Bringing the Personal to the Practical: Collaborative Instructional Design as Conversation

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Abstract: During 1988-1989 the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, and the Instructional Processes group from Edmonton Public Schools undertook a collaborative project to design and produce a Level II interactive videodisc on questioning strategies in the classroom. This paper tells a little of the story of that design process, suggesting an alternative way of characterizing the collaborative instructional design process as a sustained conversation. Conversation, which explores and uses the experiential bases of the designers as the source of knowledge for design practice, is explored as instructional design method, instructional plan, and the content of the resulting videodisc. Implications for instructional design practice are suggested.

Resume: Au cours des annees 1988 et 1989, la Faculte d'Education de 1'University of Alberta et le groupe Instructional Processes des Ecoles Publiques d'Edmonton se sont engages conjointement dans un projet de conceptualisation et de production d'un vioeodisque sur les strategies de questionnement dans la salle de classe. Get article raconte 1'histoire entourant le processus de conceptualisation du videodisque. La conversation, 1'exploration et Putilisation de 1'experience des concepteurs comme source de savoir est discutee comme methode de la conceptualisation, planification d'instruction et contenu du videodisque. Des implications pour la pratique de conceptualisation d'outils d'instruction sont suggerees.

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> *Noddings... drew attention to the ways we situate ourselves in relation to the persons with whom we work, to the ways in which we practice in a collaborative way, and to the ways all participants model, in their practices, a valuing and confirmation of each other. What Hogan and Noddings highlighted is the necessity of time, relationship, space, and voice in establishing the collaborative relationship, a relationship in which both researchers and practitioners have voice.*
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> Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4.

Through 1988 and 1989 the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, and the Instructional Processes group of Edmonton Public Schools undertook a collaborative project to design and produce a Level II interactive videodisc on questioning strategies in the classroom titled, "Do I Ask Effective Questions?" (The QDisc). This project was described in 1991 (Campbell-Bonar & Grisdale), and again from a more ethnographic perspective in 1993 (Campbell-Bonar & Olson). This latter frame, in a real sense, paralleled both my developing understanding of the roots of my own instructional design praxis and a growing frustration with what I perceived to be constraints in systematic instructional design practice. The two "imperatives" came together for me as I became more comfortable with the narrative and autobiographical research I was encountering during my doctoral studies. Finally, I began to merge my backgrounds in curriculum development, teaching, and instructional design by revisiting the design process for the QDisc in a series of narrative research conversations in the spring of 1993 (Portions of these conversations are included, and the speakers identified, in this paper). On one level, the resulting study is the story of an instructional design project. But on another level, it is a story of how four teachers became intimately connected to each other through a collaborative process, a process that binds them together socially in a collaborative relationship, giving everyone a space and a voice. This paper retells a little of that story, and attempts to extend the ideas contained in the culture-building paper (1993), by suggesting an alternative way of characterizing the collaborative instructional design process as a sustained conversation

The telling of stories is a purposeful way of connecting to the intimate lives of their authors. These lives, revealed through socially-intimate conversations, contain the stories of asking questions in the classroom. These questioning stories became the content and the plan of the videodisc, the *sharing* of them the way that the plan emerged.

The story of the collaborative instructional design process is likewise nested with the instructional story told by the QDisc. The instructional story is itself reflexive of the stories of the QDisc-makers who are makers of questions, askers of questions, and tellers of stories about the rhythms of questions in classrooms. And finally, the telling of the stories of the QDisc-makers is at the same time the story of maintaining the ties of this teaching family through distance and time and experience.

This story tells of the conception and unfolding of a collaborative project to design an interactive videodisc for preservice and inservice teachers, with unexpected consequences for its collaborators - enduring relations that in their living continue to be transformational. Developing and sharing these connections in constant, collaborative conversation helped the instructional plan to be narrated, the instructional design process to be defined.

The Members of the QDisc Family

At the time of the study, Al was a senior professor in the Faculty of Education, a man who resisted collaboration by institutional mandate, but who naturally sought out and thrived in collaborative groups. An early reader of Michael Apple, a University Discipline Officer who felt strongly about involving students in the governance of their community, Al is a deeply thoughtful man who consistently acts in a caring, moral way in a professional context (the academy) that, in his experience, often demanded allegiance to dualistic structures of thinking and acting. Al came to the QDisc project typically full of curiosity about the rational instructional design process, remembering this as a time when "we were really on the bubble" (Al, 1993, May 20).

