

An Invitation for Growth

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Abstract

I performed an autoethnography (Ellis, 2004), reflexively (Freire, 1970) using the form of a Greek comic drama, (Watling, 1947) to explore the question: How can I grow (Dewey, 1902, 1915, 1916, 1938, 1941) in my understanding of offering experiences to Victorian secondary school students, that invite them to grow as humans? In the thesis, I react cathartically to my experiences of mechanistic and coercive schooling, rejecting, in particular, one representation of positivism. I characterise that particular representation of positivism ironically, as ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, in a deliberate distortion of sous rature (Derrida, 1974).

Inspired by my students, I investigate the possibility of focusing on the students' educative needs. I explore several metaphors as a means of challenging my own thinking about learning, including writing a short comic drama of my own, in order to seek the responses of others. I include transgressive data such as memory and response data (St Pierre, 1997) and express some of my ideas as personifications. The inquiry reveals and challenges my positivist and linear assumptions, following various flight lines. The structure of the thesis is non-linear and has rhizomatic elements (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

The limitations and possibilities of offering students increased control of their own inquiry, while still acting as responsible adult educators, are investigated. I observe that, it is extremely difficult to offer a substantial and consistent invitation for growth, in a system distorted by positivism. Invitational moments enabling educative practice in the midst of a mis-educative system are suggested. I describe flashes of ironic comedy and hope amidst the system.

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Acknowledgements

I have had four supervisors for this thesis, and each of them has been critical to my progress, with each sharing part of the journey. I am firmly convinced that providence lead me to Dr. Ann Ryan's office three years ago when I walked in, wishing rather wistfully that I could dare to attempt a masters. I am rather inclined to think of events as epiphanies and turning points, and that occasion was one of those. She was a kindred spirit without being soft. Ann and I began a series of fierce debates, which were tentative at first but then increased in vigour, reminding me of the Yeshiva debates describes in the book, *The Chosen*, by Chaim Potak (1967). They were heady days for me, and I fondly imagine, encouraging for Ann as well.

Ann has what I describe as a firm theoretical grasp, coupled with a determined passion for justice which is what I needed to expose the years of encrusted prejudice that I bore. For me, Ann has both the capacity to sensitively open the unseen world of ideas, and the willingness to challenge my male Anglo-Saxon-protestant complacency, which is a rare gift.

We had another wayfarer with us in those days. Another supervisor, Kim Davies, was only able to walk with us a little while as part of my supervision team. Nevertheless, I vividly remember her particular insights and encouragement as we met like fellow conspirators in the QBAR cafe and discussed the toppling of my false ideas.

After a little while, providence brought another breath of life into my inquiry. Dr. Nicola Johnson was the chief supervisor appointed by the university to guide me and she helped me greatly. Nicola is both charming and gifted in organisational matters in a way I am not. She saved my bacon many times, all with a smile. Nicola was also able to gently point out the theoretical inconsistencies and the elements in my writing that made it difficult to understand. Any success in the organisation of my ideas must largely be credited to her assistance.

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I want also to say something about my wife, Anna. The sacrifices that a supporting partner of a master's student must make are widely mentioned but little understood. Anna has little interest in dusty old books and the minutiae of educational philosophers. Anna, however, cares about people and shares my belief that our young people need a better deal, especially at school. She has stood by me through the 'thick and the thin'; I love her and appreciate her.

Declaration

This thesis has been submitted for the completion of the Masters of Education by Research at Monash University. This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

A black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Date:

17.12.15

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“A mind of metal and wheels who does not care for growing things”

(Tolkien 1954, p. 84)

Prologue

Impressions (i 16.3.15/100)¹: I am concerned about a schooling that promotes a mechanistic view of education. Students and teachers are encouraged to acquire skills in a “mechanised” (Dewey, 1916, p. 213) way to serve the interests of an industrial economy. It is a process that ignores the genuine growth of the students. I would like to explore the possibility of an alternative vision of schooling that nurtures the spirit of the child and encourages the growth of students.

My moral responsibility as an educator

Impressions (i 26.9.15/36): I claim to be both a Christian and an educator. If I am to both act like a Christian and educate, then I must apply the values of the injunction, “Do justice and love mercy” (Micah 6:8). I must both model what it means to be fully human and encourage my students to be fully human as well. This means that, in addition to having “technical expertise” (Freire, 1998, p. 127), I need to cultivate in myself “certain values” (p. 108), such as “a loving heart” (p. 98), “respect” (p. 98) and a “joyful disposition” (p. 98). If I am to act ethically, I must reject a “reductionist mentality” (p. 106) and learn how to develop healthy human relationships with my students, knowing how to “express myself effectively in an appropriate and affirming way” (Freire, 1970, p. 125).

I reject the mechanistic and false distinction between “serious teaching and the expression of feeling” (Freire, 1970, p. 125). Instead I seek to develop my capacity as a teacher and as a human to help my students grow as humans themselves with everything that humanity entails, including “joy” (p. 125), “curiosity” (p. 125) and “autonomy” (Freire, 1970, p. 125). I decided that it was time to investigate my own teaching in order to understand it more clearly.

¹ The way that data are represented is found in the episode, *The Comic Drama of Education*. The Prologue includes a description of the particular way I use present and past tenses. Fonts are also used in a different way as espoused in *The Comic Drama of Education*.

Stella challenges the science teacher

My investigation was not an objective one of purely academic interest. I felt very strongly that there was a problem. One incident among many really set me thinking about my practice.

Student Chorus (memory 1.2.13/8):

Stella came into my science class and started typing on her laptop. She rarely, however, wrote about science. Stella was writing vampire stories and publishing them on-line. From my limited opportunity to read them, I judged that the grammar in her stories did not conform to my expectations of punctuation. Stella was, however, reluctant to let me either read her work too closely, or to make specific suggestions about how my English conventions might apply to her efforts. I offered my suggestions to her partly because it might encourage her efforts and partly because I understood my role as a teacher included advising students about various conventions that I guessed she had not had an opportunity to apply. She had, she explained (and demonstrated), thousands of readers. She was not permitted to work on her stories in English class.

When I reflected on this incident, a number of questions arose: Why didn't she work on the science instead of the writing? If she did not, she was risking the imposition of sanctions from me and others. These sanctions might have included asking her to stay behind after class, or long critical lectures about my expectations of behaviour. Was she in fact 'right' in not choosing the science? How should I respond to her actions? Why was it not possible for her to pursue her writing in English class? What could I do that would encourage her growth as a human and as a learner?

The Invisible Boy

Student Chorus (m 1.2.13/8)

The Invisible Boy also caused me to reflect deeply about my practice. I remember a time The Invisible Boy came to mathematics class as usual. I refer to him by the title The Invisible Boy (a proper noun), because of the way many other students ignored him entirely. There were issues that seemed to interfere with his schooling, which the school community made little attempt to address. There is in my mind an irony as well. I guessed (with very little evidence) that he was often ignored or criticised by members of society, yet he had particular skills they lacked and were secret from them. In that sense he was a 'superhero' in my eyes. Therefore, in my mind, to give him the title like that of a superhero was a pleasing irony. He was pleasant and scruffy. As usual he had no exercise book. His materials consisted of a pile of dog-eared white A4 paper and perhaps a red biro. Over a year, I remember him attempting the set mathematical activities on about five occasions. He said he liked me and enjoyed my company. On one of the occasions he had attempted his exercises after I asked him to (in that lesson), as a 'special favour to me'. There was going to be a visit from a leading teacher to make what (I feared) might be a hostile observation of my teaching practice (real 16.8.12/30). On another occasion, an aide came and encouraged him to produce something during a test. I assumed he had, what I called, a 'learning difficulty', because as a fourteen year old, he wrote the letter 'E' backwards like a '3'. I felt powerless to address this particular issue (as I saw it) and did very little about it.

The Invisible Boy's passion was drawing horror cartoons. Each lesson he would draw humans and other beings in various states of torture. In his description of the

scenario, each image was part of a back-story, which he described. He had for example, an elaborate mythology about a certain superhero called Jonathan Peters, who lived in antipathy to a vampire in the United States.

We had long, and in my opinion, interesting discussions about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Sometimes I made him stay behind after class and sit quietly for a while by himself for a few minutes because he did not attempt the set work. Usually, however, I just tried to encourage his art with Derwent pencils, art pads and praise. At first his art teacher criticised him for his efforts but, after a while, a new art teacher was appointed to his class who was more polite to him, encouraged him to pursue his chosen themes and made suggestions, which she said might improve his skills. Another teacher helped him type a zombie story of which, in my opinion, he was justifiably proud. I read his story with great interest and asked questions about the story's plot development. My intention at the time was to signal to him that I respected his creative efforts and believed that, as a human, he had a right to express his own thoughts, in his own way.

The question arose in my mind: How should I respond to this student? He was generally ignored by members of the school leadership team. When we had the leading teacher observations while he was in the class, the observers did not seem to notice The Invisible Boy in the class. I was criticised for all kinds of other things from that lesson, including the appearance that two students had too much opportunity to choose a mathematics textbook of their own choice (r 16.8.12/30). However, none of The Invisible Boy's activities, either good or bad, seemed important to them. The advice that I did receive from other staff about him was along the lines of either forcing him to comply with "the curriculum" (Guttek, 2009, p. 9) or trying to connect his drawing with *the curriculum*. I tried both. As approaches, they both seemed dishonest to me. These approaches did not result in increased attempts at completing set materials.

A problem with my teaching practice

There seemed to be a 'disconnect' between the needs and interests of the students and what I was doing in the classroom. I decided to investigate my own practice with a view to changing it in some way. I began my inquiry with the basic premise that something was 'not right' with the way I do schooling using the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and the Australian Curriculum, and there must be a better way. In twenty years of teaching, I presided over many classes that I described as 'boring' to the students. They were so low in their attractiveness that what I understood to be "learning" (&, 2007, p. 5) seemed unlikely to occur. In contrast, I have experienced other classes that appeared full of life and passion. In these latter classes, the students were able, apparently, to recall details and ideas with great clarity, months, and even years, later. They described these classes as being extremely significant. I suspected their enthusiasm might be an indicator of what I called "worthwhile" (Dewey, 1938, p. 40) *learning*. I found also that, even after years of experience, I was unable to predict which activities would feel positive to me after their presentation and which would not. It seemed likely to me that there were things about the way learning occurred that I was not understanding.

There has been a great deal of discussion in my profession of late about 'techniques' that are said to improve students' learning. In practice, some of these ideas seemed more useful than others. My thought at that time was that, if I could distill the essentials that really touched the minds and hearts of the students, which made their learning enjoyable rather than forced, it might be helpful to them. I began to read about and investigate elements that I thought useful. I began to explore increasing the *students' choices* in the hope it might improve their participation in their own learning. I was advised by a mentor to read Sullivan's (2011) summary of Australian schooling literature, with the view that it might help in some way. I was surprised that it contained almost nothing about the idea of providing more choice to students. I also began to explore activities that I hoped would have greater meaning for students in classes. Inspired by the writing of Holt (1969), I sought to give the students activities that I described as 'concrete experiences' and which suited my understanding of their individual needs.

I experienced something, however, that was significant to me. In the midst of all my efforts, there seemed to be certain attitudes and mindsets present both in myself and others that undermined my attempts at what I felt was *worthwhile* teaching at every turn.

Was positivism not, perhaps, that positive?

In this period of reading, observation and discussion, I began to form the view that behind the actions and attitudes that frustrated my attempts at what I saw as good teaching, there might be a theory of knowledge-epistemology described as “*positivism*” (Berkhof, 1959, p. 31). Comte, who is described as the “father of positivism” (Berkhof, 1959, p. 31), maintained that only knowledge that can be comprehended by the physical senses is valid. For the positivist, all other so-called knowledge is speculation. This often leads to a view that all worthwhile knowledge can be “studied, captured and understood” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 11). Inherent in this belief is the view that there is a known body of information that a group of trained experts, the teachers, can convey, largely unmodified, to another passive group of recipients, the students (MacKay, 1998). It was this *positivism* that I began to believe may have caused part of the problem in my teaching. Though I rejected positivism, I suspected that these assumptions were tainting both my teaching practice and thought.

In reference to schooling, one way in which positivism was not helping me was a misunderstanding of the way learning occurs. If a teacher states certain ideas and then believes that these ideas are transferred unchanged to the students, it does not guarantee the student receives it in the way intended (Dewey, 1916; MacKay, 1998). Dewey described schooling that promotes growth as “*educative*” (1916, p. 31). If I acted as if the falsehood of automatic transference was true, then I would be hindered in my capacity to provide experiences for students that were *educative*. Though initially I had only the vaguest notion of educative schooling and the ideas that might support it, I wanted to investigate if there were alternative views that might help.

Was my realism really an issue?

“Realism” (Gutek, 2009, p. 15) is often associated with positivism (Schlick, 1933). Was my ontology (including my theism), I wondered, also getting in the way of helping students grow as human beings? *Realism* is the view that the universe is a fixed entity that may be explored to reveal and discover the truth embedded within it. The nature of the universe might be explored (for example, by sensory observations) to discover not only the physical universe, but also potentially the nature of the human endeavour as well (Gutek, 2009). This observation of the physical universe, it is proposed, leads to definite verifiable conclusions that can be objectively measured. It is this fixity of understanding and the primacy of reason over emotion that characterises realism.

I had assumed that my view of reality was essentially realism. Given my belief in the Bible which is founded on what I believe to be the enduring nature of God and given my confidence in scientific method to explore the physical world, I assumed that these ideas added up to a fixed view of knowledge. I discovered however, that my realism was limited. In my view, the enduring character of God is expressed in the Bible. The Bible was largely fixed in its present form in the early centuries after the formation of the church. My personal theology, however, required that the Holy Spirit interpret the scriptures to each person by revelation. This interpretation adds a subjective element, challenging the complete fixity of thought associated with a realistic ontology.

Not all truth is presently knowable (1 Corinthians 13:12). Though scientific method has revealed much about the physical universe, it is not evident to me that it will ever completely describe the physical universe and when applied to love, justice and faith, its usefulness as a tool is limited. Furthermore, Dewey (1941) contends that scientific method does not, in itself, require an epistemological framework of realism because the nature of the information it produces need not be regarded as absolute truth, but instead a conditional knowledge that he describes as “warranted assertability” (Cochran, 2010, p. 169).

On further reflection, my opinion seemed to rest upon personal experience of truth. Central to my ideas was the notion of relationship. The relationship we have with God and other people (expressed as love), is more important than the things we know. “If I understand all mysteries and have not love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2). When Descartes declared, “I think therefore I am” (González, 1985, p. 289), his words, if accepted, had the effect of establishing the primacy of reason. This can lead to unfortunate consequences. Reason is important but must not preclude other elements of being, such as ethics, faith

and love. I am at least partly defined by the quality of the sum of my relationships. These qualifying conditions, in my thinking, suggested there was an element of existentialism in my realism (González, 1985; Gutek, 2009). My realism is one that, based on the character of God, believes that an absolute truth exists and, to some extent, that truth is available to us. I reject as inaccurate that absolute truth is absolutely knowable through scientific method, through the application of reason or even through revelation to fallible human beings. Given these modified subjective elements in my realism, I do not believe it is my realism that is a problem in my schooling practice.

The way language is used arises from our core beliefs

An issue that arose in my inquiry is the way language is used to describe things, including teaching and learning. If I use terms such as ‘technique, concrete experiences, student choices and individual needs’, they are all loaded with assumptions about what teaching and learning is. These differences arise from fundamentally different world views. These words mean one thing when described from a *realist* perspective, and may mean other things, or be inappropriate, from other perspectives. I decided that if I was to address the attitudes that formed my actions I had better become a lot clearer about the meaning of the words I used.

In addition, another theme started to intrigue me. I began to reflect on the idea that words have layers of meaning. I heard people say what I thought to be remarkable things about words. I heard, for example, a school leader quote, with great confidence and without any evidence at all, that there was “more knowledge in one copy of *The Times* than an average person knew in the sixteen-hundreds” (m 7.10.15/19).

“What precisely”, I thought “is intended in this sentence by the word *knew*”? This use of language astounded me and I spent hours investigating the changing meaning of just one word² over centuries, trying to ‘get my head around’ how the meaning of words is conveyed (i 7.8.13/100). I started to toy with the idea of using a medium of writing about schooling that might express the fascinating layers of meaning and interpretation that might exist in a particular learning experience. I hoped that, in expressing my opinion in a medium open to layers of meaning, I might challenge the positivistic assumptions of my own thinking. To some extent, this attempt at addressing layers of meaning is reflected in the use of the medium of the Greek play as described in the episode, *The Comic Drama of Education*.

² the word *precarious*

The meaning of the words ‘schooling’ and ‘teaching’

Part of the reason that words are difficult to use with precision is that there is limited agreement between people as to the meaning. I decided to investigate what John Dewey and Paulo Freire have said about schooling. I hoped that I would start to understand a little about how they used words like ‘education’ and ‘learning’.

In this episode I describe some of my interpretations of the writings of Dewey and Freire. In later episodes I developed what I regarded as a more sophisticated understanding of these authors. This growth in understanding will be described in other episodes.

Dewey (1938) described what often happens at school as “traditional” (p. 45). He contrasts this with an alternative approach to schooling which might be described as “conducive to growth” (p. 46) or *educative*. So far in *The Prologue*, I have been using the past tense when describing my inquiry and in the discourse I often refer to my position in the past tense. The assumption that it is possible to have a *present* position is a construct of language. In every new moment our self has a slightly new perspective; the present is a moving target. I will explain more about this position in the episode entitled *The Comic Drama of Education*. The work of other authors such as Dewey will be described as being in the past tense.

Traditional teaching has some difficulties

Dewey represented a radical shift away from *traditional* schooling to one more centred on growth. He was critical of the realist perspective, because he regarded it as a contributor to traditional teaching, which he regarded as problematic. Schooling resulting from, that which Dewey described as traditional, was formal and, abstract and information was transmitted in a highly symbolic form “unassimilated to everyday culture” (Dewey, 1916, p. 26). It did not matter to the teacher if the student had no interest in the information, or if the student did not understand the purpose of the information. Like a trained horse, it was assumed, that the student did not need to know the final purpose of the race. The process of schooling was essentially passive and there was an undue emphasis on drill. Dewey (1922) suggested that this view of schooling resulted in a reduced outcome for both student and society. For the student it was full of “ennui and boredom” (Dewey, 1938, p. 210). For society it produced students without the capacity to think. Students were created so that “their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited” (Dewey, 1938, p. 210).

In *traditional* teaching, the teachers' role was to transmit a set body of knowledge from themselves-the-expert to the student in the most efficient way possible without "adaption" (Dewey, 1938, p. 45) to the needs of the student. The purpose of the information the student receives was to equip the child for a particular social role. In Bobbitt's (1918) view for example, "scientific survey and analysis of human needs must be the method of discovering the objectives of the training that is demanded, not by *individuals*, but by the conditions of society" (p. 70, emphasis mine).

The teacher measured the transmission of knowledge by assessments such as tests. The common notion was that all that is necessary is for the teacher to say certain words for the students to receive the knowledge (Dewey, 1922). If the students resisted the process for any reason (perhaps because they did not see the point), the teachers continued the process by control and coercion (Dewey, 1916; Marsden, 1993). In this system, individuality and disobedience were punished.

Dewey's description of growth rejects dualism

Dewey (1938) proposed an alternative approach which was that of education centred on the *growth* of the child. Dewey criticized traditional schooling as mis-educative and inclined to perpetuate class division. One influence on this class division he expressed as a dualism. Dewey rejected dualisms of many kinds but particularly the dualism of theory-versus-practice. He saw this as derived from Plato's division of the real and the ideal (Cochran, 2010). In Platonic dualism, as Dewey saw it, there appeared to be a separation of the thinker as spectator and the worker in the world as doer. Dewey regarded this dualism as part of the problem in the way schooling was traditionally organised. There had been, he felt, an incorrect assumption that society should be divided into classes (Dewey, 1915; Kadlec, 2007). It was implied that the two classes were the poor who were trained to work and the owners of capital who were educated to think.

Dewey proposed an approach to education that he regarded as more worthwhile. He conceived of, education rather than training, and growth, rather than compliance. The student was encouraged to grow as a human. The teacher offered guidance in the sense that they appealed to the common understanding of means and actions (Dewey, 1922). An analogy was made that students understood the purpose of the game and were therefore willing to co-operate with the game (Dewey, 1938). They knew that, without rules, there is no game.

Learning was the process of growth for the student. Growth was not a means to a particular end for society, but it was the end. It was the process for living, not the preparation for life (Dewey, 1916). Teaching was the process where students were offered experiences by the teacher that would stimulate the student to grow (Dewey, 1938). Choices were made by the teacher about that which would enable the greatest growth. For example, an activity might not only promote growth of understanding about a particular substance, but might alternatively promote growth by strengthening initiative. Not all activities were regarded as educative. For example, one might argue that learning criminal activities is growth. Dewey responded that these activities are mis-educative because, in the long term, they lead to a restriction of opportunities for growth of the child because such a temptation to selfishness (Dewey, 1938) restricts the capacity to achieve new understanding.

