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## Being a Teacher Educator: Exploring Issues of Authenticity and Safety Through Self-Study

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## **Being a Teacher Educator: Exploring Issues of Authenticity and Safety Through Self-Study.**

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*Abstract: The catalyst for this self-study was implementing peer-teaching in our respective science education and physical education teacher education courses. Because our students taught one another it meant we redefined our roles as teacher educators as well as the roles that our students took in the teaching and learning community. We documented and explored our learning about teaching and teacher education through journaling, observations, discussions and interviews with students. Our students' responses to peer-teaching provided a critical lens through which we considered our efficacy as teacher educators. Through this collaborative self-study, we have learnt to manage the issues of authenticity and safety for ourselves and our students.*

### **Introduction**

Self-study shifts the perspective of the researcher from being the 'outsider' looking in on practice to being the researcher analysing practice in the moment of its production from the perspective of the teacher. Such an insider's perspective provides a means to consider the tacit and personal practical knowledge that is central to an individual's knowledge and understanding of teaching (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009). As two experienced teacher educators, we were drawn to self-study as a means to examine our own teaching and submit it to a form of critical inquiry. What we needed was a catalyst to sharpen our focus and alter our perspective in order to deepen our understanding of teacher education.

Peer-teaching was the catalyst for this self-study. When we introduced peer teaching we recognised that it could create a learning context embedded in the practice of teaching in which students could experience and reflect on the relational complexities and dilemmas of teaching, the situational nature of professional knowledge and the role of discernment and decision making in the act of teaching (Garbett & Ovens, 2010; Macintyre Latta & Field, 2005; Wilson & I'Anson, 2006). Peer-teaching changed how and what learning took place from the students' perspective.

Comparing how we used peer-teaching in different contexts created opportunities to deepen our understanding of teacher education as a process. Authenticity and safety initially emerged as two issues that were central to the successful implementation of peer teaching from our students' perspective (Garbett & Ovens, 2010; Ovens & Garbett, 2008). In this paper, we document our learning about teacher education as we attended to our students' concerns. Our self-study has challenged our assumptions about teaching and

suggested new ways of thinking about being teacher educators which we explore in this paper.

## Context

We work in quite different subject areas and teacher education programmes within the same Faculty of Education in a large metropolitan university. Dawn works in the area of science education where she is concerned with enabling student teachers to understand and practice effective science education which will engage and challenge all students (Garbett, 2011a; b). She teaches in two separate, year-long Graduate Diploma of Teaching programmes for primary and secondary students. Class sizes typically number between 25-40 students and the number of hours of face-to-face contact is 24 hours for primary students and 36 hours for secondary students. In Dawn's secondary school science education methods courses, her students have undergraduate degrees in a variety of science majors. They come from many different cultural and educational backgrounds. These students are confident of their knowledge in their science specialism although each student often has limited breadth of science knowledge across all disciplines. Most of the primary graduate student teachers have an undergraduate degree in Arts and a limited science background. However, most have been successful academic students during their own education. Prior to practicum, few of her students have had any experience of teaching from a teacher's perspective so Dawn's prime motivation for introducing peer-teaching was to ensure that student teachers experienced the challenges of teaching science for themselves (Garbett, 2011b).

Alan works with physical education students enrolled in a specialist four-year degree for teaching secondary school physical education. Students in the Bachelor of Physical Education programme are a distinct cohort in our institution as they study physical education, health and teacher education pedagogy with specialist physical education lecturers. They participate in a range of practicum experiences each year so that by the end of their four years they have experienced teaching in a range of schools, at various year levels, and in different content areas. The degree programme is underpinned by a socially critical perspective which foregrounds a strong commitment to inquiry and reflection as a basis for teacher development. Alan wanted to create spaces where students would not just 'learn more' but could unpack and reflect on how information taught in other courses related to being able to teach physical education. Peer-teaching was the context for students to explore key pedagogical issues such as pupil engagement, gender equity, and cultural responsiveness. By setting such issues as pedagogical problems, students could explore each issue in an applied way through the lessons taught and experienced in the peer-teaching situations.