Roy came to the project status-poor, a graduate student on sabbatical leave from teaching. Of us all, Roy was most competent in creative and formal group processes, yet most comfortable working with the technical aspects of television production. After the project Roy resumed his teaching life in administrative leadership, but now focuses on curriculum development, because teachers "need someone to support them" (Roy, 1993, May 20).

Louise is a senior administrator who, more and more, seeks opportunities to work collaboratively with teachers, administrators, community members, and colleagues in teacher education. At the time of the QDisc project she was a consultant in a professional development program based on Joyce and Shower's (1988) peer-coaching model. Consistently curious (Jamieson, 1993) like Al, Louise saw her professional commitment to the collaborative process as a continuing personal commitment to everyone in it. She seeks different frames with which to understand this time, examining the process as a consultant, as a teacher, and as an administrator.

This paper is mostly *my* story of instructional design - understanding how I act as a designer in projects that were institutionally mandated (I'm talking about collaborative teams involving teacher educators, teachers, administrators, designers, and production teams), and that framed my working life for ten years. In examining my life and its enduring connections to the lives of those with whom I plan, I propose to authorize tools of instructional design that are denied in theoretical models of rational design. These tools are the tools of personal connection; that is, language, humour; social context. As in a family, we built patterns of language, of discourse, that defined us and kept us intimately connected through time and distance. This spoken language, the Conversation, was the content and process of design, and the means through which we shared what we each knew, collaboratively constructing new meanings of questioning.

Understanding My Own Praxis

The times I liked teaching best were when I *was planning* to teach. Both teaching assignments in my public school teaching career involved resource problem-solving, identification or creation of unusual materials and events, and the planning and implementation of new curriculum and activities.

I was transformed by having the experience of collaborative curriculum planning in the implementation years of Edmonton Public School Board's Extended French pilot program, an intensive second language program for which existing curriculum needed to be substantially adapted. Intimate conversation, negotiation, and creative problem-solving were personal and working styles that presaged my entry into the instructional design field.

My formal introduction to this field was a result of entering a Master's program in Curriculum and Instruction in Secondary Education at the University of Alberta in 1978, for which Dr. Douglas Parker was my supervisor. Newly excited by the possibilities of using microcomputers in the French classroom, he encouraged me to investigate this new technology in my own program and to explore other media-based approaches to teaching a second language. At one point, he demonstrated an early interactive videodisc: A personal epiphany! I immediately enrolled in television and instructional design courses and began working with him and David Mappin, Director of the Instructional Technology Centre, to field-test the Faculty's first videodisc, "The Golden Touch of Midas".

As a team member on SIMCLASS II, later to be called "Classroom Discipline: A Simulation Approach", my design contributions were very closely based on my personal experiences in the classroom. The disc contains four scenarios, each based on an actual problem in classroom management. After the opening video sequence which sets the problem the student, in the role of the classroom teacher, is confronted with a series of choices for action, each of which has a related sequence of choices. The scenario unfolds until all the possibilities are revealed and an evaluative summary of the student's choices is provided. My job, initially, was to take the skeleton scenarios and first menu choices identified by a large team of content experts (faculty and graduate students) and extend each "thread" to a resolution. Each menu choice on that disc was based on a personal action. I had made all of those mistakes and had all of those successes. I told how event would fold into event on the videodisc, and the plan was given authority by flowcharts, script pages, videotapes, and computer code.

During subsequent projects involving teams of faculty members and teachers, I learned more about design by doing it, at the same time studying the prevailing theories and models in the field. No one approach seemed to reflect what I was coming to believe was an essential element in the process - the

personal practical knowledge of the instructional designer. Nor did any describe the process of design as I was experiencing it. Since I was supposed to be the expert, I resolved this personal dilemma by referring retrospectively to the theory or model which best seemed to fit the finished design.

As I worried about the problem of professional expertise, I took a course from Richard Butt at the University of Lethbridge and, at the same time, began working with Jean Clandinin at the University of Alberta. I realized that a melding of the work on teachers' autobiographies with that on teachers' personal practical knowledge gave me a key to understanding my own planning practices - growing up as the daughter of a teacher, my own schooling experiences in that context, the daunting task of creating new resources during my teaching years, the videodisc development with Douglas Parker and David Mappin - all contributed to my genesis as an instructional designer. Since all my design projects took place in the social context of a collaborative team, I became committed to a praxis that involved the sharing and blending of personal stories about teaching and about life, in context-bound, "constant collaborative conversation" (Streibel, 1991, p. 128).