Dewey believed experiences should respond to the interests of the child. The interest of the child includes, not only stimulation of the intellect, but also activities that have meaning for them as an individual leading “in the very direction in which his own nature points” (Dewey, 1922, p. 77)

Paulo Freire has an important contribution to the notion of ethics in education

In addition to introducing me to the notion of reflexive praxis, the writings of Freire are important to me because they sharpen the ethical dimension of pragmatic education proposed by Dewey (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1997). Freire (1998) pointed out that it is not possible to have learning without an ethical content. Freire (1970) wrote from a liberation theology perspective that views society in terms of class struggle, and he was a pioneer in understanding the ethical and social consequences of education. Shore (1992), Torres (2002), Hursh (2005), McGregor (2009) and Kachar (2012) have explored this view further and shown in what ways a neo-liberal agenda might negatively influence the way we educate. A student of Freire, Henry Giroux (2010), stated that there is a “Militarized culture that erodes the moral and civic capacities of citizens to think beyond the common sense of official power” (p. 10). This was important to me because I perceived that a major problem with positivism is that it can lead to injustice. I am deeply concerned about the way schooling is being bent in an attempt to mechanise the students as instruments of the state.

Autoethnography

I chose to use an autoethnography because I wanted to better understand my own practice. An autoethnography may be used to write “about the personal and its relationship to culture” (Ellis, 2004, p. 39). I have been teaching for many years in a variety of school systems, either privately or publically funded-and felt that, at this point, some deep reflexive thinking and inquiry was desirable. The culture that I wished to relate to was that of the school(s) in which I was employed and their communities of students, teachers and support staff.

It has been suggested that one could keep three diaries detailing: past experience, present situation and future images (Alvermann, 2000). I extended this idea to include three diaries of another particular type. Another theorist, Van Maanen (1988) also described three diaries, the realist tale, the confessional tale and the impressionist tale. The realist tale or diary details events that occurred as I observed them at certain dates and places. This “realist tale” (1988, p. 7) is written as if I, as the observer, was objective in recording facts and did not influence the observations by my presence. The second is the “confessional tale” (p. 77). It chronicles how I, the researcher, responds as an active participant, describing how I was influenced by the investigation and how the relationship with the subjects of the inquiry developed. It might, for example describe “cultural gaffes by the researcher” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 77). There was no guarantee from this perspective that I, the researcher, or the researched, were objective. The third diary is the “impressionist tale” (p. 102). It recognises the inevitability that my observations, as the researcher, were not wholly objective and were influenced by previous thoughts and experiences. The impressionist journal is my reflections on these experiences in schooling, with the ideas found in reading and discussion. The third diary includes, in the form of narrative fiction, the voices generated in my mind after my interactions with students and others (Ellis, 2004). The identity of the individuals in the fictional narrative is concealed and the impressionist journal seeks to interpret the ideas found in the other journals. The ideas from these three narratives have been woven together into the autoethnography. Over time, during my inquiry, my reflexive praxis resulted in changes in the way I recorded data. Some of these changes are described in *The Comic Drama of Education*.

Given the questions I had about how I should respond to students in a way that helped them grow as human beings, I saw the theme of growth was central to my inquiry. In addition, I despaired particularly of the system of schooling in which I was embroiled, that consisted of so many sanctions and threats of

sanctions. I believed it must be possible for me to do things in a new way that was about *inviting* children to learn, rather than a form of *coercion*.

This, then, is the question I decided to explore:

How can I grow in my understanding of how to offer experiences to Victorian secondary school students that invite them to grow as humans?

My investigation uses a methodology that drawing upon the writing of Dewey and Freire to examine and critique the role of positivism in its influence on the presentation of VELs and the new Australian Curriculum within Victorian schools. In this context, Dewey and Freire were drawn upon as theorists to help me examine my practice within schools. The method of inquiry was *autoethnography* (Armstrong, 2006; Ellis, 2004; Pinar, 2001; Spry, 2001; Van Maanen, 1988). Some methodological aspects in my use of autoethnography are, in order that I position myself in a framework of meaning that challenges a rigidly realist viewpoint of inquiry which privileges linearity. I sought to explore my own experience of education, with myself as the subject of inquiry. This study detailed efforts to improve my practice and the challenges of doing so in the present school system. Using the medium of autoethnography, I sought to engage in reflexive praxis (Freire, 1970). Reflexive praxis is a process that may begin with a “limit situation” (Freire, 1970, p. 83), which is to say, a problem. Every such troubling situation represents a potential blockage to my growth as a human. It also represents an opportunity to grow in my understanding. The process includes reflection on a situation, then action. This results in further reflection and action. For that reason, this autoethnography did not follow the familiar and comfortable linear style of inquiry that begins with a method and methodology and finishes with some results and a conclusion. More discussion about my reflexive praxis will be found throughout my study, including in the episode entitled *The Comic Drama of Education*. The way data entries are displayed and the choice of fonts and formatting for the different voices represented in this work are described in that episode. In addition to my principal theorists, Dewey and Freire, I sought to draw at times on the thoughts of others, such as Jackson (1968).

An outline of the episodes and their themes

This autoethnography is presented in the form of a Greek play as a series of episodes. Each episode may be regarded as an inquiry into one or more aspects of educative practice. *The Prologue* describes the question I seek to explore and my journey I had in adopting that question. For those readers who wish for a more traditional arrangement, *The Prologue* might be regarded as an introduction. *The Prologue* also describes why I decided upon reflexive praxis within an autoethnography as my chosen method. In addition, it describes why I selected two theorists in particular- Dewey and Freire as the main writers to inform my interpretations. There is no methodology chapter in this work. Given that my approach is a reflexive praxis, it is appropriate that my interaction with other writers occurs progressively throughout my inquiry. There are in fact, no chapters at all. In my rejection of the linear inquiry, I selected the name *episodes*, consistent with a Greek play, to describe the sections.

I will also briefly describe how each episode fits within the whole narrative. As explained in the second episode, the whole work is presented as if it were a Greek drama modelled on the style of Sophocles as described by Watling (1947). In the Greek drama, the opening is described as the “prologue” (McLennan, 1999, p. 1). Each episode has been given its own title.

In the second episode, *The Comic Drama of Education* I seek to explore why I selected to use the Greek drama as the structure of my inquiry rather than a linear inquiry. The way time was designated is also described. I also explore several metaphors for inquiry, including a very brief play I wrote entitled. *The Comic Play*. I also introduce new voices and personifications as representations of data. I also explore “transgressive data” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 177) as an additional source of information to inform my inquiry.

The third episode is ~~*The Perfect Lesson*~~³. This episode describes a constructed representation I have made of *professional development* I received in a number of Victorian schools. In it, I represent ~~*The Perfect Lesson*~~ as an embodiment of positivism, which I reject. Within the narrative, it takes the part of the opponent or “Parode” (McLennan, 1999, p. 1) and consistent with some views of Greek drama, should follow *The Prologue* in the role of *bad guy*⁴ (McLennan, 1999). In this case, ~~*The Perfect Lesson*~~ does not follow immediately after *The Prologue*, as there is the insertion of an explanatory episode, *The Comic Drama of Education*. Within the Greek drama, the remaining episodes are a reply to the opponents’ view. While I seek in this inquiry to avoid simple dichotomies, representing ~~*The Perfect Lesson*~~ as the *bad*

³ The strikethrough font describes a particular idea which is detailed in the episode ~~*The Perfect Lesson*~~.

⁴ My words, not those of McLennan.

guy serve to provide some basic structure to the narrative. This episode is written in one voice only that of “impressions”.

The fourth episode is *Mission to Mars*. In this episode I carry out a first experiment in praxis after *The Perfect Lesson*, and explore some ideas in response to it. I described this as an ‘opening gambit’ in my inquiry, suspecting, as I did, that I had a long way to go in my inquiry to further understand the issues that I felt were interfering with making my practice *an invitation for growth*. *Mission to Mars* highlighted some issues I wished to further explore, particularly in the limitations and opportunities of giving students control over the subject matter that they were subjected to. I introduced a new term, *Invitational moments*. I do not develop this term, however, until a later episode. In *Mission to Mars*, I seek to introduce new voices in order to express a number of nuances in understanding. The new voices are the *Class Clown*, Frank and the Earlier-self. **Bernard the Inquisitor** and impressions are also represented.

The fifth episode is *Making Children Centre Stage*. In this episode, I further explore some of limitations and opportunities of offering students greater control over their learning within schools. In particular I seek to examine what I thought of as the promising work of Sister Gertrude described by Beeth and Hewson (1998). To interpret some of these new ideas I refer to some of the work of Jackson (1968), particularly to explore the limitations to invitation within the classroom that occur because of the reduced power of the student within the classroom. I decided in that episode that it is possible to create a system of education that takes the ideas and interests of students seriously. I suspected that, unless schooling can offer an invitation for growth substantially and consistently, the system is not truly an invitation for growth at all. Just because the system is not invitational however, does not negate the teacher’s responsibility to offer an invitation for growth despite the system. In this episode, the voices, impressions and **Bernard the Inquisitor** are represented.

Along the way, an opportunity arose. The *hands up* program, in the episode *Hands up for Experience*, offered the promise of schooling that took *experience* seriously. Perhaps, I thought, some of Dewey’s ideas of experience might be embodied within that program. I concluded, that for me, *hands up* was not a good representation of Dewey’s ideals of vital experience, because the experiences on offer to the students were offered from a framework of mixed messages about the value of respecting the interests of children. There were, however, useful ideas about the value of practical activity.

I felt during this process that I was growing in my capacity to interpret my own reflexive praxis. In the episode *Voices from the Pit* I tried to bring together many of the ideas that had been brewing within my

mind. I was coming to some new understanding of the severe limitations of an invitation for growth within Victorian schooling. I suspected that unless students have essential control of their educational agenda that an invitation for growth is not extended to them. Furthermore, I decided that the ideas and attitudes about schooling, which derive partly from positivism, make an invitation for growth extremely difficult to for me to apply consistently and substantially within the Victorian Schools that I had observed and was employed within.

In the *Exode*, I reflect briefly upon the whole inquiry. There are great difficulties in the way of offering an invitation for growth, nevertheless, small opportunities or *invitational moments* exist to act in an educative and ethical way within the classroom. In the Greek play the “exode” (McLennan, 1999, p. 1) concludes the play. In a comedy, it is a celebration. In a tragedy, it is not so.

The Comic Drama of Education

Cast of characters:

Impressions:. The expression of the present 'self' at a particular point in time, in reflection upon the other voices speaking into a situation.

Bernard the Inquisitor: An interrogator of the impressionist view, who reflects a belief that truth has nuisances of expression that are not neatly resolved. He is often reflective of the response data. He is not always sympathetic to the impressionist voice.

Sophia: Like Bernard, she is an interrogator of the impressionist view, and reflective of different response data. The allusion to the Greek term 'Sophia', meaning wisdom, is intentional.

Student Chorus: An expression of the student voice, written in larger font to privilege the voice that is often dismissed.

Earlier self: An expression of the idea that in a *rhizomatic* inquiry, the original thought may be challenged by a later thought, by the same author.

Frank: Representative of traditional schooling.

The role of this second episode

Impressions (Impressions 9.9.15/100): It was my intention to explore some metaphors to try and grow in my understanding of invitation and growth. I was struggling to interpret my reading and thought that reflection upon some metaphors might help me. I decided to reflect on the metaphors of the *rhizome*, the *fold*, the *mirror* and the *comic drama*. Of these I chose to reflect on the *rhizome* and *comic drama* in more detail.

In this episode, I explain the various ways I sought to challenge linear structures of inquiry. This includes how I chose to represent various voices to respond to these metaphors and also to explain how I chose to reference data of various types to support the inquiry chosen for exploration. The new voices I introduced included: **Bernard the Inquisitor**, Sophia, Frank and The Earlier-Self. I also explored “transgressive data” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 177) as an additional source of information to inform my inquiry. It also includes the way I chose to challenge the representation of time that might be expected in a linear inquiry.

The rhizome as a metaphor for inquiry.

I felt moved by Ellis (2004) and Pierre (1997) regarding their description that a *linear inquiry* was insufficient to reveal the necessary nuances of understanding. By linear inquiry, I refer to the structure: aim/hypothesis/methods/results/conclusion, which I have often used to write a scientific report. One might refer to this as an ‘inquiry-sandwich’. This structure seemed too static for flexible reflective praxis. I was intent on changing the inquiry as I went along in response to the growth in my understanding.

I was attracted to the “rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21; St Pierre, 1997) metaphor. *The rhizome* extends in multiple directions. At the beginning of my inquiry, I had little concept of how it would look at the end. It might have proceeded in several possible directions. Though the subject of my inquiry *did* seem to be becoming more focused, it did not spring into being fully formed. Rather, it formed gradually as a result of my reflection upon multiple theorists including Dewey and Freire. Like the rhizome, growth was required before it would reach its final form. I liked the “rhizomatic” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 20) inquiry because it offers an alternative to what I perceived to be the rigidity of a linear inquiry. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 20), a rhizome is an “acentred, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system”. The chief characteristic of the rhizome is its multiplicity, which is “it always has multiple entryways” (p. 12).

Impressions (i 21.8.15/30): To my mind, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) proposed an ideal of writing that is “without an organizing memory or central automaton” (p. 28). They suggested this ideal is difficult to achieve, giving as an example work by “Andrezejewski” (p. 23) which they regard as a useful attempt. My thesis does not claim to approach this ideal, as it has an *organising memory*. Furthermore, I interpret Deleuze and Guattari (1987), as having a suspicion regarding the Christian idea of “transcendence” (p. 16). I am very comfortable with the idea of transcendence.

While I do not claim that my thesis fits neatly within these ideas, the *rhizomatic* inquiry seemed to have a number of useful characteristics. I wanted to reflexively revisit experiences again and again and “any

point in the rhizome can be connected to any other” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 7). In *Mission to Mars* for example, I returned to the examination of one brief experience to write successive reflections upon it on different occasions. This would be difficult in a linear inquiry.

I wanted to challenge the idea that an inquiry is a single snapshot, rather, I wanted it to express change and growth. “Don’t sow, grow offshoots”, exclaimed Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 20). I wanted to express the idea that, at certain times, we have certain views, and at another time, we may then may hold different views. They also said, “Run lines, never plot a point” (1987, p. 24). In the past, I have represented inquiries as if the opinion expressed in the conclusion was held from the exact moment the data was collected, and remain unchanged at a “given moment in history” (p. 20). Here, I wished to express the idea that *method, data and interpretation* are all fluid and subject to change. Generally I represent writers such as Dewey as having been written in the past tense. My expressed views are also written in the past tense. They are written as if, the moment they appear in the text I have already moved on.

I also wanted to challenge the “logic” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 5) of the *dichotomy*. Sometimes complex ideas are represented as if they were a “simple” (p. 13) choice. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest the idea of “lines of flight” (p. 3), which attracted me as a way of expressing the multiple paths of thought, giving a feeling of movement and “destratification” (p. 3) and challenging the “weary” (p. 5) logic of the *dialectic* that “one becomes two” (p. 5).

The rhizome also expresses something of the challenge of the “crisis of representation” (Ellis, 2004, p. 115), which might be briefly expressed as the view that the act of observing is inclined to alter the observed. The rhizomatic form challenges the neat compartmentalisation of knowledge into separate viewpoints. I challenge the idea that knowledge can be neatly compartmentalised.

There is no longer a tripartite division between the field of reality (the world) and the field of representation (the book) and the field of subjectivity (the author). Rather an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 23)

My inquiry was also shaped by reflection upon my own reflective praxis and “responsive data” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 177) gained from discussions with others about my developing ideas. Reading St Pierre, in which she used the term *responsive data* to describe such ideas, stimulated the metaphor of the *fold*. The point of that metaphor, as I interpreted it was that responsive data is like folding back, and looking again at the same situation from a different person’s perspective. This source of reflection was, in practice, very important to me.

Regarding the metaphor of the mirror, I might sit in-between two opposing mirrors and see the reflection copied a large number of times, 'stretching away to infinity', each with a subtle variation in size or clarity. The very term 'reflection', was (of course) reminiscent to me of a mirror. For example, when I reflected on an idea such as 'what does it mean to invite the student to grow as a human?' there are many facets of the idea to explore, each with subtle variations of application. I found fascinating the infinite variety of experience represented in these metaphors and the layers of meaning implied.

I wanted also to investigate the metaphor of *The Comic Drama* to help me investigate the relationship between teacher and student. I was attracted to this because it promised several features. I was angry with the apparent humourless rigidity of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ and I hoped *The Comic Play* might provide some humour as a counterpoint. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) adopted a certain structure, "just for laughs" (p. 22) in their work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, and I thought I might get a few laughs as well. I also hoped the metaphor might provide a way to address the issue of "multiple voices" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 189 as cited in Dimitriadis and Kamberlis, 2006, p. 51), which I was struggling with, including the impressionist and real voices. Some of the voices I chose to represent in my study include the objective, confessional, impressionist, memories, student chorus, responsive and earlier-self voices. I also used the play idea to *personify* some voices as **Bernard the Inquisitor**, Frank and Sophia.

The way in which data are used and referred to

In my rejection of the inquiry sandwich as the sole approach, it created some new issues regarding the use of data. I have chosen to use different types of data. So-called real data is recorded as if the data was collected objectively, however, I claim other types of data are also useful. As I alluded to earlier, I extended the ideas of Van Maanen (1988) regarding the three diaries: real, confessional and impressionist. Inspired by St. Pierre St Pierre (1997), and her discussion of "other unnamed data" (p. 179), I decided to use other types of data. This included responsive voice data and *memory*. One of the reasons I decided to include other types of data was a protest against the view that only certain types of data were privileged as being 'true' where other types of data were regarded as 'untrue'. Non-canonical authors were also chosen as a protest against the view that only certain individuals are possessors of truth, a "canonical" (Beeth and Hewson, 1998, p. 742) priesthood of knowledge. Even though Watling's (1947) writings are a traditional form of data (an author), he is not, to my knowledge, respected as an ethnographer. Nevertheless, I chose him as an authority on my chosen mode of expression, the Greek play, because he was apparently competent in his description of Greek drama.

Data are referred to in this study in particular ways that adapt to the use of *other* data. When the data are referred to, I denote the data with a reference as follows. In this example –‘confessions 12.10.2013b/32’, the ‘confessions’ denotes the entry as an entry derived from the confessional journal. The ‘12.10. 13’ represents that date on which the event was recorded: in this case, the twelfth of October, two thousand and thirteen AD. The ‘b’ refers to the fact that this is the second confessional entry in that folio, on that day. The designation ‘/32’ refers to the folio number in which the entry was recorded. The folio was often a paper exercise book; sometimes it was a collection of note papers. Initially, I tried to ‘get modern’ with computers, however, that introduced the problem that the recorded ideas were not then recorded in separate folios, but in different files on the one device. This seemed a compromise on the idea of separating the records in the quest for authenticity. In practice, therefore, I restricted the use of computer files as folio numbers; however, the folio number ‘/100’ designates a computer entry. The use of numerous types of data entries introduced the problem that the text might become very cluttered and untidy with entries. The entry (confessions 23.3.14b/16), for example, might be quickly followed with (responsive voice 23.5.15/17) and so on. I decided on a set of abbreviations that could be used for each. For the first entry of a particular journal type in an episode, the full designation is used. The designations are ‘real, confessions, impressions and responsive voice’, the abbreviations for these are ‘r, c, I and rv.’ respectively. Therefore in the second and subsequent entries in an episode, for example, for a responsive voice entry the designation might be (rv. 12.3.13/5).

Problems with the recording of transgressive data

To my initial shame, this structure proved useful but difficult to consistently implement (c 12.12.13/100). I feared I would “disgrace myself” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 184). Suppose I had a conversation and an hour later I wrote down my recollection of it. It is a memory, but it was recorded as if it were real data. If I attempted to solve the problem by, for example, using a voice recorder, the attempt to use voice recording in real time is impractical in my classrooms. In addition, all my records are constructs. If I record one thing, I am always choosing other things that are not recorded. Therefore, all records have limitations. I decided that if a record was written within one or two days of the event, it would be described as ‘real’ or ‘confessional’, depending on whether it was describing the events as part of the ‘study’ or if it related to my status as the ‘observer’. After that two days had elapsed, it would be described as ‘memory’ if it were a record of an event, or ‘impressions’ if it were an interpretation of an event.

Other problems arose (c 12.12.13/100). A thought might strike me, for example, as I was recording a real data entry. It might be an impression that relates to some other matter. As soon as I record it there, an impressionist note is recorded in a real data journal. A problem is created by an entry recorded in the wrong place. Imagine that I later cross it out of the real data journal and write it in the impressionist journal, correcting a spelling error as I go. I therefore construct a ‘new’ impression. The original entry is ‘lost’ as it is superseded. In response to this issue, sometimes I chose to transcribe the entry across. Sometimes I chose to leave the data entry in the ‘wrong’ type of journal with a note to designate its type and date.

The system I used to record data changed as my understanding grew. I first heard of Van Maanen’s (1988) approach from others and then read it for myself. I did not immediately grasp its full intent. During that process, I sought to use and record data with increasing discipline and clarity. *The comic play* below helped me with this process. Later, I incorporated ideas from St. Pierre (1997). Even now (9:26am, 18.5.15), I recognise the possibility that some aspect of my data recording praxis will change as I write my inquiry.

The Comic Play

I began my investigation into comic drama as a metaphor by writing a very short piece of comic prose called *The Comic Play*-which is presented below.

One day a company of scriptwriters decided to write a comedy. They investigated comic techniques and dialogue, and with the best information available, wrote a comic play. They invested in creating a suitable venue for comedy and on the appointed day, it was performed in front of an eagerly waiting crowd. The problem was, very few people laughed.

