Teaching Priorities as Both Durable and Flexible: Writing Pedagogy Classes Across International Contexts

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Teaching Priorities as Both Durable and Flexible: Writing Pedagogy Classes Across International Contexts

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As writing teacher educators, we recognize the importance of critical self-study of our course design and implementation. As faculty in new positions after graduating from the same doctoral program and sharing other similar experiences, our current positions present complex opportunities to consider global and local dimensions of preparing and supporting writing teachers. From this unique perspective, we designed this study to critically reflect (Brookfield, 1995, 2009; Thompson & Pascal, 2012) on the priorities we hold about writing and writing teacher education, priorities that have been informed by our experiences and beliefs as well as our reading and research in the field (Bomer et al., 2017, 2019). Early in this process, we were struck by the implications of one of our shared beliefs: being a responsive teacher of writers, and of writing teachers, demands true appreciation of their lived experiences, which are entangled with places and spaces in ways that cannot be over-generalized. In order to stay true to this belief, we recognized the need for authentic flexibility in how we express our priorities in these vastly different spaces. Thus, as we reflected on and planned for our practice, we were most interested in finding balance between durability and flexibility: how could we stay true to our understandings of what research shows writing teachers need while also leaving space to meet the needs of the teacher-students[1] in very different contexts?

To pursue this question, we first stepped back to pinpoint what we understand to be enduring beliefs, methods, approaches to writing teacher

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[1] In this piece, we use "teacher-student" to refer to the students enrolled in our courses. We use this as an umbrella term to cover both pre-service teachers and practicing teachers continuing their education. We also use this term to emphasize the duality embedded in all of these students' identities.

education. For us, this work came from decades of cumulative experiences, as writers, teachers, writing teacher educators, and researchers. Beyond our own reflections, we also drew heavily on a literature review project (Bomer et al., 2017, 2019) for which we reviewed over 80 studies that specifically examined research on preparing writing teachers for initial certification. As we were analyzing and synthesizing studies, one of the first and most obvious themes we noticed was the multeity of philosophical understandings and beliefs present about writing—often below the surface—across the research. This led us to call for teacher educators and researchers to be more explicit and transparent about the discourses, or "ways of using language that also construct knowledge, define practices, and create subject positions" (Bomer et al., 2019, p. 198), of writing they draw on in their work. We also noted particular approaches or experiences that showed promise in disrupting problematic traditions of writing instruction (namely, deficit perspectives of students as writers leading to debased, isolated skills-driven instruction). Specifically, two overall approaches stood out to us: providing experiences that position teacher-students as writers themselves, and creating opportunities for teacher-students to (re)position their own students as strong, capable, and resourceful writers (Bomer et al., 2019).

Through our collaborative self-study, we examined the durability and flexibility of these priorities in two writing pedagogy classes, one in Aotearoa New Zealand and one in the Mid-Atlantic United States. In other words, we looked at what approaches or strategies were flexible enough to adapt to our new teaching contexts and yet still durable enough to withstand that adaptation, staying true to our beliefs about what writing teachers need.

Researcher Positionality, Shared Experiences, and Study Contexts

While, of course, there are some notable differences in our respective backgrounds and positionalities, the two authors' journeys in academia include many shared experiences. We both came to doctoral study after being secondary English teachers in public schools, Charlotte from Missouri and Jessica from New York. We both identify as white, cis-gender women who speak English as our first language. We each moved from our home states and our established careers to attend Capital University (CU), selecting CU's program in language and literacy, at least in part, due to its commitment to social justice in and through education. We entered the doctoral program at the same time and were students together in several classes and seminars in literacy education and teacher education, co-taught classes for preservice teachers, and each visited student teachers on practicum in local schools. While attending CU, we each engaged in the intensive summer institute for the local chapter of the National Writing Project. We also chose to do research, present at conferences, and write articles together (e.g., Land & Rubin,

2020; Rubin & Land, 2017; Rubin et al., 2021), through which we developed understandings about each other and ourselves as teachers who are also writers working toward publication.

