

**That's more like they know me as a person": one primary pre-service teacher's stories of her personal and 'professional' digital practices**

BURNETT, C. <<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6087-244X>>

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## **Narratives of personal and professional practice: investigating one student-teacher's digital identities**

**Cathy Burnett**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the varied ways in which one student-teacher positioned herself during interviews as she spoke of digital practices associated with her personal and professional lives. It explores the 'recognition work' (Gee, 2005) she did as she aligned herself with different discourses and notes how themes of 'control' and 'professionalism' seemed to pattern her stories of informal and formal practices both within and beyond her professional education. The paper calls for further research into how student-teachers perceive the relevance of their personal experience to their professional role and argues for encouraging pre-service and practising teachers to tell stories of their digital practices and reflect upon the discourses which frame them.

## **‘That’s more like how they know me as a person’: one primary pre-service teacher’s stories of her personal and ‘professional’ digital practices**

**Cathy Burnett**

### **Introduction**

I suppose the way I speak to my family is more formal than the way I speak to my friends. [...] So the way I speak to them in the emails and stuff will be more formal [...]. It’s more jokey with the people from the Post Office. Whereas that would be paragraphs and more organised and I’d go through and think about what I’d said and be thinking, ‘should I have added something or taken it out’, with them it would be more jumpy and scatty and more like how I was thinking cos that’s more like how they know me as a person so they can relate to that now. If I sent them an email like that they’d think, ‘She’s changed at university this girl, she wasn’t like that when she was in XXXXXXX.’ They wouldn’t like it so I have to write in that way.

In this interview extract, a student-teacher, Kate, explores the different registers she uses in her email communication with family and friends. In contrasting the ‘formal’, ‘professional’ family emails with the ‘jumpy and scatty’ emails to ex-colleagues, Kate is explicit about the different personae she constructs through this medium, outlining how she moulds emails to reflect varied relationships and communication styles. This account of shifting identity performance was representative of many accounts given by student-teachers during a seven-month investigation of their perceptions of their digital literacy practices in and out of the classroom. As one of Kate’s tutors, this highlighted the salience of identity in considering how student-teachers might draw from personal experience in digital environments within their professional lives. This paper explores Kate’s representation of her digital practices and argues that reflection upon such narratives helps us understand how student-teachers reconcile their digital experience with their professional role.

### **Context**

Kate was one of seven student-teachers I interviewed during a study designed to use student-teachers’ perspectives of their digital practices to inform debates around technology-use within literacy education. Despite arguments that the curriculum should acknowledge how digital technology is mediating new forms of literacy practice (Gee, 2004; Unsworth, 2001; Bigum, 2002; Lankshear and Knobel, 2006), government-sponsored evaluations of classroom practice claim that integration of technology is still underdeveloped (Becta, 2003; 2008; OFSTED, 2008) and research reviews suggest that technology-use within literacy fails to acknowledge the distinctive affordances of digital environments or reflect digital practices emerging beyond the classroom (Andrews, 2003; Burnett, 2009; Labbo and Reinking, 2003; Lankshear and Knobel, 2003).

By assuming the significance of student-teachers’ personal experience of digital literacy for their professional practice, my study aimed to complement studies by Graham (2008) and Robinson and Mackey (2006). Addressing claims (Prensky, 2001; 2007; Rheingold, 2003) that the younger generation may be better equipped to

understand the possibilities afforded by new technologies, these studies investigate aspects of young and pre-service teachers' technology-use. Robinson and Mackey, surveyed the range of student-teachers' technology-use within two initial teacher education institutions in England and Canada. Having identified variations in patterns of experience amongst student-teachers in the two locations and of different ages, they also argued that many student-teachers' digital experience differs considerably from that of their pupils and noted how students surveyed saw little relevance for more exploratory and playful uses of technology in the classroom. Such findings are concerning if, as Gee (2003) has argued, more playful uses provide a rich model for motivating and supporting learning. In her examination of new young teachers' experience of digital technology, Graham (2008) considers the significance of digital histories to teachers' orientation towards classroom technology-use. She draws attention to subtle differences in attitudes towards experimenting with new technologies which may have significant implications for classroom practice. Both studies therefore explore how teachers' digital experience may be relevant to classroom practice but, in drawing attention to diversity in range and quality of experience, suggest that not all new teachers are confident and innovative participants in a wide range of digital environments.

