letter with her story of experience in the AWP summer institute. She wrote,

This summer I have become a writer. I have wiggled and squirmed just like my students. I sat in the author's chair and shared my writing with my peers. Boy, that was tough!

In the upcoming school year I will continue to implement writer's workshop, refining my revising and conferencing skills. I also plan to explore various ways to have my students become published authors in various media such as magazines, journals, and web sites. I am excited about a new school year with new opportunities to implement many of the ideas learned in the writing project. I will also be available as a teacher consultant for writing and am willing to share my experiences with my colleagues.

Writing narratives of personal experience and publishing them in the summer institute anthology helped Penny to develop an identity as author and a focus on students becoming writers rather than mastering writing. This was a bridging of Penny's personal identity as a writer and professional development as a writing teacher.

Narrative writing was also a tool for Patricia Naragon's development as a writer. A white, second-grade teacher in a rural school district, Patricia introduced herself in the summer institute anthology with the following words.

Welcome to my collection of writings. My name is Patricia Naragon and I am a writer. You will notice that my writings stem mostly from my family and the lasting memories that I hold in my heart. Enjoy!

Patricia's first writing, "Hidden Treasure," is a personal story she developed during a writer's marathon. Fellows were given two hours to wander on campus and write. Patricia described her writing experience during the marathon as follows.

*I sat on a stone bench in the campus gardens and spotted two trees.
I started to observe closely the picture before me as a writer would.
This piece became therapeutic and uncovered many hidden feelings.*

Patricia gained insights into the power of narrative writing. She was practicing writing to develop her writing skills as part of her professional development as a second-grade writing teacher but found the experience to be personally beneficial as well.

Patricia contributed five pieces of writing to the summer institute anthology, including three nonfiction stories, a poem about her son, and a letter to a friend and colleague who introduced her to the AWP. Patricia's poem began in response to a demo on question-and-answer poems. Patricia "fell in love with this type of poetry" and "could see how [her] students could feel success and enjoy writing their own."

Patricia's fourth piece of writing, "Grandpa's Sugar Camp Memories," was intended as part of a gift to her father-in-law. Only a "treasured memory" now, since the camp was destroyed several years ago when the family farm became part of Potato Creek State Park. Patricia submitted this unfinished piece to the anthology, but planned to continue the revision process.

I am not finished with the revision of this piece since I would like to check with my husband's brothers and sisters to see if they would like to add any other details. I would also like to read it to my second graders and see if they have any other questions that I should answer.

This perspective on revision as an ongoing process was a change for Patricia, a change that she shared with her colleague, "I have

changed many ideas about writing since I became a writer myself. I found out that revision is really an ongoing process.”

Cookye Rutledge, an African American, middle school teacher in an urban district, contributed two poems, two narrative stories, and a position statement on writing to the summer institute anthology. She wrote “My Friend, Ruby” in response to the story map demonstration lesson that Co-Director Terry Springer presented on the first day of the institute. Terry engaged fellows to take a walk down memory lane by sketching their childhood neighborhood. The first landmark that Cookye drew was the cemetery. As she thought about this, she remembered her friends and how they had used Mt. Hope as a meeting place, a reading place, and a place to take long walks. Her story unfolded in her writer’s notebook.

Bishop Junius Augustus Blake was driving his car that day. He pulled over to one side of the cemetery, stopped, and got out. I can see him still, standing about six feet tall, handsome, with medium brown skin, and dark eyes that were bright with knowing things that only a seasoned pastor could discern. He was an icon; an educated man of the cloth with extraordinary speaking skills and a love for the people who were under his jurisdiction. I always believed that he could see right through me but was too kind to disclose what God showed him.

“Cookye Johnson,” he called out, putting both my names together to let me know that he knew who I was. “Do you need a ride home?”

I tried to wipe away the tears that were coursing down my cheeks and nestling into the corners of my mouth.

“No thank you, sir!” I responded in the style that my mother insisted I use when speaking to adults.

Here I was, twelve year old at Mt. Hope Cemetery, on a Friday afternoon. My junior high school friend, Ruby, had contracted tuberculosis and died.

Cookye remembered how she had to make sense of her personal experience with the death of her classmate at an early age. In her

position statement at the end of the summer institute, Cookye found herself using narrative to make sense of her professional landscape as she reflected on her professional state before applying for the summer institute.