The sharing of teaching stories, the creation of the content knowledge for the instructional plan, was a transformative social activity (Wexler, 1982). Britzman (1991) asserts that voice permits participation in the social world. The conversation in instructional design is a social activity with cognitive aspects in that the discursive process involves the "social negotiation necessary for the production and interpretation of knowledge" (Britzman, 1991, p. 38, italics added); and it is transformative because "life review and the act of telling one's story (are) active components in the process of transformation" (Benmayor, 1991, p. 164).

An Alternative Process of Instructional Design

In this study, then, I propose an alternative instructional design praxis grounded in the tenets of narrative discourse; that is, that the process of *collaborative* instructional design:

is a process of negotiating meaning through the telling of stories;
uses socially negotiated meaning as content;
is a social activity;
is transformative for all involved in the construction of the instructional story;
permits me to construct it as a feminist model, in that the process legitimates participants as the subjects of their own lives;
and results in the enduring relational obligations of the family, that is, the moral obligations of care and responsibility for the others.

Negotiating Meaning Through the Telling of Stories

In this research study, I characterized the conversation-based instructional design process as a metaphor which describes both the process of constructing instructional meaning, that is, the way that we designed; and the content of the story of questioning, the story of the design of the videodisc "Do I Ask Effective Questions?". Conversation was the interactive social activity in which we engaged, privately and reflexively, with our own life stories; and publicly with each other's tellings of their lives. This was a reflexive process in that design conversations were internalized conversations made public and accessible (Bruffee, 1984). I include in this public telling the conversations with teacher/exemplars and with others in the institutions. Conversation revealed the teacher lore (Schubert, 1991), or "beliefs, values and images that guide teachers' lives" (p. 207), that were at the heart of how each of us understood being in the classroom as question-askers. After Dewey, this conversation *is* the making of curriculum, or in this model the design of instruction. In the collaborative probing of the meaning of our stories we were able to draw upon the collective knowledge that "gives meaning and direction" (Schubert, 1991, p. 210) to the experience of questioning in the classroom.

Traditional, technical models of instructional design may also use language as a tool with which to probe the knowledge of assumed experts. From a feminist perspective, however, language can be an instrument of power used on informants (here, subject matter specialists) to extract what they know. The resulting "data" can then exist in forms completely independent of the personal meaning with which these individuals would have imbued them, for example, in anonymous notes to be used later. This is almost a violent image to me, suggesting strong language in explanation: The process of decontextualization suggests obliterating the personhood of the knower, recasting personal practical knowledge without reference to the personal. On the other hand, conversation is a mutual, reciprocal process authorizing a "breadth of subject matter and variety of voices compatible with it" (Florio-Ruane, 1991, p. 239) and, instead of imposing order, welcomes the twists and turns of meaning and understanding that define its equity of form and content.

In addition, conversation is the research process by which we came to understand the phenomenon of the QDisc project. During the design phase, we came together to share stories of our reflexive knowing-about the process and the experienced transformations in our lives and our work. The conversation was without boundaries - humorous, resistant to institutional accountability; ultimately transformative - and we again came away with new understandings about the QDisc project and a mutually constructed, plurivocal story of the making of curriculum.

Using Socially Negotiated Meaning as Content

How do many stories, many voices, many meanings, become the story of questions in the classroom, the story of the QDisc? The process of constant, collaborative conversation is a process of negotiation, of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1987), which engages the design team members in a dialogue with the phenomena of their lives. This is a process of finding the spaces where shared ownership of meaning can be claimed, where conversation requires each of us to clarify and authenticate for ourselves and for each other our "motives, authentic experiences, and common meanings" (Aoki, 1991, p. 73).

This negotiation, which is achieved in the public arena of conversation, does not result in a single interpretation of reality. That is not its intent. Rather, the multiplicity of meanings embodied in the telling of our stories is merged imaginatively into collaborative stories with many characters, many plots, many nests of meaning. The telling of stories did not result in the pulling apart, or isolation of strands of narrative meaning, but in the re-weaving of whole strands into a new product, the story, the instructional design of the videodisc.

