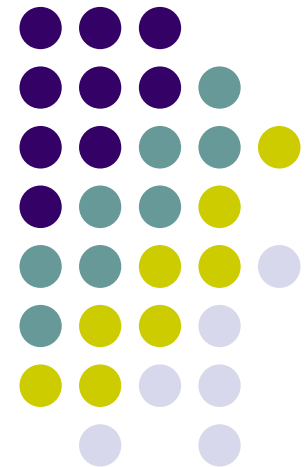# Developing self-reflective pre-service teachers through text and audio based asynchronous online discussions.

Jo Brady, **Australian Catholic University**

Catherine McLoughlin, **Australian Catholic University**

Mark Lee, **Charles Sturt University**

The context: teacher education

- Grad Dip Secondary field practicum
- 2X4 week placements, for observation and teaching practice
- Students work in isolation, within school communities
- Advised and mentored by university staff
- Practicum is assessed
- Need for both formal and informal support

Professional development

- Field practicum
- Reflective practice
- Professional identity
- Structured on-line program designed to overcome professional isolation
- Graduate Diploma of Education Secondary program

The use of virtual mentoring is time and place independent and is a medium through which every education student can benefit (Watson, 2006).

The project: developing self-reflective teachers
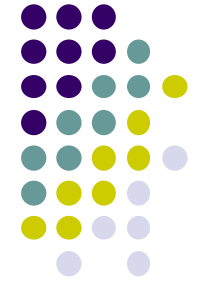
- Professional identity
- Development of self- reflective practitioners
- Enabled by digital tools, within an LMs
- Peer-to-peer with lecturer intervention
- Use of voice (podcasts) with text based online discussion

Integrating ICT effectively

- Studies on synchronous and asynchronous online discussions have revealed that students preferred more time independent discussion such as asynchronous communication (Poole,2001).

- The use of asynchronous discussion time is valuable for allowing more time for reflection and reactions (Lim and Tan (2001).
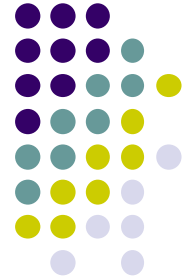
Reflective practitioners

- Pre-service teachers often struggle to employ theories from university coursework in their teaching (Duquette, 1993; Fang, 1996; McCormack *et al.*, 2006).

- Yet, 'the most contentious dimension of initial teacher education programs is the nexus between theory and practice' (Brady *et al.*, 1998, p. 2).

- "Pre-service teachers, then, need opportunities to interact with others during reflection to articulate beliefs and make sense of emerging understandings" (Schoffner, 2008).
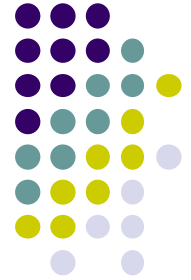
Online peer mentoring

- A partnership between 2 or more people who want to share and develop mutual interests and skills

