Shadow and Substance: What can classroom researchers see in doing classroom-

based research?

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but unknowingly to us they also limit or constrain our understandings of the possibilities of *other* kinds of communities of learning. While it is true that as children we experience different forms of learning outside of formal school, such as in extracurricular activities in our families and neighbourhoods, it is in the systematic instantiation of schooling practices that we come to experience most fully a particular culture's way of seeing learning. In our schooling experiences we learn how to think about learning and what counts as real learning, and through these experiences our identities as learners gradually develop.

In thinking about the ways children are acculturated into ideas of learning and being learners, I would like to recount briefly my personal experiences with an array of different forms of school learning into which I was acculturated. I have chosen to do this because I now understand, after much reflection, that these experiences profoundly affected the ways I approached my classroom research. Further, I have come to appreciate that the ideas of learning I brought into my work, also, powerfully impacted on processes of forgetting and remembering the shadows and substance of learning.

I spent my first six years of schooling in an inner city, working class school in Chicago in the 1950s in the United States. Here I experienced learning as being essentially related to hygiene, obedience, and conformity, with strict gender positioning rules, a process of acculturation that 'fit' us into working class a priori positions through *seeing* our teachers and administrators as servants to those positions. As a young child, this kind of learning evoked in me a feeling of comfortable entrapment and an accompanying hunger for something more -more

stimulation and more possibilities for adventure. These longings were met in a series of extracurricular activities such as ballet, baton, theatre, acrobatics, and Sunday school. In these activities, I experienced a different kind of learning, one in which others, both teachers and children, seemed to enjoy their learning practices; as I now understand, it was in these experiences that I came to experience learning as apprenticeship.

As an early adolescent I spent the next three years in an elementary school in a primarily Jewish neighbourhood with middle class pretensions in Chicago. Here I learned a diffe006 Tc -0.0-2(p.)TJ4vr0101 1WEMClaschtoime successful engageme6 T9TJ0.0004 Tc -0.0

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one travelled into unknown disciplinary territories with knowledgeable teachers who esteemed and most often loved their disciplines. I became slowly acculturated to this kind of learning through seeing my teachers enthusiastically engage with their subject matter as teacher/learners, people who enacted in the classrooms what it is like to think, believe and act as botanists, writers, historians, journalists, dramatists, etc., teachers who taught me how to experience the sheer joy of complex learning and how to be that kind a learner

experiences of school learning, I had concluded that if I could choose undeniably the most favourable one, the one with substance, without a doubt so would others. But the error in my thinking about learning in this way was that it created the condition of forgetting too much.

However, on my sabbatical last year while working on a book with my colleagues about our classroom-based research project at a primary school in New

constructed from the socio-cultural values of each school community. And it was in these interactions over the course of each research project that processes of *forgetting and remembering* as a classroom researcher were elicited, processes that impacted on my interpretive analyses of the constructions of learning in schooling through sometimes *dismissing* data relating to the diverse permutations of learning and their material effects on children's intellectual and identity development *or* in *embracing* the same data for complex analyses.

Classroom-based research project 1.

To begin. At the University of Michigan in the 1990s my colleagues and I undertook a study of the role of interest in fostering middle school students' identities as competent learners, drawing on the burgeoning literature relative to the motivational, intellectual and social benefits of self-selected interest-based learning This work was motivated by my passion to create enriched contexts of learning for early adolescents in light of their well-documented, growing disenchantment with school learning.

This study took place in an exurban school in the American Midwest with 47 middle school students and two teachers who team-taught their classes. Both of the teachers were veteran teachers with over 10 years of experience who were eager to participate in the project because of their interest in Gardner's ideas about multiple intelligences.

The findings relative to the powerful role of interest-based learning were riveting. Among the findings were understandings that middle school students knew what they were interested in and would tell you if asked (we had four interest-based inquiries in science, theatre arts, animal studies and movement studies), that their

are complex cultural constructions that are infused with ideas and practices related to particular forms of learning that teachers 'count' on and from which they derive their professional satisfaction.

Classroom-based research project 2

Next I embarked on another classroom-based research project with my colleagues at Michigan as we were keen to build on the findings from our previous project. In having experienced the leadership roles that middle school students with a range of learning difficulties assumed in self-selected contexts of interest, we wanted to explore more intensively the ways interest-based learning might facilitate their transformative learning. We were invited to undertake this work in a private school for students identified with specific learning disabilities in the midwestern part of the United States, working with five teachers, 31 students and the director of the school. As we thought about this project, however, it was critical for us to *remember* what we had *forgotten* in our previous research project about teachers' cherished ways of thinking about learning and the significance of those ways of thinking to their identities as teachers.