The solution was immediately apparent. The audience were ignorant of good comedy. The scriptwriters embarked on an explanation campaign. To explain why the comedy was funny, they interviewed the people who did laugh to better guarantee their comic success. Finally, it was time for a new series of performances with the informed audiences.

Even less people laughed.

Again the solution was immediately apparent.

The actors were no good. They needed better actors. They recruited new actors who were funnier. They made it very clear to the actors that good comedy is funny and laughs were required. Informed by the best knowledge available, they trained these new actors in comic routines.

They tried again.

This time no-one laughed.

Finally they were forced to face the fact, the script just wasn't funny

Earlier-self (i 30.11.13/11): I then recited this piece to a number of small groups of people and listened for their response. On each occasion, people laughed and expressed comment. I found this process helpful for clarifying my own practice at this point; I also like the fact that they laughed. I noticed several things. I also read the introduction to a translation of the plays of Sophocles in order to explore what the structure of a Greek drama might have originally contained. The object of my reading was to explore the possibility of structuring my whole inquiry like that of a Greek play, or even as a Greek comedy.

The structure of a Greek play

Impressions (i 21.2.14/11): In Watling's (1947) book, he describes the structure of a play generally and elements of Sophocles' plays in particular. There are certain interesting characteristics of these plays. The plays such as "King Oedipus" and "Antigone" (Watling, 1947, p. 13) are arranged in a narrative but there is no genuine attempt at by Sophocles at historicity. The individual histories of the various characters, for example, cannot be harmonised from the various plays. There is no complete unity of themes between the plays. Each addresses different problems set within the background of Greek tradition; each seeks to express feelings, ideas and "eternal truths" (Watling, 1947, p. 12).

This dramatic structure appealed to me as it seemed to embody some of my emotional reaction to the rigid constraints of positivism with its fixity of thought, its pretense of moral detachment and its intellectual "objectivity" (Wall, 2006, p. 2). Within a play such as *Antigone*, there are many voices expressed. Major characters speak in turn and some voices speak out of turn, in protest defiance or praise. Sometimes voices speak in a group, such as in a "chorus" (Watling, 1947, p. 11). The *chorus* has an interesting role, at times the chorus represents the community of ordinary *citizens* in the midst of struggle with "eternal powers" (Watling, 1947, p. 15).

The chorus does not hold a consistent position but may be viewed as vacillating between opinions. The problems confronted are rarely just dichotomies of ideas represented as simple alternatives such as the way they are represented in the presentation of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. Rather, they are nuanced representations of insights into human motives and circumstances, exemplified by the principled struggles of Antigone and Creon to reconcile their views of divinity, honour and the will of the people.

This appealed to me as a representation of my ideas about schooling for several reasons. Firstly, the multiple voices reminded me of Ellis (2004) and her different fonts used to represent perspectives. Perhaps, I wondered, a play might express these different voices in my inquiry. While a play might still be a coherent narrative that described my reflective praxis, it was not a restrictive inquiry *sandwich*, but a more flexible approach.

A second attractive feature was that it was reminiscent of the classroom as I have experienced it. In a classroom, there is often a pretense that the teacher controls the sole narrative (Freire, 1970). In fact, the students also contribute to the narrative with activities that both comply with the teachers expressed narrative and are inconsistent with that narrative (Jackson, 1968).

Since I wanted to retain some sense of the expressed voice of the students, the role of the chorus was immediately attractive to me (memories 26.5.15/19). The role of the chorus in Greek drama bridges the gap between spectator and stage (Watling, 1947). For me, this idea made the role of the chorus a neat metaphor for that of the student whose voice is often both present in the classroom but is often suppressed.

Another feature that appealed to me was the recognition that the Greek play (as I had the opportunity to read it) was a translation of the Greek to modern English. This makes an exact representation of the ideas that Sophocles intended to convey to a reader impossible to achieve. There is a recognition that the translation from another language is always an inadequate representation of the original (Watling, 1947). A *king* for example, as we receive it in the title of *King Oedipus*, meant something different than our modern understanding of *king*.

This reminded me of the concept of “sous rature” (Derrida, 1974, p. 20) that challenges the shared understanding of every written word as a “signifier” (Derrida, 1974, p. 4). I believed that I needed to remain conscious that, when I used language and my students responded with language, it was always affected by the imperfect nature of the communication. *The comic play* was like the classroom, in that the classroom was often characterised as if it was a cast of actors performing an *established code* of signifiers to a group of passive spectators. However, like the play, both students and teachers interpret the established code, often with subtle ironic humour. All of these above features made the medium of the play more attractive than the *inquiry sandwich* to tell the story of my own reflective practice.

Memory as data

The so-called objective voice rejects the idea that we are to rely on memory to inform us in our inquiry. The objective voice can only represent some of the available knowledge, not the sum of all knowledge.

Other expressions of truth exist. To illustrate this, I am reminded of a sign that was scrawled as graffiti on the café blackboard.

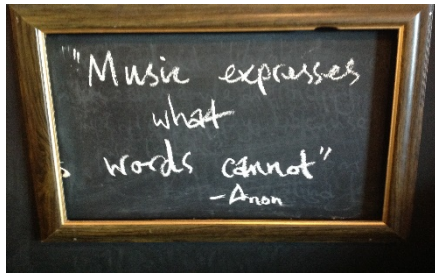


Figure 1 -Three Little Birds Cafe'. Some data cannot be expressed with words as signifiers.

The graffiti (r 28.9.15/23) represents the idea that some ideas or experiences cannot be adequately expressed in mere written words as signifiers. The objective voice does not even recognise the existence of this other meaning.

Memory also speaks. Though the objective voice claims memory does not have value, nevertheless memory is always present and often loud in my situation. It informs and shapes my observations in the present. To claim the observer ignores all that comes before is an impossible absurdity. Without the knowledge I have gained in the past, I cannot even begin to interpret my present experience. Each experience modifies me and therefore leaves its mark (Dewey, 1938).

Therefore, if I seek to reflect deeply and fully upon my own experience, I must acknowledge memory as one of the voices that speak into my present experience. There are “remembered moments” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 5). In the same way that I must understand the limitations of the objective voice (or real voice) as expressions of knowledge, I must recognise the limitations of memory as an expression. Memory is an unreliable record, shaped by emotion and clouded by bias. Nevertheless memory speaks into every situation. In this inquiry therefore, I have chosen, to draw upon memory as it informed my investigation. It is represented as a source of data under the new category, ‘memories’.

Impressions (m 1.9.14/11): Many years ago, I was a new and Idealistic teacher and I wanted to express to the students the idea that they and their expressions had value but, in my role as teacher, my authority

was more important. I stood in front of the class and said that the students needed to be quiet “because it was my turn to speak” (m 1.9.14/11).

Student Chorus (m 1.9.14/11): Hayden replied. “When is it my turn to speak?”

I never replied to that question. I had intended that the students would speak when spoken to. ‘Perhaps’ I thought, ‘They could answer some mathematical question posed to them’? In reality, the reason I never replied was I could not, at that time, answer the question. The students did not have a time when it was their turn to speak. I intended to keep full control of the narrative. They did speak, however, loudly and long, just not in the way I intended.

Student Chorus (m 1.5.15/19):

- “Sir, Tony took my ruler
- this is boring
- eat shit!”

Personified voices as an expression of ideas

Impressions (i 9.9.15/100): The responsive voice arises from the interplay of ideas when I discuss them with others. I personified the responsive voice with the title of **Bernard the Inquisitor**. Though I sometimes felt uncomfortable personifying the responsive voice in this way, I chose to do so to recognise that the ideas I have come from the interplay of my ideas with outside sources. In addition, since I sought to address my inquiry as honestly and “truthfully” (Watling, 1947, p. 11) as possible, I chose to represent voices in this way to reflect the potential complexity of some ideas. I recognised that some ideas may not be readily amenable to simple *dichotomies* or even the “triangular” (Watling, 1947, p. 14) arrangements of tragedy. Some ideas have difficult nuances. I hoped that by personifying some opposing views it might symbolise the complex nature of the issues. In *Antigone*, both that character, after whom the play is named, and *King Creon* each hold to a “passionately held principle” (Watling, 1947, p. 13) that may be partially justifiable. At the end of the play, no Hegelian synthesis (rv. 9.12.13/6; Spencer and Krause, 2012) is achieved.

An example of a personification I have selected is Frank. Frank represents traditional schooling. Of these personifications, Frank was problematic, as the term ‘traditional schooling’ was an abstract caricature representing many unresolved elements. Here he was represented as a clumsy amalgam of my experience in the classroom, the habit of training in abstract symbols without context and the ideas

represented in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. Frank, meaning ‘blunt’, was a reference to the tendency to make direct and potentially unconsidered statements with no definitive theory of education. It was also my grandfather’s name, so it alludes to the idea I have a secret sympathy for some of Frank’s issues.

The selection of fonts to emphasize difference

I selected the standard recommended font Calibri to represent the Earlier-self, objective and impressions voices. To represent Sophia, I chose Calibri Light to add the allusion of *light*, as in wisdom. To Bernard, being an Inquisitor, I decided to give him Times New Roman, which has a medieval feel, with his name in bold. ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ heading is in Century School Book, alluding to the idea that the philosophy behind it arises from the schoolmen tradition from centuries ago (Berkhof, 1959). Frank is in Book Antiqua as a reference to the fact that he is a little out-of-date and bookish. Brother Thomas is in Estrangelo Edessa because it sounds kind of Latin-American. Stewy for Dewey is in Arial because a notice in the photocopy room recommends Arial font to help students with special needs, which is an allusion to the idea that the needs of students were relevant to Dewey. The Class Clown is in **Comic Sans**, which is an allusion to his comic intent. The Student Chorus is in Calibri, but in **14 point font** for emphasis, because I contend the student voice is often neglected.

Time is designated in a way that challenges linear chronology

In a static inquiry an assumption might be made that all the data are analysed on one day, that is the date the report is given at “a given moment in history” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 20). That type of report is presented as a summation with a consistent method and methodology. This inquiry is a reflexive praxis with an assumption that I grew in both methodological understanding and skill in the method during the inquiry. Therefore, I have experimented with the way entries are dated. Every comment is dated. Sometimes the dates are represented as if the thoughts were all interpreted on one day, such as in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. Sometimes the dates are represented as a constantly changing chronology, revealing that the report was designed as a coherent narrative, rather than a rigid chronology. No attempt is made to artificially rationalise the chronology to make it appear that all thoughts arose and were recorded in neat consecutive order.

My reflections upon the reflections of others

Impressions (i 21.2.14/11): I shared the metaphor *The Comic Play* (above) for the inquiry with my friend Bernard, describing the play to him as a way of examining ‘problems in the education system’ (real 30.11.13/100). Friends are a source of response data that can “trouble my common sense understanding of the world” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 174) and I certainly found this conversation troubling. The following remarks are both personal and confessional, though they rarely reflect the confessions journal. In an objective inquiry, they would be omitted altogether. In this reflexive praxis, I include them here in this episode because they arise directly from *The Comic Play*. In addition, they help provide some rationale as to the value of autoethnography and the reason I decided to pursue certain lines of inquiry. In short, they were helpful to me because they helped me to deeply challenge my positivist assumptions about schooling.

Bernard the Inquisitor (rv. 30.11.13/100): There is a problem here with your *Comic Play*. You are just shifting the blame. The problem with the scriptwriters in the story is that they blame the audience, then the actors. You have just shifted the blame to the scriptwriters. If this is a metaphor for the education system it has two major problems.

The first is that it does not help. The story is only half complete. What happens next? Do scriptwriters rewrite a funny play? Perhaps the only helpful ending is that the audience, actors and scriptwriters meet and discuss what happens next. This brings us to the second problem. In shifting blame, it does not help to resolve the issue; it only polarises the debate. What is required is “giving more light than heat” (Shakespeare, 1963, p. 53). This is reminiscent of what Dewey describes as the “child vs. curriculum” (Dewey, 1902, p. 105) debate. On one side you have the “subject matter” (Dewey, 1902, p. 108) enthusiasts. On the other side you have the student-centred theorists (Dewey, 1902). In their conflict, the useful ideas that lead to the growth of the student are potentially neglected.

Earlier-self (rv 30.11.13/100): Bernard, you comment that we need to avoid blaming. I am reminded about an earlier debate (not recorded here) we had about my conflict with a leading teacher. You alluded to the idea of *constructivism* in psychological practice. I interpreted that to mean that with work, I can build common ground with my adversary until we can share enough perspective to work effectively on a solution. The problem was that when I attempted consensus, it appeared to me that he had already made a decision to carry out certain actions at my expense. He and I already shared the perception that he held all the power and so my attempt at a *constructivist* approach seemed to be counter-productive. We already had a kind of consensus. We agreed he had a lot of power and I had little.

This introduces the question: How can reactionary ideas be challenged if there is no place for the “just anger of those who are deceived and betrayed” (Freire, 1970, p. 56)? In my desire to avoid laying blame, would I end up just avoiding the important issues? Perhaps there is a place for a little white-hot anger. There are people who believe they have a great deal to gain by their abuse of power and not all the participants in the debate have equal power.

Bernard the Inquisitor (rv 30.11.13/100): What is required then is, that the failure of the leaders to act in the best interests of the child needs to be exposed. To do that, without apportioning blame, is very difficult but, if you want to make progress in the debate and effect change, you must try.

Earlier-self (rv. 30.11.13/100): I think it is likely that one has to get a little angry and emotional before one has the ‘gumption’ to take on the powerful. However, that does not mean that you need to use blame-filled language when communicating your ideas and feelings.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 26.5.15/100): Was the leading teacher right in using force against you?

Impressions (i 26.5.15b/100): Of course no one is blameless. No deed is carried out with completely pure motives and, conversely, rarely is any deed wholly evil in intent. It *was*, however, appropriate that I leave that employment situation. It certainly carried a lot of pain and fear (c 13.11.12/8). My whole life became focused on one event, which was the breakdown of my relationship with my employer. I was reminded of the quote from *The Return of the King*

I know that such things happened but I cannot see them, not the taste of food, nor the feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark. (Tolkien, 1957, p. 215)

Some of that pain might have been avoided if a little more honesty in communication had occurred.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 27.5.15/100): Are these feelings relevant to your inquiry?

Impressions (i 27.5.15/100): They certainly felt relevant. After reflection, I considered that the feelings were relevant to my inquiry in several ways. The fear enabled me to empathise with some of the fear that students feel when evaluated in the class room. I felt fearful when I was evaluated in the classroom. Holt (1969) described some of the fear that students feel when evaluated. I felt shame and anger at what I perceived to be coercion. Freire (1970) and Jackson (1965) described some of the shame and anger that students may feel when experiencing coercion.

I also found the process of doing the autoethnography very refreshing and cathartic. I was curious for a long time about why it was so easy to stay motivated and focused. I realised, after reflection, that my motivations were complex, but included my great anger at the injustice done to students and myself in the name of schooling. This process of catharsis and revelation of emotion is alluded to by Ellis (2004).

How I reacted to my metaphor of *The Comic Play* and the subsequent discussion with Bernard

I reacted to *The Comic Play* by developing the view that humour was not a mechanical process that was subject to scientific inquiry. I felt superior to those imaginary but highly plausible scriptwriters who thought humour was a mechanical process. I saw this element as an ironic criticism of positivism in education wherein educators had sought to quantify knowledge in the way the scriptwriters had sought to quantify humour.

There was, however, an element of my reflection on *The Comic Play* that surprised me. It seemed that, at the heart of the comic drama I created, was the premise that something was performed by an active person, by definition, the *actor*. It was received by another group of people, the *audience*. The role of the audience in *The Comic Play* was essentially passive, as they were “spectators” (Freire, 1970, p. 30). They chose to laugh or not to laugh. This passive role is immediately reminiscent of the *binary* response which I have described and criticised elsewhere in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~.

Implicit within the description of the thespians was a role that made those called “actors” (Freire, 1970, p. 30) actually *non-actors*. The actors in the play were only intellectually passive-receptors of a narrative from someone else. The scriptwriters were the ones who had the ideas and wrote the lines that were funny (or not). It was unclear in the play who these scriptwriters were. Did they pay for the play or did they take the role of artistic director or author? I noted that sometimes, by analogy, this ambiguity is present in the classroom. Does the teacher *follow a curriculum* dictated by the state? Is it even possible for a teacher to carry out a curriculum scripted by the state in the way the state expresses it in curriculum documents (c 21.2.14/8)?

These elements were surprising to me because I had spent many months and considerable effort purging myself of what I saw as an unhelpful paradigm. The paradigm I disliked was that the teacher was the active expert who imparted knowledge to the passive recipient in the role of student. I had vigorously opposed this view, but there, in my own *cultural product*, was the evidence that I (at least partly) still held those assumptions myself. This observation has enabled me to reflect more deeply on growth and invitation.

Impressions (i 21.2.14c/11): According to Freire (1970) it is desirable to present the student and teacher as “co-investigators” (p. 87). The student must be fully involved as subjects rather than objects. “The point of the departure” must be the “here and now” (p. 66). The learning process must be profound not trivial. It must have a deep trust in people and their creative power. These conditions that Freire describes are *not*, in my opinion, systematically and substantially met in the practice I have described and observed in *Mission to Mars*, ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ or perhaps very much of my own practice that I have reflected upon.

Bernard the Inquisitor (rv. 30.11.13/100): The important question remained for me: What happens in the third act of the comic play? What are you now going to explore that helps the situation?

Impressions (i 23.10.15/100): As a result of my concern about teaching practice that I observed and performed, I was very interested to read about Sister Gertrude’s activities, which are interpreted in the episode *Making Children Centre Stage*, which held out the promise of a different way of doing things. I also wanted to experiment with my own praxis, hence I decided to experiment with a variation of the traditional teaching practice I had been trying. I wanted more of what I called ‘engagement’. To do this, I devised a lesson plan called *Mission to Mars*, which is described in episode four. Before I conducted those investigations, however, I felt it was time to interpret a system I described as ~~The Perfect Lesson~~.

The Perfect Lesson

Cast of characters

Impressions (alone): One voice is represented as a shocking interpretation of a set of *professional development* sections characterised as ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. The voice is represented as a view held at a particular point in time (10a.m., 2.7.14).

Impressions (i 2.7.14/100): This episode is entitled ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. The title is chosen carefully and provocatively. It is presented with heavy irony because, though I reject the concept of a perfect lesson being possible as a positivist construct, the lesson outline was presented to me in way that made it implicit throughout, that the lesson was indeed *the* correct form for all classroom activities. I am motivated to respond to this by the anger I feel about the potential harm that may be done by this.

The word 'perfect' is crossed out "*sous rature*" (Derrida, 1974, p. 20, as cited in Dimitriadis and Kamberlis, (2006) to reflect the irony that a lesson is presented as perfect and yet that perfection is an impossible positivist construct. Using the symbol of "under-erasure" (Derrida, 1974, p. 20) to represent an irony is to deliberately do violence to the intended idea behind *sous rature* in the first place. *Sous rature* refers to the idea that every word is a necessary signifier but, in addition, every word is limited by the fact that it is an imperfect signifier. To use a crossed-out word to represent the irony that ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ is represented as perfect is a deliberate distortion of that very term 'sous rature'. The term ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ is presented in Century Schoolbook font as a further ironic gesture to suggest that it is representative of schooling from an earlier century. Another aspect I like about its designation as ~~strike through~~ font is that it is very jarring to the eye; it is like a constant reminder of error. It is right that it should shock the reader; it describes something I found shocking.

~~The Perfect Lesson~~ is the examination of and reflection on a "scheme of education" (Dewey, 1938, p. 41) presented to me to me during the years 2012 and 2013 in Victorian secondary schools. Describing it as a *scheme of education* does not imply, however, that it is educative. It was presented to the staffing group with the clear expectation that it would be employed by every teacher in every class. "If you are not prepared to do it, then that is a different conversation" (real 30.1.13/30). I write 'schools' rather than just 'school' because more than one school presented versions of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ (r 6.3.13/30), even though it reflects one school perhaps more than others. The episode is presented in the impressionist voice throughout. It was intended to be a shocking and systematic 'expose' of what I

regarded as a shocking and systematic abuse of education, and so the pseudo-analytic style of my impressionist voice seemed appropriate. In addition this episode was founded on data received early in my investigation, so it is appropriate that it reflects the earlier state of my reflexive praxis before I began experimenting with the use of different voices to express meaning. It also represents my understanding as if it were a snapshot at such-and-such a point of time. At a later point, my understanding of the intent of Dewey and Freire changed. Upon reading this episode in a similar form presented to you, the reader, A friend commented “You don’t know what Dewey means by the term educative do you?” I replied, “probably not” (memories 30.4.15/19).

The scheme of education and the schools are “pseudonymously” (Cullen, 2011, p. 144) referred to as ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ and the school(s) *St. Aquinas Memorial High School*, respectively. The term ‘St Aquinas’ is a deliberate reference to Thomas Aquinas of the “Scholasticism” (Berkhof, 1959, p. 37) tradition, which, I contend, contributed to some of the present framework of modern schooling. The term ‘Memorial’ refers to my opinion that the schools tend to memorialise or enshrine certain views of education in their practice. As in other episodes, the data on which this reflection is based come from a number of sources. It comprises handouts presented by the schools, lectures and their accompanying notes at those schools and notes in the several journals (real, confessional, responsive, memory and impressionist voice journals). The lectures were given by a small group of leading teachers to another group of about forty teachers, which included myself. The leading teacher took on the role of classroom teacher for the seminar and the other teachers took on the role of participant/observant students for the purposes of the seminar. Although I had the opportunity to observe many lessons of numerous types at *St. Aquinas*, both, before and after the advice that this *scheme of education* should be practised, I never observed an example of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ that actually involved children. The closest lesson to the form that I observed, I myself conducted as a trial. There were, however, certain aspects of the proposed scheme that I was not prepared to implement, even on a single occasion. An example of a practice I was not willing to adopt was to publicly label students as sufferers of *Asperger’s Syndrome* on class curriculum documents.