My study sought to add to these findings about variations *between* individuals by focusing upon diversity *within* individual experience. Drawing from the sociocultural tradition of literacy research which sees literacy as socially, culturally and historically located (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1995; 1997), it explored individual student-teachers' perceptions of their digital literacy practices within different contexts in an attempt to understand better the kinds of digital experience they brought with them to initial teacher education (ITE) and how they might see the relevance of this to their professional education.

### **The study**

All seven participants in the larger study were studying for the second year of a three-year, university-based, undergraduate programme of primary ITE at a university in northern England. In addition to their generalist primary teacher training, they had also opted to study for a specialism in English. As part of their entitlement as English specialists, they completed a module, 'Changing Views of Literacy', which I tutored. Taught from a socio-cultural perspective, this module included an exploration of digital literacy and its implications for the classroom and aimed to challenge the models of literacy evident within dominant curriculum frameworks. The assignment for this module included reflection on the role of literacy practices in a chosen context. I was interested in how students who had received this input would perceive the relevance of their personal digital practices to the classroom.

Three phases of exploratory interviews were used to gain insights into the values, attitudes and assumptions associated with their digital experiences in different contexts, including their personal lives, school placements and university. I also kept a research diary throughout, in which I recorded my own thoughts about the research process and emerging conclusions. In order to ensure that my assessment of participants' assignments, submitted for 'Changing Views of Literacy', was not affected by the conversations we had as part of the project, these assignments were moderated by another tutor.

Participants were recruited through a process of self-selection. All 113 students in the second year of the ITE programme were invited to complete a survey which collected information about their technology use. This included a section for the 44 English specialists to complete if they were willing to participate in the interview study. This approach was designed to both reduce perceived pressure to participate and enable me to select a sample reflecting the range of experience of the broader group. As only eight English specialists volunteered to participate, however, all were invited to do so and, as one withdrew, this resulted in a group of seven. All were female, aged between 19 and 45.

I initially had concerns that this unrepresentative convenience sample might limit insights into the diversity of student-teachers' individual experience. However, my analysis quickly moved from a focus on their experience of different uses to an analysis of how participants used digital technology to mediate and manage transitions between different roles and responsibilities. All participants told stories of managing a multiplicity of roles as mothers, daughters, sisters, partners, colleagues, old friends, new friends and trainee professionals. They described how digital practices were threaded through their complex lives, enabling them to move between roles and explore new possibilities. One participant, Charlotte, for example, conveyed the impression of being at mission control, dispensing orders and sympathy, making arrangements and organising others. She commented:

*It's a standing joke in our house that our phone's always... I don't know what I'd do if I lost my phone. Honest to God, it's like absolute life as far as friends, friends at university, my friends, home, I get like, 'J\_\_\_\_\_, where are you? When are you coming home? Do I need to do this? A\_\_\_\_\_ is going here- is that all right?'*

Using a single, portable piece of equipment and the conventions of fast, brief communication enabled her to make many and rapid transitions during her busy day. Given that my interest was in possible intersections between personal and professional digital practices, I began to focus particularly on how their narratives seemed to reflect different kinds of identity, not just in practices described but in how they presented them to me.

Whilst the continuities and discontinuities of all seven student-teachers' digital practices are explored more fully elsewhere (Burnett, 2008), this paper focuses particularly upon one participant: Kate. At the beginning of this study, Kate was 19 years old. A committed, articulate and hard-working student, she had been highly commended for both her academic assignments and performance on school placements. She was also assistant director at her local youth theatre and had a part-time job in a restaurant. Featured in her stories were repeated references to being 'professional' with regard to her life both on the course and beyond. I was interested in what she seemed to mean by this and what this suggested about how she positioned herself towards her digital practices in different domains of her life.

In this paper, by highlighting some of the themes which seemed to pattern Kate's stories, I explore how different discourses seemed to inflect how she made sense of her experience. In doing so, it is worth emphasising that I draw only from my own interpretation of her narratives. Interviews were supplemented by a series of opportunities for participants, other students and peers to comment on the data and

my analysis. However, the timing of this analysis meant there was no opportunity for Kate to give her perspective on this particular interpretation of her stories. It is quite possible that I hint at motivations and purposes with which Kate herself might disagree.