We had both been engaged in teacher education as lecturers in a College of Education before it merged with the University's School of Education to create a new Faculty of Education in 2004. A new structure was established which separated curriculum methods courses from professional (practicum) and theoretical (teaching and learning) courses. A lack of coherence with other parts of the programme developed as Visiting Tutors were employed on casual contracts to oversee students' progress in schools and lecturers were encouraged to focus on research activity. Our common

concern, voiced in informal discussions, was that we were becoming increasingly disconnected from our students' practical experiences of learning to teach.

### **Why Peer-Teaching?**

As a pedagogy for teacher education, peer-teaching was the impetus to shift the organisation and structure of the lesson away from a lecturer-focused, transmission style of teaching to one where students learnt from participating in a learning community focussed on them and their practice of teaching. By peer-teaching we mean the practice of students teaching their peers and learning from being in the teaching role, receiving peer feedback and reflecting on the experience.

They experienced first-hand the complexity and challenges of teaching. Knowledge for teaching was not represented as certain or generic, but enacted as a way of solving the specific pedagogical problems embedded in the teaching situation (Garbett & Ovens, 2010).

The implementation of peer-teaching reflected our commitment to ideas around constructivism, reflection and situated learning. It also addressed concerns about the instructional forms and strategies that were prevalent in our programmes. Prior to the merger, curriculum lecturers had up to 200 hours of contact time with their students on campus and visited each student at least twice in schools. Integration between practicum and courses was accomplished through interactive, small class workshops. Post-merger, with the number of courses and contact time reduced, telling students the key information they were expected to learn was the basis of traditional lectures. Modelling good practice and demonstrating the key information students were expected to learn was used predominantly in curriculum courses where resistance to lecturing, per se, was high. Showing and telling were based on the assumption that teaching and learning were discrete entities connected through a process of knowledge transmission by the teacher and acquisition by the student. With the pressure of decreased time, the connection between teaching and learning (assumed or real) began to unravel before our eyes.

Our shift away from transmitting knowledge drew on new understandings from different disciplinary areas about how teachers learn and develop their teaching. For example, constructivists have stressed the importance of seeing learning as an active process of interpreting new knowledge and experience in light of learners' past experiences and recognising the influence of their existing beliefs to modify and shape learning (Tillema & Knol, 1997). Sociocultural theories have focussed attention on the situated nature of settings in which people learn and how these enable and constrain learning as a function of working competently with the practices of that setting (Greeno, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Phenomenological studies have focussed on the embodied, experiential nature of learning to teach and the mediating effect biography, discourse and identity have on shaping the individual trajectories students take in teacher education programmes (Atkinson, 2004; Ovens & Tinning, 2009). As experienced teachers we realised that we could never know, exactly or even imprecisely, what learning was taking place for individual students in our classes or even if our teaching was related to the learning that was taking place. Complexity posits that learning is 'a matter of structural change of the learner- which, while conditioned by particular

experiences, is due to the [learner's] own coherent but ever evolving structure, not the event' (Davis & Sumara, 2007, p. 59).

Collectively, the contribution from these multiple perspectives challenged the underlying assumption of transmissive pedagogies and provided the rationale for rethinking the nature of pedagogy in teacher education from one of acquisition to one of reflective participation in meaningful communities of practice. Such a shift placed increased attention on enabling student teachers to engage meaningfully and authentically in situations which promoted deliberate practice. While we had limited capacity to effect such change at a programme level, we could change our pedagogy within our courses. In creating those meaningful situations for our students, we also created space to reconsider our role and purpose as teacher educators.

## Method

The hallmarks of self-study research are that it is self-initiated and self-focused; improvement-aimed with evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice; interactive or collaborative; made available through the professional community for critique; and that it employs multiple, primarily qualitative methods (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras & Freese, 2009).

Self-initiating the project was not problematic but orienting the focus on ourselves was. We noted a predilection to focus on and report data related to the student teachers rather than ourselves. This was because researching peer-teaching and the impact it had on students was less threatening to us on a personal level. Framed as an action research project, researching peer-teaching was also a more traditional and familiar form of academic inquiry than self-study. However, our drive to improve our practice impelled us to explore our assumptions systematically and rigorously. Trumbull (2004) writes:

As teacher educators seeking to improve our own practices and to help others practice differently, we can, and must, write our research so that others can see themselves in that setting and can understand in emotional and practical ways what is going on. (pp. 1224-1225)