What is central to a study of the making of the plan, then, are the problems of how conversation let the designers "produce and reproduce meanings and myths about education through their theories, practices, routines, discourses, contexts, and reflections on educational life" (Britzman, 1991, p. 15); and how these shared meanings and understandings of teaching life became the story of questioning on the videodisc. Collaborative conversation as instructional design process is thus inseparable from blended stories as content. Both clientele (teachers) and purpose (to understand the questioning process) for the instructional videodisc are intimately related to decisions about presentation, i.e. the instructional plan. Florio-Ruane (1991) makes this point in her discussion of the purposes and kinds of writing. The instructional videodisc is meant to be interactive, that is, it compels the learner to actively construct meaning from it. Therefore, the content and plan that is exophoric in nature "evokes in the (user) who shares its context images of his or her own experience that resonate with those drawn on by the author... Both (designer and user) participate in the creation of such a text's meaning" (p. 247).

Collaborative Instructional Design is a Social Activity

Various persons taking turns at talking - this is the "web of expressive social activity" (Borland, 1991, p. 63) that situates the designers at the center of a creative, dialectical process in which life experiences define the community of knowers. Elements of this knowledge community include the sharing of a multiplicity of meanings, values, imaginations, and histories. Sharing through oral personal narratives occurs naturally within conversation: This meeting in conversation is the "quintessential human act, the *social*

moment wherein and where we have authentic recognition of the other" (Brody & Witherell, 1991, p. 263). This social moment is recreated each time two or more of the design team members come together in conversation, because the community now shares a social history which I have come to think of as reflective of a family structure.

Collaborative Instructional Design is Transformative

The collaborative conversation is a process of authoring, but I go beyond the idea of authoring as the making of the plan, to the notion of authoring my own life through the making of the plan. It is in this sense that the conversation, the telling of who we are, the sharing and blending of meaning and values, is transformative for all the authors, the makers of the QDisc. Tappan and Mikel-Brown (1991) argue that this process is a moral activity because it "influences how we think, how we feel, and what we do" (p. 181). Further, reflective conversation as authorship is developmental, or transformative, in that it "not only expresses itself through narrative, it also develops through narrative... (and) such reflection also entails learning..." (p. 182). The telling of stories as instructional design praxis, or discourse as instructional design praxis, is a cognitive activity requiring reorganization, reassessment, and realignment of life experience (Brody, 1991), and in the sharing is both personally and publicly transformative.

Collaborative Instructional Design is a Feminist Construct

The instructional design process should be collaborative and socially constructed, based on conversation, negotiation, reflection, intuition, and embodied knowledge. Accepting that embodied knowing is the basis of praxis, I must make room in the instructional design process for the knowing expressed in the voices of all other design partners. Each design act is predicated on the personal/practical/professional knowledge of each design partner, and both the design process and the product will provide an account of our constant, blended, collaborative conversations. Authorizing the voices that tell these stories is a collaborative and ultimately, for me, a feminist practice.

Why a feminist practice? Because a socially negotiated process grounded in the intimate sharing of narratives legitimizes ways of knowing not imbricated in the canonical power structures of rational, technical, and finally paternalistic models of knowing and doing. After Bakhtin (1986), these models of authoritative discourse are the word of the father, invoked in systematic models of instructional design and valuing knowledge as an entity to be discovered and controlled. In contrast, a conversation makes room for multiple value systems and is plurivocal, and reflects the "Principles Behind Feminist Praxis" elucidated by Hollingsworth (1991), and by Belenky et al. (1986). In this view, the process values, rather than deprecates, emotions, intuitive leaps

and personal experiences as the basis of knowledge, and encourages continuous celebration of our discoveries, changes, and rearrangements of power through new narratives. Because conversation is so public and accessible, it masks the power question, "Whose account counts in this story?" because in its give and take it blends all accounts.

The Enduring Relational Obligations of the Family

"Making room" is characteristic of a feminist stance in which fidelity to others is an overarching concern (Noddings, 1986). The story of the making of the QDisc is fundamentally concerned with a community of story-tellers who practiced valuing and confirming the narratives of each other; building an enduring community of caring. Each conversation is a "return to community" (Benmayor, 1991, p. 166), a place where we are deeply engaged with each other's lives. This community became a haven where role definitions were fluid, where power structures were changed and rearranged through new narratives.