The leading teacher described ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ as an embodiment of a technique called “Assessment for Learning (AfL)” (r 30.1.13/30). She described it as “vibrant” (m 27.4.15/19) and the presenter had observed a school where it was claimed the structure was employed “every lesson” (m 1.12.12/8). Though the quote *every lesson* was not recorded closely enough to the event to be described by me as a real data

entry, it was a very vivid and clear memory because I was surprised that such a statement would be made by a leading teacher. It was a statement that I felt to be both ridiculous and scandalous.

The lecture was presented to us the teacher-student as an exemplar in the accepted form. This process was complete with so called “differentiation” (Wiggins and McTighe, 2007, p. 204), where “weak” students (as I was characterised) were grouped in pairings with “strong” students (generally teachers with fifteen less years of experience than I). She explained that this was intended so the *weak* students could be taught by the *strong* students. The handout she provided (r 13.9.12/30) was in a proforma format so every lesson could readily be made to conform to ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. The handout proforma consisted of forty-three boxes that should be filled out before each lesson to ensure (it was implied) the correct elements of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ were observed. The term “respectful challenging of peers” (r 30.1.13/30) was also used, which I interpreted to mean that our planning was to be observed by others to ensure it would conform to management expectations. This was coupled with an assurance that the model would not be “sort of imposed” (r 30.1.13/30). Given the accompanying remarks and actions by the leading teachers, I did not find this assurance very convincing.

The first activity was described as “winding down and chatting” (r 13.9.12/30). It was explained that this five minute interval was designated to build relationships with students and carry out the necessary administrative tasks such as taking the roll in both paper and electronic forms. The video projector was to be turned on during this time.

Most emphasised was the box that contained the “learning intention” and “success criteria”. The *learning intention* was described as the learning that the teacher wanted to achieve during the one hour period. Hattie described this as “deliberative practice focused on improving particular aspects of target performance” (2008, p 23). The *success criteria* were described as the conditions that exist that will demonstrate that “the student is successful in achieving a certain cognitive change” (Hattie, 2008, p. 23). It was frequently asserted that ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ was the product of reliable research “because this works; it is proven” (r 30.1.13/30). It was unclear to me which research demonstrated it as useful. In the scheme, teachers were given five minutes to explain to the students what they wanted them to learn and how it would be demonstrated that they had learnt it. It was envisaged students would copy down the learning intention as a means of assimilating this understanding. This process, as well as the teacher frequently referring to the learning intention during the lesson, was described as “knowing the learning intention” (r 13.9.12/30).

In the following five minutes students were surveyed by verbal questioning techniques to discover what they knew about the “ideas expressed in the learning intention” (r 13.9.12/30). The students then performed a “test” (m 11.5.15/19) in the next five minutes to discover “what the students already know”. In one of the public meetings (r 30.1.13/30), I questioned whether this activity could be extended beyond the registered five minutes in an effort to explore the interests and knowledge of the students. I used the term “prior knowledge” (m 27.4.15b/19) to describe this process. I suggested, for example, that a student might tinker with small engines all weekend and then come to school. If the lesson was going to be about internal combustion engines, the danger would be that his potentially valuable contribution would be ignored in favour of the curriculum. This problem, I suggested, could be avoided by spending some time responding to student ideas. This suggestion was dismissed by the discussion leader. No reason was given for the dismissal of this idea.

It was said that the purpose of this *prior knowledge* test would be to use the information from the test to determine the seating arrangement for the rest of the one hour session. Actually, the seating plan appeared to have been arranged in advance with, as mentioned earlier weaker students and stronger students seated together in planned locations. I felt demeaned by the seating arrangement. Five minutes was allocated for the rearranging of seats and a description by the teacher of the mechanics of the activity. The following activity was a short lecture on the “six key elements of AfL” (r 13.9.12/30), which was reflective of the learning intention. It was followed by a test. The documents stated the lecture-with-test activity (apparently an important one) would be “assessed” by “measured input and output” (r 13.9.12/30) of individual students. The “input” was apparently the words spoken by the individual group members. The “output” was apparently the individual note papers created. The next five minutes was dedicated to group members examining their own and other members writings to determine if they conformed to the pattern of the lecture. A score was given out of six to measure the extent of their agreement; I was given a low score. In the following three minute section we discussed in our group whether we had “achieved success”. It was implicit that success was gained if we were able to write the “six key elements” from memory (r 13.9.12/30).

This was followed by a longer fifteen minute session lead by the teacher, “students share in group, their answers” (sic). The implication was that the students’ answers would conform exactly to the contents of the earlier lecture. If they conformed, they were “correct”. If they did not conform, they were labelled “incorrect”. There was a general discussion about the value of the learning in the session. There was (it felt to me) something of a religious fervour to the meeting. People discussed the “six key elements” (r

13.9.12/30) in an animated way. It appeared that some were 'in-the-know' about the six elements and even declared slogans that gave the appearance of previous rehearsal, such as "success criteria without student reflection are useless" (r 13.9.12/30). Dissent was clearly not encouraged. I said, for example, that "some complex ideas were not conducive to being neatly broken into five minute segments and this might lead to superficiality" (m 1.12.12/8). This was greeted with a mystified air, as if I was spouting gibberish. A friend in the meeting, whom I valued, explained my idea to the group in different terms and now the concept, then appearing 'clearer', was dismissed as just untrue by the group leader.

It was explained that different segments of the activity were to be signaled by the timed video images of exploding bombs. This would be the signal for every change of activity in every class on every day (m 1.12.12/8). When the instructor claimed that these detonations were appropriate for every class, no one, including myself, challenged this idea. One of the experienced teachers stated that some of the students in his group had difficulty in completing their tasks in the allocated time. He stated that it was possibly a failure on his own part in some way (m 1.12.12/8).

It was explained by the seminar leader that different students would respond in different ways. For example, some students would only record three out of six of the key elements on their "placemat" (r 13.9.12/30). This was described as acceptable, and even a desirable result of the activity. It was also described as *differentiation*. On the lesson plan proforma, the initials of students with special needs were to be recorded, such as those labelled with "Asperger's Syndrome" (r 13.9.12/30). The stated purpose of this was to address the special needs of the students by, perhaps, having a different expectation of performance. This writing of student initials and different expectations of performance was also described as *differentiation*. The handout states "task is differentiated by outcome. Quality and quantity of output will vary" (r 13.9.12/30). I was a little mystified by these various uses of the term *differentiation*. This term, which I associate with the concept AfL, is a widely used term in schools. The meaning implied by this use did not seem to me either consistently applied, or in keeping with my understanding of it. I understood the meaning of the term to be something like 'appropriately responding to individual needs'. To label certain students as *Asperger* on a public document, for example, did not seem to me to be responding appropriately to individual needs.

My immediate response when hearing about ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ was an emotional one. Though somewhat attracted to the formulaic simplicity of the system, it seemed shocking that one would do an enormous amount of work for something that was probably not very helpful if done every lesson. I felt it was time consuming, amazingly rigid and superficial. I commented to a leading teacher "When are the

teachers going to do this preparation?” (m 2.4.15a/19). He replied, “In their spares and at home”. I later formed the opinion that the intention was that teachers should manage the increased time-burden by gradually developing a repertoire of off-the-shelf lessons, which could be shared among various teachers and imposed on students of particular classes irrespective of the needs and interests of the children.

Though I felt emotional, I gradually decided to interpret ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ from the perspective of Freire and Dewey, rather than be superficial myself. I intended to describe ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ and then examine it against my stated aim, which is to grow in experiences that invite students to grow as complete humans.

The machinations of dehumanisation

In this section, it is my intention to examine ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ from the perspectives of Freire’s writing. It appeared to me that this system of education was reminiscent of a machine. The schedule ran according to a timed machine. A machine (video projector) was used to communicate when activities must begin and end by the use of images of violent explosions. Students did not make genuine decisions about anything important to them. They had the choice to comply with the process or not comply; I call this the *binary choice*. Shore (1992) describes some behaviours, other than compliance, that students can engage in when faced with such a choice. These behaviours are characterised by some as “lazy” or “ingratitude” (Freire, 1970, p. 41).

Freire describes humanization as “mankind’s central problem” (1970, p. 25) and contrasts this with the practices that tend to oppress and dehumanise others. Practices that tend to dehumanise others are identified by their capacity to treat people as objects. These practices “fail to recognize others as persons” (p. 30). They “deter creative power” (p. 42) in others and see students as “receptacles to be filled” (p. 53) and therefore objects. These practices are “manifestations of dehumanization” (p. 30), because they reduce the capacity of people to transform their own world through reflective praxis. The process of dehumanisation occurs, according to Freire, when people are dichotomised from reflection. That is to say, if students cannot think deeply about their own situation and do something about it, their humanity is diminished.

Freire (1970) describes some of these practices and I reflected upon each in turn in the light of the lessons in question. Experiences that are meaningless and uncritical are dehumanising. If the lesson content is of limited importance, such as “Roger gave green grass to the rabbit” (p. 55), it is not going to enable the student to confront their situation and change it. It will tend to lead to the formation of “automatons”

(p. 55). In ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, the substance of the lesson, in my mind, was extremely superficial and a critical position was discouraged, therefore the scheme proposed was dehumanising.

Where a student task is only asked to be “receiving, filing and storing deposits” (Freire, 1970, p. 53) without really perceiving the real meaning of ideas, the experience lacks transforming power. The kind of activities the students were engaged in were apparently designed to maximise the efficient repetition and memorisation of phrases. This does not, however, necessarily result in the meaning-making about those phrases that the teacher claimed they wanted.

Another characteristic of schooling that regards students as things is that it regards the teacher as “knowledgeable” (Freire, 1970, p. 53) and the student as knowing nothing. In the presentation of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, for example, the value of the student’s prior knowledge was minimised. Five minutes was allocated for the investigation of what the student already knew. In my case, fifteen years of teaching experience was considered of little value (perhaps a handicap) and any suggestion that prior knowledge could be explored in more detail was rejected.

In the dehumanising model of education, which Freire (1970) describes as the “banking concept” (p. 53), students are discouraged from inquiry because genuine inquiry threatens the power of the teacher (p. 56) and has all the dehumanising results that are predicted by Freire when the challenge to be more human is neglected. In contrast, genuine inquiry is necessary, according to Freire, in order to gain full humanity, “Apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be fully human” (p. 53). When I suggested to the group the notion that dividing the subject into five minute blocks might lead to superficiality, the suggestion was rejected. My attempt at exploring the contention was not welcomed, and therefore, our collective opportunity for inquiry was not utilised.

Born of a positivistic point-of-view that knowledge can be measured, the dehumanising *banking* notion of education believes that methods for “evaluating knowledge” (Freire, 1970, p. 57) are readily available. The *banking* model may be described as a “ready-to-wear” (p. 57) approach that, it is implied, can be readily implemented with little modification. The notion that the same approach could be implemented in every lesson (m 1.12.12/8) readily identifies it with a *banking* approach.

At first glance, the students engaged in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ are not intended to be passive. They could be described doing things much of the time. They write down the learning intention. They talk with fellow students about the contents of the learning intention and they recite, by writing or verbalising, the learning intention’s contents. This is perhaps why the lesson is described as *vibrant*. The students do not

merely listen for long periods of time. Given that passivity and inactivity are key descriptors in the *banking* model of education (Freire, 1970), is this, then, a positive educative aspect of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~?

It seems to me, however, that while the hands and mouths of the student are active, the minds of the students are essentially passive. They are not required to critically evaluate in any real sense except recite the conclusions of the teacher. The students, therefore, are only offered “an illusion of acting” (Freire, 1970, p. 54). The students in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ are “dichotomized from reflection” (Freire, 1970, p. 35) because they are not invited to do anything other than do that which the teacher instructs in the prescribed timeframe. There is nothing creative in the student activities. In this system, one *could* conceive of being asked to write a poem, draw a picture or sing a song. They could only, however, respond in a very limited way, responding, for example, within fifteen minutes.

~~The Perfect Lesson~~ is well organised

In this section, I considered ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ from a Deweyan perspective, examining the mutual adaption, subject matter, communication and social activity. I considered this from the perspectives of growth and invitation. From a Deweyan perspective, there are potential strengths of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. One criticism of the progressive schooling movement is that it is poorly organised (Van der Eyken. and Turner, 1969). This is not a criticism that can be readily levelled at ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. The lesson is carefully planned, at least at activity level. The lesson has a pre-planned timing structure and, in its proposed form at *St Aquinas*, lesson plans are submitted in advance for storage, use by other staff and to ensure compliance. The teacher with the lesson plan, theoretically, is never stuck with the problem of saying, “What do I do now?” It has the advantage to the teacher of “definite instead of vague tasks” (Dewey, 1938, p. 88).

~~The Perfect Lesson~~ encourages clear organisation of subject matter and content (r 13.9.12/30). One could argue, indeed, that some lessons in general had an “ever-increasing organization of facts and ideas” (Dewey, 1938 p. 86). The balance, Dewey suggests, is whether sufficient attention has been given to “the development of intellectual experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 86). I would argue, that, in this case, insufficient attention has been given to intellectual experience.

Mutual adaption is not evident

It is not, however, the subject matter alone that is “educative per se” (Dewey, 1938, p. 46) but the subject matter must be adapted to the needs and capacities of the children. This is part of what Dewey describes as “mutual adaption” (Dewey, 1938, p. 45). In my earlier discussion about ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ and Freire, I mentioned my opinion that ~~The Perfect Lesson~~ fails to address the issue of prior learning in any reasonable way. Another feature of ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, however, that attempts to address the issue of the students’ capacities, is a technique described at *St Aquinas* as Assessment for Learning (AfL). Please note, that I am not, at this point, attempting to describe or evaluate AfL generally, which is a much wider concept.

In this particular context certain questioning techniques were called AfL and might include one called *placemats*. In this technique, pieces of cardboard are laminated and distributed to individual students with whiteboard markers. A question is verbalised by the teacher and the students respond by writing on the placemat. The students often (in practice) write creative response, such as cartoons, slang or graffiti on the placemats, in addition to responding to the teacher’s question. At a given signal, all the students hold up their boards for scrutiny. The teacher then glances around the room to try to ‘assess’ if the answers are predominantly the ones the teacher predicted. Any extraneous pictures and comments are not regarded as valuable information, however amusing or informative they may appear to student or teacher. The suggestion is that, if certain students do not have the expected writing on the placemat, the teacher may need to change to a contingency plan to address the needs of those students.

In my view this *does* seem to be an advance on waiting until a formal theory exam has occurred and then try and address learning issues rather “too late” (Dewey, 1938, p. 48). This process of trying to address potential issues during the lesson is sometimes called “formative assessment” (r 28.1.12/30). The technique however is too superficial. I question, how much useful information a teacher can gain from a quick scan around the room? The nature of questions and answers must also be very limited. Students and teachers cannot communicate complex and nuanced ideas requiring many words when they are very limited by the physical size of the medium and the time that is allocated under the program to gather information.

The isolation of subject matter

A further issue is that of the isolation of subject matter. ~~The Perfect Lesson's~~ adherence to focusing on one particular aspect, to the exclusion of all others, in every lesson, is a mistake. It runs the risk of alienating ideas from their meaning. Dewey claims "the isolation of subject matter from a social context is the chief obstruction to training the mind" (Dewey, 1938, p. 94).

Selecting an idea and describing it as a learning intention that must be mastered in one hour, coupled with the removal of that idea from a context, necessarily diminishes the educative meaning for the student. It does not mean, however, that the student does not gain meaning from the lesson. The student is always constructing meaning from their experience. It just may not be meaning conducive to the growth of the student as a human. They may, for example, have received "collateral learning" (Dewey, 1938, p. 48), such as having their curiosity weakened, rather than intensified. In ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, for example, the imagery of exploding bombs is very violent and might lead to the desensitisation of students regarding the undesirability of violence. This would be regrettable and an unnecessary outcome of an investigation of fractions, for example.

The view that one idea or skill may be viewed in isolation may derive from a view, like that of "Herbart" (Dewey, 1916, p. 98) which according to Dewey, "exaggerated beyond reason" (p. 98) the value of "methods" (p. 98) by glossing over the fact that the environment involves common experiences and ignores the vital conscious attitudes of the learner. That is to say, the learner's learning is greatly influenced by what is going on in the mind and heart of the learner in ways that the teacher cannot fully know or predict.

A related misunderstanding about learning may occur where it is believed that performance of one skill is good preparation for a different skill. *Observation*, for example, as a skill, is less useful when it is divorced from observing a particular task of value instead of learning the skill of *observation* from observing something of interest to the student. Dewey likens many observational practices to "carefully observing cracks on a wall" (Dewey, 1938, p. 93).

In another episode called *Mission to Mars*, a particular student could determine volume through efficient use of formulae, but did not report a missing piece of reasoning that an object four kilometers long could not be twenty-three cubic centimetres in volume. That (if we conclude that the student did not see this point) suggests that one skill, outside a certain context of meaning, did not help in another context of meaning unless appropriate connections were somehow made.

Furthermore, language does not always communicate that which the speaker intends. Language has “unrivalled significance” (Dewey, 1938, p. 54) in conveying meaning. The conveyed meaning is still, however, “somewhat uncertain” (Dewey, 1938 p. 35) because language has only significance in a certain social context (Dewey, 1916). Dewey suggests that this view that an idea can be separated from its context is an expression of the dualism that divides activity from its subjects (Dewey, 1938).

The necessity of coercion

There is another unwanted possible outcome from ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. I predict, on the basis of experience that the rigid nature of the scheme is likely to produce a reaction from the students that “makes necessary recourse to large scale use of adventitious motives of pleasure and pain” (Dewey, 1916, p. 79).

Such a rigid structure cannot operate without a high level of conformity. It must, therefore, define dissent as negative attacks to be suppressed. Individuality must be defined as “anarchy” (Dewey, 1916, p. 75). If dissent or discussion is permitted, the keeping of a strict timetable will not be possible. In order to achieve conformity, practices such as “shame”, “disfavour” and “ridicule” would be employed (Dewey, 1916, p. 48).

The belief that this is likely is exacerbated by the observation that *shame*, *disfavour* and *ridicule* were employed toward me as a teacher when I challenged the system as it was proposed. For example, when I raised my hand in the public discussion about prior learning, the session leader commented to the large group of about one hundred peers “I’m not sure I can trust you” (r 28.1.12/30). If my goal is experiences that invite the learner to grow rather than exercise control by coercion (Dewey, 1916, p. 44), the application of this *scheme of education* is unlikely to achieve my goal of inviting the student to grow.

Alternatively, if the student understands the purpose of the activity as having a bearing upon what others are doing, the teacher may then begin to develop a common understanding that controls the actions of both. This means that social cohesion is effectively a shared undertaking in a way that I had sometimes not understood. The process of the teacher building a shared meaning for the activity with the students and therefore reducing the need for coercion can make the learning more of an invitation. If the shared understanding does not exist, the relationship of trust between the student and teacher will be harmed and the student will withdraw (responsive voice 8.9.15/31), harming the willing co-operation of the student with the learning. This will have the effect of making the teacher less effective in communicating.

The system of education described by me as ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, when considered from the perspective of Dewey and Freire, does not invite children to grow as humans through educative experiences. Though well-organised; it is dehumanising, fails to be mutually adaptive, tends to isolate the subject matter and leads to the temptation to indulge in coercion.

Mission to Mars

Cast of Characters:

Objective voice: An attempt to acknowledge that, on occasions, the objective voice might have value as a perspective to bring extra clarity. It is if the inquiry was emotionless, logical and devoid of ethical judgements.

Impressions: Represented as if the inquiry was considered at a particular point of time (25.6.14).


Bernard the Inquisitor: An interrogator of the impressionist view, reflecting a belief that truth has nuances of expression that are not neatly resolved. He is often reflective of the response data. He is not always sympathetic to the impressionist voice.

Frank: Representative of traditional schooling.

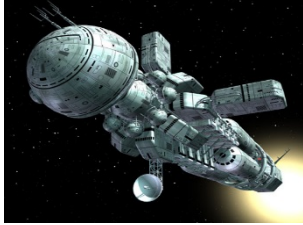
Sophia: Like Bernard, an interrogator of the impressionist view. Reflective of different response data. The allusion to the Greek term, Sophia, meaning wisdom, is intentional.

Earlier-self: An expression of the idea that in a *rhizomatic* inquiry, the original thought may be challenged by a later thought by the same author. Represented as if the earlier view was held on 16.1.2014.

The Class Clown: A representation of the idea that structures and ideas can be challenged by the unauthorised voice of comedy. No claim of relevance, authenticity or even 'funniness' is made. An obvious reference is implied to the ubiquitous role of *class clown* that is held by many teachers to exist in every classroom (memories 5.6.14/19). Expressed in Comic Sans font.

