

Joining the dots: Piloting the work diary as a data collection tool

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This paper describes and analyses the pilot of one data collection tool, the work diary, for an educational research project. Before inclusion in the wider research project, the researcher developed, piloted and qualitatively assessed the feasibility of the data collection tool. As the wider research project will be conducted in and investigate inclusive education practices, the processes and design surrounding the development and pilot of the work diary were aligned to the principles of inclusivity. This paper provides reflections and lessons learnt about the importance and relevance of the pilot as worthwhile research practice. It also provides specific discussion about focused preparation by the researcher to overcome some of the limitations associated with the use of the work diary and its implementation in educational research. Specifically, the pilot was undertaken to 1) determine what research partners thought and felt about the use of the work diary; 2) determine what improvements and or changes needed to be made to the work diary and related processes before implementation. Findings of the pilot confirmed wider research commentary about the benefits and limitations about the use of the diary under the themes of 1) purpose, 2) format and ease of use and 3) participant preparation and support. The benefits of comprehensive pre-planning and design process outweighed the limitations. The work diary was a useful data collection tool to record activities of busy school teams as required for the wider research project. The use of the diary was likened to joining dots of a children's drawing activity to reveal a complex picture of interactions.

The background

This paper demonstrates the affordances of the work diary as a data collection tool for both pilot studies and qualitative research of social interactions. Observation is the cornerstone of many qualitative, ethnographic research projects (Creswell, 2008). However, determining through observation, the activities of busy school teams could be likened to joining dots of a child's drawing activity to reveal a complex picture of interactions. Teachers, leaders and support personnel are in different locations within a school, performing diverse tasks for a variety of outcomes, which hopefully achieve a common goal. As a researcher, the quest to observe these busy teams and their interactions with each other was daunting and perhaps unrealistic. The decision to use a diary as part of a wider research project was to overcome the physical impossibility of simultaneously observing multiple team members. One reported advantage of the use of the diary in research was its suitability as a substitute for lengthy researcher observation, because multiple data sets could be collected at once (Lewis, Sligo, & Massey, 2005; Marelli, 2007).

This paper describes the design, pilot and evaluation of the diary, before it was used as a data collection tool in a wider PhD critical ethnographic research project. The design and methods employed in this research were selected to link with the social cultural

theme relating to human rights and inclusion. This theme provided a theoretical and practical foundation for why and how the research was carried out and reported. To the critical ethnographer “data are where you find them, and all things are potential data” (Thomas, 1993, p. 39). Others recommend that critical ethnographic methods of data collection need to be “dialogic, dialectical and collaborative” (Angrosino, 2007, p. 12). To achieve this, the diary was included in the research methodology as a data collection tool. It was considered both a document and a tool for participant observation. Designed, planned and used in the context of an inclusive research project, the diary processes would need to be “dialogic, dialectical and collaborative” (Angrosino, 2007, p. 12). There is much academic criticism of the use of the diary as a research tool with many reported disadvantages (Bolger, Davis, Rafael, 2003; Hall, 2007; Nicholl, 2010). Reported disadvantages include those related to its purpose, format and participants (see Figure 1). A pilot was necessary to determine the reported disadvantages of its use in the research context.

The pilot or the field test is characterised by the administration of a procedure, tool or instrument to a group prior to a wider research project (Creswell, 2008; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, Okely, 2006). For this research, data from the diary pilot provided vital information to and experience for the researcher. The pilot enabled the researcher to evaluate and refine related processes such as time taken for participants to complete (Kervin et al, 2006) and improvement to the instrument itself for the research project (Creswell, 2008). This was an important factor as the tool was new and was being used with an unfamiliar group of participants (Polit & Beck, 2004). The pilot assisted a relatively new researcher gain experience with working with participants and the tool itself (Beebe, 2007).

The process and outcomes of a pilot can provide significant information including its difficulties and benefits for the wider research community. Sapsford & Jupp (2006) recommend that a researcher look for a critical account of how a data collection tool has been piloted to provide guidance. Some research articles report the use of a pilot to test a data collection tool (Williams, Walker, Martin, et al, 2008). However, the reports rarely describe the process of the pilot or even the findings. The benefits of pilots within the research community, has been described as “undervalued and underreported in the literature” (Beebe, 2007, p. 213). Consequently, the importance of the pilot is underestimated by researchers and many have adopted a data collection tool without consideration of the issues that may impact on its effectiveness.

No specific advice about conducting a pilot of a qualitative diary in an educational setting was found in the research literature. The resulting intent of this pilot was to respond to predetermined disadvantages described in the literature about the use of the work diary’s implementation, rather from any previous diary pilot recommendations.