This license to write ourselves into the research was both appealing and challenging. Drawing on a reflexive approach (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Willis, 2007), the aim was to make the tacit knowledge constructed through our experiences explicit and available to us for reflection and interpretation. The generation and analysis of data was ongoing, iterative and collaborative. Dawn and Alan are husband and wife. Part of our (almost) daily routine across three years was to plan the peer-teaching approach, discuss our experiences, and analyze and reflect on the data we were generating as critical friends (Samaras, 2011). Most of these meetings were informal and provided both practical support for implementing peer-teaching into our courses and the opportunity to discuss our latest set of experiences. At least once every two months we also conducted more formal meetings where one of us would choose a theme triggered by a specific event, observation, journal or interview comment for more serious consideration. In this way, tacit understandings could be made explicit through careful questioning and discussion. Both forms of meetings enabled us to draw on one another's experience, reframe the issues we were facing and plan future actions. In this way, our

practices co-evolved and new understandings emerged across the data collection and analysis process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009).

The empirical material for the study came from several sources. The key source was our professional journals. The writing in the journals was unstructured, with the aim to write regularly and honestly about our experiences of implementing peer-teaching. Our journals documented and made more concrete our impressions and descriptions of events, circumstances, experiences, discussions and reflections (Holly, 1984). We shared journal entries that we felt were significant or representative of a particular issue being experienced. The journals were also used to record our evolving understandings. By the end of the third year, we had more than 60 separate journal entries, ranging from 200 to 1,500 words related to peer teaching.

Another source was provided by Dawn who observed for one semester in the physical education classes and wrote field notes to discuss with Alan. Dawn also recorded photos of situations using a camera. Dawn did not participate in Alan's peer-teaching sessions and was introduced to the students as an observer. She was present for 11 sessions and observed 25 peer-teaching lessons. Timetabling constraints did not allow Alan to reciprocate and observe on a regular basis in Dawn's classes. Both the observations and photos were used during our formal meetings as a generative method for eliciting our interpretations and perspectives of events occurring in the lessons.

We also sought to gather information about the students' experience of our teaching and use this as a lens on our teaching. Ethical approval was gained to gather anonymous feedback from the students (course artifacts and evaluations) as well as formally interview them in small focus groups. Course evaluation information provided by the students about the effectiveness of peer-teaching was also used. In the final year of their programme, focus group interviews were carried out with volunteers from the physical education cohort. Two focus groups of 6 and 8 students met to discuss their experiences. The interviews were between 40 and 60 minutes in duration and were audio taped and transcribed. Collectively, this data set provided a perspective through the eyes of the students and highlighted key themes and issues they considered important. In this paper, student teachers' names have been changed.

As Loughran (2006) writes, 'managing the complexity of teaching about teaching ...requires a familiarity with practice in concert with maintaining a distance from practice in order to see what is happening while it is happening' (p. 35). In essence, our reflexive approach allowed us to manage the complexity of simultaneously being teacher and researcher of the same situation. Our in-depth discussions helped elicit key issues and experiences that were uppermost in our minds or journals, which then fed back into our future planning, teaching, data generation and analysis.

The final phase of the method involved us reanalyzing all of the empirical materials (including those generated as part of our meetings) to foreground the key embedded themes and construct a research narrative. We revisited our original texts and worked with them in a recursive manner together with ideas presented in the wider theoretical literature. Through content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) we reduced the data and identified key themes which we then illustrated through findings within the data. Finally, we drew conclusions and verified them by constantly checking with the data. In this way, we used theory as a way of making sense of the empirical material rather than the empirical material being used to verify theory (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). The

following discussion draws together the personal meanings around authenticity and safety that have underscored our self-study. Ultimately the reader assesses the reliability and authenticity of this research as, and when, it resonates as a reliable and valid account for their own purposes (Loughran & Northfield, 1998).

