Just Practice?
Towards a theory of professional education that uses the workplace as context

by
Merrelyn J. Bates
Bachelor of Social Work (JCU)
Master of Social Welfare and Planning (UQ)
Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GU)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education
Griffith University
September, 2004
Abstract

Universities are becoming more accountable for their own funding and for establishing their own societal relevance. As Governments respond to the demands of industry and commerce to fit graduates for the workplace, universities are being asked to provide students with the knowledge and skills for learning and working in an ever-changing workplace. There is a strong implication here that the traditional theory-based learning associated with higher education needs to be augmented (and complemented) by an experiential component that enables students to develop a ‘feel’ for the workplace and ‘an instinct’ for what they are likely to be doing when they are working. Demands for such a change are not only coming from industry: students are asking that their university programs be made more ‘relevant’ to the reality of work rather than merely for the next step in the higher education ladder which requires the ‘skills of research’.

Recently there has been a strong move throughout the western world towards ‘cooperative education’ or ‘work-integrated education’. Local initiatives at individual institutions are beginning to emphasise the importance of universities developing more symbiotic relationships with the industries in which their graduates are likely to be employed. In Australia, Griffith University has, for example, set up through its Griffith Institute of Higher Education (GIHE) The Griffith Graduate Project, which is attempting to develop an institution-wide policy in this area so that a concerted and coordinated response can be made.

As convenor of a Griffith University workplace-based experiential course in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, I find this study has provided an opportunity to examine the key determinants of success for a workplace-based course and to consider in detail the teaching and learning processes involved. The aim was to examine the fine-grained processes underlying the construction of new knowledge as students accommodate to the demands placed upon them.

The methodology adopted was based on an interpretive constructivist paradigm and addressed a number of questions that considered the roles of the different
stakeholders in a specific workplace-based course, the formal and informal expectations held of them, and the role-conflicts these stakeholders tended to experience. This meant that the basic process followed was inductive rather than deductive, worked from the specific to the general and required a methodology that did the same. Because the nature of the work in criminal justice agencies often must deal with feelings and emotion, it was assumed that the students’ emotional responses could affect their learning so the methodology allowed for the subjective interpretations and responses (both appropriate and inappropriate) made by all stakeholders and the data was collected as verbatim reports of both factual reports and feeling responses. These were then analysed according to the students’ own reports of learning and key principles of procedure for the design and implementation of such courses across the career spectrum were extracted. The values and approaches of action research were central to the responsive case study methodology that was developed.

The study found that at its best, the course was conducted according to principles that enabled the student to experience an intuitive ‘felt reality’ while still making decisions on a strong cognitive base. The acquisition of knowledge appeared to depend on transactions that occurred between teacher and learner, supervisor and student in the workplace milieu.

The thesis concludes with a number of recommendations and implications for developing best practice in the field. Ways in which the findings may be incorporated into university policy are also considered, as are the implications for change in the design, conduct and teaching of university professional studies courses.
Certification of Thesis

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

______________________      ____________

Merrelyn Bates                          DATE
Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................................... i
Certification of Thesis ................................................................................................................... iii
Contents ........................................................................................................................................ iv
List of illustrations, tables and figures ................................................................................ x
Relevant publications .................................................................................................................. x
  Refereed publications ............................................................................................................... x
  Conference publication .......................................................................................................... x
  Conference presentations ....................................................................................................... x
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................... xi
Chapter 1 – Introduction ............................................................................................................ 1
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 1
  Evolution of the research topic ............................................................................................... 1
  Reasons why the research is important ................................................................................ 6
  Initial assumptions of the researcher ..................................................................................... 8
  The need for accountability and quality control ................................................................. 9
  University issues .................................................................................................................... 10
  The process of the research ................................................................................................. 12
    Method and Approach ......................................................................................................... 12
    The Participants ................................................................................................................. 13
    The Methods of Data Gathering ....................................................................................... 14
      Differences between raw contemporaneous observation and the subsequent
      reflection and analysis ....................................................................................................... 15
    Structure of the thesis ......................................................................................................... 16
Chapter 2 – Context of the case ................................................................................................. 17
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 17
  The Field Placement course: a brief overview ..................................................................... 17
    The roles of the stakeholders .............................................................................................. 19
    Table 1.1 ................................................................................................................................ 20
  Evolution of the course .......................................................................................................... 23
    Evaluation of the Course (1994) ........................................................................................ 23
    An evaluative case study (1996) ......................................................................................... 24
    The Griffith Graduate Project (1999-2004) ...................................................................... 25

Just Practice?
| General interpretation 6.3: Convening – skills, principles, or personal idiosyncrasies? | 199 |
| Conclusion | 202 |
| Chapter 7 – Response 2: The principles of convening | 204 |
| Introduction | 204 |
| Rationale for this response | 205 |
| The co-convenor’s on-the-job learning: principles of procedure | 206 |
| Constructing principles of procedure for the course | 207 |
| Preparatory discussions with the co-convenor | 208 |
| Systematising tasks and re-negotiating responsibilities | 209 |
| Modelling convenor behaviour | 210 |
| The workplace-based curriculum: principles of procedure | 211 |
| Intervening in workplace learning – some rules of thumb | 213 |
| Leading the workshops: how to run a placement workshop without discouraging anyone | 226 |
| Some More ‘Close to the Data’ Formulations | 226 |
| Briefing workshop – 3 March | 226 |
| Student workshop 1 – 31 March | 230 |
| Mid-placement supervisor’s workshop – 14 April | 233 |
| Student workshop 2 – 28 April | 239 |
| Debriefing workshop – 2 June | 242 |
| Achieving closure: how to end things constructively | 243 |
| Summary of the findings | 246 |
| Carol’s reflection on co-convening | 246 |
| Towards a theory | 250 |
| Methodological considerations: introducing the social constructionist paradigm | 251 |
| Constructing principles of procedure | 253 |
| Teaching, facilitating, counselling and intervening | 261 |
| Chapter 8 – Towards an epistemology of practice | 265 |
| Introduction | 265 |
| Key concepts and assumptions about experiential learning | 266 |
| So, how does experiential learning work? | 270 |
| Knowledge constitutive interests and meta-theory | 271 |
List of illustrations, tables and figures

Action Learning ................................................................. 3
Table 1.1: Overview of the Full Field Placement Course Processes ........ 20
Figure 4.1: The Action Research Cycle .................................. 97
Figure 4.2: The Research Process (for a Three Cycle Responsive Case Study) 98
Figure 6.1: The Phases of Learning ........................................ 202
Table 7.1: Learning Just Practice: An Experiential Model ............... 260
Table 7.2: The Criteria for Intervention: Values for the Action-Teacher ... 262
Figure 8.1: The Tetradic Mediational Model of Identity Formation ........ 285
Figure 8.2: The ‘Just Practice’ Model ...................................... 293
Figure 8.3: The Dual Action-Learning – Action-Teaching Cycle .......... 296
Table 4.1: Student Profiles .................................................... 331
Relevant publications

Refereed publications


Conference publication


Conference presentations


Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my parents, Vic (1925-1986) and Beryl (1923-2004) Bennett, whose values and beliefs contributed implicitly to this thesis and through their self-sacrifice allowed me to start my formal education journey.

I want to specifically thank:

- **Associate Professor Bruce Burton** for your patient supervision, guidance and challenges, timely return of drafts with constructive feedback, and your willingness to interrupt your own study leave to assist.

- **Criminology and Criminal Justice Field Placement Students** for the privilege of sharing your journey through the learning documented in your journals.

- **Ms Carol Ronken** for your constructive involvement and friendship as co-convenor.

- **Organisational Supervisors and Academic Facilitators** for your ongoing support and commitment above and beyond your normal duties.

- **The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Griffith University** for providing the study leave to complete this thesis.

- **Mr Paul Stevenson** for your friendship, unflagging support, wise counsel and mentoring of my academic career over the past fourteen years; also for your coaching, informal co-supervision, editorial assistance and your insistence on stretching my knowledge of philosophy in recent months.

- **Ms Emma McDonagh** for your student journal, ongoing interest, and the assistance with some of the early data analysis.

- **Ms Lorraine Coutts** for your interview transcriptions and ongoing support over the many years we have worked together.

- **Mr Matt Stevenson** for your technical assistance with the graphic presentations.

- **Lyndel, Colette, Coralie, and Sharalyn** for your ongoing encouragement, love, phone calls and e-hugs that have provided such sustenance over the many years: our long-term, long-distance friendship is very special to me. Thank you.
To all my family, including my sister Jenny, thank you for all your extra effort throughout the last eighteen months of unexpected family crises: your physical and emotional support has been very much appreciated.

- To my daughters, Lyndel and Annerley, you are such wonderful human beings and I am very proud of you both. Thank you for your editorial assistance, support, patience, encouragement, and your unstinting belief in my ability.

- Michael a special thank you for the sacrifices, particularly the number of times that you gave up our ‘date-night’ and our week-ends away for the priority of the PhD.
Introduction

This study is an exploration of the process of educating novice professionals and the role of direct experience in the workplace prior to student graduation and credentialing. The ambiguity of the title *Just Practice?* is intentional. It summarises a dilemma facing those who would use workplace experiences as an essential part of the preparation of professionals. Is workplace experience ‘just’ an add-on that gives our theoretically prepared graduates a ‘taste’ of where they are going or is it something else? What do we mean by ‘practice’ anyway? Is it the repetition of an exercise or drill, like scales on a piano, or is it more than that? In the field of human services, what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘best’ practice? Can it be taught? And what of professional workplace experience in the justice related professions? Could we call this *just* practice? And so on.

When confronted with a problem in the world of work, professional practitioners tend to revert to some of the habits of thought that, whatever their current role, they acquired during their primary professional training. Professionals also seem to revert to behaviour that reflects important learnings they have retained from early professional experience. This is certainly true of my approach to this study and of the priorities that underlie it. The questions tend to be educational but the approach to answering them reflects, as much as anything, my own training and early experiences as a social worker.

Evolution of the research topic

A number of issues became evident when I commenced working several years ago as the designer and convenor of a practicum course for students of Criminology in an Australian university. The issues were complex and the questions were difficult: not only did the students need to be placed in a variety of different settings (from investigation teams to community service agencies), the students
themselves came from a variety of backgrounds and brought with them a range of different ways of making sense of the world.

My own approach to these issues was influenced not only by my training as a social worker but also by my early professional experience in addressing problems associated with addictive behaviours, dealing with cases of child abuse and neglect, and later experience gained when working with law enforcement agencies in the training of police. My approach was therefore somewhat different to that of the ‘professional educator’. My own early training placed high values on the notion of empowerment: the goals of social work are set so that they are achieved when clients can stand-alone in an imperfect world and deal with problems themselves; and that is how I perceived my role.

The priorities underlying this approach can be contrasted with the values usually associated with ‘education’ where theoretical knowledge is often seen as the necessary precursor to appropriate adaptive action. My contention is, that although theory can be appreciated and valued as a comprehensive explanation that has both parsimony and explanatory power, it cannot legitimately be seen as an end in itself and should not be seen as a necessary precursor to action. Unlike other fields (mathematics, for example) there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ discipline in the human services. The social worker will always argue that understanding without action is not understanding at all. In my practice, the focus is also always on action in the immediate present. Although in my educational practice I am aware of the need to understand the ways in which complex causes have led to the situation my students and I confront, my concern with theoretical questions always arises because of the need to take a decision and act upon it.

I have become aware that the basic units of action for a social worker – the granular level of action I find myself drawn to – is the intervention. A social worker, whether acting as a counsellor, facilitator, educator, advisor, or policy maker is always concerned with making a contribution that is both economical and effective and these contributions are often micro acts of interpersonal signalling. The focus is always on ‘What is happening now?’ and ‘What happens next?’ and the significant action will be the action taken by the client, colleague or
student in response to the social worker’s intervention. This means that I have been encultured into a view of the world that accepts the present state of affairs as it is, but is also always future oriented.

My own operative paradigm has therefore influenced my practice and research. This study accepts the existing structures around which current educational policy and practice has been built and looks towards ways in which that practice can be changed so that more appropriate policy can follow. This study is also concerned with the process of teaching and learning in a practical setting (at the same relatively fine-grained level of the ‘intervention’ discussed above) so that the consideration of significant detail becomes paramount. The process is based on interaction and has been referred to as ‘action learning’ by a number of writers (e.g. Gasparski & Botham, 1998, McGill & Beaty, 2001, Weinstein, 1995). It may be conceived of as follows:

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.1: Action Learning**
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Zuber-Skerrit defines action learning as:

...learning from concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience – through group discussion, trial and error, discovery, and learning from and with each other. It is a process by which groups of people (whether managers, academics, teachers, students, or ‘learners’ generally) address actual workplace issues or problems, in complex situations and conditions. … But the benefits are great because the people participating accept that they actually own their own problems and their own solutions. (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002, pp.114-115)

When referring to the assumptions, strategies and methods adopted by a teacher who is facilitating the process of action learning, I have coined the term ‘action-teaching’. This does not imply that such a teacher engages in a more vigorous ‘performance’ of the traditional teaching role or that he or she engages in even more interventionist behaviours. Rather, he or she is focussed on the student’s own action and with the action-knowledge being acquired.

This needs to be understood in the light of Robin McTaggart’s comments:

‘Workplace learning’ too often means applying routines invented by others, believing reasons invented by others, servicing aspirations invented by others, realising goals invented by others, and giving expression to values advocated by others. In contrast, workplace knowledge production means participation in the praxis of invention and construction of new ways of working…and in the formulation of more complex and sophisticated ways of valuing work, work culture and its place in people’s lifeworlds. (McTaggart, 1992, p.57)

The questions my research seeks to address are therefore both process and action oriented and include: What are the most appropriate experiences for students who are being prepared for work in a variety of occupational settings that require a mixture of intelligence, initiative, forthrightness and sensitivity? How can a course best prepare altruistic young people in order for them to have both the confidence and understanding of the implications of their actions so that they can operate effectively in an organisational context without being overwhelmed? Is it possible to design and implement a course to inculcate ‘wisdom’? How do we learn to make such subtle judgements anyway? And above all, what kinds of
policy decisions and administrative frameworks best support courses designed to help novices function effectively in such complex settings?

It is also important to note that the questions asked and the issues addressed in this study, while formulated generally at the outset, changed and became transformed as the study proceeded. It is for this reason that the philosophical underpinnings of the study needed to be congruent with those underlying the educational process itself. New insights that arose from action affected the next step in the process so the research and the identification of significant issues proceeded with an ‘end in mind’ rather than with a proscribed ‘end in view’.

These questions are distilled in the central question for this research:

*What are the determinants of the effectiveness of a field-studies based course in the education of novice professional practitioners who expect to be employed across a variety of organisations and agencies?*

I have coined the term responsive case study to describe the methodology used to examine this existing course (see Chapter Four). The methodology described there provides an opportunity for all stakeholders in that course to express their own values and criteria upon which judgements are made and action taken. The relevance of any analysis of this question and the usefulness of the findings of the research depends upon matching the theoretical conceptualisations of specific issues arising from this case with the language and assumptions of several different audiences. It also depends on the extent to which each audience is able to extend its vision so that it incorporates at least to some extent the point of view of other stakeholders. Because of this, the identification of specific issues, sub-questions and the reporting of the findings becomes an exercise in interpretation, translation and mediation.

The case study methodology focuses on this particular course and how its associated practice is currently assimilated into institutional practice. Unlike many case studies, which are concerned with describing a given state of affairs, this study attempts to investigate the dynamics as well as the structure of the Field
Placement course. As such it incorporates the voices and opinions of the stakeholders involved: students, employers, workplace supervisors and academics, but its emphasis is on the voices of the students and on the convenor’s interventions. This case study is also concerned with ongoing action and with the ways in which the action of course development can have its own momentum. It focuses on how the process of developing and extending the existing course could have implications for the implementation of the new University policies concerned with ‘community engagement’.

The research question assumes that the course has been shown to be ‘effective’ and this is addressed in Chapter Two. In the study, stakeholders identify what they believed to be key processes and significant moments of learning. Chapter Five identifies the role of the convenor as the core determinant of the effectiveness of the course, and this is further investigated in Chapter Six. Further issues, related to understanding the principles that inform the convenor’s practice are addressed in Chapter Seven where a number of propositions and guiding principles about the task of the convenor are developed as a new prospective convenor is inducted into the role.

**Reasons why the research is important**

There are a number of reasons why this research is important:

1. There is a worldwide agenda that is asking universities to develop a professional education focus and to develop courses that use direct workplace experience as part of University teaching (Brodjonegoro, 2003, Lonnroth, 2003, Sijde, 2003).

2. There is a growing higher education agenda in Australia to strengthen links between universities and industry (Commonwealth Department of Education Science & Training, 2002, Nelson, 2002).
3. Although workplace experience courses for undergraduates are generally seen as relevant, there is disturbing evidence from a number of sources (see for example, Maidment, 2003; Patford, 2000; Schaafsma, 1996; Slocombe, 1993) that some placement courses actually generate negative outcomes and induce strongly negative feedback from students.

4. Much has been made by various writers (see Chapter Four) of the deskilling of the professions through over intellectualisation and of the consequent mechanisation of the professions through instrumentalist-based procedures like skill banking. This makes the education of the professional problematic.

5. Within Griffith University there has been an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of workplace-based courses in undergraduate degrees (Griffith University, 2002a, pp.21-22, 2003a, Section H, pp.3-6).

6. Industry experience courses for both undergraduates and postgraduate students have been identified as a priority in developing community partnerships in the Griffith University Quality Performance Portfolio (Griffith University, 2003b, 2.12, & 4.9-4.10).

7. University-industry liaisons have also been identified as an important part of the proposed new Academic Work Profiles for University Staff (O'Connor, 2003b). The Academic Plan proposes that 90 percent of undergraduate students will participate in a constructed work experience to a level that meets academic accreditation for noting on academic documentation (O'Connor, 2003a, p.5). Adequately researched models for the design and development of such courses are needed.

8. Within the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, the workplace course claims to provide an opportunity for students to see how their studies are both valid and relevant for the workplace (see Bates, 2003b). However, a clearly articulated framework that addresses how students learn ‘professionalism’ in the workplace and identifies key areas has still to be developed.
9. There are a plethora of different designs that have been developed for Field Placement courses for undergraduates but there are virtually no studies that examine the process of learning engaged in by undergraduates in the workplace or the principles and values underlying particular university course designs (see for example, Schaafsma, 1996, Spencer & McDonald, 1998).

**Initial assumptions of the researcher**

I have come to believe that a course designed to assist students to cope more effectively with aspects of their own lives must involve an educative process. Because of this, any study that attempts to understand what students learn must also address questions about how students learn. It will need to look at idiosyncratic data about how the learners turn raw social experiences into knowledge and skills. The data most likely to be useful in such an exercise will ten to be descriptive rather than categorical and qualitative rather than quantitative. This thesis is therefore an account of process – not a description of outcomes.

When the learning goals are presented to students as ‘skills acquisition’ that results from training, their efforts are likely, in my experience, to be formulaic, rule-directed and ultimately of limited effect. By its very nature, education involves a change in the self-concept of the learner and not merely the acquisition of particular skills. The course I have been responsible for has been preparing novice professionals who are intending to find work in any of a variety of organisations and agencies. I have come to believe that appropriate educational processes, which are conducted in a workplace environment and augmented by appropriate reflection, can address learnings that apply to a range of work situations, agency requirements and organisational cultures. I believe that further reflection on existing practices and stakeholder responses will result in a refinement of educational processes and in the development of new strategies and approaches.
The course I intend to focus upon assumes that the kinds of social and procedural learnings achieved in one workplace can be transferred to another. Because of this, the course is designed to develop the professional capabilities of its clientele so that they are equipped for as yet undetermined career paths. Practitioners function most effectively in a social context when they understand themselves, the organisational dynamics and the nature of the demands likely to be placed upon them: these understandings enable them to engage with the world autonomously. This is particularly true of novice professionals and they need the opportunity to commence this process before graduation.

The need for accountability and quality control

I am continually reminded how different the Field Placement course is from the rest of the courses offered by my School and my Faculty. There is a long tradition of quality control exercised by the University through complex committee systems and Boards of Studies over what is or is not acceptable as appropriate ‘knowledge’ or ‘content’ of a given level for student consumption. Quality control is exercised through nominating ‘what is to be learned’ by each student and then by specifying some means by which that learning can be assessed. Thus, assessment processes become the driving factors, which ensure quality in educational endeavour. There is general consensus in the University and in the community that the ability to articulate propositional knowledge is an important marker for the learning of facts, information and cognitive processes; but the ability to apply this knowledge in new ways is critical. Similarly, there is an agreed understanding that some knowledge – the knowledge of ‘doing’ – is best described by the tight description of skilled behaviours a successful learner can be expected to exhibit in a range of situations. This assessment-driven process of quality control has served universities well but tends to place a strong emphasis on the outcomes rather than on the processes of learning. Thus, aims, goals, content and behavioural objectives often become the determinants of what is acceptable and what is not.
In action-based courses where the learnings are more ontologically based, the learnings become the process because they are learnings about the self and are related to personal attributes like ‘confidence’, ‘creativity’, ‘independence’, ‘initiative’ and ‘autonomy’. Such learnings are all embedded in immediate social contexts and are often difficult or even impossible to objectify or to define operationally. In courses like ‘Field Placement’ we need different kinds of markers for accountability than the traditional assessments of student ‘knowledge’ if we are to ensure that the university is meeting its obligations to offer the best learning experiences it can.

**University issues**

The university sets the parameters of the course. The ‘authority’ that supports the course lies with the university and the university needs to make its own responsibilities clear to the students. At present the literature emphasises the importance of the relationship between the student and the workplace, but seems to make unfounded assumptions about how students see the role of the university. In some practicum courses, students are largely left to fend for themselves and even to find their own placements: the university’s role is seen as mediating the relationship between the student and the demands of the workplace institution, but remains unconcerned about the nature of the student’s learning in the placement. There are a number of questions that need to be addressed. What are the University’s responsibilities? What should its priorities be? What activities and what kinds of initiative should the course be designed to privilege?

My experience has led me to believe that the most effective determinant of learning outcomes is the relationship between the university and its agents on the one hand and the learner on the other. If outcomes turn out to be more dependent on this relationship than upon a strong association between the learner and the agency or the workplace supervisor, (i) why is this the case? and (ii) what can the university do to improve these outcomes?
Universities tout practica as a ‘good thing’ for students but rarely advance a convincing set of reasons other than that practica offer opportunities to ‘put theory into practice’. Do students on placement act according to theory or do they act more according to their own survival instincts, and to insights, hunches and intuitions that occur in a particular context? Why are practica really such an important policy priority, and what do students learning in them?

The workplace agencies and organisations seem to be supportive because they see the practicum as the beginning of a process of induction – enculturation. Is this its prime purpose? What is the university role in courses with a large induction component, and are such courses necessarily aimed at goals that actually extend beyond student learning and into their enculturation? Are there implications for other kinds of courses (e.g. mentoring and in-service courses) arranged by employers, professional bodies, and educational institutions?

Although student learning is acknowledged by all stakeholders including the university as being the prime goal, there is little research into strategies and processes. Should the knowledge uncovered by such research become a new ‘educational discipline’ so that designers of these courses can share their professional expertise? Or should the change be even more fundamental? Should the philosophy underlying work-integrated education for professional practitioners become the foundation for all tertiary education? Should universities embrace the term andragogy and begin to examine the fine-grained practice of tutors, mentors and supervisors more closely?

When the study of interventions in the learning process gains more credibility, will there be greater opportunities for different kinds of curricula, and different roles for practitioners and academics? Or is the conservative nature of education likely to stifle such innovations? Can the learning processes themselves be seen to be linked to the politics and culture of critical democracy?

There seems to be a relationship between the extent to which individuals are prepared to challenge their own comfort levels and the depth of the learning that accompanies an experience. Can any principles be developed that help identify the
kinds of risk-taking a given learner needs to encounter in a specific context? And are there principles that help predict the kinds of challenge that is most appropriate for a specific type of learner? What is the role of the academy and of the supervisor in ensuring that such challenges occur? And, most particularly does the learner have a place in setting such challenges for him/herself?

Inevitably, when the outcomes of a study are intended to point towards action and change, the question of values becomes central. What are the values that need to be espoused if proactively located education is to be for the betterment of the learners and the society? And, perhaps most importantly, what are the values hidden in our existing educational and training practices that need to be reappraised if our goals are to be more than just pious hopes?

The process of the research

Method and Approach

As previously indicated, an interpretive constructivist paradigm was chosen for this study because it was clear at the outset that the data that I required was idiosyncratic, complex and would be strongly tied to the immediate contexts of action and response in a web of relationships. This meant that the information I collected needed to be verbal, to include direct expressions of feeling, and also to include an exploration of the ways in which all participants were objectifying their experiences and making sense of what was happening to them. Thus, the data used in this study is a cumulative record of first hand responses to the actual teaching/learning encounters between participants in the course and with other stakeholders. This choice of methodology means that the study is concerned with describing processes and then constructing propositional statements that have a more general application. Because of this the study falls under the general rubric of an instrumental case study (see Chapter Four).
Partly because the case itself is a structured course which is repeated, the case study lends itself to a cyclic process of data gathering and reformulation of research questions similar to that employed in action research; but it is different in that although the participants were collaborating fully in the transparent data collection process they were not directly involved in subsequent redesign of future cycles nor in their implementation. In Chapter Four I have chosen to use the term Responsive Case Study to describe the work.

The Participants

The prime sources of the data were the participants in the course (see Appendix 1). These were:

a) the student groups involved in the final year of their degree studies (full details are provided in Table 4.1 – Appendix 4),

b) University staff involved in the delivery of the course, and
c) Workplace supervisors, colleagues and administrators involved in allocating and supervising students’ day-to-day workplace activities.

Selection of responses:

The particular interview material and journal records cited in this thesis were chosen so that the range of responses to the course could be covered. The study is not concerned with the distribution of these responses and many of the responses that were not used simply duplicated interpretive data, which is already canvassed in the responses that are included. Consequently, the data collection process has skewed the sample towards the extremes and particular care has been taken to include student records of feedback and behaviour that can be thought of as negative as well as those that are positive.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Methods of Data Gathering

Interviews

Both formal (structured) and informal interviews were conducted with participants throughout all phases of this study. Examples of the questions used in structured interviews with the supervisors and students are included in Appendix 2. Records of direct interviews with students were kept as part of the Convenor’s ongoing journal (see below).

Purposes of the participants’ journal

The journals were kept as an integral part of the course itself and were an ongoing record for and of personal reflection. They were also a mechanism for the initial construction and articulation of propositional meaning of experiences (by the participants) whilst they were still fresh. The student journals were also used as a formal assessment and evaluation instrument in the course itself: firstly, as a course requirement to be assessed at the end of the semester long course by the Course Convenor and as an important part of the teaching process itself. For this study the journals also served as a record that provides much of the essential raw data. They also continue to serve as an historical record for possible future reference in subsequent work.

The understanding by the students of the journal’s purposes

All of the above functions were understood and negotiated. They were agreed to by all of the students and all of the students volunteered their journal reflections readily. All students were guaranteed the protection of anonymity in any use of their journal records in this or any other report and full ethical clearance was forthcoming from all participants and granted by Griffith University.
Conditions under which the journals were kept

All of the journals were private recollections of events and subjective responses to them and were kept in written diary form by the participants. There were few formal constraints placed on the students about what was to be included in the journal but all participants, including the researcher, were aware that the focus of their journal was the learning process that was occurring as a result of participation in the course. Refer to Appendix 3 (pp.329-330) for the details of the assessment criteria framework provided.

Differences between raw contemporaneous observation and the subsequent reflection and analysis

The raw data includes direct expressions of feeling plus immediate, though often tentative, constructions of meaning. The process of reflection, analysis and subsequent theorising is explored in detail using the study itself as a springboard for the discussion in Chapter Eight. Throughout the study, the distancing of the participant observer from their own meaning making which enables the construction of propositions which can claim a higher level of generalisation and abstraction is achieved through (i) the renegotiation of shared meaning with others through direct interaction and (ii) the recording of the ongoing process of meaning making in written journal form.

The theoretical propositions formulated in Chapter Eight are part of a continuing work in progress. They are concerned with the relationships between intentionality, learning, and identity formation; they are also concerned with the role of the teacher/course Convenor not merely as facilitator but as the active instigator of change.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Structure of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the study. Chapter Two discusses the context of the course being studied and its structure. Chapter Three identifies and explores historical themes in the literature associated with courses that are focussed on the development of professional practice knowledge. Chapter Four outlines the methodology utilised in the collection and analysis of the data. Chapter Five provides an overview of the course in action and highlights the role of the convenor. Chapter Six further investigates this role and discusses how it impacts on student learning. Chapter Seven analyses how the convenor operationalises this role. Chapter Eight discusses the findings of the study in the light of current paradigms and Chapter Nine considers some of the steps that might be taken to improve workplace-based education as a part of the University curriculum and some wider implications for universities in general.
Chapter 2 – Context of the case

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the process aspects of a work placement course and not merely on its outcomes. Several writers have noted that the views and direct representations of the experiences made by students tend to be ignored or at least given little attention. I suggest that this may be because the students themselves are viewed as the ‘products’ of the degree and any consideration of how they learn is regarded as an ‘educational question’ and not directly relevant to organisations and agencies who employ new graduates. There is an assumption that graduates arrive already pre-equipped with the necessary capabilities for any job they are given. Research has tended to ignore the much finer-grained detail about which both students, and those directly responsible for their learning, need to be concerned. It has also neglected describing the details of those experiences that can only be gained in the workplace and of their place in pre-service education.

The Field Placement course: a brief overview

Field Placement is a ten credit-point final semester work placement course offered by the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University, Australia. It involves more than 60 students per year who are placed in more than 50 selected institutions under the supervision of practitioners in the field. Academic staff members augment this supervision, and the students’ learning is structured according to a constantly renegotiable learning plan.

The course is designed to enable students to integrate theory and practice and to draw upon the nature of scholarship and knowledge in the human sciences. It is a partnership between the students, the University and members of its academic staff, and the participating organisations who provide staff as supervisors. All of

Just Practice?
the parties involved assume responsibilities and become involved in a joint process.

Students attend the placement organisation for 100 contact hours over the semester. The question is sometimes raised as to whether the practicum should be designed as an extensive block of time spent exclusively in the workplace giving the student a sense of continuity, or as a one-day-per-week experience which enables the student to pause, analyse, and reflect on their actions in the workplace over an extended period of time. Given that the exposure to the workplace is a limited time, the benefits of continuity seem, at the moment, to be outweighed by the need for students to process and conceptualise what is happening in the workplace as their involvement proceeds and their engagement increases.

Students keep a detailed personal journal that records their learning experiences and their responses to them. This journal is maintained as a confidential document seen only by the course convenor for assessment purposes (refer to Bates, 2003b). The assessment also requires each student to complete an organisationally instigated work task and the student is given the added responsibility of negotiating with both the workplace supervisor and the nominated academic staff member (‘academic facilitator’) the assessment weightings for each.

Every student also attends four three-hour compulsory workshop seminars at the University, which focus on the practicum experience during the semester. In the semester prior to the practicum itself, students are also required to attend three two-hour compulsory workshop seminars that focus on the particular skills and cognitive processes essential for achieving graduate employment. The topics address job searching, résumé writing, and developing skills for the interviewing process. Both sets of seminars are generally conducted with between 15 and 30 students to a group per semester.

Students are prepared through a number of workshops for this work placement in the semester prior to commencing their placement in the following semester. Table 1.1 provides at a glance an overview of the whole structure. Workshops are
identified according to the semester in which they occur, e.g. 1-1 is the first preparation workshop held in the semester prior to formal enrolment and participation. A more detailed account of the formal course requirements, timescales and scheduling information supplied to students, other information about the objectives of the course, the roles of the various participants and stakeholders and a model for the required learning plan are all included in Appendix 3 – Abbreviated Course Outline.

The roles of the stakeholders

Each participant in the course has his or her own understanding of the role being adopted and, at the outset, anxiety levels vary from moderate to very high as each student contemplates his or her ability to perform appropriately in the role given. A role may be thought of as a coherent set of expectations (both positive and negative) that is placed upon an individual and which the individual attempts to meet. Many of the ‘issues’ likely to be raised by the stakeholders will involve contestation between role expectations (often expressed as values) being imposed on them by other stakeholders both within and outside the program. Each learning intervention is an exchange between parties in a particular relationship and may be regarded as an exchange between different roles. Each of these roles will be determined by the role definitions inherent in the program itself and will consist of a set of mutually held expectations by both parties.
## Table 1.1

**Overview of the full Field Placement course processes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Placement planning</td>
<td>Convenor and Students</td>
<td>Week 1 of semester prior to enrolment in the Field Placement course</td>
<td>Overview and expectations clarified; administrative processes commenced; <em>Course Handbook</em> distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>Students/Convenor</td>
<td>Weeks 2 and 3 of semester prior to enrolment</td>
<td>Assist student in identifying their needs, aspirations, areas of interest, academic strengths and weaknesses, and discuss their placement choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Job-searching</td>
<td>Students, Convenor and Careers and Guidance specialist</td>
<td>Week 5 of semester prior to enrolment</td>
<td>Skill development and link to thinking beyond completion of degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>Résumé writing</td>
<td>Students, Convenor and Careers and Guidance specialist</td>
<td>Week 7 of semester prior to enrolment</td>
<td>Skill development for completion of up-to-date résumé for presentation at interview with supervisors and information on how to address selection criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Interview skills</td>
<td>Students, Convenor and Careers and Guidance specialist</td>
<td>Week 9 of semester prior to enrolment</td>
<td>Skill development and preparation for interviews with supervisor and future post-graduation employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding and selecting placements</td>
<td>Convenor</td>
<td>Weeks 5 to 15 of semester prior to enrolment</td>
<td>Contact made with organisations and potential supervisors most suitable to the identified needs and prioritised options of the individual students; mutual interview conducted between student and supervisor; acceptance by student confirmed in writing and insurance papers completed for all parties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1.1 (Cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2-1</th>
<th>Field briefing</th>
<th>Staggered attendance of students, supervisors and academic facilitators</th>
<th>Week 1: on the first day of the formal University semester</th>
<th>Develop student group cohesion; clarify expectations and roles of all stakeholders; clarification of professional behaviour and assessment requirements.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-2</td>
<td>Student workshop 1</td>
<td>Students only</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Address concerns; revisit assessment: focus on journal writing as a form of expression and debriefing; share experiences; reflect on learning: connections between theory and practice; develop problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Supervisor’s mid-placement workshop</td>
<td>Supervisors only</td>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Networking between participants; address concerns; clarify roles and expectations; discuss assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Student workshop 2</td>
<td>Students only</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Address concerns; share experiences; reflect on progress; prepare to complete placement and terminate relationships; complete supervisor report in role; highlight language for job applications and interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>Staggered attendance of students, supervisors and academic facilitators</td>
<td>Week 13: in the final week of the formal University semester</td>
<td>Share and reflect on experience; identify highlights; identify areas of concern or for further consideration; course evaluation; debrief issues identified during semester, e.g. more effective engagement in student/supervisor relationship, value questions relating to the purpose of the course, project assessment tensions between work focus and academic focus; presentation of framed Certificate of Appreciation to each supervisor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role expectations held by stakeholders (external to the program)

These roles are primarily concerned with the existence and continuation of the bureaucracy itself. They include formal and informal rules, sanctions and rewards. The societal community holds a collection of political and special interest expectations that are usually in contestation and are problematic in the extreme. Within this macro-structure the workplace organisational bureaucracies also hold expectations which vary from industry to industry, from workplace to workplace and from person to person; they too are often in contestation and somewhat problematic. But, the role expectations held by the academic institutional work often represent quite a different worldview to those expressed by ‘outsiders’ and they are influenced by the academic culture, the culture specific a particular university, faculty and school; each may be in contestation.

The roles of the stakeholders (internal to the program)

There are four sets of stakeholders who are centrally involved in the program structure: the student, the workplace supervisor, the academic facilitator and the convenor. The course has been designed so that the expectations of students are that they should learn, become involved as a task developer of their own work project, self-evaluate their progress, act as a researcher (both for their workplace task and for their developing ‘knowledge’), and that they should develop their personal concept of self as worker-researcher. The expectation placed upon each supervisor is to be mentor, line manager (for the student activities), task devisor and workplace specialist.

The role of the academic facilitator is more likely to develop according to the expectations of the other stakeholders. This role is: of one who can ‘conceptualise practice’ (i.e. use accepted theoretical constructions to illuminate specific action); an expert paper, report, research article, submission writer (but not necessarily as an expert practitioner – academics tend to have specialised expertise rather than an extensive history of being in the field); a creator of abstract concepts that have
meaning beyond the workplace; a research mentor; a responder to the interactions initiated by the student; and as a selector of their own mode of involvement.

This complex role of course convenor needs to respond to conflicting expectations of all of the stakeholders both within and outside the program. Each set of expectations includes the following sub-roles: as manager of the course, as boundary setter for all of the above roles, as mediator for the above roles as tasks are selected, negotiated, developed, changed, and completed, as an advocate for each of the above roles as they relate to the workplace administration and as a translator/explicator. This latter component requires an ability to construct the world from different points of view and according to different assumptions, (e.g. from the point of view of the ‘theory first, practice afterwards’ academic to the practice first, ‘theory-as-holding-form’ position of the pragmatist, the eclectic or the constructivist) and then putting this into the appropriate language. Ultimately, the convenor is an academic who holds specialist knowledge and this study is designed partly to identify the kinds of ‘academic’ knowledge this needs to be.

**Evolution of the course**

During the years that this course has been operating a number of studies have been undertaken for different purposes and have resulted in an evaluation of the course, conference papers and journal publications. These studies are now revisited briefly in order to understand the validity of the claims to come.

**Evaluation of the Course (1994)**

When the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice first ran the course in 1994, we collected comments from all of the stakeholders: students, academics, and workplace supervisors (Bates & Roebuck, 1995). The students spoke primarily of the value of applying theory to practice, the emphasis on independent learning, and the value of experiencing a potential employment situation; they also made a
number of unsolicited comments about their own personal growth and the
development of personal communication skills. The academic facilitators were
universally confident that the course was a valuable addition to the degree; they
all accepted that student supervision was an appropriate responsibility for
academics in the School. All reported that they had been able to choose students
in placements that were within their own particular area of expertise.

Most of the 14-workplace supervisors said that they tried to structure the overall
work to coincide with the assessment demands of the university and expressed a
high level of interest in the students and their studies. They all wanted to provide
appropriate augmentation to the degree program to meet the needs of the students,
and most reported that the backup for students provided by university staff was
adequate. They all believed that the benefit for students was multi-layered with
particular benefits attached to the students’ ultimate choice of a career. All
stressed as important the fact that the course challenged students often to the limit
of their capabilities.

After this initial evaluation and the additional information I was able to glean
from student journals it became obvious that the students’ immediate written
reflections on their experiences were likely to hold some important information.
In 1994 I instituted a policy of obtaining permission from students to retain a copy
of their journal and the right to publish selected excerpts with due protection of
each student’s anonymity.

An evaluative case study (1996)

In 1996 I conducted a collaborative study with a workplace supervisor and two
students for a conference presentation (Bates, Hardacre, Gant, & Wilkie, 1997) to
have a more developed understanding of the fine-grained processes of the
placement experience. The students provided their reasons for choosing the
placements, their expectations, anxieties and self-doubts. Their descriptions
included reflections upon the process, particularly focussing on their decisions
associated with different levels of confrontation associated with specific challenges.

In the same study the workplace supervisor outlined what he regarded as the mutual benefits of the placement process for his organisation and for the students. He highlighted that the organisation gained not only a useful product as a result of the student’s work, but also constructive feedback about procedures that are informed by new knowledge and ideas. In return, the student gained by being involved in the “real time exposure of the workings of an active unit” (Bates et al., 1997, p.14) in an organisation as well as the opportunity to be appraised of recruitment procedures. The supervisor also highlighted the fact that the participating organisation needed to be cognisant of the costs associated in offering a work placement: for example, lowered productivity by the supervisor for the period of the placement, the need to provide appropriate facilities in order for the student to be a productive member of the team and produce work to an acceptable standard for the organisation (not necessarily the University). In some circumstances there are additional costs associated with conducting relevant security clearances for both the student and the University convenor in order for them to have access to, and work with, confidential information. The supervisor also identified that the University needed to account for matching student characteristics with the requirements of a particular placement and or the particular project task to be completed. He provided the example that in his organisation the student needed to be willing to be involved in the security check, be “self motivated and capable of working with minimal supervision” (Bates et al., 1997, pp.16-17) within a team environment and understand the operationalisation of confidentiality.

The Griffith Graduate Project (1999-2004)

This project, conducted by the Griffith Institute of Higher Education (GIHE), commenced in 1999 with the agenda of identifying the generic skills and abilities that Griffith University wanted its graduates to obtain during their study to
complement their discipline knowledge so that their opportunities for employment was enhanced (Griffith University, 2000). This was in direct response to a number of studies (Atkins 1999, Bennett, Dunne, & Carre 2000, Gallagher 2000, Harvey, Moon & Geall 1997 cited in Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini, 2004a) and commissioned reports (Coopers & Lybrand 1998, AC Nielson Research Services 2000, cited in Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini, 2002, Auchlích 1990, cited in Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini, 2004b) that were highly critical of the apparent lack of community engagement by universities in Australia. In June 2001 the writer’s involvement in the research project was sought because the course Field Placement in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice had been identified in earlier stages of the project as an example of best practice in what has become known as cooperative education.

Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, and Cragolini identified cooperative education “as an intermediate step between study and employment, work placements provide both a platform of consolidation and springboard of opportunity for students” (Crebert et al., 2004b, p.67). In another article they concluded that both “graduates and employers felt strongly that industry involvement…exposed students to ‘real world’ problems and gave them experience in meeting deadlines and managing their time” (Crebert et al., 2004a, p.162). The next stage of the research, which compared the graduates who completed a work placement with those graduates who did not, found that those graduates who did not have a work placement “perceived that even though a work placement might not have given them a greater advantage in finding employment, it certainly would have helped them in their subsequent career development” (Crebert et al., 2003, p.12). This study also confirmed that the graduates who had completed a work placement were more exposed to the direct influence of the academic staff that emphasised the importance and the applicability of generic skills and ability.
Mapping the Field of Criminal Justice Employment (2001)

In this study (Wimshurst, Bates, & Wortley, 2002) the researchers were interested in determining whether any differences in career choice existed between students taking Field Placement and those students who chose not to. It yielded results that were similar to the findings in the studies just presented. It also showed that students who completed Field Placement did not utilise the University’s job search and skill development services as much as the non-Field Placement students. Another finding that emerged showed that students who completed Field Placement tended to choose from a far wider range of careers than those who did not.

Overall judgements (Does the course work?)

During the first year in which the Field Placement course was conducted, students involved in the course were surveyed on an instrument designed by the Griffith Institute of Higher Education to evaluate the effectiveness of Griffith University courses. When this system was discontinued in 1995, I developed my own version of the original survey and continued the practice. Every time the course has been implemented, students have rated it at level six or above on a seven point Likert scale, with level seven being defined as outstanding for both teaching and learning.

If we are to answer the question ‘Does the course work?’ we not only need to review the formal evaluations but need to return to the student journals for direct feedback. Fiona, after her change of placement and quite different experiences in each wrote:

*Field Placement was a worthwhile experience - my learning goals were met and my thoughts, beliefs and values were also challenged by the experience. I feel this subject offers the opportunity for a different style of education and one that is rich in experiential learning and growth. It is*
definitely a subject that has immense value - this not only extends academically and professionally, but personally.

It should be noted that this account reflects how the program was working in 1996. This student’s insights still represent for me the kind of high-water mark I continue to expect. My own learnings continue to be in the area of how I can use my role to provide suitably challenging experiences as well as being a safety net if the student either panics or slips.

Kelly reflected on her placement experience and wrote that the highlight of her learning was her understanding of the place of empathy in counselling people with a diverse range of difficulties. She also wrote in her journal that:

*I'm learning a great deal about how the prison system really works (not just how it theoretically should which...will help me in later career paths).*

Malcolm described his learning in detail and again it was couched in language that was not related to direct ‘theory’. He identified a growth in his confidence, a greater understanding of *office politics*, and a valuing of his success as a result of developing his self-discipline in order to complete his project. He wrote:

*One of the main things I have learned is that nothing compares to actual experience. I have been doing this degree for the past three years and, although the theory is important, I have learnt so much from just one semester’s worth of Field Placement. All these things will help me, both in and out of the workforce.*

Malcolm was the student who had been accepted into the police academy and he noted as part of his final journal entry:

*Thanks for giving me a kick up the butt when I needed it, and thanks for the encouragement when I needed it too.*

One of the earliest students of Field Placement, Althea, finished her journal by noting that it was *both positive and harrowing*, but also noted that:
...I learnt that I could function independently to produce a quality product. ... This experience has also had an effect on my confidence...and has gone a long way to finally stress that I am capable of doing things on my own and doing them well.

The theme of becoming independent and autonomous, both personally and in their learning, was a common theme in most journals and many were also conscious that the autonomy was associated with responsibility and accountability. Bronson, who completed his placement in the Queensland Police Service, commented in his final journal entry that it had provided him with the opportunity to discover [its] internal culture. He continued his reflection by quoting Plato:

...‘The direction in which education starts a man, will determine his future’ [and] this experience has definitely helped to determine mine.

It is interesting to see how these journal entries cast a more personal light on the formal evaluation data.

**Conclusion**

The workplace supervisor and the academic facilitator play a very important role in the students’ opportunity to learn while completing their work placement. But, a detailed consideration of student feedback (see Chapter Five) indicates that it is the convenor who sets the climate for both the structure and the interventions that are made by those who design and facilitate the students’ learning.

The implementation of the course is the responsibility of the course convenor. The structure of the course requires this person to have an overview of the whole degree program, the ability to delegate teaching tasks and assist with them when necessary, and the ability to step in and instigate a change in direction. Perhaps most importantly the course design also assumes that the convenor is able to exercise discretion when making such interventions. It is the convenor who needs the sophisticated knowledge that even if the experience does not proceed as anyone had planned initially it is still possible to turn that experience into
effective learning and to achieve a positive closure. If the convenor is to ensure that the list of purposes identified in Table 1.1 are achieved, he or she must become a broker of experiences, a breaker of expectations, a confidante, a challenger, a director, a collaborator, a facilitator and a counsellor.
Chapter 3: Relevant literature

Introduction

This literature review follows a somewhat different course to that which might be expected in a thesis of this kind. The debates and discussions about educational systems and procedures, which pass as specialised discourses in this field, tend to rest on a wide range of values and assumptions which are already inherent in the practices described.

A disturbing fault line separates theories of adult learning from the practice of those who try to help adults learn. Psychologists interested in adult learning often find themselves trapped within the framework of particular theories and paradigms, such as the behaviourist or psychoanalyst; they seldom communicate with each other let alone with educators. Philosophers, linguists, sociologists, and political scientists also have legitimate interests in adult learning, but each group has a different frame of reference and a different vocabulary for interpreting the phenomena. Few efforts have been made to develop a synthesis of the different theories that educators of adults can use.

(Mezirow, 1991, p.xi)

Attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of practice in the field of workplace-based education courses tend therefore to rest upon deeply held (and often deeply contested) values built into the very nature of the social institutions which house and sponsor the courses.

If this thesis is seriously to explore what might constitute ‘best practice’ in this field, it must commence by providing an account of the historical antecedents of workplace-based learning. Only by considering how we got to where we are, can we begin to question seriously the relevance and purpose of the value systems inherent in the practices being described in this or any other case study research.
Those unfamiliar with the literature of adult education tend to use the processes that they themselves have experienced in universities or public schools – practices that are often dysfunctional with adults and are incompatible with the prevailing consensus among writers in the field of adult education.

(Mezirow, 1991, p.xi)

We can only helpfully suggest details and potential directions for change when we are aware why the status quo exists as it does, whose interests it serves, and how such changes are likely to be received by existing stakeholders.

Later in the thesis as certain other ideas become useful to critically examine current practice some of the threads identified in this review will be picked up again. In Chapter Eight, the discussion returns to the present state of our knowledge about learning and raises a number of considerations related to the nature of praxis, the place of objectivity, and the importance of professional autonomy in our current understanding of how practitioners and academics can lay the foundations for agreed upon positive social changes.

**Historical perspectives**

The concept of *realism* in education dates back to the seventeenth century: it “…connotes concrete knowledge, practical and vocational skills, the learning of language…and the study of politics, the sciences and law” (Good, 1969, p.175). John Locke, one of the founders of empiricism in that he advanced the notion “that all ideas are derived from experience” and extolled the virtues of his four guiding principles of education: these were the “principles of utility, rationality, practice, and direct experience” (Copleston, 1985c, p.405) and have remained at the heart of workplace based education ever since.

With the social dislocation caused by the Industrial Revolution, urban poverty grew to crisis proportions and by the end of the 18th century, political revolutions in America and France set the stage for the social realist ideas that began to be put into practice in the more liberal institutions of the enlightenment era. But very
large class sizes, the dearth of teacher training and the employment of many incompetent individuals as teachers meant that educational practice in both Church and state schools often descended into brutality. There are many accounts of beatings and overt cruelty administered to young people in the name of extrinsic motivation. Not surprisingly these schools did not achieve their aims: and it was out of this milieu that the educational philosophies of Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and John Dewey (1859-1952) emerged. Montessori was a brilliant teacher who advocated a curriculum, which emphasised hands-on experience along with step-by-step developmental stages of learning. Dewey was a pragmatist and as a philosopher wanted

…to get rid of the ‘spectator theory of knowledge’. According to this theory we have on the one hand the knower and on the other hand the object of knowledge which is entirely unaffected by the process of knowing. We are then faced with the problem of finding a bridge between the process of knowing which takes place wholly within the spectator-subject and the object, which is indifferent to being known. If, however, we understand that the object of knowledge as such comes into being through the process of knowing this difficulty does not arise. … [Dewey] intends to depict the process of knowing as a highly developed form of the active relation between an organism and its environment, a relation whereby a change is effected in the environment. In other words, he is concerned with giving a naturalistic account of knowledge and with excluding any concept of it as a mysterious phenomenon. … He is also concerned with uniting theory and practice. Hence knowledge is represented as being itself a doing or making rather than, as in the so-called spectator theory, a ‘seeing’.

[emphasis mine] (Copleston, 1985b, pp.358-359)

In his early educational work ‘School and Society’ published in 1899, Dewey directed special attention to the educational changes which had resulted from the industrial revolution (Good, 1969). He wanted the educational process to become a miniature of the society around it and to bear the closest possible relation to that larger society. He saw all educational institutions as agencies for resolving social and intellectual conflicts and so revived the conflict model originally proposed by Locke. This same model was later to inform the practices that have become known as andragogy (Knowles, 1970, 1979, 1984). Dewey advocated that in education, “…the occupations of common life and industry were to be introduced, not as special subjects or for vocational purposes but as the centre of the general
Chapter 3: Relevant Literature

curriculum and model for teaching method” (Good, 1969, p.487). Most of the literature on reflective practice (e.g. Schön, 1983, 1987b) including much of the most recent material (e.g. Demetrion, 2000) rely heavily upon the philosophical and theoretical base established by Dewey during the first half of the 20th century.

Progressivism versus accountability: the educational debate of the 20th century

The new ‘science of education’ referred to earlier which emerged as a critique of the school systems in the later part of the 19th century gathered momentum after each of the two world wars. In the book ‘Education and the Cult of Efficiency’, (Callahan, 1962) a blow-by-blow account of the rise of the managerialist culture in education and of the slow and apparently relentless process of the commodification of knowledge between 1890s and 1960s is provided. Callahan indicates that there are major consequences of this process. Firstly, knowledge, far from being a system of socially valued constructs, theories and practices, which is freely shared and generally accessible, becomes a thing to be guarded and dispensed by a privileged class of ‘knowers’ to a largely ignorant populace. Secondly, the consumers of this knowledge are seen generally as recipients of medicine that even if not particularly good for them are good for the society and the existing hegemonies and institutions in which they are expected to work. Students must be educated to make a contribution that justifies the expense of educating them and this kind of assembly model of education has been reinforced by the adoption of both business and military metaphors. We find the literature littered with terms like ‘efficiency’, ‘standardisation’, ‘knowledge production’ and ‘performance indicators’; they are also mixed with military metaphors like ‘targets’, ‘target populations’, ‘strategies’, ‘logistics’, ‘competitive advantage’, and even ‘patriotism’. Vice Admiral H. G. Rickover in his report to Congress in 1962 blamed “…the Dewey-Kilpatrick theory of progressive education” (Rickover, 1963, p.118) for what he regarded as the national failure of the American education system. There seems to be a deep and unquestioned assumption in the work of such behaviourist and system theory oriented critics of
progressive education that educational motivation must be supplied by external
(i.e. extrinsic) rewards and punishments if students are to learn. Such critics seem
to be at their most suspicious when the learner is actually enjoying learning.

**Workplace education: emergent themes and issues**

After the Second World War, the nations of the west entered a period of
unprecedented economic and technological development, which in turn placed
great pressures on the existing education systems. Initially, post war reconstruction
required the training and re-training of the workforce and the unfolding of the new
cold war. The ever-present threat of nuclear devastation meant that there was an
overwhelming demand for skilled professionals in the scientific and technological
areas.

The post war baby boom, together with the urgent priority for universal secondary
education meant that education systems were under-resourced and placed under
ever increasing scrutiny. This made them the subjects of numerous critiques such
as the one cited above. Not only was there an arms race, there was also an
education race and a new knowledge explosion which found its expression in the
triumphalism of the American Space program and in a brave new world of
unbridled economic consumption.

During the 1960s, criticism of the institutions of education began to come from
another source as well: disillusionment with the war in Vietnam and a general
frustration with what radical critics saw as the complacent and overbearing values
of the establishment meant that the new population of tertiary students began to
demand much more of a say in what was happening to them. The stage was set for
a revival of the progressive ideas of Dewey and others and for a re-evaluation of
what became known as the ‘hidden curriculum’ (see, for example Anyon, 1980).
This re-evaluation tended to spill over into the workplace and new theories of
management resulted in a slow revolution in how people thought about work and
in particular the role of the ‘professional’ at the time.
The rise of the new professionalism

In discussing the expanding role of ‘the professional’ during the 1960s and 1970s, Schön remarks “[t]he success of the professionals was thought to be due, in short, to the explosion of the ‘knowledge industry’ whose output it was the function of the professional to apply with rigor, probity, and ‘community orientation’ to the goals and problems of American life” (Schön, 1983, p.8).

As Schön pointed out, even in 1963, the new professionalism was a topic of considerable comment both in the literature and the popular media. “There were many references (by John Kennedy in his commencement address at Yale in 1962) to a second scientific revolution which [is] producing a ‘knowledgeable society’, an ‘active society’, a ‘post-industrial society’, organised around professional competence” (Schön, 1983, pp.7-8). By 1983, the increase in claims by various communities of practice to the title ‘profession’ was growing apace. “The success of the professions was thought to be due, in short, to the explosion of the ‘knowledge industry’ whose output was the function of the professional to apply, with rigor, probity, and “community orientation” to the goals of American life” (Schön, 1983, p.8). The term “…‘profession’ does not describe any actual occupation; rather, it provides a way of thinking about occupations” (Robson, Bailey, & Larkin, 2004, p.184). Robson et al. prefer to use the concept in the way that Clarke and Newman (1997) do by referring to ‘profession’ as a term that denotes a particular occupational and organisational strategy. Robson et al. (2004, p.184) note how the notion of professionalism is socially constructed and constructed to represent the outcome of ongoing contestation between different individuals and groups in specific societal contexts. These authors see what they refer to as the ‘discourse of the profession’ as a part of the kind of contestation discussed by Foucault (cited in Robson et al., 2004) that empowers (or disempowers) different actors. They refer to the discussion by Parker (1990) and Francis (1999) which shows how discourses like this not only conflict with one another, but also support institutions and power relations and refer specifically to
the conflict between the discourse of professionalism and the discourse of managerialism (cited in Robson et al., 2004).

Furlong, Barton, Miles and Whitty observe that:

The three concepts of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility central to a traditional notion of professionalism are often seen as inter-related. It is because professionals face complex and unpredictable situations that they need a specialised body of knowledge; if they are to apply that knowledge, it is argued that they need the autonomy to make their own judgements. Given that they have autonomy, it is essential that they act with responsibility – collectively they need to develop appropriate professional values. (2000, p.5 cited in Robson et al., 2004, pp.184-185)

This idea that each ‘profession’ possesses a monopoly of some esoteric and difficult body of knowledge is at the centre of claims to expertise by the professions and hence to power, influence and status. It also underpins the key ideas of accountability usually to peers rather than management and of claims to a trust in professional relations that mean the profession has prime allegiance to his or her client before any employing authority (Robson et al., 2004).

One of the arguments for including professional training under the umbrella of the universities that was advanced during the 1960s and 1970s was the notion of professional autonomy. There are lengthy discussions in the literature associated with each of the emerging professions about the nature and extents of the autonomy practitioners are expected to exercise in their workplaces. Each occupation laying claim to professional status now feels the need to embrace a body of theoretical knowledge as its own and this has led to the rapid emergence of a number of ‘disciplines’ which are seen as legitimate areas for academic (or at least ‘applied academic’) study in the 21st century.

Several recent Australian authors (see e.g. Higher Education Council (HEC) Report cited in Clanchy & Ballard, 1995, Lyons & Brown, 2001, Te Waita, 2001) note that universities now need to begin to provide for a much wider range of vocational choices for their graduates. Nunan (1999, cited in Bell, Crebert, Patrick, Bates, & Cagnolini, 2003, p.4) claims that there are “market advantages
for those institutions who understand that the rules of the game have changed. …
[Newer] universities…are beginning to provide information to employers about
their graduates’ skills and attributes as a way of diluting the reputation advantage
of the larger established institutions”. Other writers in Australia confirm this: for
example, Briggs and Cooper claim that

In most Western countries, higher education is undergoing rapid change. It is now expected to contribute directly to the national economic effort by producing well-trained, highly competent specialists to meet business and industry needs. Greater efficiencies are expected in an increasingly competitive global environment. Each institution competes within and outside its own country for a distinctive image, intake of students and placement of students in off-campus fieldwork.

Over the past decade, universities have made the transition from a selective, elitist approach to a system of mass higher education, leading to a change in the student profile. (Briggs & Cooper, 2000, pp.113-114)

The irony is that all of this is occurring in the climate of a ‘crisis of confidence and legitimacy’ for the professions that was identified by Schön. In 1983 he had already claimed that:

…the professions are in the midst of a crisis of confidence and legitimacy. In public outcry, in social criticism, in the complaints of the professionals themselves, the long-standing professional claim to a monopoly of knowledge and social control is challenged – first, because professionals do not live up to the values and norms which they espouse, and second, because they are ineffective.

Professionals claim to contribute to social well-being, put their clients’ needs ahead of their own, and hold themselves accountable to standards of competence and morality. But both popular and scholarly critics accuse the professions of serving themselves at the expense of their clients, ignoring their obligations to public service, and failing to police themselves effectively. (Schön, 1983, pp.11-12)

Instead of abating, this crisis appears to be deepening even further, with an increasingly litigious public regularly expressing their discontent and with governments and the media all too ready to lay the blame for perceived problems at the feet of the professions and the institutions responsible for their credentialing. Steven Shardlow states:
Universities have two fundamental legal responsibilities:

- An obligation to provide a ‘duty of care’ in respect of all individuals and organisations with which the university has dealings. This obligations should be exercised with ‘due diligence’ – the university must take reasonable steps to take account of information received using it to identify and act on hazards, thus minimising risks to students, agencies and staff;

- An obligation to comply with specific legislation governing citizens’ behaviour, including occupational health and safety and anti-discrimination legislation, and equal opportunity and confidentiality provisions in the workplace. (Shardlow, 2000, p.118)

What Schön said is even truer today:

The crisis of confidence in the professions, and perhaps also the decline in professional self-image, seems to be rooted in a growing scepticism about professional effectiveness in the larger sense, a sceptical reassessment of the professions’ actual contribution to society’s well-being through the delivery of competent services based on special knowledge.

(Schön, 1983, p.13)

And despite much research and academic writing about ‘competencies’ and ‘generic skills’ the reasons he gave still ring true. He refers to information from Harvey Brooks and Russell Ackoff and concludes:

Professionals are called upon to perform tasks for which they have not been educated, and ‘the niche no longer fits the education, or the education not longer fits the niche’. … What is called for, under these conditions, is not only the analytic techniques which have been traditional in operations research, but the active, synthetic skill of ‘designing a desirable future and inventing ways of bringing it about’.