"The Australian Government has decided to send a ship **Sepchendesh**  to

colonise Mars. They have asked you to calculate the correct **surface area and**



volume of the following spaceship. That way they can figure out the likely radiation absorption of the hull and how much oxygen they will need to load for the two year journey" (real 6.10.13/26).

Figure 2 - The spaceship, Sepchendesh. The students investigated a mathematics problem regarding a space ship.

Objective voice (impressions 25.6.2014/100): An activity was conducted in the classroom entitled *Mission to Mars* that had educative and non-educative aspects. The activity was intended to calculate the *surface area and volume* of a spaceship based upon the provision of a picture and certain assumptions about that picture. This activity was examined to reflect upon its educative value. It was intended that the educational value would be assessed by observations made of the student response and interpretations in the light of Dewey, Freire and other writers. A copy of a worksheet provided to the students, complete with the original grammatical errors, is included in the *Appendix* to illustrate the approach I took at that time.

Impressions (i 25.6.14/100): In Deweyan terms, an activity is educative if it results in growth of the student. I was interested in questions such as, How should I respond to this activity? Was it educative and if not, could it be made educative? I intended to examine this activity as an opening gambit to examine my practice in general. The activity comprised perhaps just two hundred minutes. It was intended that my reflexive consideration introduce a number of themes that can be explored in more detail in a latter part of my report, for example, the way students respond to experiences in ways that are not intended by the teacher.

Aspects not intended to be educative

There is a sense that *Mission to Mars* was not intended to be educative alone. It was intended for the political survival and power of the educator (me). It was not very successful in that, because it probably did not impress anybody. Fortunately, it was largely unobserved by my employers (m 10.6.14/19). The fact that it was intended for my purposes and not only to be educative is important because it raises several issues.

In a system where the educator is not free to offer experiences where the objective is to educate, but instead offers experiences designed to impress employers, it is likely to cause teachers to do things in the classroom they believe are not educative. If one accepts the likely premise that students imitate to some extent the behaviour of significant adults, it is “less and less likely that my students learn anything other than how to cover up and show off” (Palmer, 1998, p. 29).

It also raises the issue of why it is thought important, or even possible, to measure and evaluate each other’s performance. Tompkin (1990, p. 654, as cited in Palmer, 1998, p. 29) asks, “How did it come to be that our main goal as academics turned out to be performance?” It is an element of positivism that believes it can readily reduce knowledge about performance to a measurable entity; the belief that one can say that a certain performance is *bad* and that a certain other performance is *good*, that knowledge of performance can be *studied, captured and understood*.

There are many instances where staff have been punished for reasons that possibly included a political agenda (Giroux, 2010). In the past the threat seemed largely symbolic, but felt very real in the moment this sentence was drafted, with two permanent full-time staff being announced retrenched from my school this week (confessions 11.11.13/100).

Freire (1970) suggested that the teacher has a moral responsibility to offer the experiences that are educative even if that entails risk. Freire (1998), however, also contended that this is something each teacher must work out for themselves, as the circumstances and relationship of each teacher are very different. I intended to impress my employers by adopting their preferred educational approach. Before doing the activity, I met with one of the leading teachers and sought ideas on how to structure the activity in advance, using techniques that were approved by that school system. One educational text suggested by the school was Wiggins (2007) and I interpreted that text to suggest that I should adopt a technique called “essential questions” (Wiggins and McTighe, 2007, p. 206), which I had assumed was similar to

Freire's (1970) "Problem-posing" (p. 65). She agreed that my activity represented the suggestions of Wiggins and she expressed no familiarity with the work of Freire.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 25.6.2014/100): Freire's problem solving? You didn't even understand Wiggins *essential questions*, as for Freire's *problem-posing*, it has very little similarity at all.

Impressions (i 25.6.14/100): I intended to experiment with the students to see what approach might be most useful for my inquiry. To conduct reflexive praxis was not intended to benefit the students' growth alone. It was intended to facilitate my growth as well.

Frank (i 25.6.14/100): Messy! There is where you went wrong right there. Instead of this self-indulgent, bleeding-heart, intellectualism you just needed to teach the mathematical process so the students could understand it. For generations students have successfully learnt the appropriate mensuration formulae and applied them without once having to consider the volume of spaceships. It's just this sort of muddy distraction that Hattie refers to when he criticises inquiry-based learning (2008). Just teach the stuff using the most modern instruction methods and the students will avoid confusion.

Class Clown (i 1.3.13/7): So a return to the good old days, huh? Father Phineas forces futile factoids for felicity fairly frequently.

Educative aspects of *Mission to Mars*

Impressions (i 25.6.2014/100): There was a sense in which the activity was designed to be educative. I claimed to be an educator and I genuinely thought it might result in the growth of the students. I had hoped that it might "interest" (Dewey, 1902, p. 108) some of the children. I hoped that it might suit some of their individual needs and they might gain understanding not just in certain skills, but in understanding some of the purpose of those skills.

Sophia (m 6.7.15/19): This is no use at all. I just can't see the volume of spaceships as being interesting to anybody. The thing that might have interested me as the daughter of a motorcycle racer, was the volume of pistons. Could you do something about that?

Earlier-self (i 16.1.14/100): The truth is Sophia, I have already prepared this with spaceships in mind. In addition, I'm not sure all the students are interested in pistons either. Perhaps they could have been offered a variety of things to explore.

Impressions (i 25.6.2014/100): The activity was presented a few days later, accompanied by various technical methods such as questioning and what I called differentiation. The activity was introduced by a commercial YouTube video that described a new mission that was going to take place (non-fiction) where four chosen astronauts would establish a new colony on Mars without any possibility of return to Earth. Students immediately began to ask questions about this. The first thing that was immediately obvious was that the questions the students were asking were more interesting to me than the questions I was asking. They asked questions like, "What would happen if everyone died and I was left alone on Mars?", "Why would people go on a suicide mission?" and "How will the new colony be supported?" (m 11.11.14/100). This seemed much more interesting to me than the question, "Is the volume of the space ship larger than 553 million cubic metres?" They also seemed to find enjoyment in their questions. They repeated the questions several times to each other. Their faces had open expressions and smiles. When *my* question was posed, there was very little comment about it and most of the faces were turned away. Conversations then began about class relationship issues.

What seemed at that moment to be the best educative choice was to explore *their* questions rather than my questions. This might have begun to address the issue of interest. We could have had a discussion at least and, at best, launched a long and potentially interesting investigation. I was however in a class labelled as mathematics in a "scheme of classification" (Dewey, 1938, p. 18). There was an expectation that the "subject-matter" (Dewey, 1902, p. 107) of mathematics would be separate from the *subject-matter* of perhaps, social organisation. I felt that probably my employer would rather I left certain subjects, such as the ethics of colonization, completely unexplored. Furthermore, I was also employed in an arrangement known in the school as *team teaching* and, therefore, being closely observed by my immediate *leader*. I, therefore, chose to largely ignore those more interesting questions posed by the students in favour of those supported by the "curriculum" (Dewey, 1902, p. 110), namely, *surface area and volume*. If I was to judge enthusiasm based on facial expressions and the number of questions asked, students appeared much less enthused by this change of focus from interest to *curriculum*. Nevertheless, I pressed on with judicious doses of technique, encouraging them to explore the question of *553 million cubic metres of volume*.

Earlier-self (i 16.1.14/100): The students had great difficulty. I had underestimated the difficulty of the task for us all and overestimated the capacity and enthusiasm of the students to address it. Dewey comments that it is the “primary responsibility of educators” that they “utilize surroundings, physical and social that exist so as to extract from them experiences that are worthwhile” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40). I had not correctly understood the level of skills required for the task. I had partly misled myself on the false basis that, since it had been already “covered in the content” (Wiggins and McTighe, 2007, p. 144), then certain ideas would be understood by the students. Secondly, the result of a process that produces students without “the capacity to act intelligently” (Dewey, 1938, p. 27) means that they are not good at thinking about these kind of problems.

Furthermore, I had failed to demonstrate the “purpose” (Dewey, 1938, p. 69) of the task. As Dewey (1938) comments, students who are doing things they are actually interested in, rather than merely compelled to do, are going to act more intelligently. Shor (1992) discusses the different ways students respond to tasks, some of which are supportive of the teachers goals and some of which are not supportive of the teacher’s goals. In addition, perhaps the students had other motivations for rejecting the activity.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 25.6.2014/100): Precisely! Perhaps they just didn’t like you. Your comments about the intelligence of the children are trite and smack of what Freire (1970) describes as the habit of the oppressor of blaming the oppressed for non-compliance. If you were to consider the work of Jackson (1968) and notions of “adaptive strategies” (p. 11) such as you do later in *making children centre-stage*, there are many possible explanations for the students’ response or lack thereof. Indeed, they *may* have been unable to do the task set or did not see its purpose. However, it is also possible they had perceived that the school you were in did not value such experiments in education and felt they could or should be safely ignored. Did they perceive that your proposition was faintly ridiculous? Your assumptions about their motivations are altogether too superficial in this section.

Earlier-self (i 16.1.14/100): There were, for some students, elements that did appear educative. Students had practice with skills such as the use of *Excel spreadsheet* or the electronic data management system. Many conversations took place about the concepts of *surface area and volume*. Since there were considerable choices given to the students about the way the exercise was approached, there was apparent benefit for students learning about decision making and personal organisation. For some students, there was growth in habits, such as persevering toward a goal.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 25.6.14/100): Not all the things you say you value would be regarded as educative by Dewey (1938). I'm hoping that, at a different point, you will sharpen your ideas about what activities are educative and those that are not educative.

Mis-educative aspects

Earlier-self (i 16.1.14/100): There were elements that appeared mis-educative. Students were encouraged (not for the first time) to complete work that was described by one student, Jackie, as "confusing and pointless" (real 11.11.13/100). The mis-educative aspect of this for students is, according to Dewey (1938), likely to restrict their growth by making them less likely to pursue learning in another situation. Students received marks for this exercise that labelled some of them as unsuccessful and some of them as successful. This may be counter-productive to growth by bringing discouragement (Holt, 1969). At the completion of the exercise, Jackie, thus far labelled as 'better' by fellow teachers, clearly demonstrated either a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of volume or was so dismissive of the exercise that she had no interest in the final result.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 16.1.14/100): There you go again. Do you have extra sensory perception? How do you know why they got an unexpected result?

Earlier-self (i 16.1.14/100): Some students reported that the final volume of a spaceship four kilometres in length was twenty-three cubic centimetres in volume (m 11.11.13/100). Many students did work on the task but did not submit a response. These students may have been discouraged from further studies by setting a precedent that it is okay to give up on activities that are confusing.

How could the exercise be made more educative?

One possible way of making the exercise more educative was to communicate as honestly as possible to the students about the strengths and weaknesses of the task. I could have been honest about the way that marks were allocated and the failings I saw inherent in the activity. I could have communicated to them about what I hoped to achieve and the potential learning intended. If I could have found a way of doing this without the traditional expedient of blaming them for failure (Freire, 1970), it might mitigate some of the discouraging, mis-educative aspects of perceived failure.

Impressions (m 25.6.14/100): In fact I did 'confess' to the students that I thought elements of the task were poorly designed. I also thanked the students who made efforts to complete the task. The students made no comment about these confessions. I felt this was a more educative approach than that which I had made earlier when I kept in The Invisible Boy at recess for non-compliance. On that occasion, I blamed the student for his response (m 1.2.13/8), which, as I mentioned earlier, is like blaming the oppressed for non-compliance (Freire, 1970). This, to me, had an important element of *collateral learning*. In choosing to respectfully speak to the students rather than attack them, I hoped it might signal to them that I valued their humanity and enable them to approach new tasks I gave them with greater respect for themselves.

Earlier-self (i 16.1.14/100): The activity could have been radically adapted to respond to the stated interests of some of the children. For example, "What if they all died except one who was left alone?" This adaption may have been difficult to achieve in the structure in which I was operating. However, the school had a different, more flexible structure, which I might loosely describe as 'cross-curricula team-teaching'. Is it possible that this alternative structure might have made it easier to respond to the students' questions? I believe the tasks could have been better tailored to my understanding of the students' understanding of *surface area and volume*. I might have retained the basic structure of the experience and reduced the complexity of the task for the majority of the students, while retaining the complexity for some of the students.

I could have spent some more time showing my intended purpose of the activity. It would have been much better from a Deweyan perspective to take the students' interests seriously. Within the restrictive structures set by the curriculum, it might have been possible to give the students a variety of applications of *surface area and volume* to explore, while still retaining methods that helped the student's understanding. Perhaps they could choose between exploring, *surface area and volume* in trucks, spaceships or cake decoration.

Impressions (i 17.8.15/100): If I ask myself, 'What is learning?' I want to express it this way: 'What is going on in the student? What is going on in the teacher?' What is going on in the minds of the children? Positivism declares that it is possible to know what is going on in the students because knowledge is *knowable*. I regard this implicit claim of extra sensory perception as ridiculous and it is, I think, part of the unwritten law of positivism that certain things remain unexamined. I suspect that this is one reason that there is sometimes a resistance to the development of any theory for education (Dimitriadis and Kamberlis, 2006, p. vii). According to Freire (1970) the oppressor in a situation assumes that the oppressed who do not comply with expectations are either "lazy", "ignorant" (p. 45) or rebellious. Teachers often use these labels; I have frequently used them, though not often actually in front of the students. One of the personal results of my study is that I have attempted to delete them from my vocabulary. I have not yet succeeded.

Nevertheless, the students who do not comply with my expectations may have several motivations. They may, as **Bernard** suggested (i 25.6.14/100), think it wiser to avoid compliance with the instructions of one teacher in order to better conform with the expectations of the system (Larson, 1995). The students may have been trained to prefer routine drill to educative experiences (Dewey, 1915). Freire (1970) points out that the development of submissive habits may be a result of housing of the "oppressor" (p. 30) that is co-operating with oppression because it feels safer to do so. Jackson (1968) and Spry (2001) list other motivations as well. Freire (1970) observed that experiences offered by the teacher that were not like the "felt needs" (p. 97) or "familiar to the students" (p. 95), were likely to be met with "silence and indifference" (p. 97) when presented to the students. This response certainly seemed to be the case in relation to *Mission to Mars*.

The teacher is also affected by the classroom encounter. The students have brought their previous experiences and understanding to the classroom and share them with the teacher. It may feel rewarding for the teacher or it may feel discouraging. The students may bring insights in relation to the curriculum, or perhaps in relation to life. For me, these insights can be very rewarding. I was, for example, some years ago, helped greatly by the comment of one student who said, "You could be a great teacher, you could be as good as Ms 'Toolah' but you're not, because you're a sook" (m 8.10.15c/19). I interpreted this remark to mean that I was too emotionally reactive and immature and that this got in the way of my relationships with students. I attempted to act more appropriately in the future.

The purpose of the teacher is to arrange things so that their encounter is educative for students. This *primary responsibility of educators* is to try create an environment that, in the midst of the clash of events, provides something, even for a short time, that influences the shared experience of teacher and student to be educative. Ideologies, such as positivism and educative thought, speak into the situation, the past experiences of teacher and student also speak. The physical environment may be dirty or sterile. The experiences the teacher has attempted to organise may be stimulating and open to the needs of the student or be coercive and oppressive. The mis-educative forces that impinge upon the situation are so complex and troubling that it may be difficult to provide consistently educative experiences. For this reason, I started to think in terms of *invitational moments*. That is to say, it might be possible to organise small spaces of time and space that are at least briefly educative, even if the system of schooling within which the teacher and student operate are mis-educative and dehumanising.

Impressions (i 3.8.15/100): Many months later, having reflected on the *Mission to Mars*, I took the opportunity to conduct another brief activity related to it. I showed another group of students the same YouTube video I had shown the previous group. I did not mention *surface area and volume*, rather, the conversation was about various celestial bodies. Again, there was an immediately noticeable response to the YouTube video. Again, there was an appearance of animation and interest. I chose a different set of questioning techniques that I called *think-pair-share*, which I intended would give them a brief space to formulate questions they felt might be interesting. They did this in small groups and as individuals. We then discussed these ideas as a class. Some of the questions they raised were very different to the previous questions raised. Several students were concerned, for example, with how dead bodies of astronauts were to be disposed of. Other students tried to address these questions in an impromptu way. Discussion arose as to the atmospheric conditions on Mars and the soil types found there. I made efforts *not* to try to answer these questions or redirect the discussion myself but rather left them hanging as questions. I felt this was a more educative approach to the particular YouTube video than my approach in the earlier *Mission to Mars*. Freire (1970) describes a *limit-situation* that exists as an unresolved problem. If the teacher gives in to the temptation to give a ready-made answer to the question, the student loses the opportunity to explore the question themselves. While I did not give them much time or particular encouragement to explore their questions, I felt it was at least a step forward to acknowledge that a valid question existed and, if it was to be answered, they would need to find the answer for it.

Impressions (i 1.9. 15/100): *Mission to Mars* raised several unresolved issues. I mentioned several times the interests of the student, but here in *Mission to Mars*, the implication is that the teacher must control the narrative to find something to interest the student. There is a sense that the teacher is trying to guess what will interest the child. In *Making Children Centre Stage* and *Voices from the Pit*, I explore what Freire (1970) means by reinventing the student - teacher “contradiction” (p. 95). I write, for example, more about the student driving the inquiry so their interests can be better explored.

Teaching is often presented as if it is something a teacher does and the student responds to. This misperception is an essential problem revealed in *the comic play*. However, everybody present in the classroom is learning. The challenge is not for the teacher to make the children learn; everybody present is learning all the time. The challenge is for the student and teacher collectively to organise the environment so that the learning is educative. In *Mission to Mars*, learning is also defined very narrowly. While I mention collateral learning, I needed to investigate much more about what is actually going on in the student when learning occurs. Freire (1970) has a useful contribution to make in describing the development of “critical awareness” (p. 77). For Dewey (1919), it is thinking that is central; he does not mean however mean mere cognitive activity. Reflexive praxis requires more than just reflecting on an activity, it requires action in response to activity. Thinking, as Dewey points out, is intrinsically active. If my actions do not change, then my opinions have not changed either. In *Mission to Mars*, there are only a few hints about the way my practice has been affected by my inquiry. In later episodes, I explore my changed practice in more depth.

Making Children Centre Stage

Cast of Characters:

Objective voice: An attempt to acknowledge that on occasions the objective voice might have value as a perspective to bring extra clarity. It is as if the inquiry was emotionless, logical and devoid of ethical judgements.

Impressions: Represented in the impressionist voice as if the inquiry was considered at a particular point of time (25.6.14).

Bernard the Inquisitor: An interrogator of the impressionist view, reflecting a belief that truth has nuances of expression that are not neatly resolved. He is often reflective of the response data. He is not always sympathetic to the impressionist voice.

Impressions (impressions 23.3.14/100): In a previous episode, *The Comic Drama of Education*, I reflected upon education using a metaphor of a comic play. The central theme of that analogy were efforts to make a comedy funny. In *The Comic Play* despite two attempts, the state was unable to make the play funny. By analogy, we may, as a society, attempt to make schooling educative and not always succeed. In *The Comic Drama of Education* the question was posed: If that act was not funny, what is the next act of the comedy going to be? Having reflected upon two examples of teaching, *Mission to Mars* and *The Perfect Lesson*, I had some idea why my teaching was not always educative but I did not have a clear idea about how to offer an invitation for growth as I had proposed. In responding to *The Comic Play*, **Bernard the Inquisitor** suggested the next episode of the play might involve the actors, audience and scriptwriters all working together to write the script of the play. As I reflected upon my own personal response to this metaphor, it was revealed to me that, even though I had spent months challenging my positivistic assumptions *that teacher is expert*, I was still assuming *the teacher is expert* paradigm and that attitude even expressed itself in my thinking about *the comic play*.

The power relationship between students and teachers

Central to the problem seemed to be the issue of the power relationship between students and teachers. The power relationship is not an equal one. If the students are going to receive an invitation, how can they truly refuse an invitation given they appear to have such limited power (Dewey, 1916)? Even if one could offer an invitation, what form would the invitation take? How can the student become an actor in

the Freirean sense? In the following paragraphs, I explore the power relationship that exists in many classrooms. I decided to explore the boundaries and effects of this power relationship. My inquiry considered the work of Jackson (1968), who explores the limits to the power of students in his book, *Life in Classrooms*.

The power of the teacher

The teacher has a great deal of influence over the classroom. For example, the teacher is the “gatekeeper who manages the flow of classroom dialogue” (Jackson, 1968, p. 11). The teacher acts as “supply sergeant” (p. 11), for example, providing scissors. They may grant “special privileges” (p. 11), such as the right to pursue a personal interest and they “act as timekeeper” (p. 11). In short, the “division between the weak and the powerful is clearly drawn” (p. 11).

Schools can be described as highly organized environments that the students are required to attend. They are “highly stable” (Jackson, 1968, p. 6), with a “ritualistic and cyclic quality” (p. 7). The “major activities are performed according to well defined rules, which the students are expected to understand and obey” (p. 7). The schools are often “mechanically punctuated by clangs and hums” (p. 12). It is worth mentioning that modern schools, in my observation, do have special characteristics, but the phrase ‘chaotic’ (memories.14.5.14/18) may apply just as well as *highly stable*. There are constant changes in the routine, such as excursions, absences and visitors. Constant “petty interruptions” (p. 16) tend to “disrupt the continuity of the lesson” (p. 15).