After graduating from CU, Charlotte moved across the US to accept a position as an assistant professor of literacy education at a large state-related research university in a predominantly rural part of the Mid-Atlantic US, and Jessica left the United States (US) to accept a position as a lecturer in education at a university in a small city in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ). These new locations are the contexts of the current study, developed during our first full year of postdoctoral employment when each of us learned she would be teaching a class about writing pedagogy the following semester.

The Mid-Atlantic US class context was a residential writing methods course for undergraduate teacher-students, required for those majoring in secondary English Language Arts education. The 2020 cohort included fourteen people, five men and nine women. While most teacher-students identified as white Americans, the class included one international student from China, another who was Korean-American, and another who identified as a "third-culture kid," born in South America and adopted by a white family in the US. Teacher-students in the course had some experiences observing in classrooms early in their program, and a few had taught through volunteer programs, summer camps, or optional coursework. However, most had not yet had any sustained teaching experiences in secondary school contexts. Their formal practicum experiences—a six-week internship followed by a full time student-teaching placement—would take place after this course.

The NZ class context was an online class for postgraduate level teacher-students who were enrolled in several different Division of Education programs (for example, a one-year postgraduate diploma in language and literacy, or a two-year master's degree in education). While the class was smaller (6 people) and all women, there was no "typical" participant. Teacher-students had a range of prior teaching experiences, with some who were earning a master's degree having not yet taught in a classroom, and others who had decades of experience and were looking to improve or expand their practices. Similarly, they were of different ages (20s-60s) and came from many different backgrounds and home countries (China, Fiji, US, and NZ).

New Understandings: Contextual Expressions of Priorities in Teaching Writing

In this section, we present three examples of what our prior research revealed to be durable and significant priorities in a writing methods class. Then, we illustrate how these approaches took shape within our divergent contexts and

consider the textures and implications of our different expressions. The priorities we focused on were:

- discussing teaching and writing practices as connected with multiple discourses of teaching writing and connected with theories (and theories-in-progress) about writing, teaching, and students
- facilitating experiences for students to experience a cycle of writing as writers, paired with opportunities to reflect on and connect those experiences with ideas about teaching
- introducing and practicing appreciative views of students and their writing

Finally, we then present a discussion in which we look across these two contexts at each of the priorities before we consider implications for practice and future research.

Fostering conversations about discourses and theories

The multiplicity of the word "writing" requires transparency about what we mean when we use that term. Different discourses of writing and writing pedagogy "shape texts, the processes engaged in producing and studying them, and the practices assumed to be involved in their production, circulation, and reception" while also shaping "the politics of how students are acculturated into literacy" (Bomer et al., 2019, p. 198). In both of our classes, one enduring priority was viewing practices and other visible aspects of teaching writing through the often less-visible discourses and theories underlying those practices.

Reflecting on Discourses of Writing in the Mid-Atlantic Context

In the US-based class, I (Charlotte) began by asking teacher-students to reflect on their own experiences as writers, looking back at moments that made us feel strong or weak as writers and looking more generally at how writing had been positioned in our lives in and beyond school. The vast majority of their recollections centered around skills-based and genre-based—with attention to school-only genres (Brannon et al., 2008; Whitney, 2017)—approaches to teaching writing (Ivanić, 2004). For example, Sydney (all student names are pseudonyms) summarized the way writing had been positioned in her life as "strict and academic," and opposed to the writing she did beyond school (e.g., social media, making lists, writing notes), what counted as "real writing" in school "was analytic, critical, planned, and graded" (Beginning Reflection, 1/19/20).

As we named these philosophical underpinnings, many students looked back on this focus on skills and school-genres with mixed emotions. One student, Maddie, chose to reflect on three stories from her writing life focused on strict organizational structures, phonics and spelling instruction, and diagramming sentences. In her reflections on these, she positioned them as useful for her as a

writer. For instance, in talking about the teacher who required sentence diagramming, Maddie commented:

> This class was crucial to my writing career because you can't write a sentence without knowing exactly how to form a sentence itself. This class and experience has allowed me to form those sentences into larger pieces of writings. (Beginning Reflection, 1/15/20)

However, when reflecting on these events and her identity as a writer, Maddie admitted while she received high marks on her writing in middle and high school, she was fearful of taking risks in her writing. Similarly, Dylan recognized he had often been positioned as a strong writer in school, but in looking back, he described himself "as a writer that successfully formulates crap" (Beginning Reflection, 1/15/20). He got good grades on his writing, but only because he knew how to write for specific teachers, not for his own purposes and audiences. These comments and others like them illustrated the reliance on skills- and genre-based discourses of writing in their own school experiences, and their already-complicated reflections on those experiences; they were successful within these writing approaches while already expressing some concerns about their overall effectiveness.