(Schön, 1983, pp.14-15, 16)

Schön argues that far from teaching a vast body of specialised knowledge, those involved in the preparation of professionals should be engaged in teaching the ‘unknown’. He quotes Brooks as stating that each “unique case calls for an art of practice which ‘might be taught if it were constant and known, but it is not constant’” [emphasis mine] (Schön, 1983, p.17). He continues, expressing this view that the only way to approach such an endeavour is through the deliberate use of a conflict model:
Each view of professional practice represents a way of functioning in situations of indeterminacy and value conflict, but the multiplicity of conflicting views poses a predicament for the practitioner who must choose among multiple approaches to practice or devise his own way of combining them. (Schön, 1983, p.17)

He elaborates on this by referring to the aesthetic element that is inherent in all quality practice – it is what makes some practice ‘good’ and other practice ‘best practice’:

If it is true that there is an irreducible element of art in professional practice, it is also true that gifted engineers, teachers, scientists, architects, and managers sometimes display artistry in their day-to-day practice. If the art is not invariant, known, and teachable, it appears nonetheless, at least for some individuals, to be learnable. (Schön, 1983, p.18)

He goes on to argue that value conflict and conflicts over decision-making lie at the core of ‘artful’ practice, and asks rhetorically “Why…leading professionals and educators find these phenomenon so disturbing?” He concludes that:

…they are disturbed because they have no satisfactory way of describing or accounting for the artful competence which practitioners sometimes reveal in what they do. They find it unsettling to be unable to make sense of these processes in terms of the model of professional knowledge which they have largely taken for granted. … [emphasis mine]

Professionals have been disturbed to find that they cannot account for processes they have come to see as central to professional competence. It is difficult for them to imagine how to describe and teach what might be meant by making sense of uncertainty, performing artistically, setting problems, and choosing among competing professional paradigms, when these processes seem mysterious in the light of the prevailing model of professional knowledge.

We are bound to an epistemology of practice which leaves us at a loss to explain, or even to describe, the competences to which we now give overriding importance. (Schön, 1983, pp.19-20)

This, then, is the first question this thesis must address: What is this ‘knowledge’ and what would an appropriate epistemology of practice actually look like? Will it continue to be a bank of factual and theoretical knowledge that covers as many
cases as possible, backed up by ‘specialist skills’, which are in turn backed up by ‘generic skills’, as our current language tells us? Or will it be different? Is Schön right: does it have an aesthetic dimension that acknowledges feeling as well as objectivity? For an answer we must turn to some theories of ‘action knowledge’.

Towards an epistemology of practice

Schön’s work indicates a need for a definition of professional competence to go beyond the mere external attributes of specific ‘behaviours’. Competencies and skills may be better thought of as stepping-stones to something greater: to an ‘epistemology of practice’ that incorporates action at its centre.

In the social sciences, Kurt Lewin was an important pioneer and “actionable knowledge” (Argyris, 1993, p.1) illustrates the new attitude towards theory. Like Dewey, Lewin saw his task as using social science in the service of democracy and democratic values. For him, sound theory was practical and always integrated with practice; Lewin “…framed the social sciences as the study of problems…[and]…elected to study problems that were critical for society…he was concerned about promoting leadership and democracy, educating informed and responsible citizens, and reducing prejudice of all kinds” (Argyris, 1993, p.8).

Not only this, but Lewin regarded the kind of knowledge possessed by the new class of professionals as being qualitatively different from the absolutist ‘theory’ of the past. The pragmatist concepts of theory he embraced had a much more utilitarian ring to them and, particularly in the social sciences, theory began to be seen as valuable more as sets of useful approximations which led to constructive action in the conduct of human affairs than as attempts to state any kind of unchanging ‘truth’.

Because Lewin always framed his research questions in the context of closely observed real-life problems, he was always focussed on contested views of reality held by different stakeholders. He saw the purpose of his work as the resolution of these problems, which were manifest as either inter, or intra-personal conflicts.
into overt action to be taken by the individuals concerned. This process, Lewin called action research and he developed the idea into a fully articulated pragmatic theory: “Responsibility to understand, and initiative to act were core features of [Lewin’s] sense of stewardship. …[He] advised minorities that, in addition to confronting the bigotry of the oppressors, they also had to examine their own bigotry and their willingness to be disempowered” (Argyris, 1993, p.10). To this extent the ‘subjects’ of Lewin’s research became his ‘clients’ and in effect his concept of actionable knowledge meant that the activities of research and teaching became fused together into a set of values concerned with improving the client’s quality of life and an ever increasing accessible store of procedural ‘knowledge in context’.

Lewin’s research strategy was deceptively simple and is described in several of his own works (Lewin, 1946, ,1952) as well as that of others (e.g. Elliott, 1991, Kemmis, Stephen & McTaggart, 1988a, ,1988b, McTaggart, 1991a). Working with the stakeholders (i.e. those experiencing the ‘problem’ or ‘conflict’) Lewin would first attempt to set the boundaries by defining the ‘whole’. He would then attempt to use the stakeholders’ knowledge to help them differentiate and describe the parts, concentrating on careful observation of details. Then still working with the stakeholders, he would embark on a process of reflection with them to draw and develop metaphors for cause and effect relationships between the parts. Together they would then ‘chunk’ these representations and relevant variables into “micro-causal theories” (Argyris, 1993, p.10). These micro-causal theories usually existed as procedural propositions that could be implemented and tested in action in another context.

As always, Lewin’s criterion for validity was the extent to which this new knowledge was useful in the new and immediate context. Any more generalisable meanings were relevant but secondary considerations: the problem was always the issue at hand. McTaggart notes that although Lewin thought of his work as both pragmatic and even experimental, he “…never used the term ‘hypothesis’ in his prescription for action research and it seems that he avoided it for good reason. For Lewin, action in the situation was the focus. Probes were not merely to
investigate effects, but constituted the most appropriate thing to do in the circumstances which might lead to improvement and increased understanding” (McTaggart, 1991b, p.10). He goes on to identify the epistemological problem addressed by action research: he claims that it is not “…the absence of other conceptions of generalisation it was that positivist social science had denied the relevance of the less formal notions of generalisation extant in the hermeneutic and critical intellectual traditions, and of those necessary in every day life” (McTaggart, 1991b, p.11). Instead of establishing new generalisations and scientific ‘laws’, he advocates an inductive approach to inquiry that uses concepts like “Stake’s (1978) ‘naturalistic generalisation’ which provides an epistemological link between the study of the particular [in order to] arrive at more general understandings” (McTaggart, 1991b, p.11) about the likely outcomes of action in particular circumstances. As Agryis puts it, Lewin “…was the pioneer researcher-intervener” (Argyris, 1993, p.10), and as I will argue later in this thesis this notion of intervention has far-reaching implications for the practice of what I have called ‘action-teaching’ (see Chapter One).

The need to incorporate subject accounts of experience presented a real problem for the theory maker. Drawing on the work of Rummelhart and Norman, Knowles, Holton, & Swanson (1998) argue that we can see learning functioning in three different modes:

1. accretion – learning new facts and slotting them into existing places in the cognitive schemata;
2. tuning – refers to slow and incremental changes to the cognitive schemata as new experiences are assimilated;
3. restructuring – involves the creation of new schema and new relationships between those that already exist (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998, p140).

These modes of learning involve putting new experiences and feelings into language. The schema theory and memory research developed by Jonassen and Grabowski (1993) is closely related to the notion of mental models advanced by Senge who sees these as “deeply held internal images of how the world works,
images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting” (Senge, 1990, p174). Senge claims that although they are essential for everyday functioning they can also impede change because individuals resist changes that do not fit existing mental models or involve the restructuring of deeply held schema. Knowles et al. claim that “to become more effective learners adults have to identify their mental models, test them and then learn how to change them” (Knowles et al., 1998, p141). This they claim is the same process that Donald Schön refers to as ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1987a).

Because Lewin’s work addressed learning through practice it had direct implications for education generally. In the UK, concern had already been expressed that the kinds of knowledge being produced/constructed by conventional educational research had very little relevance for teachers or for their day-to-day practice. In fact, Bantock (1969) found after a broad survey of educators that, unlike professionals in other fields, they very rarely subscribed to professional journals and few were prepared to acknowledge that they had ever read any educational research at all. There was, however, an anomaly: despite their lack of attention to research there had been a growing movement of curriculum reform throughout the English speaking world during the 1960s and early 1970s which was based on ‘common-sense’ demands expressed by students and educators alike.

This and similar findings motivated writers like Lawrence Stenhouse, John Elliott and Barry McDonald in the United Kingdom, Robert Stake, Neil Postman and Paul Goodman in the United States and Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart in Australia, to begin to focus much less on ‘educational theory’ and much more on the direct observation of what was actually going on in classrooms at all levels of education. All owed a debt to the work of Carl Rogers (discussed later) and the contribution made by his notion of ‘non-directive teaching’ to the discourse of pedagogy. In 1975, Stenhouse’s book ‘An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development’ examined a number of possible models for ‘curriculum’ (i.e. what is being learned) and challenged the prevailing wisdom of the content models which sought to specify the knowledge to be learned in advance and in
propositional terms (Stenhouse, 1975). He also drew attention to major flaws in what he called the ‘objectives model’ which was based on concepts of training that had been strongly influenced by reductive behaviourist assumptions about learning – often drawn from studies on animals. Also during the 1960s and 1970s the accountability movement in education was placing increasing importance on ‘educational measurement’ and was increasingly relying on tightly defined behavioural objectives to drive educational practice. Stenhouse was also critical of the training model and its associated reification of ‘skills’. He offered instead his concept of a ‘process model’ based not on particular pre-ordinate outcomes but rather on the intrinsic merit inherent in the action concerned with learning as it happens. He suggested that an appropriate form of curriculum specification might include objectives and content as suggested areas for attention, but should concentrate on a set of value-based ‘principles of procedure’ that would serve as criteria to guide the selection of appropriate learning actions (or activities) (Stenhouse, 1975).

Such principles, Stenhouse argued, would best be developed by research which analyses the processes involved in educational action; he advocated Lewian action research as being the most appropriate methodology for studies into effective teaching practices. The principles of procedure which can be derived from a detailed and fine-grained study of effective educational practice would enable educational evaluation to “…lead the curriculum rather than follow it” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.126). Thus, his process model of curriculum is seamlessly integrated with a research model of curriculum, which pays particular attention to observing effective practice, reflecting upon its nature, and then developing and designing subsequent steps in that practice. Education, learning and teaching according to the advocates of action research become a dynamic and developing set of practices which are always moving forward and generating personal and social improvement.

There were other developments of action research in fields beyond education after Lewin’s death, which led to a large body of literature, scattered through a wide range of specialist professional journals. This literature attempts to deal with
problems arising in workplaces and has specific applicability to particular professional workplaces. It also underlines a new generic approach to the problems to the distribution of power that has direct relevance to this thesis.

McTaggart’s work shows how issues of social justice lie very close to the surface of any likely ‘epistemology of practice’. Action research developed a strong ideological flavour which is loaded with humanistic and democratic social values as Kemmis points out: “Inevitably the action research becomes involved in creating change not in artificial settings where effects can be studied and reported dispassionately, but in the real world of social practice. In action research, the intention to affect social practice stands shoulder to shoulder with the intention to understand it” [emphasis mine] (Kemmis, Stephen, 1988, p.33).

Thus, research into ‘action learning’ is predicated on an understanding of action (i.e. an epistemology of action), which is indistinguishable from the knowledge acquired by research into action in various ‘fields’ or ‘sites’ of action. These fields or sites are the locales of ‘production’ in its broadest sense and are valued by the society: they are the societies’ workplaces. Donald Schön’s argument was that educational process is intricately enmeshed not merely with ‘knowledge about’ these workplaces and what they do, but with the very processes and action of work itself (Schön, 1983, 1987b, Schön 1991). Any analysis of the skills and knowledge necessary for a practitioner must be the result of a reflection on the process of work itself.

The construction of such knowledge became the basis for what Malcolm Knowles called andragogy and involved the learner’s acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding; not only about the work they were preparing for, but intimately tied to the context of the work (Knowles, 1970, 1979). Consequently, andragogy has become not merely a study about work it has become the study of work and encompasses ‘knowledge in work’. According to Knowles it is only in this way that competent professionals can be prepared.
Knowles’s distinction between ‘Andragogy’ and ‘Pedagogy’ meant that assumptions about the role of teacher (or ‘instructor’) needed to be re-evaluated. When considering the learning of adults, the Rogerian concepts of ‘student centred learning’ and ‘non-directive teaching’ could be applied without arousing anxieties about ‘motivation’. Knowles assumed that an adult learner is to a large extent intrinsically motivated (Knowles et al., 1998) and inferred that while systematic instructional design theories can well be employed to create time efficient learning tasks for the acquisition of particular skills, the use of extrinsic system of rewards and punishments is largely unnecessary. Knowles’s work, therefore, concentrates much more on the idea of teacher as ‘facilitator’.

Donald Schön’s work begins to develop an epistemology of practice. In ‘The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action’ (Schön, 1983) he describes what a variety of different professional groups actually do when they are working and then attempts to discuss what the ‘art’ of practice actually consists of. His conclusion is that there are both patterns and limitations to what he calls ‘reflection-in-action’ and that these define the territory as the practitioner engages in “reflective conversations” with peers, clients, and others interested in the work. He sees this ‘art’ as being intuitive judgements ‘about’ theories in action that always leave “…a gap between such representations and the reality to which they refer” and intuitive judgements about the action itself. This latter form of intuition he calls “…an internal strategy of representation embodied in the practitioner’s feel for artistic performance” and notes that this too is “…frequently incongruent with the strategies used to construct external descriptions of it”. He continues “…people who do things well often give what appear to be good descriptions of their procedures which others cannot follow” (Schön, 1983, p.276). This difficulty he attributes to the immediacy of the action itself.

Schön’s second book ‘Educating the Reflective Practitioner’ highlights his message that professional education needs to be redesigned and he argues in his chapter ‘How a Reflective Practicum Can Bridge the Worlds of University and Practice’ for the introduction of “…a reflective practicum into the complex
intellectual institutional, and political context of contemporary professional schools” (Schön, 1987b, p.305). He asks:

- What form shall reflective practicum take?
- What shall count as a ‘project’?
- How shall projects be used?
- What kinds and levels of reflection are to be encouraged?
- At what points in the curriculum – or, more generally, the life cycle of professional development – might a reflective practicum be introduced?
- What shall be the relation of a reflective practicum in sequence and content to the courses in which disciplines are taught?
- Who shall teach the practicum?
- What kinds of research, and researchers, are essential to its development?

Such questions raise a family of secondary questions that have to do with the possible interactions between a reflective practicum and the existing systems of the professional school. (Schön, 1987b, pp.305-306)

We must add, though, that to answer those questions at anything less than a very fine-grained level for a particular context is difficult because of the multiplicity of factors that have to be taken into account. Rather than become lost in this detail, the current study is intended to raise a number of these issues at a more generic level (though still grounding them in practice) and then to advance a more encompassing contribution towards theory.

Learning as action

David Kolb and experiential learning

Another important theorist concerned with learning in practical contexts is David Kolb who began to formalise a number of existing ideas into a theory of practice that he called ‘experiential learning’. Kolb first canvasses some of the literature we have considered already and then goes on to set out what he calls
‘characteristics’ of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, pp.25-38). They are as follows:

- Learning as best conceived of as a process, not in terms of outcomes:

  Ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thoughts but are formed and re-formed through experience…[which is best] described as a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience. (Kolb, 1984, p.26)

- Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience:

  This is actually a restatement of the pragmatic philosophy of the work of William James 1890 (Kolb, 1984) and John Dewey 1938, which asserts that “new ideas stem from the conflict with old beliefs that are inconsistent with them” (Kolb, 1984, p.28).

- The process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world:

  Here Kolb is drawing upon the Lewin model that “emphasises two such dialectics – the conflict between concrete experience and abstract concepts and the conflict between observation and action. … For Dewey, the major dialectic is between the impulse that gives ideas their ‘moving force’ and reason which gives desire its direction” (Kolb, 1984, p.29). He also alludes to Piaget’s concepts of assimilation and accommodation and Freire’s notion that praxis is both a process of naming and transforming the world.

- Learning is an holistic process of adaptation to the world:

  Here Kolb refers to his own cyclical description of the experiential learning process and notes that it is mirrored in many other more specialised models: through the transformation of experience, through the central elements of experience, reflection, conceptualisation and active experimentation.
• Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment:

  Kolb distinguishes between this transactional notion and the more ‘reactional’ stimulus-response model of behaviourist theories of learning rather than being the actors who impose learning upon their student ‘subjects’ educators are better thought of as being collaborators engaged in interpersonal transactions with the learner as the learner engages in further transactions between self and the environment.

• Learning is the process of creating knowledge:

  By emphasising knowledge as being the result of a transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge, learning needs to be regarded as an oscillation between objective and subjective experiences.

  Kolb defines learning itself as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. It is the process of adaptation as opposed to content or outcomes involving a transformation process during which knowledge is being continuously created and recreated rather than transmitted. It transforms both subjective and objective experience.

  Kolb develops his notion of individuality in learning and his concept of learning styles. He draws attention to the fact that there are individual differences and predispositions towards different kinds of learning favoured by different individuals. He advances a typology of four knowledge structures: Contextualism, Formalism, Mechanism, and Organicism that tend to have a dominating influence over the way in which knowledge is perceived in different professional areas. He also claims that individuals have their own preferences for Accommodation, Convergence, Assimilation and Divergence, which in turn tend to predispose them towards different fields of inquiry and endeavour (social professions, science based professions; natural sciences and mathematics, and finally the humanities and social sciences respectively). He sees the evolution of these preferences and
their differentiation as being a direct product of the development of the life of the infant through which schemas develop into differentiated concepts, sentiments, and acts (Kolb, 1984). These result from the association of emotions with various settings and persons, which introduce continuity and meaning to the child’s experience. They result in “an increasingly conscious awareness and sophisticated control of ourselves in the world around us” (Kolb, 1984, p.136). This process he argues lasts for the entire lifetime of every human being. Thus, professional and work experience may be for better or for worse and forced specialisations can have a markedly deleteriously effect on both the competence and what he refers to as “the proper professional mentality [of]…graduates” (Kolb, 1984, p.183). He cites eight problems of professional education that were outlined by Schein:

- the professions are so specialised that they have become unresponsive to certain classes of social problems that require and interdisciplinary or interprofessional point of view…
- educational programs…early career paths, and…licensing procedures have become so rigid…that many young professionals cannot do the kind of work that they wish to do
- norms for entry into the professions have become so rigid that certain classes of applicants…are…discriminated against
- professional norms and the growing base of…knowledge have become so convergent…that it is difficult for innovations to occur in any but specialised areas
- professionals have become unresponsive to the needs of…clients…, working instead for the organisation that employs them
- professional education…provides neither training nor experience in how to work as a member of a team, how to collaborate with clients in identifying needs and possible solutions and…with other professionals on complex projects
- professional education provides no training for graduates who wish to work as…managers of intra or inter professional teams…
- professional education…[does not help] professionals to increase their self insight, their ability to diagnose and manage client relationships and complex social problems, their ability to sort out the ethical and value issues inherent in their professional role and their ability to continue to learn throughout their careers.

(Schein, 1972 p.59 cited in Kolb, 1984, pp.183-184)

**Jack Mezirow and learning as transformation**

---

Just Practice?
Mezirow outlines how a ‘transformation theory’ of learning through practice and communication is most appropriate when considering the education of adults because it calls upon concepts derived from “…constructivism, critical theory, and deconstructionism in social theory and in all of the social science, law, literature and art” (Mezirow, 1991, p.xiii). He draws upon the work of Habermas (1984) to argue that a concept of intentionality is essential if we are to develop a paradigm that can describe usefully any process of learning which is grounded in the reality of experience and the social validation of meaning. Mezirow sees this process of communicative action and consensual validation – i.e. the negotiation of shared meaning – as involving at its centre both action and rational discourse. He uses Habermas (1971) to explain the concept of communicative action as follows:

[Communicative action] is governed by binding consensual norms which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and which must be understood and recognised by at least two acting subjects. Social norms are enforced through sanctions. Their meaning is objectified in ordinary language communication.  (Mezirow, 1991, p.75)

Habermas contrasts this with “instrumental action”, which he argues depends on the validity of technical rules, and strategies that are empirically derived and analytically ‘correct’. He claims that “…the validity of social norms is grounded only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions and secured by the general recognition of obligation” (Habermas, 1971 p.92 cited in Mezirow, 1991, p.75). I will develop this idea later in Chapters Five and Six when the concept of role theory is introduced to describe the ways in which external expectations become further developed, internalised and ‘intentionalised’ in the act of teaching.

Rational discourse is for Mezirow the ultimate safeguard of autonomy in thought and action. He argues that when it fails we must rely on other forms of authority to resolve our differences (Mezirow, 1991). Thus, authority is not seen merely as usurping the place of reason in the construction of what we can know but it is also a constraint on our capacity to act. This has direct and deep value implications for
the social justice professions and on how their members need to construct their own knowledge if it is to serve rather than dominate the will of the society.

Mezirow develops his transformation theory of learning through practice by drawing initially on the work of Gregory Bateson (1972) and its further development by Edward Cell (1984). These writers claim that there are four categories of learning. The first “…includes habitual and stereotypic responses to information received through pre-existing, known categories of meaning – what has been aptly described ‘recipe learning’ – as well as rote learning, in which one behaviour becomes the stimulus for another behaviour. The only thing that changes within a meaning scheme is a specific response” (Mezirow, 1991, p.93). Essentially this refers to the ‘filing away’ of existing information, concepts, and behaviours into pre-existing categories.

The second form of learning involves the creating of new “…meaning schemes – that is, creating new meanings that are sufficiently consistent and compatible with existing meaning perspectives to complement them by extending their scope. … The understanding of new areas of experience that the new meaning scheme makes possible resolves inconsistencies or anomalies within the older belief system” (Mezirow, 1991, p.94). To continue with the filing cabinet metaphor this means the addition of new files to the existing filing system.

The third form of learning is “…learning through the transformation of learning schemes. This is learning that involves reflection on assumptions. We find that our specific points of view or beliefs have become dysfunctional, and we experience a growing sense of the inadequacy of our old ways of seeing and understanding meaning” (Mezirow, 1991, p.94). This involves a major reconstruction of the old filing system.

The final form of learning involves what Mezirow refers to as “perspective transformation. This involves …becoming aware through reflection and critique of specific presuppositions upon which a distorted or incomplete meaning perspective is based and then transforming that [entire] perspective through a
reorganisation of meaning” (Mezirow, 1991, p.94). This needs to be thought of as ‘emancipatory learning’. It occurs when emotionally charged situations lack meaning or “we encounter an anomaly that cannot be given coherence either by…existing schemes or by learning new schemes. It only comes through a complete redefinition of the problem itself” (Mezirow, 1991, p.94).

Mezirow sees problem solving as central to all four forms of learning and consequently his transformation theory is also built on a conflict model. He sets out a number of what he calls ‘goals’, or ‘practice injunctions’ for professional practitioners of andragogy, which underlie his transformation theory. They may be paraphrased as follows:

Communicative action
- Communicative action involves the negotiation with another of the meaning of a shared experience that results in coordinated action.

Validity testing
- Communicative action involves validity testing using reasoning rather than an appeal to authority, tradition or brute force.

Communicative competence
- Communicative competence involves participation in rational communicative action and it is this participation that constitutes understanding.

Praxis
- Communicative action demands real experience, learning, and social interaction.

Human learning
- There are two parallel goals in human learning: the instrumental (manipulating the environment) and the communicative (understanding-and-being-understood). Each is a domain with its own purpose, method, logic, and means of validation.

Instrumental problem solving
- Instrumental problem solving must involve hypothetical deductive logic; and validity is determined by assessing the results of action.
Communicative problem solving

- Communicative problem solving must involve provisional judgements open to new evidence and understandings; and validity is determined by the continuous consensus making process.

Validity of meaning

- The validity of a meaning involves understanding the boundary conditions of the statement in question. The greater the opportunities for discourse, the more reliable the statement.

Meaning making

- Rational discourse is fundamental to effective adult learning. The opportunity to talk about an idea enables it to be tests both internally (subjectively) and externally (consensually).
- Communicative learning and problem solving involves ‘pattern-making’ – reasoning by metaphors rather than hypotheses. This metaphorical-abductive logic helps make sense of the unknown by comparing it to aspects of previous experience.

Empowerment

- Emancipatory reflective learning demands a re-examination of previously held assumptions. It produces individual autonomy by drawing upon both instrumental and communicative learning.

Adult learning

- Adult learning is problem solving through existing meaning schemes, new meaning schemes, transformed meaning schemes and transformed assumptions (Mezirow, 1991, pp.96-98).

Chris Argyris and actionable knowledge

No account of learning through practice could be complete without acknowledging the contribution of Chris Argyris and his large volume of writing on organisational practice, learning, and organisational change. In his book,
‘Knowledge for Action, A Guide to Overcoming Barriers to Organisation Change’, Argyris explains that his concept of action knowledge “…is not only relevant to the world of practice; it is the knowledge that people use to create that world. The word action conjures up images of individuals doing, executing and implementing…[and] producing intended consequences… In this view, action is not simply the discovery of new ideas or the development of new policies; it is the implementation of these ideas or policies and the evaluation of the implementation’s effectiveness” [emphasis mine] (Argyris, 1993, pp.1-2). He continues, explaining the professional inertia that often exists in the face of demands for change in the following way: “any change that does not first change the meaning of effective action cannot persist because it continues to expose individuals to potential embarrassment or threat. This causes them to resort back to their old actions because their senses of competence and esteem are largely based on [old] personal values and skills that are consistent with the old status quo” (Argyris, 1993, p.2).

Argyris thus regards research as an essential domain of action; and he argues that the knowledge produced by researchers must be constructed so that its use represents a valid test of the theory of action that it implies. “In principle the test can weigh the validity of ‘technical’ theories of action such as competitive analysis or activity-based cost accounting as well as the validity of human theories of action, such as those that govern effective leadership, interpersonal relationships, group or inter-group dynamics, or organisational cultures” (Argyris, 1993, p.2). He argues that actionable knowledge “…regardless of its content contains causal claims. It says that if you act in such and such a way, the following will likely occur. That means that actionable knowledge is produced in the form of if-then propositions that can be stored in and retrieved from the actor’s mind under conditions of everyday life” (Argyris, 1993, pp.2-3). In other words actionable knowledge is in effect retrievable propositional knowledge that can direct a person’s behaviour in a purposive way.

Argyris sees this actionable knowledge as being social as well. “Effective actions are not only stored as rules in actor’s heads;…their requirements are known
publicly usually in the form of formal and informal policies and routines that are rewarded by institutional cultures. Building policies, routines and culture requires learning…” (Argyris, 1993, pp.3-4) and therefore he argues that learning itself is an action concept.

In addition to this Argyris argues that because actionable propositions can be implemented and used as acceptable field tests of those propositions it is necessary to specify the actions in advance. He goes on to differentiate this kind of knowledge with what he calls “applicable knowledge” (Argyris, 1993, p.5) which he associates far more with knowledge of the self and the ability of the learner to become aware of processes which include complex behaviours whose motivations have previously gone undetected. In order for learners to have applicable knowledge, according to Argyris, they would need to be able to describe the dynamics of previously ‘unconscious’ behaviours such as defense avoidance or hypervigilence if they wanted to avoid these behaviours. A teacher therefore would need to show these people “…how to protect themselves against rationalisation, denial, selective perceptions and wishful thinking in everyday life” (Argyris, 1993, p.6).

He comes down firmly in favour of a view that says that action is informed by theory and he argues this at some length. But as we have already seen, other writers who have discussed action-theory perceive a lot of action as guided by ‘intuition’. They would argue that this knowledge it either ‘tacit’ (silent but ‘speakable’) e.g. or even ‘sensate’, (for example Witkin, 1974) and therefore ‘ineffable’ (i.e. ‘un-speakable’). The argument here is that in such circumstances the ‘understanding’, the ‘theory’, or ‘knowledge’ is dependent upon reflection after the event of action but this is inconsistent if the action is dependent on the theory in the first place. In Chapter Seven I will argue that this ‘theory-practice dilemma’ can only be resolved by considering the notion of praxis along with a concept of ‘pre-conceptual intentionality’.
Experiential learning in educational institutions

All the discussion so far in this literature review has been concerned with the underlying philosophies that inform both the practice of experiential learning and experiential education. It has raised the issues of considerable importance that exist at an assumptive level below the surface of either the curriculum design or the experiences that are developed for students. In particular, the discussion so far has raised a number of basic value questions concerned not only with education and training but also with social justice and the functioning of the society itself.

This thesis is concerned with the preparing of professional workers in areas of social justice; each of these areas claims to be concerned with implementing democratic and humanistic values within the organised systems of social control. However, in the cultural climate of the social justice professions, these underlying values are problematic in themselves and it is necessary to chart a way through a maze of contradictions between aspiration and reality, between theory and practice, between what people say they do and what actually happens. For this reason the ‘practice of preparing professionals’ becomes intricately enmeshed with the values espoused by the educational institution, the society and its own justice system. Unlike other work in experiential education this thesis has a reflexive quality that continually returns to the same problematic values. Because there is no over-arching instrumental content that is central to all of the criminal justice related professions, specific ‘specialised knowledges’ cannot be dealt with directly by looking merely at either the content or the skills with which the practicum is concerned. Questions like ‘How do you set up a database for use by victims of child abuse?’ or ‘What are the most appropriate strategies to use when defusing a potentially violent confrontation in a correctional institution?’ must be dealt with at a procedural level in the contexts in which they arise. Certainly, these strategies are derived from a prior understanding of generic cause and effect propositions (i.e. theory) that in turn are derived from the individual’s experience of the past and that of others. But effectiveness is determined by what happens in
the moment, according to the subtle and dynamic interplay of forces whose full significance only becomes apparent as the event unfolds.

**Curriculum implementation**

This literature review now focuses upon the levels of curriculum implementation. We must now consider specific practices that have to do with generic abilities that all practitioners need in the professions concerned with criminal and social justice.

Boud and Walker (1992) focus on those factors of the learning experience that can be manipulated and managed by both the learners themselves and those who would facilitate that learning. They attempt to identify “…those elements that require further elaboration to produce a more comprehensive model of facilitating learning from experience” (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.163). They note the importance of focussing on “processes of learning” and claim that the outcomes of their studies are “…still tentative and open for exploration”. They claim that “…the models have the status of pragmatic frameworks which have value only insofar as they focus their attention of learners and facilitators on key elements of their own learning” (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.163). This comment is significant in that it indicates that they consider that the process of learning should involve the facilitator as well as the learner. The implication is that ‘facilitation’ itself involved learning on the part of the facilitator. They also make a point of saying that they do not assume that the models they advance represent “external reality or actual processes of learning that they regard as being generally …inaccessible to us”. They claim that instead, their description “…encompasses those elements of which we have become aware” (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.164).

Thus, the approach Boud and Walker adopt tends to accept the ‘reality’ of the deeper processes of learning but places them beyond the immediate world of reflection and construction. In doing so, their approach to their studies reflects that of Kenneth Gergen (1985) who “…labels his approach as ‘Social Constructionism’ because it more adequately reflects the notion that the world that
people create in the process of social exchange is a reality *sui generis*” (cited in Schwandt, 1994, p.127). They do not claim that their models represent even more generic theories, which can claim a global validity beyond the immediate circumstance. This pragmatic approach to theory development is in the tradition of Lewin and informs the methodology adopted in this study (see Chapter Four).

Boud and Walker (1992) make ‘two approximations’ as they develop their interdependent concepts of learning and facilitation. The first approximation postulates three “key elements or clusters of reflective activity” that characterise productive reflection by the learner following a learning activity. They are: “returning to the experience *(which involves …recalling and recapturing the experience in as much detail and richness as possible)*; attending to feelings *(which refers to …building on and utilising good feelings and…dealing with negative feelings…)*; evaluating the experience *(which means …relating what has become known to what is already known…[and] integrating new knowledge with old…)*” (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.164). The initial work on what they are describing here their first approximation was published in 1985 (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985) and describes how different forms of reflection, including autobiographical journal writing, debriefing discussions, and the use of computer guides, can be completed either singly or in relationships – one-to-one or in groups.

In 1991, in ‘Experience and Learning: Reflection at Work’, Boud and Walker note that the three characteristics of reflection that they had outlined were also vital parts of reflection during the experience and not merely afterwards. Their introduction of the importance of *immediacy* in reflection-in-action leads them not merely to a consideration of what *was* happening but of “what *is* happening” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.19). They link the reflective process to the event itself as it unfolds and claim that “…the more involved the learners are with the texture and features of the event, the more effective the experience can be” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.20). They also believe that attention to feelings can also be encouraged as the experience is occurring in-the-moment. This awareness of feeling means that the learner can enhance both his or her noticing and the
interventions that he or she makes in the experience as it proceeds. “By being aware of the emotional tone of our involvement in the experience, we can acknowledge that feelings will deepen or inhibit our involvement” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.20). This point will be taken up in Chapter Five, when I consider the role of the convenor in this case study and in particular the ways in which a convenor can enable the learners to attend to their own ‘feelings-in-action’.

Thus, Boud and Walker’s second approximation involves placing an emphasis upon the learner as agent in the experience rather than merely a passive ‘recipient’ of the experience. It refers to the ‘reality’ of the learning process that involves attending to what the learner actually brings to the experience, and what he or she does to guide and influence the actual events as they unfold in the experience. Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993) have developed a concept of ‘awareness-in-the-moment’ that Mason calls “noticing” (Mason, 1993). They see noticing as an active seeking process which “…involves a continuing effort to be aware of what is happening in ourselves and in the learning event, and to find a way of expressing that to ourselves … It involves taking note of our own thoughts and feelings…[as well as] attending to the [external] nature of the event and its elements” (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993, pp.23-24).

It is worth pointing out that the ‘interior’ aspect of noticing can involve ‘expression’ in codes that are different from propositional language: this expression will often involve tacit forms of knowledge referred to as “sensuous apprehension” (Witkin, 1980). Exteriorised expressions of such knowledge may occur in the languages of the arts, non-propositional exclamations or in various other non-verbal forms. When Boud and Walker refer to the learner’s intervention in the learning process it is reasonable to suppose that such ‘expressions’ are included as well as deliberative action based upon a propositionally based decision. They themselves note that “Sometimes, [intervening]…is a conscious action flowing from and influenced by a reflective process…at other times it can be unconsciously motivated” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.26). Their focus though is upon “…the deliberate actions of learners – an overt action…which can be noticed by observers of the event…but [it also includes]…the act of failing to
make an overt intervention” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.26). In other words the act of withholding an anticipated intervention is in fact an intervention in its own right.

Boud and Walker see the role of any learning program or any facilitator working within such a program with students as providing learning opportunities. They discuss this institutional role more as consisting of a “preparation” phase which is followed by a “learning strategies” phase (Boud & Walker, 1991, pp.29-32). It must be noted here that they are reluctant to describe the facilitator as engaging in any interventions at all. Perhaps this is because of the emphasis placed by writers like Rogers on the importance of non-directive teaching in the learning of adults or it could well be that there is a conflation of the notion of teaching interventions with that class control and ‘discipline’ that is associated with the education of children: this is problematic and will be taken up in the discussion at the end of Chapter Four.

When Boud and Walker discuss the third phase of reflective activity, that is, “re-evaluating the experience” they appear to refer exclusively to reflection after the event and the evaluation they speak of is assumed to be articulated in propositional terms (Boud & Walker, 1991, Boud & Walker, 1992). Boud appears reluctant to focus upon the interventions made by the facilitator. As Boud and Prosser remark, “our view is that learning arises from what students experience not what teachers do or technology does” [emphasis mine] (Boud & Prosser, 2002, p.237). Instead, they focus consistently on how the learning environment is experienced and understood by the student. This thesis will contend that the role of the teacher, convenor, facilitator, leader, or whatever we choose to call the individual who must inevitably intervene in the student’s life in order to provide the experience, is crucial in determining what is learned, how it is learned and the social climate in which it is learned.

The use of the term ‘facilitator’ rather than ‘teacher’ has a significant history in the development of modern progressive theories of education. After the Second World War a number of psychologists and psychotherapists developed a
movement that became known as ‘humanistic psychology’. Chief among its proponents was Abraham Maslow who developed his landmark research into individuals who are psychologically healthy. According to Maslow, people who have attained high levels of self-actualisation, are in a state where they accept themselves for who they are, recognise their own strengths and shortcomings (Maslow, 1970) and are “…less inhibited and less likely to conform than most of us” (Baron, 1998, p.480). Psychiatrist-philosopher Carl Rogers who developed the idea of the self-concept placed strong emphasis on the notion of intrinsic motivation. His work on client-centred therapy spilt over during the 1950s and 1960s into his notion of ‘Student-Centred Teaching’ (Rogers, 1967). Rogers placed great importance upon the need for anyone who is attempting to influence the learning of others to exhibit the characteristic he called congruence. A person (therapist or teacher) exhibits congruence when she is deeply in touch with herself, including her awareness of her own immediately experienced conflicts, and is able to initiate a cyclic process which results in another (client or student) becoming more congruent in the mutually developing relationship. Congruence thus becomes an attribute of the therapist or teacher’s communication as another experiences it, and as Rogers points out, incongruence is experienced by another when they detect a discrepancy between experience and awareness as it is being communicated to the them. Thus, incongruence is “…usually spoken of as defensiveness or denial to awareness…[and] usually thought of as falseness or deceit” (Rogers, 1967, p.341).

In addition to congruence, an effective non-directive therapist or teacher-facilitator needs to communicate an acceptance and trust of the other as well as an empathic understanding of the feelings being expressed. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was a debate between Rogerian humanistic principles and value-driven action on the one hand, and deterministic principles, which attend only to the extrinsic aspects of human behaviour or to unconscious motivations, that are beyond personal control. Baron claims that “…many psychologists are uncomfortable with the strong emphasis, in these theories, on personal responsibility or free-will. Humanistic theories propose that individuals are responsible for their own actions and can change this if they so wish to. … Yet,
this…conflicts with the idea that behaviour is determined by numerous factors and can be predicted from them…one of the cornerstones of modern scientific psychology” (Baron, 1998, p.482). Humanistic Psychology has led many writers to steer away from the idea of ‘teaching’ and to use terms like ‘facilitate’, ‘encourage’, and ‘provide opportunities’ when they are talking about the kinds of interventions that are productive in the educational encounter.

Carl Rogers’s book ‘Freedom to Learn’ became something of a manifesto for the progressive education movement in the 1970s (Rogers, 1969). In it, Rogers argued that, with its unnecessary authoritarianism and constraints, conventional education was inhibiting the intrinsic motivation of all students at all levels and he advocated the adoption of the same ‘non-directive’ approach to teaching as he had to therapy 18 years earlier (Rogers, 1951). His arguments were strong and persuasive and a sizeable minority of educators began to argue against any concept of direction in teaching. Unfortunately, it could be argued, practices that followed the non-directive dictum went too far and did not acknowledge the subtle but powerful constraints imposed on young people by the culture and its institutions. In fact, as a number of his own students have reported, Rogers himself was quite capable of making “…short but often provocative inputs” (Smith, M., 2004). Smith remarks that his students often accorded Rogers a guru-like status and that interventions that appeared to be a question or an invitation were often experienced as conveying profound insights. He remarks that “…Carl Rogers could be charged with misrepresenting or overlooking his considerable abilities as a teacher” (Smith, M., 2004).

Boud argues that the perceptions and interactions of students “…are more important to learning than what staff take for granted as the ‘reality’ of the assessment. These perceptions cannot be assumed: they are only available from the students themselves” (Boud, 1995, p.37). He argues that assessment needs to be seen more as a research activity into the perceptions of students which results in new multi-faceted strategies where university staff act more as “…consultants assisting students in the interpretation of rich information about their learning”
Chapter 3: Relevant Literature

(Boud, 1995, p.40). This of course means a major shift in the power relations between teacher and student and by implication it means abandoning any educational philosophy that sees assessment as either a reward or punishment, which is used to motivate student learning. This also has considerable implications for the way in which those designing courses in higher education consider questions to do with quality, quality control, and ‘standards’. Boud and colleagues have made a considerable contribution to an understanding of the mechanics of programs that enhance reflective practice and the use of various tools for assessment of the learning that occurs (e.g. learnings contracts, journals, etc. and a deeper understanding of peer learning).

The practicum in practice

This literature review is a consideration of the different models that have been developed for university workplace-based education across the range of professional fields. This thesis is particularly concerned with practica that are currently used or being constructed by universities and so does not concern itself directly with apprenticeship programs or workplace-based programs offered for occupations that do not aspire to the title of profession. As Schön points out, “…we honour what Everett Hughes has called ‘the great professions’ claim to extraordinary knowledge in matters of great social importance; and in return we grant professionals extraordinary rights and privileges. Hence, professional careers are the most coveted and remunerated, and there are few occupations that have failed to seek out professional status” (Schön, 1983, p.4). It could be added that the universities as custodians of esoteric knowledge have been more than willing to take up the title of ‘knowledge producers’ for the profession. But what forms that knowledge should take and how it should be used remain areas of considerable debate.

1 In a previously published paper (Bates, 2003b) I describe in some detail how an assessment schedule based on Boud, Cohen and Walker’s five propositions about learning from experience has been used as the basis for developing criteria to construct a quite elaborate assessment schedule for students in the course that is being addressed in this case study.
Traditionally, the concept of a university education includes the development of a student with the knowledge and skills associated with a particular ‘discipline’. Although there is disagreement about what does or does not constitute a discipline or indeed a profession, the assumption stands that one of the roles of a university is to provide its students with up-to-date knowledge of current theory in the field they have chosen. There is a long established tradition in universities that theory constitutes a ‘pure’ form of knowledge and that by implication, practice can be derived from such theory. As we have seen in the arena of methodology this contention is increasingly in contestation, but the universities currently seem to be having difficulty integrating ‘practice’ into their traditional theory-based degree program structures. It is true that there are precedents in the areas of medicine, law, teaching and engineering for programs with a substantial workplace component and that they have legitimacy based on longevity and tradition. But in the burgeoning new university areas such as nursing, leisure studies, generic human services, and in the case considered in this thesis, criminal justice education courses are still in their infancy.

In the areas which have only recently found their place in institutions of higher education, many of the practice-based components of undergraduate programs are built on modified versions of the internships, apprenticeships and field placements, which characterise their previous incarnations in technical and further education institutions or in vocationally specific colleges and academies. These ‘practicum’ experiences are left largely to the agencies and institutions in which students are placed and much of the literature about them concentrates on the adequacy (and often the inadequacy) of the experience and its supervision by delegated employees (Maidment, 2003, Patford, 2000, Ross & Elechi, 2002, Slocombe, 1993, Spencer & McDonald, 1998). The academy meanwhile has busied itself with constructing theory-based undergraduate programs that are designed to inform students ‘about’ their intended profession. These academic programs have tended to provide instruction in specialised versions of already established disciplines, which are given a professional flavour by selecting out particular areas of research deemed to be relevant to the vocational area concerned. This became an established solution for universities as new areas of
professionalism needed to be accommodated. Fifty years ago new ‘professional’
versions of established disciplines appeared, specifically tailored for intended
teachers and entire departments of ‘Education Psychology’, ‘Educational
Sociology’, ‘Educational Philosophy’ grew in universities and schools of
education. But these kinds of solutions have further entrenched and
institutionalised what was already a major educational problem: the rift between
theory and practice:

Research on field education has discovered that students frequently feel
‘trapped, between tutors who are out of touch with current practice and
supervisors who are out of touch with theory’. This situation is further
exacerbated where both human services educators and field educators
appear to be weak in articulating the relationship between theory and
practice. (Maidment, 2000b, p.214)

As a social worker and a social constructionist, I suggest that this student
alienation is due to a highly debatable unspoken assumption about the status of
‘pure’ theory and, by implication, the power of those who are considered ‘the
experts’. These assumptions would have us believe that any thoughtful or valuable
intervention in the life of another is a kind of derivative act of ‘applied
psychology’ and therefore amenable to analysis and explication by ‘real’
psychologists. The same can be assumed of all forms of social action, which are
regarded as special cases of the real (theoretical) knowledge that already exists
under the custodianship of specialists in the academy. It is only by taking the
advice of Lesley Cooper to those who would be field educators and applying it to
academics themselves that this problem can be addressed.

[Effective] supervision occurs when it is grounded in understanding what
it is field educators actually do, and the assumptions they make about
teaching, learning and their overall practice. Just as field educators expect
students to grow and develop as practitioners while they are in the field,
the field educators themselves will be better able to grow and develop in
their roles as they gain a better understanding of their own behaviour and
the purposes and function of supervision. (Cooper, 2000, p.40)

It is no accident that the above advice comes from a tertiary educator whose initial
specialisation is social work. For over 50 years the universities’ faculties of social
work throughout the world have utilised a field placement process as an integral
part of the preparation of professionals. This is partly because of the action-based nature of case-work social work itself: the literature claims that social workers need to be able to make quick decisions, on the spot, and to initiate action in situations that are often highly charged emotionally and which have serious ramifications for those involved (Maidment, 2003). The social worker also needs to have highly developed interpersonal skills because the day-to-day responsibilities involve direct interactions with clients who are almost invariably under stress of some kind (Maidment, 2003). The social worker needs to be equipped not merely with sophisticated counselling skills but also with a philosophy of personal practice and client learning that can inform the interventions they are making (Jones & May, 1992, Payne, 1997). Because of this, the social work practicum has a long tradition that has been refined by a continuing process of trial and error. Originally it was based on the apprenticeship model but as it developed it needed to attend to interpersonal communication in ways that most other occupations do not demand. The result was a complex union of theory and practice that, while in a kind of permanent ferment, has managed to stand the test of time (Maidment, 2000a). In its most effective manifestations, the model established for the profession of social workers appears to be the one that most consistently manages to deal with problems concerning the theory practice interface.

Because of this, the University School of which I am a member turned to the discipline of social work in order to design, develop and implement the practicum program in criminal justice education. In developing that program, I drew heavily on the existing philosophies and practice, which informed my own training as a social worker and continues to inform current courses in that field.

**The social work practicum as a model**

The following features tend to characterise practica in social work throughout the English-speaking world and represent the background upon which current critiques and debates are occurring in that field. The social work practicum is a
mandated requirement for entry into the profession and is subject to accreditation procedures set in place by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). These standards set out in detail in the document ‘Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of the Queensland Association of Social Workers’ and specify the conditions, which need to be met in the section entitled ‘Field Education’(Australian Association of Social Workers, 2000, pp.8-10). In an article that quotes from this document commenting on these requirements and the intentions of the group of directors who established them, the president of the AASW writes as follows:

Field education, an academic subject, is “a core component of the social work education process”. Placements must be planned and assessed in ways that promote academic rigour. Specified minimum standards regarding field education include:

Recognition of contribution of practitioners and agencies with support and consultation provided as “field educators do not receive direct remuneration from the school”

One, preferably two, visits by academic staff during the placement

A minimum of 140 days in at least two placements, over two years with no placement shorter than 40 days and structured to allow the achievement of educational goals, in at least two practice settings and two fields of practice where it is possible to practice using a diverse range of interventions. The field educator is a qualified social worker with at least two year’s experience, with two hours individual supervision suggested for each five days though students in the same agency may be supervised as a group (pp.8-9).

The policy opposes placements undertaken in a student’s workplace and reluctantly allows an exception for one placement if the school is satisfied that the learning goals can be achieved in the workplace (p.9). This must be thought through as otherwise the student is short-changed in the education process in the interests of the workplace or the need to earn a living.

This need to financially support oneself (particularly during the time demands of Field Placement) is increasingly problematic for most students, yet compromising the education that one is attempting to gain is not the solution. It is dissonant with the goal of that education.
Chapter 3: Relevant Literature

The term ‘minimum requirements’ is an important description of what this policy delineates. The directors discussed this term to decide what was being established – a gold standard or minimum requirements. The policy sets out the minimum that the AASW will accept at entry level. Implicit throughout the document through is an encouragement to schools of social work to educate to a higher standard and strive for excellence rather than simply meet minimum requirements. (Gaha, 2001, pp.26-27)

Clearly these standards need to be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of any field practicum procedures in Australia. Similar requirements exist elsewhere: the New Zealand requirements are similar to Australia; similar requirements exist in North America although accreditation occurs through Master level rather than Bachelor level programs; and in the United Kingdom the emphasis has been on training the workplace supervisors rather than extending the University training of students for an additional year (Clare, 2001).

Whilst the choice of the two agency placements is always designed to provide opportunities for learning in very different agency environments so that each student achieves a degree of versatility in the workplace skills they acquire, it must be noted that each of the full-time practica work from the strongly unified socio-political and ideological bases upon which the social work profession rests. The notion of empowerment as a central value reigns supreme as the guiding criterion to judge whether practice is good or bad.

Practica are almost always preceded by preparatory courses in which attempts are made to integrate theory and practice. Practitioners or ex-practitioners teach these courses because social work faculties tend to be staffed by practitioners who have joined the university after a period of professional experience of their own.

In the social work practicum there are three key roles concerned with the detailed structuring of the mandated experience for the students: they are the fieldwork coordinator (who is responsible for the whole course), the fieldwork supervisor or field educator (the delegated employee in the workplace agency to whom the student is directly responsible for day-to-day tasks), and the academic liaison officer (a member of the social work faculty staff who acts as a go-between, consultant, and facilitator).

Just Practice?
The literature concerned with fieldwork education for the social work profession has become preoccupied with overall concerns about standards, about variable qualities of different experiences and about questions concerned with quality control. However, it should be noted that without intending to do so this same literature illustrates the extent to which how far ahead thinking about field education is in this field when it is compared with the literature in other areas.

Most of the literature in social work education that looks at fieldwork is concerned with the role of the workplace supervisor. Throughout the practice literature this role is variously referred to as ‘fieldwork supervisor’ or ‘field educator’ and the role is assumed to include responsibility for the detailed learning of the student. The task of the supervisor is to help the student acquire an intimate (often tacit) grasp of the ‘fine-grained’ routines of the workplace, contribute to the overall goals of the agency, and work professionally within the agency. Slocombe (1993) reports the results of a detailed survey of social workers involved in the University of Tasmania practicum course on a regular basis over a period of years. She analysed these field educators’ reasons for taking students, the conditions under which the field education occurred in the agencies, and the field educators’ own personal responses to their task. She also analysed questionnaires submitted by field educators who had dropped out of the course and discusses the reasons why such individuals found student supervision difficult. She writes that her study:

…demonstrates clearly that field education is a program run by volunteer labour that responds to the need of the student and the school rather than the call of the profession. Thus field education programs require intrinsic rewards for the participants. The process is frequently undertaken in a hostile or at least non-supportive environment and therefore the undertaking itself becomes the reward. Many field educators feel that they struggle alone with the responsibility for supervision…

(Slocombe, 1993, p.48)

She concludes that while:

…fieldwork still remains the single most important factor in the preparation of social workers…it is the most vulnerable to mediocrity, lack of standardisation, poor quality control, few resources, and the
Janet Patford collected data on fourth-year social work students at the University of Tasmania and identified the types of learning experiences students deemed to be significant. She also drew conclusions about how students develop what she calls “a sense of professional competence” (Patford, 2000, p.25). She outlines seven categories of learning experiences based on the students’ reflections on their own ability to function in various contexts during their practicum. Her study compares and contrasts these and concludes that the most important of the fundamental problems that confront the student in practicum is the burden carried by the supervisory relationship. She writes that “tensions in the supervisory relationship are predictable” (Patford, 2000, pp.26-27) but that little is known about the way students cope with interpersonal tensions and draws attention to ambiguities that can occur in the power relationship. For example, the fact that the supervisor’s role of assessor is often perceived to be in conflict with the student’s need for support: as a consequence, ensuing tensions are experienced by the student. She also lists a number of significant ‘lessons’ reported as being learnt from particular experiences on practica by the students: for example, learnings associated with students operating solo, working under organisational constraints, and students’ own re-appraisal of their commitment to the profession in certain cases.

Jane Maidment is also concerned about tensions in the supervisor relationship and cites Marsh and Tresliotis (1996) when she comments that:

Previous research in this area has identified that students feel stressed when there is a lack of clear expectations and role clarification, where relationship difficulties exist between the student and supervisor and where there is a lack of integration between theory and practice.

(Maidment, 2003, p.51)

She argues that students:

…[need] access to preparation and placement integration material that is less about what they might do on placement and more about the processes
of learning and managing stress while working in a contemporary agency environment. Learning ways to stay safe in practice, manage stress and juggle multiple demands may equip students to feel they can both survive and work more effectively in the current workplace environment.

(Maidment, 2003, pp.56-57)

Maidment also argues that “…endeavouring to provide this kind of role modelling to students where workers themselves feel disempowered is problematic. … The primary responsibility must rest with the university to prepare students for the potential impact of the reality of practice” (Maidment, 2003, p.58). In an earlier study Maidment surveyed students and field educators involved in four different field education programs in New Zealand Universities. She concluded that “The methods used to facilitate learning and the pedagogy that informs the teaching and learning transaction deeply influence student and educator experience of practicum education” (Maidment, 2000a, p.204). It is worth noting that Maidment is clearly concerned about the kind of interventions that are being made in the students’ learning by those who are responsible for the providing the experiences. She notes that:

…students reported powerful learning experiences from ‘making mistakes’ on placement, and from being exposed to poor agency practice. These findings bear out Ramsden’s claim that even in problematic situations productive learning can occur. Students in these situations noted that they gained personal insight, greater assertiveness skills and self-awareness. These qualities are not associated with assessed practice competencies but are in keeping with the notion of…on-the-job experiences [that] are integrated and acknowledged as part of the learning process.

(Maidment, 2000a, p.205)

She also concludes that relationships in the practicum are critical determinants of the student’s learning:

Social work field education is shaped and influenced by the complex nature of relationships that exist between the student, field educator, agency, school, and wider community.

(Maidment, 2000a, p.207)

She notes that supervisors “…appeared to make a significant emotional investment in the role of being a field educator, where they describe themselves as
mentors, guides, and role models” [emphasis mine, we will return to the notion of ‘being the role’ in Chapter Five] (Maidment, 2000a, p.207).

Cooper argues that, rather than approaching an analysis of supervision by becoming concerned with “…interpersonal strategies that are teacher- or therapist-centred”, it is more relevant to focus upon how students learn in the professional practicum (Cooper, 2000, p.10). She isolates a number of learning strategies, which she believes can be regarded as skills that students can be taught so that they will learn more effectively. But it is her observations on the importance of modelling and imitation that I find particularly interesting. She places considerable emphasis upon observation, “…watching experts practise particular skills; …watching the successes and failures of…peers; or…observing field educators at work with clients or groups” (Cooper, 2000, p.14). Cooper cites Bandura’s (1986) social learning theory to argue that modelling can be thought of as having several stages: attentional, retentional, reproductional, and motivational. She regards modelling as “…a demonstration of actual practice or an explanation of how practitioners think about issues in practice” (Cooper, 2000, p.15). Students can then observe the activity, attend to its rationale and then try it out “…with their own clients attempting to match the practitioners or field educators’ skills” (Cooper, 2000, p.15). Interestingly, she argues that field educators may well encourage students through the use of role-play in situations as well as ‘real’ client interactions. The center for her rationale for using these kinds of activities is that they “get…the student’s attention [and]…engage them in the excitement of learning a new practice activity” [emphasis mine] (Cooper, 2000, p.15). By implication Cooper is advocating teaching strategies that are both complex and designed to evoke particular feelings from the students as they learn. How these strategies are used in my program is discussed later in the thesis.

Clare suggests that universities should give attention to the development of what he calls “‘educational partnerships’ between regional schools of social work and their…government and non-government placement providers” (Clare, 2001, p.54), an arrangement which is already statutory law in England. The developments in the United Kingdom have meant that there is now separate funding specifically
allocated by the government “to deal with finding and placing students” (Clare, 2001, p.54). This means that writers like Rogers (1996) and Boswell (1998) have, according to Clare, provided “…valuable accounts of the transition from ‘student supervisor’ to the emerging role of ‘practice teacher’ in the UK” (Clare, 2001, p.54). He cites Prevatt, Goldstein, and Harris (1996) who offer a “framework for the key roles of the practice-teacher in social work education – namely, Manager – monitoring the student’s work with agency accountability; Enabler – creating a sufficient learning environment with critical reflection on knowledge, thinking and skills; Evaluator – based on the provision of the student’s work, effective feedback, and assessment” (Clare, 2001, p.55).

In the Australian context this means that universities should take note of the analysis offered by Pauline Meemeduma in which she suggests that in order for the social work profession “…to bring about the integration of theory to practice, not only in the practice setting but also in the educational setting, it needs to recognise …the integrated roles of academic and practitioner” (Meemeduma, 2001, p.11). She develops a detailed description of what she calls the ‘practitioner-academic’ whom she regards as having a principle role as practitioner in the field but an enhancing role as academic, which incorporates the skills of working with students. She accompanies this with a similar description of the ‘academic-practitioner’ who is located in the university and works with conceptual and theoretical knowledge but who is also concerned with practice implications, the application of social policy analysis and the acquisition of intra and interpersonal skills as they affect direct action.

The second accepted role in social work education is that of the university staff member who is concerned with the liaison between the university and the workplace. Slocombe (1991) conducted interviews with field educators who had been offering student placements for several years. They reported that they valued the liaison contact provided by visiting academics, particularly when their efforts helped in the area of teaching/learning dynamics. It should also be noted that those who felt that they had received “little feedback or encouragement and no
In prior research, two different approaches to field based education had been identified: the ‘academic approach’ and the ‘articulated approach’ (Sheafor & Jenkins, 1981). The first, the ‘academic approach’ assumes that the student can be expected to take responsibility for gaining knowledge for its own sake and for integrating theory with practice. This, according to Slocombe fits comfortably into the model of university education where it is assumed that “…theoretical material…[is] and the course can be neatly structured without the necessity to attempt to incorporate the practical components” (Slocombe, 1991, p.29). The university simply organises placements and keeps the field educators informed of changes in curriculum content when they occur.

This is contrasted with Scheafor and Jenkins’s ‘articulated approach’, which demands that all stakeholders work together to facilitate integration. This then enables the agencies to provide much of the educational focus and the liaison role becomes central in the “…integration of the students’ tasks on campus and the expectations of placement” (Slocombe, 1991, p.29). My own comment is that the articulated approach suggested by Scheafor and Jenkins can be effective but that there is always a tension between the liaison academic’s collaboration with the supervisors and the supervisors’ feelings that high status university theoreticians are looking over their shoulders. My own contact with workplace supervisors leads me to believe that a lot of careful work needs to be done by the universities to build bridges and help practitioners avoid overcompensating with what often appears to be a kind of ‘practical, anti-intellectualism’. Slocombe too argues that any integrated model “…presupposes harmonious agency school relations despite…disparate priorities” (Slocombe, 1991, p.30). She suggests three possible ways in which the liaison academics can fulfil their role expectations. In a placement where the processes are already working well the liaison academic needs to focus on the teaching/learning dimensions of the supervisor/student relations and attempt to stretch the dyad to even better performance levels. If the placement is only working at a functional level, the academic can contribute to
greater trust in the dyadic relationship by helping to bring uncomfortable feelings into the open and facilitating a more open system of negotiation. In a placement where the process is not working at all the academic needs the ability to step in and intervene by modelling appropriate behaviours for both parties. In case of the course I am considering here which still uses the ‘academic approach’ to liaise with the workplace these intervening roles are more appropriate to the convenor of the placement course. This will be developed in some detail later in the thesis.

There is virtually no research other than broadly based curriculum designs offered for the perusal of those interested in setting up new programs into the work and the role of the program coordinator in social work practicum. Similarly, there are, remarkably enough, very few studies that concentrate on how the students perceive their roles and on how they manage to take charge when they begin to negotiate their expectations with the university and the workplace agency. Spencer and McDonald (1998) report on a review and analysis of 67 publications in the professional literature discussing social work field education published between 1980 and 1996. They identify that there are several significant omissions in the literature, chief among which is the absence of student voices when any reports of a student perspective are recorded. These reports usually consist of the students’ opinions being mediated by an ‘educationalist’ reporting on research into “…a special area impacting on students during placement… There were no articles written by students projecting the student perspective” (Spencer & McDonald, 1998, p.14). They argue strongly that “…professional discussion of field education must address these omissions if it wishes to respond to environmentally induced change impacting on the community services industry and on tertiary education” (Spencer & McDonald, 1998, p.9).

**Generic models**

The discussion of the advanced state of the debate about the practice of work experience in the preparation of social workers indicates the beginnings of a change that is likely to influence university courses in the near future. But the
larger and more extensive human resource management (HRM) literature and the new economically driven curricula that are likely to emerge could well begin to swamp the higher education system.

Cooper, Orrell and Jones from Flinders University completed an audit of all of the University’s work placement courses in order to “…document, in depth, the distinctive diverse feature of the various programs” (Cooper, Orrell, & Jones, 1999, p.1). They developed a Practicum Forum so that “…the efficient management and support of effective work experience placement programs [could be] a shared, cross-University endeavour” (Cooper et al., 1999, p.1). The audit they prepared culminated in 12 recommendations (Cooper et al., 1999, Orrell, Cooper, & Jones, 1999). It was argued that the University should:

1. Develop community engagement through the use of practicum.
2. Provide training and university accreditation for workplace supervisors.
3. Develop a managed approach to the sourcing of placements.
4. Develop a centralised cross-disciplinary system to organise placements within the University.
5. Develop an easily accessed university policy on risk management and supervision.
6. Extend placement into generic, non-professionally specific degrees.
7. Accord greater academic recognition, through promotion, to coordinators of placement courses.
8. Develop induction procedures for academic leadership of the practicum.
9. Ensure that adequate administrative support is provided.
10. Develop policy to protect any student-related intellectual property developed during practicum.
11. Develop a web-based generic pre-placement preparation program.
12. Provide ongoing support and management to the practicum website.