Many dimensions of Kate's narratives reflected those of other participants: like theirs, as explored later, her narratives repeatedly evoked a fluctuating sense of control and confidence in technology use. Kate's stories, however, are not presented as typical. Instead they are used to illustrate how different kinds of personal and professional identity may intersect as student-teachers reflect on their digital practices. Gaining insights into such intersections, I argue, is important in enabling tutors and student-teachers to reflect on how they see the relevance of their digital experience to their professional role.

### **Discourse and identity**

I draw on Gee's work on discourses (Gee, 1999; 2005) in conceptualising the relationship between practice and identity within participants' stories of their experience. Gee differentiates between 'small d' and 'Big D' discourses, defining 'small d' discourses as socially and culturally located patterns of language, and 'Big D' Discourses more broadly as the means through which social relations are constituted and constrained. As Gee writes, 'when little 'd' discourse (language in use) is melded integrally with non-language 'stuff' to enact specific identities and activities then I say that 'Big D' Discourses are involved' (Gee, 1999: 7). 'Big D' Discourses involve the activities through which people position themselves in different ways and the places, spaces and objects that frame and reflect relationships. As Gee writes,

A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk and often write; so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize... Discourses create 'social positions'(perspectives) from which people are 'invited' (summoned) to speak, listen, act, read and write, think, feel, believe and value in certain characteristic historically recognizable ways combined with their own individual styles and creativity. (Gee, 1996: 127-128)

Importantly, discourses can shrink, expand or shift as different practices are legitimised or de-legitimised within them. For Gee, individuals construct identity through aligning themselves and others to identities associated with discourses. Gee describes this process as 'recognition work' (Gee, 2005). Digital practices can therefore be understood as part of the recognition work people do in aligning themselves towards particular discourses<sup>1</sup>.

As Kate's tutor, I was interested not only in the recognition work she suggested was associated with digital practices in her lives, but in the recognition work she seemed to be doing as she told me stories during the interviews. There is no way of knowing how Kate's stories might have differed had she been speaking with a friend, family member or other student. However, the way we interacted as interviewer and

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<sup>1</sup> From this point forward 'Big D' Discourses are referred to simply as 'discourses'.

interviewee was inevitably shaped by our tutor/student relationship. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from my research diary, in which I reflect on how Kate responded during interviews:

*Initially there was a sense that Kate wasn't sure if she was on the right track with what she was talking about. She seemed uncertain that she was talking about what I wanted to hear. There are difficulties here in establishing a sense of what digital literacy is – also with her role. Is she student or interviewee? How far does she struggle because she knows that she is presenting herself as both and that the dual relationship, however far I attempt to clarify my role, is always there. I think it was important here that I didn't try to define digital literacy for her. She seemed more confident when I asked her to just go ahead with what she'd written. I think, in doing so, I managed to at least start to show that I was a listener here rather than a teacher.*

Kate's uncertainty suggested that she felt that what she told me should be acceptable to me both as interviewer and tutor. In order to try to position myself as interviewer, not tutor, I tried to appear passive and give her permission to drive the agenda, presenting myself as interested listener rather than probing tutor. However, the interviews were inevitably interwoven with discourses associated with our tutor/student relationship. The experiences Kate chose to share with me, and her framing of these, were likely to have been influenced by: the fact that I was her tutor; the way I interacted with her; and her understanding about my priorities, interests and beliefs, including perceptions developed during the 'Changing Views of Literacy' module'. Here then I explore how her stories seemed to represent recognition work as student, and how far they seemed to represent recognition work relating to other kinds of identities. In presenting this one-sided analysis, I highlight how her experience seemed to be captured in conversation with me and, in doing so, draw attention to ways that the apparent significance of experience might be moulded by the context in which that experience is considered.

### ***Kate's stories of control and professionalism***

Kate's stories of digital practices focused particularly on her use of digital communication, which she stated she used primarily to organise her complex life. She described herself as 'completely dependent' on her mobile phone, referring to this as an 'extension of her 'body'. She frequently used text-messages to organise her shifts at the restaurant and was in regular contact with family and friends. She used the internet to search for information linked to her course and interests and, towards the end of the study, began to use Facebook, the social networking site.