Despite this positioning within school contexts, there were a few students who viewed themselves as writers beyond school. They recognized other purposes for writing, including journaling, writing expressively, and writing to connect with others. These writers, along with some specific class activities such as exploring types of texts in the world and critiquing common writing programs, helped push the teacher-students to expand their definitions of what counts as writing, pushing back on writing as primarily about isolatable skills or perfecting particular a genre and reimagining how other discourses of writing—such as creativity, social practices, and sociopolitical action—might also guide decisions about how to teach. In teacher-students' final "Writing Teacher Creed" assignment, they were asked to succinctly write about the philosophies they wanted to take with them for guiding their writing instruction. Across their creeds, there was evidence of teacher-students aiming for more balanced approaches to their writing instruction, including naming creativity and social processes rather than exclusively focusing on strict skills- and genre-based approaches.

Reflecting on Discourses of Writing in the NZ Class

In the NZ postgraduate class, discussing discourses and theories of teaching writing was part of the first section of study. I (Jessica) adapted an inherited, mandatory "academic essay" about discourses of teaching writing to instead focus on fostering personal connections through their analyses. Students were required to engage with an article that discussed discourses of teaching writing (Dix, 2012 or Ivanic, 2004). Almost all of the students chose to focus on Dix's (2012) "local" piece about NZ teachers, in which she uses "three broad conceptual metaphors" (p.

405) to frame her analysis, taking a 'writer', 'text', and 'social' perspective. Through this assignment, teacher-students reflected on their own experiences as writers, in and out of schools, and discussed which aspects of particular discourses seemed to be currently informing their position as teachers of writing, perhaps aspirationally.

In their writing, teacher-students identified that it was hard to generalize the discourses that had impacted their experiences as young writers. Most of their analyses drew from moments of juxtaposition, moments they recalled when a discursive tension arose and brought a difference into sharper relief. For Sharon, a primary school teacher pursuing her master's degree in literacy, it was significant to reflect on her own transition from primary to intermediate schooling in 1970s New Zealand. After having a teacher in primary school whose approach to writing instruction made her feel "valued as a person and a learner" (Assignment, 4/2020), in the year of her transition to intermediate schooling Sharon recalled her teacher "dissected every part of my writing alongside me...I was graded a 'C' with a comment that read: little progress…. still a bother." The attention to discourses allowed her analysis of this troubling experience to be generative. She analyzed this experience as driven by the teacher's adherence to what Dix (2012) identified as a text-focused discourse, whereas Sharon herself decided her own pedagogy aspired to more closely align with a "writer" focus (Dix, 2012) even though she recognized "these discourses are overlapping and merging, and unpredictable" (Assignment, 4/2020).

For Elsie, a world languages teacher, the difference she noted was between in-school writing expectations of her as a student and her out-of-school writing life. She said, "The school approach to writing attempted to position me in the expressivist 'writer' discourses (Dix, 2012), while in my out-of-class writing I positioned myself in the dialogic social discourses" (Assignment 1, April 2020). As a teacher, she also recognized her most recent school's approach to language acquisition writing as being very "text" focused, "and so I focused on teaching students to produce these *products* (Dix, 2012)" (Assignment, 4/2020, emphasis in original). In picturing her future teaching of writing, Elsie discussed valuing the text discourse, and seeing the importance of the writer-centered discourse that was perhaps a bit too prevalent in her own schooling. Most strongly, though, she ended her analysis with a commitment to focusing on social aspects of writing and writing instruction, "bringing together students' out-of-class and class-based writing practices...giving more attention to the wider context within which writing takes place" (Assignment, 4/2020).