The diary pilot

As part of good research practice, a literature review about the diary and its use provided much valuable direction for its development. The researcher sorted information from the literature into the following themes, (a) *purpose* - why a

Table 1: Summary of disadvantages and benefits about the use of the work diary

Work diary	Disadvantages	Benefits
Purpose	Records small snapshot in time; Not widely used in ethnography; Reactance – may cause a change in participants; Cannot be used by itself; Subjective record.	Lower cost compared to wages/time of observer of multiple participants; Multiple observation record; Assists triangulation; Pre-cursor to interview; Records and reconstructs events; Creates conscious perceptions; Shows practices vary over time; Rich and illuminating; Can be used in conjunction with other tools to confirm or inform; Access to events not easily observed or influenced by presence of observer.
Format	Extensive training and practice; Time consuming to create and complete; Onerous for diarists; Difficult to maintain anonymity and privacy; Restricts comparison of events; Complex, detailed written and verbal instructions and terminology required; Analysis difficult; Examples need to be provided.	Opportunity to compose narrative; Daily recordings more accurate; Reduces recall error by diarists; Provides choice and elucidation; Records feelings, perceptions and behaviour immediately.
Participant	Reflection may be challenging; Event to be identified; Enlisting cooperation; Varied literacy/articulacy skills; Commitments and dedication to complete; Uncertain compliance; Forgetfulness to complete; Time consuming; Self editing of events; Self-reporting/administered; Follow up and support by researcher.	Can write about events their way; Become participant observers; Self-reporting; Opinions are valued; Self reporting/administered.

Adapted from Alaszewski, 2006; Bolger et al, 2003; Camburn et al, 2010; Clayton and Thorne, 2000; Crosbie, 2006; Hall, 2007; Huang, 2005; Marelli, 2007; Nicholl, 2010; Wilkinson et al, 2005; and Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977.

researcher would choose it? (b) *format, ease of use* – what constitutes effective and user friendly dairy tool? And, (c) *participant, preparation and support* – how to ensure participants use the diary effectively? Table 1 summarises the benefits and disadvantages of the work diary as a data collection tool. By sorting information into these themes, the researcher was able to transfer relevant information into a plan for a pilot, rather than rely upon fleeting references to pilots of diaries in current literature. The following discussion links the disadvantages and benefits found in the review, to the actions and processes applied to the diary pilot by the researcher.

Purpose

The theme of *purpose* was developed after sorting relevant research commentary about why a diary is chosen as a data collection tool by researchers. The diary's purpose within a research project needs to be carefully determined by the researcher to ensure alignment with the project's theoretical framework, other data collection methods and appropriateness to the research setting and its participants. For example, for this project, the researcher's decision to incorporate the work diary was influenced by the theoretical underpinnings of the research design. As a researcher using critical ethnographic approaches, the diary added a "critical, subjective dimension to the natural occurring activities he witnesses" (Zimmerman & Weider, 1977, p. 483). Another purpose was to collect data when the researcher was unable to observe the busyness and complexity of the interactions of the work group.

The researcher needed to determine how the diary 'fits' with other data collection methods before use. For example, the type of data collected for this research project was qualitative with the intention to gain insight into how and why team members engage in particular interactions. Therefore, the diary's usefulness to collect qualitative data needed to be determined. The use of a diary to collect qualitative data within school teams has been limited as many of the reports of its use are related to quantitative studies in medical or scientific contexts (Camburn, Spillane & Sebastian, 2010). In the field of education, diaries have been used in the area of linguistics and classroom language learning (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Hall, 2007), and are consistently cited as contributing to in depth understanding of teaching and learning (Huang, 2005). The diary has been used to quantitatively determine the time spent on leadership and management activities of school principals (Camburn et al, 2010).

Diaries are commonly used in combination with other data collection methods and frequent disadvantage is noted about its use in isolation (Basil, 2010; Crosbie, 2006; Nicholl, 2010). As for most ethnographic studies, the use of a variety of data collection tool verifies or helps better understand the dairy data collected (Marelli, 2007). For example, this research used observation, and semi-structured, conversational interviews in addition to the work diary. The combination of data collection methods allowed the critical ethnographer to delve deeply to uncover "individual subjectivity and collective belonging" (Madison, 2005, p. 26).