Students are required by society to attend school. The compulsory nature of attendance is compared by Jackson to prison life (1968) and according to Van der Eyken. and Turner (1969) we “incarcerate children in vast gloomy buildings” (p. 7) and “isolate them from the world for which they are supposed to being prepared” (p. 7).

There are powerful emotions associated with school life and its particular characteristics, such as fear and satisfaction (Jackson, 1968). The student spends a lot of time with their teacher(s) “1000 hours a year” (p. 5), and they may become more familiar to their teacher than to their “father” (p. 5). “There is a social intimacy unmatched elsewhere in society” (p. 7). Jackson has sought to expose these emotions within the context of school life.

A trifecta of control: crowds, power and evaluation

Jackson (1968), describes the main factors that delineate the special nature of classroom life as “crowds, praise and power” (p. 10). Traditional schooling is organised in groups. In the school day, there are many personal interactions each day with other individuals, adding up over time to a very large number of exchanges. This, coupled with the “standardization of the school environment” (p. 4), often means that the activities of individuals are adapted for the presence of others. This means, for example, that students must often wait for other students to complete an allocated task before a new stimulus is introduced by the teacher. It is surprising to Jackson “how much of the student’s time is spent in waiting” (p. 13). In order to adapt to the group nature of the classroom teachers may encourage students to restrict their interactions with other students in apparently artificial ways, such as being able to, “learn how to be alone in a crowd” (p. 13). Some children adapt to the presence of others more readily than others but all must respond in some way. The responses are “idiosyncratic to individual students” (p. 17).

Evaluation may distort the educative process

According to Jackson (1968), schools are also evaluative. That is to say, the behaviour and character of students are constantly being compared to other students or certain “objectives” (p. 23). These evaluations may be by the teacher, the students or others, and they might include character, educational or institutional objectives. These evaluations are associated with “praise” (p. 24) or, alternatively, “powerful sanctions” (p. 17). The evaluative relationship is not only a linear one. Not only does the teacher evaluate the student, but the students also evaluate each other. The student evaluation of peers is not, however, always in keeping with the accepted order of the school. If other students perceive that the student is a threat in some way, such as a ‘tattle-tale’, the other students will respond negatively. This means that sometimes the student must seek “the approval of two audiences at the same time” (p. 26). Of course, the student evaluates the teacher as well (real 7.5.15/8).

Abuse of power is dehumanising

An alternative to an invitation is coercion, (Dewey, 1916, p. 44) with the use of “shame” (Dewey, 1916, p. 48) or “manipulation” (Freire, 1970, p. 50). Systems based on coercion are suppressive of growth because they have certain inherent flaws. According to Freire (1970), anything that prevents others from engaging in inquiry is to do violence to their rights. To claim this and then link that idea to the coercion of students initially seems to be a big claim. Freire’s point is that making genuine decisions is necessary to our humanity. To alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into “objects” (p. 66) in the mind of the teacher. This process is a “dehumanizing” (p. 26) one. The kind of work the student is required to do by the teacher is more likely to be meaningless to the student under these circumstances because it does not address the critical questions the student has about the nature of the universe and society.

These criticisms of a system based on coercion amount to saying they are morally wrong because they deny the human rights of the student. A second damning criticism of coercive systems of education is that they are ineffective. They are not, perhaps, ineffective in producing students who can “record, memorize and repeat” (Freire, 1970, p. 52), but are ineffective in producing students who are used to thinking. According to Freire (1970), students who are only given ideas from-on-high “adapt to the precepts which have been set from above. One of these precepts is not to think” (p. 13). He contended that, the more effort the students employ at depositing the teachers’ facts in their minds, the less they develop critical consciousness. Therefore, if Freire was right, without an invitation to growth, the result

will be a likelihood of suppression of growth in thinking. In addition Dewey (1916) explained, the belief that introducing useful ideas can be introduced by force is inadequate. “Nothing can be forced upon them or into them” and, by analogy, “we can shut a man in as penitentiary” but “we cannot make him penitent” (p. 46).

How students respond to abuse of power

Students respond to their teachers in a complex variety of ways. Jackson (1968) describes some of those behaviours. When I initially reported on the *Mission to Mars*, I commented that students were “not good at thinking about the kind of problem that they were set” (Earlier-self 16.1.14/100), where in fact, it is not really possible to know what students are thinking. Sometimes a teacher may assume a student is thinking one thing and they may be thinking a variety of things. There may be different ways in which students respond to educative practice both positively and negatively. Evidence that using coercive methods is mis-educative and negative is found in some of the ways students respond to this treatment. Students may respond with fear, indifference, rebellion or self-destructive behaviours. In addition, they may respond with social isolation, withdrawal or merely develop habits that diminish their learning.

Holt (1969) described the ways children may be affected by fear as a result of their schooling, such as becoming discouraged. Jackson (1968) described how students are required on many occasions to put aside their impulses to do certain things. Some of these impulses, no doubt, should be restrained, such as the impulse to outbursts of anger. Sometimes, however, because of the nature of the classroom philosophy of crowd control, students who wish to learn a particular thing may be prevented from doing so because others are not ready for it (Jackson, 1968). A student must respond to this either by continuing to act upon the “desire” to learn or by “apathetic withdrawal” (Jackson, 1968, p. 18). A student may end up with the temptation to “drift into total indifference” (Freire, 1970, p. 136).

Students may respond with rebellion. Sometimes, however, behaviour that is perceived as rebellion is actually a result of some prior situation that has harmed the student in some way (Dewey, 1938). Often however, the behaviour is a response by the student to an “unjust model of a society of domination” (Freire, 1970, p. 135, margin). Students can often tell if a teacher is motivated by a desire for personal power (Dewey, 1938). Failures to conform are regarded as “anarchy” (Dewey, 1916, p. 75) when they may only be a reaction to coercive authority. Self-destructive (Freire, 1970) activities may also occur in response such as anti-social behaviour.

A major concern to educators should be the way that students may respond by developing mis-educative habits or attitudes. If a student must put aside their interests in favour of learning that will be applied at some future (and potentially mythical) date, a premium is put upon “procrastination” (Dewey, 1916, p. 79), and there is a consequential loss of impetus. If the premium is placed upon evaluation rather than learning, then the temptation may be to become better at “cheating” (Jackson, 1968, p. 27) or, alternatively, to “play it cool” (Jackson, 1968, p. 27) in order to minimise the hurt of an evaluation. By *playing it cool*, the student may communicate to other students that they are somewhat above the unwanted evaluation but may learn in the process to withdraw from learning. Worse still, the student may get used to “unpleasant meaningless activities” until they are accustomed to “the chains” and “miss them when removed” (Dewey, 1901, p. 35). Students may, for example, get quite good at “factitious drill” (Dewey, 1901, p. 35) and resent attempts to get them to think, saying for example, “Can we go on with our exercises now?” (r 2.5.14/8).

Here above, I have outlined some possible student responses to a coercive educative practice. In addition, I have described some potential harmful effects observed in students who are recipients of a coercive approach. The question then remains that, if a coercive power relationship encourages mis-educative schooling, what can be done to reformulate the *teacher-student relationship* to change this situation?

The teacher–student contradiction

Freire (1970), said “education must begin with the solution to the teacher–student contradiction” (p. 53). It is my contention that the traditional model of power sharing between student and teacher must be directly challenged if a coercive educative practice is to be abandoned in favour of an invitational practice that serves the needs of the child. Is the alternative to coercive practice one that abdicates all power from the teacher to the student in a way that results in social chaos? It is an important question because this is how progressive education has often been characterised in the popular media.

In *The Silver Chair*, a school was described, known as Experiment House.

Owing to the curious methods of teaching at Experiment House, one did not learn much French or Maths or Latin or things of that sort; but one did learn about getting away quickly when they were looking for one. (Lewis, 1952, p. 16)

This is clearly a literary caricature of a progressive school and it includes what Lewis regarded as a deficient view of moral education and unpleasant violence by students toward each other. The history of progressive schools has included other schools in which it would be possible to caricature the school as unhealthy for the growth of the student as a human. One visitor to Malting House, for example, described the students as having “happiness” (Van der Eyken. and Turner, 1969, p. 15); however when another observer, D.H. Lawrence, visited the school, he described the children as having “less self-control, worse manners noisier voices and more selfishness” (p. 16). Van der Eyken. and Turner (1969), described another progressive school, “The Forest School”, as a “failed experiment” (p. 11). Tension between apparently failed progressive historical models and traditional models posed an important question for me. Can the student - teacher relationship be re-imagined without the teacher abandoning their role as a responsible adult?

Types of relationship between student and teacher

There are several ways in which the teacher.-student relationship can be re-imagined. In trying to understand how the relationship could be re-imagined, I compiled a list of some different ideas about how the student-teacher relationship may be formulated:

- Students teaching students.
- Students teaching teachers.
- Students giving presentations to other students.
- Students acquiring knowledge for sharing.
- Students doing research, especially with technology.
- Students debating ideas.
- Students discussing and deciding in small groups.
- Students organising drama and sporting fixtures.
- Students teaching parents.
- Students challenging teacher authority.
- Students mocking teacher authority.

I thought I might be able to find examples in the literature where alternative models of the student–teacher relationship had been attempted.

Sister Gertrude’s Classroom

The example of a certain Sister Gertrude’s classroom (Beeth and Hewson, 1998) provided me with an insight to one way the relationship could be reshaped. Sister Gertrude taught science to primary school students. The fact that the school had a specialist primary science teacher was unusual but not unique. What was apparently unusual was the changing roles within the classroom (Beeth and Hewson, 1998).

At points, according to Beeth and Hewson (1998), in her classroom there was a “shift in roles among students and between students and teacher” (p. 752) to one that included student-as-investigator and as co-investigator with other students. She said that their ideas had merit. The question, “Do you realize the limitations of your ideas and the possibility they might need to change?” was recorded as one of her learning goals (p. 743). It was implied that the ideas of students were ascribed value, in that they were free to develop them in “discussion of student ideas for extended periods of time” up to “five to six weeks” in some cases (p. 746). According to Beeth and Hewson, these ways of valuing student ideas represent “dramatic changes” (p. 745) in the role of the student. It was claimed that some students were able to articulate ideas that were, in the opinion of the researchers, “significantly well developed by comparison to most elementary schools” (p. 751).

Actually, most of these claims are impossible to measure. The success or otherwise of the learning experiences is very difficult to judge. The students were described as *developed by comparison* with other students. Not only is no real evidence offered for this contention, but it also would be very difficult to demonstrate. One aspect of the critique of realism that is described as the “crisis of legitimization and representation” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175) is the contention that attempts to measure and compare knowledge must be viewed as suspect. Knowledge is not readily *studied, captured and understood*. In addition, having particular statements articulated by a teacher about the value of student ideas may be positive but does not guarantee they are valued. Spending a long time on one topic is also not any sort of guarantee that the learning is educative. It implies to me, actually, that it might not be, as it appears that all the students had to do the same thing for a long time. There was no suggestion that individual students might, for example, drive the inquiry in different disparate directions from the crowd. What was inspiring to me was that the paradigm of *teacher-as-expert* could be challenged by the fact that the ideas of students were not only valued but could also alter the curriculum objectives.

Williams (2011) wrote “It is important to note that developing learning intentions...is most definitely not a democratic process” (p. 59) and, furthermore “it would be an abdication of the teacher’s responsibilities to let whatever the students feel should be valued be adopted as the learning intention” (p. 59). In my view, some input of the students’ feelings is precisely that which should be included in the exploration of subject matter. Williams (2011) and Sister Gertrude seem to use, for example, the term *learning intention* in quite a different way from each other. Learning intentions are, for Williams (2011), so students “know what they are going to be learning” (p. 51), whereas Sister Gertrude’s learning intentions include the question “Do you have any ideas?” (Beeth and Hewson, 1998, p. 746), which seems to be quite different. One has no place for the interests, ideas and the felt needs of the student. The other makes a place for them.

Bernard the inquisitor (i 17.5.15/11): Beeth and Hewson (1988) described Gertrude’s approach as *dramatic changes*, yet there were limitations to the challenge posed to the teacher.-student relationship. While it was not explicitly stated, there is little doubt in my mind as to how a visitor to the classroom would have responded to the question, ‘Who is in charge?’ The answer would clearly be ‘Sister Gertrude’. In addition, the subject-matter was clearly grouped into acceptable subject and not-acceptable subjects. Stella, who was mentioned earlier in *The Prologue*, would still not be free to write vampire romances. The activities the students engaged in may or may not have been transformative to their growth as human beings. The important thing about the activities of Sister Gertrude is that she appeared to include the ideas of students in her development of curriculum in a way that appeared successful, without being sacked.

Impressions (i 25.6.2014): What I *am* prepared to say is that in my experience, many students in year nine have struggled to understand the notion of balanced forces (m 6.7.15b/19). Therefore, hearing about primary students who clearly articulated their ideas about it is encouraging. Another thing that is difficult to gauge is the independence of the students’ ideas. Recently, for example, I heard a teacher state that she was interested in the contribution of her students to the formation of a particular assessment activity. She later told me that she had frequently stated to the students that she welcomed their ideas. When the task was created, however, I saw no evidence that any student had contributed any idea to the formation of the activity (r 9.6.2014/8). My belief is that, after many years of education where their opinion was apparently not wanted and the influences described above by Jackson (1968) were in play, they did not genuinely believe that their independent opinions were valued. I was not convinced their opinion was valued either. The level of independent thought and activity of students is difficult to judge.

The danger of tokenism

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 1.6.14/11): There is a danger of tokenism in our attempts to re-imagine education. At certain times, you may engage in activities that you consider give the student “freedom to choose” (m 31.11.12/8) between activities or allow the students to “teach the class” (m 28.3.14c/8).

Impressions (m 31.11.12/8): Early in my inquiry, for example, I wondered if student choice might make schooling educative. I prepared a one hour lesson in which students were given a choice between investigating so-called cannibal’s disease, in which it was claimed a primitive organism was passed from individual to other individuals through the ritual practice of eating the brains of the dead. The second alternative disease to study was *Yersina pestis* (the causative organism for bubonic plague). Students studying cannibal’s disease were given less choice about methods of inquiry than students studying *Yersina pestis*. At the end of the lesson, students were given a simple test and then we discussed what learning occurred in our collective opinion and which the best strategy was.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 1.6.14/11): It would be possible to imagine that, by doing these kind of activities, you were challenging the traditional power relationship of student and teacher. These activities, however, may not in themselves challenge the relationship; they may even be regarded, on occasion as false “acts of generosity” (Freire, 1970, p. 153). Such an act of false *generosity* is one that gives token acknowledgment of the needs of another without genuinely addressing the power relationship in a way that will really change things. These activities above may involve the students in activity superficially without the students becoming actors in the sense that they have any genuine control over their own inquiry.

Impressions (i 23.6.15/100): After considering the experience of Sister Gertrude (Beeth and Hewson, 1998), I came to two decisions. The first is that it might well be possible to design learning experiences in such a way that take seriously the needs and interests of students. The second decision was that, in order to offer a genuine invitation to students, it is desirable to *substantially and consistently* make that invitation. If the offer is made partly or occasionally, it is very likely that one's actions will be tainted with false generosity. To express it bluntly, if we really mean to offer an invitation to growth, we would do it most of the time. However, it is not enough to throw up our hands in despair and say 'Because I can't do such-and-such, I will not do anything'. In the midst of the clash of ideas and voices I believe we must find spaces, *invitational moments* that invite students to grow. In the next two episodes, I examined some learning activities where I hoped that aspects of invitation might be offered. I never really thought that they would offer invitations to growth substantially and consistently, but I hoped they might point the way to experiences that would. The first was the program I called *Hands-Up*, which I describe in the episode *Hands up for Experience*. The second was the activity I describe as *The Dig*, in the episode, *Voices from the Pit*.

Hands up for experience

Cast of Characters:

Objective voice: An attempt to acknowledge that, on occasions, the objective voice might have value as a perspective to bring extra clarity. It is as if the inquiry was emotionless, logical and devoid of ethical judgements.

Impressions: Represented in the impressionist voice as if the inquiry was considered at a particular point of time (25.6.14)

Impressions (confessions 21.7.14 c/18): I observed excitedly a program at a school during a one day visit. I hoped it might be useful for considering the idea of experience as Dewey (1915), describes it in *School and Society* (p. 12). The school and program are described pseudonymously as *St. Columba's Memorial High* and *Hands Up* respectively.

Objective voice (impressions 25.6.14/20): The program was said to cater for “Kinesthetic learners” (real 15.7.14/22). This description was frequently linked with the description “hands-on-learners” (r 15.7.14/22) and “multiple intelligences” (Gardner, 1983, Title). Students implicitly used this *hands-on* term as a self-descriptor of the program “I like it because it’s hands-on” (r 15.7.14/22).

The school had established a special classroom with eighteen students. It had different subject-matter to that of the other students in the school (r 15.7.14/22) of a similar age. It had a dedicated room in the standard classroom format (tables and chairs) and the use of other useful spaces in the school, such as a nearby automotive workshop, a field, a yard and two small chicken sheds. Students also had the use of shared spaces, such as the basketball court, library and a shared sitting space.

In terms of staffing, it had extra support with an experienced teacher and the equivalent of forty-five hours of support. This supporting role was shared between three persons, each with individual skills, such as farming, mechanical and organisational skills. The school supplied some funding for the program, including paying staff wages, but the school also coordinated community support for the program such as volunteer labour and donations of goods and services. Some corporate sponsorship was sought by students of the program.

One activity that was observed considered the Tachoma Bridge collapse. According to the teacher, the bridge failed due to engineering failure and was recorded on dramatic film footage, which was shown to

the students. The teacher and students compiled a list of famous bridges. The students then used the internet to research particular bridges chosen from the list. At some point the students were to create a scale model of the bridge from everyday materials, such as string. The students would be expected to learn some mathematics in relation to scale during the construction of the model.

A second project some of the students engaged in (it was described) was the construction of a hen house. They had investigated alternative designs and had submitted a design, one of which was selected (by whom was unclear). The design had been used to guide the construction of the house from suitable materials by a group of students under the supervision of an adult helper. There were misgivings voiced by more than one student and adult(s) as to the effectiveness of the design. It was agreed that it was likely that periodic modifications to the design would be necessary. A previous group of hens had been killed by foxes, adding a certain intensity to the importance of good design. Something described as “building maths” (r 15.7.14 /22) had been introduced to the students during the design process which it was understood by the author, was to be about the conversion of units of measurement.

One aspect of Dewey’s (1915), view, was, that learning is much more compelling if it involves “active work” (p. 11). Sometimes this has been interpreted to mean the student being active in the sense of mere doing, such as might be involved in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~. Dewey intended much more, however. The essential thing is the work should be “productive” (1915, p. 15). In order for it to be productive, it is necessary according to Dewey, that the student may be able to observe and participate in the processes involved until a product of value is created.

An example might be an examination of textile manufacture. The students might ideally include in their study a visit to a “shearing shed” (p. 15) and observe the production of fibre. They might then create a simple carding device, spinning-equipment and loom. Finally, they might produce a garment. It was envisaged that the students would also be shown links to other educational themes from that “point of departure” (p. 14) such as “geographical features”, “manufacture” and “physics”. Dewey (1915) predicted the benefits of pursuing vital activity would be numerous including that the school might organize itself on a “social basis” (p. 12). He also predicted it would result in a “spirit of free communication” about both “successes” and “failures” (p. 11). Furthermore, he predicted the students would then be in a position to participate more effectively in the natural world, and be able to “read its meaning and measure its value” (p. 14).

When the students in *hands-up* designed and built a chicken coop (r 15.7.14/22), they were, I believe, given a genuine insight into the process of a valuable human activity. Not only were the particular students physically “active” (Dewey, 1915, p. 11), but the school was also willing to risk the students’ possible ‘failure’. There was the very real possibility the hen house would fail to protect the hens (r 15.7.14/22).

Impressions (i 9.9.15/32): I decided that it was valuable at this point to reflect on Dewey’s description of thinking. Dewey (1919) closely associated educative schooling with thinking. In order to grow, a student needs to think. “Education is the exercise or practice of the faculties of the mind” (p. 87). By thinking, however, Dewey did not mean empty reverie. Thinking, as Dewey described it, was neither the mere formation of theory nor the accumulation of information. Did Dewey just intend that thinking be regarded as something different from physical activity? No. Thinking is not the “pouring of knowledge into a mental and moral black hole” (p. 76); the thinking intended is inherently consequential. Thinking is the process where the thinker establishes the connection in their mind between “cause and effect” (p. 84). By an examination of experienced reality, the thinker connects the “return wave of consciousness” (p. 17) that results from activity and so establishes connections between events.

Dewey recognized the likelihood the students might need some help in recognising the relationship between cause and effect, and the role of the teacher is to “psychologize” (Dewey, 1915, p. 117) the situation so the students can see these relationships. With Freire (1970), in a similar way, the students thinking was described as the development of awareness that comes from encountering “contradictions” (p. 95) and in understanding the nature of those contradictions through “critical reflection” (p. 96). This *critical reflection* may occur through working with peers in “thematic” (p. 98) circles. It might be necessary for teachers to assist by not only facilitating discussion, but also by making “codifications” (p. 96) of observations to assist the student in “challenging” (p. 98) the students’ present understanding.

One might argue that thinking is a purely cerebral activity that does not require activity at all. Dewey rejected the dualism of body and mind as being “evil” (Dewey, 1919, p. 179). He implied that thinking which is only theoretical and does not modify action could barely be described as thinking at all. Indeed, it is likely, in the absence of connection with the experienced world, to lead to “self-deception” (Dewey, 1919, p. 187). If the idea does not have practical consequences, how convincing is the idea?