Richard Coll and his colleagues (Chapman, Coll, & Meech, 1999, Coll & Chapman, 2000, Coll & Eames, 2000) are proponents of the model in which the placement coordinator combines teaching with coordination of the placements. Their papers explore the advantages of this joint responsibility, primarily of the
coordinator having a prior knowledge of the students, which helps with the matching process required if the student is to experience success in the workplace. They argue that this provides potential opportunities for collaboration between the university and industry. Coll and Eames (2000) agree with Cooper and Orrell (1999) when they say that coordinators have a relatively low research profile and find it very difficult to be promoted. They write at length about the impact of the “…relatively low research profile…” (Coll & Eames, 2000, p.12) and highlight that in response to this, the coordinators in their schools are publishing outside the area of practicum education. They remark that in this context “…two coordinators are currently undertaking doctorates in science education” (Coll & Eames, 2000, p.12), leaving their audience to infer that this is another symptom of the devaluation of the coordinator’s role in their own institution.

Research in both New Zealand (Coll & Chapman, 2000) and from the United Kingdom (Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh, & Knight, 2001) warn against developing practicums on a ‘one-size fits all’ model. The research by Blackwell et. al. identifies six characteristics that they believed were ‘best practice’ principles in a work placement curriculum:

1. Purposefulness within the experience.
2. Continual monitoring of the quality of the course and its components.
3. University accreditation of the course.
5. Completion of a student journal/portfolio.
6. Articulated reflection.

Walker and Boud use their example of the students preparing for the ministry to emphasise that the placement is a learning experience and that as such it needs to have a definite structure to promote learning. This will happen when there is overt management occurring at the tertiary level, including preparing the student for the forthcoming experience. If a constructive and open relationship between the student, the tertiary educator and workplace supervisor is seen as central to the learning then student engagement with the experience and articulation of
Chapter 3: Relevant Literature

reflective thinking provides a stronger educational meaning to the experience (Walker & Boud, 1994).

Guile and Griffiths also from the United Kingdom, discuss a typology of five models of work experience. They believe that each model is “…part of an evolving continuum…[which] may be specific to different periods of economic and technological development and reflect changing educational ideas about the process of learning…” (Guile & Griffiths, 2001, p.119). From their research they suggest an overarching model for the universities to consider. They call this the ‘connective model’ and claim that any program must satisfy a set of global criteria: all practicum programs should be based on “reflexive” theory to develop what they call “‘boundary crossing’ skills” (Guile & Griffiths, 2001, p.125) and should make explicit the way in which the program caters for two-dimensional development in each student. For this to occur it is essential that the student have the “…opportunity to develop the personal, social and behavioural skills that support personal and organisational learning” (Guile & Griffiths, 2001, p.126), i.e. horizontal or sideways learning. As well, in order for vertical (or up-and-down) learning to occur the student must also be able to acquire the appropriate concepts that are external to the context in order to “…mediate the relationship between their formal [studies] and, for example, trends in labour and work organisation” (Guile & Griffiths, 2001, p.126). This means the use of prior knowledge, seeing the use of concepts and interrogating new knowledge.

Ern Reeders takes up the challenge of investigating the lack of scholarship in the research conducted in work placement education. He suggests that universities should embark on programs of action research, which he sees as potentially developing a new epistemology in this area. Such an approach, he argues, would be “…purposeful, informed, responsible, reflective and shared” (Reeders, 2000, p.218) – and consequently ‘scholarly’.
Criminal justice models

The literature on workplace-based learning in the criminal justice area, indicates that virtually all of the generic programs have been developed in the United States. Parilla and Smith-Cunnien discuss the internship program offered in criminal justice education which is offered in the concluding year of the generic four-year degree at the University of St Thomas, a Catholic university in the United States. Their program involves a weekly work experience component, which is offered as a discrete course where the student is located in a workplace of the student’s choice – the academic instructor can ‘recommend’ a placement, but the choice is the student’s – in which specific tasks are negotiated with the ‘site supervisor’ and the student’s ‘internship seminar instructor’ and then carried out. Emphasis is placed on ‘reflective analysis’ rather than ‘job performance’ and the placement is seen as a ‘learning experience’. However, it is the academic instructor who has the responsibility to help the students make connections between previously learned ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ (Parilla & Smith-Cunnien, 1997). Their whole rationale seems to depend on the notion that ‘integration’ is the process where specific practice events are to be seen as special cases of more generic theory, which has been learned earlier as propositional knowledge.

They claim that students often ‘resist’ this ‘integration: they see the practicum as a process of induction as “…the gateway to a career” (Parilla & Smith-Cunnien, 1997, p.230) rather than as an academic experience. The authors recognise that “…the ability to integrate prior learning with new experiences in a challenging intellectual exercise. Students often resist what they find difficult” (Parilla & Smith-Cunnien, 1997, p.230). What needs to be said here is that when theory is placed on an absolutist pedestal and the details of reality must be made to fit the prior operational definitions assumed in the theoretical propositions, of course it is difficult! When practice is seen as illustrative the student’s ‘reflection’ becomes a form of intellectual gymnastics.
Stone and McLaren discuss contemporary literature and studies of internships in this general field and strongly advocate that an internship component should be an important part of any degree level program for criminal justice professionals. They identify the benefits of such programs to the students, the agencies and the academic institutions and then consider academic concerns associated with such programs. How should such programs be supervised? How should students be assessed and graded? How should these grades be related to the credentialing process? Should the internship be a compulsory or an elective component of the students’ program? How should agencies and sites be chosen for the program? The authors appear to have written their paper on the assumption that internship programs are already in “…in more than one thousand colleges and universities in the United States” (Stone & McLaren, 1999, p.171) because potential employers are increasingly demanding that the universities become more involved in “…preparing young people for employment” (Stone & McLaren, 1999, p.171). They claim that “…the criminal justice internship is an example of a program that has not yet achieved consensus on its objectives of educational role” (Stone & McLaren, 1999, p.171). Because of this they argue that:

...faculty members must be disabused of the belief that internships are merely opportunities for the practical application of classroom knowledge: in a high-quality internship, the student learns valuable new material. Working professionals must also acknowledge the value of classroom-based theoretical foundations because such foundations provide students with the signposts to guide them through future situations.

In their paper, ‘Beyond Sibling Rivalry: Criminal Justice Internship on a Social Work Model’, Reed and Carawan examine a criminal justice program that originated in a school of social work and retained the already existing social model for its practicum. They chose to follow the social work model which as we have already seen involves an intensive period of continuous placement because “…both disciplines require the examination of professional/practice issues” (Reed & Carawan, 1999, p.154). They also claim that the social work model “…reflects the commitment of social work education to the intensive professional practice experience” (Reed & Carawan, 1999, p.156).
They then note that every aspect of the field experience has been evaluated and researched regularly as a matter of course because the social work model demands this. They go on to discuss their examination of their own program and identify four general areas that define it: maintaining an academic focus; integrating classroom knowledge with practice experience; coordinating between the university and agency supervisors, including the development of a ‘field coordinator’ role within the university to ensure ‘quality control’; and making concrete the benefits to all participants.

It is worth noting that although no formal evaluation of the ‘integration’ process has been attempted, faculty members report that in this social work based model, although the ‘resistance to integration’ reported by Parilla and Smith-Cunnien is still evident, “…a positive transformation [in the students occurs] between the beginning and the end of the semester” (Reed & Carawan, 1999, p.163). I suggest that it is likely that this occurs because the social work model carries with it a set of assumptions about the relationship between theory and practice that is not shared by the ‘academic approach’ (Sheafor & Jenkins, 1981).

A course offered at the State University of New York that prepares students in criminal justice or human services for their fieldwork experience (refer to Sgroi & Ryniker, 2002) illustrates some key features of the preparation phase needed for effective workplace-based experiences advanced by Boud and Walker (1992). They claim that most of their students “…had little or no previous experience with self-directed learning” (Sgroi & Ryniker, 2002, p.192) and they claimed that “…making an effective transition from traditional learning to self-directed learning requires considerable preparation and support” (Sgroi & Ryniker, 2002, pp.192-193).

Sgroi and Ryniker also claim that “…students have to become active learners” and that this ‘taking of control’ requires prior ‘preparation’ by the academy because students do not have “…a concept of theory in practice” (Sgroi & Ryniker, 2002, p.193). They note that the workplace experience often reinforces a belief in the students that such a relationship does not exist. They then argue that
students actually have to be taught prior to the experience of practice that such a relationship does actually exists and how to recognise it. In other words, they are still locked in the theory-first-practice-afterwards paradigm and seem to be getting uncomfortably close to an infinite regression when they are arguing that theories of theory need to be taught before a given theory can be understood.

We can contrast this notion with the action-based way in which Boud and Walker conceived of the process ten years earlier. They claimed that:

…learners bring with them ‘intent’ which may or may not be able to be fully articulated. … [Learners] make assumptions about the possibilities inherent in the event, often with very little knowledge of what specifically they might be expected to do. This ‘intent’ can be such that it cuts across the purpose of those who have planned the event. The result of such mismatches of intent and purpose can be behaviour which is perceived by either party [i.e. learner or facilitator] as negative, disruptive or counter-productive. (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.166)

In other words, the preparation phase, rather than involving the teaching of theory generation and meta-theory should be characterised by “…focussing on the personal, what learners bring to the event, what they want from it” (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.165) rather than on pre-determined propositional outcomes. It then becomes what Boud and Walker call “…the learner’s [and facilitator’s] personal foundations of experience” which include both sets of intents (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.166).

Sgroi and Ryniker believe that the preparation should give students “…the concepts and vocabulary” (Sgroi & Ryniker, 2002, p.194) needed to think critically about working in a bureaucracy: anticipating what they might learn. Boud and Walker argue that although such a vocabulary is useful, it is only by using it and “…focussing on learning strategies, how learners can get what they need from the given situation” (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.165) that such preparation is anything other than another intellectual exercise.

It is worth including in this review one more study that exemplifies how researchers still appear to be tied to assumptions about teaching and learning...
which remain in a model based on the transmission of propositional knowledge from academic to student. Ross and Elechi conducted a self-report survey with students who were placed for a minimum of ninety six hours in an agency and then required to evaluate the experience. Their survey was conducted over three years (1995-1998): they note that “…a number of students…pointed out the value of their coursework in preparing them for their placements” (Ross & Elechi, 2002, p.307). They cite feedback that indicates that the students considered core knowledge obtained in the classroom as useful when they were discussing issues with their supervisors. Despite this, they still regard the relationships between theory and practice as ‘troubled’ because many students “…literally went out of their way to report on the disjunction between classroom learning and ‘real world experiences’” (Ross & Elechi, 2002, p.308). Amazingly, they attribute this to the fact that students do not realise “…that the classroom and the agency are not the same, or even similar experiences…[or that] the classroom presents an educational experience while the agency provides a training experience” (Ross & Elechi, 2002, p.308).

In their anxiety to justify the importance of the university’s academic courses, they actually claim that without them “…it would be impossible for students to make sense of the agency and its functions” (Ross & Elechi, 2002, p.308). (One can only wonder how they believe the general community and the clients of the agencies can make any sense at all out of the services they receive without first taking a preparatory higher education course!) The fact that in their conclusion these researchers regard “the repetitiveness of the majority of students comments” (Ross & Elechi, 2002, p.309) as ‘poignant’ seems to reflect the fact that they believe that the students still do not understand that theory reigns supreme and that guardianship of propositional knowledge makes academics part of a privileged priesthood. When they conclude that “…criminal justice educators…[should] make concerted efforts to improve the troubled relationship between criminal justice theory and practice” (Ross & Elechi, 2002, p.309) they are still arguing that this needs to be done conceptually. I would suggest that if a social constructionist were to describe the academy, and meaning was understood as the product of negotiation rather than imposition, these difficulties would
vanish because attention would then be focussed on action-knowledge, action-research, action-learning, and action-teaching rather than on pre-conceived categories based on assumptions about social roles and social status.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the development of experiential education and the values on which it is based since the 17th century. Much of the literature has addressed issues of curriculum design, the guidance of process and the growing the field known as andragogy. What has not been found in the literature is an analysis of the assumptions on which the educational practices of work placement courses have been based. A lot of attention has been given to the mechanics of implementation and to the role of supervisors: there has also been ample discussion of process models of curriculum design and many empirical accounts of implementing practicum courses. But, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the students’ own accounts of the experiences they had in such a course. An analysis of fine-grained feedback from students about the feelings they are experiencing and the sense they are making from a practical learning experience would appear to be timely.
Chapter 4 – Methodology and the research process

When attempting to articulate and select a particular methodology with which the researcher is to address a question or set of questions, she must decide which of two fundamentally different philosophical positions she will work from. Hamilton notes that during the eighteenth century, a fundamental disruption occurred in the fortunes of quantitative research in the differences between René Descartes and Immanuel Kant (Hamilton, 1994, pp.62 & 63). Kant drew attention to incompatibilities between scientific reason and practical reason so that each represents a quite different view of the nature of theory. Because of this, there are differences in the concept of ‘theory making’ (or the way in which the primary activity of the researcher is conceived) when the researcher takes cognisance of Kant’s work.

Dualistic paradigms

Dualistic (Cartesian) paradigms, where the theory attempts to articulate absolutist statements about the nature of the real world, and which become increasingly refined by further research, characterise the work of classical scientists who embarked on an endeavour to discover ‘the truth’. Such theoretical formulations are seen as having a derived validity and as being dependent upon logical extensions from empirical data. These theories are also regarded as valid in as much as they predict accurately the outcomes of a new set of experimental circumstances. A valid theory is assumed to consist of generalisations that determine practical outcomes and is the basis of the scientific method (Popper, 1979).

Theoretical statements derived from an absolutist position exist as increasingly generalisable, fundamental ‘principles’ of action that govern the natural world: these principles, like the laws of physics, are discoverable through the use of the scientific method. When such a theory is constructed about practical human action there is therefore an inbuilt claim about the truth (or falsity) of its predictions. If
the practice fails to meet the predictions of the theory, the failure is either, (a) in the theory itself, or (b) in its ‘implementation’ in a specific context. This positivistic set of assumptions regards practice as a special application of generic theory: its sees the ability, or otherwise, of practitioners to create action which is appropriate and effective in the real world, as dependent upon that person first understanding the theory. According to this view, the ability to engage in appropriate action is dependent upon the practitioner being able to ‘operationalise’ this conceptual understanding through the exercise of a particular skill. These ‘skills’ are also seen as being determined by the theory but are regarded as having a reified existence which is independent of the person who is using it. Thus a factory worker on an assembly line can exercise the skill of ‘tightening nuts with a spanner’ without ever needing to understand the grander purpose that his efforts serve. This dubious reductionist reasoning is often used to construct many of our educational and training practices. It enables theory to be regarded as the province of more highly qualified cerebral academic specialists, while practice is seen as a lower order ‘application’ of that theory in a specific context.

**Relativist paradigms**

An alternative paradigm, which was advanced by Kant, rests upon notions of subjectivism, perspectivism and relativism and became “…the ultimate source of qualitative thinking” (Hamilton, 1994, p.63). The relativist perspective admits more than one point of view and has over the last two hundred years evolved into a number of paradigms that include post-modern versions which question the very concept of absolute truth altogether. This relativistic vision sees theory as a ‘holding form’ for generalisations about pre-existing observations of action. Theory follows practice that is intuitively derived: indeed, it often struggles to keep up with it. Theory’s purpose in the relativistic paradigms is to objectify experience, to codify observations, and to allow cause-and-effect statements about practice to be made: it provides a language for reflecting on practice and enables contestation between different views of practice to occur. Theory is valued by action researchers (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, Kemmis, S., 1990) because it becomes
a vehicle ultimately for improving practice, for breaking the problems of practice into manageable conceptual pieces and enabling problems to be articulated so that they are more independent of each other (Kemmis, Stephen & Stake, 1993).

Such a perspective means that action (i.e. practice) can be allowed to proceed according to its own tacit logic even though theoretical debates about the ‘holding forms’ that have been constructed and what is ‘really going on’ continue in the background. Eclecticism is not really an option for the practitioner who must make decisions and practice in real time; it is a necessity. Truth claims depend not so much on internal consistency as on improvements in the practice because the criteria for judgement depend upon the values and interpretations of stakeholders. Because of these, criteria for judgement will often be contradictory due to the different constructions of reality in which they are embedded; they will also often have an aesthetic dimension when they are applied to the ‘performance’ of practice as understood by consumers, clients, other audiences, and in particular, by informed peers (Eisner, 1985).

The educational implications for such a position are as follows:

1. Educational practice needs to be based on a conflict model where ideas are the unit of currency and theory making (rather than merely theory implementation) becomes the province of the practitioner as well.
2. The training model, which is based upon an assumption that there is ‘one right way to do things’, and where skills become the unit of currency is seen to have limitations determined by absolutist assumptions. If the governing worldview of theory is no longer seen as more powerful and does not necessarily govern a range of specialist practices, several apparently contradictory theories about practical action can be allowed to co-exist because their truth claims are not absolute. As we shall see later, a ‘training schedule’ can quite legitimately become part of a constructionist program provided other conditions are met about student choice.
3. The role of the educational researcher tends to become one of articulating the differences in the constructions and assumptions held by practitioners,
suggesting new theoretical forms and helping to negotiate compromises when
designing new activities.

Qualitative paradigms for the research

Matching the paradigm to the process

The paradigm chosen for this study uses a qualitative methodology heavily
influenced primarily by the following four schools of thought, which are closely
related.

Interpretive anthropology

We can consider what happens in the program at the level of fine-grained or
‘thick’ description as advocated by interpretivists like Geertz and our analysis of
subject action can then proceed in terms of impulse and understanding. This
allows generalisations at a higher level where actions and their effects are woven
into ‘strategies’, be they conscious (and propositional) or unconscious, implicit or
simply not verbalised (and therefore tacit). It also recognises the political
implications of action and its proscription (by rules and sanctions) at the level of
policy formulation. Issues and questions arise at all levels of this continuum from
the fine-grained observation of behaviour through to the construction of
encompassing theory and this chapter acknowledges the need to be aware that
answers and descriptions that are appropriate for one level do not necessarily
apply to another.

This study claims to be data driven rather than theory driven (Dick, 2000). It
proceeds from the empirical observation of practice and attempts to describe
things, as they are, not according to any kind of predetermined theoretical
structure. Because of this, the initial position the researcher must adopt is that of
an interpretive anthropologist as advocated by Clifford Geertz (1973). Geertz is
firm in rejecting the assumptions of a structuralist approach which would attempt to see human action as “…routed in the…real meaning of myth, ceremony and other cultural artifacts…[whose] categories and structures of culture provide powerful explanatory devices for accounting for the behaviour of members of a group or society” (Schwandt, 1994, p.122). Rather than attempting to “…discover the one true interpretation lying behind or beneath the complexity of appearances”, Geertz sees the analysis of human action as “…an interpretive science in search of meaning, not an experimental science in search of laws” (Geertz, 1973 cited in Schwandt, 1994, p.122). Culture, its artifacts and language then are “…construable signs [and not]…processes can that can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly described” (Geertz, 1973, p.14 cited in Schwandt, 1994, p.123). Geertz explains that such ‘thick descriptions’ should always be grounded and local so that “…theoretical formulations hover so low over the interpretations they govern that they don’t make much sense, or hold much interest apart from them” (Geertz, 1973, p.85 cited in Schwandt, 1994, p.123).

**Radical constructivism**

Ernst Von Glasserfeld argued that “…we cannot know such a thing as an independ objective world that stands apart from our experience of it. … We cannot speak of knowledge as somehow corresponding, mirroring or representing that world” (cited in Schwandt, 1994, p.127). Radical constructivism rejects the idea that “knowledge ought to be a veridical ‘representation’ of a world as it ‘exists’ prior to being experienced” (Von Glasserfeld, 1991, p16 cited in Schwandt, 1994, p.127). In other words knowledge cannot be thought of as a product that exists independent of the knower. It is rather an activity. In this view knowledge becomes an instrumental tool rather than a set of verifiable propositions. Von Glasserfeld argues that to know is “to possess ways and means of acting and thinking that allow one to attain the goals one happens to have chosen” (Schwandt, 1994, p.127). Schwandt notes that radical constructivism provides the opportunity for “reformulating theories of teaching and learning. …
Learning is redefined as a process of experiencing and developing the knowledge construction process, and teaching becomes less a matter of communicating content (i.e. a transmission model) and more a matter of facilitating a process” (Schwandt, 1994, p.133).

**Social constructionism**

In using the methods of interpretive anthropology and in the acceptance of the fact that knowledge is a process rather than a product, this study quotes extensively from reflective written accounts of action by participants in the course as well as verbal recorded interviews with other stakeholders. This means that some of the initial ‘findings’ of this study may sometimes appear to be simply descriptions of practice. But it must be noted that they are much more than that; they are further interpretations of the interpretive data collected from the stakeholders, which includes first-hand observations, and are offered as higher-level theoretical formulations. Later in this thesis as an attempt is made, particularly in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, to construct higher-order (i.e. more generic formulations), the question of validity arises and a new paradigm is required. At that stage, the researcher moves towards a social constructionist position described by Kenneth and Mary Gergen (see for example, Gergen, M. M. & Gergen, 2000) who “…instead of focussing on the matter of individual minds and cognitive processes,….turn their attention outwards towards the world of inter-subjectively shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (Schwandt, 1994, p.127). Their approach sees the world as understandable in terms of what Kenneth Gergen calls “…historically situated interchanges between people” (Gergen, K. J., 1985). It relies on the shared interpretations of social artifacts – including language – and shares ground with Hans Georg Gadamer’s “philosophical hermeneutics” (Schwandt, 2000, p.194). This aspect of the methodology and the truth claims made later in this thesis is further developed in Chapter Seven and the ultimate philosophical position of this research is what Schwandt refers to as “weak or non-sceptical holism” (Schwandt, 2000, p.202).
As Schwandt points out in his earlier work, “…one does not have to be an antirealist to be a constructionist” (Schwandt, 1994, p.126). In the same way, a social constructionist does not necessarily have a view about what constitutes ‘reality’: he or she merely asserts that all we can know is that which we construct as we arrive at a consensus picture with others of what constitutes ‘practical truth’.

**The intelligence of feeling**

At the center of the conceptualisation of ‘learning through practice’ is the notion of intuition. This idea that there is a kind of inexpressible inner knowledge that directs actions (i.e. inner-tuition) is not new: the word has existed in the language virtually unchanged since the 15th century. Currently work by writers like Robert Witkin with his concept of ‘The Intelligence of Feeling’, which he sees as “the reflexive component of the affective life” (Witkin, 1974, p.21) re-articulates this old notion of ‘subject knowing’ that can only be expressed in action.

Polanyi (1983) has shown that this kind of knowing exists at a different level to the cause-and-effect propositions of science. What he refers to as ‘tacit knowledge’ is wholistic and cannot be expressed directly in language – in Polanyi’s words it is ‘untellable’. Donmoyer argues that any model of experiential learning that assumes that the subject consciously creates “working hypotheses” which exist at the tacit level actually misses the point (Donmoyer, 2000). The very term ‘hypothesis’ implies some kind of cause-and-effect understanding that is propositional, whereas with intuition it is precisely the fact that the tacit knowledge being alluded to is not propositional that makes it different. He remarks “…the relationship of teachers and students – like the relationship of counsellors or social workers and clients – need not necessarily be similar to the relationship between scientist and subject” (Donmoyer, 2000, p.57). He goes on to note that Blumer’s (1969) concept of ‘joint action’ “…refers to the creation, through action of a common set of meanings to describe a situation” (Donmoyer, 2000, p.57) and infers that such meaning can be shared at a tacit level as each.
participant in an interaction imaginatively “‘take on the role’ of the other…” (Donmoyer, 2000, p.57). It is this level of ‘shared experience’ that the research methodology used in this study relies upon: the educational practices it describes demand that students reflect upon what has happened to them and then share their common meaning. This research also acknowledges the point made by both Witkin (1994) and Polanyi (1983) that often learning is ‘reflexive’ and proceeds to action without any great degree of conceptualisation at all: it is only when there is a need to share such knowledge with others that ‘conceptualisation’ becomes necessary and verbalisation is required. It is at this point that propositional knowledge is constructed from pre-existent tacit knowledge.

Case study as a methodology

This study uses an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, which takes a utilitarian view of theory. Schwandt states that “Interpretive accounts (efforts to make clear what seems to be confused, unclear) are to be judged on the pragmatic grounds of whether they are useful, fitting, generative of further enquiry…” (Schwandt, 1994, p.130). Because the study involves the construction, elaboration and reconstruction of ‘issues’, its findings are best developed as a linear narrative. The reporting style will involve the researcher investigating her own changing and developing constructions as well as allowing the evolving constructions and interpretations of other stakeholders to emerge as well.

The need to focus upon relationships and contested expectations drew me to the work of Robert Stake who develops his notion of the case study so that the research is focussed upon what he chooses to call ‘issues’ rather than more abstracted research ‘topics’. In the introduction to his somewhat provocatively titled book ‘The Art of Case Study Research’ (note that he refers to this research as an ‘art’ rather than a ‘science’) Stake defines case study as “…the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p.xi). And while he acknowledges
that a central research question is appropriate, he notes that the work of the
researcher inevitably places a strong emphasis on interpretation:

[A case study emphasises]...placing an interpreter in the field to observe
the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening
but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to
refine or substantiate those meaning. (Stake, 1995, pp.8-9)

The questions may be modified as the researcher begins to understand the case
and when new issues appear the design changes. The boundaries of the research
are set by the definition of the case itself.

Stake explains that he chooses to use issues as the conceptual structure “… and
issue questions as…primary research questions – in order to force attention to
complexity and contextuality” (Stake, 1995, p.16). He does this not out of a
concern for the failure of systems but because he believes that it is in their
difficulties that people and their contexts become transparent:

…Issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out, the problems of the
case, the conflictual outpourings, the complex backgrounds of human
concern. Issues help us expand upon the moment, help us see the instance
in a more historical light, help us recognise the pervasive problems in
human interaction. (Stake, 1995, pp.16-17, emphasis mine)

In his definition of issues, Stake appears to see them essentially as ‘contested
constructions’ which present themselves as problems of interpretation that impede
appropriate action. Thus ‘issues’ will become the central unit of discussion later in
the study.

Robert Stake claims that “In the social sciences and human services, the case has
working parts; it is purposive: it often has a self. It is an integrated system” (Stake,
2000a, p.436). In this study the case refers to this particular course. But, it is
desirable that an instrumental case study generates findings that are ‘transferable’
from one set of assumptions and idioms to another if it is to provide knowledge
that is useful. It also needs to generate findings which use language forms
appropriate to different audiences. This means that the researcher must approach

Just Practice?
this kind of case from a position of flexibility and be able to mediate between different ways of thinking and to draw upon different conceptual structures as she does so.

**Research and the development of practice**

The intention of this study is to illuminate and to improve practice. It consequently shares a number of assumptions with the paradigm of action research (see Figure 4.1) and follows a similar cyclic development through several iterations of the course (see Figure 4.2). Each iteration of the course can be considered as a separate case study because the personnel are different and the data collection focuses on different issues as they emerge. The preliminary iteration of the course was used to extract the generic research question and possible issues for further analysis. The second iteration (i.e. Response One) considered the specific issue of the role of the convenor. Response Two (i.e. the third iteration) involved the analysis of convenor behaviour as interpreted by an academic who had the expectation that they would take over the convening of the course. This thesis represents a reflective summary report on the whole process.

It should be noted as well that political and administrative changes, due to pressure arising from circumstances external to the course, also become incorporated into each new cycle, and that an analysis of how the course responds, even to these, can be used to construct new interpretations and to allow new patterns to emerge from the data. Unlike collaborative action research the stakeholders are not contributors to the design of the research or to its redesign in subsequent cycles. Instead, the stakeholders’ voices (and their interpretations) are sought and analysed with a view to the researcher extracting, and when possible, implementing suggestions for change based upon her understanding of the constructions that are in contestation (i.e. what Stake would call the ‘issues’). As such, the researcher becomes what Denzin and Lincoln refer to as “…the conduit through which the voices can be heard” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.23) and the researcher herself introduces the changes in her other role as convenor.
The responsive case study: a methodological framework

Robert Stake (Stake, 2000a, p.437) identifies three types of case study according to the purpose envisaged. An *intrinsic case study* is conducted primarily to provide a better understanding of the particular case itself and tends to be less concerned with implications that are more generic or which extend to cases beyond the one that is being analysed. An *instrumental case study* is conducted as mainly a means of providing evidence for generalisations, which go beyond the case itself and may be applied in other circumstances. A *collective case study* involves the study of more generic problems, phenomena, or conditions that can be illuminated by the consideration of several different specific cases. While the study is concerned with ‘the course’ as the case, the course itself consists of the subtle interplay of meanings and feelings generated as it progresses and of the responses made to them. The *responsive case study* is therefore an umbrella term to cover the detailed description and investigations into issues that emerge and
involves the exploration of problems affecting particular parts of the course, be they individual students, groups of students, the behaviour of institutions, or the professional practice of a particular individual.
This study explores the ways in which a particular course (the case itself) responds to changes that are made in response to client and other demands as it is being implemented. Change is built into the implementation process and the course is not described in ways that prohibit this. The study explores the nature of the connections between the curriculum (i.e. the map) and the actual learning that takes place (i.e. the territory). Because of this, the case study involves a separate consideration of more than one iteration of the program. It is therefore possible to investigate the resilience of the program; identifying those features that remain stable and can accommodate particular kinds of change and those that cannot. The study is being conducted with a view to isolating what might become key predictors of the effects of any future changes on the program’s effectiveness. Thus, this case study has elements of all three kinds of case study identified by Stake.

If we revert to an earlier publication by Stake (1975) in which he was more concerned with the evaluation of program effectiveness, we find that he pioneered the use of the adjective ‘responsive’ to describe what he advocated as an effective form of program evaluation. However, although value judgements are sought throughout the process this is more than an ‘evaluation’: the intention here is to attempt to identify significant processes and articulate them and to come up with improved practices. I have therefore coined the term responsive case study to refer to this particular piece of research. It should lead us towards theoretical formulations that can describe and predict outcomes that are applicable to a number of different kinds of field studies based educational programs.

Collecting and analysing the data, and reporting the findings

It was clear from the beginning that in many ways this research would inevitably become an exploration of values. As Stake notes “the value of [a]...program will be different for different people for different purposes yet there will often be sufficient agreement on possible purposes and criteria to sustain useful discourse.
about the program’s merit and shortcomings” (Stake, 1975, p.25). He also describes how he, as a responsive evaluator, goes about his task. His description could equally apply to that of a researcher who is conducting a responsive case study. To paraphrase Stake:

…the responsive [researcher] will rely a great deal on the criteria used by teachers, learners, clients, and audiences involved or by whomever is seen as important in the eyes of the client, audience, and the [researcher]. …[She] does not rely heavily on abstract statements of standards and criteria, but more on naturally-occurring responses to actual happenings. [She] is the collector of these responses…[she] lets the action of the program stimulate evaluative responses. These [she] collects and works into some form of illuminative narration or case study which audiences can interpret for themselves. So [she] is guided largely by the particular situation. (Stake, 1975, p.34)

This program was designed to incorporate the notion of the ‘reflective practitioner’. Smith records that Schön (1983, 1987a) introduced this concept into the professional literature and notes that professional practitioners “…face “situations of practice” characterised by complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict” (Smith, L. M., 1998, p.190). We can add that not only are these the characteristics of the ‘issues’ faced by this researcher but they are the characteristics of the issues that faced the students too. Commenting on the difference between thoughtful action and reflective practice (particularly when in written form), Smith quotes Schön: “…clearly it is one thing to be able to reflect-in-action and quite another to be able to reflect-on our reflection in action so as to produce a good verbal description of it; and, it is still another thing to be able to reflect on the resulting description” (1987, p.31 in Smith, L. M., 1994, p.293). In order to conceptualise or ‘objectify’ issues and isolate them, it was desirable that as reflective practitioners all participants keep a written journal that recorded the meaning extracted from the reality of professional action in the field. This had already become an accepted practice in the training of the professionals and was extensively employed in the program being studied.

Because of the above, this study had at least three distinct layers, which in many ways interacted with each other. Firstly, there was my own reflective practice as a qualitative researcher, which was addressed by commenting on the kinds of data I
found most illuminating as I approached the research question and developed my own research protocols. Secondly, there was the reflective practice of the students in the program as they engaged in real experiences in the workplace and then attempted to make sense of them. Thirdly, there were the reflections on my own practice as convenor. This practice consisted of developing the program, supporting the students and interviewing them at regular intervals so that the nature of the experiences they were encountering could be monitored and adjusted so that important deep learnings could occur. Finally, beyond these layers there were moments of insight reported by different stakeholders at different times as they engaged in the sharing and company of their own prior reflections.

**Journals of stakeholders**

A reflective journal was required from every student participating in the course and both I and the co-convenor in Response Two (see Chapter Seven) kept journals as well. These journals which were a primary source of data about the students’ own reflective practice were used as the source for the students’ interpretations of their experiences. Similarly, journals kept by other stakeholders, including myself, were also used as sources of data and were referenced accordingly. These documents contained entries made shortly after the experiences themselves and existed largely as autobiographical accounts of events, and the propositional holding forms (i.e. the linguistic constructions) the students used to describe and make personal sense of them. As will be seen, while the accounts in these journals represented real attempts at ‘objective description’, they were at the same time laced with direct accounts of feelings being experienced both at the time of the events being described and at the time of writing. Indeed the interpretations and the descriptions were rich with metaphor and emotion as well as what may be thought of as attempts to offer ‘clinical’ descriptions of the events being experienced and reflected upon. Indeed, these journals had as a major common theme reflection upon the students’ earlier reflections as their metaphors were refined and developed. Whenever other
stakeholders were involved in the issue under consideration they were interviewed and their oral reflections of the events were recorded.

**Student subjects and data gathering approach**

What follows is an account of the number of student subjects, processes for student selection; a rationale for the selection of case studies and a brief profile of each student including year level and each placement. This is followed by a detailed account of journal use and interviews; and the means and frequencies of interviews including a sample of questions asked. This section concludes with a brief account of the procedures used to ensure that the research was conducted ethically.

**Student subjects**

The study involves the collection of data from three separate groups of students as summarised in Table 4.1. The *Preliminary Monitoring Phase* (Chapter Five) involves the collection of data over *six* years from students who completed the course. As indicated in Chapter Five this involves analysis of both journal entries and records of interviews. The phases labelled *Response 1* (Chapter Six) and *Response 2* (Chapter Seven) involve a more detailed analysis of the nature and range of responses of individual students. During the period 1994 to 2001 a total of 208 students were enrolled and completed the course. Thirty-three of these were selected for citation in Chapter five where their responses are discussed and analysed. Data was collected from all 38 students enrolled in the course in Semester 2, 2002 for *Response 1* and from all 16 students enrolled in the course in Semester 1, 2003 for *Response 2*. 
Selection of subjects for citation

Because the study was concerned with the range of responses rather than with the frequency of particular observations, only 22 were selected for direct citation from the 2002 group and 15 from the 2003 group (see Appendix 1). This selection was made on the grounds of the relevance of the students’ responses to the issue under investigation, i.e. the role of the convenor in the teaching/learning process and whether or not similar data had already been discussed. Those not cited were omitted to avoid unnecessary redundancy.

Student profiles

Table 4.1 (refer to Appendix 4) provides a brief profile of each student cited in the study including the year level and placement.

Use of student journals

As can be seen from Appendix 3, which sets out in detail the course requirements, the journal kept by each student is designed to be a reflective learning tool. Students are expected to make entries as soon as possible after significant events in their learning experience and to record briefly and clearly what has happened and how they have interpreted the meaning of events. They are specifically asked to provide evidence that they have a willingness to appropriately critically evaluate and reflect on their own goals, progress and experiences and to articulate changes in their own self-awareness. These documents contain entries that are largely autobiographical accounts set in the propositional holding forms (i.e. the linguistic constructions that the students use to describe and make personal sense of their experiences). As will be seen while the accounts in these journals represent real attempts at ‘objective description’, they are at the same time laced with direct accounts of feelings that were experienced both at the time of the
events being described and also at the time of writing. Indeed the interpretations and descriptions are rich with metaphor and emotion as well as what may be thought of as attempts to offer ‘clinical’ descriptions beings experienced and reflected upon. These journals have as a major common theme reflections upon the students’ earlier reflections as their metaphors were refined and developed.

Thus the journal is the prime source of written interpretive feedback from each student and therefore has been used as a prime source of data for the study. The research process was designed to not interfere with the journal requirements of the course. And in fact the line between the data gathering and teaching functions of the journal is often blurred and it will be argued later in this thesis that all teaching is, in fact, research by the teacher into her students’ learning.

**Interviews and student feedback**

Students’ oral reflections of events were also recorded. This was done in a one-to-one interview situation in which the questions used were designed to prompt responses from the student rather than to secure specific pieces of information. Thus questions tended to be open-ended and were designed to extend students’ comments they wished to explore.

**Means and frequency of interviews and questions asked**

A list of questions that were used as guidelines to ensure that all relevant ground was covered for each student has been included in Appendix 2. This was developed from a personal experience, a range of reading and particularly a list advanced by Knapp (1992) for the use of teachers intending to guide learners in reflecting on their experiences. However, the order in which questions were asked, the extent to which the student was able to extemporise on his or her answers, and the extent to which the student was able to volunteer new material not initially sought by the researcher varied from case to case. Generally, interviews lasted from five to fifteen minutes and were conducted when specific
issues affecting the student’s learning arose. Interviews were conducted in as informal manner as possible and were conducted with both parties seated, facing each other in a private space – this was often at the university or occasionally when a space was made available for this purpose in the workplace. Each student was involved in these interviews on at least three occasions.

As with the journals, the data gathering function of the discussion with students was not allowed to interfere with the other purposes of such one to one discussions. Often the interviews took a more clinical form and consisted of attempts by the teacher/researcher and the student to solve real problems in real time. Although it was possible to make audio-tape recordings of some of these interviews, many of the encounters were relatively short and content of the discussion was recorded shortly after in the researcher’s journal. Thus, both verbatim reports made by students in these interviews and my own recollections of such comments recorded shortly after the event are used in this study as primary data.

Ethics for this research

This thesis does not contain any confidential information that cannot be made freely accessible. All stakeholders in the study including students, other staff members and workplace supervisors have been protected by the use of pseudonyms (this does not apply to myself or to my co convenor Carol because we are both readily recognisable staff members at Griffith University). All participants knew the fact that the course was the subject of a substantial research study in advance. Written permission to use excerpts from student journals, student and staff interviews and supervisor interviews was obtained There were no unexpected adverse effects of this research on any of the participants. Because of the naturalistic way in which the data was gathered there were no risks involved in conducting this research that students enrolled in the course or other stakeholders would not otherwise experience. No participants withdrew from the study or withdrew any permission to use the materials they had provided.
The raw data from this study is kept in secure storage (a locked cupboard); the de-identified data is also kept secure. A detailed plan for this research and an ethics application for the study were submitted to the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee and an ethics clearance number VTA/10/02/hec was granted in October 2002.

The findings of the study

The interpretations of the stakeholders are recorded as verbatim quotations from the above sources. The selection of quotations was made as I identified emerging patterns and emerging issues. Thus, the narrative of this thesis moves from issue to issue as each becomes identified. Additional narratives have been included to set the contexts in which the issues are raised. A general discussion that looked beyond each iteration of the case concluded each account in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. At the conclusion of the study a number of general conclusions, comments, recommendations and suggestions for action are made in Chapters Eight and Nine.

I was interested in how original experiences were perceived and then described in journal entries and in how the interpretations and constructions made by different stakeholders abrade against each other. Because I was concerned with changes over time, probably the ‘dance’ metaphor best describes my reporting (Janesick, 2000). In this thesis I have described changes in constructions and interpretations and consolidated the data into issues or contested constructions that are in the process of change. In the dance, form is continually emerging and dissolving; parties to the dance are altering their relationship (or their ‘positions’) as the dance proceeds and the meaning of the whole can only be apprehended if it is understood as continually changing and ‘more than the sum of its parts’. The patterns that emerged from the findings and recorded here are those that I was able to perceive in the data; they consist of a kaleidoscope of patterns and have been recorded here as I see them. Another researcher may have been able to see
the interpretive data in different ways and so produce different kinds of formulations. It was my prior work in qualitative research and my considerable experience as an practitioner that allowed me to extract the patterns that I have.

The sample of students whose interpretations are quoted is not necessarily random. In Chapter Five, students’ feedback was selected for inclusion when they highlighted a particular issue or represented a trend present in a number of the comments. In Chapter Six (Response One) nine students’ entries were selected according to their relevance to the role of convenor; at least two entries were included because they represented atypical but highly relevant responses to the course. The discussion of the experiences of these students has been presented as a set of ‘mini-case studies’ because their experience of the entire course from beginning to end is canvassed. The remainder of the students from this group were considered when their journal entries illuminate or add to the developing narrative. In Chapter Seven (Response Two) individual student entries were selected when they made a specific point about the procedures being adopted by the convenor in particular circumstances. Almost all of the students in this iteration of the course have been represented.

In all cases stakeholders have been identified by pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

**The voice of the researcher**

This final report on my study has been written so that there is a covering narrative of the research in the first person. The text of the discussion sections is autobiographical in nature and contains assertions and value judgements. As Stake notes:

> Interpretation as well as ‘objective’ accounts is a major part of all research...[and] the function of the qualitative researcher during data gathering is clearly to maintain vigorous interpretation. ...For assertions, we draw from understandings deep within us, understandings whose derivation may be some other mix of personal experience, scholarship and
assertions of other researchers. ...[The case studies researcher’s] reports and consultations will include strictly determined findings and loosely determined assertions.

(Stake, 1995, pp.11-12)

My own direct experiences as the convenor have been included as extracts from my own journal extracts and my interpretations of the information I collected from the informants. These have been presented as direct quotations from my journal or as experiences being ‘relived’ in the first person and present tense.
Chapter 5 – Preliminary monitoring

Introduction: data generated by the course as artifacts

This course generated a reservoir of detailed information that consisted of the interpretations made by students, supervisors and academics about the process. Largely this comprised the journals maintained by students and the convenor (usually on a daily basis), and also included tape-recorded interviews with students, academics and supervisors conducted during the period prior to the following analysis. These interviews were designed to collect specific information about issues raised by stakeholders. As explained in Chapter Four, the interpretive data collected from participants consisted of thick description (Geertz, 1973 cited in Schwandt, 1994) of actual experiences, and it was my increasing reliance on these descriptions as artifacts that enabled me to formalise the analysis in this study. My interpretations of this material, the analysis of trends that emerged from it, and the constructions that arose, constitute the findings that are outlined below.

From my reading of the student journals, listening to feedback from supervisors, and keeping notes on what I believed was happening I realised that my role was quite different to that of a ‘normal’ academic. The role of convenor seemed to be pivotal in constructing a bridge between the university and the post-graduation workplace; I had to provide assistance (i.e. procedural guidance in crossing bridges) to each of my students. The feedback from students and workplace supervisors was very positive but it became obvious that I needed to understand whether or not the success was due to structural factors or to particular procedural idiosyncrasies of my own.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the effectiveness of the course and to identify the various key determinants of student learning that have been offered by students, supervisors and academics during the period when the course was being developed and refined. As will be seen stakeholders identified that the fine-grained interventions made by the convenor were central to the process. My

Just Practice?
judgement as a practitioner was that theoretical formulations that could be used to develop structural features of the course and principles of procedure for effective teaching needed to be identified. Such a description would need to consider the design of learning experiences that maximised all aspects of the student’s growth at particular crucial moments in their Field Placement course: it would inevitably extend beyond simplistic models of information transmission or skills training. This view of teaching would need to take into account the interventions made in the crucial learning relationships, as well as the structural proscriptions that make specific demands upon the students.

The artifacts from the workplace

The journals

The student journal had a twofold educational purpose: firstly, it encouraged students to reflect upon their experiential learning and secondly, it provided an opportunity to conceptualise the changes occurring over time. Students provided direct accounts of their experiences and these accounts were packed with fine-grained information, set in a matrix of feeling. The events, the personal emotional feelings they engendered and the learnings were inextricably bound together. An analysis by reduction into traditional categories of content, knowledge, skills, feelings, personal learnings and competencies could not properly grasp the sense of the whole that these accounts presented and any attempt to do so would compromise the chosen methodology. The students’ own linguistic categories often changed over time and their interpretations reflect this.

Students’ conceptual understandings about their learning were extracted from journal entries and the intention was to develop new descriptors of the learning experience according to the student’s own linguistic categories. The preliminary reading of all of the students’ journals indicated that the students’ language shared three main characteristics:
1. Their accounts were highly contextualised and emphasised the relationships between feeling, learning, and students own self-concept as ‘one who (now) knows’.

2. Students did not use the kinds of linguistic categories that an academic outcomes study would use. Instead, the learnings they articulated were expressed so that their recollections often did not make direct sense without an understanding of the context.

3. Student learnings tended to have a major social dimension in that they were almost always attributed to the consequences of actions in relationships. ‘Academic’ learnings tended to be expressed as insights through which previously acquired ‘dehydrated’ knowledge had come to life in a specific social context.

**Reports from the workshops**

Careful notes including direct transcripts of sections of these workshops were kept from the inception of the course and recurring themes were identified. From the beginning, stakeholder feedback clearly identified that mutual learning was occurring. Student, workplace supervisor, and academic facilitator were all engaged in structuring and making sense of their experience as the placement proceeded and negotiating ways of express this ‘sense’ with each other as they did so. It was clear from the reports from workshops that students were using the opportunity for discussion between each other and with me as convenor of the course to arrive at a consensus view. These workshops were allowing this consensus to emerge so that each participant began to modify his or her own perceptions so that they were becoming similar to those of other stakeholders.

The need for an opportunity for the stakeholders to meet and air specific problems, and to develop and share solutions became obvious very early in the life of the Field Placement course. As a result, workshops involving all stakeholders were organised so that they could become a relaxed social event.
This meant that the meetings provided the convenor and the University with direct feedback on how the stakeholders saw the course developing. There was a clear understanding that the University would take this feedback seriously and whenever possible modify the course in its subsequent iterations. One of the first suggestions to be incorporated was that the initial briefing workshop for the supervisors should be augmented by a second mid-semester workshop; in addition, both the students and the supervisors requested that the academic staff be encouraged to attend all of the workshops so that they could become more familiar with the course, its philosophy and goals.

**The findings**

This is an account of the series of cumulative experiences that constituted the course for any given student. It must be noted that all students did not learn the same ‘things’ and the ‘things’ that they did learn were often learned at different times and in different circumstances, so there was no way I could describe this course as having a sequentially ordered content. Chapter Two has provided an overall description of the structure of the course and highlighted the processes and procedures that were part of the course prior to the commencement of the placement itself. This chapter investigates the major structural components from the perspectives of all concerned. What follows are the interpretations, or what may be thought of as the Lewinian ‘micro-theories’, constructed by stakeholders about what was happening to them as they fitted the pieces together in their developing schemata.

Janine demonstrated that her journal was not only a method of processing her experience of the practicum as a student but that it also reflected more extensively on her own personal development. Her self-concept was changing. She wrote this during the third week of her placement:

*Many of my reservations about making recommendations are linked to my ‘student mindset’. I don't feel that it is my place to be making recommendations about a course that I have never worked with or seen in*
action... Despite these feelings, I am also aware that the research skills I have developed...have equipped me with the capacity to critically analyse information.

Student reflections and researcher interpretations

What follows are the researcher’s attempts to reconstruct this ‘student mindset’ from the data available. Because this mindset changed over the period of the course the feedback from each student needed to be considered sequentially, starting from the beginning.

The pre-placement interview

The pre-placement interview with the supervisor in the workplace was usually the first reflection recorded by a student and as such it provided an important insight into the very basic nature of the preparation required for crossing the bridge from the academy into the professional workplace. Mitchell went to great lengths to detail his experience, from his style of dress to his actual presentation in the interview as his notes in his journal:

>This was the first time that I had dressed up in a tie for literally years. I even had to go out and buy some clothes to wear...for this big occasion. I wore a sports coat, for the first time.

>On the day, my palms were sweaty, I was worried about how I looked and what I should or should not say. I had to wait at reception for a few minutes before [the] secretary came to collect me. Down the long corridor I followed her, knowing full well what awaited me at the end: the interview.

The pre-placement interview also exposed students, usually for the first time, to the direct experience of their proposed future employment environment. Ginnie, in her journal, not only identified her anxiety about going into a custodial environment but explained:
I didn’t really know what to expect... I was so glad that Merrelyn had warned me about... what to do at the front gate... It was quite overwhelming, all the razor wire and the big orange walls that surround the perimeter of the centre.

If there is a single word to describe the students’ immediate responses to the challenges presented by the placement, it is anxiety. Students commenced the course with high expectations and knew that they were going to have to deal with the unexpected.

**The workshops**

Della reported that the workshops were important to her because the process of verbalization involved allowed her the opportunity to think about the experience and provided a structure for her to write in her journal. She explained:

> I hadn't really thought about...my strengths as a practitioner...because when you're in a normal work environment you're not thinking of those things.

Cherie developed this a little further when she claimed that the workshops also provided an opportunity that allowed the students to compare ‘stories and experience’. In an interview she stated:

> I think the workshop process helped me to identify barriers to my learning, just through discussion ... I remember one thing...which was about how, does this [organisation] see their client group? ... Are they viewed as offenders or are they viewed as people who need to be re-integrated into society?

In an earlier publication (Bates, 2003b) I investigated the contribution made by the workshops to the students’ own reflective processes as they shared new learnings with each other. For example, Alison explained that during the placement itself she did not have time to reflect. She commented that the workshops gave her the opportunity to reflect on issues raised by other students. For example, she had found the police very helpful in her placement organisation.
while other students had found them to be quite uncooperative when they were seeking information. Jackie believed that the workshops provided an opportunity for all the students to have a small exposure, albeit from a particular perspective, to a range of organisations.

Each workshop made its own contribution to the ongoing ability of the students to objectify their experiences.

**Workshop one: briefing workshop**

This workshop was held on the first day of the teaching semester, usually before the students had their first day of work in their placement. Quite deliberately this workshop was not held in a University classroom; instead I have insisted that it always be held in the highest status space available. This is so that the students could become aware that this course reached beyond the usual boundaries. Annabel wrote a lengthy journal entry in which she commented that by conducting the workshop in the Faculty’s Boardroom, rather than in a normal tutorial room, we had made her feel ‘special’. She wrote that the workshop:

...made me think about the reasons I was doing this subject in more depth. We spoke about the assessment...and clarified issues about what we had to do and what was expected of us.

She remarked that she did not know many of the other students completing the course and that this had caused her greater anxiety than she was used to. But once she saw that the interactions between the student group and myself were relaxed this had eased her hesitancy.

Roberta wrote in her journal that one of the most beneficial parts of the workshop was when I discussed some of the experiences of previous students. She wrote:

...everyone had the same sort of anxieties that I had and...hearing other people's experiences helped me relax...
Thus, the first workshop enabled the students to settle some of their anxieties and to develop a realistic appreciation of the kinds of experiences they were likely to have.

**Workshop two: student workshop**

This workshop was held in week five after students had been in their placement for four working days. For most students it allowed them the opportunity to compare their own progress with others. Michelle felt reassured as she noted in her journal:

> I had been a little worried that I had not started my project yet, but after talking with other students I realised that this was not necessarily a negative. Some students who were working on a specific project were not enjoying it, or finding it interesting. Even though I was not yet engaged in a specific activity or project, I was finding my Field Placement to be very educational...

Melissa wrote that the value of the workshop for her was the connections she had been able to make between her studies and the real working world. She saw this as extending her knowledge base of possible employment options. She went on to say that:

> The feedback we received from Merrelyn was of great assistance. It helped me to...look at situations more objectively and to think of ways I could generate my own solutions. Solving one's own problems is part and parcel of the role of being an independent and reliable worker.

I tended to use this second workshop to check that all of the students had settled into the placement and had a clear idea of what was expected of them. It enabled me to ‘gather up the dropped stitches’ and to ensure that nobody felt neglected.
Workshop three: supervisor’s mid-placement workshop

This workshop had been introduced as a direct result of supervisors requesting it. One supervisor, Liliane, explained in an interview with me that she found this workshop very valuable because it allowed her to find out what projects other students were completing and that it gave her a comparison point on the degree of difficulty for her student’s project. She explained:

...you're always worried that you're giving them too much to do. ... I think we really need to make sure our expectations...are not too hard for them to deal with, because, for me, the learning is being on the job and understanding it.

This workshop was very important indeed: it enabled me to establish a consensus across the total group of placement supervisors about the purpose of the course and some of the expectations the University had for them. It also relieved a certain amount of anxiety on their part.

Workshop four: student workshop

This second student workshop was held in week nine of the course, so by this time most students were feeling comfortable in their environment, had established a working relationship with their supervisor and were at the point of consolidating their projects towards finalisation within the next three to four weeks. I asked the students to complete a role-playing exercise where they had to take the role of their supervisor and complete aspects of the final assessment report on themselves as placement students. They did this according to the guidelines spelt out for the supervisor in the course handbook and they took the exercise very seriously indeed. Michelle wrote in her journal as she reflected on this exercise:

It gave me an opportunity to think about how I may be perceived by my supervisor. It is often easy to forget that we are being assessed all the time. Not just for the supervisor's report, but also as a representative of Griffith University, or possibly as prospective employees.
This comment indicated that this student saw herself as fulfilling three separate sets of role expectations: as student, as representative of the University, and as prospective employee. When students included the written report generated by this exercise in their journal the entries were disarming in their honesty. Jonathon, in the role of his supervisor, wrote of his own ‘interpersonal and professional skills’:

> With out disrespect to his capabilities, I find that Jonathon at times lacks the confidence necessary to express his ideas in a professional manner. This is particularly the case when he is interacting with police officers, regardless of their rank. This will come in time and with practice.

Amongst other things, this entry illustrated how the central learning in this course always comes back to learnings about the self. It also illustrated the ways in which projected experience, imagined worlds, role-play and imagined futures could be used in this kind of course. Many of these techniques are useful and have direct connections with the ‘visualisation’ techniques used by coaches.

Thus, the fourth workshop was setting the context for a positive ‘closure’ to the experience for all of the students.

**Workshop five: debriefing workshop**

This was the final workshop for the placement and involved all stakeholders: firstly, the students by themselves and later their supervisors and the academic facilitators who joined them after morning tea. For all, it was a process of debriefing but as Milton (one of the supervisors) stated in an interview:

> It made me articulate what...was happening in the process. It gave me a basis for comparison but also was valuable...[because] at that stage I hadn't really given it much thought. ...I guess it crystallized it a little bit for me.
Milton explained that he saw part of his role as being there to help his student overcome some misconceptions that she seemed to have. He realised that he needed to re-negotiate how the power in the relationship was distributed. At this point, Della (the student) had still not grasped what self-direction involved. Milton explained that he had an understanding that the structure was there to provide an opportunity for Della to create her own learning experience. But he was concentrating on the process, whereas Della felt she had to have something to show for it. He commented that, while this course structure was designed for self-directed learning, the idea still seemed to be foreign to Della because the rest of the University degree was structured around assignments and exams.

I have observed that the student contributions in this final workshop showed that many of them went through a similar process and managed to see even some of the frustrating experiences they had as important steps in their learning. A regular comment made in the journals concerned the value of this workshop in providing the opportunity for closure and the fact that the students were able to see their entire experience as positive.

The structure of the workshop provided opportunities for all stakeholders to contribute suggestions for improvement. When the group was broken up into small groups of students, supervisors and academic facilitators, many of the journal entries, feedback from the sub-groups and individual feedback from the academics indicated that the question of assessment, particularly the marking of the project arose quite regularly: the students were completing a project for a workplace audience but an academic was marking it and the tensions were obvious. Majella captured this in her journal:

*The input of the academic staff was valuable in our group discussion. ... [My supervisor] expressed how extremely happy he was with my work and could not see how an academic person could mark [it] who had no experience in the media field. ... I think as a result of this discussion...supervisors should have a more active role in assessing the final report...*
This student’s placement with a local newspaper had involved her in researching the topic of domestic violence and compiling a number of news articles for publication. Her final ‘product’ was two news broadsheets, published over two weeks in the newspaper. Her academic facilitator had initially had some difficulty in understanding how to provide an assessment mark for such a project because this was outside the norm of academic papers. As a consequence a final result had to be negotiated between the workplace supervisor and the academic facilitator.

**Formal requirements of the course**

It may seem unusual to regard these as part of both the data and the findings of this research, but it is the formal requirements that make clear the ‘hidden curriculum’ of the course. These requirements are designed by the convenor to be an integral part of the teaching of the course. The constructivist assumption is that students learn what they do rather than what they are told. In Chapter Eight, attention will be drawn to the importance of teacher-convenor as a person who gives permission to the learners. The students need to break free of their existing self-expectations and take risks in a situation where they feel both challenged as well as supported. But, freedom cannot exist without constraint and the demands and constraints placed upon students as course requirements are also the responsibility of the convenor as course designer. When discussing the convenor’s role as a ‘non-directive’ facilitator, this prior directive role needs to be understood as being a part of the process of extending the student’s own vision of his or her capacity.

The action required of the students in the course is the course (as will be explained later in this thesis) and so the formal requirements are central to it – they are not merely precautionary measures to ensure student compliance. This is why holding the first workshop in the Faculty Boardroom is so important: it conveys the clear message that in this course, the requirements relate to the world beyond the University culture of compliance and assessment, and that these requirements are able to negotiated.
Chapter 5: Preliminary monitoring

The following core components make up the formal requirements of the course.

**Attendance at placement**

Students satisfied attendance requirements at a wide range of workplace environments. For many, their project asked them to be very focussed and the experience was in one static location; other students have a greater range of experiences and were often involved in work in several different environments. It was important that students were matched as well as possible to the experience to be provided so that their initial anxiety response did not hamper their opportunity to learn. This meant that it was important for the convenor to know each student personally and to be familiar with the workplace at which he or she was located.

Rachel wrote in her journal:

> The best way to describe my first day of Field Placement is ‘Overwhelming’!!!! There was so much information to take in, in just 8 hours. There were so many names to remember, office procedures to memorise, and a great deal of personal challenges. I am naturally a very shy person who gets frightened by new situations. Even at this early stage I can tell that this Field Placement course is going to be a challenge!.

But for Fiona the challenge was very different: she described her first significant interaction with a group of offenders in her journal as follows:

> The responses and actions of many inmates even in fictitious role-plays surprisingly gave me a great deal of ‘information’ about their thought processes, rationality, and personality. For example, during a role-play one inmate chose to stab another to death because he was sitting on his motorbike. When questioned about his response to this event the inmate replied, ‘no-one touches my bike, it means more to me than my woman’. He frightened me; his responses were riddled with anger and hate. I remember thinking that he seems so deeply rooted in his ways that it must be difficult for him to change.

Despite the melodrama this student still regarded the whole experience as rewarding and confidence building. She concluded that this is both what I want and need.
The attendance requirement was obviously not the same for each student and took into account individual differences from the beginning. This meant that the precise details of the attendance requirements had to be set by the workplace rather than the University.

**The learning plan**

This was a compulsory requirement that students completed as the first part of their journal. It was referred to as a ‘learning plan’ rather than a ‘learning contract’ because it was not only negotiable (in fact, it had to be negotiated with the supervisor and the academic facilitator) but it was also continuously renegotiated and therefore responsive to changes in circumstances in the workplace or in the student’s developing understanding of the issues at hand. This was particularly important in a course where the student attended over a period of several months rather than in a continuous short block practicum. The opportunity to renegotiate was welcomed by students and supervisors alike and became built into the course.

Many students commented on how the learning plan required them to think of their learning in a way they had never done before. Louise conceptualised her learning plan within Kolb’s learning style framework and wrote:

> As I am naturally a ‘doing’ person rather than a ‘feeling’ person, having to come up with a learning plan and writing this journal, has really helped me to get in touch with aspects that I would have otherwise missed.

Students sometimes missed the value of completing a learning plan and using it until the very end of their placement. Jackie noted:

> In hindsight I can see the importance of the learning plan... If I had shown Ron the plan I had developed, and if it was reviewed regularly, then perhaps the communication breakdown would not have occurred... Discussing the plan would have given us an opportunity to regularly review how the placement was going.
Alison’s supervisor indicated that the learning plan was similar to workplace performance schedules, which as a supervisor he used to monitor staff performance. But for Elaine, the learning plan was only a tool that helped her create her ‘own experiences’. She explained how she went through the learning plan deliberately each day in order to complete her journal writing.

Again, this course was different. The ‘content’ was actually the subject of negotiation and the learning was always self-initiated and self-directed: students were given assistance and even detailed tasks but what they learnt was actually up to them.

The journal

The practice of keeping an on-going personal journal has been quite widespread in workplace-based courses and was adopted here. It should be noted that the journal was very different to the kinds of ‘term papers’ expected in other courses; it was similar to those kept in most social work practicum courses by students asked to reflect on the way a particular piece of theory had been put into practice. It was a much more open diary-like document which reflected how the students felt, how they acted in response to their feelings and on the consequences of their actions. The journal had a number of set assessment criteria that helped students in their reflection (refer to Bates, 2003b).

Some students, like Brendon, found that keeping a journal like this was a new experience:

The idea of writing a diary every week was another experience in itself, because you have to...think about everything that has happened...and write about in a way that a independent third party can understand. ... It gives you an outlet to express some feelings that you don't want to say directly to an individual. The added security of the diary ensures that what you said won't get back to that individual.
For Emily, the journal was an opportunity to highlight the areas for improvement after reflecting on a day’s work:

*Reflection is a new skill that I've had to develop ... [and] I would say the journal is what has really helped...like you have to put that reflection into practice. ... ‘Oh, is that what happened?’ The little light bulb would go off...*

The journal requirement was that students should engage in the process that Donald Schön refers to as reflecting-on-action. As will be seen later this is a crucial step towards the more fundamental experience of ‘mastery’, which involves ‘reflecting-in-action’.

