



Column 2, Section 6

Drawing, reflection and reflexivity

Container of time

“The participatory action research did really shift totally for me once I [started to use art]...Why did I not do this in the first place?” (E.C. Betlem, personal communication April 11, 2011). I was both excited and intrigued by the possibilities of the images visually representing the dynamics of the teacher’s day. I had instructed the mentors to draw a container to represent time. They could draw their own design or choose one from a sample of drawn containers I provided (see *Figure 29*. Sample of drawn containers), then consider the tasks that they planned to complete that particular day and put them as items into their “Container of time”. I gave them each a 2B pencil and a white A4 sheet of paper.

It was our fifth PLT session together and we were sitting at one end of a large formal timber table in the school’s board room. The formality of the room was enhanced by the high ceiling and tall walls painted in beige and light green sections. A sober contrast was created with the large dark brown timber windows and double glassed doors which, if opened, led to a covered verandah and the school beyond. *“I don’t see you drawing your container”* said Jacquie light heartedly to Lindi as she started to draw. *“No, I am planning in my brain ... I did not have planning my artwork in today’s plan, so I have to find that box which is currently shut”* said Lindi. I laughed at the image that this created in my mind. *“I like the*

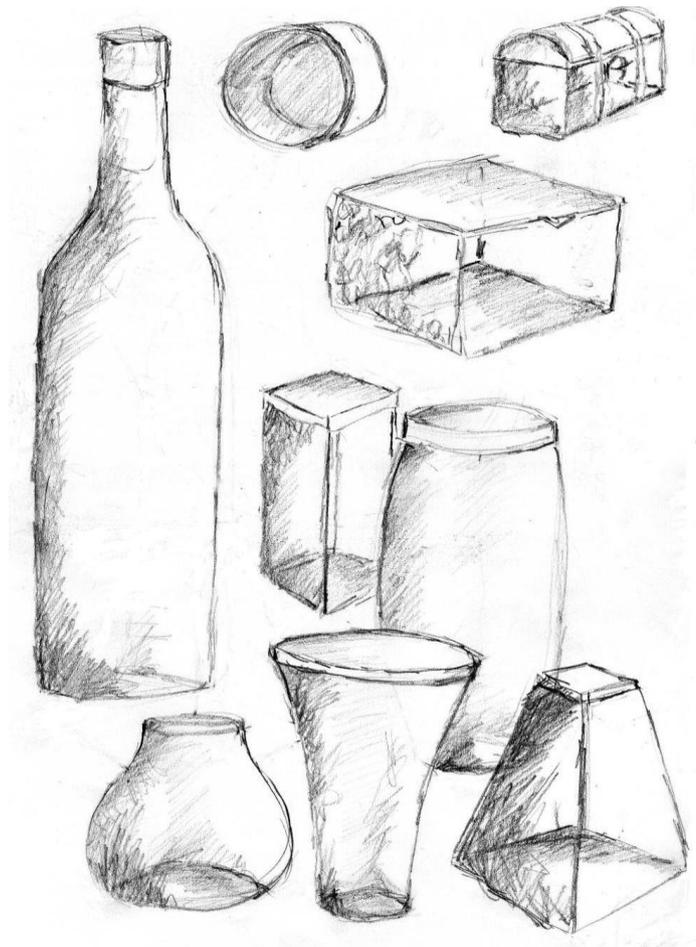


Figure 29. Sample of drawn containers.

way you expressed that” I reflected out loud. Lindi continued to think for several seconds while Jacquie drew. *“I am taking my container seriously”* said Jacquie. *“You are!”* responded Lindi and she too commenced to draw (personal communication, October 21, 2010). The atmosphere in the room became electric, the mentors where quickly engaged in the activity, looking at each other’s drawing, seeking opinions about the quality of their drawing from the other and giving advice about the contents as they emerged. They were collaborating! I enthusiastically watched and for the first time felt that the PAR was moving forward.

In my attempt to ensure that my study of inquiry was instigated by the mentors so that they were doing research on themselves (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), I was open-

ended and had left the structure of the PLT sessions loose. I did not wish to take control of the mentors' PAR. I was not sure how, or how much to support the mentors (Kember et al., 1997; Swaffield, 2002) or whether I should be an involved or a distant member of the group (Messner & Rauch, 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) or act as a leader and/or guide (Messner & Rauch, 1995). When the mentors began working with me they were not familiar with PAR. What was participatory action research? What issues would be helpful for all in the group to explore and whether they had *time* to do this work, dominated the previous PLT sessions.

