

TLRP Meeting of Minds Fellowship Report

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I was already an 'established researcher' (though I generally did not see myself as this). I had been involved in a number of collaborative projects with colleagues from other HEIs and published in high quality publications as a joint author. The TLRP Meeting of Minds fellowship provided the opportunity and focus to develop my own writing and publishing capacity as a sole author with dedicated, specific support and professional guidance from a critical friend – Professor Pat Sikes, University of Sheffield.

I felt that I struggled with *writing* as the following poem perhaps illustrates:

Writing Day (2007)

Children gone, washing on
blank screen
Check emails and respond
10.30 second breakfast, washing out
blank screen
peruse an associated article
make a few notes, type in a quote....
and the full bibliographic details
Next load.
Emails - many more, distract, respond.
A few subheadings
A sentence to incorporate the quote
Look up the journal guidelines
5000 words
oh well, 4,800 to go.
Lunch in the garden
Washing in.
More emails. More quotes.
What was it I wanted to say? I'm not sure.
Suddenly a bit of a splurge, some thoughts, structure,
most of the words come to me
Dots for the gaps, come back to them later.
Children home. 500 words total.
Concentration gone.
Ah well, I've spent a day writing.

It was my approach to writing in addition to the writing itself that we focused on through the fellowship. The activities and support enabled through the fellowship included: face to face meetings 24 hours apart with a day of writing activity in between: ongoing email and telephone contact; and a 'writing residential' in a hotel room near Pat's place of work.

There have been a number of outcomes in terms of produced writing – the completion and acceptance of an article, two chapters, two research grant bids (unfortunately unsuccessful). Perhaps more importantly, in exploring my approach to writing I have developed some strategies to support my approach to, and focus on, writing:

- * turning off the internet and email
- * setting time goals and timed 'breaks', including email breaks!
- * leaving sections that required looking up other material, discussion with others, further literature etc
- * talking to myself (in my head and out loud) about **what I mean to say**, trying to find my voice in my writing
- * keeping in 'track changes' to show myself how much I have done!
- * standing back and looking at my own writing as I do when working as an editor.

The TLRP Meeting of Minds Fellowship provided the impetus and focus for this.