An important aspect of Dewey’s rejection of mind and body dualism was his attitude to physical activity. He did not regard physical activity without thinking as educative, because it lacked the required conscious

recognition of relationships between things. In addition, however, Dewey did not encourage theory without activity. He pointed out that the student came to class not only with a mind but with a body as well. Any suggestion that the student leaves the body behind is ridiculous. He suggested that much of the sort of behavior regarded as problematic behaviour such as “callous indifference” (p. 179) to the set work, or “explosions” (p. 179) of defiant behavior, is caused by a failure to recognise that humans have a body as well as a mind that could be expected to move.

In relation to Dewey’s ideas about thinking, *hands-up* has some useful elements. Dewey’s thinking was about the flow of consequences in a situation that the child is reflexively testing. The construction of the hen house is an illustration. Only some of the children carried out the project, suggesting that some element of choice and ownership might have been present. There was a distinct possibility of failure in the exercise, judging by recent events, and there was, therefore, a very concrete example of the flow of consequences. The teachers did not step in and rescue the children from learning as I generally might have expected. There was a very real possibility that their design would yield definite results. There was further risk for the school entailed in the activity in that the school might be accused of that “certain disorder of any busy workshop” (Dewey, 1915, p. 12), an accusation that stands in opposition to the tendency of schools to desire the display of order (Jackson, 1968).

The students in *hands up* at least to some extent, reported a “spirit of free communication” (Dewey, 1915, p. 11) in their activities. It was described by students as “the group I can do things with” (r 15.7.14/22). The activities were intended by the teachers as a *point of departure*, for studying other subject areas such as “practical maths” (r 15.7.14/22). This was understood to be part of the course goals by the student, “We do angles” (r 15.7.14/22). There was a desire expressed by the leading teacher to “enrich across the curriculum” (r 15.7.14/22), in order perhaps, to move away from learning that is “highly specialized, one-sided and narrow” (Dewey, 1915, p. 18).

Impressions (i 27.7.14/20): I felt that these aspects were a sincere attempt at improving educative practice as they saw it and, initially, I was quite optimistic that the program well represented aspects of Dewey’s thought. After a comment from a colleague, however, I tried to examine *hands up* with a more critical eye. She commented that the students of *hands up* were “pretty much excluded from doing VCE” (responsive voice, 21.7.14/22). I reflected that the students in the school were not invited to a consistent and systematic opportunity for growth, in that certain students were invited to the *hands up* program and certain other students are invited to an alternative program that included complex scientific ideas.

Objective voice (i 27.7.14/20): As mentioned before, the group members were given labels such as “kinesthetic -learners” (r 15.7.14/22) and, in addition, they were described as “disengaged” (r 15.7.14/22). Labelling the students may be problematic in several ways, including the tendency to lead to certain judgements about activities that were offered to the students.

Some of the students, in the mainstream class, were restricted in their growth because their learning was narrowed by not exposing them to the potential advantages of vital experience. Other students, In *hands up*, were disadvantaged because the assumption was made that it was not possible to connect the world of vital experience with the world of abstract ideas. Assumptions such as, “less science enables more business” (r 15.7.14/22) were made, and, as a result, the students were not introduced to ideas such as the theory of atomic structure. In addition, they were not introduced to languages other than English.

This decision had the practical result that some of the students were less likely to complete the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). This prevented them from engaging in opportunities for growth in many educational institutions. A student, according to the assumption, cannot be *hands-on* and succeed in science. While any individual student cannot do everything, there was an implicit ‘either/or’ assumption that was reminiscent of dualism. There were, it was implied, students suited for physical tasks and students suited for intellectual tasks, as if one cannot do both. Dewey (1915) particularly disliked the dualism involving the “separation of theory and practice” (p. 18).

Dewey (1915), commented that if we concentrate on the child’s growth, then “all other things shall be added unto us” (p. 38). That is, if one concentrates on involving the child in vital experience, one will have ample opportunity to add “far more of the technical information and discipline” (p. 38) than the traditional mode. He was critical of the view that the imagination of the child finds its satisfaction only in the “unreal and make believe” (p. 38). He also rejected a view that culture and its symbols are a mere “superficial polish” (p. 39) rather than related to the “substance of experience” (p. 39).

Another indicator that the program (though containing useful initiatives) was not consistently and substantially educative toward growth and vital experience was the confused narrative within *St. Columba Memorial High* regarding subject-matter. The teachers of that school were required to submit in advance detailed class outlines for both the week of classes and the term of classes (r 15.7.14/22). The purpose of this requirement was not explained.

Impressions (i 27.7.14/20): As I mentioned earlier in ~~The Perfect Lesson~~, I believe this approach of rigid forward planning is detrimental to student learning, as it restricts the teacher's response to individual needs and restricts the capacity of student ideas to shape the subject-matter. The *hands up* program, according to the lead teacher, had complete "curriculum freedom" (r 15.7.14/22) and flexibility in this pre-planning requirement. These two aims of complete freedom and complete prior planning seemed to create the likelihood of a confused narrative regarding the responsive nature of subject-matter to the needs of student growth.

I decided therefore that I did not think that *hands up* represented a genuine expression of Dewey's vital experience. To my disappointment, I concluded that the program did not offer a real challenge to the teacher.-.student contradiction and therefore, was unlikely to lead to invitation or growth. In the following episode, I made what might be regarded as a last ditch attempt to come to grips with the possibilities of offering an invitation to growth in a substantial and consistent way within my classrooms. After considering the role of the objective voice in this episode, I felt that it did not contribute much in comparison to the impressionist voice. This objective voice will not be included, therefore, in the next episode. I determined in the episode, *Voices from the Pit*, that I would figure out for myself what was going on in my teaching that might enable me to offer an invitation to growth. I began by considering the question, How can we determine if an activity is *transformational* or not?

Voices from the pit

Cast of Characters:

Impressions: The expression of the present 'self' at a particular point in time, in reflection upon the other voices speaking into a situation.

Bernard the Inquisitor: An interrogator of the impressionist view, reflecting a belief that truth has nuances of expression that are not neatly resolved. Often reflective of the response data. He is not always sympathetic to the impressionist voice.

Sophia: Like Bernard, an interrogator of the impressionist view. Reflective of different response data. Usually sympathetic. The allusion to wisdom is intended.

Frank: The traditional teacher viewpoint.

Stewy for Dewey: The Deweyan viewpoint.

Brother Thomas: The Freireian viewpoint

Student Chorus: An expression of the student voice. In larger font to privilege the voice that is often dismissed.

The Class Clown: A representation of the idea that structures and ideas can be challenged by the unauthorised voice of comedy. No claim of relevance, authenticity or even 'funniness' is made. An obvious reference is implied to the ubiquitous role of *class clown* that is held by many teachers to exist in every classroom (m 5.6.14/19). Expressed in Comic Sans font.

What does it mean to be transformative?

Impressions (impressions 30.10.14/23): Freire describes growth in terms of growth as a human being. For Freire (1970), growth as a human meant to grow in ones' capacity to engage in reflexive praxis. That is, one reflects on the nature of the universe and then acts on that knowledge in a way that affects the universe and especially society, which was one of Freire's chief concerns. Dewey (1938) refused to define growth, however, the basic direction was that, growth-promoting experiences offer opportunities for transformative experience in the future. Experiences that are mis-educative do not offer such opportunities. Growth is central.

I selected the word transformative because it related to my central idea of growth. The definition of *transformative experiences* is extremely problematic because it may or may not include many elements. Physically, growth is somewhat measureable. I reject as positivist constructs, however, the notion that intellectual, emotional and moral growth are measurable. Nevertheless, growth in certain areas leads to growth in other areas. *Hands up* closed opportunities for some students in the area of abstract scientific ideas, but opened up other areas in the exploration of vital experience such as egg production. I argue that invitations to growth should do one thing without neglecting the other. As Jesus said, in Matthew 23:23, "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former". Dewey (1938) recommended that we offer experiences that vitally connect the end-product with the present activity. He suggested that this often requires practical materials to be used and touched by students, otherwise the intended final product ends up being obscured by symbolic representations of the product. I tried to closely define in this episode which approach made the best contribution to transformational experiences from a choice of Freirean, Deweyan and traditional teaching concepts. Alternatively, if a winner could not be picked, I sought to synthesise core ideas that would enable transformative education. I did not easily succeed.

Each of the approaches seemed to offer certain overlapping foci and certain deficits. Dewey's concern seemed to be growth through experience, and though he valued growth as a social being, there was less emphasis on the social than that which Freire expressed.

Frank (i 30.11.14/23): Naturally, given that Freire was a Neo-Marxist

Impressions (i 30.11.14/23): Dewey (1915), talked about vital experience contributing to the acquisition of "technical" (p. 38) knowledge yet, in practice, I have sometimes felt more comfortable providing a

certain amount of technical information to help give what is described as “background information” (real 20.3.15/24) to the students’ inquiry. The students of *Mission to Mars*, for example, were provided with some mensuration formulas and practice in using them before the exercise. At that time, I regarded the training as helpful.

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 30.11.14/23): Is this belief in training students to use abstract symbols *a’ la* traditional exercises well founded? Though some students seemed to enjoy its structured predictability and complained voraciously if they did not get it (r 2.5.2014/8), there is limited evidence that it actually helps.

Frank (i 30.11.14/23): The comments you have heard from your students regarding the value of your sometimes highly structured approach certainly lend support to the view that training in abstract symbols does something useful.

Student Chorus (r 1.4.14/24):

- Every time I go to maths I feel like I’m gonna learn something
- He explains things in a way I understand
- I’m learning a lot
- I feel good about maths
- He makes sure that we understand about it and helps us understand it.

The Class Clown (i 23 18.11.14/23): That’s nice

Student Chorus (r 1.4.14/24): However the students also said-

- He treats us like five year olds
- It would be better if there was less noise
- School is boring because of teachers like you (memories 8.10.15/19)

The Class Clown (i 18.11.11/23): That's not so nice

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 18.11.14/23): Why is this relevant? 'Nice' is not even a useful word.

The Class Clown (i 18.11.14/23): I'm trying to cast doubt on the idea that it is easy to draw conclusions on the validity of certain class activities. Besides I'm a clown; I don't have to be relevant. I don't even have to be funny.

Sophia (responsive voice. 30.10.14/4): Beware of the search for eternal truths in education. Could I suggest that rather than trying to extract the quintessence that will transform educational lead into gold, you describe the individual contributions of each position to a situation without trying resolve the differences too neatly (rv. 27.10.14/11)? Beware also of intellectual neatness; knowledge can be "messy" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 176).

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 30.11.14/23): That way is also fraught with peril. Like the teacher who declares themselves "constructivist" (m 14.11.14/19) because they allow the students to use wooden blocks, there is already enormous potential to confuse narratives such as that which occurred in the *Hands-Up* program. In *Mission to Mars*, one issue you faced was that you had a confused narrative. You tried to provide a framework of meaning for the student but the attempt to *inject* meaning failed because meaning cannot be injected, it can only be constructed by the student from experiences and ideas.

Impressions (i 30.10.14/23): So that's what you think went wrong? Was I making an attempt to impose my meaning on the students?

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 30.10.14/23): There were probably a number of problems. In addition, this token veneer of meaning *you provided* smacked of false generosity, allowing the students one iota of vital experience while imposing a whole codex of coercion.

Sophia (rv. 27.10.14/11): By trying to 'pick winners' in praxis, for example, Dewey-versus-Freire; it would appear that you have been tending to the either/or dichotomy that Dewey (1938) has criticized. While there is a danger of mixed narratives, acts of so called generosity or contrived experiences, these problems may not entirely evacuate the potential value of one position such as specific training in the use of abstract symbols. This is my suggestion. You have said that, in the classroom, many voices speak into the situation. It could almost be described as a "sitz em leben" (Gunkel, 1917 as cited in Terrian, 2003, p. 12) life-situation for every experience offered by the teacher. Why not consider a particular activity that you have done in a similar way as you considered *Mission to Mars*? However, in this case, you could more sympathetically consider the contribution of each position and its influence upon the experiences. The three positions you might consider would be that of Dewey, Freire and traditional teaching. You could consider the contribution of each position to the experience expressed as a voice.

Impressions (i 7.11.14/23): Many voices speak at once?

Bernard the inquisitor (i 31.10.14/23): Won't the multiple voices create an impression like that of 'Pandemonium' from Dante's *Inferno*?

Impressions (i 7.11.14/23): Precisely, hence the allusion 'voices from the pit'. To represent the voices of different theoretical positions, I chose new names for this specific task: Brother Thomas and Stewy for Dewey. We also hear from Frank again. In addition, the comments and impressions of students were represented as the **Student Chorus**. There is also an allusion to the difficulties of the classroom, which

sometimes feels like the imagined seven circles of hell. Alternatively, the pit could describe the orchestra pit in front of the actors from which the orchestra make the beautiful background sound of a symphony.

Brother is an allusion to the French word for brother (frère) and hence Freire. *Brother* is also an allusion to the Latin-American faith position. *Thomas* is the doubting - believer who, in himself, represents an inherent tension reminiscent of the unresolved tension between the various voices. *Stewy for Dewey* was meant to be a mere playful alliteration. Frank represented traditional schooling, as before.

Many voices speak at once – not necessarily in unison

Impressions (i 7.11.14/23): I found it difficult to select an appropriate activity to consider. Some years ago, for example, I conducted an activity called *Shanty Vale*, which was a role - playing game culminating in students examining alternative environmental results of large-scale power production (m 24.11.14/19). At the end, the students held a mock local council meeting. This seemed to provide considerable potential. The difficulty was that the activity had become forbidden in my present school context. Contemporary policy frowned upon extended inquiries and, for several years, in my opinion, curriculum documents have reduced the scope of environmental inquiry both ideologically and chronologically. These two facts meant that any examination of that activity would rely heavily on yellowing and wrinkled documents and even more yellowed and wrinkled memories, which might rob it of immediacy. Instead I chose to examine a more recent activity that I described *pseudonymously* as *The Dig*, and the school in which it was conducted was called *St Mary's Memorial High School*. I chose the term *St. Mary*, because there is a certain ambiguity as to which Mary is referred to. This is an allusion to the ambiguity I felt at *St. Mary's* as to which educational narrative it sought to memorialise.

Frank (i 7.11.14/23): The students were given classes to help them prepare for the activity and began with teacher-directed instruction, offering information about the purpose and procedures of archaeology, using Tonga as an example (r 4.8.14/22).

Brother Thomas (i 20.11.14 /23): Freire (1970) describes the representation of knowledge to make it more accessible to students as coding and decoding. Certain situations exist that are worthy of reflexive praxis because they are "limit-situations" (p. 86). Limit-situations are situations that are preventing the students from becoming fully human by preventing them from taking up their transformative potential. These situations can sometimes be better understood by the teacher than by the students because of the teacher's greater experience. The teacher "decodes" (p. 85) the situation by their own research and recodes the situation into a new form that the student can relate to. The teacher makes a symbolic representation of knowledge that enables the student to reflect upon the situation. It is the responsibility of the teacher to make these representations somewhat *familiar* to the students and appropriate to their understanding.

Frank (i 20.11.14/23): *The Dig*, which purported to dig for artifacts, was a practical activity in the school vegetable garden. The students were provided with class activities to prepare for *The Dig*, and they were introduced via lecture materials, YouTube videos, PowerPoints and group discussions to the vocabulary and ideas of archaeology as applied to a situation in the nation of Tonga. The information included ideas about how archaeological methods might be used to evaluate a theory of origin for the whole Polynesian people. The students were given a task file to describe the activity. Two teachers supervised the activity (r 4.8.14/22).

Students were instructed to take notes on materials and chosen images regarding Tonga. The students were instructed to share these notes with fellow students nearby and to the whole class with teacher direction. The teacher constructed a board list. During this process students were re-introduced to the abstract concept of a hypothesis, which is considered to be important to the structure of their eventual written report.

Stewy for Dewey (i 20.11.14/23): This procedure has a number of non-educative aspects. You have, for example, set the agenda with very little regard to the expressed interests of the children.

However, I note there is a subtle change in your approach, from a Deweyan perspective. In the past (m 24.11.14b/19), you might have selected certain *factoids* and ideas and privileged them with importance compared to other factoids. You would have then required that students memorise and then be tested on those factoids. You justified those choices based on the idea that the curriculum standards required them. You did not, however, read those standards. Instead you drew occasionally on a textbook that claimed to be based on those standards to provide guidance to what was ‘in’ and what was ‘out’. You then made decisions based on your personal preference.

Frank (i 7.11.14/23): So in the past, on the basis of your greater experience and reading, you selected certain ideas as worthy of consideration (Dewey, 1938). Surely, that is reasonable?

Stewy for Dewey (i 7.11.14/23): More than that, however, you intended certain ideas as more valuable for recording and memorization, even if the textbook and students highlighted something different. You tended to define learning only in terms of *your* objectives. If students learnt other things during the lesson, that was described often as ‘not learning’. The difference is that, in *The Dig*, you tended to value all the ideas the students gathered and communicated as learning as long as they were not clearly mis-educative, such as intolerance. This new approach that values all the growth promoting learning in the class, even if it does not neatly fit your agenda, seems a positive development.

Impressions (i 1.12.14/23): In *The Dig*, I realised there were potentially stimulating questions that could be put to the students, which may have led to their interest in pursuing a valuable inquiry. The land on which the school sits is Gunaikurnai land. Crown land in the area is subject to a successful title claim. The words, which I deliberately quote to emphasise the point, are “the Federal Court recognized that the Gunai/Kurnai people hold native title over much of Gippsland” (Victorian Department of Justice, 2015). If

The Dig had included a simulated shell midden, it might have led to some interesting questions about competing land use.

Frank (i 10.11.14 /23): A cultural minefield! How will the students have the cultural sensitivity to deal with such a difficult issue? The ethical issues of conducting a genuine dig in a Koori site are insurmountable. The inquiry could never lead anywhere even if it interested the students. It is not our job to confuse the kids with “emotions” (Ellis, 1997, p. 123). We just present facts.

Stewy for Dewey (i /10.11.14 /23): More “dead, mind-crushing” factoids (Dewey, 1912, p. 191), devoid of meaning.

Brother Thomas (i 10.11.14/23): Freire (1970) describes such evacuation of meaning as “necrophilic” (p. 58). Your alternative was to completely ignore the issue of prior indigenous occupation and replace it with a fictitious social group, in order to ensure you completely side-stepped difficult issues of meaning (confessions 26.11.14/19). They will never be able to consider social questions if never invited to do so. I suspect your concern was more about reluctance to address difficult cultural issues (given the present tenuous nature of your employment), than your concern for the students. This is despite the fact that the curriculum statements you say you follow, specifically ask you to consider Koori cultural issues (Department of Education and Training, 2015).

Impressions (i 1.12 14/23): From a practical perspective there might be an excursion to a local Koori site in Stratford like the one I observed (m 2.11.15/19).

Stewy for Dewey (i 2.11.15/23): Is this an appropriate study for the children? Dewey says that the activity should begin within the “child’s experience” and develop from there (Dewey, 1902, p. 50).

Brother Thomas (i 2.11.15/100): Given that the children actually experience the place that was formerly occupied by Koori people every day, it certainly is within their experience. I suspect your problem is with facing inconvenience rather than with the immediacy for the children (c 2.11.15/18).

Frank (i 7.11.14/23): What about the application of “scientific method” (Dewey, 1938, p. 80)? Wasn’t your buddy Dewey keen on that? This activity made an effort to use scientific method.

Stewy for Dewey (i 21.11.14/23): The activity did include a genuine effort to introduce scientific method, including the concept of *hypothesis* (r 4.8.14/22). It is also worth noting that Dewey regards truth claims as *warranted assertability* rather than proven truth. In this case the students were not asked to find which hypothesis was correct, but instead to evaluate certain myths on the basis of the evidence as *supported or not supported*. I grant that the symbols of scientific method have some merit, but in another regard, this activity has a major flaw. Genuine scientific method requires inquiry. While there is value in learning the “principles and language” (Dewey, 1938, p. 86) of scientific inquiry, without the opportunity for the student to genuinely inquire, the so-called scientific-method is just more empty rhetoric (Dewey, 1938).

The value of student Inquiry

Brother Thomas (i 21.11.14/23): To be transformative, the student has to engage in reflexive praxis on a matter, have power to influence the universe and they have to be involved in the selection of the ideas to explore (1970). These students are merely carrying out the agenda of the teacher to explore set curriculum ideas and they are doing it in a way that does not substantially challenge the power structures within which they live.

Stewy for Dewey (i 10.11.14 /23): Yes. For Dewey, the development of students is restricted unless they participate in the formation of experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Frank (i 10.11.14/23): How is this possible? Dewey spoke at length about the necessity of “prior organization” (Dewey, 1938, p. 57). How can the teacher anticipate the formation of the task the students want and allow for prior planning?

Brother Thomas (i 10.11.14 /23): Nevertheless it must be addressed, students alienated from the decision-making process are “dehumanized” (Freire, 1970, p. 66) by the process. The school in which *The Dig* took place had substantial resources that allowed the pre-planning of potential activities to be offered to students and more flexible structures that could have gone a long way toward allowing the students scope to contribute to the inquiry (i 10.11.14/23).