**The project task**

The students were required to complete a project for the workplace organisation. This project was not an academic document although it could take the form of a research report, a policy analysis or a literature review. The important point is that it was to be completed in a form that was usable by the workplace personnel after the student had left. This meant that there needed to be a process of negotiation between the supervisor, the student and the academic facilitator who was expected to assess this piece of work. This was designed into the course so that the academic faculty member had to articulate theoretical demands in terms that were meaningful to the workplace. As might be expected this negotiation was sometimes difficult and often fraught. The project provided students with a sense of what was expected in practice as distinct from the kind of formal writing required in an academic environment. The concrete outcome of a product also was of benefit to the organisation.

For some students and supervisors a project evolved as the placement developed. Sandra explained in her journal that:

*After several discussions with the Course Director, it was established that I could do a project that would provide assistance toward the*
development of a database that would...enable the evaluation of treatment outcomes...and a means of evaluation for the course itself.

Sometimes the project presented two challenges at once. Nerida found it difficult to work autonomously:

> With...my project...I was very independent and alone... I didn't have anyone asking me 'have you done this yet because you should have?' I was my own boss, and it scared me a little. ... I identified that...I believed University was all about being taught and pushed into achieving. However, through researching this project I learned that...I needed excellent time management skills, a high level of concentration, good database search skills, and patience. All of these cannot be taught in a lecture...

But, she also reported that the experience of collaboration was new and unexpected: she was surprised that feedback from colleagues could be a natural component of workplace relationships. As she reported:

> I thought I may have gotten ripped to shreds...but I didn't. I shouldn't be nervous when receiving feedback. I should consider it as an excellent mechanism for improving the way I write and conduct myself.

On the other hand, Norm did not receive much feedback and he experienced concern at first and confidence came later as he took control of the situation. He wrote:

> One thing of concern for me has been the lack of direction that I have been getting. ... I asked [my supervisor] what was expected in the layout of the report and he said that it really was my project and that it was up to me. ... It is actually a bit of a confidence boost that I'm able to do this without much direction.

Norm’s comments were quite typical, almost all other students reported similar heightened anxiety levels. It was not unusual for student anxiety to begin to increase when they realised that their project report was to be in the public arena. Norm understood that he needed to allow time for proof-reading (which was not necessarily something he usually accommodated in his studies).
Similarly, Nerida completed her journal by reflecting on the cyclical feelings of stress, conquest and confidence and wrote:

*All of the worry and anxious nights, all of the boredom and tedious putting together of information, and all of the STRESS this project inflicted on me was all worth it. I learnt that I should be confident with my abilities; I can do things I set out to do and do them well. After this experience, I am ready to tackle anything anyone throws at me.*

An overview of the students’ feedback indicated that it was the project that gave the work placement a sense of reality and purpose. It enabled each placement to culminate in a product that the student could own and feel proud of. It must be stressed that the criteria for assessment were always negotiated and that artificial constraints were not imposed by the University on the exact nature of this product.

**The importance of relationships**

As noted in Chapter Four, to a social constructionist, how we make meaning out of experience depends upon the nature of our relationships with others. Thus, as with the other ‘findings’ in this chapter, relationships are not simply ‘context’ for knowledge, they determine the very nature of that knowledge – that is, the curriculum itself.

**Relationships for the student**

It was clear from the interviews with stakeholders that students made direct connections between personal relationships with others and conceptualising their own learning. Initially, students entered the placement experience with many anxieties about whether or not they will be able firstly, to understand and secondly to meet the complex set of role expectations that will be placed upon them. Their first concern was with the process of role-taking (see Chapter Five) where the focus is upon ‘fitting-in’ and ‘not being conspicuous’ (Biddle, 1979). Later this changes and a process of role-making begins. Della explained in her journal that:
...I had really high expectations for myself, and so I was constructing this whole confusion and mess, which...wasn't as extreme as I thought it was...because they were my expectations of myself not the expectations of the placement.

So for Della, the learning was ultimately about putting herself in the centre of the experience and not to regard it as something external to herself that was being imposed upon her. She explained in other journal entries that in order for this occur it took about five to six weeks before she felt comfortable and settled into the placement and attributed this to the development of the interpersonal relationships, which were reinforced because she felt she was making a ‘real’ contribution.

Emily indicated that, although the relationships helped to make her feel more comfortable, the discomfort reappeared to make the experience more of an emotional roller-coaster. In her journal she remarked:

In my first few weeks I was quite anxious, then I settled down, and then half-way through I became anxious again. Now that I've finished I've...felt I've really enjoyed it...because I have actually achieved what I set out to achieve.

These comments are similar to the kind evidence many theorists and practitioners (e.g. Carkhuff and Berenson, 1976) have used to highlight the cyclical nature of student learning: a problem is experienced ensuring that internalised conflict results in anxiety, which motivates action to ameliorate the immediate situation. This is followed by a sense of relief or even release and results in a growing sense of confidence, which ultimately results in new and further exploration. This means that a certain amount of internalised stress is essential for active learning to occur; and the problem is that sometimes this stress is almost debilitating. It is through the meaning-making exchanges that occur in relationships that the competing elements of that stress can become ‘objectified’ so that the conflict-producing pressures can be handled.
Stephanie explained in her journal that her excessive stress left her *doing nothing for ages*. She stated that the inertia did not shift until she took the action of becoming more involved with her supervisor, making contact with me as the convenor, and speaking with her academic facilitator. She stated that it was her active involvement in all of these relationships that assisted her to identify her own strategy to address the requirements of her work task. This, and journal entries from other students illustrated that these relationships were important not only for the purposes of continued knowledge development (content), but also in terms of self-knowledge (i.e. self-concept), and of the kinds of strategies that were appropriate in certain kinds of situations.

However, it was impossible to guarantee the outcome of any planned experience: Fiona’s placement was suddenly concluded. Her initial experience was not at all challenging and she wanted the arrangements changed. I insisted that she take responsibility for terminating the placement herself before she could move onto another she would find more satisfying. She wrote about this experience in her journal:

> My interactions with both my supervisor and Merrelyn throughout this process of change...has forced me out of the ‘student role’ ...[and] I have had to take positive steps to obtain what I want. ... [It] has also enabled me to view the student-lecturer relationship in a different light. It has not only made it easier for me to break down this ‘status’ relationship (that I thought was rather academically defined) but has given me confidence to discuss concerns and problems.

This provided an example of how the convenor acted in order to facilitate learning. Firstly, the convenor here was acting as an expectation breaker as she asked the student to stand aside and begin to look at her own needs. Once this has happened the convenor then became an experience broker in that she used the resources at her command to help the student restructure the relationships by embarking upon a particular course of action.

Once Fiona was settled into her new placement she provided an example in her journal of how she used different relationships as she processed and confirmed her learning in separate discussions. She also highlighted how both the supervisor’s...
and the convenor’s responses to her feelings were central factors that enabled her to make decisions and then act upon them:

*I had concerns about taking on other people’s problems and feeling guilty if the client did not better themselves… My supervisor asserted that it was not for me to take on other people’s problems…or to feel guilty for their feelings or subsequent actions, which Merrelyn had pointed out to me in a previous discussion.*

The complementary relationship between the workplace supervisor and the course convenor was not always this obvious to students. It was essential to focus the student’s awareness onto the different relationships involved in this course because the placement experience often triggered memories of significant and sometimes traumatic real-life experiences. When this occurred the opportunity to discuss the situation with a significant other was essential. Whether or not this opportunity was used is up to the student, but it needed to be there. Maxine wrote about a clinical incident that left her feeling unsettled:

*Following the interview, my supervisor and I had a debriefing…[where she] stated that she noticed I was very upset… On reflection, I was able to concede that I had been very upset by what had happened and the reasons for this stemmed from aspects of my own life.*

This discussion was very important for Maxine and she identified that ...*it was very healing to be able to pinpoint the source of my anger and distress.* My own judgement at the time was that this would not have happened had there not been a sound relationship between the student and her supervisor. This illustrates the importance of ‘noticing’ (Boud & Walker, 1992, Mason, 1993). It is the prerequisite to any form of facilitation and it involves the facilitator (or supervisor, convenor, teacher) in calling upon two separate sets of skills: those of attending to feelings and those of empathically responding to feelings. These are the essential ingredients of the first part of the effective teaching intervention (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976) and precede the process of helping the student personalise the problem and focus upon action.
Chapter 5: Preliminary monitoring

Relationships for the workplace supervisor

The supervisor’s relationship with the student was a crucial component of a workplace learning experience. The process, as always began with negotiating complementary role expectations. Often students were surprised at the fact that someone they expected to be take an authority position was prepared to commence the relationship with negotiations rather than simple demands. Leisha’s experience was recorded in her journal:

...I will remember what it is like to be treated with respect...and I trust that if ever I am in a position as a supervisor of a student, I will also treat that person with the same respect that I have been shown.

It was not uncommon for supervisors to comment on the positives associated with the process. Many of them alluded to the fact that they would have liked a similar opportunity when they were a student. Milton explained that he believed this was part of the success of a placement and that the relationship between a supervisor and student was dependent on the ‘accurate’ matching of the student to the expected role-demands of the placement. In a recorded interview he commented from his own experience:

I was impressed. I think it was a good process. ... I think some students would find [this placement in the staff counselling section of the Queensland Police Service] very intimidating... They would have required...more concrete thoughts rather than just an outline and that wouldn’t have been possible here.

When Milton was reflecting on his role and the University’s expectations of him, he saw a number of changes that had occurred for him as well as for the student:

My role was never really prescribed. I saw it as fairly broad and...I had to move away from the mind-set that it was a physical placement...the student...[had] to become involved in a particular project that...would have some outcomes. So that was a bit of a transition for me [and] it took me a little while to...identify what my role would be. ... I saw [the role] towards the end as...helping Della work on her project, and...making sure that she got something out of the placement...but also to make sure...
that we got something out of it in terms of ensuring that what she did was ultimately of some value to us.

Della explained that Milton’s supervision was crucial for her learning. She said in her journal:

\[\text{His} \text{ expectations were good in that he...put everything into context...because otherwise I think I would have gone off on a bit of a tangent.}\]

Another supervisor, Liliane, emphasised the point that one of the components of the role of supervisor was to ‘assess’ the student and match the project/tasks to the individual. She explained this in her interview:

\[\text{I saw Cherie come in as a very naive young woman who...hadn't had a lot of experiences in the wide world. ... When [she] first started she was shocked...that she was in a courtroom and prisoners were being walked backwards and forwards with handcuffs on.}\]

Liliane had previously been a mature-aged student of the course prior to being a supervisor and was able to empathise with the students:

\[\text{You can see the student's attitudes changing...and as a supervisor I love to watch...the maturity changes in a young person. They learn to work within the bureaucracy... They learn how important teamwork is...}\]

Liliane was conscious that she had a responsibility not only for Cherie’s learning outcomes but also for her emotional well-being. She reported that:

\[\text{The most important thing I had to do...was continually debrief her after her experiences. ... I actually...rang her the...day [after her placement visit] because I was concerned... Her mother was very grateful that I'd rung... 'because she can't stop talking about it'...}\]

It was examples like this that first made me doubt the need for specific ‘educational’ training for the supervisors. This is often demanded in the literature. It seems to me that the last thing a supervisor needs is the ability to (for example) write a list of behavioural objectives for the student. In this course the pragmatic
attitude of the supervisors often already makes them ideal ‘action-teachers’ for adults.

Max also was conscious of the changes occurring in his student, Alison. In his interview he explained that he thought her ability to become integrated into the working team depended a great deal upon her self-presentation - including her demeanour and dress.

Gordon commented, in his interview, that his student, Emily, was well prepared prior to her starting the placement. He stated it was her attitude of wanting that most impressed him about her preparation because that always makes imparting knowledge so much easier. He was also impressed that when she started she had some prior knowledge of the organisation.

Liliane explained that she had seen her role as a guide who was conscious of the potential impact of certain experiences within the context of the criminal justice system. Her philosophical position was that if a student had plans to work in the criminal justice system then exposure to its realities would help in future employment choices. Liliane reported that she had learnt more about her role as a supervisor because she had supervised a number of times and discovered that each student was different, with different abilities, different needs, and different aspirations. She reported that she had to …remember not to compare students.

Gordon identified that he saw his supervisory role as being very clearly in two parts. The first was that of inductor into the workplace, providing the student with introductions, expectations, procedural information, and political agendas associated with public sector employment. His second role, …not secondary but second role, was the same as Liliane had described – a guide. He elaborated that this meant he ‘guided’ his student to …those areas of knowledge and competency needed not only for the completion of the student project but also to inform her in her area of interest within criminal justice.
Given that this course occurred in the students’ final semester there were some occurrences when the students found themselves in a conflicted position about whether to remain as full-time students and complete the last few weeks of the degree or withdraw in order to take up full-time positions (usually as police recruits, which is a dream that is hard to put on hold once having been accepted) and defer the conclusion of their studies for a year or so. Malcolm found himself in this position and as his journal demonstrated he traversed a number of emotions and thoughts before making his ultimate choice:

*I was excited to find that I had been accepted into the Police Academy... My first reaction was to drop two of my subjects, and try to finish the other two before I went in. When Merrelyn and my supervisor found out they ganged up and convinced me to defer the Academy...and finish my degree.*

Many students commented on the frequently enlightening discussions with their supervisors when the assessment report for the University was being completed. Maxine reflected on this in her journal:

*I felt positively elated! It was great to get so much positive feedback about my conduct... Being able to discuss the supervisor's report...helped me to gain an understanding of my level of skill development...[and] it helped me to see the kinds of skills and attributes that potential employers value.*

In all of these cases it was the student’s feeling of satisfaction with relationships that appeared to be most important to them. In Maxine’s case she was elated and it is important to realise how significant realistic positive feedback is to a student’s own self-valuing. Often the supervisor-student relationship continues long after the practicum has finished.

*Relationships with the academic facilitator*

The academic facilitator served a number of different functions and the students were in a position where they had the opportunity to establish this relationship and, to some extent, its purpose. It could be authority-dependent or it could be the
opportunity for the beginnings of a relationship in which collaboration was a major component. The academic facilitator was originally conceived as fulfilling a similar role to the ‘liaison academic’ in the social work practicum or the ‘visiting lecturer’ in a teaching practicum. Essentially the idea was that such a person should monitor the placement process, helping students to conceptualise the nature of their project task, assessing the written product of that task, and trouble-shooting and helping to resolve any difficulties in the relationship between student and workplace supervisor.

In practice, it became obvious from the beginning that many academics saw this role – particularly, the ‘trouble-shooting’ part – as peripheral to their work and even as something of an imposition. Consequently, in this course, the academic staff were mainly concerned with the written task and its assessment. They tended to see ‘relationships’ and particularly ‘problems in relationships’ as outside their field and really the province of the course convenor. Here is a student writing about the pragmatics of his relationship with the academic facilitator at the beginning of his placement:

*I had my first meeting with my academic facilitator [and] we talked about the project, my ideas and thoughts, the plans that we had to finish the project. ... The meeting went very well...for the first meeting. The next meeting will be more informative and involved because we will have a lot more of the project done to talk about.*

Anita found the experience of having to explain her project to her academic facilitator as personally reaffirming. She wrote that when she had to describe her project she was also able to place it in the context of the organisation: knowledge that she was unaware that she had developed. She further explained that:

*He helped me clarify the outline of my project and suggested some useful readings... He made the process of the project seem more approachable ...[which] increased my motivation...*

The way in which the academic facilitator was allocated to a particular student meant that not all students already had a relationship with their assigned staff...
member. As a result, this meant that for some students there was an added level of relationship building demanded. In her journal Narelle wrote:

I wanted to get to know [my academic facilitator] quickly and make sure he was aware of exactly what my project entailed. I was a little disappointed that I wouldn't be working with a member of staff that I already knew...but after our meeting I'm more confident...

In her interview, Della stated that, even though her academic facilitator did not have any ‘content’ knowledge in the area of her project, she was able to use the relationship as a sounding board for ideas and to receive support that would help her meet the criteria of the subject. She explained that it might even have been a disadvantage to have an academic facilitator familiar with the area because his or her own academic agenda might be a hurdle to the contextual development of the project. Andrew, on the other hand, found that the process of explaining the project to the academic facilitator in a language familiar to the academic helped him conceptualise the project. Some students, like Alison, worked collaboratively with their academic facilitator who was happy to look at her rough draft.

Ginnie’s description of her academic facilitator showed just one of the barriers that students sometimes had to overcome when they had already experienced authority dependence (or even or hero worship), previously in their relationships with their academic facilitator:

...I think of Ray as God...he's up there and we're down here. The first meeting...was very much agreeing to everything he said.

Jackie also had an academic facilitator who did not have a direct content knowledge in the area of her report: this motivated her to consider extended areas of the topic. This, she stated, would not have occurred necessarily with any other academic. She commented that her academic facilitator expressed some concern about how to mark this workplace project and that as a result there had to be a process of negotiation for which, she, the student was responsible. Jackie saw this as a constructive process because it put the onus on her.
Students tended to remain aware of the large status gap between themselves and the academic staff. The academic facilitator was primarily concerned with helping the student to translate the ‘knowledge of academia’ into the language of the workplace and vice versa. In doing so, students expected to be provided with appropriate propositional forms with which to communicate their new knowledge. This presented a major challenge for the academic facilitators because very often the audience for the student’s report was not an academic one.

**Relationships with the convenor**

We have already seen that the literature rarely refers to the relationship of the course convenor with the students. But, because the convenor has firm control over what is possible in the course, from the moment that students signal their intention to enrol, this relationship is central. In the following journal entry Fiona described the subtle levels of negotiation that occurred when she discussed potential placements with me: we can note that there is a distinction between ‘forcing’ and ‘facilitating’, which I interpret as ‘directing non-directively’:

> ...I was grateful for not being forced...into the custodial placement even though the convenor thought I would benefit from...it. What was most pleasing...was that [I was able] to express to the convenor what I wanted to achieve...from this subject...[and] I was able...to make personal learning decisions and determine my needs... This differs from...where the subject objectives and the means of attainment are strictly set within the course outline.

It was this kind of feedback which first led me to realise that by its very structure, this course was demanding that my teaching now involved assisting students (sometimes by not directing them) to make decisions in the present tense – in the here and now. Fiona explained that her experience led to a redefining of the student-lecturer relationship:

> The communication that occurred between the convenor and I during this change process enabled **me** to break down the academically defined ‘status’ relationship and develop a more personal relationship. (Emphasis mine)
Students were exposed to a range of experiences, which cannot always be predicted. It was essential that they felt ‘safe’ to approach an appropriate person in order to analyse these experiences in a way that did not impair their future employment opportunities, or even their emotional and mental well-being. Delece wrote in great detail about a difficult interview that she completed with a female inmate of a custodial institution. She wrote:

\[\textit{Try as I might to get focussed…it just didn't happen… I left the experience feeling as though my interviewing and communication skills needed lots more practise. ... In search for help...I spoke to you Merrelyn about what I could have done...}\]

With my professional background and experience I had been able to offer some insight and alternative strategies for the student, just as an organisational supervisor might do. For other students the supervisor became more like a coach as they struggled against their own personal inclinations. Brendon wrote:

\[\textit{...[My] organisational skills have not advanced as far as I would have liked... However, as you said Merrelyn it is a matter of prioritising and deciding what is more important.}\]

Because students were exposed to a ‘professional’ workplace, usually for the first time, it was also their first exposure to ‘office politics’. Frequently it was the convenor – either within a workshop setting or in a personal interaction – who had the responsibility of providing a different perspective for the situation being observed by the students. Thomas explained in his journal that he had observed an interaction between two staff members, which concerned him. He had approached me after a workshop asking for strategies he could use to intervene and help. I had explained that mediation was not part of his role and his journal entry confirmed this – the staff members sorted the problem out on their own. In Gail’s case, her supervisor was unexpectedly transferred to another office so she came to discuss her options and, as is not uncommon, other issues also came up. As she explained in her journal:
Chapter 5: Preliminary monitoring

I had some possibilities or courses of action that I could take, and I discussed these with Merrelyn. She helped me to decide on the most appropriate course of action...

I also discussed...the suitability of including some information...regarding others in the office. Merrelyn raised a few points that I had not previously considered. I had been worried about...things that had been told to me in confidence. ... Merrelyn asked me to consider the appropriateness of a supervisor sharing privileged information with a student. I pondered this... ... I also considered the point made by Merrelyn that higher positions in organisations can be isolating...

On the other hand, sometimes the discussions between the student and the convenor were simply to clarify the nature of the course and its requirements. Similarly, a discussion with Jonathon focussed on the assessment requirements for his journal. But, my role was also to set expectations: Jackie clearly identified that this was central to her learning and participation in the course when she explained in her journal (that is, to me) that:

I'd have to say the demands and expectations from you [influenced me] because you're obviously a major stakeholder in the whole process. ...your expectations were clearly delineated...with what was expected of us as students and how this reflected on the uni....

Jackie also identified an additional level of responsibility because her placement was with an organisation in which I held a number of committee positions. She wrote:

I think that made me keener because I was also representing you who they know. It also influenced my journal because...I was careful that I put in justifications [for my statements], that I may have glossed over if it was anyone else.

Reading this and other feedback led me to realise that my role as ‘structurer of experiences’ and ‘maker of interventions’ was, in fact, the essence of my teaching. It was something that I was doing with all of my students all of the time: it had a lot more in common with the kinds of interventions I had been making earlier in my career when operating as a social worker (or counsellor) than with the safer more traditional ‘academic’ functions of a university faculty member. Somehow, I
was working in a way that operated at a deeper and more personal level than simply being a conduit for the transmission of pre-existing knowledge and skills that I ‘possessed’ and the student did not.

In summary, the relationship between convenor and students was multi-layered and was often perceived by the students as very different to their relationships with other academics. When I read their comments, I began to realise something else about the way the students experienced the task of journal writing. They did not see it as simply a record of a kind of ongoing internal monologue, they actually saw it as half of an imaginary dialogue and often this dialogue was with me personally and not just my role. Many of them read more like personal letters than anything else.

**Summary discussion**

The findings of this preliminary monitoring of the course can be summarised as a number of key learnings: elements or aspects of the course to which the students attribute learning. The students’ reports on their learning seemed to fall into three main categories: firstly, the students reported that they learned about the details of the workplace and the kinds of tasks an agency expected its staff to complete. In so doing, students reported that they developed specific workplace skills through direct engagement with specific purposive activities. Secondly, students reported that they learned about certain aspects of criminal justice theory in the context of real relationships often with real ‘clients’. And thirdly, perhaps the most important, they all reported that they learned a great deal about themselves.

**1. Key challenges**

It is clear that key learning experiences always appeared to involve a challenge of some kind and the student went through a cyclic process which began with experiencing the problem (or conflict) and a degree of anxiety (or stress),
engaging in action, and subsequently experiencing a sense of conquest (or release). The following seven categories of challenge have emerged from the data presented in this chapter.

i) Challenges associated with immediacy of events
Students were often surprised by the way in which conflicts, problems and challenges presented themselves suddenly. They commented on their sense of amazement at the ‘all-at-onceness’ of events in the workplace and how problems seemed to appear from nowhere and not necessarily in any kind of sequential order. This, they report is unlike the way they appeared in their theoretical studies and in theoretical analyses. Even when events took a sudden new turn in a role-play this came as a challenging surprise to students who had become used to analytical and sequential reasoning as a means of addressing problems.

ii) The challenge of real crises
Not only did criminal justice placements present students with experiences that were real and immediate they usually involved clients or others who were in a state of personal crisis. There was a certain melodrama that students found exciting and alarming in the criminal justice workplace and developing the resilience to deal with extremes of emotion and behaviour became very important to them.

iii) The challenge presented by the demands of on-going negotiation
Students were used to having demands placed upon them and then being given time to go away and deal with those demands. The fact that there was always a response reaction to every move they made, and new and unexpected twists occurred as they attempted to negotiate and solve problems, meant that they often faced new and disquieting challenge.

iv) The challenge of reflecting on action
Many students had previously no experience of writing a reflective journal that openly attended to the feelings they experienced and the actions they
initiated in response to those feelings. Confronting their own responsibility for what they did (or fail to do) in writing without feeling overwhelmed or guilty also presented challenges on a daily basis.

v) The challenge of mediating meaning
This course deliberately put students in a position where they had to translate the experiences and realities of the workplace into written text that had meaning for the audience in the workplace as well as for an academic from the University. As they did this they were expected to negotiate with their academic facilitator the ‘contribution’ they were making and the criteria that would be used for their assessment.

vi) The challenge of taking responsibility
For many students the Field Placement was the first experience they had of facing real and direct consequences for their immediate behaviour. Until the practicum much of what they had learned had been either hypothetical or mediated by some sort of ‘exercise’ structure; but the practicum was the real thing.

vii) The challenge to collaborate rather than to conform
Again, until the practicum, many students had seen their work simply as being their efforts to meet the demands of others and to do it on their own, while competing with their peers. In Field Placement their major preoccupation when presented with their ‘professional’ responsibility was ‘What am I supposed to do?’ For many of them it was difficult to see others around them as potential allies to whom they could turn to for help; instead, they often regarded having another person join them in a collaborative endeavour as an implicit judgement that they had failed. This challenge meant that the students needed to realise that it was not a problem to seek help or work with another on an equal footing.
2. **Key elements of the course to which learning is attributed**

Both the students and the supervisors identified two aspects of the placement as vital.

To begin with there were five structural aspects: the first was the learning plan that students were expected to develop and re-negotiate, the second was the project or the task that they were expected to complete, the third was the journal, the fourth was the fact that they were thrust into the social milieu of the workplace, and then finally, the workshops were central to unifying the experiences and cementing this ‘new’ knowledge together.

The second key element was the centrality of the experience of relationships in the process.

3. **Key understanding about the self**

The key understandings about the self that were achieved in this course were not about the student’s success or failure, they were about how an individual could take and use the experiences of success and failure to advantage.

All of these learnings were attributable at least in part to the course and it was clear that the course itself revolved around a number of important interventions that were made by the convenor, the supervisor and the academic facilitator in the ongoing experience of each student. These interventions facilitated all important learnings about the self. Thus, the focus was always upon a dialogue that helped the student to make finer and more accurate discriminations about his or her own strengths and weaknesses and then to act upon that knowledge. In social work this is usually referred to as acting from a “strengths perspective” (Payne, 1997).

The challenges and tasks that constituted the maze through which the students had to find their way were developed by the convenor. Often this was done on an
Chapter 5: Preliminary monitoring

individual basis. In every case the ordering of events, the implicit supports and the confirming interventions were overseen and initiated by the convenor either directly or indirectly. It was the ongoing detailed outworking of this role and the management of the variables involved, case-by-case that determined the success or failure of the course.
Chapter 6 – Response 1: Convening a Field Placement course for criminology students

Introduction

The early evaluation studies discussed in Chapter Two and the preliminary monitoring reported in Chapter Five established that the Field Placement course appeared to achieve its aims and was valued by the students and the workplace agencies as an essential part of professional preparation in a variety of contexts and sites. The course also seemed to work more efficiently when the progress of all of the students was closely monitored by the University convenor. This could be time consuming but seemed to be critical. Those who conducted the course needed to be ready to allow problems and challenges for the student to arise naturally out of the placement situation, and also to be ready to respond with interventions that were genuinely helpful but that still allowed the student to solve his or her own problems. It was the convenor who set the structure and climate for encounters with others, and it was these interactions with others that determined the nature of the course.

Chapter Five also identified the convenor as central to ensuring that the process of maximising challenges and opportunities for all students occurred. Other stakeholders did not see the convenor only as an administrator but also as someone who had an academic overview and understanding of the degree program and of the course in particular. The convenor was expected to have knowledge of each student, particularly those experiencing difficulties, and to be aware of the problems they were encountering; ready to make incisive interventions without either reinforcing anxieties or undermining initiative. The other stakeholders, including workplace supervisors and faculty staff, only had a view of parts of the total course; it was the convenor who had to take care of the whole. So, in response to this finding a number of questions about the convenor’s role were raised for clarification:
• What were the explicit formal expectations of a convenor?
• What were the explicit and implicit informal expectations of a convenor?
• What were the role conflicts experienced by the convenor?
• Did the convenor’s solutions to these role conflicts determine the nature of this course?

The convenor: role expectations and external constraints

In attempting to describe the role of the convenor it was important to take some cautionary advice from Raban and Torrance who argue that “…the main problem with the concept of ‘role’ is its lack of constraint; it is a tearaway word which tends to carry all of human behaviour indiscriminately away with it” (Raban & Torrance, 1988, p.751). They also note that the term ‘role’ discriminates between the “…attributes associated with a particular…position and …the personal characteristics of the individual who occupies that position” (Raban & Torrance, 1988, p.750). The concept was useful in that it separates the notion of ‘role’ from acts of ‘role-taking’ and the subsequent process of ‘role-making’; this in turn made it possible to list those attributes of the role as though they were separate from the attributes of the person performing the role. The discussion could then turn to how these two sets of attributes could become melded into specific behaviours either by compliance to expectations or by a process of identification with the role.

Role-taking has been defined as a process whereby the person adopts particular behaviours and conforms to norms and expectations held by others for the role (Biddle, 1979). Essentially role-taking involves compliant behaviour in which the individual learns to construct and modify his or her responses according to external demands: it usually involves imitation of normative behaviours, initially ‘modelled’ by another and then replicated by the role-taker. The term role-making is used to refer to a deeper process where the role itself becomes modified by the
role incumbent as he or she constructs new expectations for both self and others. The transition from role-taking to role-making is usually referred to as ‘socialisation’ (Hurley-Wilson, 1988), during which the new behaviours are adopted and ‘owned’ by the individual, (i.e., the new behaviour and the role that is made becomes a part of what is called the individual’s “self-concept” (Rogers, 1967)). Biddle argues that in modern western culture, which demands changes in identity and role during adulthood, the person needs to be conceived of “…in a more active mode – accommodating, enjoying, suffering from and sometimes even changing the social systems in which he or she participates” (Biddle, 1979, p.312). This more complex notion of role, and the ways in which role behaviour becomes fused with the individual’s sense of identity is discussed later in this chapter.

In considering the external and more formal conception of role, Schwandt draws attention to Lyotard’s notion of “…performativity (i.e., efficiency, completion, perfection, and measurement)” (Schwandt, 2001, p.189). This refers to compliance to formal and informal rules, which generate ‘role-conflicts’ because of inconsistent and incompatible expectations placed upon the role incumbent. However, “…most social ‘roles’ are so inexactly defined that they are barely more than intuitively felt guidelines to the correct behaviour for a particular social situation” (Raban & Torrance, 1988, p.750) and this would indicate that most roles come with role conflicts built in. Marshall explains that every role brings a number of different partners with it and that each partner has “…their own set of expectations”, which in turn almost inevitably creates “role-conflict” (Marshall, 1998, p.570). However, when role-conflict is seen as simply a matter of conflicting ‘orders from superiors’ during the role-taking process, the responsibility for any inconsistencies and even inadequacies in role performance can be passed up the authority chain and the conflict need not be internalised. However, when it is agreed that responsibility for resolving the conflicts rests with the role incumbent, the role-making process becomes much more personally challenging. It must be noted that this transition from role-taking to role-making does not refer only to the convenor of the course. It is a central unifying concept and applies to the learning of the students as well and they were very conscious of
the role-change from ‘student’ to ‘practitioner’. The individual’s own resolution of such ‘role-conflicts’ is a critical pre-requisite to the making of every role; and self-directed personal action becomes crucial to the ongoing development of that individual’s identity.

**Expectations of the convenor**

The role of convenor comes with a clear set of formal expectations but in order for these to be met they need to be translated into action. This means that in a discussion of the role of convenor it is necessary to take into account both the inner and outer aspects of the role-making process. What follows is an attempt to analyse the stated expectations for the convenor of the course held by the different stakeholders and to identify the ‘role-set’ of external expectations that had been clearly established by all concerned. It should be noted that in describing the expectations of the stakeholders the language that has been used carries with it quite deep assumptions about what is to be learned in the educational process and the nature of the communication between academic and student. The University’s statements are couched in terms that appear to accept implicit assumptions about a transmission model of learning in which pre-determined knowledge about an area of human endeavour and about appropriate role behaviours is delivered to the students for their consumption. Similar assumptions appear to exist in the minds of other stakeholders (e.g. the workplace supervisors as well). It is inevitable that any academic who approaches the role for the first time will do so carrying many of these assumptions with her. As will become evident, the role-taking process will challenge these preconceptions.

**Expectations held by the University**

There are a number of formal, relevant and legally binding documents that impinge upon the University’s convenor’s role in this particular case. The official Griffith University document, ‘The Role of Course Convenor’ (Griffith University, 2002b), describes the responsibilities and lists a number of tasks the
convenor is expected either to undertake or oversee. Although the document makes no mention of particular sanctions that may be invoked and applied to a convenor whose role-performance is judged to be inadequate, the University office bearers who are expected to make formal judgements about such matters are identified as the Head of School and his or her superiors in the University hierarchy.

Griffith University (Griffith University, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2001e, 2003c) has a selection of documents available to students and staff that contain direct implications and detailed specifications for the work of a course convenor. They include the formal requirements for which the convenor is responsible (mainly concerned with course approval, course review, and student assessment). Also included are documents that outline the rights and responsibilities of students as well as the University Code of Conduct document. All of these contain direct references to the ways in which the convenor of a course is expected to carry out the role. The Code of Conduct demands that University officers carry out their assigned duties with ‘diligence’ and with ‘integrity’ and a number of behavioural indicators are included there as guidelines for those required to make judgements about standards of role performance.

**Expectations held by the students**

The conceptions that determine the student’s own perceptions of what is going on are often couched in pre-ordinate terms at the beginning of the course. The students’ detailed feedback indicates that they often still see themselves as passive recipients of knowledge from outside rather than as active constructors of that knowledge as they reflect upon and interpret their own unique experiences. The external demands that have been identified describe ‘learning’ as a change that is wrought upon students by the course and its agents. This learning is described as an acquisition of either knowledge or skills. Its ontological significance for the student-as-person is not explicitly considered by this transmission model, nor is
the student’s own intentionality: the concept of ‘autonomy’ is only thought of as a distant goal.

All of the official documentation and the accepted academic culture of the university lead students to believe that it is the role of the course convenor to provide information and experiences which will give them the knowledge and skills required to pass the course. The students then expect the convenor to make judgements about the extent to which each of them has ‘learned’ this ‘material’. Students expect to have to articulate examples of the ‘knowledge’ they have acquired in written assessment tasks. They also expect to have some authority figure pass judgement on their newly acquired practical ‘skills’. In addition, and specifically in the Field Placement course, some students bring with them the false expectation that they will be placed in an organisation in which they will be able to obtain future employment (something I quickly need to disimbuie them of early in the course). They also expect to have an experience which is quite different from an ‘academic’ one; an experience that concentrates more on the day-to-day practice of a profession than on abstract academic theory. This notion that theory and practice are two quite different requirements for credentialing and have little to do with each other is still an assumption shared by a surprising number of students even when they come to the final semester of their degree program. The journals of the students, their comments in the workshops, and their individual pleas for help indicate that almost all of them enter this course with a preoccupation about assessment, are more than ready to be compliant and want to know what the rules are. They do not seem to mind if the assessment is demanding, but they do expect it to be relevant to the ‘content’ they believe they are required to learn.

**Expectations held by workplace supervisors**

The workplace supervisors’ expectations are many and varied. These are determined by the policy of the particular agency or organisation, attitudes and values held by senior management figures, concepts about the purpose of the
activity the organisation is engaged in, and particularly the supervisor’s own prior experience of work placement themselves. In Chapter Two, management views expressed by senior personnel reveal that there is an underlying assumption in many agencies that it is the task of universities to prepare graduates for employment by equipping them with ‘generic’ skills applicable to all workplaces (Crebert et al., 2004a, 2004b). By and large, these studies indicate that senior personnel in workplace agencies see the workplace as the location where students best learn the procedural knowledges associated with a particular job; these and similar studies (e.g. Patford 2000, Slocombe 1993, Maidment 2000) indicate that ‘theory’ is often seen by them as a ‘thing apart’: a credentialing pre-requisite which is often relevant, but sometimes not, and the province of the University. The supervisors work much more on a micro level and are concerned with the day-to-day working procedures. They also feel the need to equip students with an intuitive level of general competence; and direct feedback from many supervisors in the workplace indicates that they tend to see students as socially naïve. Almost always they express a personal commitment to the students themselves and a desire to ‘help them do well in the course’. Again, their initial conception of the course is that it is a series of tasks that are assessment driven. They can see the written project as an opportunity for the student to contribute to the organisation’s activities constructively and ask that it be written in a language register appropriate to the audience for whom it is intended.

**Expectations held by academic facilitators**

These vary from academic to academic but the university culture seems to encourage them to believe that their involvement with a Field Placement course is an imposition that deflects them from their ‘real work’ of research and teaching (knowledge production and then the imparting of that reified knowledge to the students in verbal form). This could be because the University draws a distinction between three areas of responsibility for any academic. Faculty members are expected to spend equal amounts of time on research (knowledge production), teaching (knowledge transmission), and service (knowledge dissemination, via
consultancy – preferably paid). Most academics claim that they can see the ‘relevance’ of the course as ‘applied theory’ for students but often complain that they are ‘too busy to spend more than a minimal amount of time on the task’ of ensuring that the theory they have taught is being put into practice. My experience of discussion with academic staff is that the hegemony of the written word is often taken for granted and that the need to assess a particular piece of project work done by a student on placement is not regarded as a legitimate part of their workload. They often claim that involvement beyond that is of limited importance. Consequently, a common expectation of the convenor by her academic colleagues is that she should give them precise tasks concerned with their own area of expertise that occupy as little time as possible. They also expect to be involved in the assessment of the student’s learning – mainly to ensure that the student is drawing upon the most recent research and approaches to complete whatever task is set with academic rigour.

**Role conflicts experienced by the convenor**

All of the above externalised role expectations of the stakeholders constitutes the role-set (Biddle, 1979) that governs the convenor’s behaviour. However, a cursory examination of the University’s statements previously mentioned shows the extent to which role conflict can be expected. Many statements are contradictory and others qualify some role demands to the extent that they are likely to be extinguished altogether as real possibilities for action. For example, it is expected that all of the tasks included in ‘The Role of the Course Convenor’ (Griffith University, 2002b) under Section 4: ‘Detailed Responsibilities’ will be discharged by the convenor “within the resources available”. Clearly this places a convenor in an impossible situation when the availability of resources is changed by a funding decision made elsewhere. Similarly, the University’s requirement in its ‘Code of Conduct’ (Griffith University, 2001c) that “diligence”, and “integrity” should characterise the convenor’s discharge of his or her duties is open to such broad interpretation that any convenor could be placed in a double-bind whenever the

---

Just Practice?
range and depth of demands cannot be met. This is particularly true when the students face unexpected crisis situations in the workplace – as often happens.

Initially, when an individual takes on a new role she attempts to do what is expected as best she can. When difficulties arise she uses ‘common sense’ to prioritise the rules as she carries out her functions and is prepared to be corrected by line management. A convenor in the role-taking phase, by definition, will comply with the University culture and the structures within which her responsibilities are determined. She will operate within the University’s rules, accept the University’s assumptions and attempt to resolve conflicting demands through proper University channels. Thus, the convenor becomes the course designer, implementer, manager, administrator, assessor and evaluator. The convenor is also expected to take responsibility for the course to maintain its adequate resourcing within the competitive culture of the University School or Faculty: the convenor then is concerned with husbanding the course and acting as advocate for the course both within the University and beyond.

**Role of the convenor from the inside**

There is a deeper process that follows compliance when a person not only takes a role but also begins to make it her own. This means that the role-taker begins to resolve value conflicts between contesting expectations and the philosophical foundation from which she operates. Any assumption that the student is merely a passive recipient of new knowledge and skills does not sit comfortably with any notion of student autonomy. The philosophical import of the intentionality of the learner is profound. It means that action through compliance alone is no longer rule-directed, it becomes instead self-directed and goal oriented (Witkin, 1974). Intentionality is often only first manifested in the action taken: this involves making what is implicit (in action) become explicit (in formulation) (Schön, 1983). When this happens, what is tacit becomes first conscious and then propositional. This is the process of role-making (Biddle, 1979).
Role-making: an ontological perspective

As already discussed, a role is actually made by the person performing it in her day-to-day activity. Not only is the role the incumbent’s response to the formal role-set discussed above, it is also conditioned by informal and unstated role expectations, which can only be learned through direct experience. These include whatever myths and ‘common knowledge’ there is available about the convenor’s personality, sensibilities, her likely sensitivities, areas of tolerance, and individual peculiarities. Above all, the role-making process is determined by the ways in which the incumbent resolves the role-conflicts that are a manifestation of both formal and informal role expectations in contestation as they emerge on a context-specific and case-by-case basis.

This means that there is an ongoing ontological aspect to the process of role-making for both convenor and students. “Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished as uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality… The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity. Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be it must become” (Freire, 1972, p.65). Being-a-convenor involves a way of understanding the collective or inter-subjective features of self-and-events as they unfold; it demands that the role incumbent looks at the ongoing temporal nature of the decisions made, the action taken in particular contexts and the immediate outcomes. Above all, it demands that the focus is always upon the immediate intentionality inherent in personal action.

It follows from this that any attempt to articulate how I have been able to ‘make’ the role of the convenor will have a strong autobiographical flavour, and will be concerned with how I have resolved my experiences of role conflict: how I have been able to live with real tensions and still move forward with intentionality. This means that the ‘role’ I have made needs to be understood as what Handal and Lauvas (1987, p.79 in Solomon & Tresman, 1999, p.354) have called a “teacher’s practical theory”, which is “dynamic, a basis for action, and yet also subject to...”
change as the teacher [in this case the ‘convenor’] experiences new situations and new knowledge” (Solomon & Tresman, 1999, p.354). As Harré (1983, p.211 in Solomon & Tresman, 1999, p.354) points out this “extends the argument into the realm of one’s sense of identity in [each] social situation…”. It also means that my account of the action and any subsequent theorising must be firmly grounded in the detail of real events: inevitably it involves ‘thick description’ rather than formulaic abstraction. Its validity inevitably will be face validity based upon the recurrence of patterns.

being a convenor

Perhaps the simplest and most encouraging observation I can make about ‘being a convenor’ is that it is challenging and enjoyable. Being in a position to respond constructively to the real and immediate needs of students and to share in their self-discoveries is both a pleasure and a privilege. And to be able to do so within a complex and changing institutional and interpersonal climate presents a challenge which, when met, can be very satisfying.

That being said, what follows may be thought of as a set of short instrumental case studies that illustrate specific aspects of the praxis of convening a field studies course during semester 2, 2002. These studies lead to a deeper examination of the role of the convenor. These ‘mini instrumental case studies’ have been chosen because they cover the overall spread of students – they include cases where the course was working at its best and others where its outcomes may be more problematic. The cases are not chosen because they are statistically representative of the whole population of students in the course. Each anecdote (or more extended set of anecdotes) has also been chosen so that it adds to a cumulative record. As Stake notes:

…we can learn some important things from almost any case. … The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality, but leaning towards those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn. My choice would be to take that case from which we feel that we can learn the most. … Potential for learning is a different and
Chapter 6: Response 1: Convening

sometimes superior criterion to representativeness. Often it is best to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a magnificently typical case. (Stake, 1994, p.243)

In a later publication Stake notes that one of the reasons for studying particular and even atypical cases is so that the researcher can “…add this one in, thus making a new group from which to generalise, a new opportunity to modify old generalisations” (Stake, 1995, p.85). Each of the cases that follow enables specific aspects of the convenor’s role to be examined.

Each case is introduced by a general question that addresses the convenor’s apparent intention; it must be emphasised that these questions (or ‘issues’) often present themselves initially as an intuitive feeling that ‘something needs to be done’ rather than as the particular dilemma posed in the question. What is at issue in this section is the ‘style’ of the convenorship. What is it that the convenor does and how does the convening (i.e. the ‘bringing together’ of the participants into specific contexts and for specific purposes) influence the kinds of learning that are possible? It is the answers to the questions that are italicised in the following text that constitute the findings of the research in this chapter.

**Andrea**

Andrea was 24 years old, was previously employed full-time in a call centre for an insurance company, and was a student of the Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice).

*How can an enthusiastic but dependent student be persuaded to choose more realistic challenges without dampening her initiative?*

**Finding 1**

In Andrea’s case I realised from the beginning of the placement process that I would have to review her preferred choice of placement in a custodial institution. She presented as enthusiastic but naïve and often unable to stay within the
boundaries set by others. She saw her future job as a prison chaplain and I was concerned that because of her enthusiastic manner she could be perceived as someone who could be easily manipulated and perhaps even intimidated. There was a possibility that she might even fail to recognise potential dangers until it was too late. I decided that her relatively closed view of the world needed to be challenged but in a safer environment.

I decided **not** to give her the placement she wanted (custodial corrections) and contacted Michael, a senior officer at the Corrective Services Training College, who was a previous graduate of our degree and had successfully supervised students in the past. In this environment Andrea could begin to see the sub-cultures that existed in the corrections system without having to respond to these in the moment. This would at least give her the chance to think before she reacted and to accommodate to the new experiences before committing herself.

Michael and I agreed that the task of evaluating the case management component of the Induction training for Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) would involve Andrea in meeting with a number of Departmental staff to expand her understanding of the policies, procedures and operational perspectives of the bureaucratic Corrective Services organisation. Michael believed this would have considerable benefits for the organisation while still providing significant opportunities for Andrea to complete a ‘real’ task within a challenging organisational setting. The nature of the project would also protect her from being in a **reactive** situation where she may have to fall back upon inappropriate responses; she would still have to experience the reality of custodial institutions.

Predictably Andrea thought such a placement may become *too boring* for her. She wrote in an email:

> ...I guess the position will be okay for making contacts...however I distinctly remember you telling a story of a [Community Corrections] placement that...was too boring. That’s why I am hesitating.... I am sorry if I convey too negative an attitude but...guess I’m not eagerly anticipating this nor am I excited by it exactly. (16/05/02)
I explained in a reply email that a placement:

...only works because of what you put into it. The variables that make a placement work are:

1. My finding a reasonable opportunity in an organisation – my past experience with the training college is that this is positive in this regard.

2. Having a good supervisor who provides learning opportunities and supervises - past experience with Michael is that he is consistently operating at a high level.

3. The student's desire to learn, transfer knowledge from one environment to another, and gain as much from the opportunity as they can possibly fit into their schedule - I have no control over this, other than to encourage and support you to take risks and move out of your comfort zones.  

(18/05/04)

Before the placement commenced I reviewed Andrea’s case in my journal:

It seems to me that Andrea requires strong boundaries... The steps I have taken include: the appointment of a strong supervisor and appointing the Head of School as Andrea’s academic facilitator: he has a secretary as his gatekeeper and this will prevent her from becoming overly dependent.

At the briefing workshop everything appeared to be on track but within a few weeks Andrea’s anxiety level increased and she was unable to meet with her academic facilitator to clarify the rationale for her project. I adjusted the deadlines for her because she needed to maintain her energy for the demands of her work. It was most important that she manage the planning of her own learning herself.

During the second (students only) workshop I was pleased to see that Andrea had settled into the placement. As she wrote in her journal:

[Prison] visitors must sign in and obtain a security pass...they are also required to leave valuables and any metallic items in lockers. ... You have to walk through a revolving door that is essentially one large metal detector. I got inside...and it shut down, momentarily locking me inside whilst an overhead recorded voice said that metal had been detected on my person! What an experience!
She further explained with some amazement that she had to remove her shoes before the security system would let her in.

Andrea was also not afraid to comment about her lack of ‘life knowledge’ and her inexperience. She began to see this as a personal and professional challenge:

*The Women’s Correction Centre had its own individual impact on me too. I…was unaware that it was so common for women offenders to have babies and children living in the prison with them. Maybe, I am not broadminded enough but I struggle greatly with this idea.*

*My other inward reaction…was quite amusing…I thought to myself ‘these girls look like “normal girls” just like me!’ … A girl who looked about my age…was a psychologist in a Brisbane prison…and got incarcerated herself for having sex with her male offender clients! I was shocked and astounded…*

*I think I am equally naïve about the methods by which drugs are smuggled into prison facilities and the extremes that both men and women offenders go to. Like women who shove heroin up their babies rear! I guess if I started working with offenders, my eyes would get opened rather quickly, but I am not sure I want my eyes opened to that sort of behaviour. Maybe I actually want to stay innocent, even if that means being naïve. … My Christian faith encourages me to love others around me. … If I am to consider prison chaplaincy in years to come…how do I view people whose moral standards tend to vary greatly from my own personally? [emphasis mine]*

Andrea had begun to realise that the Corrective Services system was much more complex than she expected and that many of the values she was beginning to encounter within the system were at odds with her own. She remarked in her journal:

*The Director of Community Corrections gave an informal talk… [and] …I walked away now believing that the system is driven by politics… Do I sound somewhat disillusioned? I think currently, I definitely am: with the system!*

She had documented that her desire to be a police officer had prompted her to enrol in the degree but that she had quickly identified that policing was not for her because they …*do not affect or create any long-term change or help in the lives of either victims or offenders.* Now that her interest had turned to the area of
corrections, this placement was not identifying a satisfying career direction here either. She was not convinced that she would be able to make a difference:

Essentially...I am not sure I will utilise my degree in a future career. No doubt there are transferable skills that I can take away and I do not regret the time spent doing the degree...however, I think the best thing I can do after this is to take some time off and spend it further developing my convictions and deciding what career would be best for me to pursue.

Andrea also made some additional learnings that need not be recounted here and that I did not discover until I read her journal after the semester had concluded, but when she submitted it she emailed me with some anxieties about its candour.

I have been extremely honest about a lot of my feelings, some of it quite negative towards government departments... It is quite blunt and I am worried I may be assessed or judged on some of my opinions instead of on my ability to analyse etc...

(16/11/02)

She even apologised for her opinions in the journal itself:

For sometime I debated about whether to include sections in my journal that so poignantly expressed my opinions... However...a journal is a record of an individual’s own personal journey and the information written in its pages is private and therefore should be able to be frank and honest. ... If I cannot express them in my own journal, how can I realistically work through the feelings that I am encountering as I progress through this time in my life?

The following entry from Andrea’s journal highlighted her perceptions of some of the complex dynamics operating within the student/convenor, student/course structure relationships. She referred to her initial disappointment as follows:

I recall sitting there at the briefing workshop and immaturely and selfishly listening to other students describe their placement and jealously thinking, ‘I wish that was me!’. At the time, I expressed my frustration to Merrelyn and...the two things that stuck clearly in my mind was her advice to make the most of it and not be scared to ask if there was something I wanted to do...even if I thought it was totally out the question; she encouraged me...to mould the placement into a time that I would be able to reflect back on positively.... I respect Merrelyn a great deal, and she is the university lecturer whom I have had the most contact.... Therefore, I decided to heed her words. Thankfully too!
...Merrelyn encouraged me to approach Michael and ask whether something [like a tour of a prison] might be possible. I was pleasantly surprised when he responded by organising security clearance for me...[to] see all three prisons. I consider this one of the best parts of my placement.

Postscript:

Andrea completed her degree and decided to continue with her current casual employment until she worked out what she wanted to do. Early in 2004, she made contact, asking me to be an academic referee when she began to apply for criminology-related positions: for example, crime prevention, risk assessment, compliance officer. She was offered a number of positions but still had difficulty making her choice. She is now a Claims Assessor for a government department.

Interpretive summary

Andrea’s story problematises success and failure as far as the course is concerned: if the purpose of the course is to train industry recruits in specialist areas the course failed in Andrea’s case. I choose to define success in terms of the student’s autonomy and fulfilment, not society’s demands. As Boud and Miller note “…assessments of learners, to which the learners are not party, and which can have consequences for the lives of learners beyond the immediate situation, introduces a constraint on the kinds of relationships which are possible” (Boud & Miller, 1996, p.15). There was no doubt that Andrea had succeeded – in fact she was awarded a very high grade for her diligence and her insights.

I had become aware that my own role-making behaviour (i.e. my own expectations of myself) placed the highest priority on those of my behaviours that enabled the student to make informed decisions with personal integrity. ‘Fitting’ students with skills (generic or specific) that are regarded as necessary for a particular job is not my responsibility. The initiative for this has to remain with each student as the details of what is to be learned are to be negotiated with the supervisor. My role is to tailor a set of real and challenging experiences that meet
the student’s expressed needs. It is then to assist them individually as they make sense out of what is happening and arrive at their own conclusions and decisions. It is also to provide constant encouragement and even pressure for them to take responsibility for their own learning. After all, that is what the employers have already told us they want as the key attributes in prospective employees: they want them to be mature individuals who have a breadth of knowledge and experience and be people who can take the initiative (Crebert et al., 2004b). This is why the assessment for the course has to be based on criteria that are open ended; criteria that emphasise the student’s ability to take risks, to solve problems (in whatever form they presented themselves); and criteria that require them to relate theory and practice in an intelligent and thoughtful manner as they develop deeper and deeper insights (Bates, 2003b). As we shall see, nearly all students believe they are able to meet these criteria despite the fact that I set the bar very high.

**Abby**

Abby was 21 years old and was a student of Bachelor of Behavioural Science/Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice)

*What strategies does a convenor use when a student wants to take major steps in challenging assumptions about herself, her own family culture, and her own ability to adapt to the role of ‘professional practitioner’?*

Abby was grappling with a major shift in her social status: her mother was a housewife and her father a mechanic; she was an only child and the first of her extended family to attempt a university qualification. In my journal I noted at the time that:

*Abby is personally struggling. She says she wants to leave home and that ‘Mum is dumb’. Clearly her mother is not able to grasp concepts in a language that Abby finds easy...but it is clear that Abby’s problems are similar to those experienced by many other students who are the first members of their family to aspire to a university education.*

161

Just Practice?
Finding 2

Abby presented as having relatively little confidence in any choices she might make about a profession. She said that all she wanted was ‘a job’ and she hoped that Field Placement would provide some experience. She requested a placement with adolescents and I offered her the option of working in a small church-auspiced alternative school for adolescent girls who had been excluded from all other educational establishments. I believed this experience would be extremely challenging because of its chaotic environment caused by the unpredictable and frequently disturbed behaviour of the student population. My own journal notes recorded her reaction:

*She seemed reluctant to take this opportunity and it seemed to me that this was because her normal coping mechanisms were consciously to control her social environment so that she always had room to move; unpredictability challenged this. I told her so and left her to think about what I had said.*

Abby asked to have an interview with the Principal of the School and said *...it’s important for me to challenge my comfort zones and need for control.* She accepted this placement and saw this experience as being potentially ‘good’ for her. Her own underlying anxiety was evident to me although she appeared to be relatively unaware of it.

Abby’s journal showed that despite her initial nerves on her first day, she was able to devise and design a new system of ‘class leave passes’ that would operate humanely but still enable staff to know where temporary absentees were. The principal and the staff accepted this during the staff meeting in the afternoon and her timing in presenting it showed that she had the capacity to demonstrate initiative even in a complex new social milieu that was potentially threatening. But not all of Abby’s experiences were so positive:

*The girls were swearing and being extremely insolent...(I think I heard more bad language in those five minutes than I have in my life). ... Another student walked into the class with her eleven week old baby...[in] a jumpsuit, no blanket, no cardigan... It was freezing...one of the*
volunteers wrapped the baby in her own sweater. I found myself feeling angry towards this young girl.... So there were two reality shocks, in the first half-hour of the day.

Because of my initial concerns regarding Abby’s ability to settle into such a challenging environment I made contact with her supervisor, Sara, who indicated that despite some initial surprises Abby seemed to have settled in quite well. Abby recorded in her journal that she had found the input from her supervisor both encouraging and productive:

I told her... my first day [was] quite difficult, but was getting better and I was really enjoying it. She made me feel I wasn’t wrong for having my own judgements about things that had happened. I told her that I was aware that I could not impose my values on others and just had to accept everyone for who they are.... She told me that I was very good with the kids and that I dealt with them on a very professional level. It was great to get some positive feedback and I am really lucky that I have such a supportive supervisor.

This was the first time Abby had to confront the fact that her new professional responsibilities meant that she had to curb her desire to take matters into her own hands. Sara also played an important role in focussing Abby on making more explicit the connections between the University theory and the practice occurring in her placement. Abby had documented in her journal that she was constantly learning new things and putting all the theory...into practice.

Later in the placement Abby was even able to cope with criticism by exercising her sense of humour:

I managed to severely jam the photocopier...the Admin officer had to call someone out to fix it because it was jammed so badly and all day I got little sarcastic comments from the staff. I felt so bad, but then I learned that nearly everyone on staff has managed to stuff up this photocopier!

My first intuition was correct: Abby’s commonsense and strength of will had carried her through even though she felt justifiably anxious at the beginning. Once again, I had proceeded on the assumption that no news (from the student,
Chapter 6: Response 1: Convening

supervisor, or academic facilitator) was good news and again this ‘faith’ was confirmed.

Not only had Abby begun to feel more comfortable with other professionals she was able to make judgements about the kind of professional career she might aspire to. She recorded in her journal her early decision to reject working with clients whose values she did not share:

> Eventually when [the baby] woke up, her mother came and...started carrying her around like an accessory. Maybe I am being to harsh here, but it made me realise that I don't think I could work in Family Services because I would get too emotional over the children involved.

But as the semester progressed so did her sense of her future:

> Sara told me that...if they received funding they would hire me next year. ...I wondered whether I wanted to stay there or move on to something different... I wrote before that I could never work for the Department of Families but now I think it would be great! This prac has really made a difference in my life. I have seen what is really happening to our youth, rather than just reading about it in some textbook.

Ultimately, Abby acknowledged that the decision that I made prior to her placement to deliberately challenge her comfort levels and even provoke stress was appropriate:

> I have totally enjoyed this placement and could not have asked for a more challenging environment.

Postscript:

After she graduated Abby left home, moved to a country town to work in a community youth centre. This meant that the skills she had acquired in the placement were being used and she had chosen a lifestyle congruent with her values. She claimed that she developed these abilities by being able to generalise from her own problem-solving activities in the relatively chaotic Field Placement experiences to wider imagined experiential domains. She attributed her newfound confidence directly to her Field Placement experience.
Interpretive summary

The crucial role of the convenor here was to be aware of and to facilitate Abby’s problem-solving abilities without appearing to be intrusive. Her feedback six months after graduation indicated that she had become markedly less dependent and much less inclined to resent and blame others for any difficulties that she faced. Her changed view of herself meant that she became more ready to risk respecting her clients. My ‘faith’ in the student’s ability to grow was at least as important as my ability to advise and instruct; and often withholding an intervention was much more constructive than stepping in too early. Abby trusted me enough to be able to share her negative feelings about her mother. I sensed that she also trusted me enough to provide her with a challenge that would stretch her to her limits without overwhelming her. An intervention is focussed “…on the deliberate action of learners – the strategic interventions over which learners can exercise some control” [emphasis mine] (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.26). The fact that I did not respond to her need signalled to her that I trusted her and that I remained comfortable with the amount of protection she was building into the experience herself.

Amelia and Daniel

Amelia was 20 years old and a student of Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice); and Daniel, aged 25 was a student of Bachelor of Behavioural Science/Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice).

How does a convenor help two students construct a team-based working experience when they need to accommodate individual working styles that are very different?

Amelia and Daniel were in court-based placements and although they had different supervisors both supervisors knew each other quite well and suggested that the two students should be allowed to collaborate on a joint project. The
proposal was that Daniel’s supervisor, David, was to be the primary point of contact for the students as far as the project was concerned, with Amelia’s supervisor Katherine having minimal input but being actively involved in her student’s overall placement learning. I had some anxieties about whether or not the joint project would work but I was pleased that it had emanated from both supervisors. My hesitation was because, in my judgement, these two students had markedly different working habits and I could foresee a number of potential difficulties. However, the reality in the real world of work is that sometimes one is asked to collaborate with someone who works differently and I saw no reason to protect either Daniel or Amelia from such an experience unless it presented as an acute and intractable problem. I judged that the resilience of the course structure itself would be strong enough to take care of any of the conflicts that might arise. I also judged that working through these predictable conflicts could be a useful learning experience for both of them.

Finding 3

From the outset, the nature of my relationship with each of the students was different. Daniel and I had already met through his involvement in my mediation course earlier in his degree program; I was aware that his time-management was likely to be inadequate and could be exacerbated by anything that increased his stress levels. When Amelia came for her initial interview I assessed her to be above average academically and potentially very competent. She appeared to have good time-management skills. She wanted to increase her self-confidence and develop her ‘people skills’ and sent me an urgent email wanting assistance to prepare for her first interview with her supervisor. I replied as follows:

*I want you to treat this interview as you would a job interview. ... Use the experience to develop confidence to ask questions: e.g., what hours are expected, what style of dress code is expected, what is the main function of the section? I suggest you do some research on the department ... This prepares you and will give you some confidence. ... Do not hesitate to let her know why you were interested in a placement in Justice, what your future career plans might be...* (29/05/02)
Throughout the semester Daniel maintained regular contact with me, ostensibly wanting to share his enthusiasm but he also wanted confirmation and reassurance. About halfway into the placement, I discovered that Daniel had become the carer for his elderly father who had dementia, his younger sister who had Down’s syndrome, and his elderly mother who had had a hip replacement operation. I realised that Daniel’s relatively poor time management would be exacerbated. I believed that the fact that his supervisor was male would help Daniel so I encouraged him to rely on David as a peer and co-worker who could help with any day-to-day problems he may encounter.