"I need your judgment said Jacquie and then asked *what are you doing?"* while repeatedly looking at Lindi's drawing. *"Bear with me"* responded Lindi. *"WOW!"* said Jacquie, seeing Lindi draw the  around her writing (see *Figure 30*. Drawing done by Lindi). The mentors continued to draw and resolved their ideas into two very different images (see *Figure 30*. Drawing done by Lindi and *Figure 31*. Drawing done by Jacquie).

Lindi created an explosive image represented by angular lines stretched out into five points radiating from the container. The contents of her "Container of time", the planned work for the day, did not fit into it. Responding to Jacquie, she stated *"... it doesn't all fit in"* and later in the session said *"well there is heaps exploding out of my container"* (personal communication, October 21, 2010). The drawing looks very much like a hand. Cirlot's (1971) well respected volume of symbols helps us to understand the meaning of the many symbols we encounter in the visual arts and the history of ideas. The hand he describes, amongst many interpretations, as a traditional symbol of manifestation and action (Cirlot, 1971). Lindi is a coordinator of a practical subject who is involved not only in the extracurricular activities at her school, but also in her professional association, the marking of external state exams, voluntary work and has a young family. She tried to fit a lot into her

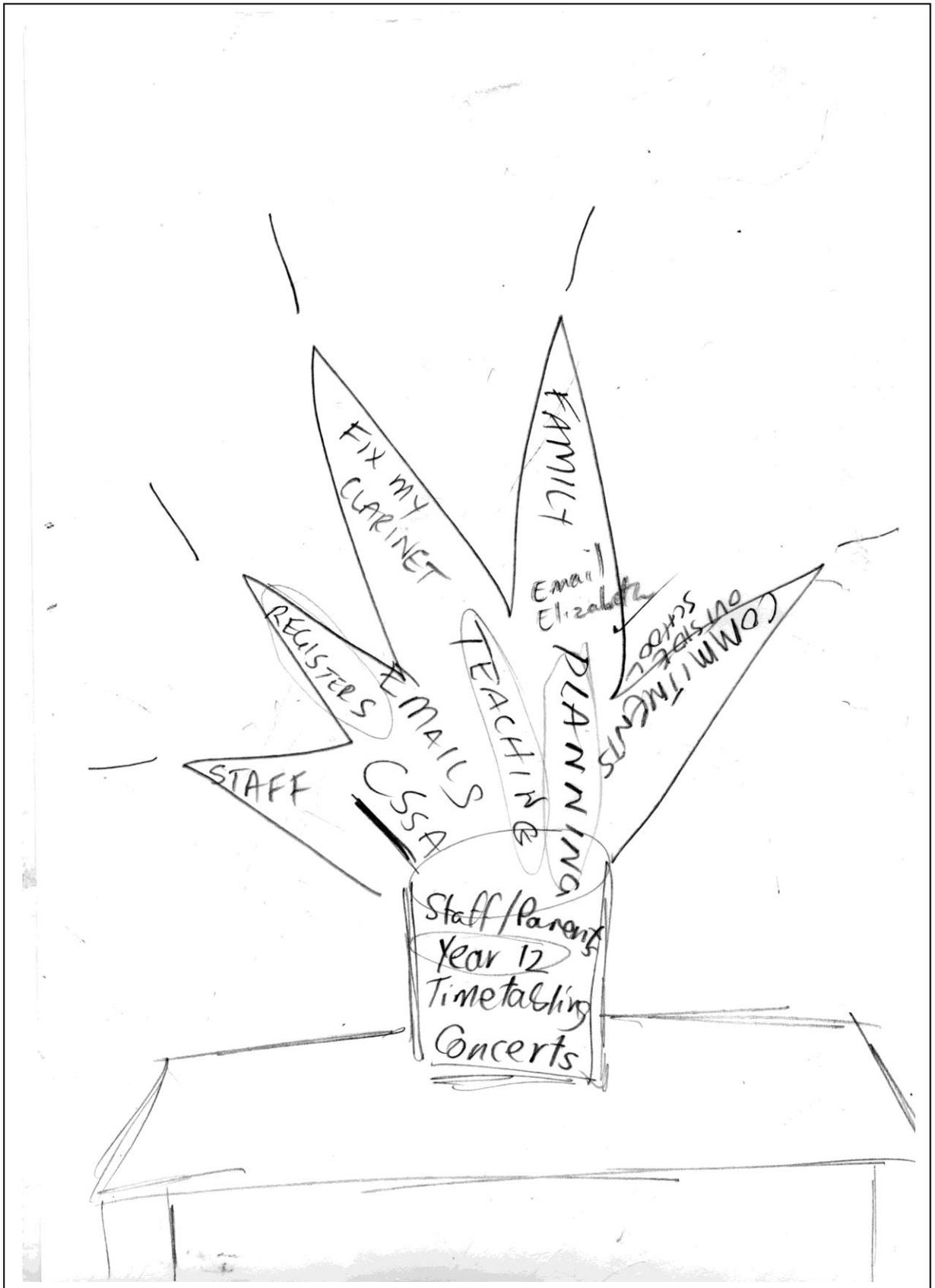


Figure 30. Drawing done by Lindi.

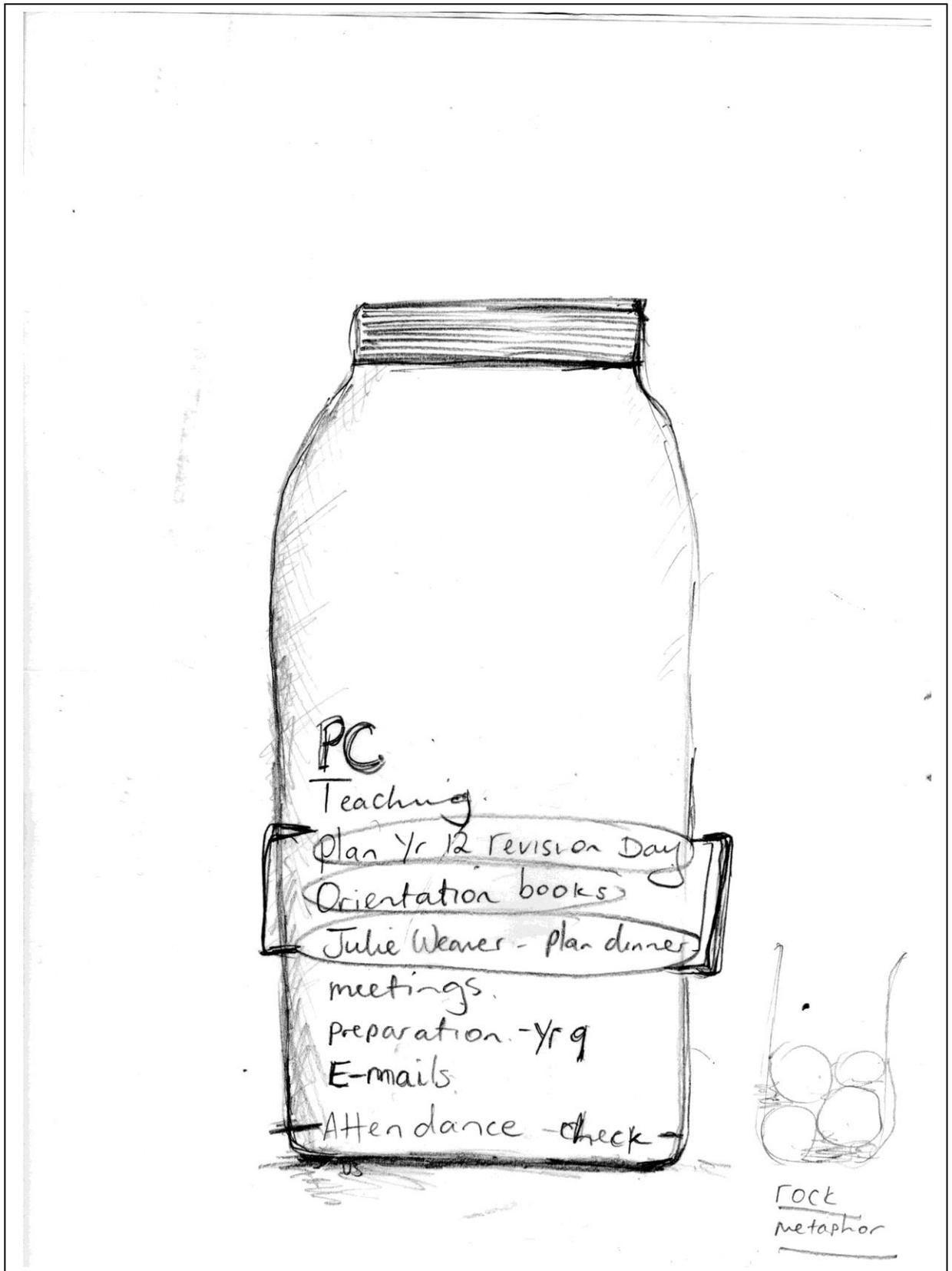


Figure 31. Drawing done by Jacquie.

day and was constantly adding to the “Container of time” in her drawing.