## **Results and discussion**

### **Managing authenticity of practice**

It is not always stated explicitly, but core to participatory learning is the notion of authenticity. Learning situations are said to be authentic when they approximate the communities of practice they are meant to emulate (Barab, Squire, & Dueber, 2000). In other words, authentic practices are those that actual practitioners of a specific professional community carry out. Any authentic practice setting would need to share the same contextual features as the one being referred to (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). In using peer-teaching, we felt we had structured a practice setting which was contextually rich because the students were expected to teach one another. In terms of education for teaching, it was a structure that had the potential to foster the kinds of thinking and problem-solving skills that our students would need as teachers in school settings (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

However, we quickly realised that authenticity was an issue for our students and one that we needed to effectively manage. Their difficulties were apparent through comments such as:

*Teaching peers is confusing as do we teach them as student teachers or as mock students from school? It is hard to take the task seriously. (Student comment: 19 June 2007)*

*The situation in peer-teaching never accurately simulated an adolescent classroom environment. Peers are very nice to each other and don't always give thorough and honest feedback. (Student comment: 19 June 2007)*

In our initial efforts the task of peer-teaching was construed as some form of simulation activity that was meant to model school-based teaching. Constructed in this way, the task became artificial because it lacked any clear congruence with a school-based context. What we, as experienced educators, believed authentic was not perceived by students in the same way. We came to see that in our initial efforts the teaching being done by the students was being acted rather than enacted. Collins and Ting (2010) coined the terms actors and act-ers. An actor approaches a lesson acting in the way that they think an actor should act in that situation. In effect, they “play the role of the teacher” (p. 903). When group members in our classes were pretending to be students, rather than being actual students, the actions within the lesson, from both those in the student and teaching role, became stereotypical and superficial representations of the teaching process. For example, if group members pretended to be bored in a lesson, as though they were playing the role of disinterested teenagers, they followed some preconceived script - yawning loudly, calling out inane comments and the like. The person in the teaching role then resorted to artificially managing the situation, for example, warning students that they would be detained after the session. One way around this was to direct the teachers to treat it as a ‘real’ lesson and teach their peers something of substance, i.e. to teach their peers something meaningful. The result was that they became less self-

conscious and more engaged in the lesson and responded genuinely to their peers' queries and comments. In effect, as Collins and Ting (2010) point out, "These teachers act authentically because they are completely connecting to what has been done in the moment, rather than following a script like actors. They become 'act-ers'" (p. 904).

Through our discussion and reflections, we realised the important distinction between acting and enacting when considering the notion of authenticity in our own teaching. Acting implies the task is framed by the participants as a theatrical performance in which they can practice or rehearse the role (Bell, 2007). In contrast, enacting implies the performance is enmeshed with, and emerges from, the immediate context. We sensed that we had been actors in our own classrooms – we had modelled exemplary practice and acted in the role as expert teachers - teaching about our respective subjects – science and physical education. We were confident in the traditional teaching role and skilled in the instructional techniques involved. Our expertise was tuned to teaching in a traditional, transmissive way. The following comment typifies our initial confidence in this role:

*They really enjoy learning science content. I have to be careful not to fall into the trap of showing off. It is so easy for me. (Dawn, journal entry: 22 March 2007)*

We had opted for a carefully scripted play in which we took the lead roles, presented information to be acquired and assigned students to a cast of understudies. What emerged from our discussions with one another and reflecting on each others' comments, questions, readings and students' concerns was the acknowledgement that we were comfortable with a preconceived notion of how teacher education should unfold through our courses. Handing over the responsibility to our students meant that we were no longer in a position to determine which way the learning journeys went. By using peer-teaching, we were no longer cast in the role of the expert who provided information.

The new role created by the peer-teaching approach was unscripted for us. What could we do and say as act-ers to engage student teachers in learning about teaching? Dawn wrote this of the dilemma:

*I am still trying to get the balance right between low-level science concepts and more sophisticated science education practice and theory, but I never went 'public' with my anxiety and concerns about forging a new persona where I am both learning and teaching alongside them. (Journal: 5 August 2007)*

To have gone public with her dilemma and to have admitted that she was juggling competing roles would have helped create a more authentic learning situation where her students could have witnessed the decisions made on a regular basis by teacher educators *in situ*. The tension that we felt between acting in traditional ways and enacting a new role became apparent to us as we shared our experiences. Engaging authentically became a prominent theme in our discussions as we adapted to our new roles.