This heavy ISTEP immersion program had caused me to wonder about my place in education; should I remain in the middle school classroom or should I search for another way to use my skills? My students were tired of hearing about ISTEP and standards, and I was tired of sharing the data analyses each day. The school day had become boring to them and to me.

Narrative played a role in Cookye reflecting on her personal experiences and professional experiences in teaching writing. Her resultant plan was to begin her fall 2003 semester by engaging her seventh-grade students to draw a picture of their neighborhood, reflect on their drawing, and write a narrative story about one experience.

Role of Narrative in Data Collection

Following each four-week summer institute participants reflect on their experiences with a writer's notebook, writer's group, coaching, demonstration lessons, developing inquiry questions, reading and research, and writing activities during the summer institute. Participants write narrative stories of critical incidents, describing the processes in terms of their impact on their development as writers, teachers, and researchers. These narratives include positive experiences that participants value as well as experiences that were problematic for their professional development. They also give suggestions for ways the instructors might improve the use of writer's notebook, writer's groups, and coaching.

The narrative writing activity also provides participating teachers with the opportunity to reflectively think about writing instruction theory and reflexively analyze their experiences during the writer's workshop and their teaching practices as a way to

assess their professional growth and plan for change for the upcoming school year. Summer institute participants are also asked to describe a significant incident they experienced during the writing workshop summer institute. They are asked to describe the experience in detail (situation, people involved, feelings), and then critically reflect on the incident for lessons learned about teaching, how their perspective changed, and changes they planned to make in how they would teach as a result. By research design, participants continue to analyze the transfer of writing workshop to their teaching practice the following academic school year. Teachers maintain logs to document their use of writing practices. In December and May, participants reflect on their experiences of implementing elements of writing workshop and write positive and negative narratives. I have collected narrative data from 87 TC in the AWP.

Thus, the data sources for evaluating the impact of the AWP on teacher leadership development are multilayered, including participating teachers' collection of data to examine the impact of their teaching practices on student learning, participant critical self-reflective stories of professional development in a four-week intensive writing institute, and participating teachers' logs and journals of writing practices, as well as teachers' self-reflective analyses of craft lessons and impact on student writing development. Participating teachers' analyses are documented by examples of student work, portfolios, and quantitative writing scores from rubrics.

The 2007 summer institute participants have made a commitment to engage in narrative self-studies of teaching writing. Each engaged their students in writing early in the fall semester (August or September), collected writing samples, and analyzed the writings to plan lessons. They each sent me a narrative analysis of their students' writing and reflective teaching plan. These were not detailed lesson plans but reflections on various aspects of their teaching. Amy used portfolio assessment and included the following entry in her narrative journal of teaching writing.

I just received students' first portfolios with three pieces of writing, plus a self-reflective letter to me about why they chose those pieces and how they've developed over time with the help of their Peer Response Writer's Groups. Writing problems range from passive voice, run-on sentences, verb tense shifts, and awkward syntax and diction, to incompleteness and simply not turning in the work. Some students chose to include their lunch room renovation essay from the first day of class; others may include it in the next portfolio assignment, but others may choose not to include it at all. The letters served as a self-reflection and a justification for the three pieces chosen for inclusion. The letters varied in style, format, grammar competence, length, and depth. I will address in a mini-lesson what competencies I expect students to master and demonstrate in the next portfolio and letter.

Remaining committed to alternative methods of assessment, such as portfolio assessment, which serves as a tool for students to learn through narrative analysis of their own writing, means to work against the grain of standardized testing practices. I feel the same pressures as Amy and other classroom teachers in settings where people are looking at quantitative measures to judge writing effectiveness. After we had decided to use portfolio assessment to analyze the impact of the AWP on teachers' practices and students' writing development, our state withdrew funds, demanding quantitative correlations between the summer institute and P-12 writing achievement scores. Our use of narrative methods promotes writing, the analysis of writing, and teachers' narrative analysis, which is a narrative product.