Amelia, on the other hand, was much more independent but lacked self-confidence and was anxious about the placement. She managed the negotiations and arrangements for the joint project in a clear and business-like manner and did not seem to need reassurance from me. Whenever Amelia needed help she sought it from Katherine, from David or Elena, her academic facilitator who was also her lecturer in legal studies with whom she had already established a strong working relationship. Elena was also the academic facilitator for Daniel but both he and Elena informally reported having minimal contact with each other.

Daniel and Amelia had different starting points. Daniel was not able to attend the briefing workshop and predictably reported in his journal:

I regret having missed the pre-placement meeting at uni, as Amelia seemed more ‘with it’ than I was… I was quite lost...

Amelia, on the other hand, was focussed and open to new learning experiences but still expressed her vulnerability:

... It was a learning experience for myself in just being... well out of my comfort zone. I not only had to adjust to the new project and settings but also...set the foundation for a good relationship with my partner in the project. This intimidated me. ... Daniel is 25 and I am 20 and I lack confidence at times when dealing with adults and people older than me.

When Amelia and Daniel returned to the University for the first student workshop in week five, I noticed that they sat well apart in the group and while
Chapter 6: Response 1: Convening

acknowledging each other’s presence did not seem to share a very strong working relationship. This self-imposed distance continued for the rest of the semester and both Daniel’s and Amelia’s journal entries provided an insight into the differences that led to this. These entries illustrated how the minimal interventions of the convenor interacted with the course structure and expectations to maximise personal learning. Neither would have been effective without the other.

Amelia analysed her lack of confidence, comparing herself with Daniel:

_He has probably better communication skills than me…[but] he has difficulty remembering what people say in their interviews, whereas I do not. This has made me realise that although I may not speak as much, my listening skills are strong, and this is an important skill._

She also wrote:

_He is obviously used to prompt task completion with visible results…and he is having far greater trouble adjusting to the project than myself. It…has made me more self aware of how…I need to assist him…_

On the other hand, Daniel found that the research method for the project was unfamiliar because it required ‘_...speaking to people’ rather than looking up written works._ This may have made his time-management worse: he had an appointment to report the results of an interview back to his supervisor but missed it. He wrote:

_David chewed me out…and stressed the importance of attending arranged meetings punctually._

Amelia on the other hand was concentrating on learning to work with Daniel. She quickly understood that they had different approaches to the task and wrote in her journal:

_Daniel is happy to write, at least on this project, things he has not had confirmed… I on the other hand do not like to write something unless I am totally sure of its reliability. ... This was a development in my exposure to working in a team..._
So, she quickly developed some problem-solving strategies and used them to refine her developing interpersonal skills and continued to learn more about herself:

Throughout the day I kept setting him time frames to work to... Continually he kept finding other things to do and this really frustrated me. Eventually I had to turn my constant reminders and checking into a joke with mock frustration, however underneath it was very genuine. ... I learned even more about people’s working styles today. I also got experience with trying different approaches to encouraging him ... I learned that I am not as tolerant as I thought I was and can get quite frustrated ... I may have to become more flexible in this in the future to avoid excess stress.

Although both Daniel and Amelia obviously continued to work together, it would appear that it was fraught with different tensions at different times. Amelia documented that just going to a meeting with Daniel could be difficult: she claimed in her journal that she knew how to get there but that Daniel had wanted to check the address himself. Amelia also wrote that when she was proved correct and Daniel mistaken she ...possibly enjoyed it a bit too much! She then claimed that ...letting go of small things such as this is perhaps an area I will need to develop.

This difference in approach was also occurring in the relationships that Amelia and Daniel had with Katherine and David. Amelia’s journal documented this:

Daniel...still wants to consult with them...about things I felt we could take care of ourselves. I do not like feeling as though we are wasting their time. ... We catch the supervisors when they are busy...and their mind is elsewhere, so they just answer us off the cuff. Daniel appears to take all of their advice quite literally. This has made for some interesting conversations between the two of us.

When reflecting on a meeting with one of Queensland’s Chief Justices that had been arranged at short notice Amelia wrote:

I was quite nervous about this meeting...and was keen to prepare so we did not waste his time and to also come across as professional as possible. Daniel on the other hand was quite content to ‘wing it’...and did
not prepare any questions... This made me quite uncomfortable, so I prepared some rough questions and areas that we wished to discuss...

But Daniel’s journal’s account was quite different and he managed to place the blame for the lack of preparation at his supervisor’s door:

*I arrived...to find our meeting had been scheduled in only ten minutes, and we had not had time to properly prepare questions... We managed to get general information...but I felt we could have done better given the time to prepare questions properly.*

When it came time to put their project together, even more differences about writing style, draft styles, and editing became apparent. When Daniel emailed a draft of their report without showing it to Amelia for her approval first she wrote:

*...I am a bit of a perfectionist and have started to take pride in this project. Through Daniel handing in a copy of our work that I was not happy with, I was totally embarrassed that our supervisor and his colleague thought this was the standard of our work. I think that Daniel also got this message and will not hand in a piece of work that I have not seen again. So we are going to both need to relax about our work and stop taking suggestions from the other partner as a personal attack on the writing, ... This is a reality of working and producing documents and we both have to get used to it.*

But, in his recollection of the same incident Daniel wrote that:

*We were reluctant to meet [our supervisors], as we were embarrassed about the draft we had sent them over the weekend. Sure enough, they ripped the draft apart and suggested several major changes to it... I was shocked at the straightforwardness of their assessment of the draft. I left the meeting embarrassed and angry with myself for sending them the draft we did, as it was grossly inadequate.*

Both members of this team were quite upset at the feedback they had from their supervisors when they presented the first draft of their project report. Daniel noted in his journal that:

*We felt that [the new draft] was good for marking from a University perspective...[but] we left...shocked at the amount of changes requested,*
and shared our frustrations with each other as to why he had not asked us to make these changes in the first place.

Despite this, both students were conscious of having gained personally from the collaborative process. Amelia’s final journal entry says:

\textit{Overall...[the collaboration between Daniel and I] was one of the most beneficial elements of the whole placement. I got first hand experience at working with a partner... I did notice that by end of the placement I was dealing more confidently with everyone...}

Daniel wrote that:

\textit{I enjoyed the challenges... It allowed me to step outside my comfort zone... I noticed that the majority of research is done through meetings in which information is exchanged, rather than by conducting literature reviews, which I initially found confusing.}

\textbf{Postscript 1:}

During the supervisor’s mid-placement workshop David (Daniel’s supervisor) asked how supervisors could contribute more to the course. We discussed the valuable knowledge that supervisors have relating to potential jobs, application processes, current résumé requirements and formats, and the need to address selection criteria appropriately. I suggested supervisors could stretch students in this area and indicated that I encourage students to ask their supervisors for assistance. I suggested that supervisors could assist in reviewing applications and doing dummy runs of interview processes. I was pleased to learn from Daniel’s journal that David had followed up on this discussion and that both Amelia and Daniel had had the opportunity to participate in a government training session focussing on addressing selection criteria for government positions.

\textbf{Postscript 2:}

Amelia was not completely sure about what she would do after graduation but was going to investigate further studies in law, which had always been an interest and had been rekindled during her placement.
Postscript 3:
Within three months of completing his degree at the end of 2002, Daniel had married and moved out of home. He consciously elected to “de-stress a bit” and continued in his casual work without looking for professional employment until late November 2003 when he made contact for a reference.

Interpretive summary
From the beginning it was clear that both of these students had different needs, different learning styles and needed different challenges. From my point of view Daniel needed to face, at least to some extent, his dependence and his need for approval. This had to happen by reinforcing his strengths by placing him in situations where they could be exercised. Amelia was bright, intelligent and very capable but she had grave self-doubts about her ability to communicate with others. It was clear to me that each student had a lot to offer the other if opportunities were structured in such a way that each could examine and ‘play’ with behaviour that was being modelled by the other. The next step I encouraged them to take was for them to use each other as a sounding board, discussing the strategies they were testing and evaluating the effectiveness of their attempts. This meant that Amelia discussed her communication strategies with Daniel as she attempted to learn from him and Daniel began to discuss issues of time management and attention to detail with Amelia. Unfortunately, in my experience it is during this second phase of the learning that things almost always begin to break down. Because the learning environment is designed to place each learner in a challenging situation the anxieties are very focussed on the task in hand and the generic value of the learnings need to wait until later when they can reflect on their action in either spoken or written form. In the heat of the moment there is always a danger that individuals can reinforce each other’s failings and often peer learning in circumstances like this can be a two edged sword. In this case there was a real danger that Amelia’s tentativeness could turn into substantial withdrawal or that her planning skills and ability to focus on the task in hand
would lead her to foster Daniel’s dependence and ultimately dominate him completely. Such tensions are implicit in learning relationships and sometimes the learners need a protective safety net so that they can work within them.

Perhaps it is in the nature of the criminal justice professions that high levels of anxiety tend to be relatively common for students in the early phases of workplace learning, but whatever the cause I have found that the use of peer learning, or what Boud, Cohen and Sampson refer to as “student-to-student learning partnerships”, needs to be even more closely monitored than individual learning in the workplace setting. This can be done but is problematic, as Boud et al. note “…it involves maintaining the level of student learning without more input from staff” (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999, p.3). It certainly can provide students with “…a repertoire of skills and strategies to foster lifetime learning” (Boud et al., 1999, p.3) but I have my doubts as to whether these strategies develop “reflective practice and critical self awareness” (Boud et al., 1999, p.3) without mediation from outside the peer to peer relationship.

**Leanne**

Leanne was 22 years old and a student of the Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice).

*How does a convenor ensure that stresses for a student do not become incapacitating when there is a dissonance between her confident self-presentation and her own privately held self-doubts?*

**Finding 4**

A community agency who had not previously been involved with our course asked for a student to help determine whether there had been a reduction in child abuse notifications since they provided respite child care to stressed or at risk families. I decided that Leanne would be a suitable placement student: she wanted to focus on children, was academically consistent, very enthusiastic, and described...
herself during the interview as “very assertive”. I knew that she could be quite excitable and lose focus, but believed that her energetic approach would be an asset in an independent project such as this. Although the agency was located some distance from the supervisor and she would have to make her minute-by-minute decisions as she went, Leanne did not envisage any difficulties. She noted in her journal that she would...be able to learn skills that will give me an advantage over other graduates.

Despite this, immediately following her interview with her supervisor, Leanne contacted me by telephone: she was highly anxious and afraid that too much was being expected of her. She feared that she would fail. I called her in for a personal face-to-face interview and suggested that while a different placement was possible, she could use this opportunity to deliberately create a structure for the project that would suit her style of operating. I suggested that she talk with Emma, the School’s administrative assistant who was an earlier graduate of the degree and had completed a similar Field Placement herself. Shortly afterwards Emma reported that Leanne continued to be agitated and did not seem to be able to listen, let alone stand back and plan.

With Leanne’s permission I contacted her supervisor, Dianne, to check her perception of the interview. She reported that Leanne appeared to be confident, enthusiastic and competent; she had put forward ideas very intelligently and her questions were constructive, coherent and thoughtful. In fact, Dianne had been very impressed with Leanne’s self-assurance. I decided that I would take an active role in the initial stages to assist Leanne to conceptualise the project and to provide enough structure for her to feel more comfortable. I discussed her case with Carol, the assigned academic facilitator; I needed to be confident that Leanne had several people to lean on as she overcame her immediate anxieties associated with the new environment, the real responsibilities, and real consequences. Describing what had happened she wrote:

Merrelyn discussed...what is expected of me, of Dianne, and Carol. Merrelyn emphasised the importance of communication and...to look at the placement as an opportunity to learn how to negotiate and develop
practical skills. ...I was very happy to hear that Carol is my academic facilitator: I feel comfortable talking to Carol as I have had a lot to do with her...

Leanne’s journal entries reflected the range of emotions as she tried to find her feet in this new experience. She tried to reassure herself by writing ...I understand what I am researching and I must remember to be positive... but, her initial anxiety became disappointment when she found that there was little difference between the project and an University assignment.

In the first student workshop we brainstormed a number of strategies to help Leanne overcome her lack of contact with Dianne. Although the relationship with Dianne was not optimal, I still felt confident that the placement would be successful, so it was with some surprise that I read the following entry in Leanne’s journal:

> I think that although I consider myself to be a confident person who can communicate with people on all levels, I am frustrated that I cannot communicate openly with Merrelyn and with Dianne about my placement. I have come to realise that I need structured routine in my life. I am finding it very un-motivating to be placed in an organisation that lacks these qualities. I will go and talk to Carol about how I am feeling.

I was pleased that in Leanne’s emotional confusion (my assessment) she remained confident that there was still one stakeholder she felt comfortable to go to for assistance. She was not yet able to reflect on the fact that while she felt comfortable with Carol she was uncomfortable with the other stakeholders and that this discomfort was hers and not theirs. Again I decided to wait rather than intervene.

Leanne continued to identify her feelings of fragility in her journal and documented the emotional swings in her journey. Her disappointment was obvious:

> I am feeling envious that other students are really enjoying their experience and are actively involved in their organisation; a number of
people have told me that they can already see how their placement could help them with their career.

Leanne did not contact me again so after the second student workshop in week nine I approached her informally to see how she was going. She was still disappointed about not being more involved in the organisation and said that she had not even been invited to participate in a significant fund-raising activity auspiced by the organisation. My own journal noted at the time:

When I re-emphasised my consistent encouragement for all students to take responsibility for their learning by communicating openly with their supervisor about their desires for various experiences, she seemed to have a moment of insight.

And subsequently Leanne wrote in her journal:

...I realized that I was acting unprofessionally...so I later called Dianne and explained that I felt I had not being involved enough... I felt a lot better ... I felt a lot more like the confident person that I usually am. Why had I waited so long to talk to her? ... I feel today has been a steep learning curve for me as an upcoming graduate. Both verbal and written communications are key generic skills that I have failed up until now to use effectively.

She later wrote that she had reviewed her entries and discovered that her lack of confidence had prevented her from enjoying the process. This was an interesting insight: her final journal comment was very telling:

Overall I feel Field Placement has been a beneficial course to undertake in my final semester of my degree [and] has made me aware that things never turn out how you expect, so it is imperative make the most of presented opportunities. ... Although I feel it lacked the supervision and guidance I would have liked, this placement has helped build my confidence to work independently, meet deadlines and pull through when the pressure is on.

Postscript:

In spite of Leanne’s ongoing anxieties and general unhappiness with her placement in comparison with her perceptions of other placements, the report that
she submitted to the organisation was found to be …an excellent basis for future studies. Her supervisor remained highly positive about Leanne’s performance and the value of her contribution; overall she achieved a high distinction grade for her work in the course.

Leanne returned to her home state on completion of her final assessment and when last heard from she was seeking employment in England as a youth worker.

**Interpretive summary**

Leanne’s case illustrates how, when a learner has a high level of outer confidence that masks inner self-doubts, he or she can experience something approaching panic when facing the reality of a commitment that has been made. In my experience such students require support that is carefully constructed and more or less invisible until it is needed. This can be done by briefing others and by discussing specific strategies with the student at the point of crisis. At such times the student is then able to turn to procedure to overcome the fear – using ‘just do it!’ as a motto. Once again, the convenor must not reinforce self doubts by overtly rescuing the student; instead she must continually refocus back onto the problem itself, even if ‘staying stuck’ is quite uncomfortable.

‘Staying stuck’ is a problem solving strategy advocated by Robert Persig in his book ‘Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values’ (1974), a volume described by Robert Stake as “…the best book on evaluation I have ever read” (McTaggart, 1991a, p.125). Persig places great stress on simply letting ideas ‘brew’ so that ultimately a new gestalt is able to emerge. It is a pity that Leanne had to have such a frustrating placement, but she thought it was worth it in the end.

The University staff are important to the learning of a student. Not all placements operate as the convenor expects; without the ‘non-interventions’ by the convenor and the academic facilitator, which keep the students focussed on the problem rather than providing a ‘way out’, it is possible for them to be unable to move
from their emotional and cognitive ‘stuckness’ into an arena that allows the reflection and consequential learning to occur. When it happens, this insight learning is different to (and deeper than) the learning they originally expected.

**Grace**

Grace was 24 years old and a student of Bachelor of Behavioural Science/Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice).

*How does a convenor cope with a placement situation where the student, her supervisor and her academic facilitator are unwilling or unable to meet the demands of the course?*

**Finding 5**

In this case, it was the student who was unwilling to face the challenges presented by the placement, the workplace supervisor was uncertain of how to deal with the student’s lack of commitment, and the academic facilitator who was not ready to make supervisory interventions during the placement; she saw her role only as the assessor of a written piece of work at the end. Each of these problems exacerbated the other two. For me, I was in a situation that highlighted whether offering support to the workplace supervisor could make the situation manageable. In this I was only partially successful. This case actually explores the boundaries of the convenor’s responsibility.

I began working with Grace as soon as she enrolled because she had already attempted the course once before without passing. I discussed the reasons for her previous failure with her in order to help her learn from past mistakes. Grace was able to agree that she had lost sight of seeing the placement as a learning experience rather than just an experience. She acknowledged that in her previous attempt at the course she had not attended the University workshops, did not submit her assessment work until very late and did not address the prescribed criteria.
In my journal I constructed some goals that I hoped I could help Grace achieve.

1. That she be able to get a passing grade. For Grace’s own personal development it is vital that she move forward.
2. That she has a placement that she enjoys. (Grace does not seem to look for possibilities and has difficulty with relationships.)
3. That she has a placement that helps her with her job seeking skills for future employment.

I made the following administrative decisions:

- I insisted that Alice (the co-ordinator and administrator responsible for the joint degree program) became Grace’s academic facilitator. I did not believe that it was suitable for me as convenor to take that role as well because it was important for Grace to have clear and simple expectations for each staff member involved.
- Grace would have her placement in the area she requested; this ensured that Grace could not use the choice of placement as an excuse for inadequate performance.
- Grace should have a supervisor who was a graduate who understood the process and was aware of any potential risks; this would ensure that Grace could not be able to complain that her supervisor was unqualified or inexperienced.

I placed Grace in the compliance division of a government bureaucracy as she had requested. Her supervisor, Rachel, a graduate with five years experience was working as the Team Leader and I discussed with her the kinds of interventions that would be needed if Grace were to develop her abilities adequately. I did as much as could possibly be done to construct a ‘safe’ learning environment.

Grace’s progress followed a predictable path: at the beginning she praised her supervisor (…she is very friendly) and articulated her recipe for success (…Action planning will assist me keep on task and on schedule) but, after two weeks she began to complain that the placement experience was ...overwhelming, and claimed that ...I believe that I have put more pressure on myself than anyone
would...and I am apprehensive. By the end of the third week of the placement I had received an email from Rachel saying that ...Grace is not very motivated and is not attending consistently.

Then Grace began to contract a range of physical ailments and she missed the first student workshop. She recorded in her journal that on the days she did attend she was expected to complete tasks that her supervisor, without any consultation, had given her. She presented this comment in her journal as her ‘critical analysis’ of her placement experience.

When I approached Alice to step in her comment was:

*If Grace fails, so be it. ... It is not our responsibility to hold her hand.*

She refused to visit Grace or to discuss the problem with the workplace supervisor claiming that her own academic research was a far more important use of her time.

Grace’s supervisor and I put far more time into this placement in order to develop strategies that might be helpful; Grace finally offered to put in two days a week at the workplace to make up her requisite 100 hours. Then she complained in her journal that:

*After discussing...the fears that Merrelyn held...I have a lot of issues. I had not shown Rachel my learning plan...because I was confident in my direction... I believe I was keeping to task, although interrupted by illness, and had failed not in my placement hours...as talked about between Merrelyn and Rachel but in my duty to inform the ‘powers that be’ of my progress. ... Currently I feel like my placement is being unfairly judged.*

Then she began to blame the workplace, her supervisor and the University for her problems. I had not experienced this before. She even claimed that this course was damaging her.
I am not ‘going down the same track’... I believe if another student experienced the same scenario I am experiencing, the same scrutiny would not be taking place. I feel that any concerns for my work should have been discussed with myself initially, than jointly with my supervisor if need be. I feel like I have been labelled as a bad student as a result of my past experience, and my confidence has decreased a great deal...

At the end of her placement Alice made the judgement that Grace’s report on her project was just adequate to meet the assessment criteria. My assessment of Grace’s journal was that she had addressed the criteria albeit at a minimal level. I also felt that Rachel had managed the situation as well as could be expected.

So Grace passed the course – just. Like most university courses, if it can be argued that the assessment criteria are met the student will pass. In the discussion between Rachel, Alice and I we all questioned Grace’s competence even though the ‘numbers added up’.

**Postscript:**

There has been no further contact.

**Interpretive summary**

Perhaps the postscript is the most important part of this story. In the end university assessments are no more a statement of objective truth than any other judgements that are made by academics. They are constructions that meet the requirements of the immediate situation and need to be seen as such. As Razack observes “Failing a student in a Field Placement is complicated and not a common occurrence, due in part to the fear that students may resort to legal action…” (Razack, 2000, p.196). Although her article is specifically addressing social work credentialing, the underlying tensions are the same. Grace defended her inadequate performance by laying responsibility for it at the door of her supervisor and the University. As Eisenberg, Heycox, and Hughes claim “Students are aware that their personal characteristics are being assessed. Their concerns about their own performance often focus on personal confidence and experience, and many of their other
concerns relate to value issues, and personal conflict, or ‘clashes’ with their [supervisor]” (Eisenberg, Heycox, & Hughes, 1996, pp.38-39).

Were this course a requirement for professional credentialing things might well be different; but however problematic assessment is, we should not let it drive our courses.

**Karen, Allen and Rochelle**

Karen was 24 years old and a student in the Bachelor of Behavioural Science/Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice) degree, Allen was 20 years old and a student in the Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice), and Rochelle was 24 years of age and a student of Bachelor of Behavioural Science/Bachelor of Arts (in Criminology and Criminal Justice).

*How does a convenor harness small group processes to support and make more economically interventions needed for the personal development of individual students and their self-directed learning?*

**Finding 6**

The three students are considered here as a single case because they met fairly regularly as a group. Each of them had been placed in an organisational context of their choice and although I maintained contact individually, some of the most relevant interventions occurred when all three were working together. The following account illustrates how a convenor can bring a group together for their mutual benefit.

During the initial session the students identified their personal anxieties. Allen was extremely shy and wanted to develop his oral communication skills. He said this was just a matter of believing in himself and set his goals very high indeed!
As with every task I carry out, I will challenge myself to exceed [my own] expectations. [emphasis mine]

For Rochelle and Karen the anxiety was more explicit and the goals more achievable. Rochelle was concerned whether she could complete her workplace task in the timeframe, and Karen felt pressured because her supervisor’s previous Field Placement student had achieved very highly. These fears were articulated in the group situation so at least each student was aware that he or she was not alone.

During our next meeting, all three commented upon the ‘busyness’ of their supervisors. But, when Karen said that she was starting her placement at 7.45am, in order to have uninterrupted supervision and planning time with her supervisor who started work at 7.30am and had booked appointments from 8.00am, Allen remarked that Karen was “managing her supervisor”. He noted that this had been suggested as a strategy by one of the other supervisors at the briefing workshop.

By mid-placement Rochelle and Karen had each seen me separately because they were ‘stressed’ in their placement. Rochelle was working in a very small organisation where there was little interaction with other staff and no one to debrief with. She felt very pressured by the client information she was reading as part of her project, and although she was using the journal to reflect upon her practice her anxiety was not being eased. She commented on this in her journal:

I feel exhausted…and somewhat depressed…because of the nature of the information that the files contain… I’m sometimes upset by what I read… It makes me feel like I’m unable to help these people.

In our one-to-one discussion Rochelle was able to talk at a much more concrete level. Her project task was to enter client information from their files into a database. This involved her reading graphic details of child physical and sexual abuse. She told me that she had already received counselling for childhood sexual abuse herself and had believed that she had already “dealt with it”: however, the files she had been reading had triggered vivid memories and nightmares. We discussed a number of strategies, which included my contacting her supervisor and providing enough information so that Rochelle did not have to repeat her full
story. She also decided to seek professional help: her journal highlighted the stress impact very poignantly:

*I have discovered that the issues faced by many...clients are also old wounds for me... Although I have been using debriefing with one of my peers...I have decided that counselling is another option to help me deal with the difficulties I'm facing when working in such an environment.*

Karen’s stress was different: she had high levels of anxiety, which were the result of changes in expectations. Her journal entries were preoccupied with the amount of pressure she was putting on herself, her inability to assess whether she had appropriate skills, and above all her alarm at her own anxiety. Again, in the one-to-one contact, we discussed whether stressing about one’s stress was not something of a waste of effort and considered a number of other strategies; these included some relaxation techniques and time-management skills.

When Karen raised the matter of her anxiety in the group setting I invited the others to comment. Rochelle acknowledged her stress and, without going into unnecessary detail, talked about how she was bringing some of the more distressing stories she was encountering at work home with her. Everyone responded supportively. Although Allen did not comment on his own anxieties at the time, some weeks later he said that he had been relieved that the others had admitted to their own feelings of inadequacy. He claimed that now he did not feel so alone in coping with his own panic, which had surfaced when he discovered he had to give an oral presentation at the end of his placement to his workplace colleagues.

Karen identified the development of her insight and self-awareness, as a result of our general discussion, in her journal. She wrote that the group discussion with the other students:

*...allowed me to discuss my concerns and share my experiences. I found out that everyone else has his or her own type of problems and I am not the only one with personal insecurities. I came out of the meeting feeling a little bit better, knowing I'm not alone.*
It was clear that the small group processes I facilitated for these students were beneficial.

By the end of the semester each of these students had travelled a long way. Allen, who was originally so shy and who had set himself an impossible goal, appeared to be coping a little more stoically when he wrote in his journal:

*I will always have good and bad days..., however the best way to get around the bad days is to relax, plan, organise and time manage myself so things are set to get done.*

His learning of basic techniques enabled him to say at the end of the semester:

*I have learned that I am capable of improving my formal oral communication skills...[and this has] enhanced my confidence. I am proud I have been able to produce a position paper for Council to be used for policy development.*

In her final journal entry, Rochelle commented:

*I have learnt that I have personal limitations to the type of work in which I can confidently carry out. For example I have personal issues that can be affected by certain tasks such as reading vast material on child abuse.*

Karen, who had experienced anxiety at near panic levels, was beginning to articulate more confidence as well:

*I am becoming more assertive. ... I realise that whatever I write...will have consequences. Previously my assignments have just been handed in without sizing up the effect my paper would have. I find myself now considering every word written...But Field Placement has been a discovery period for me, enabling me to strengthen my self-confidence...*

**Postscript 1: Karen**

Immediately on completion of her studies Karen began work as a Family Services Officer in the Department of Communities. She has since secured a Counsellor’s
position in a custodial correctional centre where she facilitates a range of programs, including Cognitive Skills, Substance Abuse and Anger Management.

**Postscript 2: Allen**

Allen unsuccessfully applied for a number of criminology related positions but after six months decided to expand his life experiences and moved interstate where he currently works in sales for an international company. He reports that his position requires high levels of oral and interpersonal communication skills, which he believes he developed through the challenges that he faced during his Field Placement.

**Postscript 3: Rochelle**

Rochelle worked for 12 months as a “Before and After Care” Coordinator in a kindergarten. She reported that this time provided her with an opportunity to develop her skills for working with children. She is now employed as a Family Services Officer in the Department of Communities and has reported that her placement experience, and its consequent emotional upheaval, provided her with much needed knowledge of personal boundaries for ‘self-care’. She says she believes very strongly that she was “meant” to work in this area with young people whose lives have been compromised by abuse or neglect.

**Interpretive summary**

The account of these three students’ experience has focussed on the convenor’s ability to help them manage their stress levels while still taking initiative and responsibility for their actions. This provides us with an insight into the paradoxical nature of ‘teaching for autonomy’. At first sight the role of the convenor is that of supporter, collaborator and facilitator in true Rogerian non-directive style. But, in my experience, below the surface of this lies the fact that in
Chapter 6: Response 1: Convening

her design of the course and the selection of the placement the convenor sets up the circumstances that make such conflicts inevitable. In this course, experiences are often selected so that such conflicts are inevitable and not just unfortunate accidents. And such conflicts are welcomed as potential learning experiences for the students when the convenor negotiates appropriate challenges with each of them.

When a factor emerges that was unknown earlier on, like Rochelle’s unfortunate history of abuse, I believe the convenor is ethically bound to ensure that, at the very minimum, no damage is done when the challenge proves unusually difficult for the student. This means that the convenor needs to have adequate resources of her own (both skills and time) either to deal with the problem herself or to refer the student to others for appropriate counselling and support. At best, the effective convenor will enable the student to take control of the situation herself, to take appropriate action and see the experience as a piece of deeper learning, all of which Rochelle did.

It is worth noting that each of these students had problems with their stress levels – for different reasons. They each reported that the sharing of this problem and accepting the fact of the stress itself rather than its cause, was a major step in helping them learn how to cope. Rochelle’s story demonstrates the importance of the convenor’s relationship with the student, and with the supervisor. It also highlights the fact that skills in responding to the expression of feelings and in helping the student to develop strategies of action to deal with inner conflicts are required to manage such situations. Such procedures are neither academically or theoretically driven and poor management of sensitive situations like this can have negative effects for all concerned.

Three issues that emerge from this response

Among the many conflicting demands placed upon this course (and hence the convenor) there are three that demand attention. The first is the goal that students
should exercise autonomy when making decisions while still conforming to externally imposed standards whether they want to or not. The second, which has already been alluded to above, involves the kinds of written language considered appropriate by academics on the one hand and the workplace on the other. The third concerns the unique demands placed on students who intend to enter the criminal justice related occupations and the alarming lack of life experience brought by many young people to the course because they have never left school. The following discussion uses examples from student journals to explore how these conflicted expectations create role conflicts for the convenor, and how they can interact. It also suggests that any appropriate solutions involve the convenor in taking matters into her own hands by redefining the problem herself.

**Whose language is it anyway?**

This question presents itself as an issue about the assessment criteria to be applied to the students’ major formal written task during the practicum: the project. I decided that the question about the appropriateness or otherwise of specific language forms were not a question of value but a question of ownership: whose language is it anyway? Ideally, it is the province of the academic facilitator to assist the student in understanding the relationship between theory and practice while recognising that each situation is quite context specific. In reality, students often become overwhelmed with the problem of translating their own self-imposed expectations and judgements from academic language into the practical language of the workplace and vice versa. The ‘theoretical culture’ sits alongside the ‘practical culture’ of the workplace and each has its own sets of language registers; each prescribes linguistic rules for dealing with particular questions and principles of procedure that must be adopted in order for sense to be made. For example, an eclectic use of terminology borrowed from a number of different theoretical models is frowned upon in the academic culture but is considered useful and often indispensable in the workplace.
Throughout this study, students, supervisors and academic facilitators all provided evidence that this is an issue. Carmel’s journal documented her realisation of the importance of different language registers:

*Dorothy did not use much textbook jargon...and...described problems in a matter of fact way. She...was asking...how they would be referred to in an academic language. This I realised was what my course was about! The ability and skill to apply the theoretical knowledge I had studied and apply it to real practical dilemmas.*

But sometimes her efforts to apply the language of theory to the world of practice misfired:

*The term ‘criminogenic’ was one I thought would be applicable but...Dorothy said the concept was a bunch of theoretical nonsense. ... It did not provide an opportunity for the prisoners to be directly asked what they considered to be their main priorities.*

In this course, the academic facilitator had to assess each student’s project and it was important that both parties had an agreed understanding of the nature and scope of the piece of work that was to be submitted. There was inevitably some tension here and in fact this had been designed into the process. I had judged that the workplace supervisor was likely to expect analysis in terms that had an immediate currency in the workplace, whereas the academic facilitator was likely to require students to use quite sophisticated theory and to ensure that the document was appropriately referenced.

The convenor had to ensure that a constructive process of negotiation was commenced and that each student was equipped with the appropriate skills. In the workshop I regularly helped students learn to mediate between supervisor and academic facilitator. I conducted role play exercises in which it was up to the students to ensure that both parties agreed on a single piece of work and a language register that satisfied both sets of interests. In the real situation this negotiation was ongoing but the supervisor had the final say – because ultimately the workplace was the audience – even though supervisors often did not have a degree level qualification in the area. The whole process was designed so that
there were benefits to both the University and the workplace: there were immediate synergies and spin-offs, which alone justified these procedures. For example, the academic staff member was able to access immediate, current local knowledge while the workplace supervisor was able to gain a greater theoretical fluency in the issue under consideration. Meanwhile, and most importantly, the student was learning valuable and often difficult interpersonal skills during the negotiations.

Kellie discovered this after her supervisor had proofread her draft document and informed her that it ...looked too much like an essay, and was not reader-friendly enough. So, she then met with her academic facilitator whose main concern was related to referencing and ensuring that neither the organisation nor the University could be accused of plagiarism. Kellie’s strategy for dealing with this tension was to:

...share the concerns of my academic facilitator with my supervisor and give them both each other's contact details so that they can discuss this amongst themselves. I really do not want to have to re-write to conform to academic standards, so I have given negotiating with my academic supervisor a top priority.

Polkinghorne claims that it is the audience who is responsible for “…the validity of the knowledge claim, not the general reader or the disciplines’ practitioners” (Polkinghorne, 1997, p.4). He continues by acknowledging that practitioners are much more interested in the “usefulness of the knowledge”, which he calls “the knowledge for practice”. The writing task given to the Field Placement students was quite different to any University assignments that they had done before. Not only did their work need to be academically respectable (in that assertions needed to be backed up by evidence and so on) but the document had to be useful as well. The focus of academic facilitators, who still seemed to see their role in the course as a traditional one, tended to be on the function of gatekeeper and the exercising of quality control over academic writing. This meant that I as convenor needed to reorientate some of the academic facilitators in their attitudes towards what was or was not appropriate in each student’s final report. Similarly, I needed to stress that their role was not simply one of assessor but also that of collaborator.
This helped to resolve the other conflict: that of where student compliance ended and student autonomy began. As convenor, I had to ensure that the assistance and direction needed initially was gradually and firmly withdrawn as each student was expected to take the role of initiator. The convenor’s task was to assist both supervisor and academic facilitator to do this. In her journal Caitlin recounted how, firstly, her supervisor helped her with the document’s structure and, later, on the contribution of how her academic facilitator:

Ivan, my supervisor, went over some of the mistakes I had made and pointed out a few areas that could have been worded a bit better. I also spoke to my academic facilitator about my primary concern, which was that Ivan had told me to speak more generally and not to reference much. She was a wonderful help and provided me with further guidelines and said that she would read what I had written to ensure that it was okay. This was a great help.

Some faculty members took readily to the task of being an academic facilitator and made major contributions in this area. For example, Carmel noted that:

I started to question why and how such a marginalised population such as ex-prisoners could continue to be ignored. I raised this at a meeting with Carol, my academic facilitator, and came to the conclusion it was largely political.

Similarly, Hannah reported that not only did Carol clarify the project but she also assisted in setting acceptable boundaries:

I went to see Carol this week to have a chat about what I will be doing for my project. This had been stressing me…and she suggested that a survey of the current projects would be enough.

The naïveté of students

Perhaps the most consistent comment of all made about the students by workplace supervisors concerned how naïve they were. The students were so inexperienced in the life-skills that we take for granted and expect in working adults, that
supervisors reported they were anxious and lost in the new context. An important part of the convenor’s role was to ensure that supervisors needed to be ready to supply students with the most basic information about the workplace and its informal rules. It was sometimes difficult even for the convenor to realise the size of the gaps in a student’s experience.

During the early weeks of their placements many students wrote with amazement about the physical circumstances of the workplace. For many, it was their first exposure to a professional office environment; Kellie remarked that:

\[
\text{Not only are the phones always ringing, but the staff are constantly moving about, either to talk to other colleagues, to use the fax, copier or printer or they are leaving for the office for meetings.}
\]

Kim found distractions like these disrupting. She wrote in her journal:

\[
\text{All of my written work on my project and my journal has been done at home... I find it really difficult...to work productively...because all of the offices are next to each other; they are desks with dividers. So, even if you are trying really hard to concentrate on what you are supposed to be doing you can be distracted by another conversation or telephone call.}
\]

After a few weeks Carmel remarked that the office environment was a social one and that ‘work’ was quite unlike the solitary tasks that students were used to:

\[
\text{In a work environment there is a lot of pressure to meet deadlines and priorities are essential. This is especially as I keep getting interrupted by the many visitors who stream through the office everyday.}
\]

This question of time management arose regularly as did the students’ perception that their knowledge and skills were simply not adequate. Raelene described her initial impression of the placement:

\[
\text{I found myself overwhelmed. I felt bewildered and nervous about the task ahead; I originally thought that I would address my lack of knowledge in this area merely by conducting a search or two. However, I now feel as though I might be out of my league, in over my head... I now have an awareness of my internal motivator, fear of failure!}
\]
We should note in passing that Raelene was referring here to failure as defined by the task she had set herself and the responses of those around her – not failure in the terms of academic assessment.

Many students had difficulty in adapting to the practical routines and rules that surrounded them in the workplace and understandably they were concerned with the informal sanction systems that operated. Their first learnings were about the behaviours that were permissible and the factors that determined both their supervisors’ and colleagues’ expectations. Kerrie noted:

> I am unsure how they work out their tea and lunch breaks and what time someone starts their workday and finishes...The staff are permitted to have food and drinks, hot or cold, at their desk and answer crosswords etc. without getting roused at by the manager.

Penny was quite astounded at the police culture in the office where she is placed:

> I was expecting a highly structured, busy and stressful working environment however just from this week alone I’ve noticed that there are significant opportunities for fun, including the lunch break of 45 minutes where I spent my whole time laughing at dirty jokes!

Caitlin, who was very academically bright and had one of the top grade point averages ever achieved in the School, found it difficult to ask when to finish work, so she played it safe:

> I was very unsure of when I should go home – I left at 5.05 pm. I felt uncomfortable deciding myself when I should leave, however, I was the last to leave and therefore believe that I left at the appropriate time.

Some students could still not muster the courage to ask where the toilets were even five weeks into the placement. It was only when I discovered this in the workshop that I was able to give these students permission to ask! I alerted the workplace supervisors to the problem and encouraged them to include a small map of the premises in their induction materials. Sometimes a convenor’s work is fairly basic.
On the other hand, Lara seemed surprised at the simple friendliness of her colleagues:

_I took in a cheesecake and we had it at morning tea. One of the things I will miss is lunchtimes with the girls. It’s not just all the academic things that you learn on Field Placement, Merrelyn was right, it’s being a part of that organisation and interacting with them all the time, lunchtimes are just as important._ [The icon was part of this entry]

It may be because of this naïveté that students often reported the early phases of the placement as an emotional roller coaster. In her journal Kerrie said:

_A at times I felt extremely stressed, tired or incapable. I have had to learn to deal with these emotions..._

At first sight these anecdotes may seem to be quite amusing but they reveal a concern we must take very seriously. The extent to which these students are more authority-dependent than their potential clients is a reality that the convenor must face.

**Transcending dependence**

All stakeholders agreed that a major part of the convenor’s role was to enable students to transcend dependency on the university, its structures and its supports and to adopt a far more autonomous position. I took every opportunity to redirect students’ questions to the supervisors and to consult with those supervisors about the most appropriate strategies they could use to exercise their autonomy. In his journal Sam remarked on the effect that some positive feedback from his supervisor had on him:

_William informed me that he had emailed Merrelyn and told her that I was doing a good job...and everything is going excellently. This was the first official positive feedback and really made me feel good and boosted my morale._
Simple praise and expressions of confidence in the strengths that the student was beginning to show was far more effective than direction. As students were provided with realistic positive feedback they began to develop a sense of independence that was often experienced as a feeling of elation. Amber described this in her journal:

After completing my assessment with both supervisors it was evident that they were very pleased with my progress. After completing the report I felt very proud of the feedback of what I had achieved within this period.

Lara recorded her response to favourable feedback that began to extend her horizons:

Marnie mentioned that there is a permanent full time position available and she suggested that I definitely apply... I was pretty excited and know that there will be heaps of competition but Marnie sounded very encouraging. She helped me write out a cover letter, had a look at my résumé and has agreed to be a referee for me as well, which is fantastic.

However, a student cannot simply wait around for positive feedback: Hannah supervisor’s suggested an interesting technique:

Sharon said that I wouldn’t have a clue for the first couple of weeks...but that the best thing you can do when you are not confident about something is to just pretend that you do know what you are doing!

Finding supervisors who were able to encourage students in this way was like discovering gold; such contributors to the course had to be treated with respect, and valued so that their ongoing commitment could be retained.

Even when the contribution of a particular supervisor left a lot to be desired the student’s ongoing autonomy could still be encouraged and the student had to confront the supervisor and make his or her needs clear. When this happened the student needed considerable support from the convenor and sometimes a tactful intervention from the convenor with the supervisor was also required. As Davina recorded:
Mark must have emailed Merrelyn, as he sent me an email asking whether we could meet. He has never asked to meet with me before. The fact that he wants to meet now leads me to believe that Merrelyn asked him how I was going.

Students’ journal entries reported a growing self-awareness and by implication an extending self-concept. Kellie wrote that:

Knowing that I am able to work solidly on one task and not get bored or distracted, as well as my ability to adapt and deal with the work environment in which I find myself, are probably the most important lessons that I have learnt about myself.

Carmel focussed on the benefits of Field Placement on the transition process:

Uni is coming to an end and it is at the stage where soon I will be in the working world. A transition I feel would be even bumpier if I had not had this opportunity to participate while still under the guidance and support of the university. ... It is only once you are in the work environment you can really practice adapting various theoretical knowledge to the situations you encounter.

But for some students, like Paige, the experience of Field Placement provided an opportunity to ‘test the waters’ before making any choices:

I became aware that I require a job that does not involve sitting behind a desk for the entire workday. I am glad that I have found this out prior to entering my chosen profession. ...I have grown to support what I already knew about myself and in some instances gained an insight to what it is I now want. I gained this from family members who also work for government agencies and through Merrelyn sharing her experience

The process of resolving role conflicts and of transcending dependence is fundamental to any workplace-based course. As the role-taker becomes more proficient at making judgements and acting upon them the role becomes internalised. The course is designed so that the students go through this internalisation-socialisation process and ultimately become truly responsible for their actions in the role to which they have been entrusted. Exactly the same principle applies to the convenor too.
Discussion

At the beginning of this chapter, four questions were posed about the role of the convenor of the Field Placement course. The complexities of the formal and informal expectations have been considered, but the concept of role conflict now needs to be revisited in order to answer the final question, which focuses on the direct relationship between role conflict and the course.

General interpretation 6.1: A conflict model

The idea that human learning is motivated by the need to resolve internal conflict is not new. It is the basis for any concept of learning that regards problem-solving as its central process. Thorndike’s notion of ‘insight learning’ derived from Gestalt theory, Festinger’s concept of cognitive dissonance and the whole edifice of psychoanalytic theory from Freud to the present day are all examples. Role-conflict describes contradictory expectations placed upon an individual performing a role by different role partners and in some ways the term ‘conflict’ can be misleading. What we are usually referring to is a sensation of discomfort felt by the role incumbent as he or she is pulled in different directions and perhaps ‘tension’ would be a better word. Tension only erupts into conflict when adequate measures to deal with it are blocked or avoided until the critical moment passes. Marshall argues that role-conflict can be considered as an extreme form of what sociologists refer to as “role strain” (Marshall, 1998, p.570). We should note that anxiety fostered by contradictory demands could, in extreme cases, become a double bind that can create disabling anxiety and even neurosis if left to fester.

As has been indicated already the convenor of this course deliberately designs experiences in which conflicting expectations are likely to be placed upon the student. The student’s task is to begin to take on the role of ‘professional practitioner’ and develop his or her own ways of resolving or at least minimising these conflicts. Indeed the greatest sense of achievement is often expressed by students who manage to design a win-win solution where the conflict itself is
overcome and seen as a point of closure for a particular narrative. Sociologist, Raymond Williams, draws attention to the dramatic metaphor in the notion of role and highlights the idea of the ‘planned scenario’ (see Williams, 1983, p.109) and in a very real way the convenor’s contribution to the student’s learning experience is the careful design of a role-taking situation in which a conflict narrative is likely to be inevitable. Not only does this increase each student’s level of anxiety it also challenges her to engage in risk-taking behaviour that she would otherwise not attempt. We should note that Raelene identifies as her prime motivator her fear of failure: here she is not describing failure in the University assessment context, but rather the level of challenge presented by the task in hand and, for her, failure in that context was far more worrying.

In my experience, formal assessment is actually quite unnecessary as a motivator for students in this course and, as is apparent in Grace’s case, may sometimes be an impediment to learning because it reinforces inappropriate dependence and anxiety. The concept of a planned scenario can be used to describe some of the aspects of the pressures the convenor deliberately puts upon the students by imposing tasks that they find difficult, often because this is the first time they have been exposed to such a challenge. It is up to the student whether or not she takes charge of the situation and engages in appropriate action or remains ‘stuck’ in what she constructs as a dilemma, blaming others for its creation. The deliberate structuring of these scenarios that contain inherent role-conflict and subsequently the offering of encouragement as the student strives to find resolutions are the broad strategies the convenor uses.

**General interpretation 6.2: The importance of the convenor’s role in unifying the course**

This understanding of what I do did not arise from my conceptualisation of role-theory. Instead, it evolved in my own consciousness as a dynamic aspect of my working within the role of convenor. This again points to the ontological nature of role making, which focuses on relationships and interactions rather than seeing the
interventions as arising because of theoretical or even prior procedural knowledge. Procedural strategies set the parameters for the convenor’s goals for each student. These tend to be congruent with the students expressed goals but often go a great deal further as sets of potential strategies to operationalise the goals are developed. The procedural strategies form the basis for the convenor to initiate, provoke and suggest appropriate action.

**General interpretation 6.3: Convening – skills, principles, or personal idiosyncrasies?**

When I was commencing this study, a colleague asked me whether the thesis would simply be a list of my own attributes and preferences remarking that it was all a matter of ‘passion and personal style’. Others suggested I identify specific skills or competencies that any convenor could be expected to possess. Instead of either of these approaches I decided to attempt to construct my own theory of personal practice, as it appears to be developing. Inevitably this includes considering concepts and ideas from my own field of counselling and social work and then adapting them to develop a set of principles of procedure that provide a first approximation to what I think I actually do.

My own concept of learning through experience is grounded in the work of Carl Rogers and others who followed his lead. As discussed in Chapter Three, Rogers based much of his work on the notion of the ‘self-concept’ and claimed that the process of psychotherapy involved a movement in an individual’s self-concept so that it more closely matched that person’s ‘ideal self’. He and his associates were able to present compelling empirical evidence that such a change occurs and were able to make the following claim:

> We know that it is primarily the self-concept, which changes in therapy, not the ideal self. The latter tends to change, but slightly and its change is in the direction of becoming a less demanding, or more achievable self. We know that the self-picture emerging at the end of therapy is rated by clinicians (in a manner which excludes possible bias) as being better...
adjusted. We know that this emerging self has a greater degree of inner comfort, of self-understanding and self-acceptance, of self-responsibility. (Rogers, 1967, p.258)

He advocated a non-directive approach to therapy and hence to teaching because he assumed that there was a strong inner drive within human beings towards adjustment and personal and social self-fulfilment. Rogers believed that it was the therapist’s and teacher’s task to support and value the individual through a period of vulnerability as this occurred. This led him to prefer a non-interventionist term like ‘facilitator’ over the more traditional and power-laden concepts of therapist and teacher.

It was one of Roger’s students, Robert Carkhuff, who challenged this and in a series of convincing empirical studies of effective therapists in action was able to demonstrate that even those espousing the most non-directive rationales were in fact offering strongly action-oriented interventions to their clients. Working over a period of years from observations and descriptions of therapist and teacher behaviour he and his associates were able to demonstrate that directionality and the ability to focus upon client action were equally important aspects of effective helping behaviour.

Carkhuff’s work adds an extra dimension to the theoretical propositions advanced later in this thesis. It offers a large volume of circumstantial empirical evidence that shows that the kinds of constructions advanced by Rogers and others are applicable to both the teaching/learning relationship and the counselling/therapy relationship. When the helpers studied by Carkhuff and his associates consistently demonstrated empathy and respect towards the clients their ability to focus the client’s attention upon prospective action consistently resulted in positive changes and growth. These findings prompted Carkhuff to rehabilitate the notion of the ‘directionful intervention’ and the concept of ‘teaching’, but with one fundamental difference to the more traditional view of the transmission model of learning. The effective teacher must be responsive to the learner’s current expressions of feeling and intent, concentrating always on the concrete and immediate aspects of issue at hand. It should be noted that this kind of theoretical formulation is quite different
to others (such as psychoanalytic theory), which postulate phenomenological entities because it is so empirically grounded in teacher (helper) behaviour. But, at the same time this is not a ‘behaviourist’ theory either because it is built upon assumptions that are essentially relativist and constructivist.

In describing effective teaching behaviour Carkhuff and Berenson first suggest three sequential stages through which learners proceed as they acquire more control over themselves and their environment. These stages, they claim:

…revolve around the first basic principle of learning: all learning begins with the learner’s frame of reference. This principle is the cornerstone of the learning process. If the program is not hooked up with the learner’s frame of reference, whether before or after the action behaviour, there is no learning. (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976, p.158)

The phases of learning are as follows:

1. Exploring:

   In order to demonstrate constructive outcomes the learner must first explore where she is in relation to herself, her world, and significant others in it…

2. Understanding

   In order to demonstrate constructive outcomes the learner must use her exploration to understand where she is in relation to where she wants or needs to be.

3. Action

   In order to demonstrate constructive outcomes the learner must use her understanding to act, to get from where she to where she wants or needs to be. (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976, pp.146-148)

Carkhuff’s contention is that all people have the propensity to travel through these stages on their own. If a teacher-helper is to justify her salary she must add something to the process, either deepening or accelerating the learning, preferably both. He proposes four sets of teacher behaviours that complement the three
learning phases as follows. Commencing from the learner’s frame of reference the
teacher engages in: attending behaviour enables the teacher to assess content-
meanings and feeling-meanings expressed by the learner. This is followed by
responding behaviour, which involves the learner in articulating both feelings and
the reasons for those feelings. The teacher-helper will encourage verbal
expression that stimulates and reinforces the learner’s exploratory efforts. By
personalising the meanings, problems, feelings and goals of the learner the
teacher-helper assists the learner to become responsible for her functioning in the
learning situation. Initiating behaviour ultimately learner understanding leads to
learner action and the teacher-helper can assist the learner in defining and
operationalising goals and then developing steps to achieve those goals. Initiating
action also involves encouraging the learner to take the first step. This total
process is summarised in Figure 6.1: The Phases of Learning.

![Phases of Learning](Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976, p.148)

**Conclusion**

With this kind of informing philosophy I have become aware of the extent to
which my own practice is informed by a psychodynamic approach to the helping
of others, which involves granting permission to the learner so that they can go
beyond the bounds of what they have previously regarded as their limits. I can only do this by offering an equivalent amount of implicit protection for the learner against the consequences from any false moves. In order to be able to offer credible protection the learner must perceive the teacher-helper-convenor, as having enough potency to neutralise sanctions that are likely to be invoked. These sanctions may come from inside the learner (in the form of fears or self-doubts) or from outside in the form of direct interpersonal or institutional disapproval. Central to offering these three ingredients of effective helping is the need for the teacher-helper-convenor to have an awareness of the power that is actually available to them (Berne, 1986). It is not only risky it is unethical to make promises that one cannot keep.

I would like to believe that my approach to the convening of this course is more than simply a set of personal idiosyncrasies. It seems to me that although I am using a number of skills that I have learned elsewhere, the whole process of designing, convening and managing this program is driven by a set of principles, which are transferable beyond my own immediate practice. In answer to the final question posed at the beginning of this chapter (that is, is the nature of this course determined by the convenor’s solutions to role-conflict?) the answer is yes, but within this answer is an integrity that has a coherent philosophical foundation. This leads us to another perhaps more important question: can such a rationale for ‘action-teaching’ be developed so that it is transferable to others? Clearly the answer to this will involve attempting to articulate my own informing philosophy into a set of procedural principles, which will have meaning to another person and be translatable by him or her into action.
Chapter 7 – Response 2: The principles of convening

Introduction

The one person who is able to sustain an overview of an undergraduate work placement course, as a process, is that course’s convenor who is responsible for structuring the demands placed upon students and when and with whom they meet. In Chapter Six the role of the convenor was explored and developed as a complex role-set, which includes inscribed (formal) expectations, enunciated (verbally expressed) expectations, and informal (covertly held) expectations of stakeholders (Merton, 1966). It also established that the authentic occupation and enactment of a role involves a process of interiorisation of role expectations that emerge as solutions to role-conflicts are negotiated and new expectations are constructed by the role-maker (Biddle, 1979). In this next iteration of the course I decided to explore how another individual could ‘step into my shoes’ and identify the kinds of knowledge that became formalised as she did so. I judged that this part of the study should provide information about how another person could re-negotiate conflicted role expectations and ‘make’ the role of the convenor over again.

In June 2002 the Head of School committed to providing additional staff support for the Field Placement course in order to accommodate its success and growth over the previous years. As part of an Academic Staff Review for my position as convenor I develop a working proposal that addressed the role of convenor as well as the new role of a ‘co-convenor’. I had in mind the idea that close collaboration and communication with another could bring fresh perspectives and possible new approaches; it could also allow me to discover how much of the philosophy of the course could be internalised by another individual. As Coll and Eames point out, finding and appointing a placement coordinator with appropriate abilities has, in the past, been difficult in cooperative education courses particularly when the role...
has been seen largely as an administrative one (Coll & Eames, 2000). However, because Field Placement has always been acknowledged as a course in its own right the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University acknowledged the fact that the convenor fills a vital teaching function. This raises another issue worthy of investigation: How is a person best prepared to take on the major teaching function of the role of the Field Placement course convenor?

I decided to use the same learning principles that inform the placement course to mentor the new co-convenor. I would model appropriate behaviours and act as a support while the co-convenor learned about crucial aspects of the convenor’s role, internalised them, and began to operate autonomously. I anticipated that this would probably take approximately one semester of the course during which time I would need to work alongside the co-convenor and help her formulate her own principles of procedure. In this way the research study could focus on the preparation of a new role incumbent and allow a number of pertinent questions about the teaching-learning process to be addressed. These were:

1. To what extent is modelling essential for the novice convenor?
2. Is it possible for the novice convenor, in collaboration with the convenor, to develop procedural principles that arise directly from the experiential process of convening the course?
3. Can generic versions of these principles help another person in their own role-making as convenor?
4. Is there a hierarchy of such principles, and are there natural groupings of principles?
5. Can a central set of principles crucial for the ongoing efficacy of the program be identified?

**Rationale for this response**

The idea was to use a social constructionist approach and to allow any ‘theoretical’ or linguistic propositions about the action of convening the course to
emerge in the discussion between two people trying to make sense of the same events. In doing so, we were together attempting to create a role prescription for the convenor couched in procedural terms.

- Throughout the following process the mentor is acting according to an implicit set of principles of procedure that become a ‘curriculum’ for the new co-convenor (Elliott, 1991, Raths, 1971, Stenhouse, 1975).
- In this case, such a set of principles will and need to be congruent with (and very similar to) those that guide the work placement course itself because the new role incumbent is going through a very similar process.
- The principles to be developed will not be seen as ‘skills to be acquired’ but rather as value statements that serve to guide action.
- The principles governing the course itself are likely to be self reflexive in that they will be internalised as a set of criteria which apply equally to the learning of the convenor, the co-convenor and the students.
- The initial step will involve the novice convenor in observing the experienced convenor modelling the expected functions through a sequential series of steps.
- This will be followed (and be accompanied by) a series of interactions with the convenor as the novice convenor describes the behaviours that have been modelled and attempts to construct procedural propositions that she can initially use as guidelines as she attempts to take steps towards a similar end point.

The co-convenor’s on-the-job learning: principles of procedure

Biddle’s (1979) idea that learning consists of a ‘role-taking’ phase that is later transformed by a process of ‘role-making’ means that the novice should gradually become ready to take full responsibility for the consequences of actions in her new role. Her role performance then should cease to be compliant to external pressures and become autonomous ‘responsible’ behaviour.
In order to develop explicit principles that could help the co-convenor make this change it became necessary to look more closely at the processes used by adults as they learn. As discussed in Chapter Four many concepts developed in the literature concerned with pedagogy – the teaching of children – can be re-thought when considering the kinds of learning experience appropriate for adults. Malcolm Knowles’s pioneering work in the 1970s has been further developed by a number of others, most notably Jack Mezirow, David Boud and Stephen Brookfield. The intention here then was to allow the new co-convenor to both participate in and observe the actions of the convenor as she went about her tasks for one full iteration of the course.

**Constructing principles of procedure for the course**

The research goal of this process – apart from helping a competent and intelligent academic-practitioner take on the role of co-convenor– was to identify a number of fine-grained generalisations which help guide the convenor’s behaviour. The intention was then to attempt to group these generalisations into a much shorter list of generic “principles of procedure” (Stenhouse, 1975, pp.85-91) that would retain enough of the flavour of the initial detailed description and analysis to make them useful descriptors of the program itself. In this way, what may appear to be idiosyncratic attributes of the convenor might become principles that can be followed by others: but principles with a difference, principles that place action at the centre of the curriculum.

This idea of principles of procedure, for me, is best captured in the literature by Jack Mezirow when he paraphrases Jerome Bruner’s statement of the relationships between action, learning, and the self:

> Bruner sees a universal direction of intellectual development moving from action – knowing by knowing how to do – to symbolic representation which primarily involves the use of language with rules for forming and transforming propositions and permitting representations not only of what is but also of what is not and what might be. This requires
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

the development of self-consciousness which permits one to make the crucial distinction between one’s own psychological reactions and external events. This self-awareness is a precondition for developing the capacity to categorise the same stimuli according to several different criteria or different points of view. Through symbolic representation one can dialogue with oneself, and, in imagination, construct the perspective of the other person. (Mezirow, 1981, p.150)

In this case, as we will discover, the actual detailed system of categories we chose was dictated by the events as they arose in the co-convenor’s experience and the set of principles that we arrived at in the end were just one of the innumerable ways of cutting the epistemological cake. But it was the co-convenor’s way and that is what matters.

**Preparatory discussions with the co-convenor**

Carol had already demonstrated that she was prepared to become directly involved in students’ workplace projects when she was an academic facilitator (see Chapter Four). I was able to tape the initial interactions between Carol and me shortly after her appointment: this is a brief summary of those discussions. I explained that the Head of School had confirmed that this position was academic rather than administrative; and that this meant that the convenor and co-convenor needed to have a detailed understanding of the principles underlying learning, reflective practice and teaching in an experiential setting. I also made it clear that this position required the matching of student ability to workplace requirements, as well as the nurturing and cultivation of the University’s relationships with the workplace agencies. These requirements demanded sophisticated levels of communication and conceptualisations rather than just the ability to perform administrative tasks.

This early discussion with the co-convenor covered the mechanics of the process, for example contacting students, organising workshops, contacting and briefing supervisors, and monitoring the kind of feedback supervisors are giving to the students noting that sometimes supervisors who believe that they ‘know’ about workplace learning often contribute inappropriately and need guidance. We were
able to share our perceptions of the quality of student/supervisor relationships and agreed that these conditioned the climate of the experience more than the actual tasks set in the workplace.

**Systematising tasks and re-negotiating responsibilities**

It became clear after my early discussions with Carol that the first priority from her point of view was to see the work as a set of tasks – and to be able to systematise these so she could predict the likely demands on her time and set priorities for each day. Until this point these ‘systemic’ tasks had been adopted, developed and scheduled as the need arose. In other words, Carol needed procedural guidelines in a way I did not. I had not even seen these tasks as separate in any way. As convenor I would be aware of the need to visit workplaces when specific difficulties or need arose and automatically structured my week accordingly, but now I had to be aware of the duties I passed on to Carol, who in addition to her PhD studies was also holding down a part-time job elsewhere. She had to be able to systematise her work so that high priority tasks were not forgotten or neglected because of time constraints. My mentoring of the co-convenor now meant that a separate set of management tasks began to emerge for me. These involved a process of constructing specialised duties for the co-convenor and integrating my own activities to accommodate these. We agreed that we needed to have a clear joint understanding of the management of the course and of our separate areas of responsibility.

Establishing a system that enabled more than one person to take responsibility for the course and for its relationship with the University was not easy. Line management from the University’s perspective came down through the Head of School, but decisions that affected the course tended to be worked out as a matter of policy consensus in the collegiate atmosphere of School staff meetings. I found myself responsible for liaising with workplaces, a growing area of the University activities, at a time of quite severe funding cutbacks. Inevitably this meant that convening the course and fostering its interests began to become a more political
activity than before. Not only that, but by implication I had now become an administrator in my own right and had to deal with the supervision, allocation of duties and even decide on the rates of pay for the co-convenor. The role of convenor had clearly expanded.

**Modelling convenor behaviour**

In the previous chapter, the detailed description of the convenor’s interventions and her responses to specific cases were examined in order to arrive at an accurate description of the role and it is clear that the performance of this role involves a great deal more than merely meeting sets of formal and informal expectations. To actually be a convenor, one must internalise a number of procedures that have been found to work empirically. This can be thought of as a protracted trial-and-error learning process during which the ‘role-taker’ attempts to meet conflicted and often ill-defined expectations and then resolves ‘role-conflicts’ by making decisions in specific contexts, internalising them (often below the level of conscious awareness) and then using this knowledge later, transforming it so that it fits new situations. The process of ‘making the role one’s own’ means that the detailed expectations one has of oneself (i.e. one’s values) become built into the role. The boundary between the role, the ‘self’ of the role incumbent becomes less defined as procedures become internalised as part of the her “way of life” (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1977).