Alan highlights authenticity through the following example. His students frequently failed to dress in what he considered appropriate clothes to participate in the practical component of the peer-teaching sessions. He was caught between stepping into the teacher's role to insist that students were appropriately dressed and leaving it to the students who were teaching their peers to make that judgment. His dilemma was exacerbated by a colleague who chided him for allowing the students to be physically active in normal street clothes. Alan responded defensively that he had told them on



numerous occasions that all of the students should be dressed appropriately but to little avail. He reflected:

*I was torn between maintaining my persona as the effective teacher in charge with my colleague and supporting the student teachers to make those decisions. Shortly after, when I taught the Second Years [a group not involved in peer-teaching] I gave them a real blast for not getting changed. (Alan, journal entry: September 2009)*

The tension for Dawn was highlighted when she chose to purposely over-react to a group of students who had been talking while one of their peers had been explaining a point. The students had been surprised by her ability to change so abruptly. She explained to her students at the time that it was just a performance but later she reflected:

*Was it a performance? It felt pretty authentic. They had wanted me to treat them as 'naughty adolescents' so that I would play that game of 'What would you do in this situation?' I showed them what I was capable of when I was backed into the teaching role. (Dawn, journal entry: 26 March, 2010)*

We shared these examples of our struggle to be authentically engaged in subsequent discussions. We realised that authenticity was not embodied in the acting out of the role (which we both resorted to in the examples above) but when we engaged the students in debriefing the episodes. Dawn wrote of the next session:

*Apparently, they had discussed whether I was serious or not?... I admitted that I was disappointed I hadn't given them more notice that they were about to see a 'performance' but I also told them it had felt authentic. It led to a discussion about the personal and affective costs involved. (Dawn, journal entry: 2 April, 2010)*

Alan also discussed with his students how his colleague's disappointment, that the peer-teaching sessions were lacklustre, had made him feel. His students were genuinely perturbed. They appreciated the opportunity to practice teaching and to receive constructive feedback from one another. They argued that they were learning a great deal. They explored reasons why an outsider might have formed the opinion that the sessions were below standard and wondered whether Alan's colleague had been aware of the implicit intent.

*We started talking about why we bother getting changed into proper gear to do PE. If PE is to be taken seriously as a curriculum area rather than just a chance for kids to muck around, what are we saying if we don't insist on appropriate codes of dress and behaviour? (Alan, journal entry: September 2009)*

Both of these situations exemplified our developing commitment to be authentic in front of our students. We realised that they rarely had the opportunity to see behind the 'teacher educator' act unless we invited them to do so. Stepping out of the rehearsed act into unscripted territory gave our students access to authentic learning experiences which we hoped would be applicable in their future teaching. However, working in that liminal zone between comfortable expert actor and exhilarating novice act-er (Collins & Ting, 2010) as we juggled making the implicit explicit was not without a personal cost.

### Managing Safety Around Practice

Managing safety around peer-teaching had a two-fold meaning for us. The students' responses to peer-teaching highlighted the importance of managing a supportive and safe learning environment for them to practice teaching in. The role change impacted on our sense of self-worth too and forced us to confront issues of safety on a personal level.

We had anticipated that peer-teaching would help create a meaningful and supportive learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Student teachers participate in multiple learning communities as they move through teacher education programmes (Ovens, 2002; Ovens Tinning, 2009, Sinner, 2010) and each becomes significant in fostering the forms of participation that shape learning. However, we had underestimated the importance of feeling safe enough to participate. Our mistake was highlighted in interviews with Alan's students. They had been together as a cohort for four years and a hierarchy within the group had developed. We had assumed that the students would engage in peer-teaching and with the feedback process with a sense of integrity. We also assumed that they would interpret the feedback they received professionally rather than personally. However, the established social hierarchy influenced how students related to each other and what they could say in their feedback

Through reviewing the interview transcripts it became apparent that students were not necessarily able to 'hear' the feedback they received. They used emotive terms like "slammed," "hammered" or "smashed" to label the critique of their teaching by their peers. As we reflected on these statements, we realised that the scripts these student teachers were hearing were not conducive to their development as critical teachers.