The Role of Narrative in Presenting Case Stories

Data analysis is an ongoing process in narrative inquiry. Each July, after collecting teachers' self-reflective narratives of experience in the summer institute, I initially analyze the narratives to write a narrative analysis of the summer institute, including recruitment, research and readings, coaching and demonstrations, range of writing activities, and writing response

groups to write part of the report to the NWP. I return to these narratives of teachers' experiences to conduct case studies of individual teachers over time. The resultant product, *Case Stories of Emergent Teachers Leadership*, contains teachers' examination of the impact of the AWP on their professional development. The case stories are based on three participants who were in the inaugural 2003 AWP summer institute. The teachers' writing demonstrate the development of professional voices and emergent leadership as seen in consciousness raising, increased interest in discourses and practices, and understanding of the transformative nature of writing. Narrative played a role in development in the following ways:

- Reflection on experiences
- Medium for expressing anxiety
- Space to envision new ways of working with colleagues
- Engagement in critical discourses concerning the politics of English
- Self critical examination of teaching practice
- Analysis of research literature
- Engagement of teachers and parents in critical education action
- Reflective-reflexive writing

Narrative plays the role of constructing new insights into the role that narrative can play within a community of teachers during an intensive writing institute and ongoing continuity activities to promote writing, engaging children in writing, and inquiry into writing practices.

Case Stories of Emergent Teacher Leadership

Becoming a Teacher Researcher: Patricia Naragon

Patricia Naragon teaches second grade in a rural school district in Northeastern Indiana. Like many teachers who attend the summer institute, Patricia reflected on how her perspective of

writing and teaching changed. She realized what her students experience when they are writing. At the conclusion of the 2003 institute, Patricia reflected on her experiences.

As I wrote I was continually revising, and each time I thought I had it done I would revise some more. This is much different than the one time revision process I had my students do last year. The coaching during my demo helped me become more focused on why, what, and how I was teaching teachers or students. It taught me how real writers write and the processes they use to become published.

My perspective of teaching has changed. I need to become observant of my students, I need to reflect on what they have learned and their future needs. I need to model my own writing to my students, and share the frustrations and successes. I need to be a guide on the side, letting them place meaning into their own writing—to give them more ownership and provide them authentic audiences to share their writings. I need to encourage their own reflections so that they will be able to learn not only the skill but the process and then transfer their learning to new situations.

Pat's story gives us an insight into her shift in thinking about her role in the classroom with her second-grade students. Before she attended the summer institute and engaged in writing as a way to reflect and observe herself as a writer, she thought of teaching writing in terms of isolated skills and correcting students' papers. Her instructional objectives had been more focused on students' editing individual papers for correct writing as contrasted to her new goal of developing them as writers. This shift in thinking was not without uncertainty as Patricia anticipated teaching in the fall following the summer institute. Narrative gave her a place to express her anxiety and concerns.

When I go back to school, I will be one of the few teachers that will be using reading and writing workshop. There may be unsaid pressure by coworkers and administration to revert back to the

program set earlier. Our school wants most of the same grade to be similar in their approaches and the products produced. I know I will need to be able to show assessment and growth which is not that hard but it might be in a different format than usual.

Part of Pat's anxiety was the result of growing pressure in her school to raise scores on State standardized tests. Such pressure is directly connected to legislation such as No Child Left Behind, which has made assessment political. Patricia was already familiar with the concept of collecting data because she was expected by her Principal to view test scores as data to be analyzed and used as a lens for reflecting on her teaching practices.

Pat, like every other teacher, is under fire to continually show results in her students' work as measured on standardized tests. Patricia was aware that she was returning to a setting where she would have to mediate her way between expectations that she use what she learned while achieving the school's goal for improved achievement scores. But Patricia had another perspective on inquiry that went beyond standardized test score data. Patricia hoped to build a community of inquiry among her colleagues. Anticipating the beginning of a new academic session following the summer institute, Patricia uses narrative to envision a new way of working with her professional colleagues and parents.

I hope that my enthusiasm for writing is contagious among my colleagues. I would like to drop seeds of quotations about writing from the scholars we have visited in my weekly newsletters. I would also like to post them in the classroom. I want to be able to inform on the sidelines and drop little diamonds from other guru's during normal conversations and have them ask questions. I would also like to involve my students' parents in the reflection process so that they begin to think about how their students are becoming and learning more about their writing. I also serve on the writing committee at our school so consequently, I might be able to share a different point of view.