The range of technologies that Kate described using seemed to reflect the patterns identified by Robinson and Mackey. She made no reference to computer gaming or other playful applications and focused primarily on her use of digital communication to organise her complex life. As illustrated in the interview extract which opened this paper, Kate suggested that she adapted the style of her digital communication to suit different audiences. In doing so, she could be seen as performing recognition work linked to a series of identities aligned to different discourses. If we consider the recognition work Kate was achieving through the interview, however, it is interesting that references to her ability to move rapidly between roles were a recurring feature

of her narratives. When asked how she would be affected if unable to use digital technology, she commented:

I think it might blur the boundaries more. If I had to speak to people on the phone, it would be hard to keep to the point and just discuss the things you need to because you started getting into stuff like, 'have you had a good day, what did you think about such and such' and you might get swayed into another conversation whereas if you're sending an email, it's straight to the point, people know what they've got to reply to. I think that's easier.

Kate focused upon how her digital practices enabled her to keep different roles distinct, stay focused and avoid 'blurring the boundaries' by being 'swayed into another conversation'. Through explaining how her digital practices enabled her to manage the complex demands of multiple roles, she presented herself to me as efficient, capable and in control within her various relationships.

This theme of control repeatedly inflected Kate's descriptions of digital practices, even those which might usually be associated with less formal purposes. In the following extract, for example, she commented on her use of Facebook, the social networking site, which she began using during the study:

I think you could become a complete victim of Facebook and have it organise your life for you but what I've done is say, Oh right, OK, loads of people are on this, so what could I do to help other things so I've, you know, set up a group for that to advertise performances, and get everyone to join that so you can send a message to everyone in that group saying, this performance is here and you can buy tickets from such and such [...] So I've not just used it as a social thing, I've used it more as an enterprise sort of thing as well...so I don't see it as a negative thing because I'm able to use it as well as it using me

In discussing Facebook with me, Kate did not focus on enjoyment associated with the social aspect of participation. Instead her comments about becoming a 'complete victim' or 'letting it organise your life', seemed to position the social networking site as threat, which could undermine the ordered life she had worked hard to create. In describing her own use of it, however, she focused on how it served her role in the Youth Theatre, stating, 'I'm able to use it as well as it using me.' She suggested that she accommodated Facebook within more formal and ordered discourses by using it 'as an enterprise thing' rather than a 'social thing'. Moreover, her emphasis on her decision to use the site for her own purposes was more in line with the sense of agency and control that seemed to pattern her other stories of digital communication.

Her dismissal of the value of Facebook as a 'social thing' was paralleled by other dismissals of playful and personal uses of technology. She told, for example, of how she exchanged frequent text-messages with her partner:

We do text quite a bit, which I think's silly. I really do because if I text someone, it's cos I need to know something or need to pass on some information, but I think for R\_\_\_\_, it's just a way of letting me know he's there all day and keeping in touch, but I'd just rather have a conversation with someone. [...] He always texts me and I text back because I think that makes him feel better but if I wanted to speak to him about something, I wouldn't text,



I'd ring him up. But I think that's just like the way of keeping a relationship. You do things for each other.

By distancing herself from the 'silly' texting practices her partner preferred, she seemed to contrast what she suggested was her purposeful use of texting - used 'to know something' or to 'pass on some information'- with her partner's need to stay in constant contact, and legitimised her own participation in these exchanges by explaining that she did this for him. Presenting her contributions within a discourse of a caring relationship rather than of frivolity or sentimentality, she again seemed to associate her digital communication with order and purpose.

### ***Stories of passivity and uncertainty***

In contrast to the agency associated with Kate's narratives of personal practices, Kate's stories of university-based digital practices seemed characterised by passivity and uncertainty. She described, for example, the dilemmas caused by a requirement to email a tutor:

You know this children's reading group, I had to email T\_\_\_ to say that I wanted to go [...] With my dad I can say what I like and my friends at work, we've got our own greetings for each other [Laughter] But with T\_\_\_ because it was a formal email, I didn't know how to start it... Because with a letter you'd put 'Dear T\_\_\_' or a card, you'd put 'To T\_\_\_'. But I sat there for ages thinking, 'I don't know what's the correct protocol to email a tutor, I really didn't know what to say'.

In this narrative, Kate suggested she struggled to find an appropriate register. Whilst she presented herself as proactive in managing a wide variety of relationships beyond university, here she emphasised her uncertainty. She suggested that her confidence dissipated as she tried to accommodate conventions developed with friends and family with the recognition work she wanted to achieve through her relationship with a university tutor. This highlights the contingency of confidence in digital environments and the difficulties of accommodating familiar digital practices within unfamiliar discourses and these are themes I explore more fully elsewhere (Burnett, 2008). For the purposes of this paper, however, the significance seems to be in how Kate narrated her dilemma. Whilst her story tells of her vulnerability, she still appears to be performing recognition work as organised, efficient student: by mentioning her desire to adhere to protocol, she seems to emphasise how important this is for her.