*We tried to make the lessons meaningful. Every single time we tried to do anything we just got hammered, so we just got so over it by the end that we were just trying to make a fun lesson so everyone would just enjoy it. (Alison, focus group interview: 23 November 2007)*

*There is an ongoing consequence of what you say. I wouldn't go to the extreme because when I walk out that door, then they're going, 'Oh, she's a bitch,' ra-ra-ra. (Sally, focus group interview: 26 November 2007)*

It was ironic given our intention to create our courses as safe practice environments in the teacher education programme that we put our students into positions which were threatening. This led to us considering the feedback that we gave our students regarding their teaching. Dawn observed in Alan's classes and wrote comments to discuss later with him. In both of the following examples, "you" was underscored for emphasis:

*Why didn't the students [who were teaching the session] say something to those late-comers? Why didn't you challenge them to ask? (Observation notes: 26 July 2007)*

*When Alex was so condescending, why didn't you say something? I wanted to ask Daniel how it felt to be talked to like that. (Observation notes: 2 August 2007)*

In reviewing the field notes, our discussions focussed on our struggle to know when to interrupt peer-teaching and how to facilitate the debriefing process more effectively. Our comments to the students in debriefings were finely balanced between maintaining a

positive relationship with them and giving them honest feedback. Berry (2007) refers to this as a tension between safety and challenge. Understanding the social dynamic between the students in the class was important to recognising the subtle positional plays that influenced the quality of the debriefing. Having prior knowledge of the students' relative strengths and weaknesses was also important in facilitating the process. In her own class, in the midst of teaching, Dawn acknowledged that she may not have even noticed the points that caught her attention either. Furthermore, she may have been reluctant to challenge students so forthrightly.

The importance of knowing your students and developing safe, relational trust with them was highlighted in our discussions. We recognised that we had tended to neglect relationships with students post-merger, professing limited time as an excuse. But peer-teaching impacted on those relationships too. For example, a student asked Dawn 'Why have you stopped teaching us?' The question resonated with other students' comments and our own concerns about the changed pedagogy of the courses. As teacher educators who were well versed in presenting expertly packaged information and polished performances, giving responsibility to students appeared to be a retrograde step to them and also fundamentally changed the lesson for us. Peer-teaching meant we were in the background while the students were active in the lesson.

Dawn admitted that she often felt at a loss. She flitted in the background between groups feeling like an intruder on their peer-teaching conversations. Similarly, Alan's script as an expert physical education teacher was attuned to being in front of students directing the activity rather than letting the students lead and facilitate collegial inquiry and reflection. Initially, he found adopting a new role disquieting and non-rewarding. He commented in his journal:

*I get so bored just watching them teach. (Alan, journal entry: 18 June 2007)*

When we shared this sense of being disengaged at a teacher educators' conference many of our colleagues responded with helpful advice about what we should do that would be beneficial for our students. We were taken aback. Initially, we were unable to hear their feedback any more constructively than our students had heard feedback from their peers. Chagrined, we declared that we wouldn't mention being bored again in front of our peers.

Reflecting on our peers' responses to us at a later point heightened our sense that many teacher educators are all too familiar with providing well-meaning advice about how to act as teachers. But, in light of our discussion about authenticity above, *being* a teacher educator requires knowing who you are rather than what you are or what you are doing.

In reframing our understanding of our practices, we confronted our own identity as teacher educators and, in particular, the emotional investment we both put into being good teacher educators. Unsurprisingly, we did not become better teachers just because we had adopted an innovative approach – particularly when our students' responses were often less than enthusiastic. This impacted on our sense of self-efficacy and self-worth but the collaborative and rigorous nature of our research support the development of alternative ways to find satisfaction, accomplishment and enjoyment in our new roles. The discomfort and angst of so openly studying our practice was off-set by the

satisfaction of deepening our understanding about how we could facilitate the peer teaching process more effectively and be more authentic teacher educators.

### Concluding thoughts

Our students' responses to peer-teaching mirrored our own concerns around authenticity and safety in our teacher education practices. Through self-study, we have explored alternative ways to be authentic with our students as teachers – not acting like teachers but *being* teachers. The importance of authenticity in the teaching-learning partnership extended beyond peer-teaching and into our relationships with students. Our relative roles in the teaching-learning partnership shifted. Rather than teaching about our subjects we have made teaching about teaching our goal. We are now in a position to acknowledge that this goal is confounding and confronting. We have been apprehensive about giving up the old, familiar position of expert. We have felt frustrated by wanting to be trailblazers when the path ahead is unclear but self-study has helped signpost the way ahead. Discussing our research with others in the teacher education community has informed and improved our practice and given us greater legitimacy to contribute to the on-going exploration of the complexities and challenges of teacher education.

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