My research led me to study the reflection process and its value. It instilled in me a desire to try some action research of my own to see if the reflection of my students will help them transfer their learning to new situations. My research on audience awareness will help me go back to the school and inform other teachers how to help grow this skill in our children's writings. This was a question that was asked at our last writing committee meeting. The reading of scholarly books helped show me new ideas and the basis for their effectiveness in the schools. It made me feel confident of teaching because I could name research that backed my methods.

Patricia did what she refers to as “dabbling” in action research when she returned to her classroom in the fall of 2003. She interviewed students at the beginning of the year to determine their ability to reflect. She worked to engage her students in reflection on their learning to read, write, and compute. In the spring of 2004, she interviewed students again to assess improvement in their ability to reflect and understanding of what reflection means.

While Patricia was “dabbling” in action research, she was also inquiring into the process of action research. She completed an online tutorial for using human subjects in research. She designed an action research project to implement “writing-to-learn” journals in the fall of 2004. Her focus was on developing students’ ability to reflect on math. She wanted them to think like mathematicians rather than simply learn how to compute. Patricia obtained IRB approval to conduct the research and secured parent consent for all of her students and assent from each of her second-grade students. She collected data for a year and obtained IRB approval to continue her study.

While achievement scores on standardized tests did not fluctuate much as a result of her use of writing-to-learn journals, Patricia continued to use the strategy because her second-grade students were becoming more engaged learners. Furthermore, Patricia had become a more engaged teacher, examining her students writing journals for evidence of critical thinking in math

and other areas of the curriculum. Her ongoing narrative analysis allowed her to see weaknesses in her teaching that she had not seen before and develop her instructional practices. Patricia presented preliminary findings from the first year of data during the 2005 summer institute, during the 2006 spring state network retreat and at the Mid-Western Educational Research Conference in the fall. Although second-grade students in Patricia's classroom did not post significantly higher achievement scores on standardized tests, their narratives of experience in her classroom became a way for her to assess her students' understanding of math and feelings about learning math. A more dialogical learning relationship between Patricia and her students developed.

Becoming a Program Coordinator: Cookye Rutledge

Professional development in an age of NCLB can be rather frustrating as teachers seek to become reflective practitioners but are often restricted by a focus on standardized testing. Mediating professional identity as one weaves between policy, practice, and theory, demonstrates the complexity of education in the 21st Century and provides a rich setting for the development of critical action. Cookye Rutledge, an African American middle school teacher in an urban school with 36 different languages represented, is well aware of this complexity as she prepares instruction to engage her students in writing. She realizes that her African American ethnicity does not insure that African American students will like writing in her class anymore than in the classrooms of teachers with European American cultural backgrounds.

"How can I get my African American boys to write?" was Cookye's first inquiry question during the 2003 AWP Summer Institute, where classroom teachers read professional literature and wrote about inquiry questions. This question grew far beyond a four-page analysis required by the assignment as Cookye proposed the AWP sponsor a summer writing program for middle school African American students. While the AWP leadership engaged in the critical discourse concerning the political dynamics

of such an idea and were confronted by the fact that African Americans as a unique population of learners is seldom addressed, we began an annual Urban Youth Camp in the summer of 2004, open to any middle school student from an urban school district.

Narrative played a role in Cookye engaging in the critical discourse concerning teaching students with diverse dialects of English and multicultural experiences to write in an age of standardization. Her narrative of experience being coached by a summer institute facilitator during the development of her demonstration lesson became a tool for critical reflection on the tension between fidelity to her school's structured plan for teaching writing and fidelity to a changed professional perspective of what she believed was best for her students.

I believe that the Demo had to be the most life changing event. I was very frustrated because I kept thinking of the structure of my school's plan and how I was going to be loyal to them but do what I knew was best for the kids. I would come up with an idea and my facilitator/coach would question using the why, what, and how questions that would cause me to doubt what I was doing. I know that in the end it was the most meaningful because of the process that I went through to learn it. I need to allow my students through active questioning to learn the processes and not just the rote skills.