- Sharing expertise, learning and growth

- Virtual environment supported by social software enables collaboration

- Main challenge: the human connection

- Benefits: flexibility, time efficiency, reflection

Aim

- Communal interaction in reflective peactice
- Create an e-mentoring system
- Offer emotional support, feedback and encouragement
- Mitigation of professional isolation and anxiety
- Students recorded and shared critical incidents while on practicum
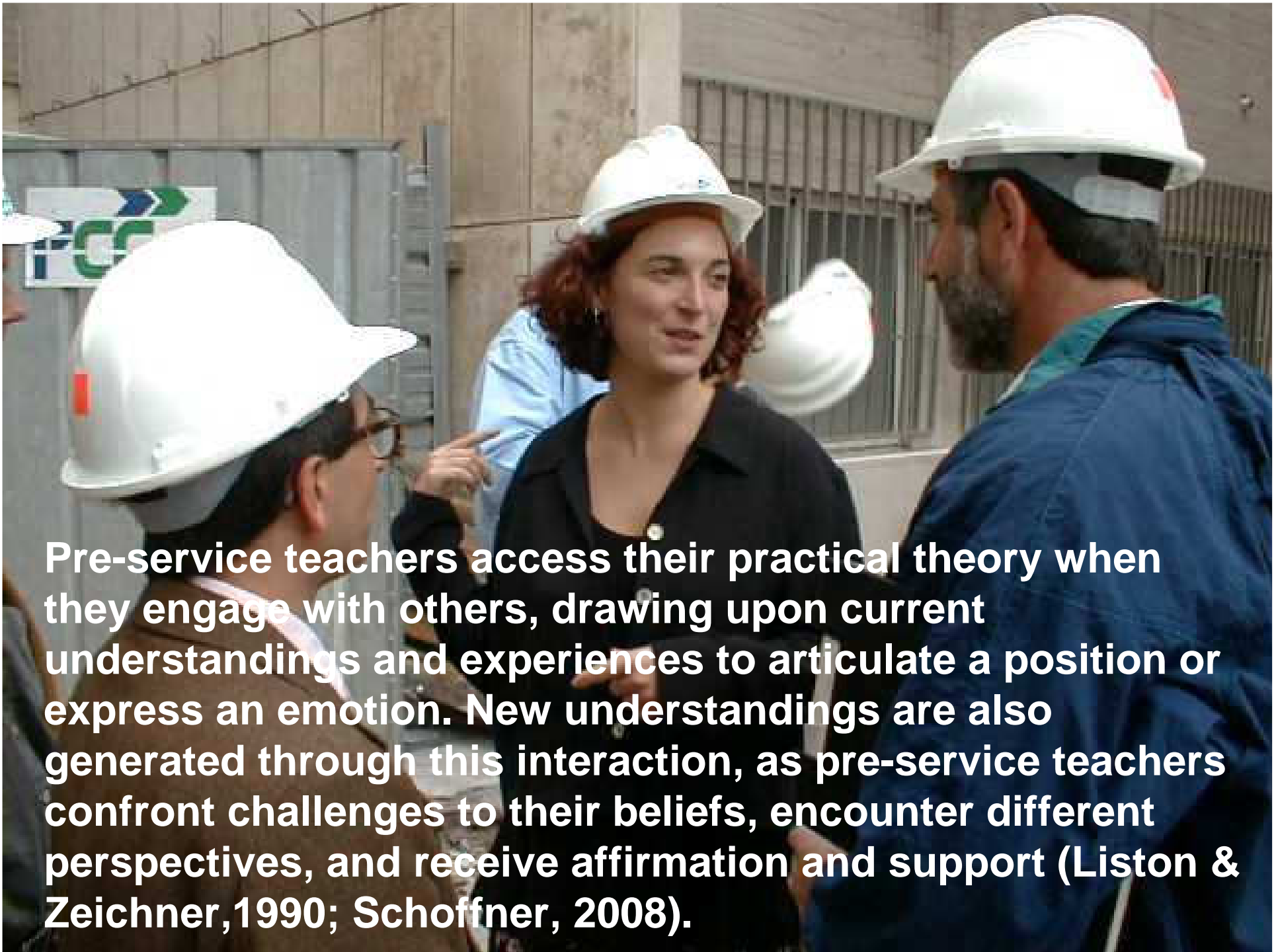
Pre-service teachers access their practical theory when they engage with others, drawing upon current understandings and experiences to articulate a position or express an emotion. New understandings are also generated through this interaction, as pre-service teachers confront challenges to their beliefs, encounter different perspectives, and receive affirmation and support (Liston & Zeichner,1990; Schoffner, 2008).

Reflection benefits when multiple perspectives and diverse voices are brought to bear on issues of teaching and learning; pre-service teachers learn to articulate their ideas and understandings when they engage with others (LaBoskey1994)

In the context of pre-service teacher education the opportunities for the "enactive experience" through the practicum and the vicarious experience of observation in the field enable the opportunities for the development of self efficacy beliefs.

A practitioner who reflects-in-action tends to question the definition of the task, the theories-in-action that are brought to it, and assess the performance. (Schon ,1983)

Asynchronous online discussions were selected as opposed to synchronous as these are more task oriented and allow the participants greater opportunities to reflect on what they have learned before posting responses (Lim &Tan 2001)

The value adding potential of podcasting technology to learning lies in its community-building value, and its use as a vehicle for disseminating learner-created content, to peers as in this research study.
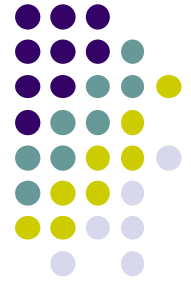
McLoughlin & Lee (2007)

Research questions
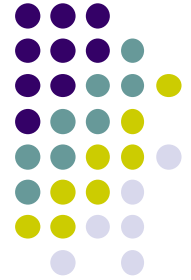
- How did students use the blogging and voice discussion tools to engage in professional conversations?

- What were the emergent themes that were the focus of discussion in the student podcasts?

- What evidence was there of the students becoming self-reflective practitioners?

Web based tools to support online discussion

- Wimba Voice Board (Wimba Inc., 2007) tool.

- allows the creation of threaded, asynchronous audio discussions that are also integrated into the Blackboard environment

- it requires no specialised software other than a Java-enabled web browser.

Study design

- This study was designed to evaluate the impact of the sharing of audio recorded stories of critical incidents on the development of reflective practice within a learning community among pre-service teachers who formed dyads.