A similar concern about inappropriate behaviour was evident when she told of her reluctance to contribute to online asynchronous discussion boards. These discussion boards, available through Blackboard, the university's virtual learning environment, had been posted by the course team to encourage open-ended collaborative discussion. Kate, however, described her anxiety that 'displaying' her 'personality' through posting on a discussion board could jeopardise the professional identity she cultivated:

I wouldn't ask something myself but I would answer something someone else said but anonymously [...] I don't want people to form an impression of me...[...] Like in the discussion board, I wouldn't want to display my

personality. I see it almost like a professional thing in which I need to conduct myself in a certain way.

It seems that Kate struggled to accommodate this kind of practice within her understanding of a discourse of 'being professional'. She needed to 'conduct' herself in a certain way in order to maintain a 'professional' identity and suggested that asking a question might encourage others to draw conclusions about her which could challenge her recognition work as an organised student. Her understanding of 'being professional' here seemed to involve formality and the fulfilment of externally imposed expectations rather than tentativeness or uncertainty. In this extract then she seemed to frame her non-participation as further evidence of her 'professional' approach.

This lack of engagement contrasted with the active way in which she reported managing her relationship with Facebook. In conversation with me, it may have seemed legitimate to discuss her manipulation of Facebook, particularly as this provided evidence of her 'professionalism' or avoidance of being 'dragged into' social time-wasting through informal practices. She may, however, have found it difficult to question the nature or quality of the support provided by Blackboard with me, her tutor, and so presented herself as passive observer rather than active manipulator. Her presentation of these university experiences could be seen as part of the recognition work she was doing in positioning herself as student through the interviews. If so, her focus on fitting with protocol and appearing 'professional' suggested that she associated a student identity with being organised and meeting standardised demands and expectations.

Kate's accounts of her digital practices outside the classroom both in her personal and university life seemed to be patterned by a discourse of control and order. She told stories which reflected her 'professional' approach, providing evidence of her efficiency and keenness to comply with accepted ways of doing things (or protocol). Perhaps this was because her need for control and order reflected her 'primary discourse' (Gee, 1996). Or perhaps, as she was talking with me, she framed her personal practices in ways which seemed most appropriate to her recognition work as student-teacher.

### ***Stories of technology use within the classroom***

At the time of the interviews, Kate had only completed one block placement at the end of the first year of her course. During the study, and following this placement, however, she participated in the 'Changing Views of Literacy' module which included critical evaluation of dominant classroom practices involving technology including those involving its use to support whole class teaching. Given this context, it was possible that these perspectives would have influenced how Kate spoke of her classroom practice. However, although she had contributed enthusiastically and thoughtfully to module discussions, there seemed to be little evidence of such perspectives in her narratives of classroom practices. Both the practices she described and her descriptions of them seemed to be aligned to dominant discourses:

Kate	I would use an interactive whiteboard, especially for whole class teaching. So I'd use it for introductions and plenaries for sort of motivating and capturing attention. For like a different way of
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presenting things to children to like see things from a slightly different angle and also I think, more children can see so that's really useful and it brings resources into the classroom [...] But also, I found it was really good for visual learners so whenever I was talking about something... If I had to read a poem or something, I wouldn't just read it, I'd always have it displayed.

Cathy            So how have you learned that that was good for visual learners?

Kate             It was sort of the feedback I got really from my observations. Just like, 'This would be nice- you could do this as well.' So I started doing it and it worked so I thought, 'Yeah, I'll carry on doing it'.....

Whilst we learn little here of how Kate structured the rest of her lesson or the kinds of activities in which the children were engaged, Kate's justification of her use of the whiteboard seemed to reflect a discourse of teacher-led provision: she used technology to enliven and engage, linking motivation with 'capturing attention' rather than deepening learning. She also evokes the increasingly prevalent discourse of 'learning styles' to justify her approach, considering the whiteboard's value for 'visual learners': the poem is projected onto the whiteboard and displayed there. Again the children seemed positioned as observers rather than participants as the poem was projected on screen.