I have not been a writer-teacher. I have been a writing teacher in the classroom. Having to write now allows me to have a conversation with my student's about what it feels like to write. I now know what it feels like when you think that you have nothing to write about. Before this summer, I thought that my students were just being oppositional when they'd say that they couldn't think of anything to write. Now, I believe them because I've had that experience. I now know what it feels like to actually be a writer. I, too, worried about my writing, this summer. I, too, have felt full of doubts about a piece of writing. I too, have slept "lightly" because of a piece of writing that was not making the journey from my heart, through my brain and out of my fingertips. Of course, every writer

needs the writing crafts lessons. Reading the experts allowed me to see that good writing is not accidental. Yes, I had always said that to my students, but I needed to revisit that comment with practical lessons.

Narrative served as a tool for Cookye to reflect critically on her prior structured practices focused on writing drills that situated her as a “writing teacher” in the classroom and detached judgments of her students’ non-engagement in her classroom. Through experiencing the writing process and coaching process, Cookye gained experiential knowledge of becoming a writer and a writer-teacher. Cookye used her demonstration lesson to engage summer institute fellows to write about experiences with race issues and to open dialogue concerning the role that culture, ethnicity, and racism play in the disparaging test scores.

During the 2003 summer institute, Cookye used her inquiry assignments to explore ways to more successfully teach her African American male students. Narrative analysis of research literature drew Cookye deeper into the discourse concerning issues of gender and race in teaching. She became empowered to change her practices and engage in social action to provide urban students with enrichment opportunities during the summer to write creatively in a setting free of standardized tests. In piloting the first young writer’s camp for the AWP and in participating in an Urban Sites Network Minigrant, Cookye began exploring how to address the specific needs of disadvantaged students and the needs of teachers as they learn to teach these students to write.

As part of the minigrant, the AWP conducted a workshop: Focus Group Study of Teaching African American Students to Write. Twelve participants spent a Saturday examining parts of three texts: *African-Centered Pedagogy*, by Peter C. Murrell, Jr.; *Young Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African-American Students*, by Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliard III; and *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, by Lisa Delpit. Patsy Lockhart, Teacher Consultant from the Bay Area Writing Project, flew to Fort Wayne from

California and led participants in a focused group study of where teachers must begin if they want to close the achievement gap. Patsy's narratives of experience being African American and teaching African American children in the Bay Area engaged participants in a critical dialogue concerning the cultural dynamics of teaching and steps to take towards beginning an Urban Youth Writing Camp. Cookye took the lead, and experienced the power of narrative to engage colleagues and parents in her project to meet the needs of developing writing.

In April 2004, I sent out an e-mail to the nine urban middle schools [in my corporation], inviting teachers to assist me in identifying "reluctant writers." Several teachers responded, and within a week, I had a list of 32 names. Next, I had to sell the summer program to the parents of these students. A writing camp just doesn't sound like much fun to many urban students who had already become frustrated with school.

The camp officially began on Monday, June 21, 2004 with 18 campers, two less than Cookye's goal. Her primary goal to engage a diverse group of urban students in writing during the summer was actualized as the group constituted students of various ethnic backgrounds: African-American, Hispanic, Indian, and White.

Becoming a Professional Author: Penny Sholl

Penny had several experiences that helped her deal with a concern and perspective she had of herself as a writer. At the pre-institute workshop, conducted on a Saturday six weeks before the summer institute, Penny identified herself as a turtle in regards to writing. She could write well, as long as the criteria were analysis, synthesis, taking a position, and correct conventions. Penny felt like her "creative writing" left much to be desired. She felt like there was no way she could ever write as well as Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi (2001) or the people described in their book. Penny realized that she was not alone when she read an article in one of the NWP newsletters, where a summer

institute participant from another state site expressed similar feelings. Penny realized that she never would write like someone else because she wasn't that writer. Penny reflected,

Each of us writes the best we can in our own way. Whew! That was an epiphany for me. I can write like I write. Then I read Katie Wood Ray (2002), What You Know by Heart, and she said basically the same thing but in different words.

The reflective-reflexive process of reading professional literature, and using it as a lens to examine the personal and professional self, had begun. Penny did not read the texts to memorize information for a standardized test or to show the facilitators what she could remember. She read to learn and engage in reflective thinking about writing and teaching as craft. This reflective process occurred in a community of writers, bridging the personal and professional landscapes, and was integral to Penny's professional development.