Jacquie’s image (*Figure 31*. Drawing done by Jacquie) is quite different to that completed by Lindi, her *time* was contained. “*I put a lid on it, to contain it*” she said, referring to her drawing. Lindi responded “*yeah, I am not*” [putting a lid on the container] (personal communication, October 21, 2010). Jacquie worked on her drawing, on and off, throughout our PLT session, in order to embellish the lid, toning it to create a three dimensional effect. There appears to be room for other things in Jacquie’s day as there is a space at the top of the container. She is a Pastoral care coordinator who oversees and supports a large group of international students attending the school.

As a visual arts educator I was used to asking children to draw aspects of their world, it had not initially occurred to me to do the same with adults. The research literature also indicates there are few studies that involve researchers asking adults to draw.

When we entered the PAR the mentors and I came together from similar contexts of culture and values as we had a history of teaching at Catholic schools. Although we did not know each other well, our shared profession and desire to improve our practice as mentors, meant there was an expectation that something positive would come from the experience of working together in a group. Bottery (2003) described this early acceptance of trust between professionals as “Role” trust (p. 252). To develop a relationship between the mentors and I that would go beyond one based on “Role’ trust relied on my ability as a critical friend to establish a level of trust that moved the group towards “Identificatory trust” (Bottery, 2003, p. 253). This type of relationship is cultivated from an ethical base, fostered by ongoing interactions of mutual interest, to care for the other members in our group and respect each other’s integrity, someone who could be relied upon and be trusted by the mentors (Bottery, 2003).

During our previous PLT sessions, the mentors had been weighed down by *time*,

conceptualising it as a deficit: “... *just finding time ...*” (Jacquie, personal communication, May 5, 2010); we are “*time poor*” (Lindi, personal communication, April 28, 2010); “*we all mentioned that time was an issue*” and later “...our “[Individual Mentor] *Plan*” [focus of PAR being considered] *needs to be something that is not time rich*” (Lindi, personal communication, June 4, 2010). The mentors at the beginning of this same PLT session described the end of the previous term as their time being “*stretched*”. “*Doing, not one thing at a time but two, three may be four at the same time depending on what was going on*” (Lindi, personal communication, October 21, 2010). Lindi was multi-tasking to get the work done “*set one group up to do that, then another do that, make phone calls, answer emails, attend that meeting*” (personal communication, October 21, 2010). Jacquie described the end of term as:

Lots of marking, kids handing in essays, not just from one class but from other classes, because I am so accessible, the international students bring me everything and so I feel [I] cannot, let them down. So they sit down and have extra help. Which is all fine but when it is on top of all of your [own] teaching, wrapping up the course, doing practice exams and doing model answers. (Jacquie, personal communication, October 21, 2010)

Time is always an issue with teachers (Cockburn, 1994; Collinson & Fedorul Cook, 2001; Hargreaves, 2003 ; Liew, 2005). Teachers often voice that they do not have enough time to complete the work that is required. Teaching is a busy, complex and diverse profession (Liew, 2005). It is not only about planning and conducting differentiated lessons, creating programs and marking student work such as: exams, workbooks and quizzes to evaluate and report progress; teaching is also about, working collaboratively with colleagues, utilising technology, attending staff meetings and professional development activities, supervising students in the classroom and “the yard”, administrative duties, and so on

(Education Service Australia, 2012). Time is also needed for teachers to build relationships with others; the students, their parents/guardians and colleagues.

I decided to use drawing as a medium to assist the mentors' reconceptualise their deficit concept of time. Drawing allows for an intuitive and personal response to the mentors' experiences of time in their teaching practice (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Finley, 2005). Eisner (2006) described how "the arts capitalize on the emotions and use them to make vivid what has been obscured by the habits of ordinary life" (Eisner, 2006, p. 11). I aimed to release the mentors from their prevailing negative view of time.