The diary has been used in social and educational research contexts to enable the researcher to "give voice to other people" (Plummer, 1983, p.1). It is necessary for the

researcher to determine if this is a relevant purpose for the diary in their particular research. For example, it was chosen for this research to provide opportunity for research participants and researchers to become both observers and informants themselves (Hall, 2007; Zimmerman & Weider, 1977). The use of the diary was seen as an inclusive and collaborative data collection method. This researcher ensured effective and open communication at every stage of the pilot and referred to participants as “partners”. For example, when negotiating access to the research site the aims of the pilot and its methods were explicitly outlined to the partner school. The inclusion of the partners in the research process in itself made the process more complicated. Ultimately the researcher was ‘on site’ for longer to develop trust and gain input from the research partners. However, the researcher was able to gain greater insight into how partners interpreted interactions and how they assigned significance to actions and events highlighted in the diary (Alaszewski, 2006).

The use of the work diary and its relationship to the data collected and the type of setting in which the research takes place, requires analysis before its use. For example, the researcher wanted to collect qualitative data about the interactions between staff about curriculum in a naturalistic setting. This contrasts with the use of diaries for medical and social research that focuses on collection of data in structured formats about time spent in activities by its participants (Alaszewski, 2006; Basit, 2010; Wilkinson, Wells & Bushnell, 2005). Given that the researcher would collect more subjective data and wanted research partners to make decisions about what was important enough to diarise, it was vital that this be discussed with the partners. This was included in the plan to prepare partners for the diary’s use. The diary’s format was also designed to ensure data would be collected in an easy to use format.

Diary format

The pilot of the diary was undertaken as closely as possible to, and using the processes and manner planned of the research project. Researchers piloting any data collection method need to consider this (Creswell, 2007). For example, the first design format challenge for the researcher was to create a format that was easy to use and provided enough space for recording events effectively. The preparation for, support during, and use of the diary by the research partners was recorded through researcher’s field notes. Unstructured feedback sheets, provided as a page of the diary, were completed at the end of the pilot by the research partners. Feedback about the use of the data collection tool and field notes enabled researcher to hone its effectiveness and appropriate to the research (Creswell, 2007). For example, Appendix 1 contains a full copy of the work diary that includes a feedback page provided to the pilot partners.

One intention of the work diary was to compliment and provided the basis for questions for semi-structured, conversational interviews within the wider research project (Lewis, et. al., 2005). It was important that the diary design proactively addressed some of the known disadvantages reported with its design and ease of use before the pilot (see Figure 1). Researchers need to predict what barriers to completion they may encounter in any pilot. For example, the format of this diary needed to provide space for details, such as time of the day, and what the interactions were, to

determine the patterns and purposes of interactions between members of the school team. This format needed to supply the researcher with enough data to determine questions for semi-structured, conversational interviews to follow.

Variable participant motivation to complete; and inaccuracy of recording of the details of the event (Marelli, 2007) are disadvantages noted in the literature. Researchers need to proactively apply processes that assist to overcome known barriers to completion. For example, to respond to the variable 'participant motivation to completion' noted in the literature (Crosbie, 2006), the researcher determined that the 'diary guide' (Appendix 1, pp. 1-3) needed to be clear about the purpose of diary and the wider research. Though they should not be copious, provision of written instructions were important to support partner's motivation to complete the diary accurately (Basit, 2010). The 'diary guide' also provided reminders such as avoiding the use of personal details about students, parents and colleagues. This addition was provided to respond to the caution of issues related to confidentiality and anonymity when using a diary in research (Nicholl, 2010). The section in the guide, 'filling in the daily entries', was written using jargon free language (Nicholl, 2010) and reflected the researcher's intention that the completion of the diary would not be an onerous task (Basit, 2010; Nicoll, 2010). Examples of what events could be recorded and how it could be recorded were also provided (Figure 1).

An example of a completed diary entry was provided to participants. The example page was an important element as it modelled the amount and type of data to be recorded. The diary entry page provided space for differing levels of detail regarding the interactions between partners. Figure 1 shows the type of information recorded frequently (e.g. type of interaction and people involved), that could be ticked to reduce the burden of time to complete the entry (Basit, 2010).

The researcher acknowledged that predetermining the structure of the diary entry page may not meet the needs of the research partners (Nicholl, 2010). Therefore, an electronic version was provided and partners were encouraged to modify the diary to meet their needs (e.g. size, method of data entry either electronic, audio or pen and paper). The intent of this example and instructions was to overcome variable motivation for completion linked to participant confusion about how to complete the diary entries (Bolger, Davis & Rafael, 2003; Crosbie, 2006). Extensive partner preparation before the use of the diary is commonly noted as a benefit and a disadvantage for researchers within the literature (Basit, 2010; Bolger, et al, 2003; Camburn et al, 2010). Preparation was designed, planned and delivered in conjunction with an easy to use format.