This process became a marker event for us all. In terms of our family history we count life events and construct new narratives from that time. Membership in a caring community means that we honour each other and our ways of knowing whether together or apart. The notion of family goes beyond community, however, in the depth of intimacy attained by entering into each others' lives and forging bonds that endure through time and space as we come together again to make a new story, the story of the making of the QDisc.

Conversation as Design

In conversation we make meaning out of stories, meaning that is enacted in a plan. This is the Conversation as Instructional Design. In this conversation, every story we tell is intentional: We share our images of teaching, and these images are given life by the teachers who ask questions. We share our teaching stories, and these stories become the content of the questions the teachers ask. We share our lives as parents, and our family lives are connected to our images of teaching. The instructional design evolves from talking about our shared classroom experiences, told as we engage in editing conversations, working with the videotaped images of our exemplar teachers asking questions in their classrooms. The rhythm of the conversation is the rhythm of teaching is the rhythm of the design. There is no clear distinction between the design activity and our lives.

In this excerpt, we talk about how the design conversation modelled the actual technology that would represent it: it was intuitive, dynamic, spontaneous, chaotic, and interactive, and it was very personal. Roy expresses the transformative nature of conversation:

> But there was also each and every person getting an education... maybe (that) added to the commitment and the ability for the design to continue. If, at one point, had this not happened, would the design have stopped? (Roy, 1993, March 18).

At first, the conversation does not seem to fit into the rhythms of school and academic life. Institutional accountability makes clear the expectation that a well-defined job is to be done in a plan-ful way that does not accommodate the personal rhythms and learnings (the coming-to-know-about) of collaboration. Of the four of us, Al and I felt most accountable to this view, and consequently most guilty about its defiance. I remember my vow to stick to the agenda (whatever that was) when I heard Al talk about his uneasiness with the slow pace of the process, although for Louise and Roy the conversation was a revered essential in their coaching and drama and teaching families.

The conversation, which was based on the shared language of teaching, emerged from our talk and from the talk contained on the videotaped classroom stories that unfolded as we watched. The stories in the QDisc were told in the classrooms as we watched, and we reconstructed those stories later, in the editing suite, into the instructional story of questioning. The stories of Question Framing, and Wait Time, and Taxonomies, and Questioning Disabilities - all were assembled from the Conversation about the teaching we saw unfold in front of us, frame by frame, from the day's master tapes, and the next day's videotaping was informed by the meaning shared, conversationally, in what we had seen. Thus, the teaching itself became the content of the conversation, which became the instructional plan called "Do I Ask Effective Questions?"

This seems to be an honest way to tell stories of teaching for others who will come to know about questioning. Conversation authorizes the decision to actively value the stories told in the asking of questions in the classroom, by legitimating them as design process. In this process we trust the teachers we are honouring at the same time as we honour each other's knowing-about teaching. Al describes the editing conversation as design process:

> I was just thinking that part of the consensus-making, part of the decision-making took place when we were up in that little place (the editing suite) and Roy was spinning the dials on the machine and picking out sequences. I mean, there was a sense that this is what we have, so whatever we make it's going to be made out of this. And so, that became an important part of the decision-making (Al, 1993, May 20).

This active process rejects a retreat into the artificiality of scripting:

> ... you armchair this stuff and you write out questions and classrooms are well-behaved and everything is just perfect... And you start

> getting into real classrooms and that's not the way they are... (Al, 1993, May 20).

Instead, it empowers conversation as a way of teaching that comes from the personal practical knowledge of the designers:

> But, at some level, that's part of being teachers again. And I think, to go back to consensus, that that's what we do every minute of our lives, in classrooms, and as coworkers... We didn't even have to say to each other, "We know that, that kids are going to answer that you didn't expect to have answer, or a teachable moment's going to come up and that'll take 11 minutes", you know, we knew those things and didn't have to talk about them (Al, 1993, May 20).

The conversation requires that we share images of teaching by telling stories of teaching. Here, one shared image is a common one of 'just getting one more little thing in' to the teaching conversation:

> One thing I really like pedagogically about Level II videodiscs, is with the teaching sequences, you return to it again and again and again. That really... gives the right impression about teaching... that there are a lot of things going on here, a lot of angles... (Katy, 1993, May 10).