It is perhaps unsurprising that her stories of classroom practice reflected dominant discourses rather than the alternative discourses explored through 'Changing Views of Literacy'. As Britzman (2003) has explored, the discourses encountered on school placement during ITE are often far more influential than those encountered at university. Kate was at the early stages of a course, had responded positively and proactively to feedback given and received praise for her approaches. By aligning herself with practices approved by her teacher she gains affirmation and, in doing so, perhaps performed recognition work within a legitimised 'professional' identity. Indeed, she expressed no doubts about the suitability of such activities. In contrast to the hesitancy and uncertainty which characterised her stories of university practices, she spoke of her classroom-based practices with conviction: note the use of 'I would use...', 'I think...' and 'I found...' She presented herself as back in control, sure about what she was trying to achieve and able to be proactive in gaining success in a professional role. This narrative could be seen as performing recognition work not just as successful student but as successful student-teacher.

### **Intersections between personal and professional identities**

Whilst Kate's stories told of practices aligned to varying discourses in different contexts, her *presentation* of practices within and beyond the classroom seemed patterned by repeated references to order and control. This seemed to be important in understanding the possible relationship between her digital practices and professional identity. Kate seemed not only to frame her classroom digital practices within a discourse of order and control but, in discussion with me, also seemed to recruit her personal practices to her recognition work within this discourse: she presented herself as efficient and capable in managing different environments, avoiding anarchic or frivolous uses. Kate's stories of her informal practices, therefore, seemed to reflect the discourses that patterned her school-based

practices. It seemed that her presentation of efficiency and competence in her personal life combined with her agentive descriptions of classroom practices bolstered her recognition work as efficient and competent student-teacher.

Kate's focus on order and control is interesting given the kinds of digital practices which have been associated with more innovative technology use. Lankshear and Knobel (2006), for example, highlight how new possibilities for relating with knowledge and others are associated with flexible, participatory and informal digital practices. They argue that these kinds of practices seem to offer most potential for using technology in educational contexts in transformative ways and that educationalists have much to learn from the creativity and innovation that is often associated with informal practices. In contrast, Kate's presentation of both her formal and informal practices seemed to reflect an educational discourse which reifies order and control.

### **Implications**

There is no attempt here to suggest that Kate's experience was typical and, of course, Kate's perspective on her digital practices and her approach to integrating technology within the classroom may have evolved or been framed differently within other contexts. Whilst the study captures insights gathered during a seven-month period, Kate's practice continued to develop. Indeed, reports from colleagues suggest that Kate has now graduated as an exceptionally able and reflective practitioner keen to experiment and innovate with new technologies. It is possible her focus on order and control in these narratives reflected concerns that were particularly relevant to a student-teacher part-way through her professional education. Her implied notions of 'professionalism' may have shifted as she progressed through her course and the early stages of her career. However, the way she told her stories did seem to be significant in understanding the barriers and opportunities associated with encouraging student-teachers to draw from their informal experience of digital literacy within their professional role. Her stories prompt questions about the kinds of digital practices that are deemed legitimate and the kinds of digital identities given credence within educational contexts. Further research is therefore needed to understand the values, feelings and assumptions associated with use and the social, cultural and historical contexts which shape such assumptions. Listening to student-teachers' stories of digital practices may help understand the barriers they face to drawing from that experience whilst in school.

The insights gained through such stories also suggest there is a need to review how technology is framed within ITE. Much current practice around identifying student-teachers' differing levels of experience in using technology relies upon audits of skills and competences. However, the insights reported here suggest that the telling of stories of digital practices deserves a place alongside such activities. Commenting more broadly on work designed to encourage teachers to tell and reflect upon stories of educational practice, Olson (1995:120) argues that it is important to develop teachers' 'narrative authority' through giving them the confidence to discuss their own practice and the influences upon it. If students are encouraged to tell their stories, they may be empowered to reflect on and make meaning from their own experience (Huber and Whelan, 1999; O'Connell Rust, 1999). Given the pressing need to review and develop the use of new technologies in classrooms, it would

seem important to encourage student-teachers to develop such 'narrative authority' in relation to their stories of their own digital practices.

Graham (2008) has already begun to explore this potential, through encouraging practising teachers to tell stories of learning to use digital technologies. Such work could be extended to consider the relationship between digital practice, literacy, identity and discourse and its relevance to teaching. The opportunity to tell and reflect upon stories, if embedded in professional education, may encourage student-teachers to distance themselves from their own experience and not only explore the assumptions underpinning that experience but perhaps imagine new kinds of connections between personal and professional identities and, in so doing, explore truly transformative ways of using technology in educational contexts.

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