My reading indicated that learning can be accelerated by what has been termed “vicarious experience” (Donmoyer, 2000, Stake, 2000b). This may be thought of as the tacit knowledge (which includes intuitive action) of experts being made accessible to others without them having to go through the original experience themselves. Inevitably, this involves a process of observing, imitating and modelling specific behaviours; it also involves the learner in a process of induction (or pattern-making) so that he or she can construct a generic formulation that is transferable to other similar contexts. Thus a very important part of helping others gain expertise is to ensure that they are able to observe a practitioner in
action so that they can imitate effective behaviours and then abstract from their knowledge (tacit or conscious) specific cases and to construct procedural knowledge for themselves. Thus, procedural knowledge (which links specific procedures to particular outcomes) begins as very fine-grained observations, moves through a phase of ‘rules-of-thumb’ and ends with more general abstract principles that may be codified in language and constructed as more generic propositions that can be shared with others. The research process attempted to derive these propositions from the co-convenor’s developing conception of her role.

The workplace-based curriculum: principles of procedure

This section contains some of the procedural learnings that emerged as Carol and I considered specific situations: inevitably it also raises some of the issues students believed to be important too. As she was working with me in an assistant role, Carol was able to observe my interventions and discuss the reasons for them with me afterwards. Although Cooper is discussing learning in a different context altogether (learning to become a social worker) she seems to be describing a similar phase of learning when she advances the idea of a “…cognitive apprenticeship”. During such a period of learning the learner

…develops expertise in thinking by working and interacting closely with an expert. The expert models thinking strategies about professional problems and approaches, gradually socialising the student into day-to-day activities. Educators may achieve this cognitive apprenticeship by thinking aloud about their practice and dilemmas. … Learning practice is a process of inquiry, discovery and appropriating information…[it] takes place through discussion and exchange of ideas. Meaning is mutually and collaboratively constructed…

(-Cooper, 2000, p.18).

It must be stressed that the convenor/co-convenor relationship was at all times managed so that whatever the co-convenor did or did not do, the initiative to construct principles always came from the co-convenor as she progressively
internalised the role. Her expectations of herself had to become her own as she took the initiative.

The key research question for this iteration was: Is it possible for a novice convenor, in collaboration with a convenor, to develop procedural principles that arise directly from the experiential process of convening a course?

What follows consists of excerpts taken from my journal at the time and the procedural knowledge Carol and I constructed together through discussion about specific issues and particular cases. I have also included additional data in the form of comments made by Carol, relevant student journal entries, and supervisor comments. The data is presented on a case-by-case basis so that the processes involved can be seen as sequential and cumulative.

Sharing procedural knowledge through dialogue is fundamental to the mentoring process: the following descriptions of the convenor’s actions and of her interactions with students individually or in group situations are accompanied by some of the verbalisations of procedural knowledge by both the convenor and the co-convenor. More generic applications of the principles that governed the outcomes of a particular event became a major topic of conversation during this phase of the responsive case-study and the ‘rules of thumb’, the ‘holding forms’ and the procedural generalisations that arose from these discussions are highlighted as numbered points in bold style under each excerpt. In fact, in many cases the ‘principles’ are stated as opinions, values and even ‘facts’, but they still should be seen as guidelines, not as statements of truth: they are listed as they arose in the discussion and are not set out in any particular order. The dated entries that precede many of the entries are from my own journal prior to my subsequent discussion with Carol and for clarity are set out in an alternative font. Others are comments taken from students’ journals and are recorded in italics.
Intervening in workplace learning – some rules of thumb

These are the ‘middle order’ generic statements that constitute the findings of this study.

Matching student needs to specific work placements

28 February 2003
Carol and I discussed the role of the interviews in the preparation phase…and how it assists me to (1) put a face to a name for a student; (2) begin to identify characteristics of the student that may be useful or detrimental within the placement experience; (3) provide the students with an opportunity for an interview that has aspects of a job interview included; (4) also talk with the student about potential placement ideas.

1. The convenor should take every opportunity to establish a constructive relationship with each student in order to be prepared to identify and make a choice about intervention in any unpredicted circumstances. This entails a lot more than simply being friendly and approachable. The convenor must attend closely to the student’s verbal and non-verbal signals and be ready to respond to feelings when appropriate. At all times the convenor must be focussed, respecting and genuine.

We also discussed the high levels of anxiety in most students…, which are attributed to what might be expected: their own personal anxieties about performance, success and assessment, etc. I explained…that it was important to at least appear to know what I was talking about so that students developed a sense of feeling “safe”.

2. Anxiety, if left unchecked, can become a block to learning, but if accepted as a normal occurrence in this situation and managed can become a useful tool for promoting student learning. Carol and I were able to decide together that this is always a matter of displaying an empathic understanding of the students’ feelings rather than coming in too early with either reassurance or advice.

During the process of this discussion I became aware that Carol…was focussing solely on what the student wanted rather than also considering their academic record and trying to understand that different organisations may have different standards and that weaker students could be set up to fail if they were put into an organisation like the Criminal Misconduct Commission or Australian Federal Police who are demanding stronger students.
3. **The consideration of a range of factors is absolutely essential if students and organisational partners are to be given an optimal opportunity for success.** This involves the convenor in making an early assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each student and of the kinds of challenges each workplace is likely to present. These assessments are often intuitive and are always subject to change in the light of new information.

I realised that Carol would need additional information about some of the students and my assessment of their learning needs. We needed to discuss each student.

**Dylan – the difficulty of finding a placement:**

12 February
Finding a placement for Dylan has been very frustrating because he works full time. The other constraint is the fact that his experience is in the justice system specifically… So, the placement not only has to be within a clinical setting in order for him to extend himself in his psychology area, but it also has to take into consideration the fact that he cannot be placed in an organisation where he might face a conflict of interest with his full time position.

4. **For some students, any of several possible placements can be appropriate but sometimes (as in this case) there are a number of constraints that must be observed.**

14 February
My attempt to get Dylan a placement in the health system was not productive… One clinical nurse supervisor made it very clear that her critical mental health assessment team did not have any relationship at all to a justice or psychology environment.

5. **Often the supervisors and others in the workplace cannot see why a placement is suitable for a given student. In cases like this they need to be helped to see their own role as ‘provider of learning experiences’, rather than that of ‘fitting square pegs into round holes’.** Carol was able to agree that this was a rather specialised intuitive skill that could only be developed as a result of experience in the job.

17 February
…I was still struggling with where I would be able to place Dylan. I remembered that the Spring Hill branch of Relationships Australia worked of an evening with groups and did some Saturday clinics. I contacted Tony, the manager, and gave him the details about Dylan and suggested that there might be an opportunity when Spring Hill may be able to have some further research done. Tony was excited by this possibility…
6. Excitement in a supervisor is a fairly rare commodity. If the convenor can encourage and reward excitement whenever it occurs, everyone benefits.

Despite this Dylan’s placement presented further difficulties.

3 March
Dylan…and his supervisor, Tony, are hoping that the outcome of the work he is doing may be able to be put into a publishable article. He is very excited and I don’t envisage any problems… He has been given the task of developing an instrument…to evaluate the effectiveness of counselling in terms of client outcomes. This meant that Dylan needed access to confidential records and had to consider how clients would receive the evaluation form that he was designing.

7. Problems related to the sensitivity of information and confidentiality issues are endemic in the criminal justice system and often in other workplaces as well. The convenor needs to understand and be aware of the detailed requirements of each workplace as well as the different value systems that operate in different placements (e.g. community agencies, corrective services, policing, etc.).

17 March
Dylan rang with the news that Tony’s superior now demands University ethics clearance. … As convenor of the course, I approached the University Office of Research who informed me that…the course itself should obtain a blanket ethics clearance. … Accordingly, the co-convenor and I completed a University Ethics Approval Application, submitted it to the Head of School, reported this to Dylan and Tony and gave permission to go ahead… I was summoned by the Head of School and told I had just wasted a lot of time because the responsibility lay entirely with the placement organisation.

8. The convenor must be able to draw the line when bureaucratic processes threaten to consume her time to the extent that her ability to oversee the whole course suffers. The balancing of priorities for a convenor is almost an art form on its own. Carol claimed that this needs to proceed according to the central value criterion that what is good for the students should take precedence over other considerations.

17 April
Dylan informed me that he believed that Tony’s superior had embarked on this ethics exercise as a political strategy to bring pressure to bear…in the organisation for a review of current ethics requirements.

9. The convenor of a Field Placement course needs to be aware that she and the student for whom she is responsible can be pulled inadvertently into inter-nicene struggles and policy dilemmas within the placement organisation. Being able to deal
with this when it occurs requires judgement, tact, diplomacy, and firmness – not necessarily in that order.

**Nigel – the need for structure:**

12 February
The placement of Nigel was quite serendipitous. He’s a student who failed…about three years ago… He made contact…wanting a placement this semester; he really did not understand why he failed previously. I explained…that it was important he participates in the workshops and that the placement is a learning experience, not just a ‘work experience’ course. We talked about his responsibilities as a student to his supervisor and to the organisation… Fortunately Pat, who is a past research assistant of the School and currently working in the Queensland Police Service, rang wanting to know if a student might be available to assist with a specific project…

10. **Creative solutions to problems often appear to be serendipitous, but often the convenor has so many options available that one turns out to be remarkably suitable. The trick is to be awake enough to see the possibilities.**

I explained Nigel’s circumstances to Pat and stressed that he would require some tight structures initially to help him know what goals he had to achieve. I indicated that I believed he had matured…but that it would be important for Pat to consider these factors when she was interviewing him.

11. **Given time and life experience, people (in this case a student) can change quite remarkably. A good convenor needs to be able to read the signs of this in earlier interviews and not make too many assumptions based on a student’s past mistakes. A period away from academia is often a positive indicator that change may have occurred.** Academics who often have little direct knowledge of the circumstances of individual students must avoid stereotyping them.

In my subsequent contact with Nigel, I informed him that there would be some need for him to demonstrate initiative but that I did believe Pat would provide more structure than was provided in his previous placement.

12. **An important aspect of matching supervisors to students is the extent to which the student needs structure (often to allay excess anxiety) and the extent to which a proposed supervisor is prepared to provide it.** Ideally, as Carol observed, the best supervisors learn when to increase structure by insisting on specific constraints and when to let go. This knowledge only comes from experience.

Whether that occurred or not, it was important for Nigel to maintain the contact with either myself or Carol…

Just Practice?
13. The convenor can (and should be ready to) step in and provide structure, encouragement and support when it is needed without withdrawing the demand that the student still takes the initiative and responsibility.

Jane – high expectations and the need to recognise her limitations:

12 February
Jane is totally visually impaired and...[demonstrates] extraordinary independence by living on her own. Jane’s...career goal was to become a police officer and although she cognitively understands her limitations...she is still having great difficulty in believing this is not possible. I have decided to place her in a civilian position in the Queensland Police Service where she can use her considerable abilities and hopefully come to a more realistic assessment of her limitations without in any way losing her confidence.

14. Some learnings have to be self-appropriated: it is the convenor’s job to negotiate the framework of the placement experience so that the possibilities for the most important personal learnings are maximised.

15. Confidence, belief in oneself, is the basis of learning. This is what enables a person to translate the reality of ‘being-with-intention’ into action. The last thing Jane needed was for anyone to demonstrate a lack of faith in her.

Jane also had to come to terms with the reality of choice:

28 February
Today both Jane and her supervisor, Marion have independently rung me. Jane’s project starts with a seminar on Monday, which is the same day as the first Field Placement Workshop. Jane and Marion believe that it will be in Jane's interest if she is able to attend the seminar...and questioned how important is it for Jane to attend the Field Placement Workshop.

I explained to both Jane and Marion separately that philosophically the placement is designed so Jane will have to make the choice about which activity she attends. I explained that this reflects normal professional activity where it is not uncommon to be required in two or more places at the one time, which are both of equal importance. ...[E]ach professional then has to make a discriminatory decision regarding which function they will attend, understanding that there is always a penalty associated with not attending the other activity. Jane's response to this was that she had rung me in the hope that I would make the decision for her.

Marion’s response was that I was just a ‘tough lady’.
Jane’s reflection in her journal stated that:

*While I was quite frustrated by this dilemma and my inability to control or alter the timing of these conflicting interests, I recognise that such time clashes and their resulting sacrifices are a reality of life in the workforce...however, I am well aware that...such conflicts of interest remain an ongoing source of frustration for me.*

16. A good convenor needs to resist the temptation to rescue students by reconstructing arrangements to suit specific problems. This is not how the real world works. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing in itself – in fact ego strength is directly related to the individual setting priorities and making decisions. As Carol observed later, the more often a student is forced to choose between alternative courses of action, the stronger his or her value system will become.

3 March

Jane requires specific computer programs in order to complete the work that she does at an academic level… Marion, her supervisor, discovered that Queensland Police also use the program. … Jane will do extremely well, not only because she is a high achieving motivated student but also because her supervisor has experience and is keen to work with Jane.

17. The understanding and goodwill of both supervisor and workplace are essential if appropriate, specific goals are to be tailored for individual students.

*Lesleigh, Allira, Kimberley – too many students in the Detention Centre:*

28 April

Three students all expressed interest in youth justice issues…[and] were all accepted at the same youth detention centre and placed under the same supervisor, Marnie.

So far, the arrangements do not appear to be working… Allira has been unable to establish a good relationship with her supervisor but has been able to find another worker with whom she hopes to collaborate on her project. Kimberley, on the other hand, has established a strong working relationship with Marnie. Lesleigh seems to be maintaining contact with her supervisor but reading and hearing the informal feedback from all concerned, I’m not yet sure that she is learning much. I can only trust that this experience will work for her.

18. It is vital that the convenor does not interfere with the arrangements while the student and supervisor are negotiating their expectations of each other. The convenor must learn to ‘trust’ the student and supervisor and to have ‘faith’ in the
process once it has commenced. After all, something must be happening and generally ‘no news is good news’. This need for ‘faith’ and ‘trust’ is not mystical, it is simply based on the fact that when individuals are given freedom to learn, one consequence is that the teacher should not try to control the process. This was, for Carol a major piece of learning.

Somehow the dynamics of this trio is interfering with the learning: Lesleigh seems to be just ‘floating’ and enjoying the experience – she doesn’t really seem to be motivatedly engaged; Kimberley is both motivated and excited, and Marnie thinks the sun shines out of her. Allira is just full of despair and does not seem to be able to meet Marnie’s expectations. Maybe too many students in the one placement can result in unnecessary competition and even scapegoating.

19. Ideally, the supervisor/student relationship works best when it is a one-to-one collaboration. Supervisors, who can manage the group processes with two or even three placement students at once, need additional skills and workplace management needs to understand the extra demands such an arrangement places on their staff.

22 June

Now that the semester is nearly over it seems that the ‘hands-off’ policy... has worked. Lesleigh has submitted a very good project and journal and has met all the criteria for the course assessment. She remains fairly self-contained and does not seem to feel the need to share her experiences with her peers, but her excellent work means that she will receive a high distinction.

Kimberley will definitely receive a distinction for her written work and has now been offered full-time paid employment at the Centre.

Allira will also receive a distinction grade and now claims that although the placement was uncomfortable it was a major learning experience for her. She believes she is now aware of how the internal politics of an organisation as well as the staff culture often places severe limitations on what it is actually possible to do in a job. She feels she is now much more realistic in her self-expectations and more able to manage herself in a workplace situation.

20. While a student’s enjoyment of the learning is highly desirable, a certain amount of discomfort is not necessarily bad. But, when it is occurring it is important that the convenor monitor the student’s experience and is ready to intervene with direction and support when absolutely necessary. What is important, however, is that the student should end the process on a high note. All care must be given to ensure that students are able to look back upon the experience and see how far they have travelled.
Mia – matching expectations for the demanding supervisor:

3 March
Experience has taught me that Graham who is...brilliant as a supervisor...is likely to make strong demands on his placement student. His suggestion for a project...involves redesigning toilet amenities...in order to reduce crime rates – an interesting and possibly confronting challenge. I have decided to place Mia with him. She will do quite well...not only because of her enthusiasm and her academic levels but because she has a habit of setting goals that are very high...

21. It is important to meet high expectations with high demands if maximum learning is to occur. This ‘setting of the bar’ is a fundamental part of the convenor’s task and will only be effective when the student willingly participates in the establishment of demanding goals. It is necessary that the convenor make informed intuitive judgements about the capacities of the student and the extent of the demands that the supervisor is likely to impose. As the co-convenor remarked, “The students need to know where you are coming from.” If students trust the convenor’s judgement of their capacities they are likely then to be prepared to believe it and act accordingly.

Rosslyn – the need for patience:

28 February
Rosslyn...is panicking! ... Most placements start on Monday and we still do not have anything organised for her. I...explained that we will make flexible arrangements given that she will be starting late. I said I had received a phone call from Sgt. Trudy N... who was interested in having a student complete a mental health training project. Rosslyn's immediate response was that she knew nothing about mental health! ... We agreed that if a placement was not confirmed by the end of next week...Rosslyn would do the project with Trudy.

22. On occasions considerable persistence is required on the part of the convenor and the student as arrangements are made for the most appropriate placement. The convenor needs to work within the patience of all concerned but should refuse to take the easiest administrative way out. In the end a different placement was organised which met her requirements.

23. Reality does not necessarily fit into other people’s timetables: if we are to maximise our learning from real situations, we need to be ready to make our arrangements as flexible as our systems will allow. This applies to convenors and administrators as well as students; often everyone has to settle with the best fit rather than the ideal.
4 March
Contact was made today with Inspector George P…in the Office of the Commissioner. … He was very open to the idea [of a placement] … George indicated that Rosslyn’s project might not commence for another couple of weeks…because they were still awaiting approval from the Assistant Commissioner.

24. The convenor cannot ask the workplaces to fit their contribution into the University’s timeframe. Instead, the convenor must be ready to use whatever flexibility is possible in order to ensure that the placement and the tasks demanded of the student are appropriate. Sometimes this may even mean starting and finishing the placement at different times for different students in the same semester.

25. Every so often a bureaucracy will place unanticipated demands on the placement process. In cases like this, the convenor must remain patient (and encourage the student to do so too) while the supervisor negotiates his or her way through.

26 May
Rosslyn has at last found her own feet, mainly because she is able to network with other staff. She is also receiving peer support in her relationship with Jane who is working in the same building.

26. Peer support seems to work best when it arises naturally. Long-term commitment to a fellow student cannot be legislated into existence – it can only be allowed to emerge.

It seems that Rosslyn’s focus has been established because of her direct commitment to becoming a police officer and she is now able to select goals and is developing a project that is consonant with this.

27. When a student manages to overcome obstacles and construct a meaningful set of tasks to which he or she is committed the central goal of the course (responsibility for one’s own learning) has been achieved. Such an outcome is worth waiting for because everyone benefits and everyone learns.

Jessie – enthusiasm versus Focus:

3 March
I expect that Jessie will do very well at the Department of Families because she is highly motivated and enthusiastic. She has a supervisor who is keen to learn… Jessie’s difficulties will centre more on time management because her enthusiasm is not allowing her to contain her focus. I have the feeling that this placement will test this to the limit.
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

28. The convenor needs to ensure that each student is being confronted with a direct goal and is able to use the placement to address a perceived personal learning need. This always means that the convenor has a responsibility to lead the student into action that is beyond his or her comfort level. In cases like this the student also needs to know that the permission to take the risk of engaging in new behaviour is matched by the presence of an appropriate ‘safety net’ if things go badly wrong.

14 April
Fortunately, Nick (Jessie’s supervisor) has seen her focus problem and has been able to ensure…clear lines of communication between the two of them so that the project is continually being revised and adjusted… Nick has set a high priority on providing Jessie with opportunities and guidelines for her to network with other staff at the agency…

29. When possible the convenor needs to encourage the supervisor to become a willing collaborator in stretching the student’s capacities. Once again, when it comes to personal resilience in the workplace the bar should be set high, but not so high that failure is inevitable.

22 June
Jessie has become acutely aware of the limitations placed on the agency because of the almost impossible workload and this has impacted on her career choice.

The following excerpt from Jessie’s journal provided an example of her experience:

Week 12
Because I was up to date with all my work, I found that Nick was very accommodating because I wanted to do more client focused work. I asked him if there was anything he wanted me to do, and he asked if I would look into some camp venues for something he was trying to organise.

I learnt that there is more to this kind of work than I thought. I read up on the idea of camps for juvenile delinquents and how it can help them, and I realised that the Department can only do a limited amount of things with the kids in the time that they have with them. I think that I would prefer to work in a community organisation where I can spend more time working with the young people.

30. The convenor must be aware that when a student verbalises learning like this in writing as if is a new discovery, that student is expressing important new insights. There is evidence that insight learning that is gained experientially is deep, personal, and permanent (Schein, n.d.).
Erin – risk-taking as a concomitant of learning:

Erin’s experience has been discussed as a case study in a recent article (Bates, 2004, pp.11-12). My journal entry recorded the events as follows:

6 June
Paul, the manager of a juvenile justice unit in the Department of Families, had completed post-graduate studies in Criminology and had introduced a new theoretical framework of intervention based on justice principles rather than welfare principles... Paul set Erin the task of assessing the effectiveness of this new approach and indicated that her research would be of interest to the Department; and if her work was good enough she could probably anticipate a position there on completing her studies. Paul then went on holidays.

Erin soon found that the staff could not see the relevance of the innovation Paul had asked her to monitor and they resented the extra work. She then embarked on the evaluation walking a tightrope between two sets of interests. I had to help her with her anxiety that this report could not please everyone. Feeling somewhat strengthened Erin finished her report without any further reference to us and the feedback from both Erin and her supervisor was that they were both happy with the outcome.

31. Role conflict is a springboard for learning and the convenor must ensure that the student is able to take full responsibility for his or her actions. When the consequences of the student’s risk-taking behaviour are positive, again, the learning is deep, personal and permanent.

This again was a major piece of learning for Carol as she began to understand the role of the convenor.

Margaret and Megan – the need to assist supervisors:

3 March
Margaret is likely to do quite well in this subject... One little hiccup is that the supervisor who originally agreed to the placement is going overseas on a Churchill Scholarship and so Joan will supervise Margaret. This may create some problems for Margaret because Joan may not be quite as understanding as Margaret’s original supervisor.

3 March
...Marleen is very keen to provide a good learning experience for her student, Megan, and is extremely anxious...about the project... Marleen acknowledges
that all of her previous experience in supervising work placement students has been with full-time attendees; she is struggling with the difference between a full-time placement and a placement that is for only one day a week.

Both of these cases illustrated the importance of the convenor/supervisor relationship because the convenor was aware of the needs of individual students and was intimately connected with the intentions of the course. Often she needed to become a part-time mentor for the supervisors as well. Again the key element of this relationship was continuing contact and trust.

32. The convenor/supervisor relationship needs to be ongoing and the subject of careful monitoring. The convenor needs to be ready to respond to problems as they occur rather than wait until they get out of hand. This means that the convenor needs to have strong intuitions about how people are likely to respond in the conditions that are emerging.

Eloise – the importance of self-presentation:

3 March
I have some concern about Eloise going to the Australian Federal Police, primarily because of her dress and presentation. …She also has an array of body jewellery that is clearly inappropriate for that working environment. I have emphasised to Eloise the need for her to present a little more conservatively.

Fortunately Eloise took my advice seriously, unclipped her jewellery and changed her mode of dress. Not only did she look completely different, but she was able to create a much more positive set of expectations when she met her conservatively dressed supervisor.

33. Sometimes the convenor needs to provide the students with direct and even confronting personal feedback. Once again the ability to do this without raising resentment or anxiety is critical.

Chloe – the importance of self-awareness:

3 March
I don’t expect that Chloe will have any difficulties with this course… Chloe needs constant reminding to slow down her speech and will need assistance in terms of developing professional presentation and interpersonal skills.
Chloe had the habit of ‘over-talking’ and of doing so very rapidly and persistently to the point of becoming very annoying. She was so unaware of her behaviour that any subtle indications from me fell upon deaf ears. In the end, I was forced to adopt a behaviourist technique: waving my left hand up and down to indicate to her that I was not going even to listen to her unless she slowed down! After some weeks of this ‘treatment’ Chloe began to respond – at least by demonstrating a verbal awareness of my behaviour. I do not claim to have cured her but she certainly began to behave a little more acceptably in the workplace, with some lapses.

34. Some flaws in personal presentation are easier to remedy than others; and sometimes one single problem is actually responsible for all of the other problems the student experiences. The convenor needs to be able to draw upon whatever techniques and strategies she can think of in order to remedy this in her continuing relationship with the student. Sometimes this entails being very direct with a student to break through his or her denial.

All of the principles that have been derived above were developed in the discussions between the convenor and co-convenor during the mentoring process. Most of them reflect procedural knowledge already held, but hitherto not articulated by the convenor. This knowledge was put into propositional forms in the context of an ongoing relationship: the propositions reflect the fact that ideas are socially constructed and refer to an overall system of personal engagement. It is only when an idea needs to be communicated that it becomes necessary to put it into propositional language, and there are unending ways of grouping generic rules of procedure because when they are formulated they are relatively specific and context-bound.
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

Leading the workshops: how to run a placement workshop without discouraging anyone –

Some More ‘Close to the Data’ Formulations

This section concentrates on techniques, strategies and procedures that a convenor uses when harnessing group processes so that they contribute to particular teaching goals. Carkhuff and Berenson note that when group processes are used to facilitate an individual’s learning, the term ‘teaching’ is probably the most appropriate to refer to the strategies used (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976, p. 9). However, this use of the term ‘teaching’ no longer implies a direct transmission of propositional knowledge from expert to novice, rather it describes how the expert teacher is able to set the preconditions socially, emotionally, and contextually for the participant to actively engage and take responsibility for his or her own learning. Ideally, the ‘action-teacher’ sets a context in which the learner can design his or her own learning program in fine detail. This is what the workshops in the work placement course are all about.

Most of the following data again consists of my own journal entries made after discussion between the convenor and co-convenor following specific events that occurred in one or other of the five workshops conducted for the group of students and their supervisors during the placement semester. Again, the procedural generalisations that arose from these discussions are highlighted at the end of each statement of issue or excerpt.

Briefing workshop – 3 March

This introductory workshop was held in The Roundhouse (a unique and comfortable conference venue on campus) rather than in a ‘normal’ university tutorial setting.

35. Using venues other than the usual tutorial rooms is another strategy that is designed to help ‘shift’ the student mindset from being the student to being the novice professional.
Although this may be regarded as excessive pandering to students, the fact is that they invariably report that the choice of venue makes them feel ‘special’ and that something significant is occurring.

The first workshop was held in the week prior to the commencement of most placements and was open to all supervisors (as requested, see Chapter Five) but the first hour and a half was devoted to the students by themselves. This section of the workshop dealt with administrative details and allowed students to familiarise themselves with each other and verbalise their expectations of their Field Placement experience. Emphasised within this was the importance of having fun while learning. The second part of the workshop, which was also open to supervisors, was aimed at developing a collective understanding of the expectations of all the stakeholders.

Inevitably, the issue of assessment was raised and there was a discussion about the role of the required learning plan, the journal, and the workplace project. It was at this point that I made it very clear to everyone that students were responsible for nominating the percentage weightings to be allocated to each separate part of their assessment (the participation percentage of 20 per cent was non-negotiable). This was a novel idea for the students and in keeping with the philosophy of the course I did not follow up this up with continual reminders. An important guiding principle can be drawn from this:

36. **The students must accept the consequences of their actions and be awake to the possibilities that exist.** When a teacher refuses to take a parental role and simply respects students as fellow adults, she is neither unnecessarily protective nor censorious. This can be disconcerting for students who expect to be either ‘disciplined’ or ‘sheltered’.

When preparing for this Workshop…I realised the folder with all my materials was still with Carol. This meant that I had to start right from scratch again. This was not such a bad thing because it really did make me focus and think about what were the important processes I wanted to ensure that students and supervisors became aware of.

37. **The material for discussion in a planned workshop session must always be directly relevant to this group of students, this workshop leader, and this immediate context in the here and now.** This means that the agenda for the workshop may include specific items, but how they are dealt with is best determined
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

by the immediate social context and dynamics of the group. (The idea that a teacher can prepare a single ‘lesson’ which can be delivered over and over again directly violates this principle.) In fact, in many ways, prepared lectures are far less work and require less preparation than do effective workshop sessions that are conducted with precise goals using professional methods.

After the Workshop I did come across the folder and there were a few handouts that I normally provide for students to use as they focus on developing their rationales for the next workshop.

38. Although the interaction in the workshops needs to be immediate, honest, and spontaneous, this in no way clashes with the requirement that both students and leader make appropriate preparation. The prepared material students are asked to bring always consists of their own attempts to express goals, desires, descriptions of events and feelings in their own language. In addition to a wealth of experience, the workshop leader brings a precise knowledge of who each student is, what their priorities are and where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

There was a relatively good turnout although some students did not show up for particular reasons.

39. The convenor should keep records of attendance at workshops – not to penalise recalcitrant students but so that she is aware of those discussions a particular student has missed.

Each student who was present was asked to complete the Learning Style Inventory, which will be used for some other research I intend to follow up in the future. I also explained to them about the Self Assessment of Generic Capabilities questionnaire on the Web and encouraged them to complete that in conjunction with the development their learning plan.

40. A competent convenor will be always interested in developing her own knowledge about the teaching/learning process; and the conduct of relatively simple small-scale research projects (possibly for publication as journal articles) should be a natural concomitant of the teaching process. It should go without saying that the students will be fully informed about the nature of any research in which they become involved, and that, whenever possible they should become collaborators rather than ‘subjects’ in the design.

Chloe referred to her learning plan a number of times in her journal and in her last journal entry she reflected:
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

...I have acquired immense knowledge about the organisation and correctional counselling. I feel this has occurred through the use of a learning plan and...the way I was gradually shown the job...that is, I was given theory and information first, shown by example and given time to reflect and conceptualise before being asked to act.

41. The convenor as workshop leader will direct students towards readings and other exercises that she believes will enhance their learning. She is aware that not only do students need to learn, but also they need to learn how they learn. Sometimes a ‘conceptual’ understanding of propositional theory comes first (as it does here) and sometimes theoretical understandings need to be drawn out of practical experiences. In both cases, the desired end is praxis: an authentic union of both.

Our discussion on the relationship between the students and the academic facilitators offered Carol an opportunity to stand back from the role of academic facilitator and investigate it from the convenor’s point of view. She acknowledged that those students who made contact with her as academic facilitator usually received higher marks and she attributed this to the fact that because of the student/academic facilitator discussions she understood the context and purpose of the workplace project more thoroughly than those projects that just arrived for marking. We discussed the difficulties associated in making individual contact with an academic for some students. We also noted that I always exhort students to discuss their project reports with their academic facilitators; and I emphasise that this always seems to result in higher marks for the student. For a complex set of reasons that will be discussed elsewhere, often only half of the students elect to do so.

42. It is important for the convenor to have an overall picture of the relationships that students form and those that students avoid. If we are to equip students for the world of work we need to be able to provide them with similar constraints and opportunities. Students need to become proficient in dealing with authority figures, knowing when to comply and when to speak out and take the initiative. Managing the etiquette of the workplace is a difficult skill to learn if you have spent years being drilled into passivity.

43. Opportunities for students and academics to negotiate the ‘reality’ of theory and practice need to be provided by the structure of the course. (Academics tend to want students to work from theory whereas most of the writing tasks that the supervisors set tend to have a non-academic audience.) The students cannot necessarily please both authority figures.
Student workshop 1 – 31 March

This workshop was conducted after the students had had four to five weeks to acclimatize to their placements. It was very important for those students who commenced their placement a little later than the first week because they usually carried anxieties about being at different stages in the work placement as Rosslyn’s journal showed:

…I attended [the] workshop feeling very left behind and a little anxious. It seemed to me that everyone was soaring through their placement and making a lot of headway on their projects, whilst I’m not even sure what my project will be.

44. It is essential that the convenor is aware of the varying degrees of engagement for each student and reinforces the individual nature of progress in this course. Students need to be encouraged to set their own standards and make judgements about their performance according to the context they are working in. A competitive race between different students in different circumstances is inappropriate and motivation needs to be intrinsic rather than extrinsic.

This workshop was for students only and began with basic housekeeping before it moved into a number of activities that addressed issues raised by the students and refocused their thought processes into a learning framework. Invariably, this workshop also addressed specific questions concerning assessment of the student journal. It was in this workshop that I was prepared to provide some examples of past students’ work for the first time.

45. The convenor needs to ensure that the students struggle with the problem of developing ideas and formats to express their reflective learnings in their own voices. I take care to resist the temptation to provide ready answers to this problem, preferring to let them share their own solutions with each other. Learning to be oneself rather than the person one is ‘supposed to be’ is an arduous process and inevitably involves a certain amount of ‘unlearning’ as well (Brew, 1993, Schein, n.d.).

One of the activities I used in this workshop asked each student to share their written answers to a number of specific questions that had been circulated prior to the session with two others they did not know well. They were asked to comment...
on their relationship with their supervisors, to identify two specific positive and negative experiences, their own personal strengths and vulnerabilities, and their own uncertainties.

Dylan included his written response in his journal and identified the following points:

I do not want to do relationship counselling. ... I find it frustrating only being at the organisation for limited time each week. I am a ‘get in and do it’ type of person, and staggering simple things over many weeks is frustrating. ... The fact that some people cannot see the practical benefit for them in what I am doing has [also] annoyed me. ... I tend to be letting Tony, as the professional, lead me a little. I need to work on this as he could be leading me up the proverbial garden path.

46. The convenor needs to be careful about the language that she uses when identifying deficits in her students. For example, students have been conditioned into believing that ‘weaknesses’ are almost unchangeable attributes whereas the term ‘vulnerability’ contains a subtle inference that there is a problem to be solved and some skills to be learned. The convenor’s language needs always to point towards solutions rather than focus solely on the problem. This highlights the fact that this is a ‘strengths-based’ course, which celebrates difference rather than censoring it. This is often hard for students who have been educated according to deficit theories of learning to understand and often they need considerable help to see themselves positively.

What follows are excerpts from my journal account of this workshop.

In today’s...workshop...every student had an opportunity to talk about their placement and the experiences they were having. A couple of students were still...getting started because their placements had commenced late or there had been issues regarding their supervisors. The students’ stories are useful in that everyone becomes informed about the diversity of experiences...and it enables the sharing of a common bond.

Erin’s journal was representative of the struggles for many students and highlighted the value of the workshop for students:

I have to wait for feedback [on my research proposal] from Paul now. I have no idea what to expect... I am really worried.... I just don’t feel confident or good enough...but the workshop...was really positive and
helpful... I was able to talk to my classmates and find out their experiences... It was a relief to find out that I was not the only one who was feeling out of sorts, out of place and scared... I am so glad that we have the workshops, as I don’t know how I would last without them. ... I am actually enjoying the workshops more than my placement at the moment.

47. The convenor needs to ensure that each student has the opportunity to discover that he or she is not alone in facing a particular kind of challenge. The sharing of dilemmas and attempts at constructive action is the essence of collaborative learning. The act of verbalising an experience can enable a ‘shared apprehension’ to emerge. And this is the beginning of a ‘shared solution’.

In fact there was more to students’ accounts of events than that: when students related specific anecdotes in the workshop situation, real learning through vicarious experience could commence. Usually this happened when someone in the group (often but not always the convenor) sensed that something in the story being told didn’t quite ring true. This leads to a principle taken directly from the experiential learning literature:

48. Over time, the convenor develops a specific teaching skill: something John Mason has called “the discipline of noticing”.

To paraphrase Mason this discipline uses ‘a systematic form of personal and collective enquiry into how to sharpen moments of noticing so that they shift from “I could have...”, or “I should have....,” ‘to the present indicative and choice-making perspective “I could...”’ (Mason, 1993, p. 121).

I had a sudden sense that something was not quite right when Allira began describing her placement... She commented on her frustration that while her supervisor was away...she felt there had been...no one to advise her about an appropriate project. She claimed that she had ‘used her initiative’ and found another employee who...suggested a specific project... She said she...began to see this other worker as a supervisor...[but] when her supervisor (Marnie) returned she...cancelled the proposed project without providing another option.

Allira was obviously distressed and we discussed what strategies were available to her, including whether she could continue with the ‘deleted’ project while still including Marnie in the loop. Although I offered to ring Marnie...Allira wanted to be able to follow through on this particular issue herself.

As usual I had asked the group whether anyone had experienced something similar. I did this for several reasons: firstly, such a strategy engages everyone present in the problem as active participants; secondly it encourages any reluctant participant who might have something to offer; thirdly, it asks students
to verbalise what may still be tacit knowledge; and finally, because nearly always there is someone in the group who can identify a similar experience. It must be noted that I am most anxious that students do not see me as ‘the font of interpersonal wisdom’ because I am acutely aware that they still see me as an expert and sometimes conclude that they cannot take appropriate action until I provide them with the right theory or permission. Because of this I very rarely offer solutions myself; I just ask more and more searching questions.

49. **The convenor must be skilled in managing the interactive process in a group situation.** This means that she must deliberately guard against the impulse to present information didactically. Instead she needs to work in a responsive mode and rely on her ability to attend and respond to the feelings and meanings expressed by group members – guiding the ensuing discussion beyond ‘explanation’ and towards action.

When Carol and I debriefed after the workshop I explained that this approach provided an opportunity for the two students who shared the same supervisor as Allira to make a contribution. It was their contributions that helped me to judge whether or not the problem lay with the supervisor’s style or with Allira’s inability to relate to her. The group discussion that ensued had involved others relating their own experiences, some challenging Allira’s judgements, and others again suggesting strategies for Allira to use so that her supervisor would become involved in the original project…

50. **While encouraging the others to enter imaginatively into a dilemma proposed by one group member the convenor must guard against the kind of games that can be played in such discussions.** When the rest of the group become would-be rescuers and the protagonist begins to systematically reject their suggestions the convenor needs to be ready to intervene.

When I asked the group to identify the most significant learning that each of them had made early in the course, one young male student volunteered that…‘if you want to get promotion you have to learn to play the system!’ His frankness took me aback.

51. **The convenor needs to value each student’s verbalisations when they contain a ‘ring of truth’ even if they are expressed in the vernacular and sound inappropriate, amusing or even alarming.** Such formulations are the beginnings of theory making and with a little tidying in discussion they can become important insights that the students can own as a group.

**Mid-placement supervisor’s workshop – 14 April**

This workshop was conducted for the supervisors alone and was instigated at their request in earlier years (see Chapter Four). The emphasis was always upon the
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

students’ ability to generalise from the specific workplace experience they were having towards the more general attributes they needed if they were to become successful practitioners in any workplace. In this workshop I emphasised that the course was not an induction into a specific workplace, nor was it an opportunity for students to indulge in the euphoria of feeling ‘grown-up’, or for workplaces to begin to prepare selected prospective appointees. (Any of these things could happen but they were not the central focus of this course and at times they could actually get in the way.) This meant that sometimes the supervisors became a little confused about their role. In addition, many of the supervisors who had not had the benefit of a tertiary education felt somewhat unsure as to what was expected of them.

52. The processes and role expectations of all participants in this course must be kept transparent. No single individual holds the key to knowledge that is to be transmitted. This means that everyone needs to understand clearly not only what their own role is in the course but also the role of each of the other stakeholders.

The session began, as did all of our workshops, with a welcome and a short period where the participants and convenor set the agenda for the session together. The supervisors then introduced themselves and provided a short introduction to the nature of the placement they were responsible for. What followed was a fairly open discussion between the supervisors and the convenor, which focused on specific questions about the students’ learning plans, their assessment tasks, and the student/supervisor relationship. The issue of assessment arose and the supervisors tended to ask that any judgements about a given student’s performance be made on criteria applicable to the workplace itself, rather than according to what they often saw as academic standards. Garry’s journal entry highlighted the tension between what was seen as valuable by academics and what practitioners found immediately relevant and useful.

When I finally finished the proposal I showed it to [my supervisor] for his advice. What I expected…was perhaps some positive criticism, maybe even a little advice; what I did not expect was laughter! I am not talking about a little chuckle or even a mild guffaw; I am talking about a loud bellow. … When I asked why…he informed me that the language was too academic and technical. While this may not seem…a startling revelation,

_______________________________________________________________ 234

Just Practice?
it was to me. I realised that I had spent so long writing academic documents that I had forgotten how to write conversationally. ...These particular proposals are written for board members who have no interest in academic lingo. They do not want to read...such crime prevention catch lines as preventative factors, recidivism or interventions, they just want the bare facts in a basic language that anyone can understand.

53. The convenor must ensure that the criteria for the assessment of individual students are clear and that they reflect appropriately the demands of each workplace rather than general demands related more to the task of academic writing. In fact the convenor should challenge the notion that an academic style of writing is always the most appropriate – something that students often assume without question.

The following excerpts from my journal provided a number of examples from which further principles of procedure could be drawn.

The supervisors who attended...were new to the task apart from Martin and Denise... They quickly set about comparing placements with each other, wanting to check that they were meeting the requirements... We talked about the philosophy of the course and the fact that it is a bridging course designed to help students identify the skills required for working as a professional.

54. As when dealing with individual students, the convenor needs to start from ‘where the group is at’. In this instance, rather than present an elaborate analysis of the process of supervising, she commences with the group’s immediate need to clarify role expectations. Only when this has happened can more general issues be addressed.

We talked about the transferability of not only the content knowledge but also generic skills. I provided examples from our student workshop to let supervisors know the range of students’ abilities and where they tend to get stuck in their learning experiences. We talked about the student’s need for feedback and the role that supervisors can play in helping students develop their learning plans.

55. The convenor must ensure that the supervisor checks that the student’s learning goals are realistic and open possibilities that the student is unaware of. Students are used to ‘fudging’ when it comes to writing plans, goals and objectives: usually they do not expect to be held to them.

Because the group was relatively small, I was able to talk to individual supervisors about the learning needs of individual students. For example, we spent some time talking with Martin and Denise regarding...Chloe and her interpersonal skills. Denise indicated that she had already spoken to Chloe on a number of occasions about her tendency to over-talk but had not received too much positive response. We discussed including this as one of Chloe’s objectives in her learning plan...
Denise did follow through as is evidenced by an entry in Chloe’s journal:

…”my supervisors feel I could build on developing professional interpersonal communication skills in regards to talking too fast…”

Later the group considered how other supervisors could develop similar personal objectives for their students. Most of their suggestions were about the need for the students to ‘lighten up’; the supervisors wanted the students to be more relaxed and less ‘intense’. This led into a discussion about student anxiety to which all of the supervisors contributed.

56. Again, as in all workshops, the focus of the discussion always begins with the particular and then moves outwards toward more general principles. The convenor must have the skill to enable this process to work so that the participants can own the ideas and not see them as emanating from some kind of authority.

Marleen was still trying to make sense of her role. The placement for one day per week and…she could not give the student a particular clinical case to work on as she had with her involvement in previous programs. She was concerned about the project component and wanted to know whether it was feasible for the student to show me a draft…so that I could decide whether or not it would be adequate. Again, I reiterated that the idea was for the project to be of benefit to the organisation and that we could manage the assessment ourselves. … If we had any concerns we could deal with them later.

57. When we discussed this interaction Carol began to realise that the philosophy of this course deliberately discouraged dependence. The convenor must ensure that everyone, not just the students, take responsibility for the judgements they make and for what they do.

During the workshop Paul became aware that he had structured the project for his student as if she were a consultant rather than on placement for a learning experience… From the discussion he decided it would better for Erin to complete her work in the office rather than at home or in the library…so that she could learn] to manage the workplace distractions…

Jane noted her experience in her journal:

I am…aware of the difficulty I have…in working and concentrating in…a busy and noisy office environment. While I am able to work steadily when alone in the office, I find I am frequently distracted and half listening to other conversations…when others are in the office…hence, I waste a lot of time… I am hoping that ongoing exposure to…this will help me…as I
The convenor must ensure that not only the task but the setting in which it is completed is as close to the real working environment as possible. This relates back to the general principle that students learn best when they are confronted with ‘realia’: real problems, real situations and real consequences.

Trudy indicated that because there are times when she doesn’t have anything specific for Simone to do, so she had been getting her to sit in on meetings that are looking at project development or discussing new ideas. I indicated that this was a really good plan.

It is always surprising when the supervisor discovers that this course encourages the student to take an interest in the whole of the workplace and not simply to focus on a specific task. The convenor needs to be aware that this course is markedly different to most others where the main goals are to teach workplace ‘skills’ rather than provides students with an awareness of their own potential and options.

Nick said that the one-day a week structure seemed to be more beneficial than full-time placements...which, no matter how well organised the supervisor and the placement might be, always had downtime for the student... He has been able to organise all the activities in his section of the Department of Families that relate to the student’s work on the one day, i.e. the Justice staff have their meeting, the supervision session...and meetings with outside organisations are organised...as well. [Then] there’s six-days...to think critically about what happened and consolidate her knowledge before coming back.

The one-day a week structure enables the course to focus much more on the student’s learning and less upon an experience, which they may either simply enjoy or dislike. A major part of the convenor’s task is to ensure that the intervals between the single day placement experiences are used wisely and for appropriate reflection and sharing with others. This is not to say there are not advantages in the continuous placement model used by faculties of Social Work, education and others, but it does underline the need for continuing and detailed attention by the University to what is actually going on in each workplace.

Nick was happy to recommend our course to the Youth Justice Program just opened at Morayfield. He’s going to talk to them about it and get them to contact me.

When the convenor is concerned about advocacy for a work placement course and its marketing in the workplace, endorsements like this is critical. In our case, the course’s reputation spread by word of mouth has been the major method of recruiting new supervisors and new workplaces. The
convenor should ensure that whenever possible records of such recommendations are kept for further use.

George was quiet and...I noticed that he took lots of notes. This made me feel that, although I felt the session went well, I was still doing too much of the talking.

62. I had noticed that when I had said something obvious, some supervisors still felt the need to write it down. When discussing my misgivings with Carol, we noted how important it is for the convenor to keep her own contributions to a minimum in the workshops and to open the ‘talking space’ to the participants as much as possible. This is not to say that what is obvious to one person is not an insight to another, but it highlights the need for talkative academics to learn how to value the ideas of others.

After morning tea we focussed briefly on the role the supervisors could play in helping students learn about how to get jobs.

63. The convenor needs occasionally to collude with the supervisors and encourage them to relate to the student as a whole person and to offer their own skills as resources to be used as the student ventures from the protected environment of a ‘course’ into the real world of work. This is another example of attending to realia and transferring the focus of the course from the particular to the general and asking the supervisors to assist.

Students frequently benefited as a result of having had their supervisors attend this workshop. Dylan’s journal commented that:

Tony was very task-focused, which may have been the result of him seeing Merrelyn earlier in the day. For the first time key dates and agendas were set. I felt considerably more comfortable... I am ordinarily a methodical planner.

Jane noted in her journal that her supervisor re-checked, following the supervisor’s workshop, that the emotional impact of the work was not having a negative impact (similar to Rochelle – refer Chapter Six). Jane wrote:

Marion asked me...if I was bothered or disturbed by the graphic details of the sexual abuse cases... In truth, I find it doesn’t bother me at all, aside from being constantly shocked and appalled at how prevalent such cases are. I am glad to have discovered that I would be able to work in this or
similar departments without being unduly bothered or overwhelmed by the subject matter.

64. The convenor’s knowledge of students, supervisors and workplaces can be of assistance in leading general discussion in the workshop in order to ‘plant’ specific points for consideration. Supervisors can use these in future when making decisions about students with particular personality traits, placement contexts or project tasks.

Following the workshop Carol identified a number of students who had still not completed the minimal requirements expected by this point in the course. She was concerned that, as co-convenor, she may be placed in the position of being negligent if she did not follow the matter up.

65. The topsy-turvey nature of this course means that some assessment responsibilities need to be handed over to the students. This is difficult to understand for anyone who is used to a top-down chain of academic authority.

I needed to reassure Carol that this is not the case and I explained that Rosslyn and Chloe had started after everyone else so they would already be behind; Erin had not been working within the organisational environment; and I expect that Nigel has forgotten… I informed Carol that if the students had not provided their rationales by the next workshop we would just note it so that it becomes a slight penalty on the participation mark.

66. The convenor needs to keep herself aware of the detailed circumstances of each placement so that she is no longer reliant on blanket systems and unnecessary rules as she places demands upon students and supervisors. This is essential if maximum benefit is to be gained from each placement. This is not a matter of being ‘soft’ with students: as already indicated intrinsic motivation should drive their action and extrinsic demands only cloud the issue.

Student workshop 2 – 28 April

This workshop was for students only and was designed to pull the threads together, consolidating and focussing the disparate learnings across the placements. Students were concerned with the completion of their written project but my goal was for the students to begin to construct an overview of what they had been through so that they could complete the final four weeks and achieve some closure. A second goal that I had in this workshop was to assist students to disengage from the placement relationships in an appropriate and constructive manner. This involved a focus on parting rituals appropriate to the culture of the
organisation within which they had been working (e.g. cards, thank you letters and perhaps even a small gift for the supervisor). Again, this was not being either indulgent or ‘soft’: the importance of rituals in the workplace often becomes a focus for discussion in the workshops.

One of the things I expected the students to find easier to do at this stage was to talk reflectively about the learning experiences, bringing into focus the relationship between their academic education and the organisational culture in which they had been working. This was augmented by a written role-play exercise where I asked the students to adopt the role of their supervisor. I briefed them (as supervisors) on what I required in a final written evaluation of a student’s learning. They were asked to refer to the Course Handbook (Griffith University, 2004) for the details. The resultant reports surprised many of the students because this exercise demanded that they focussed on their achievements and strengths rather than being overly modest or self-deprecating.

67. It is important that students be given a structured opportunity to objectively reflect on their development during the placement. Completing the exercise at this time provides the opportunity for students to make changes to ensure optimal learning in the last few weeks of placement.

The following are journal excerpts written after the workshop followed by corresponding principles of procedure.

...I asked the students to...very quickly talk about two things that had been good about the placement and something that they had found more difficult... I chose this strategy because prior to the workshop commencing, the students who had arrived first were taking particular seats so that they would not have to sit next to Chloe. I explained to these students that I had picked up on the body language in our last workshop... This appeared to surprise them.

68. I have discovered that it is wise to draw a group’s attention to the fact that while an individual’s response to a given situation may seem to be undetectable, when it is repeated by several group members independently it becomes glaringly obvious. This principle of confronting students with the immediate social consequences of their social behaviour is fundamental in the conduct of the workshops. It encourages a climate of honesty and a business-like attitude towards understanding the interpersonal dynamics operating in the group.
 Eventually, Rosslyn volunteered that she and Chloe engaged in a verbal argument...prior to giving a group presentation in another course. Allegedly one of the group members...left the University supposedly as a result of Chloe’s abuse. I had to take this information on board, not because I could solve Chloe’s interpersonal problems, but because I needed to use it in my management of the workshop.

69. The convenor must be aware in any group situation that she cannot solve everyone’s problems, and that some problems are best left alone. Her focus must always be on the students’ learning.

I also became very conscious that, when I broke the students into groups to do a couple of the exercises, I had to count around the room to make sure that Chloe wasn’t going to be in any of the groups...where some of the more antagonistic students would be.

70. I had to make it clear to the co-convenor that I had then to act upon what I knew by ensuring that neither Chloe or any other member of the group could disrupt any of the work in this particular workshop.

Garry was concerned about the inconsistent workloads in his placement.

71. The convenor needs to be aware of each new piece of information about the placement process and its possible implications for future placements. As I explained to Carol, Garry’s story meant that this organisation, whose activities are organised almost on a week-to-week basis because of non-recurrent funding problems, might not be suitable for future placements.

Allira, Lesleigh and Kimberley are very amazed at the politics and staff culture within the detention centre and felt that it had limited their opportunities for learning.

72. As Carol and I discussed, although this may well have been true, the strength of the experience itself was enough to justify us persevering with this institution.

Eloise was still experiencing problems in collaborating with her supervisor; and though Dylan was enjoying his placement he was still finding it difficult to design an appropriate evaluation...

73. When dealing with comments or even complaints like these, presented in a group situation, the convenor needs to be aware of hidden agendas: she needs to realise that often students project self-doubts about their performance onto the workplace, the supervisor and even each other. She needs to point these students towards the action they can take (or could have taken) to resolve or even avoid the problems. She will, of course, be asking for the students’ suggestions rather than
...When we discussed the learning plans I mentioned that students needed to understand how to ‘manage their supervisors’ as this was similar to how employees need to take a hand in their own performance reviews. This was novel thought for them.

This intervention was referred to in Erin’s journal:

_I had a review meeting with Paul...We had quite a good conversation about theories and...I enjoyed it. Paul is...quite a nice guy. Might be a pain in the ass to work with, but I am sure I can handle him...or ‘manage’ him as Merrelyn says._

74. **It is important for the convenor to make use of every opportunity to draw parallels between their work placement experience and the potential experiences in their future world of work.** It is also worth noting that often the most ‘throw-away’ comments by the convenor can be remembered when they apply to a particular student’s problem.

It was about this time in the placement that students were beginning to progress and make sense of their projects. Rosslyn wrote in her journal:

...it has finally occurred to me that this project can have an effect on someone and...may indeed help someone. At first I felt...this was a huge responsibility to give to a university student but now, the more I get into it, the more I realise that this is what uni has been preparing me for.

75. **In the end, the most important learnings are learnings about oneself.**

**Debriefing workshop – 2 June**

This workshop was in some ways the mirror image of the initial briefing workshop with students giving an overview of their achievements during the semester. After a general discussion the supervisors joined the students for morning tea and in a one-hour session raise issues they thought were important and discussed them with the students.
The supervisors who had participated in other placement programs remarked on the difference in focus that exists with this course: the emphasis on reflective practice and focussing experience for specific purpose at all times. … They commented positively on the structure of the course and particularly on the importance of the workshops [which] they believed were placed at appropriate times throughout the semester and…‘well worth attending’ [because] it enabled them to keep the focus on the student’s learning. They also remarked that whilst the one-day per week placement did not have the advantages of continuity that a full-time experience would provide, it did make the project much easier to supervise and allowed the opportunity for more extensive work to be completed than would otherwise be possible.

76. It is essential to provide opportunities for supervisors to engage in dialogue about the course and how it is perceived to be working for them and for the students. This is another way for the course to maintain currency as a link between the University and the world of work.

Following a general discussion looking at the connections between the placement experience and employment opportunities the Head of School presented framed certificates to the supervisors.

77. The recognition of work done and effort expended by the University is all important to the success of this course. All stakeholders need to feel that the extra commitment demanded by this course is not only enjoyable but also valued as an important contribution to the education of the students. Although the matter was not discussed at any length the supervisors regarded the presentation of the Certificates as significant. The fact that the University was prepared to go to this trouble (in fact, it was a relatively simple administrative task) impressed them and made them feel valued. All supervisors indicated that they would be willing to participate in the course in future; in fact, many were prepared to recommend it to other colleagues in other workplaces.

Achieving closure: how to end things constructively

Philosophically, ‘closure’ is an illusion: life does not frame itself so that it exists as a set of overlapping narratives with happy or unhappy endings. We construct our own endings and experiences (like that of being a student in this course) will usually be recalled in a particular way: as if ‘the experience itself contained a “moral” (or guiding principle) similar to a parable. The ‘narrative endings’ constructed by students when they complete this course need to be as positive as possible so that any changes to their self-concepts are felt to be enhancing and
empowering. For this reason the way the course concludes (which is up to the convenor) is of great importance.

Closure was achieved for the students in a number of ways. Firstly, they participated in parting rituals in the workplace itself; secondly, they engaged in the ritual of the final workshop that was conducted in an ‘official space’ at the University. Here, their final personal contact with academics and supervisors was as equals – the workshop ended with informal discussions over tea and coffee and people departed when they felt ready. The students also submitted their written journals to the convenor – ostensibly for assessment, but usually for a form of personal confirmation of their newfound autonomy by a trusted authority figure. The convenor’s feedback on these journals focused on the positive aspects of the experiences each student reported, on each student’s own growth and of each student’s prospective futures after graduation. Finally, the students received the formal assessment grade from the University and their supervisors’ and academic facilitators commented on the project they had completed.

The purpose of the journal was two-fold: firstly, it acted as the focus for an ongoing internal monologue by the students as already noted, as they constructed and tested hypotheses about who they were and the likely impact they could have upon the world. As Robert Carkhuff suggests, the ultimate hypothesis is in fact the self; and learning is the process of increasing discovery, definition and redefinition (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976). The journal also enabled students to describe their experiences of reality and reflect upon what were or were not appropriate goals for them to pursue.

78. The act of reflective writing in the journal is a sanctuary in which the student must feel safe to explore dilemmas (moral and ethical) and the strengths and limitations of the self in an imperfect world. The only way a student can fail to meet this as a course requirement is to demonstrate that they find reflection-on-action either impossible or (even more alarmingly) unnecessary.

As co-convenor it was important that Carol achieve closure too. And her responses to the final task that involved reading and commenting on the students’
journals are illuminating. Carol drew attention to an entry by one of the students, Garry.

_Most alarming to me... was seeing a student of no more than sixteen years old openly and freely smoking a marijuana joint. ... What kind of a supervisor lets a young person smoke marijuana during a school activity? When I questioned [the supervisor] on this issue, he said that it is a form of harm minimisation since [the student] usually participates in chroming (paint sniffing). While initially this sounded viable, upon closer deliberation, this comment is quite absurd. ... Even though harm minimisation involves the supervision of responsible drug taking, is it appropriate to include this in a scholastic atmosphere?_

Her comment on this entry was that what was significant here was not whether the institution was right or wrong, it was the fact that Garry now feels strong enough to hold an opinion and defend it. Further experiences and debate would almost certainly have had an effect on Garry’s judgements, but he was now participating in the ongoing debates.

79. **Positive outcomes of the course must be expressed as positive changes in the students’ ability to express and, if necessary, defend their own autonomy.** Inherent in this is the fact that while the course has concluded, a new process of ‘self-teaching’ has begun.

Carol was able to reflect upon the commitment and effort demonstrated by each student. She noted that they were able to do this without the goad of extrinsic motivation: they were all able to identify new and growing personal strengths. Her perception was that the high results achieved by students in the course were the result of four very strong messages given to the students about their own capacities:

- ‘this is what you can achieve’,
- ‘this is why you can achieve it’
- ‘this is how you can achieve it’ and
- ‘these are the benefits associated with achieving it’.

The final principle of procedure then notes that when learning is effective it is necessarily accompanied by a personal feeling of achievement.
80. The closure of a learning experience is the result of reflection after explicit faith has been expressed in the student before and after she or he has been extended to the limit.

Summary of the findings

The preceding discussions between convenor and co-convenor have generated a long and incomplete list of propositions about the procedures associated with convening. They are articulated in the text above as general statements that contain inherent values, which have guided decisions in very specific contexts. Each principle then advocates certain kinds of actions that are appropriate in particular circumstances. The principles are attempts to generalise from specific cases and state criteria that assert their own face validity because they are derived by induction from ‘real’ experiences that have been shared and reflected upon. The propositions are not derived from formal theory; they are the result of shared reflections: but the language that is used in their statement does contain implicit theory in that each noun represents a category of objects/phenomena/abstractions and each verb represents a category of action. We need to acknowledge that as soon as we use the metaphors of language (that are often deeply buried, but are there nevertheless), we imply an interlocking set of concepts we do not question and upon which we more or less agree.

Carol’s reflection on co-convening

The previous section records the results of discussions between Carol and I as the semester progressed; and together we were able to articulate the kinds of principles that guided our ongoing decision-making. Inevitably these principles were closely tied to the contexts in which specific decisions were made and, as such carry their own face validity. But I was interested in more than that: it seemed important to draw out some ‘second level’ implications that had guided Carol’s own learning: I believed it was important to record some of the ways in which Carol made sense of the experience at the end of the semester.
Carol’s perception of detailed cause and effect relationships between the fine-grained interventions made during the convening process seemed to grow rapidly as she was able to observe, participate in, and discuss what we were doing and why we were doing it. Her ability to make more and more fine discriminations in her perceptions of the kinds of interventions I was making enabled her to make effective contributions of her own. She persisted, for example, in negotiations with potential placement organisations when I was ready to abandon them, and she kept careful and insightful records of her own perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of all of the students. After a while she was prepared to challenge my judgements and debate the pros and cons of different courses of action and this was gratifying to me because it meant that she was interiorising the values that drive my procedures and not simply following my rules for specific situations. It seems that one of the main areas in which Carol experienced a change in understanding as a result of her participation in the process was regarding the importance of autonomy, both for herself and for the students as they learned.

Overall, Carol claimed that she found the experience of co-convening with a mentor a positive one. She was able to comment on why she believed the student-centred nature of the course was crucial and her insight that in learning, the initiative must come from the student seemed to be a genuinely new and valuable idea for her. She commented that:

Being involved in Field Placement gave me an invaluable insight into how incredibly important contact with students is – and what an important role the University can have…[and that as lecturers we often become so lost in teaching and passing on knowledge…and we forget that for our students their degree is a means to an end (a job).

Carol was genuinely surprised and concerned about how passive the students were when confronted with new or challenging situations; she suggested that this may be due to the fact that they see professional behaviour as being ‘theory-driven’ rather than an immediate, informed response to a given set of circumstances.
For third year students it is particularly concerning... – specifically as one of the subjects I have been heavily involved in is a theory subject and I have always emphasised the way in which theory feeds into practice!