As a consequence, we changed three aspects of our previous project. First, we did not want to begin the interest-based inquiries with the students until we had created a working community with the teachers and the director of the school. Here we drew on the growing literature related to the importance of developing communities of learners with teachers and researchers to develop shared understandings of pedagogy and research objectives. We wanted them to become actively engaged in all aspects of the project before beginning it, and hopefully become as enthusiastic as we were.

Thus, we spent the first half of one year meeting with the five participating teachers and the director in bi-weekly meetings during school and three workshop dinner meetings after school to discuss the th

apprenticeships, the mentors guided these learners in ways of thinking about and acting in their professional fields, and the five researchers collected video and audio data and served as supports for the mentors.

Here again the results were captivating in the same ways as in our previous project but this time there was an additional finding. The outcomes of the interest-based learning guided by mentors who designed complex, problem-based contexts of learning as apprenticeships for the teachers/co-learners *and* their middle school students were so powerful *for the teachers* that they reconstituted their ideas of school learning to include ideas and understandings of interest-based learning and its positive effects.

Our interpretation of this positive response from the 4 teachers who participated fully in this project is that they engaged with us as eager partners in all phases of the project; they joined us enthusiastically in a small democratic community in which they were teachers, teacher-researchers, learners and co-learners. This time we did not forget that teachers' identities have been constituted *before* we arrived as classroom researchers. Instead, we understood that the positive findings of a classroom-based research project are likely to be appropriated by the teachers only if they have been involved in the intellectual and social conversations and practices associated with new teaching/learning dynamics, if they have experienced again, or remembered themselves the exhilaration of learning new ideas and of being changed by those new ways of thinking. .

As a corollary, however, what I had forgotten about as a classroom-based researcher in this project is that complex disciplinary contexts of learning are not easily interpretable from outside of a discipline. Thus, faced with the requirement to 'make sense' of the data from this project, I experienced a sense of incompetency.

Thus, to learn more about the disciplinary complexities involved in transformative learning in sculpture, such as ways of thinking, acting, feeling and talking as a sculpture, I took a class in human form sculpture with the mentor who led that apprenticeship in this project. Without understanding that discourse I realized I could not do justice to the teaching/learning dynamics in this apprenticeship.

Classroom-based project 3

Finally, while time limits my possibilities for discussing with you the complex and provocative aspects of the longitudinal project that my colleagues, Baljit Kaur, Ruth Boyask and Kane O'Connell, and I embarked on at a special character school in New Zealand from 2001 to 2005, to inquire about the meanings of the special character learning and their relationships, if any, to complex interest-based learning, I can say that it was in this classroom research project that, as I mentioned before, I had to confront what I knew in my bones but what I had forgotten in my educational utopian zeal –ideas of what counts as learning are carried in specific schooling contexts by teachers whose identities have been shaped through complex acculturation processes. There was a blinding sense about *remembering* in the context of classroom-based research in NZ because the research approaches I had honed through the forgetting and remembering processes involved in doing classroom based research in the United States did not fully transfer to this NZ schooling context.

While time does not allow me to touch on all of the ambiguities and conflicts that I encountered in this cross-cultural research project, I can illustrate the confrontation of different educational discourses with one example. Whereas in my classroom-based research experiences in the United States there had been a taken-for-granted esteem afforded to educational scholarship by the participating schools and its

that underpin their professions' history and thinking so that as teachers they can be trusted to know and act responsibly in the classroom – pedagogies of formation. Third, it is paramount that pre-service teachers can critically understand the forces that constitute the society that they are called upon to serve, otherwise as Dewey suggests, they are mere slaves to that society –pedagogies of contextualisation.   Last, it is important for teachers to practice the skills necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the teaching profession –pedagogies of performance. What was particularly striking to the authors of this text is that the intellectual pedagogical core of teaching budding clergy lies with a concern with the significance and practical implications of the *interpretation* of texts, customary practices and experience.

In thinking about this kind of professional preparation, I must confess that mine was deficient in several respects, in particular in knowing the history of my profession, in interpretation of texts that theorized different ideas, and in understanding the inextricable ties of schooling to socio-cultural and historical contexts. In short this amounted to the experience of being in Plato's cave deprived of a whole range of knowledge and understandings that restrained my intellect and those of my peers in educational programs of study. In face of these deficiencies in knowledge, in understandings and ways of thinking in and about my profession, I had to encounter and grapple with them on my own in complex interactions in classroom teaching and in classroom-based research over my professional life.

As I think about this situation, I would like to leave us all with a question to ponder, one with numerous and significant possibilities and challenges that would honour our professional preparation programme as a call to intellectual, experiential and moral service. *Wouldn't it be possible for the profession of education to craft a programme of studies that is akin to the one in the clergy so that the recursive*

processes of forgetting and remembering differing kinds of historical, social and cultural learning are built into our shared professional identities to be used as intellectual and social resources in the creation of transformative learning contexts for all?