ACU National

Teach | **Student View**

GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL EXP 1 – EDFX503 – 2007 Semester One, Canberra

Course Tools

- Course Content
- Announcements
- Assessments
- Assignments
- Calendar
- Chat
- Discussions
- Goals
- Learning Modules
- Local Content
- Mail
- Media Library
- Roster
- SCORM
- Search
- Syllabus
- Web Links
- Who's Online
- Library

My Tools

- My Grades
- My Files
- My Progress
- Notes

Your location: Home Page › **Week 1**

Week 1

Description (click to collapse)

Write a 200-300 word report on a critical incident, issue or problem that occurred based on the following steps..
1. Context
2. Student actions
3. Teacher actions
4. Questions for peers

See example.

Topic Type: Blog
Graded: Yes
Peer Review: No
Posting Restrictions: Allow post and reply
User Identification: User Name

Create Message   View Drafts

Select All | Deselect All   Sort by: **Date** ⇩ Author

☐ **Subject:** week 1 at the school
   Author: **Date:** May 29, 2007 12:27 PM

i am teaching year 8 and year 10 advance maths class at ▓▓▓▓ college (all boys school). after the first week i had some issues with actually raising my voice, i found i was bit soft spoken at the beginning of the class, but towards the end i was getting used to raising my voice when needed. the first two days i was also having problems adjusting to writing on the board, which i am very conscious of at this stage. preparing or coming up with new starter exercise is also a challenge at this stage.
In the year 8 class there has being instances when i had to change seats of some students as they become chatty and not doing their work. another challenege in week 1 has been knowing their names which i think is really important and hoping to know by end of week three. My supervisor has been really great and supportive.

i have to start thinking about the behaviour management strategies and being confident in implementing it.

Comments | **Forward**
(0 Comments / **0 New**)

☐ **Subject:** First week Practicum (Late message)
   Author: **Date:** May 28, 2007 10:12 AM

I am teaching Music at the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓, during this week I have got about 12 hours teaching, (about 9 solo teaching and 3 or 4 hours team teaching) in week one and around 11 hours teaching even though I wasn't certain about the load I meant to do. I didn't really think that would be the issue for me. My focus teaching area

Done

ACU National

Teach   Student View   **GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL EXP 1 – EDFX503 – 2007 Semester One, Canberra**

Course Tools
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Your location: Home Page › **Mentoring**

Mentoring

This is for students on EDFX503 to record their experiences. Please refer to the instructions on the home page.

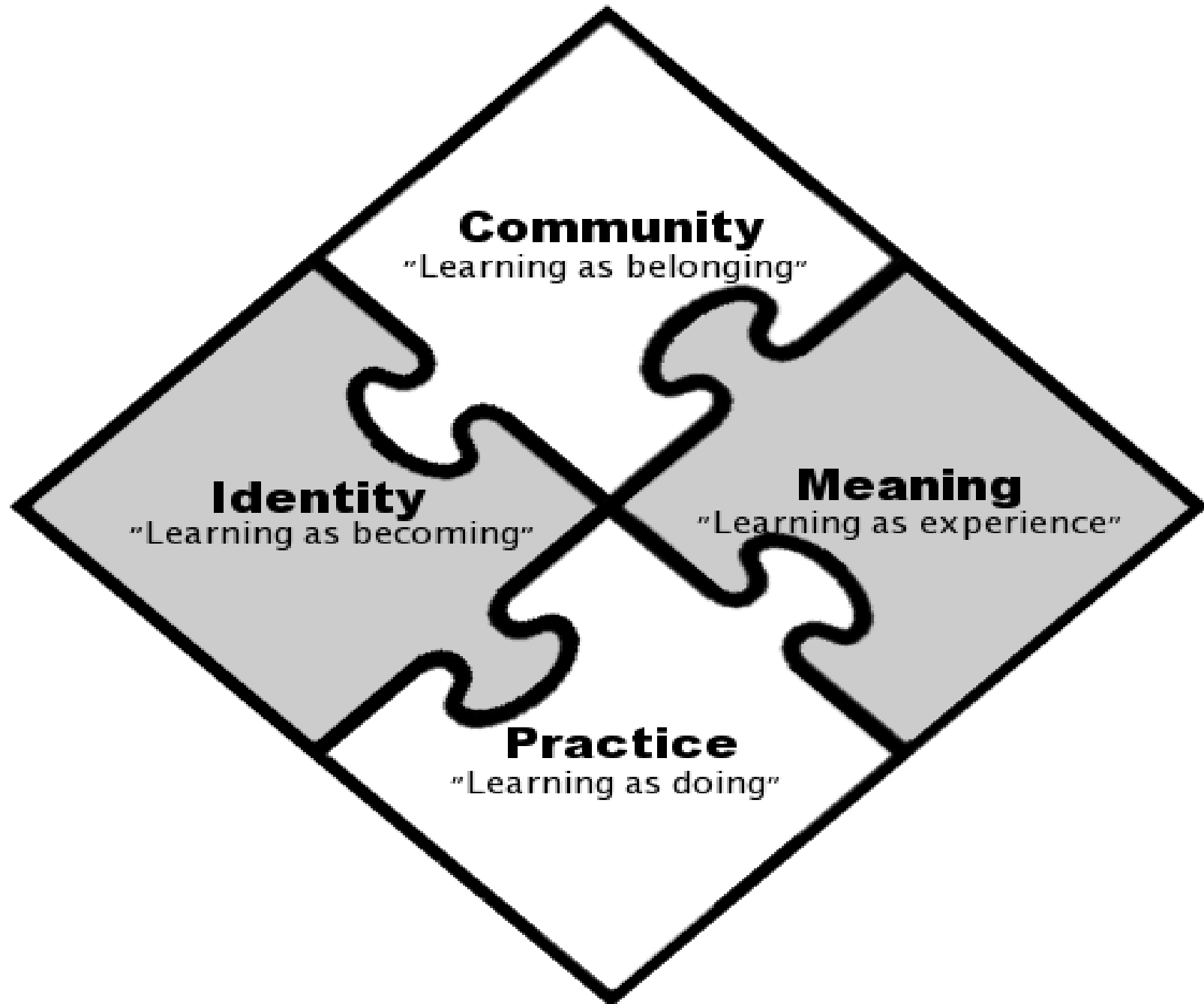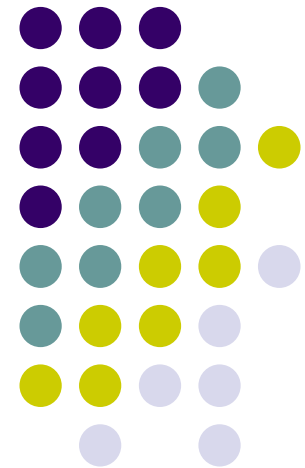**Wimba Voice Board**