Facilitating the Experience of a Cycle of Writing as Writers

Writing teacher educators can design writing experiences for their teacher-students in order to help facilitate positive relationships with writing and provide added insights into how to teach writing themselves (Bomer et al., 2019). We saw this practice as an opportunity to interrupt some teacher-students' past experiences with writing and offer all a fresh chance to experience writing instruction that values process over product, honors their interests and decision-making through emphasis on choice and agency, and includes space for collaboration and reflection. As in previous classes, we both modeled a workshop approach (Bomer, 2011; Ray, 2001) to writing instruction.

Fostering a Cycle of Writing for Mid-Atlantic Teacher-Students

The last third of our three-hour course was devoted to teacher-students' own writing. Early in the semester, they started writers' notebooks, designed to be spaces for collecting ideas, recording thinking, and managing more extended writing projects. Believing one of the hardest decisions writers have to make is choosing what to write about, I (Charlotte) never gave any specific assignments or prompts, but expected students to write in their notebooks at least four times a week. During class, I taught minilessons on strategies for getting started, for maintaining focus, and for going back to previous entries to expand thinking.

After a few weeks, this work transitioned into writing for an audience, a short memoir in this case, and their notebooks served primarily as a tool for supporting this process as I taught minilessons on choosing topics, collecting more ideas around that topic, planning or envisioning the piece they wanted to create, drafting, revising, and editing or polishing for an audience. At the end of the process, teacher-students shared their memoirs with other classmates—and in some cases with other family members or friends as well. I responded to their pieces as a reader, but did not offer any "corrections" or grades on the final product. Instead, students met individually with me for a "process conference" where they reflected back on decisions they made throughout their writing process, highlighting evidence of this work found in their notebooks and previous drafts.

By doing their own writing in class, teacher-students were exposed to a different way of teaching than they had experienced before. Many of them had "workshopped" pieces of writing in their creative writing courses in the English Department; however, none had been in a writing workshop classroom before. In their final reflections and process conferences, teacher-students often commented how their notebooks and sharing their memoirs reminded them writing could be personal, pleasurable, safe. Multiple teacher-students admitted they were beginning to finally see themselves as writers. Lin expressed: "I can actually be a good writer if I want to" (End Reflection, 4/30/20). Nina commented: "I need to have more confidence in myself as a writer" (End Reflection, 4/24/20).

Beyond recognizing the value of writing in their own lives and re-evaluating their identities as writers. Every teacher-student noted they wanted to use some form of a writers' notebook in their own classrooms, and most wanted to try to find space for writing workshop. They also drew on their own writing process to collect and share almost 200 practical teaching points they could take into their own classroom teaching—including strategies for finding ideas, for building routines as writers, for revising and editing pieces for audiences.

Fostering a Cycle of Writing for NZ Teacher-Students

Our class's online space was divided by week; each week, we had a forum for "learning about teaching writing" (for discussion about readings, assignments, etc.) and a forum for "learning about ourselves as writers." In addition to providing materials related to the theoretical and pedagogical content of the class, each week I (Jessica) posted a recorded minilesson (and a transcript with commentary) and invitation for students to try something with their writing. While I had experience teaching a writing workshop thread with teachers in a methods class, this was my first experience doing so in a fully-online environment. As an instructor, this highlighted how much I depend on organic discussion and synchronous experiences to improve clarity and develop depth and texture in this aspect of my pedagogy. The "ourselves as writers" arc of the class began with a focus on starting a writer's notebook and developing the habits and sensibilities that help us to live like writers. From there, we moved to choosing a topic to write more about (each writer her own) and collecting additional entries around that topic. We then moved to discussions about possible genres, then drafting, revision, and publication and celebration.