Carol saw the journaling task as ‘wrestling with propositions about practice’, and noted that this was particularly difficult for students for whom reflective writing seemed to be almost a new skill that they had to learn. She commented that until now, they had only been used to extrapolating from theory. She noted that the students rarely showed any introspection even though they had been provided with details and examples of the writing style. But, having said that she did emphasise that some of the journals were exemplary and ‘had it so right’ with the way in which students reflected on experiences and linked in the ‘theories’.

Carol also demonstrated that she was engaged in internalising the role when she identified that some of her most important learning was learning about herself. She commented on her new awareness that an intervention into a student’s learning should never become an interference with that learning.

I am thinking that I also learnt that I have a tendency to ‘hold students’ hands’ – and that this is not really helpful. While I don’t think it is useful to just throw students into the deep end, there is fine line between providing students with support and being there and ‘mothering’ them through their experiences. ... Merrelyn...showed how to guide students, encourage them to think of their own solutions to problems and support them in this process.

Carol continued, commenting on the importance of having a model to imitate. This highlighted the fact that much of what she was able to learn first manifested itself as highly contextualised, tacit ‘observations’. Although the following excerpt from her written reflections appears to be a kind of personal endorsement of my teaching, it is clear, reading between the lines, that Carol was not so much interested in my own personal style as she was in a particular approach to the task of ‘action-teaching’ which she could adopt herself. Her comments need to be thought of as comparative statements; she appeared to be surprised that teaching could have a feeling or value-centred dimension that sometimes even seemed to
be ‘passionate’ when the accepted norm was that of the ‘dis-passionate’ transmission of objective ‘facts’.

Merrelyn’s whole approach to teaching impresses me. She has a passion for the subject, for her students and for getting the most out of her students...

The way Merrelyn ran the workshops was fabulous. [She] has a way that promotes an openness that allows students – even the quietest ones – to participate and share their experiences. I think it is mainly because Merrelyn makes each student feel as though she cares so much about him or her. I think that building of a rapport with the students and that individual contact and support is incredibly inspiring.

In other words, Carol identified an emotional-feeling dynamic that was essential to this kind of teaching where the emphasis was upon student decision-making.

Carol also commented specifically that the philosophy of the course was applied simultaneously at different levels of teaching, which included assisting supervisors to improve their own supervision practice. She provided, as an example, one of my interventions during the supervisors’ workshop:

I remember when Chloe’s supervisors were discussing problems they were having with her, Merrelyn’s response did not only validate their concerns...but offered a way in which these supervisors could take those problems with the student and address them effectively, allowing the student to learn. In essence Merrelyn always tended to help the supervisors think about how to make the students reflect on their own behaviour in the workplace and assess its appropriateness.

The significant word in Carol’s reflection is ‘allow’. It underlines the fact that Carol has internalised the value assumption that real learning is always intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated – and that it is about action and not just disembodied knowledge.
In her final written comments Carol advanced a number of new ideas and suggestions for changes to the program, including suggestions that the course be conducted as a full-time for four weeks in the summer semester, making the first workshop compulsory for placement supervisors and requiring students to be much more involved in organising their own placements. She suggested that students should have to complete an assessment form on the value of the placement to them, as a form of feedback to their supervisors. What was significant was the fact that none of these suggestions were modelled or even discussed with Carol and yet all of them are consonant with the values and principles of procedure that underlie the course. This meant that Carol had gone beyond any ‘imitation’ normally associated with modelling behaviour, beyond the rules of procedural knowledge and was in the process of internalising an underlying value system. This is strong evidence that the course is not merely the product of a particular ‘personality’ but it depends upon a coherent system of values as well as a sound understanding of cause and effect. It is this combination of values and ‘theory’ that drive the praxis of the program that is expressed in the action and in the principles of procedure.

Towards a theory

Taken individually the propositions about (or principles of) procedure represent rules or guidelines to be followed by a novice learning the role of convenor. However, when viewed together the whole is greater than the sum of the parts – this list of eighty propositions will now be treated as the beginnings of a statement of shared values from which a much smaller number of general principles for ‘action-teaching’ will be developed. The ensuing statement of values are expressed below as nine criteria which should be able to serve as a basis from which others could construct specific (and sequenced) learning experiences for students in a similar course.

The purpose of the following exercise was to see whether a set of principles or guidelines that might have transferable meaning to other individuals and to other
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

contexts, could be derived in this and act as what Polanyi refers to as a “functional structure of tacit knowing” (Polanyi, 1983, p.10). The first task was to collect these ‘Geertzian’ formulations into a smaller and more manageable number of categories. If such a list of principles of procedure was to have a more general usefulness (i.e. the kind of utilitarian validity discussed in Chapter Four) it was also desirable that this list should also (at least in some respects) match similar lists that had been devised by others. A perusal of the literature showed that although different writers had designed their principles for different purposes and for different contexts, they all seemed to share many of the same fundamental human values with the eighty principles developed above.

Methodological considerations: introducing the social constructionist paradigm

At this point, the activity of theory-making in this thesis faced a methodological impasse: if the thesis was to have ‘findings’ that could be expressed in a way that makes them applicable to other programs, how could such a list be compiled from these lower order findings so that some kind of truth claim could be made about their validity? If this problem was approached from an interpretivist position, the goal (to find generic meaning in specific actions) would become an exercise in what Schwandt refers to as “objectivist hermeneutics” (Schwandt, 2000, p.192). This would assume that the interpreter could “…transcend or break out of her or his historical circumstances in order to reproduce the meaning or intention of the actor” (Schwandt, 2000, p.192, emphasis mine); or in our case, the shared meanings and intentions of a number of actors and of other theory makers as well. Such an exercise in theory construction using an interpretivist paradigm is sometimes referred to intentionalism and emphasises “…the contribution of human subjectivity (i.e. intention) to knowledge without thereby sacrificing the objectivity of [such] knowledge” (Schwandt, 2000, p.193). Consequently, the interpreter uses whatever tools are to hand to objectify or to reify the concepts being advanced – and this means relying on some kind of empathic identification
with the actor by the interpreter. “Verstehen thus entails…getting inside the head of the actor to understand what he or she is up to…” (Schwandt, 2000, p.192).

This in turn means that in order to claim validity for a set of principles of procedure we should attempt to ensure that any biases or pre-judgements of the interpreter are kept to a minimum (or eliminated altogether) by some kind of triangulation process that guides the theory making. But, all such approaches still require us to see theory making as an attempt to make closer and closer approximations to an external reality, which it is assumed exists independent of the knower: and such approaches ask us to use syllogistic reasoning, objectivity and methodological rigour to ensure that our conclusions are free from the potential contamination of self-delusion through language. As Schwandt (2000) points out, this assumption is fraught with difficulties.

The alternative approach Schwandt offers is that of “philosophical hermeneutics” as it is manifest in social constructionism (see Chapter Four). This allows the theory-maker to reject a strictly representational view of language altogether and proceed as Potter (1996) advocates when he argues that what we know of the world is “…constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it, and argue it” (cited in Schwandt, 2000, p.197). This approach means that a set of principles can be constructed simply as a set of Gestalts, which emerge from the data as the theory maker experiences them, and need not lay claim to objectivity. All that is required is that others experience the propositions as ‘meaningful’ in that they accord with their own experiences and are useful as descriptors and holding forms.

The social constructionist position is that we, as interpreters, cannot ‘distance ourselves’ from an objective external and past tradition that influences our meaning making. Instead, As Gallagher (1992, p.91) puts it “…socio-historically inherited bias or prejudice is not…a characteristic or attribute that an interpreter must strive to get rid of or manage in order to come to a ‘clear’ understanding…., it is…a living force that [is] already there, ahead of us, conditioning our interpretations” (cited in Schwandt, 2000, p.194). As Gadamer (1975) claims, to
step outside these preconceptions “…would be like trying to step outside our own skins. … On the contrary understanding requires the engagement of one’s bias. … The meaning one seeks in making sense of social action or text is temporal and processive and always coming into being in the specific occasion of understanding…” (p.419 cited in Schwandt, 2000, p.195). ‘Understanding’ (i.e. the ‘meaning’ of any text or human action) is not an ‘object out there’ and so cannot be ‘discovered’: instead it must be negotiated mutually in an act of interpretation or social construction.

This approach was appealing because it was in accord with the description given by Polanyi (1983) about how tacit knowledge is created and how both Carol and I experienced the knowledge we were putting into words. According to Polanyi this kind of tacit knowledge exists as “…more than we can tell…” (Polanyi, 1983, p.4) and is the result of a process of shifting attention. As we move from attending to the specific to attending to the general we are creating the functional structure. According to Polanyi (1983) Lazarus and McCleary coined the term “subception” to refer to a process that operates as a higher creative function in the human mind and enables this functional structure to emerge. Subception reaches beyond ‘perception’ (which Polanyi regards as the most impoverished form of tacit knowing) and forms a bridge that engages the creative activity of pattern making. It is this that allows the higher capacities of human thought and action to create new knowledge that ‘emerges’.

**Constructing principles of procedure**

The purpose of devising a set of principles of procedure was to attempt to separate the valid from the invalid (the useful from the non-useful) when devising and describing a process of ‘knowledge production’. It assumes that the relationship between knowledge and meaningful action is more than just a close one: they are in fact different sides of the same coin and one cannot exist without the other. I was interested here in the circumstances under which productive knowledge and action emerged and on procedural rules that would enable me to construct such
circumstances for myself (as researcher) and for others (as learners). Essentially this meant considering some basic pragmatic principles that govern any research endeavour in the field of human action, human learning and human service.

The processes of developing such a set of principles follow the steps as set out below.

**Step 1.**

An initial set of such principles, ‘Principles of Learning and Research: A Synthesis’, was developed from earlier research by the author (Bates, 2003a) in a paper presented at the Thirteenth World Congress of Criminology Conference in Rio de Janeiro. It drew on the work of Clifford Geertz (1979) and Norman Denzin (2001), and was based upon the relativist and constructivist paradigm outlined by Schwandt (1994).

**Step 2.**

The *Step 1* research had provided the data for a second set of generic principles of procedure (‘Principles of Curriculum Design’), which this time referred to the specifics of curriculum design. These were developed and presented at the Thirteenth World Association of Cooperative Education (WACE) Conference (Bates, 2003c) and the same list was revised and developed in a further publication (Bates, 2004) as a set of nine criteria to be used in determining whether or not any particular learning activity has inherent worth in the Field Placement course at Griffith University. These principles imply that judgements need to be made by learners about what they do, as well as by teacher/facilitators as they make decisions about the constraints and encouragements they offer their students. This list was developed using as a base the set of ‘Principles for the Selection of Content in the Curriculum’ (Raths, 1971). This set of criteria became a holding form for the more refined categories and principles of procedure
developed later when the eighty detailed propositions above were taken into account:

*Nine criteria for determining the inherent worth of a learning activity in the Field Placement course*

All other things being equal one activity is better than another if it:

1. Permits a student to make informed choices and to reflect on the consequences of their choices.
2. Involves the student in a real situation with a real problem that challenges his or her intellectual processes with problem solving, either personal or social.
3. Demands that the student engage in the risks of attempting something new.
4. Assigns to the student active rather than passive roles.
5. Asks a student to engage in inquiry into ideas or applications of intellectual processes.
6. Asks a student to examine in a new setting an idea or an intellectual process that has previously been studied.
7. Requires a student to rewrite, rehearse, or polish their initial efforts.
8. Provides opportunities for the student to engage in a range of relationships that either support or challenge her or his worldview and his or her current and future professional frame of reference.
9. Is relevant to the expressed needs or goals of the student.

(Bates, 2004, p.13)
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

Caveats:

It should be noted that these statements

- Do not claim the reified status of phenomena. (The criteria are constructions that are offered as potentially useful criteria, not as postulated ‘truths’ to be contested.)
- Do not claim universality. (Although they claim a degree of generality, the criteria are still strongly context bound and make sense only in specific circumstances.)
- Do not claim factorial integrity. (The principles overlap and include nuances that in turn resonant with similar principles.)
- Do not assert priorities. (The principles recognise that very small differences in initial conditions can result in major differences in outcomes: the relative weighting placed on these principles when a choice needs to be made depends on the context.)
- Do result from tacit (silent) knowledge and intuition that takes many factors into account at once.
- Do assume that any agent attempting to implement these principles is doing so according to personal values consistent with the principles.
- Do assume an institutional and systemic context (the criteria assume the existence of an ongoing program with clear institutional and educational constraints).

Step 3.

For the purposes of this study the above propositions (i.e. the nine criteria) were then amended so that they incorporated some of the specific detail concerning intention contained in the set of eighty principles developed in this chapter that had been constructed during the mentoring process. In this amended list the principles are again cast as criteria to be used to determine whether or not any particular learning activity has inherent worth. But now they incorporate implicit
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

criteria for the convenor’s interventions as well as the judgements that need to be made about the constraints and encouragements offered to students. This has taken the number of criteria to thirteen and they are now expressed as characteristics of effective learning tasks and activities. Most importantly the learning activities designed by the convenor contain demands that are intrinsic to the activity itself; such ‘demands’ and ‘requirements’ cannot be imposed by the convenor – they must arise from problems inherent in the practice.

**Thirteen characteristics, which need to be reflected in activities and tasks set for the students.**

Activities should be designed and developed so that they:

1. Reflect the student’s current state of knowledge and interests. They need to be directly relevant to the expressed needs of the student and developed in collaboration with the student.

2. Require the students to take on an active rather than a passive role in a social context; there must be an obvious and clear relationship between knowledge and the required action.

3. Demand that the student be directly concerned with real problems, real needs and real activities located in a real workplace.

4. Involve the student in addressing a problem, with a need to make choices and decisions and then following through with appropriate action based on those decisions.

5. Demand the application of previously acquired knowledge (tacit, propositional and theoretical) into a new context or setting (i.e. the workplace).

6. Involve the student in accepting the consequences of his or her decisions and actions.

7. Involve the student in risk taking associated with new behaviours and new environments, understanding that these ‘new’ challenges will provoke different levels of anxiety for each student.
8. Demand that the students demonstrate they can use relationships constructively.

9. Demand that the students must use collaboration and legitimising processes of strategic thinking and acting.

10. Demand that the student demonstrate an understanding of the use of power and social influence.

11. Demand that the students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between an institutional framework and what is possible.

12. Demand that the students demonstrate reflexive analysis and reappraisal of goals and strategies.

13. Require the student to refine their initial efforts of practice (through rewriting, rehearsing, and polishing).

These characteristics then describe the nature and purpose of the student’s social transactions with those assisting her or him to construct meaning. The convenor (along with the workplace supervisor and the academic facilitator to whom some of the convening functions are delegated) needs to become a ‘sounding board’ and helper. She will be operating in a collaborative and responsive mode and will not be overtly directive, preferring instead to allow the exigencies of the tasks and the workplace context to make the demands listed above. This approach of drawing out the values that underlie action in the learning encounter is thus extended, and the principles of procedure apply not only to the program designer but also to the convenor, the academic supervisors, the workplace supervisors, and the students as well as they work together on implementing the program.

**Step 4.**

It became clear in this study that the interventions of the convenor (and the others who served a teaching-facilitating role in the course) needed to become more of a focus of attention. In the eighty propositions developed earlier in this chapter this became apparent as the issue of process became more important. In attempting to articulate what was going on in the relationships between the parties working the
Chapter 7: Response 2: The principles of convening

program, it became possible to conceive of the procedures as following a sequence. It also became apparent that cyclical processes similar to models advanced in the literature on action research, action learning, problem solving and program development seemed appropriate here too. The central concept of a conflict model in which the learner faces conflicting demands, expectations and goals and then resolves them through action also seemed to be relevant.

The model described in Table 7.1 was then developed and is a more expansive outline of the principles that govern the selection of appropriate learning activities in the course, the steps involved in the learning process and the central purpose of the learners’ action at each stage. Again there is a caveat. This process is one way of describing the cycle followed when working through a problem, but we do not encounter our problems one at a time. At any given moment a learner will be working at different stages, at different levels on a number of goal oriented tasks, each of which might be conceived of as a problem. One weakness of the model at this stage is that it does not capture this ‘all-at-onceness’ of workplace learning as it was described in Chapter Five. We need to remember that each learner will be engaged on several tasks at the same time and that the demands will interact creating both pressures and opportunities.

Step 5.

The final step in developing a model for this course and of the process of teaching-facilitating and learning inherent within needed to concentrate on the two forces that drive it forward. The first is the intentionality of the learner which this has already been discussed at some length and is built into the structure above. Here, the learners’ action is at all times driven by intrinsic motivation rather than by external rewards and sanctions. But what is unique in an institutionalised program is the role of the teacher.
## Table 7.1: Learning Just Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE ACTIVITY SHOULD</th>
<th>THIS PHASE SHOULD INVOLVE</th>
<th>THE LEARNER WILL BE</th>
<th>THE TEACHER/HHELPER/ FACILITATOR WILL BE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Have RELEVANCE**  | • Learner's current state of knowledge  
• Learner's current interests  
• Matching the needs of all stakeholders  
• Involves commitment to learner’s current needs  
• Must involve a problem | 1.2.3,  
4.6.7,  
11.12,  
22.24,  
25.54,  
64.71,  
72 | Exploring a problem or issue  
(The focus is on observation and description) | ATTENDING  
NOTICING  
BASIC DIMENSIONS  
Genuineness  
Concreteness |
| **Be PROBLEM BASED** | **THE PROBLEM SHOULD INVOLVE**  
• Refuse  
• People and relationships  
• Cognitive component  
(i.e. involve the application of prior learning – transfer and transformation of knowledge)  
• A commitment to real change  
(i.e. action as well as analysis)  
• Must involve a choice | 5.18,  
23.32,  
38.41,  
42.44,  
51.55,  
56.58,  
59.63,  
78 | Exploring a problem or issue  
(The focus is on feelings and goals) | NOTICING  
RESPONDING (to feeling)  
FACILITATIVE DIMENSIONS  
Empathy  
Respect |
| **Demand CHOICE**   | • Must involve selection of action from a range of alternatives  
• Must involve competing/countering interests  
(i.e. the choice should be difficult and involve prioritising, saying no, etc.)  
• Must involve a commitment to action | 8.9,10,  
26.30,  
46.47,  
49.73 | Understanding a problem or issue  
(The focus is on cause and effect) | PERSONALISING (the course)  
ACTION ORIENTATION  
Confrontation  
Immediacy |
| **Demand ACTION**   | • Must involve challenge (the action itself should pose difficulties)  
• Must involve student anxiety  
• Must involve risk taking (i.e. there must be a real possibility of negative consequences)  
• There must be student ownership | 13.16,  
18.20,  
21.28,  
29.33,  
34.37,  
50.68,  
70 | Acting on the understanding of the problem or issue  
(The focus is on planning and initiating) | INITIATING (Acting)  
MOVING TO ANOTHER LEVEL |
| **Require FOLLOW THROUGH** | • Must involve evaluating the outcome of action  
• Must involve accepting consequences of the action  
• Must involve the ownership learning and transfer  
• Must involve dealing with the implications of the action  
• Must involve a commitment to a new cycle of reflection to action | 14.15,  
27.31,  
36.43,  
45.53,  
57.60,  
62.65,  
66.67 | Owing and accepting the consequences of the action | MOVING TO ANOTHER PROBLEM  
TRANSFORMING  
(To other contexts) |
| **A NEW CYCLE OF REFLECTION LEADING TO ACTION** | 35.74,  
75.76,  
79.80 | | |

### CONVENOR PRIORITISING TASKS

- Convenor attending and noticing individual students  
39
- Convenor managing group learning  
19.68
- Convenor overseeing research  
40
- Convenor noticing, intervening and managing timing  
48.69
- Convenor managing for a strengths perspective  
61

### UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITY

77
The second driving force is the value system which guides the interventions of the action-teacher. I have already alluded to my conviction that the teaching function needs to be rehabilitated to some extent. Whether he or she is prepared to admit it or not, such a teacher figure does exercise both power and control through direct interventions and demands. What is at issue is the nature of these demands and how they can be reconciled with the prime goal of autonomy for the student.

**Teaching, facilitating, counselling and intervening**

Table 7.2 is a concise account of the dimensions of effecting helping developed by Robert Carkhuff during the 1960s and 1970s. I use them as a set of guidelines for my own practice as a counsellor, a social worker and as convenor of the course. A perusal of that Table and a comparison of virtually all of the convenor interventions recorded in this thesis shows how closely my own teaching reflects high levels of functioning on Carkhuff's scales. I also offer a version of them as a set of criteria for my students to call upon when making interventions as part of their own practice.

The six scales that are set out in the following table are condensed versions of those developed by Carkhuff to describe the communication behaviour of people in the helping professions. They were developed through a rigorous process of empirical research over a number of years. A quick glance shows that each scale describes five levels of communicative response ranging from level 1 (very ineffective) to level 5 (very effective). In all cases, level 3 is the minimum necessary for the communication to have a constructive impact. Level 5 on each scale describes very effective functioning. In all cases, the communicator's verbal and non-verbal behaviours need to be taken into account when making judgements about what is going on. Accurate observations of the other's non-verbal expressions of feeling and meaning are an essential ingredient of effective direct communication (Carkhuff, 1969, ,1971). Here they are, this time couched in terms of ‘action-teacher’ and action-learner
### Table 7.2 The Criteria for Intervention: Values for the Action-Teacher

**THE BASIC DIMENSIONS**

( Behaviours exhibited by the action-teacher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>GENUINNESS</th>
<th>CONCRETENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• appears either uninterested or defensive in the relationship;</td>
<td>• appears interested only in a ‘discussion’ of vague and anonymous generalities;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• appears to be preoccupied or inattentive, offering nothing of what she seems to be really feeling or thinking;</td>
<td>• offers responses on a strictly abstract or intellectual level;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• appears ‘phoney’ in the relationship.</td>
<td>• avoids and discourages direct expressions of feeling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>GENUINNESS</th>
<th>CONCRETENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• appears to be responding according to a previously established procedure;</td>
<td>• frequently deflects expressions of direct feeling into ‘discussions’ about generalities;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• appears at a loss when asked to volunteer immediate feelings particularly if they are negative or likely to provoke hostility;</td>
<td>• does not encourage or elicit expressions of personally relevant feelings and meanings in concrete terms;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• seems to be ‘evasive’.</td>
<td>• avoids active verbs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>GENUINNESS</th>
<th>CONCRETENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• appears to make appropriate responses that are spontaneous and sincere;</td>
<td>• shows preparedness to consider material personally relevant to the learner;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• offers nothing of deeper or negative feelings evoked by the relationship.</td>
<td>• avoids consideration of some feelings, meanings and issues raised by the learner except in general terms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>GENUINNESS</th>
<th>CONCRETENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• offers responses which appear to be congruent with her own real feelings;</td>
<td>• frequently elicits and encourages expressions of direct and explicit meanings and feelings from the learner;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• leaves no doubt that she means what she says;</td>
<td>• develops issues raised in concrete terms and considers specific incidences of behaviour and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• offers but may be somewhat hesitant about negative reactions to the learner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 5</th>
<th>GENUINNESS</th>
<th>CONCRETENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• appears freely and deeply in tune with self, offering spontaneous reactions of all kinds;</td>
<td>• is always seeking and facilitating a fluent and direct expression of feeling from the learner;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• seems ‘open’ to the relationship and prepared to change and to learn without hesitancy or defensiveness.</td>
<td>• is always guiding the discussion towards direct expressions of personally relevant feelings and meanings in concrete and specific terms that relate to real experiences and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If an action-teacher is to engage the learner in a constructive interaction they must show a basic level of honesty and openness - meaning what they say. They must also be ready to deal with direct expressions of feeling and personally relevant experiences and events by the learner. (LEVEL 3 or above.)
## THE FACILITATIVE DIMENSIONS

(Behaviours exhibited by the action-teacher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPATHY</th>
<th>RESPECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 1</strong></td>
<td>shows no awareness of obvious surface feelings expressed by the learner;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appears not to listen, attend to or understand the learner's feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 2</strong></td>
<td>shows some awareness of the learner's feelings but misinterprets, distorts or devalues them;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seems to be listening but cannot accurately reflect what the learner says or correctly identify the feelings they express.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 3</strong></td>
<td>shows accurate understanding of the learner's surface feelings;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responses are interchangeable with the expressions of the learner (gets both meaning and feeling right).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the learner acknowledges that these responses accurately reflect real feelings and meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 4</strong></td>
<td>shows a deeper level of understanding;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expands on and correctly adds to the learner's expressions of feeling and meaning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the learner acknowledges that these responses accurately reflect real feelings and meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 5</strong></td>
<td>shows a deep and significant understanding of both the surface and hidden feelings and meanings expressed by the learner;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is ‘tuned in’ to deep and previously unexpressed feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If an action-teacher is to offer constructive assistance to the learner she must first be able to understand and interpret accurately the feelings being expressed. They must then be able to communicate this understanding back to the learner without distorting or detracting from what has been offered. This entails an accurate reading of both verbal and non-verbal signals. They must also show a basic regard for who the learner is, and a belief in their ability to deal with their current situation. (LEVEL 3 or above.)
### THE ACTION-ORIENTED DIMENSIONS
( Behaviours exhibited by the action-teacher )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFRONTATION</th>
<th>IMMEDIACY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVEL 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• shows disregard for even the most obvious discrepancies in the learner’s behaviour;</td>
<td>• ignores all communications which have a bearing on the immediate relationship between self and the learner either directly or indirectly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ignores or passively accepts the most obvious contradictions or inconsistencies in what the learner says and does.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEVEL 2</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• shows little regard for discrepancies in what the learner says and does and does not explore their implications;</td>
<td>• shows little regard for any expressions of the learner which relates even indirectly to the immediate relationship or to immediate feelings;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• does not deal specifically with inconsistencies in the learner’s behaviour or view of the world.</td>
<td>• does not relate the content of the learner’s expressions to what is happening now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEVEL 3</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• shows direct attention to obvious discrepancies and inconsistencies in what the learner says and does;</td>
<td>• accepts, but does not extend the learner’s expressions which refer to the immediate relationship;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• raises questions about these discrepancies and inconsistencies but does not explore their implications.</td>
<td>• is open and accepting of the learner’s expressions of immediacy but does not explore them to any great extent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEVEL 4</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• attends directly to the discrepancies in the learner’s behaviour;</td>
<td>• relates the learner’s expressions to the immediate relationship and is prepared, tentatively, to explore their implications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• confronts the other directly and explicitly with those discrepancies and points up the divergent directions implied by the inconsistencies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEVEL 5</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• gives keen and continuous attention to discrepancies and inconsistencies, perceptively and sensitively pointing up their implications whenever they appear.</td>
<td>• directly explores any expressions by the learner that may refer to the immediate relationship;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• makes direct and explicit connections between the learner’s behaviour and the immediate situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If an action-teacher is to make a constructive difference in the learner’s life she must be prepared to confront the learner with discrepancies in his/her behaviour and his/her view of the world. She must be ready to point the learner toward action, emphasising what is immediately possible and achievable. She must also be prepared to point the interaction toward a consideration of what is happening right now and to what will happen in the immediate future. (LEVEL 3 or above.)
Chapter 8 – Towards an epistemology of practice

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to articulate an epistemology of practice that can serve as a foundation for developing curriculum models. These models can then describe usefully the kinds of learning activities appropriate for workplace-based education programs in the pre-service preparation of novice professionals. They also have implications for the institutional, contractual and relationship contexts in which the principles derived in Chapter Seven can be applied. The findings of that chapter have been extracted in the form of general guidelines or principles of procedure that informed my own practice in the research study and lay claim to validity because they are grounded in detailed descriptions of actual practice events. They are extensive but not necessarily exhaustive and in-as-much as they become useful to other convenors, programs and contexts they need to be internalised by the individual applying them and then transformed so that their ‘spirit’ rather than their ‘letter’ becomes relevant to the new and different contexts.

The ‘principles’ are propositions and value statements that become criteria for decision-making (Table 7.2) and were originally devised to describe effective helper behaviours in the process of psychotherapy by Robert Carkhuff and his associates in the late 1960s. They were refined later during the 1970s and 1980s into a similar set of skills of effective teaching (see e.g. Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976). As has already been noted, Carkhuff’s approach tends to rehabilitate the concept of teaching and takes us beyond what is usually referred to as ‘facilitation’. His work enables us to focus more clearly on the importance of the institutions, the institutional assumptions and the personnel who set the context of any course that places students in a complex work environment and expects them to learn from the initiatives they take.
But the framework offered above is only one of many others that have been developed to describe similar courses, each developed under different circumstances. What is required now is to demonstrate how this curriculum description sits alongside others in the literature. This has already been commenced in the literature review (Chapter Two) and in other discussions arising in the analysis of the data in the last three chapters. What follows is an attempt to demonstrate how the sequential process described by the model advanced in Chapter Seven is common to a number of other theoretical models and is consistent with a number of other analyses of experiential learning. The following key points arise directly from the data above and are reflected in the literature that has already been cited.

**Key concepts and assumptions about experiential learning**

1. **Intentionality**: Any model of experiential learning which attempts to describe changes internal to the learner always depends on a concept of personal, individual intentionality on the part of the learner, which drives the learning forward. This intentionality is intrinsic to the learner and to his or her engagement with the learning task and its social context: it is not the direct product of extrinsic rewards and sanctions.

2. **Inner and outer dimensions of learning**: Any model of experiential learning that relies on a change in the cognitive schemata of the learner always involves a change in the way the learner perceives him or herself as well as his or her environment. All experiential learner has an inner as well as an outer dimension and knowledge cannot exist without a knower.

3. **Social contexts and learning**: Experiential learning is always ultimately made manifest in the context of social relationships. While a particular skill may be thought of abstractly as a reified entity, all skills affect the learner’s self-concept and such changes do not appear to be complete until they have been socially verified and validated through use. Learning always involves some form of engagement with others; and its
implications needs to be communicated to others, usually in some form of propositional language or in a direct demonstration of some kind.

4. **Experiential learning is a temporal process:** There is a directionality to learning that has a great deal to do with a learner’s power over his or her immediate environment (social as well as physical). When learning has occurred, things are seen in a ‘new light’ and, for the learner, the world has become changed in some way. Learning always involves action which has a forward momentum and that even though a particular ‘concept’ (or set of relations) may be thought of ‘as-if’ it exists independently, it only carries meaning (or validity) when it becomes immediately useful in a particular context. Thus, learning and empowerment are different sides of the same coin.

5. **The teacher exerts a ‘pressure to act’ on the learner:** Teaching (the facilitation of learning) is the antithesis of social control: it is in fact the conscious and deliberate ‘handing over of the reins’ to the learner. It is true that the teacher not only intervenes as the learning course proceeds and at times that intervention will have a strong flavour of action-orientation. The teacher’s skill lies in her ability to manipulate and manoeuvre the learning circumstances (context) so that the necessary ‘pressure to act’ comes from the experience itself and from the learner’s own desire for mastery or conquest. Such manipulation is not trickery: it occurs with the learner’s full permission and agreement. It is always an act of faith in the learner, never an attempt to deceive.

The effective teacher will always be offering encouragement (or even exerting subtle pressure) that points the learner towards decision-making and subsequent action. Far from being apologetic about her interventions, when she intrudes into the ‘natural activity’ of student learning, the effective teacher is concerned with what the student is doing and will be acutely aware of the student’s action and of the student’s motivation. She is also aware that she is working with the student’s ‘Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)’: the space between the student’s independent activity of problem solving and the potential achievable level of problem solving.
when the activity is subject to some form of expert guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). And along with Vygotsky, the same teacher will be acutely aware of the importance of modelling and imitation as the learner passes through this developmental zone.

6. **Teaching for independence:** Teaching is also the careful and deliberate freeing of the learner from dependence on the teacher. No effective teacher will tolerate a learner’s dependence a moment longer than is necessary; and no effective teacher will ever allow a learner simply to describe a problem and then believe that he or she can make their contribution in an analysis of the problem alone. The question ‘What happens next?’ is always paramount in the mind of teacher and learner; and the teacher is always working herself out of her job.

7. **Action learning, action research and action-teaching:** The values that describe learning may be thought of as **action principles**. They are closely allied to those principles that govern socially useful (i.e. ‘valid’) research. The connection between learning and research is intimate in that all learning must be thought of as ‘first-time learning’ for the learner and the knowledge gained will be ‘new’. The connection between the notion of **action learning** being advocated here and the kind of social interventions described in the literature as **action research** is even closer. It would appear reasonable to claim that every effective **action teacher** is of necessity engaged in a truncated form of action research as he or she observes, reflects upon and plans her own action-teaching and her students’ action learning.

8. **Constructive withholding:** The concept of **action-teaching** is very different from traditional concepts of knowledge transmission where the teacher is regarded as the font of knowledge and is responsible for delivering it in measured doses to the learners. In reviewing the ‘Eighty Propositions About Convening’ developed with the co-convenor in Chapter Six, it is remarkable to see how the teaching interventions that appear to have the most productive impact are very often those where the convenor actually **refrains** from intervening. It is as if the action teacher,
rather than delivering the knowledge that the learner needs, instead goes to some trouble to confirm that the learner, as yet, does not possess such knowledge and leaves it at that. The teacher draws attention to the conceptual space the requisite knowledge must occupy and then insists that the learner fills it appropriately. In being prepared to wait while the learner experiences anxiety and goes through her own trial and error processes the action teacher’s task is to communicate her ‘faith’ in the learner that will translate into learner confidence. The trick of teaching is to be able to imbue the learner with appropriate optimism and to redirect efforts or recast tasks before he or she experiences too many negative reinforcements. What the teacher provides is not the ‘stuff’ of which knowledge is made; it is rather the possibilities, spaces, or moulds into which knowledge can be cast by the learner.

In other words the action teacher teaches neither content nor skills, instead she is engaged in modelling positive learner-self-reinforcing, learner-self-believing, learner-self-encouraging behaviour as the action learner goes about the business of negotiating, creating and making meaning with others. Her ultimate goal for the learner is to become his or her own action teacher using the techniques of confidence building and self-belief he or she has been witnessing. The object is always to free the intentionality of the learner and maintain it at an optimal level.

9. **What is learned is the business of the learner:** The final outcomes of the teaching learning process will always lie beyond the actual teacher’s vision. The action teacher has an ‘end-in-mind’ for her students (autonomy) but by definition this cannot be an ‘end-in-view’. Like all creative endeavour the fruits of learning will be new and unpredictable. The action teacher will hold an ultimate ‘anti-behavioural objective’ for her students. I will have succeeded in my teaching when this student is regularly constructing knowledge that is new, is doing things that are unexpected, and is setting off with confidence in directions that I cannot predict.
It is possible that the discussion of the forgoing may be viewed with a certain amount of suspicion because of its emphasis (not far beneath the surface) on feelings, emotion and interpersonal relationships rather than epistemology. There is often a degree of discomfort felt by some academics (whichever paradigm they claim to be using) when the subjective world seems to be getting more than its fair share of attention. As noted in Chapter One, this author is quite comfortable with being regarded as committed – even passionate – about her teaching, but often feels patronised when this same ‘passion’ is seen as too ‘emotional’ and, by implication a little unworthy of a proper ‘dispassionate’ truth-seeking academic. This is partly because of the peculiar historical prejudice which elevates objectivity to a level it cannot command and can be easily dismissed; but this thesis must include a brief consideration of the concept of praxis and of the thoroughly respectable place in recent academic and educational discourse occupied by concepts like tacit knowledge, intuition, and will. Some of the more recent contributions by post structuralist theorists and philosophers demonstrate that no attempt at building a robust theory of experiential learning is possible without considering both the cultural and the subjective, feeling-based aspects of meaning-making. Action and reflection, theory and practice, justice and effectiveness, and morality and validity all need to be united in any theory that attempts to outline an epistemology of practice.

So, how does experiential learning work?

The nature of this study which has been data, rather than theory-driven, has allowed a number of generalisations and interpretations to be made, that are grounded in interpretative data that is largely couched in everyday language. What Schön was asking for, though, was an epistemology of practice. The following section is an attempt to construct a theoretical framework that will fit the findings of this study.
Chapter 8: Towards an epistemology of practice

Knowledge constitutive interests and meta-theory

Each and every individual carries with him or herself a ‘meta-theory’ of action – a theory about the place of theory in his or her life. Central to this understanding of how we can or cannot act is our understanding of who we are – our own meta-theories are driven by our understanding of what is possible for us to do and to a very large extent this is socially defined. The problem of action is always tied up with problems about who we believe we are and what we believe we are or are not able to do. We tend to assume that the more abstract and meta-theoretic discourses we and others use to describe ourselves to ourselves logically subsume the discourses they are seeking to explain.

Robin McTaggart describes how Habermas’s (1972, 1974) meta-theory of ‘knowledge constitutive interests’ seeks to explain how certain political interests pre-empt the nature of certain kinds of social science. His analysis is relevant here in that it is also directly applicable to the interests that limit what working activity any given individual is able to conceive herself actually doing. Knowledge constitutive interests are concerned with the ‘production of knowledge’ and this explains how “…certain political interests [have] pre-empted the nature of certain kinds of social science. In turn certain social scientific theories seek to explain social phenomena and/or to inform (or deny) certain kinds of change” (McTaggart, 1991a, p.90).

But we are concerned with the production of educational action and McTaggart notes that:

There is a…danger that academic discourse [will] simply supplant and de-legitimate people’s self-understandings in quite disempowering ways. That is, the nature of the relationship and the discourses involved are problematic and are an important topic for collective reflection by participants…and for the proponents of abstract theory and meta-theory. (McTaggart, 1991a, p.91)

McTaggart goes on to ask “What are the problems which count? How can we ensure …that all practices are better informed, more just and more humane? …
Where might people begin?” He concludes that “…[t]he questions we should be asking is not what kinds of education people need to work in industry and commerce, but what kinds of industry and commerce educated people need” (McTaggart, 1991a, p.91). He then lists democratic priorities for educational reform. I have slightly reworked them to encompass reforms in the areas of criminal justice education:

- Redressing disadvantage associated with gender, race, ethnicity or social class;
- Moving away from competitive assessment and towards work-based assessment;
- Developing…community participation;
- Increasing student participation in policy making, [and] curriculum negotiation;
- Increasing activity learning…through engagement in the writing process;
- Increasing student engagement and critique in community life…and work experience coupled with the critical study of work.

(McTaggart, 1991a, p.92)

**Tacit knowledge, awareness and commitment**

**Tacit knowledge**

As has been shown (see Chapter Four) the importance of intuition (inner-tuition) and tacit (unspoken) knowledge has been a cornerstone of almost all theories of learning since the time of Locke. The only exception is the positivist movement and its behaviourist descendants in the twentieth century. Tacit knowledge, or personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958), is ‘sensate’ (but untellable), ‘pre-conceptual’ (but identifiable) and ‘implicit’ (rather than explicit). It is ‘lumpy’ and ‘sensate’ and seems to exist within our beings in its own non-propositional forms. As we have seen in Chapter Six, Polanyi claimed that tacit knowledge has its own functional structure in which lower order creative functions (like perception) give rise to higher order functions (still beyond the range of discourse) that have been referred to elsewhere as ‘subceptions’ (Polanyi, 1983).
Polanyi draws a distinction between what he calls the proximal and distal ‘terms’ of tacit knowledge. He argues that when we draw upon our tacit knowledge we use that knowledge which is close to us to the extent that it has become ‘interiorised’ or ‘indwelling’ in order to know tacitly about the wider world beyond ourselves. Polanyi argues that those aspects of tacit knowledge that are proximal (i.e. which are ‘being used’ to know something outside) cannot simultaneously be focussed on ourselves and our own process of knowing. Thus, the proximal terms of tacit knowledge (that inner knowledge we use to know what Polanyi calls “the spectacle” (Polanyi, 1983, p.17) are only known as a means of knowing that spectacle. They are at this point interiorised and so are not the focus of attention. We attend ‘from’ them.

**Awareness**

Looking at tacit knowledge in this way means that the theories we use, (e.g. our systems for postulating cause and effect, in advance of our actions) must lie below the immediate level of awareness when we are engaged in the action. The only way we can reflect on them at the moment of action (as Schön would have us do when we ‘reflect-in-action’) is through the action we are engaged in. This we could call action-knowledge that can be thought of ‘as-if’ it is a process of rapidly oscillating attention so that the proximal tacit knowledge with which we are doing our knowing becomes briefly the distal focus of our attention and the action we are engaged in becomes the means whereby we can know this tacit knowledge about ourselves and attend to its constituent parts. The distal ‘spectacle’ becomes the proximal means of knowing about our own reflective processes, about our tacit ‘theories’ and about their strengths, limitations and assumptions. Then, momentarily attention can switch back again to the world beyond ourselves.

If this is, as Polanyi would have us believe, a reasonable account of how knowledge emerges in our consciousness, it is no wonder that meta-cognition (knowing about how we know what we know) is not amenable to reductive analysis. By its very nature, the knowledge (the epistemology) any of us possesses

---

Just Practice?
is our own, it is private, and only a small part of it is accessible at any given moment; it is also dynamic and in the throes of continuous change. The very act of observing our knowing (which is what we try to do when we construct theories of learning for example) will change that knowing. There will never be a ‘right’ answer, there can only be an ever-emerging set of complexities which obey a law of indeterminacy and which can sometimes be seen ‘this’ way and sometimes ‘that’. Tacit knowledge is not “…an inferior or irrelevant dimension of consciousness interfering with deliberate attention. Rather, it [is] integral to the entirety of our consciousness forming the background grid which makes focussed perceptions possible, intelligible and fruitful” (Poole in Bullock, Stallybrass, & Trombley, 1988, p.844). If this is the case, the knowledge we can articulate is only the tip of an iceberg. It rests on a vast body of non-propositional (tacit) knowledge that consists of perceptions and subceptions that are only brought to awareness when attention is directed towards them (i.e. when a judgement is about to be made about relevance). This is reminiscent of the process identified by David Boud and others called noticing; where one’s awareness is being focussed and directed like the beam of a searchlight rather than simply being ‘general illumination’. It is as though we spend our time actively seeking for emergent patterns that match others we already carry with us. All we can hope to retain at the centre of such a kaleidoscope is our own emerging sense of self-hood, which is, as we have already seen, intimately bound up with the apparently similar sense of self that others tell us they experience, and with the models (or constructions) of reality that we share with them.

**Commitment**

For Polanyi, tacit knowledge also goes along with what he refers to as ‘commitment’. This is the personal intention by the knower to act on his or her knowledge, and this commitment by the knower, Polanyi saw as the dialectical opposite of ‘detachment’. In fact, he claimed that detachment was a philosophical impossibility and that claims to it were self-delusionary. Intentionality, he saw as the teleological and instrumental concomitant of proximal tacit knowledge.
(knowledge towards), which demands a commitment of the self towards a particular knowing-and-acting goal. Later in his writings (e.g. Polanyi, 1983) he came to believe that commitment was an inevitable component of the structure of tacit knowledge itself and not a separate act of will. In 1975 he was able to write that “…scientific enquiry is…a dynamic exercise of the imagination…routed in commitments and beliefs… Its method is not that of detachment but rather of involvement. It rests, no less than our other ways of achieving meaning, upon various commitments which we personally share” (p.63 cited in Schwandt, 2001, p.247). Action then becomes an inevitable and basic part of the structure of knowledge, and whether the sensation of ‘knowing’ comes before, coincides with, or follows any given manifestation of action is really beside the point. The fact that we seem to be able to regard knowledge and action as inseparable in a temporal dimension is, for Polanyi, an artifact created by our own human a priori categories of understanding that we apply to our perceptions rather than an inherent part of any universal epistemology or of the nature of knowledge itself.

**Pragmatism revisited, the philosophy of ‘As-If’ and the ZPD**

Any account of the relationship between knowledge and action cannot be complete if it does not take into account our ‘knowledge of what is not’. An integral part of our ability to come up with new configurations and arrive at new understandings is the fact that we are all capable of imagining fictional worlds and fictional relationships between constituent parts of those worlds that do not – and often cannot – exist. It is only by suspending our disbelief and exploring these fictional worlds that we are able to construct new versions of ‘what could be’ and so develop the hypotheses upon which all of our knowledge, even those things we accept as certainties, are inevitably built.

**Pragmatism and action**

Polanyi’s conception that the elements (or constituent parts) of an object or action are in fact tacit ‘distal’ constructions that are created when we attend to the object
using our proximal (indwelling) tacit knowledge as the base from which we reach out is not new. Copleston notes that Dewey, and other pragmatists like C.S. Peirce saw the purposive act as the starting point for how people make meaning (Copleston, 1985a). Meaning does not start with all pieces of the jig-saw on the table, or with anything other than a hunch about what the final picture might look like. Instead we always start with only some of the pieces and hope that as we shuffle them, a coherent larger but incomplete picture will emerge. Fuhrer argues that Dewey believed that all stimuli are contextualised within the act (Fuhrer, 2004, pp.18-22) and that the organism’s interest, habit, and choice of active situations all influence an implicit choice of these stimuli. Thus, our responses are part of a process that involves action, perception, and the construction of representations of action in a cyclic series of cognitive, affective and physical choices and acts. Thus, according to the early pragmatists theory-making and active responding are, in fact, the same thing: any illusion of delay between the two activities may be thought of as a manifestation of the fact that when tacit knowledge is ‘proximal’ (to use Polanyi’s term) it is at least temporarily inaccessible to the free-ranging intellect. This is because the distal attention is all focussed towards the object of the action – the ‘spectacle’ and its constituent parts that are being created and affected by the knower. It is the very essence of metaphor and the beginnings of propositional language.

As Fuhrer points out, Dewey also advanced the idea of meaning as ‘trans-action’ and this notion also depends upon his argument that the organism in its active mode takes its own ‘habits’ and ‘interests’ into account as it chooses the stimuli to which it will respond. This led Dewey to the idea that the self is formed by ‘psychic behaviour’, which includes “…the external object, representation, and resultant conduct as interdependent phases of itself, thus linking self and world” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.18). In other words Dewey believed that we do not start as ready-made ‘selves’ – rather we become selves when, like a growing plant we appropriate nutrients, and interiorise them and engage in the ongoing process of living in our (social) environment. Only in this way can persons become ‘complete’ and develop “…solidly grounded identities” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.19).
Chapter 8: Towards an epistemology of practice

The philosophy of ‘As-If’

Fuhrer (2004) notes that in ‘The Philosophy of Money’ (1990), but first published at the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel suggested the constructionist idea that people as well as using heuristic tools to analyse the world of their experience, also use the same tools to create it. This early version of constructionism was grounded in ideas propounded in ‘The Philosophy of “As-If”’ first published by Hans Vahinger in 1911 and further developed by Josephs (Josephs, 1998). Vahinger’s argument was that there is an a priori master function that sits above Kant’s categories of understanding and enables the human mind to operate “independently of the natural world” that is outside it (Fuhrer, 2004, p.57). That is, we can conceive of that which is not, ‘as-if’ it is. By treating things ‘as-if’ they exist as components parts of larger entities we are able to create what he called ‘useful fictions’ – and the entire world of hypotheses, imagination, and metaphor opens before us. We can be aware not only of our own beliefs (constructions) but also of entities and relationships, which do not and perhaps even cannot exist. We also become aware of what might be, what could be ‘if’, and consequently construct a more encompassing explanation of what is. It is this ‘master-function’ that we use as a heuristic device for exploring possibilities; through it we are able to interpret the world and at the same time create it. By making choices about which constructions (patterns, gestalts) we are prepared to take on board, we can first ‘get to know’ our conjectures by ‘entertaining’ them (i.e. by suspending our disbelief in them) before committing ourselves to adopting them as part of our own hierarchical belief system.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Before leaving Vahinger’s philosophy of ‘as-if’ we need to consider three more implications of his work and that of Simmel. As we have seen in Chapter Six, Vygotsky proposed a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which referred to a particular stage in the learning process. As a learner matures, according to Vygotsky, he or she becomes ‘ready’ for certain learnings when particular mental
functions begin to move from an embryonic state to a more mature one. Different areas of learning are appropriate to different ‘zones of development’ and different formal and informal ‘curricula’ for personal and cultural identity development become appropriate as the individual encounters each stage. Vygotsky operationally defined the ZPD as beginning when the learner becomes aware of his or her knowledge or skill but realises that he or she cannot operationalise this new knowledge like an expert. At this stage, a ‘teacher’ figure is required and Vygotsky suggests that different kinds of experiences will be appropriate for different individuals depending upon their previous learnings. All will be directed towards the opening of new action-possibilities for the learner, rather than any insistence on the following of procedural rules.

Vahinger’s approach to the concept of imagination allows us to adopt a somewhat more flexible attitude towards learning theories. Depending on the context and the level of detail we are considering, apparently contradictory ‘theories of reality’ can be at least temporarily reconciled. When we apply this to the learning theories that direct our educational practices, a quite rigorous behaviourist training program may be appropriate if the learner is to gain or to polish specific skills at a particular stage of readiness. Thus, even a strictly mechanistic set of assumptions can become incorporated as a model for designing part of a student centred learning course that is contained within a larger relativist paradigm. What is important from the social constructionist’s point of view is that it must be the learner’s choice to follow a particular course of action and that this action needs to remain under the control of the learner’s volition. The learner may choose to embark on a demanding set of tasks, even if these are tightly rule-directed, but the underlying motivation needs to remain intrinsic and must frame the whole exercise. Lesley Cooper shows how Skinner’s model of operant conditioning, Bandura’s social learning theory, and cognitive learning theory can all be pressed into the service of a course designed to use workplace-based activities without necessarily violating an overall constructionist approach (Cooper, 2000, pp.14-19).
Vygotsky’s work means that we need to focus upon what Penuel and Wertsch (1995) refer to as “transforming shifts” in identity formation which “…communities of learners [can provide] insight into the way that individuals and groups can struggle against dominant discourses of their identity and co-construct a different way of speaking about themselves and develop new forms of action” (cited in Fuhrer, 2004, p.7). We should add that this indicates that the role of the ‘teacher’ or ‘significant other’ is of one who can collaborate with the learner as he or she experiments with new ‘as-if’ identities. All of the research in field of drama education (see for example, O'Toole, 1992, Stevenson & O'Toole, 1988) indicates that when the teacher is able to briefly enter the fictional (‘as-if’) worlds created by her students she is able to construct ‘practice’, ‘training’, or ‘rehearsal’ situations that enable the role players to take what are often tentative steps into the unknown, broadening their skills and perspectives as they do so. This has also been demonstrated in some of my own earlier work using drama methods in the teaching of police recruits in the area of interpersonal communication (Bates & Stevenson, 2000).

We can also note that in the same vein the sequence developed by Bruce Biddle and the other role theorists (see Goffman, 1974) who use a dramaturgical model for human behaviour and human learning (see the discussions on role-playing, role-taking and role-making in Chapters Five and Six) also rests upon the fundamental power of the a priori ‘as-if’ of imagination. The initial approach to adopting a role is first to engage in ‘role-playing’, where the imitation-identification-impersonation process (see for example Courtney, 1978) is initially tentative, through to a procedurally guided and directed ‘role-taking’ phase, and finally onto the ontological act of ‘role-making’ in which the individual’s belief system and identify become intimately engaged.

It is this same heuristic ‘as-if’ function that enables the human mind to free itself from the constraints of the immediate present without needing to postulate any ad hoc inner psychic or mystical abilities. We can all imagine a future in which the world has changed in some way without believing that the change actually exists: as we have seen, this capacity underlies the processes of goal formation and is
Chapter 8: Towards an epistemology of practice

intimately bound up with intentionality and of all creative thought. Kolb associates the concepts of ‘intention’ and ‘extension’ with “…the basic transformation processes of learning as they apply to both the apprehensive and comprehensive modes of grasping experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.51). He talks about ‘apprehension’ – the ‘grasping of an idea’, concept or element of ‘tacit’ knowledge and contrasts it with ‘comprehension’ where sensate awareness becomes integrated into a model of the world. Fuhrer’s contention is that the problems for cultural developmental psychology is to understand why people …externalise their internal minds into external structures…[and to] understand “the transactional constitution of the self between internal and external structures, i.e., cultivation” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.12).

Permission to learn: the ‘I can…’

Empathy and respect: the facilitative bases for teaching transactions

In Chapter Six we saw that empathy was a complex and key determinant of the effectiveness of both teaching and helping; we saw that when coupled with respect communicated from the teacher to the learner it becomes the basis for the facilitation of learning. We have also seen that these processes function when the learner is in Vgotsky’s ZPD and that they cannot be imposed upon the learner from the outside. Both of these values or ‘dimensions’ of communicative behaviour involve an individual putting herself into the learner’s shoes and then communicating back what they believe it feels like to ‘be’ that other person. Empathy thus involves the imaginary creation of the ‘other’ self based on what has been communicated and an amalgam of one’s own cognitive and tacit understandings of the other. This is made ‘real’ by mediating the emerging picture through a selection of imaginary ‘rememberings’ taken from one’s own well of tacit knowledge. This new ‘experience-of-the-other’ is then conveyed to the other together with nuances of feeling ‘as-if’ it is one’s own. Whether or not this empathic understanding is accurate will be determined by the response of the other and an ongoing process of negotiation (see Table 7.2). Respect would seem to involve a similar process and enables the teacher/helper to understand the helpee’s
behaviour and reserve any judgements and value the other positively because he or she can ‘feel’ as they do. In this way every person’s inner life plays a vital part in the acquisition of knowledge and in the establishing of relationships with others. And in this way an understanding of the ‘as-if’ construction of the world of the other is extended and deepened.

‘I can…’ and the suspension of disbelief

The final point to be made in relation to the philosophy of ‘as-if’ is the distinction that must be drawn between changing one’s belief and the suspension of disbelief. Milton Rokeach argues in his book ‘The Open and Closed Mind’ that it is not the rigidity of an individual’s belief system that limits his or her flexibility or adaptability to change: it is the degree to which that individual rejects his or her disbeliefs (Rokeach, 1960). A disbelief system that is rigid and always unchallenged leads, according to Rokeach, to authority dependence and unthinking compliance. In contrast to this when we enter a make believe world, we engage in an implicit contract that we will leave certain parts of our existing belief system at the door. We are then free to enter a world in which some aspects of reality are temporarily going to be different. Either we are no longer as we were before, others are no longer the same, or the circumstances in which we find ourselves have changed. We are then able to explore this new set of hypothetical meanings (or action possibilities to use Fuhrer’s term) and learn about our own as yet untested capacities. But there is never any suggestion that we abandon our existing beliefs: we neither give them up nor suspend them, we just behave ‘as-if’ things were otherwise and we know that we can always return to the real world if the going gets tough, because in fact, we know that we have never left it.

Similarly, the notion that we can ‘entertain’ ideas, perceptions and constructions without ‘believing in them’ means that we are able to live with apparent contradictions and apply one paradigm in a particular case and another in circumstances where the first is not so useful. We can do this because the dramaturgical ‘as-if’ of the metaphor is always there in the background of our
thought and our task in making meaning is not so much to ‘pin down’ the truth, as it is to construct (or create) a pattern of explanatory relationships that deepens (rather than completes) our emergent pictures of reality.

The three ‘Ps’ of action-teaching: permission, potency and protection

Another way of considering the nature of the interventions of a teacher-helper figure when the learner is in the ZPD is that offered by psychiatrist Eric Berne in 1986. Like Carkhuff and his associates, Berne also sees psychotherapy as an intensive version of teaching; both the action teacher and the therapist are interested primarily in assisting the learner to take his or her own decisions and follow through on them with confidence and so develop competence. Both see themselves as working themselves out of a job as quickly as possible – enabling the learner to become a ‘self-teacher’ who can use the physical and social resources around her to cope more effectively.

The interim role of helper, according to Berne, is to offer specific permissions to the learners to plan to take risks and attempt to engage in new behaviours, which take them beyond their existing comfort zones. As has been noted in Chapter Five, there convenor has, of course, been complicit in constructing the hurdles and requirements of the course beforehand and her permission-giving role needs to be seen in this light. The point is that after enrolment the student has entered into a contract to allow change to occur in his or her self-concept (Schein, n.d.). Central to this is a second contract (often unspoken) that the teacher figure will cushion the learner from the negative effects of mistaken choices or errors in performance, particularly early in the piece. The metaphor that suggests itself is that of a parent holding the seat of a bicycle as the child begins to learn how to ride. If the helper is responsibly to make such an offer, he or she must be able to follow through with the protective behaviour that provides the safety net implied. The teacher-helper needs the potency at the very least to keep his or her implicit promises. (Of course, once the endeavour has commenced, returning the metaphor, the teacher helper
may choose to let go of the bicycle seat – enabling the learner to discover that in
the very act of ‘pretending’ they have actually acquired the new skill.)

This is relatively obvious when we consider the acquisition of simple skills but the
situation becomes more complex when the learner runs the risk of incurring real
social sanctions for his or her mistakes. It is this point that the helper figure needs
back-up support for the implicit offer of potency and protection; and it is at this
point that the helper needs to be able to call upon institutional support. In the case
of university controlled workplace-based courses, this support needs to be
deliberately built into the course structure and into the stakeholder roles; the final
responsibility for what happens in the course must then lie with the university.
This really needs to be formalised and responsibilities need to be clearly identified
in advance if the kinds of problems identified by Maidment (where some social
work students on work placement faced physical threats from clients) are to be
avoided (Maidment, 2003).

Again, all of these courses are creatures of the university rather than the workplace
and the universities’ responsibilities must be taken seriously: the fact is that at
present most of the literature draws attention to inadequacies in workplace
supervision, and while it is important that supervisors understand what they are
expected to do, the ongoing husbandry of the course must remain with the
university. It appears that now, particularly when the university is accepting fees
from the students, it is time for the higher education institutions to accept
responsibility not only for the design of these courses but for their detailed
implementation. As Briggs and Cooper point out, the university as well as the
workplace agency have “…a ‘duty of care’ in relation to the student… [Students]
have a contractual relationship with the university and their field educators…and
are asserting their contractual rights to ensure that a quality fieldwork education
and assessment are provided” (Briggs & Cooper, 2000, p.114). If meeting this
responsibility means either allocating additional resources or abandoning the
courses all together then that problem needs to be faced. This is not an area that is
amenable to arbitrary cost cutting, quite the reverse. The universities off-campus
activities are where the university, its programs, its students, and its values are
Identity and agency: praxis and the ‘Just Practice’ model

Fuhrer’s cultivating minds paradigm

As we have seen, Urs Fuhrer takes the ideas of Georg Simmel, the early pragmatists, and Hans Vahinger a step further. Drawing upon existentialist misgivings about separating the knower from the known and the way in which knowledge itself always appears to be couched in the terms of the knower (as a fixed entity), Fuhrer regards the inquirers themselves as a part of the phenomenon they are seeking to understand. This means that their ‘knowledge’ needs to be defined or described from a number of different points of view before it can lay claim to having meaning that is not at least potentially tautologous. Simmel saw culture as a process emerging from and going beyond sociation. It is the shared intentional construction of formed subjectivity and incorporates all human products including language, knowledge, memories, skills, relationships and artifacts. He saw culture as the product of ‘cultivation’, a process of intentional self-development through creation and construction and “…activities become transformed into development possibilities” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.14). Fuhrer describes his cultivating minds paradigm as “…a bio-psycho-cultural model of the emergence of human individuality” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.57). Cultivation is “…symbolically induced, motivated by a belief in possibilities, and provides a provisional sense of purpose around which to shape one’s life” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.110). He suggests that the validating mechanism should be the culture itself: the “…generative medium for the agentic, self-referential, creative self” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.92). Consequently it is the culture that provides the parameters for the interpretation of any meaning or action possibility.

However, it is impossible to determine whether or not an artefact (that is, an object that has been culturally moulded) “…is a ‘model of’ a pre-existent identity
characteristic or whether the object is a ‘model for’ an newly generated aspect of identity” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, cited in Fuhrer, 2004, p.92). Thus, every action-on-the-world can be regarded as an attempt by the actor (individual or group) to select from a range of possibilities and then use one of these to expand or even recreate even further possibilities for the development of that actor’s identity and view of the world. Any criteria for determining whether the actor has chosen ‘rightly’ will, of necessity “…not come from any external or alien source but rather from the same socio-cultural context in which the action is constituted” (Fuhrer, 2004, p.93). In other words, the learning comes from the learner who initiates it in a response to a particular need to act in a specific socio-cultural situation.

He proposes a “tetradic mediational model for identify formation” reproduced here with some additional explanatory notes as Figure 8.1.
The central shaded square represents the ‘identity’ of the actor prior to an action of identity development. This initial identity can be thought of as having four interlocking and independent components (or aspects) that work together as systems. They are

i) System 1. The Subject: The Actor’s Self (the agent the actor is referring to when using the pronoun ‘I’).

ii) System 2. The Actor’s Social Partners (those with whom the actor is collaborating in the making and carrying out of the decision to act).
iii) System 3. The World: (Those real objects, their relationships with each other and their relationships with their constituent parts likely to be affected by the transaction). And

iv) System 4. Cultural Artifacts: (The physical objects, media of communication, symbols and rituals that may be regarded as the currencies with which the transaction will be effected.)

Once an action has occurred we move forward in time and find that each of the four systems has been changed in some way: a new set of meanings has emerged and a new set of actions is possible. Again, a new action will be chosen from the new set of action possibilities (or meanings) and the whole process will continue.