Participant preparation and support

Preparation of participants for a pilot should be a prime focus for the researcher's processes. Figure 1 summarises the references in literature to participant preparation and support related to the use of diaries in research. Notable was the consistent reference in the literature to the amount of participant motivation, cooperation, literacy skills and researcher support required when using the diary. For example, issues

requiring response, included varying written literacy and articulation skills of participants (Basit, 2010; Hall, 2007); “honest forgetfulness” (Bolger, et al, 2003) and the unreliable identification of events to be recorded (Bolger, et al, 2003).

Date	Thursday 17 June, 2011	
Time	<p style="text-align: center;">Purpose</p> <p>Met Anne and Sonja in the playground. Anne told me that I needed to re-do Sonja's timetable as she was required to accompany Steve on an excursion next week. We spoke about how I would let the teachers affected know (email) and planned for Sonja to see the excursion planner. Sonja had some concerns about Steve's medication and I suggested we have a quick meeting tomorrow about it.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0ffe0; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> <p>A description of the purpose of the interaction, where it happened and who said what to whom.</p> </div>	<p>Type of interaction</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meeting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone call</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brief conversation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Email</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other.....</p> <p>People involved</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> SEP Teacher</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HOSES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Teacher</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Therapist</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> HOD</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Principal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Principal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Student</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parent</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teacher Aide</p>

Figure 1: Examples page

Emphasis on participant preparation to overcome issues of variable participant motivation for completion and accuracy of recording of events was determined for the pilot. For example, it was important that were a similar composition (roles and numbers) to the group intended for the wider research project. A representative sample was identified through the researcher's previous professional relationship with the educational site. As for most participant recruitment, issues of diarist recruitment had to relate to the purpose of the study; build relationships and contact; and build trust (Alaszewski, 2007). For example, planning how the researcher would build trust and persuade partners to keep records was one item for consideration before the pilot began. Commonly, researchers provide incentives for research participants (Lewis et al, 2005). In this case, the ethical approval by the school's governing body was given

only if the researcher did not provide incentives of any kind. Instead, relationships with partners and persuasion to maintain the diary depended upon multiple visits to the research site where the researcher engaged in informal social and professional activities with the partners.

Extensive briefing of research partners is vital before a pilot. Before invitation to join the project, all members of a school Special Education Program (SEP) and the Principal were briefed about the research pilot and whether they would be directly involved or not. The research partners who agreed to participate included the Principal of the school, Head of Special Education Services (HOSES), one SEP Teacher and two Teacher Aides. These staff members completed the work diary at the same time for five continuous days. Researchers using the diary need planned processes for their response to incomplete or not completed diaries. For example, two partners signed consent for involvement in the pilot, though did not return the diaries. To encourage these partners to comply, a letter, new diaries and a self addressed envelope were sent to the partners after the completion date. These were not returned. It is not known if these partners completed the five days of diary entries.

Analysis and findings

Initial data analysis determined preliminary findings of the pilot. The method of data analysis should be determined by the research questions and aims of the project. For example, for this pilot, all diary feedback sheets and the researcher's field notes were entered verbatim into *Nvivo 9* software. During transcription the researcher noted similarities between partner feedback and established themes in the literature. The themes became the codes *format, ease of use, preparation and support, recount and reflection* and were applied to partner and researcher data comments.

Format

Format was the code applied to all partner comments about the diary's look, size, structure, and instructions. Comments related to the theme of format, found in the literature review (see Figure 2). Issues such as size and portability of the diary were determined. Before the partners were given the diary, the Head of Special Education Services (HOSES) suggested that it be presented in A5, rather than the original A4 format for ease of carrying in pocket. No other changes were made to the format before distributing to the research partners. One research partner however, decided to change the format completely from written to digital audio.

This staff member decided at the end of the first day of the pilot, when s/he realised that "the notebook was sitting on desk and I thought God almighty – I have not done this – and there is more to do" to change the format of the diary. When faced with the choice of writing in the diary in the car park, the research partner decided to use a digital pen to 'record' her recount of the day's events driving home.

I reflected upon the whole day from start to finish quite easy due to normal practice when driving home. The whole of day took approx half hour each

time. I could also make note of things to do simultaneously without having to make a handwritten note or stop the car. This was an unexpected advantage.
(Partner 1)

Ease of use

Ease of use was the code applied to all comments about the participants perceptions of ease of use, including time spent completing the diary (or not). These comments related to the theme of purpose and format drawn from the initial literature review (Figure 1). Issues such as the how notes were kept and time spent keeping the diary were determined. Three participants made direct positive comments in the unstructured feedback space of the diary about its ease of use. It was interesting to note that staff working in special education programs are used to keeping detailed notes about students – their behavior, social and academic progress. This was reflected in the comment by one partner, “This was the easiest data recorder I have ever used” (Partner, 4). The other two related comments were that partners felt the diary was “quite effective” (Partner 3) and “simple to use” (Partner 5).