To set the mentors into action I provided a starting point for the "Container of time" activity by introducing an alternative metaphor for time. We often think about time as a traditional metaphor of balancing or juggling our time. As teachers we may describe how we balance our school day, weighing up how time will be spent on work, perhaps at the expense of some work not being done. Time cannot be stretched as there are limited hours in a day. A different perspective is to consider time as a container (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001), as it is a more flexible metaphor. Like the fixed number of hours in a day, a container metaphor, emphasises the finite nature of time because it has external boundaries that cannot be altered. A container has a fixed capacity which cannot change, however the contents inside can be varied. A choice can be made about what is placed into the container, a number of small items, one very large item, a combination of both small and large items or it can be left empty (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001).

Metaphors allow us to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5; Morgan, 1986, p. 13). They "urge us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and to tap new, different, or deeper levels of meaning" (Feinstein, 1982, p. 45). The "container" as an alternative metaphor for time helped liberate the mentors and invited them to explore other possibilities of how to represent time.

Engaging their imaginations (Eisner, 2002; Wenger, 1998) the mentors developed an idea for their “Container of time”, which they transformed and made public into a drawing (Eisner, 2002, p. 3). Once the mentors started to draw, their drawings quickly took on a life of their own. The mentors were guided by the emerging forms and the materials in use. In the process of representation, artistic accidents provide an element of “surprise” (Eisner, 2002, p. 7) as opportunities previously not considered may reveal themselves during the making process. These new ideas could be explored and utilised, by the mentors to alter their emerging image (Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 2002).

The pencil and paper I gave the mentors as materials had constraints and affordances within which they had to work (Eisner, 2002). Drawing with a 2B pencil on white paper restricted the possible tonal variation and quality of line that could be produced by the mentors. However the two resulting images are quite different to each other. Lindi’s drawing (*Figure 30*, Drawing done by Lindi), is a simple linear drawing of strong rigid lines and large dynamic shapes that are consistent in density and tone. You can almost see the urgency with which Lindi drew this picture, resonated in the lines and shapes used to communicate how she felt about her day. Jacquie’s use of line in her drawing (see *Figure 31*, Drawing done by Jacquie) feels calm and composed. Variation in the tone is achieved by the light, soft lines seen on the right side of the container, a medium tone to the left and the base is dark, reinforced by additional shading. To create a three dimensional effect she applied cross-hatching (a drawing technique to add the illusion of depth to an object) on the left side of the container. The lid too was toned. Lines with varying qualities in tone and dark shading at the bottom of the lid create the illusion of a screw top firmly attached to the top of the container. The mentors attended to the details of their drawings, editing their images in order to stabilise their ideas and make them concrete, (Eisner, 2002). To bring closure to the work we shared it with each other (Eisner, 2006).

The process of making art is like having a conversation with the work, stabilising the idea, editing it and then sharing it with others (Eisner, 2002). What we share with others, what we communicate in the image is based on “our lived experiences of participation in the world” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3). Embodied in the image is the mentors’ lived experience of *time* as a teacher. Eisner (2002) explained how “the works we create speak back to us and we become in their presence a part of the conversation that enables us *to see what we have said*” (p. 11). The idea and the image are resolved in a way that allows the work to reflect back meanings that have been unconsciously expressed. Drawing the “Container of time” image allowed the mentors to direct their attention inwards to what they believed and felt about their available time.

Contemplating her drawing “*that is a real artwork*” said Lindi. “*Yeah*”, agreed Jacquie. Probing the mentors and referring to the drawings, I said “*I think they are a great representation of your school day*”. Jacquie responded “*mine’s very....*” her hand gestures down the page of her drawing illustrating order or a list and then contemplates her drawing. Lindi, looking at Jacquie, responded “*you probably get more done, as I am Ah! Ah! Ah!* [flapping her arms around, head shaking and laughing]” (personal communication, October 21, 2010).

“*Circle the things that you are in control of, the things [on the list] you know you can change*” I suggested. “*Well I can change most things but I am trying to squish in as much as I can*” responded Lindi. “*So otherwise it will just overflow the next day*” states Jacquie while embellishing her drawing. “*Yeah that is right*” agrees Lindi. “*I can do this one, anytime,*” said Jacquie while circling an item on her drawing. Clarifying, I suggested, “*What are the things that have to be done today?*” Jacquie immediately responded “*I have to teach ... Prepare Year 9 ... Check the attendance*” [of the international students] and then clearly identifying the items that were flexible in her day and gave reasons for this flexibility.