Frank (i 31.11.14 /23): There was a level of choice built into the design of the project. The student had choices with whom they could choose to work and choices regarding the level of complexity of the report. They were provided with task descriptions called “target, stretch and super-stretch respectively” (r 4.8.14/22). The system found at *St. Mary’s* had resources available and time set aside for students to allocate their time on different subject areas themselves. For example, they could choose during a lesson whether to catch-up on mathematics homework or finish their history assignment. It appeared, incidentally, that the students responded well to *The Dig*.

Student Chorus (r.14.8.14/22):

- “It was awesome” and
- “Can I continue digging at recess?”

Impressions (i 31.11.14/23): There was a couple of elements at work here. Firstly, the so-called provision-of-choice in complexity of work or tasks was essentially tokenistic. Students could choose ‘different’ tasks but they were all evaluated against the same standard and graded with a number. This meant that choice

was largely illusory. The provision of educational resources was useful because it reduced the waiting around that Jackson (1968) describes. It is, however, only educative if the experiences are educative in themselves and not the mere “absorbing of facts” (Dewey, 1915, p. 11).

Secondly, the opportunity to use their time to study chosen topics has some potential. In practice, however, the teacher alone set the agenda. Given the resources at your disposal (computers, flexible learning space, pre-planned activities), there was much more scope for the student to contribute to the agenda (i 10.11.14/23).

Bernard the Inquisitor (i 1.12.14/23): You are not getting it are you? All this fiddling while Rome burns.

Stewy for Dewey i 1.12.14/23: FIRSTLY, THE CHILD MUST DRIVE THE INQUIRY, NOT JUST BE INVOLVED IN THE INQUIRY! The teacher: supports the child's inquiry, and "supplies" the inquiry (Dewey, 1916, p. 21), encourages the inquiry and even guides the inquiry (Dewey, 1902). However, if the inquiry does not come from the child, it is the teacher's interest being pursued not the students' interests being pursued. This is the main issue you face. Why is it so hard for you?

Impressions (c 27.11.14/18): It is so hard because it is inflammatory. Yesterday (26.11.14), we were instructed again that planning documents needed to be posted weeks before the term begins. It would mean that very little flexibility exists for pursuing students ideas if I was to follow my own planning documents. It is so hard because the process of teaching can be very public, often conducted in the presence of potentially hostile adult witnesses (r 16.8.12/30). It is hard because to pursue the student's inquiry would mean ignoring the frequently ridiculous state curriculum statements. It is hard because it would mean both hard work (c 8.12.14/18) and mental flexibility by leaving the well-trodden path of predicable systems to allow an opportunity for students to pursue their individual and group inquiries.

The awful silence

Stewy for Dewey (i 1.12.14/ 23): Secondly there is the question of the awful silence.

A bible quote is inserted at this point in effort to raise the dramatic intensity of the narrative

“And when he had opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about half an hour”

(Revelations 8:1).

Frank (i 1.12.14/23): What awful silence?

Stewy for Dewey (i 1.12.14/23): The void

Brother Thomas (i 1.12.14/23): During the course of student activities, they sometimes encounter a situation to which they do not have a ready solution. Freire (1970) describes *the limit-situation*, that is to say a genuine problem. It is a genuine problem because the student has encountered a particular event, perhaps for the first time, that inhibits them reaching their full humanity by preventing them exercising their reflective praxis in their own lives to order their universe. Freire uses the example of alcoholism. Via a group discussion, the students were invited to reflect upon the limit-situation of their relationship with alcohol. The teacher used a stimulus of a photograph of a drunk worker to provoke discussion. The picture was highly relevant to the students and alcohol was central to their lives.

Stewy for Dewey (i 1.12.14/23): From the Deweyan perspective, the teacher having presented the students with an experience leads them to an unresolved question by “the giving of problems” (Dewey, 1916, p. 195). For example, what kind of relationship should they have with alcohol? The teacher, having lead the students to the question has a choice. Will the teacher provide some sort of prefabricated, rehearsed so-called solution to the problem? Or will the teacher support the student in their own inquiry? (r 26.11.14/22). While the question hangs unresolved, it creates a tension. It is that empty space that cries out, hungry to be filled. It is a “craving” (Dewey, 1902,

p. 32; Webster, 2009). The hunger for completion is a discomfort to both the student and the teacher. It is full of danger and possibility.

Frank (i 1.12/23): No danger surely? It's a great opportunity for a teachable moment. Using their expertise, the teacher draws upon their body of knowledge and provides it to the *motivated* student; the hunger will be satisfied.

Stewy for Dewey (i.1.12.15/23): No! At the very moment the student is hungry to embark on a journey of discovery, the teacher should not choose to rob them of the thrill of the chase. The student must be able to find an answer they feel will fill the void or the void will remain empty.

Impressions (1.12.15/100): Amy, a year seven student, approached me after hearing my story about how Helen Keller began life deaf and blind.

Student Chorus (r 1.12. 15 /8): How could they think? How could they think without language to express it in?"

Impressions (c 12.2.15/18): I felt this was a profound question. I did not know how to respond. I mumbled something along the lines of "I don't know; it is a good question". I felt totally inadequate and wished heartily that I could have responded to the question in a way that would have allowed her to pursue the question for herself in depth.

Frank (i 1.12 14/100): Therein lies the danger. The students will be angry and say the teacher is not doing their job. They will complain and the parents will complain (m 27.11.14/19). The school leadership will be angry and say the teacher's work lacks direction and continuity because the teacher is not providing answers (m 27.11.14c/19).

Bernard the Inquisitor (m 23.10.15/100): Point taken. There is a space. But why use such negative language? You described it as 'the void', or the 'awful silence'. It is not merely the space that momentarily exists, a space which allows the student to act in a human way. Is there not a more wholesome way of describing this space? Are you going to address that issue?

Impressions (i 13.2.15/100): This episode was very important for me. As a result I have decided that it is not presently practical to consistently and substantially invite students to grow in Victorian secondary schools. The problem was not, as it is often presented, a problem of staffing or physical resources. Schools have a variety of structures of staffing and rooms that would enable far greater flexibility than is presently demonstrated. The difficulty is one of attitude. In the four or more schools examined as part of my study, all of the schools would probably describe themselves as 'cutting edge' in terms of curriculum delivery. One of them, *St Mary's*, has probably made much greater advances than the others in addressing the issues around inquiry-based learning. All of the schools, however, suffer from mixed narratives. Not having clearly thought through their educational philosophy, at every turn their decisions, are at least partly, affected by positivism. In the last few days (r 31.3.15/26), *St. Mary's* has announced to its staff that it will reduce the scope of its education in a way that will, in my opinion have a more traditional and more strongly positivist focus. The view that strong and independent thinking in students is both desirable and requires students to have control of their own learning is not one that is yet accepted. When Dewey wrote in 1915 that independent thinking is valuable, he was more than a hundred years ahead of our educational practice. When the school provides "the instruments of effective self-direction" (p. 44), he

wrote, “we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious” (p. 44).

Sophia (rv. 24.7.15/31): Is that it then? Three years and thirty thousand words to end in one more pathetic educational cop-out. Your student spoke well when he called you a sook. So what if you can’t substantially and consistently offer an invitation? Got that! You said you had a moral responsibility to act justly. What *can* you do?

Impressions (i 21.9.15/100): There *is* something I can do.

Exode

Cast of characters:

Impressions: The expression of the present 'self' at a particular point in time (7.7.15, 9pm), in reflection upon the other voices speaking into a situation.

Impressions (impressions 7.7.15/23): In *The Prologue*, I detailed the beginnings of my inquiry. Stimulated by my relationship with students such as Stella and The invisible Boy, I sought to investigate the question: How can I grow in offering experiences that invite students in Victorian secondary schools to grow as humans? I experienced a system that was opposed to systematically and substantially offering an invitation for growth. I also experienced, however, small opportunities for invitation to students within the confines of that constrictive system.

Invitational moments

In every meeting of students and teacher in the classroom, there are a complex series of interactions. It is a contested space and is influenced by the past experiences that students and teacher carry into that space. I have selected an image below to illustrate this space. Note, it is not a tidy image. This reflects multiple realities. The image is presented as it was given to me; it has not been air-brushed to modernise it. It is not, however, real data; it is photographed, copied and cropped to emphasise a certain point. It reflects also the physical realities of the teacher's life. If the teacher is to constantly adapt to the needs of the student and the direction of the student inquiry, there will be many *ad hoc* resources and improvised materials.

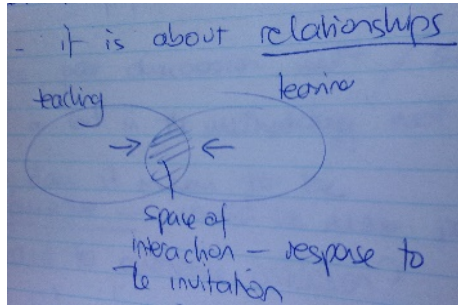


Figure 3 - The interactional space. A graphical representation of the student - teacher relationship.

A sketch from Ann (responsive voice.24.7.15/26).

I have chosen the term *invitational moments* to describe this space. It is not primarily a physical space, but a situation where there is an interplay of contested ideas and forces. By analogy with mathematics, the “moments of force” (Luebkeman and Peting, 1995, p. 1) describe the trigonometric application of all the forces acting upon a particular point that bring about rotation around that point. In a particular invitational moment of time, amidst the wreckage of modern schooling, a system that is not consistently and substantially educative, there are fleeting opportunities to provide an invitation for growth.

In the build-up to the moment, both student and teacher engage in many years of preparation. The trauma of past schooling, or alternatively the provision of education, either inculcates the child with excitement about learning, or despair about schooling. This is true according to the extent they have been encouraged to grow, or alternatively been encouraged (in Freirean terms) to house the oppressor. The child has gained certain empirical knowledge of the universe and a measure of *critical awareness*. In their mind and heart the many voices of the parent, state and past teachers speak through their previous experiences.

The teacher also carries a similar array of personal experiences into the classroom. Does the teacher house the oppressor, or has the teacher engaged in reflective praxis to challenge their own negative learned assumptions or contradictions? Is the teacher informed by positivism or more educative thinking? The teacher also has empirical knowledge gained through experience and potentially a greater critical awareness than the student, though this is not guaranteed. To prepare for the class, the teacher has trained for many years, learning, cultural symbols, procedures, factoids and traditions. These inform their ideas and may serve to enhance their educational authority (Freire, 1998). The state has expressed certain

expectations of behaviour to both student and teacher. It develops structures to enforce those expectations within the moment. The power of the state may encourage invitation for growth but frequently does not.

After the moment both the student and teacher are changed. By analogy, at the crime scene, it is said that the criminal almost always both leaves something behind and takes something with him/her (Lane, 1994). Though the parallel is unfortunate, in that education is not supposed to be a felony, certainly teacher and student are both changed by their encounter. The teacher has enormous opportunities to increase the likelihood that the encounter will be educative. Despite the lack of a substantial and consistent invitation for growth amidst the wreckage of the present schooling system, it *is* possible to provide genuine invitations.

The invitational moment occurs in the context of an appropriate relationship. The child has observed that the teacher has respected the students' humanity, for example, supporting their human right to engage in reflexive praxis. The child observes that, where the teacher is an adult (rather than perhaps a child acting as teacher), they do not abdicate their role as a responsible adult. Neither, however, does the teacher abuse their authority-as-adult to prevent the child expressing their humanity. Lacking perfection as we all do, we approach an ideal and, to the extent that we succeed, we are trusted by the student. On this basis, the student may choose to privilege the teacher with their trust, being willing to share their inquiry with the teacher.

In the moment, the teacher presents an experience to the students. If the teacher has carefully prepared appropriate materials, they will present experiences they hope will be commensurate with the students' felt needs and within the child's sphere of experience. They may have been codified to some extent to select certain foci from the teacher's perception of reality that may allow the student to respond to them more readily. Ideally, the experiences should have a physical aspect that will make it more likely that the student will be able to observe the flow of consequence between cause and effect without excessive use of abstract symbolism. This might lead to irrelevance, over-simplifications or even self-deception on the part of the teacher. Always being alert to the dangers of tokenism, the teacher seeks to genuinely offer the student as much independence of thought as is practically possible. The resources provided may include text, articles or images to engage the mind and the senses. This is true as long as the teacher does not represent the materials as the embodiment of some fixed notion of truth that must be consumed without digesting them through critical awareness.

Sometimes I have acted however, as if that was the end of the educational event. It is, however, just the beginning of the potential invitational moment. Amidst the experience, it is extremely likely that the student will form some question or inquiry. The “cathartic force” (Freire, 1970, p. 99) of the material because it engages the students present experience, makes this likely.

At that point, the teacher, if they seek to be educative, will empower the student to pursue their inquiry rather than shut it down. This opportunity I called (rather provocatively) the awful silence or the void, because the very opportunity for the student represents a challenge to the teacher’s positivist paradigm-as-expert. This positivist paradigm was, I found for myself, a very deep-seated lie and was difficult to challenge.

This point of inquiry is, however, the opportunity for learning. The teacher, if flexible and brave, can challenge the expectations of many that they will slavishly follow the dead curriculum. For what might only be a brief period, the teacher can encourage the student to pursue their inquiry. Perhaps the inquiry has been informed from a previous experience and inquiry. In that case the teacher may have been able to anticipate a possible direction and provided resources or codification for a new inquiry and a new experience. Perhaps they can merely give advice in a non-directive way. At other times they may be able to challenge the contradictions in the students’ thinking to enable them to explore new paths of inquiry. At other times, the teacher may not be able to provide much in the way of invitational moments, but by their respectful language and honest communication, they can demonstrate their *own* needs and expectations in a way that at least is clear and open.

The ‘moment’ for Stella, or the Invisible Boy is long past. I can no longer serve *them* as an educator of any sort, otherwise they might now expect a new approach. The students might expect that we the student and teacher together, sensitively explore some inquiry that interests them and, at the very least expect me to support and encourage them as much as possible. As for sanctions, the moral responsibility of the teacher is that they not give sanctions to students as a punishment for learning. Rather, they should be willing risk sanctions (to some extent at least) from the state themselves and try to enable the student to inquire.

Is this then a comedy or a tragedy? Of course it is tragic whenever students are not invited to grow. For me, however, the best comedy is found in the quirky ironies and flashes of hope in the face of disaster. The state of schooling within Victorian schools has many flashes of hope, seen in the way students grow

and mature despite the challenges they are unnecessarily burdened with. My students are a constant source of humour and encouragement to me. There is also plenty of disaster found in the injustices of our system. Therefore, it remains for me *The Comic Drama of Education*.

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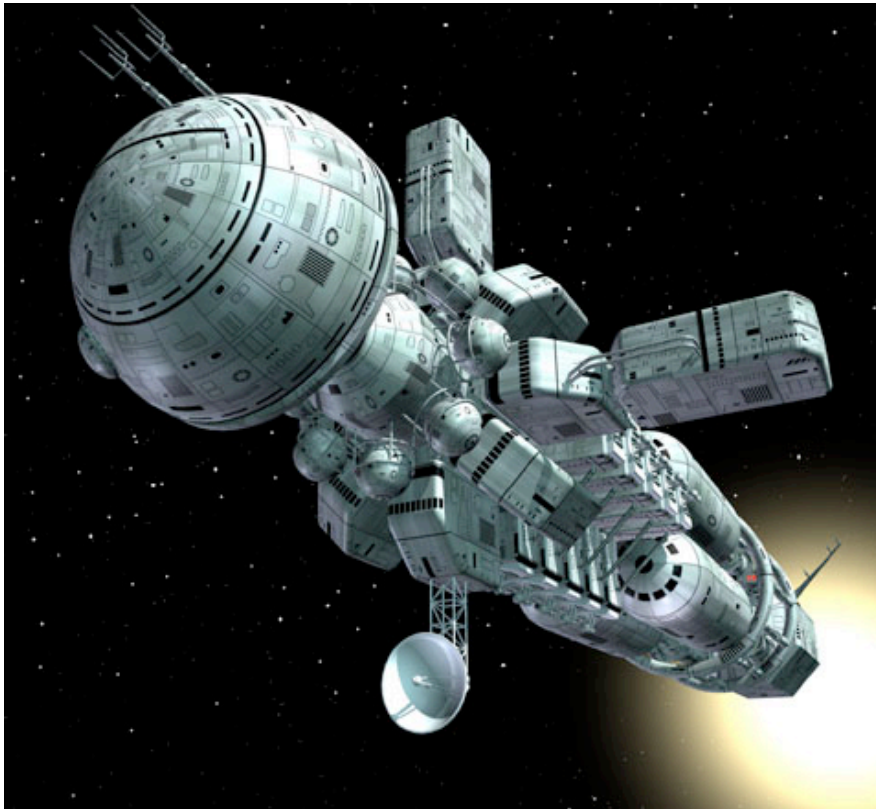
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Appendix A

Mission to Mars

Target Level Task



The Australian government has decided to send a ship **Sepchendesh**  to colonize MARS. They have asked you to calculate the correct **volume** of the following space ship. That way they can figure out the likely radiation absorption of the hull and how much oxygen they will need to load for the two year journey.

What questions must be answered before you can calculate the surface area and volume?

What assumptions do we need to make?

Mission to Mars

Target level

Big Idea: Area and volume calculations can be used to plan constructions .

Essential Questions: In order for the inhabitants of the **Sepchendesh** to survive the surface area must be less than the 1520 million cubic metres and a volume greater than 575 billion cubic metres. Will the inhabitants survive the journey?

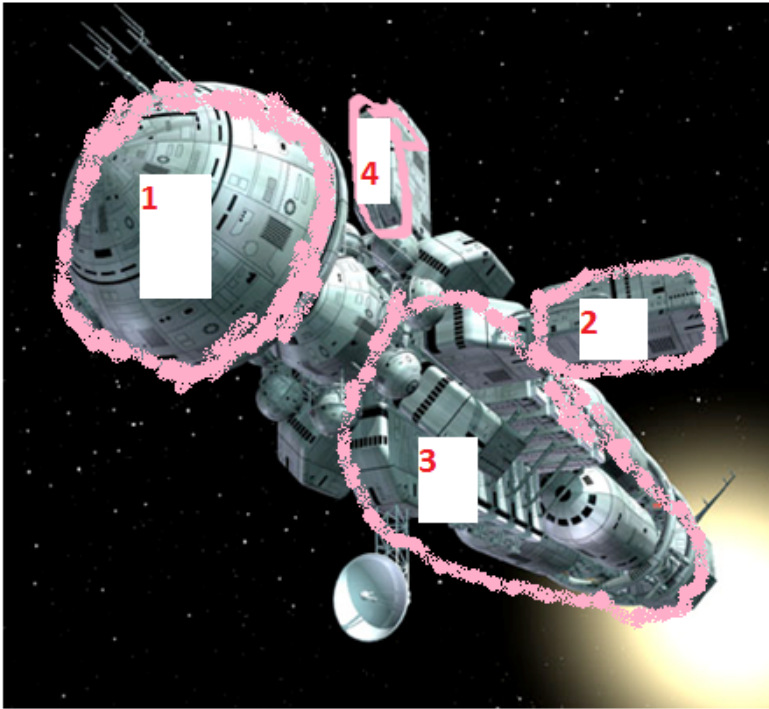
Goal: You are to calculate the volume of a space ship.

Role and Setting: An aerospace designer constructing space ships.

Audience: The Australian government aerospace design department.



Product and Process:



1. You are to use the information in the picture provided to identify the different shapes eg: cylinder in the picture.
 2. Note the outlined shapes in the picture
 3. **Assume the ship is 4 km long.**
 4. Using a ruler measure the shapes.
 5. Work out the length, width and height of the shapes.
 6. Write from the text book or google, the formulas to work out the volume of each shape.
 7. Record the length, width and height of the major shapes and record them in a table.
- The table might look something like this....

Shape	Length	width	height
1 -sphere			
2-box			
3-cylinder			
4-box			

5.

Using that information calculate the volume of each shape then add them all up to find the total volume and surface area of the shape ship **Sepchendesh** .

All calculations must be clearly shown.

6. Write up to 150 words about how you carried out your investigation. Include suggestions about how to alter surface area and volume.

Standard

This assignment will be assessed with a rubric.

Marking rubric

TEACHER NAME:

STUDENT NAME: _____

CATEGORY	Exceeds standard with excellence 4	Exceeds Standard 3	Meets Standard 2	Nearing Standard 1	Does not meet Standard 0
Work ethic	Worked very cooperatively in a safe way.	Worked cooperatively in a safe way.	Worked in a safe way.	Reasonably safe	Not safe or cooperative.
Calculations	Calculations carried out clearly in a very appropriate way.	Calculations carried out clearly in an appropriate way.	Calculations clearly carried out.	Calculations carried out but not entirely clear.	Calculation not clearly carried out.
findings	All findings recorded in a very appropriate format	All findings recorded in an appropriate format	Some findings recorded in an appropriate format	Few findings recorded in an appropriate format	No findings recorded in an appropriate format
Writing	Writing very neat and attractive. Spelling has no errors.	Writing neat and attractive. Spelling has no errors.	Writing neat. Spelling has fewer than five errors.	Writing a bit messy but is still readable. Spelling has five or more errors.	Writing difficult to understand.
Conclusion	Very clear evidence of understanding of volume and surface area	Clear evidence of understanding of volume and surface area	Some evidence of understanding of volume and surface area	Little evidence of understanding of volume and surface area	No evidence of understanding.
Teacher Comment					