Louise agrees, "Yeah, that it's complicated... That it's not sequential, and when you learn this, then it's learned? And you go on to the next thing? I really like that, that it's complex. Sophisticated..." (Louise, 1993. May 10).

And, finally, the conversation helps us to connect our lives to our images of Good Teaching, which are embodied on the videodisc as the content and the design.

Why Conversation?

Design partners in a collaborative process need to be aware that each is the sum of all past experiences, and that their embodied knowledge - about teaching, about relationships, about life - will cause them to interpret the design task and experience through personally and socially constructed symbols. Conversation is the public symbol system that allows this embodied knowledge to be surfaced and made available to the group, so that meaning may be negotiated and then captured in an instructional plan. As a symbol system, conversation corresponds to shared knowledge and provides the means with which we can connect on a deep level to each other's life experiences - our values, imaginations, and "ideological and axiological frameworks" (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991, p. 81). The telling of stories, the oral narratives which provided the content and drove the process of the collaborative instructional design, were the meaning systems represented in

the constant conversations in which we engaged in workrooms, in restaurants, in classrooms, at lake cabins, on the telephone, while watching daily rushes in the television studio - over time and space and separation and nested lives. And as participants in each other's lives we became primary collaborators in each other's stories (Campbell, 1995),

Collaborative conversation as an instructional design method has been problematic for the theorists of the rational paradigms, unless they are able somehow to systematize the process or reduce it to the work of team-building that happens before the real work of design can begin. This is a view embraced in the androcentric worlds of industry and academia, although I suspect that there are more design anarchists like me than would be admitted at annual professional meetings. In fact, reviewers of my work have consistently confided their intuitive models while refusing to delineate a socially constructed process, except retrospectively4 submit that any instructional design process involving two or more team members *will* unfold in a conversational milieu, admitted to publicly by its participants or not; and that the making of an instructional plan will always require a constant internalized conversation with oneself, as well. So, what does the collaborative conversation look like, and how are its elements embodied in the curriculum/the design? For this I turned to the insights of feminist oral historians who, in their work with women with whom their lives became entwined, understand the process of telling lives as one of seeking deep moral connections with others.

The Purposes of Conversation

Conversation is collaborative, participatory, and inclusive: The purpose of conversation is to establish a community because community is the source of power and meaning (Tannen, 1990; Minster, 1991). We recognized the power of the community of the teaching family in providing us with collective memories and as a social structure that let us do the work of design. "Roy said something very interesting in one of these conversations... that we always set a place at the table" (Katy, 1993), and this setting of a place, this establishing of community through conversation was accomplished through the telling of a teaching story, putting out on the table our personal practical knowledge about teaching. The stories always contained collective memories, for example first-year teaching stories, that set the stage for the sympathetic, intentional talk about the process of teaching that, in retrospect, contain the meaning of the design. These stories are sympathetic and intentional just because they are told to cement relationships in the group - stories that are revealed as collective memories in the sharing.

The Forms ofConversation

If we accept that conversations are negotiations for closeness in the community (Tannen, 1990) then the forms that the conversations take must be both purposeful and personal. While the androcentric purposes of conversation may relate to power hierarchies (whose account counts most?), the conversation as negotiation has as its purpose the making of communal memories. Out of these memories come kernels of meaning that are collectively owned (Minister, 1991) and that lead efficiently to new stories of meaning in the community. Verbal markers, key phrases, questions, jokes, gestures, particular connotations such as "weasel words" and "technofear" - tools of the conversation - all are refrains that are regularized and are functional (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991; Etter-Lewis, 1991). Thus, the telling of stories in the social milieu of conversation can still be authorized by guardians of institutional accountability. Both the forms and purpose of this conversation do differ substantially from the ritual talk of academic committees to which Al once referred, however, because it is meant to be non-competitive rapport-talk (Tannen, 1990). Typical of this conversation: Cooperative overlapping in which thoughts are linked with shared life experiences. Louise and I typically do this by simultaneous speech, by finishing a story started by another. We all do this by joining in to the self-deprecating joking about our shared personal and teaching dilemmas (Minister, 1991). Meaning is negotiated, communal memories are created by the sharing of humorous anecdotes and personal narratives, commonplace matters and mundane experiences (Minister, 1991). In conversation the stories can be told, and in the telling the curriculum is made.