“What is flexible? What can be changed or taken out [of the ‘Container of time’]?” I probed Lindi. *“That is difficult, because, yes things can happen, but I don’t want to... I want to get them done, so they stay on the list”*. Questioning Lindi about her available time to complete her exploding list, Lindi responded with liveliness and said *“it might only be five minutes but it could be a very effective five minutes... I might have a light bulb moment”* squeals like a cat and pretends to type on her computer keyboard, her fingers moving with great speed. We all laughed! (personal communication, October 21, 2010).

Picking up on Jacquie’s earlier reflection *“you’ve got your own life out there too”* I asked about the other things that are part of their day, their family etc. *Where do they fit?* Lindi opened up and shared with us a personal story *“just this morning my daughter asked me why can’t you drive me to school? I don’t want to go to Kate’s”*. Describing what her daughter had said and shaking her head she continued *“I hate that”*. However later declaring that having several responsibilities *“enriches it all ... I know it [her coordinator’s position and teaching job] is chaotic but it is exciting”*. At this point, Jacquie spontaneously introduced us to a metaphor. *“Where you put the rocks in, they are really important things”*, drawing it on the bottom right hand corner of her page (*Figure 31*. Drawing done by Jacquie). *“Then you put the sand in and it fills the gaps. You can fit a lot into your life but you have to work out what is going to be the priority”* (personal communication, October 21, 2010).

The drawing activity was a structure for openness and encouraged an individual response from the mentors (Eisner, 2006), providing “media for self reflection, self expression and communication between and among the creators and audiences” (Finley, 2005, p. 692). It opened up space and dialogue between the mentors and myself. Reflecting in their final interviews, Lindi liked my *“visual, obviously ... art background approach”*. She *“appreciated the creative consideration”* and that *“sometimes we would have visuals*

[and] *liked stepping out of just being spoken to ...*” (Lindi, personal communication, March 10, 2011). Jacquie:

Liked the practical sessions... when it's just theorising I'm more silent because I take a long time to process things but if things are practical, I'll just get in there ...you gave us practical tools to work within the sessions, you went away and thought about what we said and came back and gave us practical things that we could do and work with, which was helpful when you've come from teaching and suddenly you're in this space, that was a good starting place and you gave us freedom to work with that [activity]. (Jacquie, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The art based activity's ability to promote and generate open and honest communication between the mentors and myself became a vehicle for cultivating trust in our relationship. *“Making us feel comfortable and feel that we could share our ideas, you [were] affirming it was not a threatening environment”* Jacquie had said (personal communication, March 15, 2011). When the mentors began to share not only aspects of their school life but also more personal aspects I felt our relationship had moved from one based on professionalism, “Role trust” (Bottery, 2003, p. 252), to one with moments of “Identificatory trust” (Bottery, 2003, p. 253), where we started to know each other well and I was being trusted by the mentors.

My enthusiasm for using art based activities with adults was ignited. The mentors became “engaged” in their PAR. The “Container of time” drawing helped the mentors make use of their “imagination” (Wenger, 1998, p. 176), they were able to visualise how their conceptualisation of time connected to their practice through the act of drawing and dialogue about that drawing. Their participation and active involvement with each other allowed them to learn and take on new perspectives of *time*. With this increased “engagement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 174) a pathway for learning was commenced (Wenger, 1998, p. 154).

Rocks, Pebbles and Sand

The “Rocks pebbles and sand data collection activity” evolved out of the “Container of time” drawing session I had with the mentors. As a reified object of our participation together (Wenger, 1998), it created a visual link between the work started on *time* and the mentors’ Individual Mentoring Plans, the product of their own PAR.

A jar which represents our life is filled by rocks, pebbles and lastly sand (*Figure 32*, Visual representation of rocks, pebbles and sand metaphor). The rocks are placed first into the jar as they represent the things that are important; family, partners or health. They are so important that if we lost them we would be nearly destroyed. The pebbles are then placed into the jar. They naturally fall between the rocks and represent the things that matter like our job, house or car. The sand which fills the spaces, represent everything else, the “small stuff”. If we pour the sand in first there is no room for the important things in life as we are spending all our energy on the small stuff. We need to prioritise our life take care of the rocks first, the things that matter (Covey, Merrill, & Merrill, 1994. pp. 88-89).



Figure 32. Visual representation of rocks, pebbles and sand metaphor.