The community building process began during the pre-institute workshop six weeks before the summer institute. Participants had all read Mem Fox (1993) *Radical Reflections*, and typed reflections on the text before arriving at the workshop. Penny was engaged by Mem Fox and conversations with participants. She reflected,

Mem Fox (1993) and Glenda¹ have also influenced me. By reading Radical Reflections and conversing with Glenda, I discovered that what I consider more mundane writing (reports, reflections, research, etc.) can have a personal touch and be meaningful when put in a personal context. Plus that kind of writing is very useful and necessary in the professional world.

This was not the first time I had such conversations about the definition of creative writing. During my own participation in a 2002 summer institute at another site, I took issue with the narrow definition of creative writing as poetry, prose, and personal narrative. While I met the summer institute

requirements to submit four creative pieces of writing within that definition, I continued to explore critical storytelling (Barone, 1992) in narrative research as creative professional writing with three fellow 2002 summer institute participants, who all signed up for one of my graduate courses in the spring of 2003.

While our presentation of *Narrative analysis, creativity, and professional development: A pedagogy of becoming writers, teachers, and researchers* at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Association entertained more discussion among audience members concerning the legitimacy of narrative methods rather than the issue of what constitutes creative writing, the scholarly discourse evidenced the power of writing, author's chair, and critical feedback in building learning communities. I continue to reflect on the critical questions posed by one quantitative reading researcher, who was seeking to understand narrative methods. The one hour session was exhausting, similar to the intensity of rigor built into the design of the summer institute. It is through scholarly rigor that participants grow professionally. Penny was impressed with herself as a writer by the end of the summer institute.

Lastly, I am so impressed with myself that I am now a published author. That in itself validates my abilities and ideas. This has given me an incredible confidence and pride that I hope to convey to my students by doing my best to see that each and every one of them also get this opportunity during their year in my class. I shared in my position paper that my goal was to pursue having all of my students become published authors next year. I hadn't realized the impact this could have on a writer until it happened to me.

At the end, Penny saw herself as an author in the context of the course anthology. She implemented "writer's workshop" in her classroom (2003/2004, 2004/2005), hoping her students would become confident authors as she felt like she had become. She participated in two ongoing inquiry projects designed for narrative

self-study and professional development. Within two years after her participation in the summer institute, Penny had engaged in professional writing as co-editor of *Annual Edition Early Childhood and Elementary Literacy 05/06* (Moss, Swim, Cross, Sholl, Laidroo, 2005/2006). Penny used her inquiry skills to access current articles on early childhood and elementary literacy, critically read them, and make recommendations for the annual edition. She used her professional writing skills to co-construct the introduction and overview for units one and two in her work as a professional author.

Final Reflection

Although narrative inquiry methods are sometimes dismissed as anecdotal and lacking in rigorous scholarship defined by quality of data collection and analysis, this project demonstrates that narrative inquiry methods are labor intensive in terms of longevity, quantity of data, and intellectual engagement not only for the researcher but also for the collaborative participants. Pat's story of becoming an action researcher, Cookye's story of becoming a program coordinator, and Penny's story of becoming a professional author provide examples of how classroom teachers can author their professional lives by engaging in ongoing reflection on professional literature to reflexively critique their writing and teaching practices and reconstruct what it means to teach children to write. By weaving between reflection and reflexion, teachers narrate their own professional development and contribute to the professional development of others.

The co-directors of the AWP are included in this ongoing process of becoming writers, teachers of writing, and researchers of writing and teaching. In my own development, I experience the ongoing critique of my writing and use of narrative methods when I submit my work and receive reviews from professional journal editors. The professional revision process is engaging, rigorous, and reflective, resulting in a deepening understanding and application of narrative methods and presentation of the narrative analysis. They posed thoughtful questions to engage me in deeper

inquiry into my narrative analysis and presentation of the roles that narrative plays in the merging of personal and professional development. I view the process as collaborative, similar to the intersubjective nature of narrative research and similar to the experience of writing response groups. I also believe this is part of the provisions of trustworthiness in narrative research. Unlike the legislation of No Child Left Behind that would like people to believe that writing is perfunctory, can be produced on demand, quantified, and developed through scripted teaching to a prescribed, monocultural standard, national writing projects across the nation and globally continue to experience the phenomenon of writing as a collaborative experience through which individuals construct their personal and professional identities.

Notes

¹ As Co-Site Director of the local site where Penny attended the 2003 Summer Institute, the author worked with two Co-Directors from PK-12 schools to facilitate the summer institute.

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