A Few Implications for Instructional Design Practice

There is a strong tendency, I think, on the part of instructional designers based in corporate and industrial settings to resist a deeply personal authorization of their practice which actually supports the use of feelings and intuition - the "just knowing" that their praxis is right, that it embodies everything they know about design. I, on the other hand, resist just as strongly the pressure to rationalize and systematize my own practice by developing a 6-step process to "build a team culture", or "establish the conversation"; a process that can then be automatized by others in the same contexts. Knowing what I know now, I don't want to return to justifying my practice retrospectively. Perhaps the different contexts in which we work demand that we be alert in different ways to the demands of time, space, money, deadlines, distribution, implementation; competing professional lives: I call these the demands of institutional authority and accountability, and I suggest they lead to what Maxine Greene calls "the depredations of technique" (1978, p. 17).

I do believe though, that whatever our instructional design contexts, we must be attuned to the people with whom we are engaged in essentially a task of meaning-making. Given this, we must then value the rich knowledge bases, the personal practical knowledge that we bring initially to the design task, and keep probing the active reconstruction of meaning that is made as the instructional plan, or design, unfolds. What does this mean for design practice?

Certain *deliberate* practices enabled the Conversation to unfold in the project described in this paper. For example, as design team leader initially, I made a point of visiting each team member at his or her workplace several times, during which we talked about our lives - teaching histories, families, current work lives, future personal and professional goals - and sometimes those conversations had questioning as a topic , or included questions about what an instructional design project involved. Those conversations continued for four months before the team was *officially* brought together in the first design meeting. When we did meet in the Fall of 1988, the institutional authorities said we had begun our task. But we were far ahead of the task, because now we knew each other and shared a common understanding of questioning in the classroom. And, we knew how the design process was going to unfold because we had experienced and had articulated the culture of the classroom: we would go into classrooms and let teachers tell their own stories through their actions, and we would take those stories back on videotape and examine them for the plan. Because we decided, deliberately, to share design power (or knowing), we took turns with the process by rotating design tasks such as brainstorming, flowcharting, scripting, editing, and so on. We were able to proceed this way because we had a design space that was ours exclusively for a year— a room with a door that closed, away from phones, and equipped with coffee and food. We felt authorized to design together in social spaces like restaurants and our own homes, because conversation flows in the social milieu of a community, and that's what we had become. And even when the others had to go on to different things at the end of the academic year, as it happens while final editing and design decisions were still unmade, I was able to make decisions and bring the project to conclusion in full confidence that I had the trust of my team to tell the story that we had mutually constructed.

In Conclusion

The story of the making of the QDisc is the story of the tension between the authoritative discourse of instructional design and an internally persuasive discourse - the subversion of the practice of rational, lock-step instructional design processes (first you write objectives, then you create test items...). It is a story of the rejection of received and static knowledge and the celebration of alternative ways of knowing and "ever newer ways to mean" (Britzman, 1991, p. 21). It is a story of breaking the sanctioned rules, the sacred myths of the

discourse of technical rationality (Schon, 1983) and celebrating the ambiguity of words, the play of meanings in conversation. Collaborative conversation as instructional design praxis is the internally persuasive discourse that is socially negotiated and constructed through the telling and retelling, living and reliving of teaching stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

This is a story, the telling of which is a fundamental human activity and thus of instructional design practice. I tell it this way because "narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate *knowing* into *telling"* (White, 1981, p. 1).

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Footnotes

Throughout this paper I use the word "praxis" to refer to my ID practice from within the frame of my personal practical knowledge, a term first coined by Connell & Clandinin, 1988.

I've been asked if a conversation-based process can deal adequately with the "conversational steps of an instructional design model, such as needs assessment, defining learner characteristics, etc." This is a paper written from outside the frame-work of those activities, and it in fact assumes that certain activities, like needs assessment, have already happened. I don't wish to imply that they should not happen just because they are technical steps (or are they, necessarily?) This story starts with the making of the instructional plan.

The word I have chosen to use here, reflexive, implies a kind of interactive "bouncing back", that is a sort of circle of reflectivity.

For example, one reviewer for "The Instructional Designer as Constructivist: An Anarchist's View" commented, "As I began to read the article, I immediately thought of my experienced as a designer and the times I was asked, 'What model do you use?' My very flip response was 'the intuitive model' and then quickly went on to describe how we use parts of various models in the order which fits the project, the faculty, the situation. So I can identify very closely with the writer of the article."

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