In their participation as writers, the teacher-students in this class confronted complexities in their own writer identities as they also wrote very openly about the tensions and epiphanies that arose for them through the process. Although we missed out on organic in-person discussion about this, posting thoughts online meant that students had space to think and respond to one another over time, keeping conversations afloat across the week. Teacher-students' posts were vulnerable and thoughtful throughout the semester, and the connections made between their experiences and their teaching came early and often. At the start of the process, Sharon shared her difficulty with getting a regular writing habit started: "I do not look around, open my notebook and instantly feel motivated to write. It's a struggle" (Discussion Forum, 3/2020). In a subsequent post, she said, "My goal is to shift my mindset so writing becomes pleasurable." Over the next few weeks, Sharon was able to make that shift, making time in her daily life for writing and noticing the world as a writer even without her notebook in hand: "I started writing a poem in my head while out walking yesterday evening" (Discussion Forum,

4/2020). In addition to working through these challenges for herself, we discussed that the strategies she used to face the blank page of her notebook, persisting in making time to write and finding ways to authentically enjoy it, were all potential curriculum available for teaching young writers.

Elsie found a way to recognize and, through her writing, explore, some of the deep roots of her own complex writer identity. In our first writing forum, she said once she opened her notebook she realized, "I don't think of myself as a writer and I struggled with whether I really had permission to write" (Discussion Forum, 3/2020). She went on to say she spent several pages going through her own thinking about what it means to be a writer. In a later post, she shared, "I have an idea in the back of my mind that if it's not long, it's not writing. I wonder where that came from?" Through her writing, and her discussion about it, she invited everyone into some important thinking about how teachers of writing can limit or expand students' ideas about themselves as writers, and about what counts as writing.This led to discussion about representation of authors and the inclusion of various real-world genres of writing.

All reflected on the fear they felt in preparing to share their writing with others, and the unfamiliarity of that fear. Despite this, everyone shared a piece of writing (via video post) at the end of the course, and their responses to one another were supportive and generous. Having had this experience, not just of writing but of going through a cycle of writing to publication, most students reported feeling better prepared and more motivated to facilitate something similar for their students.

Practicing Appreciative Views of Students and Their Writing

Both of our writing pedagogy classes included activities or assignments that asked writing teachers to practice appreciative views of students, challenging singular views about the kinds of writing valued in school and the assumption that the teacher of writing is meant to direct and correct the writing of young people. Through this work, we aimed to create "occasions for asking broader questions about the sociopolitical layers of language, literacy, and evaluation" (Bomer et al., 2019, p. 205), reinforcing writing pedagogy that centers students and their linguistic and cultural resources (p. 207).

Building Toward Appreciative Perspectives with Preservice US Teachers

As part of an "Exploring Writing in the World" assignment, I (Charlotte) asked teacher-students to keep a record of all the texts (broadly defined) they encountered over a 24-hour period and were also assigned an interview, primarily focused on a young person's history as a writer and their writing practices in and beyond school. Through these activities, we learned about young people's day-to-day writing practices—which varied from publishing comments or captions on

social media, writing text messages to maintain relationships and make plans, journaling to preserve memories or reflect on experiences, writing summaries and essays for school, making lists of tasks or interesting quotes, coding websites or video games, and so on. As we reflected on this learning, many of the teacher-students commented on the importance of seeing all of these practices as valid and important. Sydney, for example, wrote: "As an emerging educator, I want to validate and draw upon the ways in which my students use writing in their lives, because their lives are *real*. The writing they're doing outside of school is real" (emphasis in original). While many educators and others in our society tend to denigrate young people's out-of-school writing practices as too informal, too short, too unconventional (Dyson, 2008; Ives, 2011), Sydney's comment, like others in the class, reflected a more appreciative understanding about the writing tools young people bring with them as already important and as a resource for building forward.

Since the teacher-students in this course were not currently observing instruction in schools, later in the semester I shared writing from students in various grade levels and from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I asked teacher-students to begin by reading appreciatively, noticing and naming what students already knew about language and writing, and then practicing possibilities for writing conferences with these students. During these conversations, teacher-students acknowledged it still felt easier to look for what was "wrong"—what was unconventional in form, usage, punctuation. Years of getting feedback primarily focused on errors and training to give this kind of feedback (through formal and informal peer reviewing) made this part of the work feel more natural to them. However, they were also able to notice things young writers were already doing or trying in their writing. In her "Writing Teacher Creed" at the end of the semester, Brooke wrote the following:

> I want to validate students' work and worth. I want to focus on their successes more than their shortcomings, and affirm them for the good work that they've done...I also want to instill the mindset that English conventions and standards may be common expectations for academic and professional writing, but there is no overall "right" or "wrong" in the English language. Unconventional genres, integration of other languages, and other experimentations should be praised, rather than condemned.

