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**STUDENTS TELL THEIR STORIES TO LEARN ABOUT
SOCIAL STUDIES: AN EVALUATIVE CASE STUDY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Education

at

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Sue Blackwood

2004

I certify that the thesis entitled *Students tell stories to learn about social studies: An evaluative case study* and submitted as part of the degree of Master of Education is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged and that this research thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:  _____

Date: 10 December 2009

Abstract

A fundamental learning and teaching principle involves drawing upon prior knowledge. This may encompass reflecting upon a past experience and using it to make learning 'connections' with new information. One strategy to assist in making those connections in the curriculum area of social studies is to reflect on one's personal history. By doing so, social studies can become more meaningful for students. Social studies is not only about content knowledge but the development of life skills enabling students to confidently participate in society.

This research used an evaluative case study approach, to establish how writing a personal history could assist students to learn about social studies in a teacher education context. Through the analysis of questionnaire responses, focus group discussions and document analysis of student assignments, themes emerged relating to how personal histories supported their learning. These themes suggested that personal histories had allowed students to realise the personal and social significance of their past and the social studies curriculum. Personal histories had also supported the development of the student/teacher relationship, which had a positive effect on learning. In addition, the use of personal history supported emerging teacher identity, and the role student teachers play in children's learning. The effectiveness of this learning process was derived from a social constructivist theory of learning. The use of personal histories as a form of assessment is recommended for developing knowledge of social studies and its participative pedagogy.

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