The metaphor's message of recognising what is important and prioritising the things in our life formed the basis of the visual and written representations in the data collection activity. The concept of prioritising was applied to the needs of the beginning teachers within the mentors' school (see *Figure 32*. Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection activity). I asked the mentors to prioritise the things that they believed the beginning teacher should understand and do to be effective as teachers. Rocks represented the important things that the mentors felt were an absolute must in order to be effective in the beginning teacher's practice. They are so important, that if these things did not happen, the beginning teacher's practice would fall apart or be destroyed. The pebbles represented the other things that the beginning teacher had to do, that mattered and were important for the running of the faculty of which they are a part but not as important as the rocks. The sand was everything else, the "small stuff".

The activity stimulated conversation amongst the group and allowed me to ask questions and at times challenge the mentors' ideas and beliefs listed on their "Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection activity" sheet. This allowed us to negotiate together new meanings (Wenger, 1998) of the expectations we had of beginning teachers entering into the profession. "*It is ridiculous, I placed everything in rocks ... I have a lot of rocks*" said Lindi (personal communication, November 4, 2010). She saw nearly everything as important for the beginning teacher to understand and do as part of their practice and she was able to clearly articulate reasons for her belief. The potential of art based activities as a media to "evoke memories" (Orland, 2000, p. 206) and generate further reflection and reflexivity through our collaborative discussions (Finley, 2005) became apparent when Lindi confided in me:

I learnt the hard way, suffering from burnout. I was in every morning and staying every afternoon with ensembles, running music camps, performances on weekends,

Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection activity

What are the things that you feel a Beginning teacher (BT) should understand and can do in order to be effective in their practice?

Metaphor	Beginning teacher / New member of staff
<p>Rocks are the important things that you feel are an absolute MUST that the BT understands and can do in order to be effective in their practice. So important, that things will fall apart or be destroyed in their practice if they do not happen.</p> 	
<p>Pebbles... are the other things that matter and are important for the BT to do to ensure the continued running of the faculty of which they are a part.</p> 	
<p>Sand..... is everything else, the small stuff.</p> 	

Figure 33 Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection activity.

competitions, etc. I got really sick, so I learnt that was perhaps not the way to teach and if you want a happy lifeyou need balance. It was ridiculous what I used to do.

(Lindi, personal communication, November 4, 2010)

I reminded her of our “*Container of time... to look after your container*”. “*True*” she responded, “*it was definitely exploding*” gesturing with my arms. “*It was ridiculous, I cannot believe what I used to do*” (Lindi, personal communication, November 4, 2010) she continued to reflect on her past. Realising the impact that over commitment had on her health, well-being and practice as a teacher, she established structures to safe guard colleagues in the faculty she now coordinated.

Lindi’s personal reflection was shared with me on an occasion when we were alone. I was very touched that she trusted me with information about a very demanding time in her personal and professional life. We had reached a level of “*Identificatory trust*” (Bottery, 2003) rarely achieved in this type of professional context.

The Mentors found it difficult to move from doing *pebbles* and *sand* activities during the course of the day such as collecting assignments or marking books to doing the *rocks* tasks. These tasks required deeper thinking for example, writing a program or reflecting on their practice. Our regular sessions together gave the mentors a *space* free from the constant interruptions by students, colleagues and administrators (Cockburn, 1994; Collinson & Fedorul Cook, 2001). “*I would not have got round to making this document* (referring to her Individual Mentor Plan) *if I had not been for this time*” (Jacquie, personal communication, November 30, 2010) “*It’s like a funny space in the middle of your day ... [which] was quite calm... it gave me a chance to actually do that* (her Individual Mentor Plan) *in a reflective way*” (Jacquie, personal communication March 15, 2011). “*I don’t get to go in depth very often, so it’s good that I could do that*” (Lindi, personal communication, March 10, 2011).

The art based activities assisted the mentors to reach a depth of thinking not normally possible in short periods of time as it can take “*a long time for ideas to rise to the surface*” (M. Brooks, personal communication, April 11, 2011). They generated reflective, open and honest communication by opening the space and dialogue between the mentors and myself (Eisner, 2006; Finley, 2005), allowing for improved opportunities to develop trust and more meaningful relationships between all in the group (Bottery, 2003). I concluded my first PAR with a desire to further explore the use of art based activities within the PAR model as a contextualised PD structure for teachers. However, did I release the mentors from their prevailing negative view of time? Yes and no!