Building Toward Appreciative Perspectives with Practicing NZ Teachers
I (Jessica) asked teacher-students to engage with appreciative views of students in several ways, including thinking about the purposes of assessment and developing a case study of a young writer focused on conferencing and planning for teaching that moves students forward from strength. In forums and interactions, teacher-students discussed the power of pivoting away from focusing on what was

lacking in a student's writing toward noticing what students, as individuals, were showing about themselves through their writing. This thinking featured in their more formal writing as well, through which ideas about respecting students as individuals and already-writers were reflected in growing conceptions of assessment and instruction.

Many of their contributions focused on the care teachers must use with students and their writing, since writing "makes us so vulnerable" (Penny, Assignment 2, 5/2020). Laurel, a teacher and literacy leader in her school, had experience connecting appreciation for students and assessment; she said her assessment theory "embraces celebration" and that by focusing on celebrating success, "students are proud, their *mana* [spirit] is intact" and by "celebrating the writer they presently are" they can fully embrace the direction of their next learning steps" (Assignment 2, 5/2020). Several teacher-students wrote about the need for teachers to listen to students' voices, both literally and figuratively. Elsie (drawing from Eyres, 2017; and Johnston, 2004), wrote about listening as multidimensional, requiring attention with ears, eyes, and heart, noticing how students engage with the writing process and how they present who they are on the page, and not ever forgetting that any words on a page are that student's voice (Assignment 2, 5/2020). Recognizing the power of students' voices, she said, was not just about respecting what was written, but about engaging students in the assessment of their writing and thinking together about next steps.

In their work with individual writers (mostly via video during lockdown), all of the teacher-students activated the commitments they described, discussing students' work appreciatively and joyfully. Elsie said that through working with a writer from this perspective, "I have learnt that students hold a lot of wisdom and insight about their own writing…. Students do not need their teachers to direct their writing" (Assignment 3, June 2020). They also recognized that part of appreciating students and their work is about supporting them to keep moving forward, providing meaningful feedback that does not simply praise what they have done in their writing, but extends what they are already doing as writers. Jane, who was participating in the class from her home in China, worked alongside a young person whose writing showed her voice and her style as a writer. She used punctuation to build and express her excitement about a topic, and made the beginning and ending of a piece of writing "echo each other" in a sophisticated way. In addition to naming what this writer was doing well, Jane developed three individualized mini-lessons to support her continued growth, including looking at mentor texts that used "echoes" at different points for various purposes. The student was thrilled; she said that her other teachers usually gave her high marks and some general "praise," and then moved on.

Discussion: Looking Across Contexts

In both classes, the ways these priorities impacted instruction and students' learning were generally positive. Supported by our prior experiences and research in the field, adhering to some durable practices in these new spaces helped each of us to have a firm foundation from which to adapt to the contexts we were in. We would posit that any "durable" practices in teaching teachers of writers are only useful if they are also flexible enough to fit the needs of the teachers in front of us.

By making space to examine their own experiences as writers, expand their definitions of what counts as writing, and look at how different theories about writing might manifest within instructional programs and practices, teacher-students in both contexts were able to begin recognizing how their decisions as teachers were not neutral or inconsequential, but instead reflected various discourses or theories about writing and writers that positioned themselves and their students in specific ways. Teacher-students are often reluctant to engage with theory and might see it as divided from practice (Gravett, 2012); when positioned as a choice to make, they prefer a focus on strategies and practical examples. This opportunity to think about concrete practices as produced by and contributing to discourses offered a position from which they could analyze their own experiences as students and their (prior, current, or aspirational) work as teachers as something more than the "right" or "wrong" decisions of individuals. In course discussions and readings (e.g., Dix, 2012 & Ivanic, 2004) discourses were presented as non-exclusive and co-constitutive, which means one's writing pedagogy can be discussed as unfixed and changeable. This perception of discourses (and the practices that grow from them) as fluid contributed to teacher-writers across both contexts as willing and ready to grow as teachers of writing.