New   Reply   Options

- **Being Prepared** from ‹
  - **Re: Being Prepared** from ‹
  - **Re: Being Prepared** from ‹
- **Mobile Phones and iPods** from ‹
  - **Re: Mobile Phones and iPods** from ‹
- **first week** from ‹
- **G'day** from ‹
- **Chatterbox** from ‹
- **critical reflection on wk 1** from ‹
- **W1 – IT** from ‹
- **Question for** from ‹
- **My little voice** from ‹

Subject: 0:00
Date: 0:00
From:

Applet board started

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Results

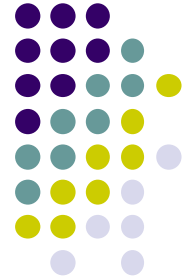# Content analysis of discussions

- Classroom practicum experience: initial experiences
- Pedagogy: Choices, decisions
- Classroom management: Issues and problems
- Nature of Teaching: linking theory to practice
- Concern for students: statements pertaining to the welfare/learning approach of students.
- Reflections on self-efficacy:
- Resources: statements in which students talked resources including teaching ideas, general information, or instructional strategies.
- Lesson planning: statements in which a student discusses the need for planning in advance of the lesson
- Emotional reactions to classroom occurrences: Expressions of surprise/positive and negative comments on the events and interactions of the classroom
- Future speculation: teachers looking ahead and commenting on future plans for teaching based on their initial experience

| Component	Explanation	Examples from student discourses	Occurrences from focus group discussions as %
Community	▪Belonging ▪mutual engagement ▪ joint enterprise	On the first posting I feel that if I did have someone who was doing the same thing as me, they would understand more in depth It just sort of helped me when I got home to know that I was not alone	34
Identity	▪Learning as becoming; ▪use of shared objects	The other thing I liked was just learning new skills Just knowing who is teaching what subjects and what levels so you can share things	24
Meaning	▪participation in community ▪negotiated experience	It was nice to have that community support while we were going through that experience I also see the benefit of having somebody to share ideas	23
Practice	▪learning as doing ▪ shared goals	Knowing that everybody went through the same thing, more than once on some occasions	19
Total			100%

Conclusions

- Voice connections very powerful, reduction of isolation

- Content: sharing of experience, common ground

- The voice board in combination with the blog enabled reflection on professional growth experiences, as well as providing a solution to the problem of isolation.

Conculsions

- Initial levels revealed a superficial treatment with little analysis and a descriptive approach, limiting their response to immediate solutions.

- through dialogue and social engagement with others, they learnt not only about the teaching profession, but also about themselves as practitioners.
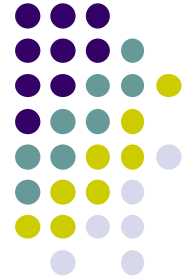
Conclusion

- The process of asynchronous online discussion provided the pre-service teachers with a structured opportunity to interact with others during reflection to articulate beliefs and make sense of emerging understandings.