Participatory action research is a research where practitioners aim to “transform their *practice*, their *understandings* of their practice and the *conditions* under which their practice is carried out” (Kemmis, 2012, p. 890). It aims to change what the participants *do* (practices), what they *think* and *say* (understanding) and how they *relate* to others and to things and circumstances around (conditions of practice that enable and constrain) the participants’ practice which all emerge and develop in relation to one another. One does not work alone, each responds to the other, reshaping our practice (Kemmis, 2009, p. 463). On a micro level, did the mentors change how they used time, how they talked about time and how they related to their context regarding time?

I returned to interview the mentors in the new school year. Jacquie revealed that the school had changed the structure of their day, lengthening the lessons from 45 minutes to one hour. Jacquie’s reflection on this change illustrated how she now *thinks* and *says* differently about time and related positively to the new circumstances around her (Kemmis, 2009). Time was no longer viewed as a deficient but seen for the positives that had been achieved by the change.

Last year ... it was just high paced and frenetic craziness but this year they've slowed it down we've got one hour periods there's five period's in a day every day and that has made a huge impact. Like you get more learning done in the classroom the kids are more settled so it's been nice to see that transition and see it be a real positive, so that's been good. ... It's probably what I would have hoped for last year, just to slow down, and so it's a calmer environment for the kids ... which then impacts on our practice and I think it's a better environment for the kids to learn and better for us. (Jacquie, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

She felt that the change in lesson length had a flow on effect to everything we did as teachers.

Lindi, however made no mention of the time changes to the length of the lessons within the school day and has continued to *think* and *say* about time as a deficit, “*the lack of time, there's a lot of things to do in a day*” she responded to my question about the school environment. I reminded her of how her “Container of time” revealed she achieved a lot in a day.

In the same breath I'm very good at going, well I've got 10 minutes, do a bit of that, OK, bit of that, bit of that. I really wish I could just go; I've got an hour I'm going to do this and work at it really well. So I find it a little bit frustrating, that bitsy approach, but it's the only way I get things done sometimes, do it bit by bit, keep coming back to it. (Lindi, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Ironically, with the new structure to the school day Lindi does have an hour to work. She continues to use the “*I am Ah! Ah! Ah!* (Lindi, personal communication, October 21, 2010) approach to her use of time described during the earlier PLT sessions. However Lindi's growing self awareness of how her personality impacts on her use of time resonates in this statement.

Summary

A fundamental component of working with others as a critical friend was my ability to develop trust (Bottery, 2003; Gibbs & Angelides, 2008; Swaffield, 2007). I took a risk when I asked the mentors to draw. Adults untrained in art may feel reluctant to do so as Gladding (1998) and Gladding and Newsome (2003) explained in their rationale of integrating art into the counselling process with adults. Also Kearney and Hyle (2004) found that most of the adults in their study did not appear to enjoy or become excited about the opportunity to draw as part of their research methodology. However I found that the mentors were willing participants, enjoying the act of drawing which freed them from the constraints of a traditional verbal, written approach to PD (see for example, Ballantyne, et al., 1995; Cheng & Yeung, 2010; Margolis, 2007). The art based activities acted as a vehicle for cultivating trust between the mentors and myself. This permitted us to develop more meaningful relationships and thus enhance the opportunities for learning to occur (Swaffield, 2008).

The use of drawing allowed the mentors to explore an abstract phenomenon such as *time* from a different perspective. The drawing of a “Container of time” generated reflection by the mentors of their negative conceptualisation of time in more concrete terms. I found that providing the mentors with opportunities to discuss and clarify their intentions was important for my understanding of how the mentors interpreted their images within their teaching and/or mentoring practice. Eisner (2002) reminds us that the use of art and/or images as a “way of seeing is also at the same time a way of not seeing” (p. 11). The relationships made visible through the images created by the mentors can also at the same time obscure other meanings and thus opportunities for dialogue were important to the process. Extending the drawing into the “Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection sheet” (*Figure 33* Rocks, pebbles and sand data collection activity) encouraged further reflections

by the mentors of how their perceptions influenced their mentorship of the colleagues they supported as part of their practice.

Therefore learning in our PAR looked different, the mentors worked together to draw and dialogue in order to negotiate new meanings (Wenger, 1998) of their practice as mentors. The art based activities, as an alternative lens for reflection, opened up possibilities that enriched both the mentors' experience and their context for learning (Wenger, 1998, p 215), moving the mentors into a deeper and more reflective space within a limited time-frame. The art based activities for me became powerful tools as they had the ability to motivate and engage the mentors in a non-threatening method of introspection as they were generative, encouraged dialogue, reflection and reflexivity by the mentors of their own practice.