In Fuhrer’s transactional model, meaning ‘bumps along’ in the temporal dimension moving from one construction of identity to the next in what feel like discrete steps; it is entirely driven by action which in turn is constrained by the meanings (action possibilities) that exist at the time of each movement. Each action results in a new constellation of meaning/action possibilities and the process of meaning making continues to deepen, to extend, and to expand all four aspects of cultural identity: but it does so with minimal disruption to the hard-won consistencies that constitute the self as it has been constructed so far. Each discrete change in the identity-meaning complex can be thought of as a new ‘crystallisation’ or ‘insight’ that appears to emerge from the ‘ground’ of the ‘world of on-goings’ as a gestalt, setting the context for the next emergence. Thus, the self, the social partners, the world, and the cultural artifacts that are laid down like railway tracks behind the ongoing action will influence the choices made by the individual at each successive step forward. There is no more need to attempt to analyse ‘the impetus to act’ in such a model as there is to analyse the ‘impetus to exist’ in a Cartesian (nominalistic) one. Action is simply the way things are: it is not amenable to further philosophical reduction.

The relation between objective and subjective culture – in the sense of *causa finalis* – may be seen as *subjectively* meaningful.
The total telos of the individual forms meaning; it is that ‘mediating activity’…between a person (or life) and culture (or form) which creates meaning during the process of cultivation… ‘external events’ can only be…interpreted by analogy to inner experience and inner events conversely only by analogy to tempo-spatial, i.e. ‘external’ determinations. The two analogy formations produce one another mutually.

(Fuhrer, 2004, pp.75-76)

Fuhrer’s paradigm remains, of course, a model, a schema which may be accepted, modified, or rejected; however, it does seem to carry with it a great deal explanatory power. It enables us, for example, to see why conflict models are so ubiquitous in discussions about meaning-making because contestation and tension are inevitable if choice is placed at the centre of conscious existence. It helps us to understand the importance of play in learning because play helps us to distinguish what is and what is not, between what is possible and what is not possible and between the likely outcomes of different courses of action. It enables the world of the ‘as-if’ not to be just the make believe universe of the infant which gives way to a more serious ‘reality’ as the individual matures; instead, it becomes the very foundation of human choice and human survival. It is also the basis for all human activity, ingenuity, creativity and values.

‘The Cultivating Minds’ paradigm also enables us to do away with any notion that ‘truth’ is a point of closure beyond which no further meanings exist. In fact it insists that ‘closure’ is itself impossible; instead, the paradigm allows us to see existence as offering endless possibilities and asks that we adopt a view of knowledge and of learning which has a strong teleological component but without any associations of determinism. It enables us to take this open-ended view without running the risk of slipping into mindless superstition and mysticism on the one hand or into scepticism and nihilism on the other because it is held together by cultural values which, instead of being desirable peripherals, are the very foundations for the choices we make and the knowledges we create.
Praxis

All of the territory explored in this thesis can now be mapped by addressing a single question: *In knowledge construction, what is the relationship between theory and practice?* Of course, to address such a question analytically would mean returning to the discussion above and carefully deconstructing its language, but I believe that the concept of *praxis* provides us with a much simpler way through the maze.

We can define praxis as the authentic union of action and reflection: of theory and practice. This concept refuses to separate these two aspects of knowledge that are irrevocably welded together. *Praxis* is theory and practice happening at the same time; the idea claims that theory always has a base in action and that practice is intimately related to reflection. The problem is not so much that praxis is an ineffable union and has a mystical quality, it is that any attempts to separate its two aspects is an exercise in futility. To isolate the evanescent and ever-changing nature of practice by in effect taking a still photograph of it and relating each of the parts visible in the photograph of the whole, denies the dynamics of what we are looking at. Similarly, to look at any piece of theory as if it is an explanation that exists as a monistic truth in its own right, whether it is ever applied to anything that either happens or exists in the world, is to destroy the very nature and purpose of theory itself.

It is true that we can construct pieces of ‘propositional knowledge’ in the form of subject-verb-object statements but this kind of knowledge is only useful when it can be reconstituted back into the action-knowledge it describes and then re-applied in a specific context. Propositional knowledge is a useful, transmissible set of codes but it must always remain reliant on either ostensive or operational definitions for its meaning. In fact, proposition knowledge (which is based on our ‘knowledge of things’) can be thought of as almost entirely an ostensive activity: an activity where the “…definition of any word denoting an external thing must rely on pointing at such a thing” (Polanyi, 1983, p.5) and simultaneously naming
it. It is always left to the receivers of such coded propositional knowledge to observe and infer the processual information themselves. This is the translational problem faced by all who would learn from theory first and then ‘make it real’ by practice afterwards.

The concept of praxis also enables us to free ourselves from the constraints from being artificially being frozen in the moment. Whether we believe that action and reflection can in fact be simultaneous or we argue (as does Polanyi) that there is a rapid oscillation between the two we are no longer left with the translation problem. In the same way, the concept of praxis frees us from all of the paradoxes of motion because it enables us instead to see relationships between contesting forces conceptually ‘as-if’ they were stationary even while they are still happening in real time. Praxis, then, becomes goal directed theory-and-action that is relentlessly moving forward in the moment. It can be examined but it cannot ever be stopped or regarded as though it has a separate existence in some kind of equilibrium-in-the-moment.

The term praxis has an interesting history. As Schwandt explains, it has strong political overtones derived from its use by Marx and later critical theorists like Paulo Friere (Schwandt, 2001). The concept of praxis is best known to qualitative enquirers because of its central place in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas who each attempt to reconcile modernist understandings with those of the ancient Greeks. According to their analysis, Aristotle saw theory as quite removed from practice and different altogether – it was a contemplative activity of the mind that led to eternal truths and remained uncorrupted by everyday living with all its uncertainties. But, Aristotle believed that quite separate from theory there were two other kinds of activities in which humans engaged. The first, poiesis, was the rigid impersonal activity of production which relied upon the application of certain kinds of rules and skills to bring about a given state of affairs – be it the making of an artifact, the production of a good state of health, or the making of music. It required the direct application of technè – what we would probably call ‘procedural knowledge’, but is usually referred to as practical knowledge.
The second kind of activity in which people engage is praxis. This, according to Aristotle, had to do with the conduct of one’s life and was deeply internalised with one’s identity and values. It was something that determined whether or not one was a good practitioner – either professionally, morally in the conduct of one’s relationships with others, or socially in one’s relations with the society. The quality of praxis determined the quality of one’s being and therefore was an activity from which one could never rest. We can probably best envisage the Aristotelian concept of praxis as the active expression of one’s values in society. Just as the productive activity of poiesis required a particular kind of knowledge (techne), so praxis demanded a kind of practical knowledge called phronesis, which is more reflective of the “…kind of person that one is and is becoming” (Schwandt, 2001, p.207) than it is of the technical, cognitive skills one may possess. Phronesis is “…variously referred to as deliberatively excellence, practical wisdom, or practical reason… and is… concerned with the timely, the local, the particular and the contingent (e.g. ‘What should I do now in this situation, given these circumstances, facing this particular person at this particular time?’)’’ (Schwandt, 2001, p.208).

Schwandt notes that of particular concern to both Gadamer and Habermas is the fact that with the rise of modernity, the domain of praxis (the moral and human conduct of practical affairs) is being subsumed into the technical and mechanistic domain of techne. In our brave new world, we are seeking to resolve our problems not by the careful application of respect and justice, but according to the impersonal and allegedly value-free rules and methods of bureaucracies. Schwandt summarises their position as follows:

Praxis is not external to understanding – that is one does not first understand (by generating knowledge based on method) and then ‘apply’ that understanding to praxis. Rather, in the ‘event’ of understanding, there is already an element of praxis (action-oriented self-understanding). … In Gadamer’s view, the kind of knowledge and understanding that characterises praxis is not technical knowledge anchored in method, but rather phronesis. Understanding is an event that happens within a relationship of vulnerability to that which one seeks to understand. The
interpreter surrenders to an interaction in which he or she is always at risk… (Schwandt, 2001, pp.208-209)

And it is that risk that is essential. The effective practitioner is always poised right at the cutting point of action – somewhere between phenomenology and teleology – always concerned simultaneously with ‘What is happening now?’ and ‘What happens next?’ Again we are left with the centrality of values, justice, morality and the criterion of the social good as determinants of all of the issues related to the preparation and training of all professionals. Justice not merely for those in the ‘justice related professions’: it is for all who would teach and who are working towards JUST PRACTICE.

A JUST PRACTICE Model

The concepts discussed above have been derived from the literature and from the more specific findings of this study; and Figure 8.2 is an attempt to summarise many features of a ‘Just Practice’ model for experiential learning in a single diagram. Like all such diagrams it can only indicate some of the links between the concepts. The work of a number of writers coming from different disciplines and often using different assumptions has been drawn upon without attempting to redefine terms and running the risk of making a complex linguistic picture even more obscure. This means that there are a number of aspects of the model that are described in the text above but are not obvious in Figure 8.2; and a number of the terms that appear in the diagram as separate in fact overlap when used in certain ways.

The Just Practice Model advanced on the next page places praxis at the top. Praxis is the desired outcome and incorporates the kind of authentic union between theory and practice that enables an individual to act quickly, skilfully and almost instinctively to a particular problematic situation. The model places a strong emphasis on the assumption that all action that we describe to ourselves is in fact some for of social action and that to ignore the social dimension of both action
and consequent identity formation leads to a vision of humanity and of human knowledge that is ultimately stultifying.

The left side of Figure 8.2 describes the process whereby we do work from theory to practice, modifying our own understanding of ourselves, our capacities and our potential as we do. As such it describes the ways in which propositional knowledge becomes transformed as it is mediated by experience into procedural knowledge – the step by step ‘understanding’ of how to get from A to B. But, as
we begin to engage with the world, what Polanyi refers to as our proximal (i.e. tacit) knowledge also comes into play as this “pre-conceptual” knowledge begins to influence not only what we do but also what we are able to say about what we do.

The right side of the figure describes the process whereby the knowledge which is inherent in action itself (what Fuhrer refers to as “…the total telos (intentionality) of the individual” (refer back to p284)) becomes codified into verbally transmittable propositions.

At the centre of the diagram is the self who is both acting and learning through praxis: as self that is undergoing an unending process of renewal, refinements and change as he or she makes finer and finer discriminations through the process of ‘noticing’ described by Mason (1993).

Specifically the diagram does not:

1. illustrate the large number of feedback links and interdependencies between the constituent parts of the model (for example, the dynamic oscillation between the proximal and distal terms of tacit knowing that allow the object of attention to change from moment to moment is not shown).

2. illustrate the importance of empirical and social validation processes, nor is the social component of identity construction directly indicated.

3. illustrate the importance of social support when the learner is inhabiting Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, nor does it stress the collaborative nature of the action usually associated with praxis.

4. draw attention to the obvious connections between this model of praxis and those constructed by Lewin, and others to describe the more formal procedures that constitute action research.

5. provide any analysis of the aesthetic dimension of practice and the extensive literature that refers to quality practice as ‘Art’. (A full discussion of the issues involved is beyond the scope of this thesis and would include a consideration of Emmanuel Kant’s work ‘The Critique of...
Judgement’ in which he attempts to unify the concepts of freedom, aesthetics and teleology. The work of numerous other writers like Frederick Neitzcher, Benedetto Croce, John Dewey, Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Cassirer, Susan Langer and Elliott Eisner would need to be considered. What is required is a coherent account of the concept of ‘artistry’ as the reflexive control of media, as well as a discussion of Kant’s concept of the ‘categorical imperative’ as it applies to quality cultural endeavour.) Despite this, the model with praxis at its centre developed here does allow a number of important issues about ‘the ineffable aesthetic’ in education to be addressed, as does Polanyi’s concept of tacit knowledge, Vahinger’s philosophy of the ‘As-If’, and Fuhrer’s ‘Cultivating Minds’.

Despite these caveats Figure 8.2 does indicate how the contributions of writers from a range of disciplines complement the findings outlined in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight allowing a convergent picture to emerge.

Figure 8.3 shows the ‘Action-Learning – Action-Teaching Model’ that describes the learning process as it occurs in the ‘proximal development’ or ‘role-taking’ phase. It too, is a generic model designed in response to both the findings of this study and the literature on experiential learning. It should be noted that this is a theoretical model that describes a cyclical teaching-learning process and, while it is in some ways similar, should not be confused with a methodological model for research. It arises from this particular study.
Chapter 8: Towards an epistemology of practice

Notes:

1. The cyclic model describes a process that occurs issue by issue. In practice, several cycles may be in different stages at any given time.

2. The ‘issues’ tend to be those that inform and are informed by fine-grained decisions. (Unlike action research, these issues are often dealt with on a minute-by-minute basis and so the cycles can turn much more rapidly.)

3. The process works at a naturalistic and informal pace. (Unlike the action research cycle, it is not formalised; it is not formalised into a step-by-step
methodology although the stages followed in moving from action to the next are similar.)

4. As cycles are repeated during the learning phase of an individual’s development, the role of the ‘action teacher’ diminishes. The learner interiorises it so that ultimately, the self-supportive behaviours that have been modelled become ‘indwelling’ as part of the learner’s identity.

5. The goal is learner autonomy, and the process never stops: it only changes focus to different and larger arenas of human endeavour.

Summary

In this chapter, I have drawn together threads from various disciplines and used a number of different theoretical models to demonstrate the coherence of the emerging picture of Action Learning and Action Teaching. In Habermas’s terms, the emphasis has been drawn away from that of ‘knowledge constitutive interests’ and is now firmly on the developmental and implementation of ‘educational acts’. The Just Practice model is practical and emancipatory; and its implications for future action now need to be discussed in the final chapter.
Chapter 9 – Implications and conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has advanced a sequential curriculum model described in terms of principles of procedure that could be used to describe the teaching and learning that occurs in the Field Placement course. This has been accompanied by a more generic model, which could be useful in the design in similar courses for different contexts. A set of ‘dimensions’ or ‘values’ based upon the work of Robert Carkhuff and his associates that can be used to describe the interventions made by an effective ‘action-teacher’ has also been suggested as part of such a description.

In Chapter Eight the basis for an overall epistemology of practice grounded in both the findings of this case study and in currently accepted philosophical and methodological paradigms used to describe experiential learning was suggested. What follows now is an attempt to address some of the relevant and immediate issues that emerge in the study as a whole. These issues arise in response to certain accepted educational practices that need to be debated for change in the light of this study’s findings and yet contain assumptions that do not seem to welcome challenge. Any basis for a critical analysis of the experiential learning literature is relatively narrow unless questions concerned with course design are addressed before questions about course implementation. The discussion does not claim to be comprehensive because most of the specific questions and policy issues that arise tend to be very context dependent.

To give some specific examples, some discussions in the literature attempt to address questions like whether or not ‘block placements’ (where a university student in one of the human service industries is located in a particular workplace for an intensive experience for three weeks or more) are more desirable than ‘spaced placements’ (where the student spends one day per week in the workplace over the semester). Such a debate begs a number of other questions often concerned with the locus of power, which really needs to be dealt with first. From
an interpretivist paradigm it is importance to understand that such questions relate
to values and are important to include in further research that is focussing on the
practice implementation processes. They include:

- Who should have an input into such decisions?
- On what grounds should such decisions be made?
- What are the areas of responsibility of i) the placement agency and ii) the
  university?
- What are the implied responsibilities of each institution and its agent to a fee-
  paying student?
- To whom in the workplace should the student be responsible?
- To what extent should this experience be designed as a training experience
  where the student is expected to acquire specific workplace skills?
- Should the experience be a more analytical educative experience?
- Is the student expected to gain an in-depth experience of work or an overview
  of the workplace?
- To what extent should the university expect students to ‘critically theorise’
  about the workplace and its associated practices?
- What is the place and where should the locus be of personal reflection by the
  student in such a course?
- What aspects of the course should be considered essential upon graduation for
  the credentialing of the student as a professional?
- Which aspects of working experience are best left to induction programs and
  which belong to pre-service education?
- What should be the goals of the workplace agency and the university in
  furthering the symbiotic relationship to which they both pay lip service?

The answers to these questions often depend on even higher-order questions:

- To what extent should the workplace experience be structured and guided?
  What should the nature of such guidance be?
- How central to the university degree programs should workplace-based
  courses actually be?
- How should they relate to other coursed in the degree program?
• Should such courses be resourced and staffed on the same basis as other university courses?

• Should they be elective or compulsory?

Such questions are much more than pragmatic structural choices; the answers to these questions are the central values that underpin any developed framework for experiential learning within a work placement setting. Answers to these questions will be determined by the understanding of decision-makers in the university of how students learn specifically through experience. They will also depend on the immediate complex of institutional circumstances, the resources available, and the political will of those who are developing the courses.

This study used a case study approach in order to develop not only an understanding of this case, but to also identify the ‘key determinants’ that allowed the course to be successful. These specific research findings are summarised below.

**The research findings**

The research question specifically asked that this study identify the ‘key determinants of the effectiveness’ of programs that utilise work placements as a part of their education process. Field Placement in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice was chosen as a case study because previous evaluation studies had already demonstrated that it was effective. The question itself implicitly asks for a statement describing the crucial procedures and values that govern the operation of such a course.

Chapter Five analysed feedback from students and others involved in the course in order to determine which elements of the course seemed to determine its success. The first determinant identified was that the students should face challenges in the course. These mean that the students should experience immediate events that sometimes involve them dealing with real crises, in an environment where
persistence is required and ongoing negotiation is essential. The students need to face the challenge of mediating meaning with and between others, taking responsibility for their behaviour, collaborating with others, and finally reflecting on their action and constructing propositional knowledge about it. Secondly, there appeared to be two determinants of success that were related to the course structure. One was the centrality of relationships and the negotiation of meaning and of the importance of the social dimension in student learning; the other were the formal requirements of the course itself. The learning plan, the workplace project, the reflective journal and the involvement in the social milieu of the workplace were all seen as crucial. The workshops, where students were able to verbalise their learnings with each other, converting their tacit knowledge into propositional knowledge, tended to serve the function of ‘cementing’ new knowledge into place. The third determinant was the extent to which this particular course was person-centred and focussed strongly on the student’s own self understanding. This enabled students to take and use experiences of success and failure and incorporate their new found understandings into their own identities. Fourthly, the convenor’s contribution to the learning process was seen as fundamental, and because the convenor was also the designer of the course, this incorporated the other three determinants. It was the convenor’s overview and involvement with students, and her management of the variables in each case, that ensured that appropriate learning experiences were tailored for individual students.

Response One (Chapter Six) focussed on the convenor and examined how the convenor’s day-to-day practice influenced student learning in this iteration of the course. The interpretive data collected from each student and from other stakeholders was analysed and the chapter contains a large number of descriptions of student action as they responded to the course and to their interactions with the convenor. This data contains what the students believe were the fine-grained determinants of their learning and their interpretations are similar to those of other stakeholders. The interpretive summaries that appear for each ‘mini-case-study’ of individual students, or small group of students, summarise these determinants and
are here expressed at a more generic level by the researcher. These determinants of the success of the course can be categorised as follows:

1. Teaching for challenge
Perhaps the most noticeable finding in the data was the way in which students’ anxieties fluctuated over the period of the course. For some, at certain points they became almost incapacitating and the convenor needed to offer appropriate support. But, in nearly all cases expressions of higher anxiety turned into statements of satisfaction, and even elation, as the students met the challenges they were presented with and began to solve problems. Anxieties expressed by students tended to be task and relationship focussed and could only be alleviated by the student taking action of some kind. Usually this action had very little to do with any anxiety that the student had about formal assessment; in fact, formal assessment tended to be an extrinsic factor irrelevant to their immediate concerns. The students were aware that it was the convenor’s responsibility to provide experiences that allowed them to experiment with new behaviours within boundaries that were safe, both physically and emotionally.

2. Teaching for individual differences
All stakeholders saw the importance of the fact that students were matched carefully to their supervisors and to the workplaces in which they were placed. Of equal importance was the fact that the convenor attended to each student individually and so was able to cater to individual differences in learning styles.

3. Teaching for autonomy
The goal of the Field Placement course was to allow students to learn how to become effective self-teachers: a skill essential for a world where one person could be expected to engage in several different and even un-envisioned jobs in a professional career. This meant that the problems the students faced needed to be real and challenging and they needed to be responsible for the final outcomes. Sometimes, in order for this to be achieved there was still a
need for support to be offered strategically and non-intrusively. The convenor, herself, needed to withhold interventions and the impulse to teach didactically, and needed to encourage supervisors and academic facilitators to do the same. The action-teacher resisted the temptation to rescue the student and allowed the student to recognise his or her own abilities and contribution. The students reported that they were very pleased when they succeeded at their tasks even though the standards were frequently very high.

At the next level of generalisation the interpretive data from Response One indicated that this course operated according to what could be referred to as a conflict model. Such a model would espouse the following basic design principles:

1. A work placement course should provide experiences with conflicting expectations that increases anxiety, challenges risk taking behaviour and demands negotiation with others. The level of challenge should always be intrinsic to the contextual demands of the placement rather than the extrinsic demands of assessment.

2. A work placement course is at its most effective when it is seen by all involved as dynamic and responsive to new circumstances as they arise. The structures that proscribe what is possible in the course should facilitate this, and the course should be implemented so that students always have ‘an end in mind’ rather than ‘an end in view’. At all times it should be acknowledged that the factors determining the effectiveness of a particular decision are usually highly contextualised.

The interpretive data suggested that an effective convenor is likely to espouse principles of practice in which learning is seen as sequential (moving from exploration through understanding to action), responsive (rather than formulaic), student-centred (rather than teacher or workplace directed) and active.

In Chapter Seven (Response Two) the focus was on translating the principles of personal practice into the principles of educational procedure. This required
making what was implicit in practice explicit in propositional terms. Chapter Seven attempted to put the convenor’s role into propositional form and 80 principles of procedure and statements of process constructed by the convenor and a novice convenor in negotiation were advanced as a basis for developing a process model.

A five-step sequential (and cyclical) model for experiential learning which described the course as process was developed from a synthesis of the negotiated principles of procedure. This model presented criteria that learning activities need to meet if they are to satisfy the requirements in each of five phases of a learning sequence (refer to Table 7.1). The criteria in order were that the learning activity should (i) have relevance, (ii) be problem based, (iii) demand choice, (iv) demand action and (v) require follow-through (to a new cycle). The model indicates the kinds of ‘action-teaching’ and ‘action-learning’ processes that occur as the learner and teacher move from one phase to the next.

In Chapter Eight a more generic model for curriculum policy development is presented. As the findings of the study became more generic they began to take on the characteristics of values. It was clear from the outset of the study that any conceptualisation of experiential learning and teaching would need to have the concept of *praxis* at its centre. It is only in some of the most recent literature that the basis for an overall theory of process in education could be found. Such a theory would need to accommodate the interpretive findings of this study if it was to enable the findings above to be generalised. Chapter Eight represents the first steps towards the construction of such a theory. At the centre of the evolving Just Practice Model are values, identity and praxis; because it can contain comfortably the findings of this study, which suggest that intentionality lies at the centre of learning and that tacit knowledge precedes propositional knowledge, it may be worthy of further development.

The term action-teaching has been coined in this thesis to describe the often non-interventionist behaviours of educators who base their procedural decisions on a philosophy of practice similar to the one espoused here. The Dual Action-
Learning Action-Teaching Cycle (refer to Figure 8.3) illustrates diagrammatically how the action-teacher’s responses address the action-learning needs of the students. It complements Figure 8.2, which outlines the model at its present stage of development.

**Implications**

Further research using interpretive paradigms, which takes cognisance of feedback from students and other stakeholders into the processes and practices of similar courses in different fields, is urgently needed.

Research into the different kinds of models implicit in these programs, an analysis of how their internal processes actually work and a discussion of the inherent values in their educational practices is also required. Is this particular program good for the students? (That is, does it foster student autonomy?) Does the course have educational integrity? (That is, does it practice what it preaches?) And, is it good practice in a climate where the mutuality implied by the concept of ‘community engagement’ is being espoused?

Further research is required which challenges the assumptions inherent in the development of policies that affect what is possible in higher education programs that are designed to prepare professional practitioners for the workplace. Such assumptions include the notion that a given student’s program must be broken into a number of discrete courses and that experience in the workplace should be just one of these. The assumption that practice is based on pre-existent theory and that ‘understanding’ is first propositional and only later translated into action also needs to be challenged.

There also needs to be research into the contributions that practitioners can make in the preparation of professionals in their undergraduate education. If, as this study suggests experiential learning tends to follow a practice first, theory afterwards sequence the teaching contributions made by practitioners and others
in the workplace environment may be found to be even more educationally valid than many university courses conducted through lectures and tutorials.

**Conclusion**

As an academic working in the field of workplace education I believe we are facing a situation that has the following characteristics.

- There are a number of separate, context bound situations in which we might possibly encourage members of each community to work with the other in a symbiotic relationship.
- We have a status divide between theoretician and practitioners that places the former well ahead of the latter.
- Much as we might like to shatter the theory/practice divide, we need to apply our own principles and start with what we have: two sides who, at best, have little professional contact and at worst regard each other with suspicion – and work from there.
- There is a strong and expressed need for universities to be seen to be more relevant to the world of work.
- There are new and emerging social problems that require attention and allocation of professional personnel at both practical and policy levels.
- There is a substantial amount of community goodwill towards the helping and social justice professions.
- There is a community expectation that more needs to be done and that many social problems need to be addressed with appropriate programs as a matter of urgency.
- There is an emerging philosophy of workplace-based education that is student centred and places a priority value on intrinsic motivation and learning through social engagement in the completion of tasks and projects.
- This study has shown that it is possible to design and implement a course that is highly valued by students, industry and the University on minimal resources. Further studies could well show that courses based on the values...
and processes that drive this course have even more impact when they are resourced appropriately.

The design of the solutions has to be a collaborative effort and it is inconceivable that new and more appropriate service systems cannot be constructed. There is no doubt that we have pressing social needs; but we are an affluent community and there is also no doubt that we have the resources to attend to those needs. We have the expertise in our agencies and in our higher education institutions; we also have a well of new personnel. All we need to do is to use them.
# Appendix 1: The Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>No. selected for citation</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of University Facilitators</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Workplace Organisations</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Workplace Supervisors</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Structured Interview Questions – Questions for Supervisors

1. What do you understand as your role in Field Placement?

2. Can you tell me what did you intend for the student to learn? Has that occurred? How?

3. Can you tell me what you expected the student to learn? Has that occurred? In what way?

4. Were you aware of any changes in the student re their attitudes and feelings? Can you explain these?

5. Were you aware of any other changes that occurred in the student’s knowledge, skills, attitudes, values or feelings as a direct result of this experience? If so, explain.

6. When did their ideas change?

7. Did you become aware of the student discovering any misconceptions?

8. What do you think the student will remember or retain in other ways after the experience? Can you explain why this might be so?

9. How do you believe that the student learnt from his/her contact with you?

10. Are you aware of any other relationships/interactions that assisted the student in their learning?

11. Were you aware of any demands and expectations on the student? If so, was this an influencing factor in their learning?

12. In your role as supervisor what was the most important attribute/s that assisted the student learn? Please explain.
Structured Interview Questions – A set of twelve sample interview questions to assist student reflection

1. What do you know now that you didn’t know before?
(Knowing something...means mentally recalling and communicating it by verbalising, demonstrating it in other ways upon request, or justifying its importance and use.)

2. Can you tell me what you intended to learn? Has that occurred? How?

3. Can you tell me what you expected to learn? Has that occurred? In what way?

4. What attitudes and feelings do you have about the experience that you didn’t have before?
(Attitudes are personal preferences or dislikes and feelings are emotional states such as being mad, scared, sad or glad.)

5. Are you aware of any other changes that occurred in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or feelings as a direct result of this experience? If so, explain.

6. When did your ideas change?

7. What misconceptions have you discovered?

8. What do you think you will remember or retain in other ways after the experience? Can you explain why this might be so?

9. What will you probably verbally share with or demonstrate to others in the future?

10. How did you actually learn what is most important to you?
   - From supervisor
   - From peer
   - From other work colleague
   - From academic liaison
   - Observed or discovered it for self without outside help
   - Became aware of it through a small or large group discussion
   - Other ways? What are they?

11. In what way have demands and expectations influenced your learning?
   - From supervisor
   - From peers
   - From academic liaison
   - From family
   - Others? What are they?
12. “Experiences are constructed *by* us as much as they happen *to* us” – explain how this statement might apply to your placement learning.

(Refer to Knapp, 1992)
Appendix 3: Abbreviated Course Outline

INTRODUCTION

Field placement is an integral component of the Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and Criminal Justice degree offered through the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Faculty of Arts, Griffith University and is available to students no earlier than the final year of their degree.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a reference point for students, organisational supervisors and participating university staff. It is designed to promote a mutual understanding of the field placement process enabling a meaningful, positive and challenging learning experience for the student as they contribute constructively within an organisational setting.

The Purpose of a Field Placement

Field placement is a process of supervised experiential learning within an appropriate work setting. It is a partnership between the participating organisation, the student and the University. All parties assume certain responsibilities, perform certain functions and obtain certain benefits as a consequence of their involvement in the placement.

Field placement provides the opportunity and context for students to develop:
- a greater understanding of the way criminology and criminal justice professionals operate within a variety of contexts;
- the ability to transfer knowledge between theoretical concepts and practice applications;
- the skills to effectively facilitate independent learning;
- an ability to plan, organise, and manage the work environment;
- an ability to be a critically reflective practitioner who self-assesses and uses feedback to help plan future development.

Objectives of the Field Placement

There are a number of important objectives for field placement. They are:
- the provision of a collaborative approach to experiential learning by appropriate organisations, students and Griffith University staff;
- the provision of a range of placement opportunities to meet the students' identified learning needs and potential employment opportunities;
- the linkage of theoretical frameworks to work experience so that each can inform the other;
- the opportunity to facilitate the development of graduates who are professional and ethical in their approach to work practice; and
to continue the development of a field placement curriculum that includes critically reflective feedback from students, placement supervisors and participating university staff.

Field Placement Arrangements

Field Placement is a 10 credit point (10CP) course (40CP is a normal full-time semester load). Of the total 130 hours required to complete this course, students are expected to be involved (in an unpaid capacity) in a placement experience for a minimum of 100 hours of experience spread over approximately 13 full days during the semester. A full day is 7½ hours. The additional time remaining will be available for meeting the assessment criteria including compulsory participation in set University workshops throughout the semester.

Students' participation and experiences will vary from placement to placement. Some students will have a structured placement that requires involvement in specific project research, development or evaluation. Others will have a less structured experience. Some students will be in placements where shift work is a natural form of the work environment. It is acceptable for a student to participate in a shift outside the "normal" work hours (9.00am to 5.00pm) if it is for learning purposes. The Griffith University public liability and personal accident insurance accommodates this. Irrespective of the placement framework, each student will be expected to observe, assist appropriately and become acquainted with the structure of the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of professional practice.

Students will, wherever possible, be placed in an environment of their choice to develop experience that they have identified as being important to them. This will be the culmination of a process whereby students have nominated their choice in order of priority and participated in an interview with the course convenor. In those rare circumstances where students are unable to be placed in an organisational context of their choice, consultation with the student will be maintained until a suitable arrangement can be confirmed.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIELD PLACEMENT

Course Convenor

The field placement convenor is responsible for the overall implementation of the course 3008CCJ Field Placement. Responsibilities include:

- providing assistance and general support to all students enrolled in the course;
- initiating contact and maintaining relationships with organisations for the continued provision of appropriate field placements opportunities;

Just Practice?
Appendix 3: Abbreviated course outline

- providing assistance and recommendations on procedures for students and/or supervisors experiencing difficulties during the field placement experience;
- collaborating and liaising with the Head of School (Criminology and Criminal Justice), course convenors, and academic staff regarding the development, implementation, review and evaluation of models and systems of field placements;
- developing and articulating a theoretical framework for field placement;
- examining the linking processes between field experiences and the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes for students;
- liaise between the organisation, the student and the University to help overcome any difficulties being experienced by the institution and/or the student; and
- ensuring the maintenance of a high standard of field placement opportunities for students;
- maintaining an ongoing evaluation of the subject for continued curriculum development;
- providing skills workshop to potential supervisors.

School Administrative Officer

The School Administrative Officer provides assistance and administrative support to the course convenor, organisational supervisors, lecturers with liaison responsibilities and students. In this capacity, the School Administrative Officer will undertake the following functions:
- co-ordinate the processes necessary for students to be placed in a field placement experience;
- develop structures and communication processes to ensure effective and efficient operation of the field placement tasks;
- assist in disseminating information regarding field placements;
- advise on administration issues associated with field placements;
- ensure that the Field Placement Handbook is produced and distributed to students, supervisors and appropriate academic staff; and
- liaise with the Head of School to ensure adequate resources and administrative support for the effective operation of field placements.

Participating Organisations

For a field placement experience to be a successful learning experience for students there is a need for some commitment from the organisation offering the opportunity. There is a need for resources to be made available. In return it is hoped that gains for the organisation will be able to be identified.

The following points highlight some of the issues which organisations need to address when offering the opportunity of providing a field placement.
The organisation needs to provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate the development of their knowledge and skills.

The supervisor will be required to spend some time with the student to assist in negotiating tasks to meet identified learning needs and provide an evaluation report.

For the student to have maximum benefit from the placement there is a need for them to meet with other staff separate to their immediate supervisor.

Students will need some resources, e.g. desk and chair or a space to work in, administrative supports such as telephone, typing and stationery resources.

Depending on the work that the student is involved in, it may be necessary for them to access appropriate organisational records. In some circumstances it may be important for the student to sign an oath of confidentiality (Refer to Appendix 1 for example).

The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice appreciates the assistance given by organisations who have agreed to participate in the practical development of our students.

**Organisational Supervisors**

Supervisors in organisations offering field placements are experienced practitioners who wish to be involved in the process of educating students in a practical context. It is expected that supervisors will establish and maintain an effective, mutually acceptable working relationship with the student. It is important that this be a collaborative relationship by conferring with students for the continued negotiation of their learning.

Some of the tasks of the supervisor include:

- reviewing the student’s learning plan;
- ensuring that the assigned workload is negotiated with, and appropriate for, the individual student;
- alerting other staff to the presence of the student and promote interaction between the student and other staff;
- making a commitment to meet formally with the student every four weeks (usually for one hour) to provide feedback, monitor workload and evaluate progress and learning;
- being available for impromptu questions and refocussing as they arise; and
- ensuring that the student has another appropriate person to whom they can refer if the supervisor is unavailable at any time.

At the completion of the field placement, supervisors will be required to provide a brief report on the performance of the student. The report should detail attendance by the student as well as a general indication of the performance of the student whilst on placement. It is expected that this report will be completed in collaboration with the student.
The University provides a briefing, mid-placement and debrief workshop for supervisors. These workshops provide a venue to meet with supervisors from other organisations, discuss expectations of the university and their own individual organisations, discuss expectations and progress of the students, and generally use this time to communicate with others and alleviate any concerns which may be evident. New supervisors to the field placement program are strongly encouraged to participate. The briefing and final workshop includes participation with students and academic staff members. It focuses on debriefing and discussion to enable ongoing development of the field placement program for the benefits of all participants. Feedback from supervisors who have participated in these workshops indicates that they are extremely beneficial.

Field placement supervisors are encouraged to contact the course convenor or School Administrative Officer at any time. It is important that this occur if there are any circumstances affecting the quality of the student's experience (e.g. staff shortages, illness, emergent work demands, etc.) and particularly if they consider the student to be experiencing difficulty. This would include any situation where a student's performance is not perceived as satisfactory. If this advice is received early then the appropriate assistance can be given to the student. Early notification may mean the difference between a successful or unsuccessful field placement for the student and the organisation.

It is recognised that supervisors have a significant responsibility with the role they play in field placements. Therefore, it is very important that clear and open communication occur between the supervisor, student and the University. Contact the course convenor or School Administrative Officer for further clarification or input.

**Academic Facilitator**

Academic staff from the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice will be allocated responsibility for facilitating the overall learning that is occurring for field placement students. In this role the University staff member is expected to be available to advise and assist either the student/s or the supervisor/s where necessary, particularly on matters of theoretical expertise. Students and supervisors can expect academic facilitators to participate in the field placement in the following ways:

- review the student's Learning Plan;
- assist in linking theoretical frameworks with practice experiences;
- review student's rationale for the proposed report;
- mark the student's report in consultation with the organisational supervisor;
- assist with minor problem solving;
- assess whether the student appears to be making adequate progress;
- enhance the communication interaction between the student and supervisor if necessary;
- provide support, input, mediation if required;
be available for telephone or personal consultation regarding academic issues as required;
liase between the organisation, the student and the University to help overcome any difficulties being experienced by the institution and/or the student; and
alert the course convenor of any student considered to be having difficulties.

Student Responsibilities

Field placement is the practice context in which students acquire knowledge and skills through observation, participation, reflection and critical analysis. Students will be expected to get to know their organisational context and some may possibly engage with client populations and write reports. This will be limited by the instructions and advice of the field placement supervisor.

In order to maximise learning during Field Placement students have the following responsibilities:

- fulfil the professional standards of dress, speech and conduct;
- develop and continually review a Learning Plan in consultation with the supervisor;
- exercise initiative in seeking to re-negotiate the Learning Plan as necessary;
- ensure that all organisational policy, procedures and rules regarding field placement students are known;
- become familiar with available resources, e.g. library, specialist personnel, administrative assistance, etc;
- explore relevant theoretical material;
- maintain contact with the assigned academic facilitator;
- unless otherwise indicated, refrain from sending letters out of the organisation without supervisory approval and ensure that all reports are countersigned by the supervisor;
- participate as actively as possible in the professional life of the organisation;
- prepare for and actively participate in the formal discussions with the supervisor at least once every four weeks;
- engage in self-evaluation and invite feedback on how to improve developing competencies;
- if the supervisor is unavailable, consult with another designated staff member before deviating significantly from the agreed upon work plan;
- work within the guidelines of Griffith University and the Field Placement Handbook;
- terminate relationships with service users, supervisors and other organisational staff appropriately;
- submit assessment requirements to the University by the due date.

NB: Please remember that the person who has agreed to be your supervisor during your field placement is doing so without compensation and is forfeiting their own
Appendix 3: Abbreviated course outline

valuable personal and professional time to assist you with your professional development.

This course demands professional attitudes and behaviours. If at any time a student does not exhibit these qualities, attitudes or behaviours, authority rests with the Head of School (Criminology and Criminal Justice) and the convenor of the course to terminate enrolment in the course.

FIELD PLACEMENT LEARNING PLAN

Field Placement Learning Objectives

Each field placement experience is different for each student. As a result it is important to clarify the learning objectives of participating in such an activity. These objectives become important when developing a Field Placement Learning Plan in consultation with the supervisor.

It is important that each student:

- can demonstrate their learning within a theory-practice-theory framework;
- is aware of their own responsibility for developing their learning;
- can demonstrate an increasing ability to communicate clearly in both written and oral formats;
- assumes some responsibility for the content of the supervision sessions;
- begins to seek appropriate feedback from the supervisor and other work colleagues;
- begins to appreciate the dilemmas and limitations within the work environment;
- takes increasing responsibility for their time management and organisation of workload;
- be aware of the tasks that are perceived as mundane and still complete them on time;
- shows increasing understanding of interpersonal processes;
- begins to develop a working knowledge of relevant resources and networks outside the field placement organisation; and
- displays an honest self-reflective learning practice.

Field Placement Learning Plan

The objectives of establishing a Learning Plan for the time of the field placement are many and include personal, educational and professional practice elements. It is a document that is developed following discussions between the student and their supervisor. It is expected to be designed to meet the student's individual specific
needs within the specific placement context. It is a compulsory requirement and is to be placed in the Journal.

The general principles to be considered in the development of a Learning Plan include:

- having the student articulate their ideas on what they want to experience and develop while reflecting back to their already developed skills, knowledge and experiences;
- stating the learning objectives and expectations of the student in connection to specific tasks; and
- leaving the Plan flexible to change in conjunction with supervision discussions.

It is important to remember that a Learning Plan can not cover every aspect of the desired learning experience but that it does provide a structure against which a review of developing knowledge and skills can be made.
## EXAMPLE OF INITIAL LEARNING PLAN

### Name of Student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I want to do/learn/develop</th>
<th>What is my current level of knowledge/skills/attitude</th>
<th>What can I do to achieve my goal, including identification of resources and strategies</th>
<th>Review progress in 4 weeks (date)</th>
<th>Evidence to demonstrate achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To become more familiar with the structure and resources of the organisation</td>
<td>Know very little about this specific organisation, but do have a limited understanding of the operations of an organisation such as this from my studies in Corrections</td>
<td>Ask questions of supervisor and other work colleagues. Tour the building and grounds after developing an awareness of the security limits. Visit other organisations that have a working relationship with this organisation</td>
<td>Review progress in 4 weeks (date)</td>
<td>. Map of organisational structure . Ability to discuss with supervisor the relationship of the organisation with other services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become familiar with office procedures and rules</td>
<td>Have no prior experience at all</td>
<td>Ask questions of supervisor and other work colleagues. Document processes so that I remember them</td>
<td>Review progress in 4 weeks with supervisor (date)</td>
<td>. Able to write in the organisational genre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn the process of assignment of clients to this Corrections office, how they are assessed, why they see a particular person</td>
<td>Know some of the court procedures but do not know what happens after the paperwork leaves the courthouse</td>
<td>Reading the Procedures Manual. Discuss with staff and supervisor</td>
<td>Review progress within 4 weeks (date)</td>
<td>. Able to participate in work-related discussions with staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop processes of documenting my learning</td>
<td>Not very good with time management and writing tasks</td>
<td>Set myself time limited tasks involving my field placement demands, eg. research and report writing, and my assessment demands, eg. learning plan, completion of tasks for Student Folio, etc. Ask supervisor for additional input in this area</td>
<td>Ongoing but with a regular review during the first half hour of field placement each week</td>
<td>. Able to complete a critically reflective journal that meets assessment criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop confidence in asserting myself in the role of a worker (includes becoming more aware of myself, my presentation and main manner)</td>
<td>Due to limited past work experience I feel very anxious about my ability to “fit in”. Am certainly feeling a lot more confident about myself as an individual but don’t know how this will fit into a work setting</td>
<td>Use the assessment requirements in my student Folio to maintain a heightened awareness of myself and my interactions thus allowing continued development of the self-reflective process. Use supervision sessions to invite feedback. Ensure that all allotted work tasks are well planned - ask questions if I am not sure</td>
<td>Review progress of this in 6 weeks (date)</td>
<td>. Supervisor’s feedback is positive . Feedback from other staff is positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To articulate my understanding of the models relating to rehabilitation in Corrections operating within the organisation</td>
<td>Have a basic theoretical knowledge of a number of models but knowledge is not very well developed in relation to applications within a practice context</td>
<td>Reading that focuses on the specific models: 1 x journal article “A” 1 x book “B” 2 x organisation articles “C,D” 1 x journal article “E” Discuss issues with supervisor, other appropriate work colleagues, University staff. Use the assessment folio to document why I did this and what did I do</td>
<td>Review during first supervision session and try to articulate an understanding of the application of the theoretical frameworks as seen to be operating</td>
<td>. Able to participate appropriately in collegial discussions . Able to critically reflect in my journal on the theory and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve my ability to think and write more clearly</td>
<td>Am certain that this is an issue and causes some concern</td>
<td>Write structured reports - practice is needed. Seek feedback from supervisor or other nominated person</td>
<td>Complete at least one workplace assessment every three weeks</td>
<td>. The successful completion of written work for the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Final Learning Plan suggestion)</strong> Terminate relationships with clients, supervisor, &amp; other staff</td>
<td>Am not very good at saying goodbye</td>
<td>Discuss issues with my supervisor and actively terminate contact with service users. Document the process utilised</td>
<td>End of field placement.</td>
<td>. Completion of Supervisor’s report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASSESSMENT

The for this course is divided into three sections:

1. Student attendance and participation in the placement (including the Supervisor's Report) and the course workshops; (20%)
2. A workplace assessment, or other agreed upon assessment item, from the student; (20-60%)
3. A journal of critical reflection and activities, etc. completed by the student throughout the process of the field placement. (20-60%)

(Note: Due to the nature of the assessment, supplementary assessment is not available.)

The weighting for the workplace assessment and the journal is to be negotiated by the student in consultation with their academic facilitator. This is to be finalised, in writing, and a copy handed to the course convenor during the first workshop in Week 5.

Issues which will need to be considered by students will include:

- what is the focus of their learning?
- are the tasks/project/report organisationally important?
- how much time is going to be required to complete the organisational tasks/project/report?
- what is the length of the tasks/project/report?
- what reading is necessary to complete the tasks/project/report?
- what reading is required to continue personal development and growth as a student?

The maximum weighting for either the journal or the workplace assessment is 60%; the minimum is 20%. A student may decide to weight the assessable work equally - therefore both the journal and the workplace assessment would be worth 40% each. As the weighting increases so would the expectations, e.g. if the journal were weighted at 50% (and the workplace assessment at 30%) then the journal would be a very detailed record of critical thinking, self-reflection, journalling, reading issues, daily logs, and learning plans.

Refer to further individual assessment items.

Student Attendance and Participation

Students are required to participate in the field placement for no less than 100 hours during the semester of enrolment. It is expected that most students will attend for 7½ hour days over approximately 13 days. Other students may find that they are requested to do a few days block placement, either as an induction or at another time during the semester. The decision for this will be negotiated between the supervisor
and the student. It is not possible for a student to do their 100 hours as a block placement without prior negotiation between the student, supervisor and the course convenor.

Students are also required to attend and participate in four by 2½ hour compulsory workshops to be conducted throughout the semester.

The first workshop (to be held on the first Monday of the semester) will focus on pre-placement issues for students, clarify expectations, address anxieties and outline assessment requirements. The final workshop will be conducted in the final week of semester. It will evaluate the outcomes of the course, ensure that all students have been debriefed, terminated their field placements appropriately and completed the requirements for meeting assessment criteria. These two workshops will also include the participation of supervisors.

During the semester, in Week 5 and Week 9, workshops for small groups of students will be conducted. The intent of these workshops is to provide an opportunity for students to:

- be exposed to the experiences of their peers;
- be provided with support from their peers and course convenor;
- articulate the connection between their practice experiences and their university education;
- formalise their learning through organised reflective processes; and
- ground their practice experience in their theoretical frameworks.

A contributing factor to the assessment criterion will be a report submitted by the supervisor. This report is expected to be completed in consultation with the student.

**Supervisor's Report**

The supervisor is expected to contribute to the assessment of the student by completing the Criteria for Student Assessment form. This form provides the qualities by which the student's performance will be judged. Students are also advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

Please note: This report can provide the student with valuable feedback for their professional development and career search.

It is recognised that assessment and evaluation of a student's performance whilst on field placement is inherently subjective. All processes of the placement take place in a context of interaction and communication and are influenced by interpretation. These same issues apply to the completion of the formal report (refer Criteria for Student Assessment). Therefore it is important to stress that the completion of this report is a process of consultation and negotiation between the supervisor and the student.
A pass grade for this component is mandatory in order to pass the course.

Weighting 20%
CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT
Please write comments having consulted with the student regarding the criteria.

Student's Name:    Supervisor's Name:

Field Placement Organisation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Functioning with the Organisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attended punctually and participated appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands the organisation's goals, structure, function and the role of the worker in this context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands the role of other staff in the organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands formal and informal networks within the organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is aware of the relationship of this organisation to other organisations in the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Carried out the assigned tasks/project with diligence and enthusiasm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Interpersonal and Professional Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to organise self effectively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developed a knowledge of organisational processes and displayed an ability to be effective in this context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to communicate to users of the service.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to communicate effectively both in oral and written contexts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Displays an awareness of accountability to service users, Supervisor and the organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Understanding of Self

- Student is willing to recognise their own strengths and limitations in terms of previous life experiences and personal outlook.

- Student is aware of their own personal value system and the influence this has on their response to situations.

- Student is willing to seek feedback and develop themselves.

- Student displayed the willingness to learn through discussions with staff, reading, taking contextual risks appropriately, etc.

- Student displayed flexibility in their attitude and approach to the Placement experience.

- Student used the time effectively and organised their work efficiently.

### 4. Student/Supervisor Relationship

- Student was prepared for scheduled supervision meetings.

- Student appropriately utilised contact with the Supervisor displaying sensitivity to the role and expectations of that position.

- Student maintained an appropriate balance between dependence and independence with the Supervisor.

- Student displayed an ability to analyse and evaluate personal practice during the Placement experience.
CLOSING SUMMARY
1. Briefly describe the tasks or project assigned to the student

2. Supervisor’s Comments on Final Project/Research Submission assigned work tasks (if appropriate)

3. Student's Strengths as a Practitioner

4. Areas Recommended for Continued Development

5. Supervisor's General Comments

6. Student's General Comments

Supervisor's Recommendation Regarding Student's Performance in Field Placement

Please circle one

1. Outstanding performance in all areas
2. Outstanding performance in most areas
3. Above average performance in most areas
4. Satisfactory performance in most areas
5. Unsatisfactory performance in most areas

Signed: ____________________  ____________________  ________________
Supervisor    Student    Date

Position and Organisation

Just Practice?
Appendix 3: Abbreviated course outline

Student’s Workplace Assessment

Students have a choice of activities and/or products that will be acceptable for assessment. The focus of the workplace assessment must always have been an agreed negotiation between the student, the workplace supervisor, and the academic facilitator.

For those students completing a major project/report for their Supervisor it is important that appropriate negotiation of its acceptability as an assessment item be undertaken. Permission from the supervisor is necessary.

As a document which is required by stakeholders within the workplace it is acknowledged that the requirement may be significantly different to that of an academic document. It is expected that students will conform to the organisational formatting requirements. Unless notified to the contrary, the academic facilitator will mark the document with an expectation of:

- coherency
- clear identification of the issues
- appropriate use of relevant literature
- lack of plagiarism
- demonstrated critical thinking
- neat presentation, including attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation and clear sentence construction.

In some circumstances the “uniqueness” of a project/task offered by a supervisor may indicate that the assessment criteria is negotiated between the supervisor, course convenor, academic facilitator and student. This situation must be notified and agreed to prior to Week 5 of the placement.

As a self-directed study students will be expected to:

1. identify the major issues to be addressed;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the relevant and theoretical literature relating to those issues;
3. demonstrate a relationship between these and other sources and experiences;
4. demonstrate an ability to critically appraise and articulate the issues/theories/concepts; and
5. present the report in an appropriate format with full referencing and bibliography.

If a student believes that their field placement has a very “practice” orientation, e.g. skill development such as co-ordinating a group development, putting together a computerised training package, etc., there is an opportunity for negotiation regarding the assessment item. Students will approach their supervisor and their academic facilitator with a defined proposal for alternative assessment consideration. Alternative assessment would include both an oral and a written component. For example, the student may be required to present a minimum two (2) page summary of the task and either make a specific presentation to the field placement organisational work group (including their supervisor, academic facilitator and course convenor) or
complete a Viva Voce (oral exam) within the university setting (including the involvement of their organisational supervisor).

Other forms of assessment might include creative products, e.g. collages, video tapes, informative tours of premises and so on. Any illustrative assessment process will require a short accompanying written analysis and discussion as negotiated by the student with both the academic facilitator and workplace supervisor.

Students will be expected to provide their negotiated rationale no later than the Workshop in Week 5. This means that the issues needing to be addressed and the proposed rationale will need to be discussed with the student’s assigned academic facilitator or the workplace supervisor prior to Week 5.

Weighting 20%-60%

**Student Journal**

A Student Journal will contain the record of the student’s activities, readings, personal reflections, critical thinking, learning plans and other related resources. It is expected to be a working record of the process of learning through which the student has travelled.

It is recommended that the journal be organised with specific headings although other styles are acceptable. When work is completed it can be dated and filed under each heading, e.g. observations, personal reflection, readings completed, tasks assigned, tasks completed, organisation framework, critical reflection of theory-practice-theory continuum etc. It is this document that can provide the student with material to reflect on and identify issues for discussion with their supervisor. It can also be the place to store information relevant to the assignment.

Please refer over the page for specific assessment criteria.

Weighting 20%-60%
## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Journal</th>
<th>Not Evident</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of a learning plan incorporating articulation of goals, self-awareness, planning skills and understanding of the process required for completion or non-completion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to select and utilise a suitable range of secondary sources and other resources to complement and enhance work experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to appropriately critically self-evaluate and reflect on progress and experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to demonstrate understanding of connections between theory and practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to demonstrate processes of critical thinking relating to the practice observed and/or participated in during the 13 experience days.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to submit work that is grammatically correct, clearly written, well organised and well presented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4: Student profiles

### Table 4.1: Student Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Work Placement</th>
<th>Task/Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Australian Customs Services</td>
<td>Complete a risk management assessment of companies and industries that import and export goods on the internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Althea</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Australian Customs Services</td>
<td>Develop an information presentation for visitors to the Brisbane Customs office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Child Support Agency</td>
<td>Develop an orientation package for new staff to Brisbane head office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabel</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Investigate an environmental (situational prevention) design for property theft in specific police district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Logan Youth and Family Service</td>
<td>Evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of Juvenile Aid Bureau police officers to community conferencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
<td>Assess the currency of a training package on <em>Identifying Deception</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronsen</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Evaluate <em>Protective Behaviours</em> training completed in four schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Alternative Dispute Resolution</td>
<td>Research ethics of using of mediation and community conferencing when domestic violence is an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delece</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Custodial Corrections</td>
<td>Develop program activities for young inmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Della</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Review of programs which drug tested employees to identify resource needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Organisation/Unit</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>John Oxley Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>Review and compiled a list of the techniques for assessing competency to stand trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Interpret legislation pertaining to the Policy and Systems Development Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Custodial Corrections</td>
<td>Co-facilitate Anger Management Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Community Corrections</td>
<td>Design and write two brochures:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Office and staff functions and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Offender orders, rights and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginnie</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Youth Detention Centre</td>
<td>Investigate bullying with the Centre and compile a booklet with anti-bullying strategies for detained youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Relationships Australia (Qld)</td>
<td>Develop the policy on ‘serious matters’ for counselling staff to refer to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janine</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Corrective Services Policy Division</td>
<td>Evaluate the effectiveness of the sex offender program operating in both custodial and community correctional centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathon</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Develop an integrated crime prevention strategy for Griffith University Logan Campus, Logan TAFE, and Logan Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Australian Community Safety &amp; Research Organisation Incorporated (ACRO)</td>
<td>Design a survey of visiting families to prisoners who utilise the ACRO services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisha</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>The Salvation Army Alcohol &amp; Drug Rehabilitation Centre</td>
<td>Complete a comparison of client groups in residential rehab., i.e. self-referred, referred by the Drug Court, medically referred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexie</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Logan Youth Justice Service</td>
<td>Develop a staff procedures manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Southside Education Centre</td>
<td>Plan, coordinate and evaluate parent/carer-teacher contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majella</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Quest Community Newspaper</td>
<td>Research and wrote a number of articles for a special section on Domestic Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Complete an approved calendar of ‘Crime Weeks’, e.g. Child Protection Week, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Task/Project Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Alternative Dispute Resolution</td>
<td>Evaluate current client satisfaction and compare with previous evaluation of 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Relationships Australia (Qld)</td>
<td>Develop new Rehabilitation Policy to comply with changes in the Workplace, Health and Safety legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Logan Youth Justice Service</td>
<td>Develop an overview of this specialist Government service, i.e. rationale, structure, operation, and evaluation strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industry</td>
<td>Investigate compliance of public to small fish catches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nerida</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Mental Health Unit, Prince Charles Hospital</td>
<td>Develop a drug and alcohol abuse program focussed on relapse prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Crime Commission</td>
<td>Research availability of illicit drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Attend all events/duties of police prosecutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
<td>Contribute to preliminary evaluation of pilot Juvenile Justice Conferencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberta</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Design specific interventions for at risk juveniles in specific police district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>The Salvation Army Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Centre</td>
<td>Develop a survey for past and present clients in order to inform future policy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Corrective Services Program Development Division</td>
<td>Compile a list of programs (including referral and assessment systems) addressing sex offending in both community and custodial corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Contribute to the evaluation of the recruit training program at the Queensland Police Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Environment</td>
<td>Investigate the changes in legislation on the resources of a Section within the Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>Year Level</td>
<td>Work Placement</td>
<td>Task/Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Barrett Adolescent Centre</td>
<td>Develop program focussing on anger management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Southside Education Centre</td>
<td>Evaluate peer mediation programs used in other schools and examine feasibility of implementing such a program in this environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Supreme and District Court</td>
<td>Research the use of video-conferencing between courts, legal aid office and custodial centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Corrective Services Training College</td>
<td>Evaluate the Training College’s Case Management Process and Procedure for training new community correctional officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Redland Shire Council</td>
<td>Research and prepare a position paper on the impact of graffiti upon service deliverers and residents within the Council district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caitlin</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Griffith Adolescent Forensic Assessment and Treatment Centre</td>
<td>Research the extent that behaviour will reflect personality by making a prediction about responses of an adolescent to a personality inventory (MACI) based on his responses to a daily assessment questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Catholic Prison Ministry</td>
<td>Complete a literature review of the prisoner support programs pre- and post-release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Justice Department</td>
<td>Research the use of video-conferencing between courts, legal aid office and custodial centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davina</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Office of Fair Trading</td>
<td>Investigate internet gambling and fraud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Project Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Centrelink</td>
<td>Develop a ‘best practice’ guide for tipoffs – otherwise referred to as public denunciation or dob-ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Community Corrections</td>
<td>▪ Conduct initial assessments and interview with offenders using standardised assessment tools&lt;br&gt;▪ Redesign assessment tool used to determine project suitability for community service orders&lt;br&gt;▪ Design a survey to determine satisfaction with current process of assigning offenders to community service orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Research statutory laws application to health and safety requirements for training activities for police recruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Logan City Council</td>
<td>Evaluate the effectiveness of the Safety Camera Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td>Evaluate the Vietnamese Playgroup Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Mt Gillen Safe Health and Accommodation Centre</td>
<td>Analyse collected data to build a profile of clients using service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerrie</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Logan Youth Justice Service</td>
<td>Complete a statistical analysis on the number of juveniles offending and the occurrence of re-offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellie</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Premier and Cabinet</td>
<td>Research principles of environmental crime prevention, with examples for staff who are not formally trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Playground and Recreation Association of Queensland</td>
<td>Investigate the impact of new centre on the reduction of child abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Youth Detention Centre</td>
<td>Analyse the effectiveness of certain practices and methods used by Centre staff in their operationalisation of programs for detained youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Melanie  | 22  | F      | Final  | Custodial Corrections                       | ▪ Develop an orientation manual for new staff and students within the correctional centre  
▪ Compile an extensive database of articles relevant to work of psychologists and counsellors, e.g. suicide, psychological disorders, etc. |
| Paige    | 21  | F      | Final  | Child and Youth Mental Health Services      | Design a program and accompanying manual for children who have parents who suffer from a mental illness                               |
| Penny    | 22  | F      | Final  | Queensland Police Service                   | Evaluate:  
▪ Water Police ‘Lock It or Lose It’ program  
▪ Effectiveness of police liaison officer role in Neighbourhood Watch programs                                                        |
<p>| Ranee    | 21  | F      | Final  | Community Forensic Mental Health Service    | Complete a literature review on models of community based integrated treatment of mentally ill offenders                                    |
| Rochelle | 24  | F      | Final  | Aftercare Resource Centre (ARC)             | Design and complete data collection, and prepare report of client needs from client files                                                |
| Raelene  | 23  | F      | Final  | Queensland Police Service                   | Compare existing crime prevention mechanisms for Griffith University Logan Campus, Logan TAFE, and Logan Hospital with other hospitals and universities within the Brisbane area |
| Regina   | 26  | F      | Final  | Queensland Police Service                   | Research the effects of ‘identity crime’ within Queensland and Australia                                                                  |
| Sam      | 21  | M      | Final  | Queensland Police Service                   | Create a training module for detectives on handling the media                                                                               |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Work Placement</th>
<th>Task/Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allira</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Youth Detention Centre</td>
<td>Develop appropriate rules and regulations for section of centre that accommodates older offenders or offenders with long sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Custodial Corrections</td>
<td>Develop a cognitive skills program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dylan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Relationships Australia (Qld)</td>
<td>Develop an instrument/methodology for measuring client outcomes of relationship counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Families</td>
<td>Evaluate the knowledge relationship between theory and practice within the staff group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eloise</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
<td>Contribute to the development of training scenarios that provide practice in responding to strong emotional situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garry</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Impact Youth Projects</td>
<td>Contribute to the building of a recording studio at the Albert Park Flexi School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Prepare formal submission of project plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete design requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Families</td>
<td>Develop an early intervention program for young offenders in conjunction with Lifeline and the Department of Families staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Attend the Interviewing Children &amp; Recording Evidence (ICARE) training course; complete subsequent literature review of relevant training manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Youth Detention Centre</td>
<td>Develop a program proposal for gender specific services for young women in detention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesleigh</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Youth Detention Centre</td>
<td>Devise a human rights program inclusive of fun activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Employer/Institution</td>
<td>Project Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Mater Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>Collate a referral directory to be used by the Child Abuse Therapy Team (CATT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Brisbane City Council</td>
<td>Evaluate the crime risks of a specific toilet block and provide and complete redesign elements using a situational crime prevention strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Department of Families</td>
<td>Investigate the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the local Children’s Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Prepare a report addressing crime prevention initiatives to minimise victimisation of tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosslyn</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Research the incidence of violence in Queensland schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
<td>Review police training manuals to incorporate changes in legislation for the community conferencing of juveniles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Just Practice?


References


References


References


Just Practice?


References