By working as writers through a cycle of writing within our courses, teacher-students in both contexts reflected on how they were able to use this space in class to (re)connect with writing that sustained them as humans rather than just fulfilling teachers' expectations. They became more confident as writers and began viewing their own writing through a teacher-lens, drawing on those practices to come up with their own writing curriculum. As we looked back across these experiences together, we were quick to recognize this practice was the least changed by our new contexts. Beyond Jessica's need to adapt to an online forum, our experiences in these new contexts primarily reinforced the importance of this practice for teacher-students across spaces and points in their careers.

Despite their own experiences in schools, teacher-students were beginning to see the value in practicing appreciative views and building from students' strengths if not fully reimagining what counts as "good writing" in school. Jessica's teacher-students overwhelmingly felt empowered by this new way of thinking about students and their writing. Yet, this view, for most in Charlotte's cohort, was

still haunted by their years of strict expectations about "academic" conventions of writing in their conversations. Perhaps particularly because they had not spent much time in schools yet, many still worried about how to balance more appreciative perspectives of students' language with the demands of traditional academic writing. While they saw the importance of changing the way they responded to students' writing, most were not confident they would have the autonomy or authority to build curriculum that did not also include a focus on "correctness" and traditional school genres.

This distinction between the two groups was also likely exacerbated by the larger societal and institutional differences in each context. In NZ, teachers found support in government policies for more appreciative views of students' linguistic resources, even if these policies were not always fully implemented. In the US, though, both societal pressures and policies (as enforced through means such as standardized testing) reified hierarchical—and classist and racist—perceptions of what counts as quality language and writing. These differences in context, experiences in classrooms and societal/institutional differences, continue to make us think about how to further adapt our course experiences to best maintain this priority while also meeting our teacher-students' needs.

Looking Forward

In a written assignment for Jessica's class, Laurel said, "an effective teacher of writing...is constantly changing." The same holds true for writing teacher educators. In both classes, across the overlapping spaces of these priorities (and others) some ideas have emerged about how to continue shaping our practices as we move forward. Overall, we recognize the need to actively continue learning about the contexts we are in to better adapt our teaching and facilitate connections that ring true for the teacher-students in our classes. For example, when discussing discourses and theories, having meaningful examples of common, local writing instructional practices to use when analyzing how practices (sometimes quite subtly) position writers and writing. The flexibility of these priorities does not just exist across contexts, but also across time in our own spaces. In the new iteration of the US undergraduate class for rising teachers, rather than participating in a cycle of writing to produce memoirs, the teacher students will be writing for social action to stress how writing can be sociopolitical as well as personal, and to model a workshop approach where students make more choices about genre. The next NZ post-graduate class offering will have more space for teacher-students to choose their own areas for deeper research to better support those who are looking toward departmental or school leadership, and those who might already be teaching using some of these approaches.

Overall, looking at our own methods has facilitated wider discussions about our beliefs and experiences, producing new avenues for reflection about the meanings of our choices and new understandings about our experiences. For example, as scholars who came from an institution where many of the beliefs we share were nurtured and supported, we have graduated into individual contexts where acting on our priorities takes a different kind of resolve. This is what we ask teacher-students to do all the time—to notice what blossoms in their university coursework and, somehow, take it with them as they navigate the resources and constraints of their new local contexts. It is important to consider how we emphasize the durability and flexibility of priorities for them as well, and we see this as an important facet to continue exploring in literacy teacher education research.

This type of reflective work requires conceptualizing teacher education as responsive without simply being a reaction to any particular prevailing systems. Relevant beyond writing pedagogy, building curriculum forward from clearly articulated and research-supported priorities can be balanced with those priorities that arise organically in a local space. We expect our practices will continue to shift and change as we learn more about our current contexts and/or move into new spaces. Among the possibilities created through international, cross-contextual partnerships like this one, difference and distance can better highlight opportunities for reflection and growth.

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