Comments about time spent completing the diary varied. Partner 5 found it not time consuming at all. Partner 3 commented it did take time but did not expand upon this. Partner 1 found time to complete the daily entry most challenging due to the busyness of the day’s events related to student behaviour.

I found time management i.e. scheduling of time to make entries in diary was particularly difficult due to the near constant disruptions in "day to day" running of the SEP (This week was particularly challenging w. student behavioural support). (Partner 1)

However, Partner 1 overcame this issue by changing the format from written to digital recording of audio and completing on the drive home from the school each day. “This was no extra work or impact on time or unexpectedly being distracted from task as during the day. This action reflected the importance of partnership in an inclusive ethnographic study. The change of the format did not interfere with the quality of diary entries. Affording partner decision making and ownership in this pilot improved the data collection tool. Partner 1 also commented that the timing, week 7 of term 1, was not the best for recording conversations about curriculum in a week where the cross country was held and staff were experiencing stress about literacy and numeracy expectations, and the number of relief teachers working in the school. Originally, consideration was made for the pilot not to be held during the week of the cross country, unfortunately the cross country was cancelled the week before and moved to the diary pilot week.

Preparation and support

Partner comments pertaining to processes and actions of the researcher to assist the research partners complete the work diary successfully were coded *Preparation and support*. These comments related to the theme of participant in the initial literature

review of the use of the diary (Figure 1). Reflecting the literature review findings, explicit pilot processes were applied to prepare and support partners. These processes included group and individual briefing meetings held two weeks before the diary collection week to explain the research and its wider context; written instructions and an example of a diary entry included in the diary; provision of contact email address and mobile phone number to research partners in case questions arose during the pilot week; and the researcher was “on site” for two days, one per week, before the pilot, and one day after the pilot to provide any support to research partners.

Overall, the participants provided positive comments about the way in which they were prepared and supported during the pilot. Partner 1 made comments about the preparation and support on their feedback page. This partner commented about the deliberations they had when addressing staff questions about the diary in the absence of the researcher. Reference was also made to the provision of the researcher’s email address and mobile telephone number by the researcher as useful. For example:

[I] was not sure if I was to follow up with staff regarding their diaries despite being aware I could contact Mrs. Duke at any time. I chose to refer to actual communications and directions I had given by Mrs. Duke where staff had been informed they could contact her at any time (email or mobile) and as they are all adults would proceed with this if they felt required. (Partner 1)

Partner 1 also commented about the way in which the researcher offered preparation and support by referring to flexibility and unobtrusive participation in the school’s daily activity.

Choices of communications with self, staff and admin were flexible, which actually enabled the initial communications to be successful for all. Staff duties were not interrupted and staff found the flexible and friendly approach both supportive and not confronting. (Partner 1).

Suggestions to improve the preparation and support for the use of the diary from both partner feedback and researcher’s field notes, included (a) researcher defining what a ‘curriculum’ conversation could be (b) whether it should be recorded in the diary (c) including space in diary entry area for writing about the “Intent of actual enacted communication and intended communication” (Partner 1).

Recount and reflection

Recount and reflection was the code applied to all comments about the use of the diary as a tool for the partners to recount and reflect upon the day’s events. This code was not completely related to the original scan of the literature about its use. It was interesting to note that the research partners saw the diary as a useful tool that contributed to their work providing support for reflective practices. This finding is useful for any research in fields where reflection on practice is encouraged as in the education field. This was an unexpected benefit of the use of the diary though linked to the caution of participant reactance, i.e. how the research may change the participants

(Bolger, Davis & Rafel, 2003). In this case, the effect of the research on the partners was positive. Partners commented that the diary was a useful way to record the multiple types of conversations and how they were held during the day. Partner 3 commented that the recording of the conversations allowed them to debrief about the details of the day's events. Partner 2 commented that the "diary created a control point of recording a small portion of conversations".

Another partner noticed that the diary allowed them to reflect upon the type of conversations they had been involved in.

I quickly realised that if this week continued on or was representative of a "typical week" I realised the limitations on my intended leadership regarding curriculum change. (Partner 1).

Partner 1, who chose to record audio diary entries, also found the daily event of diary completion as "liberating". S/he noted:

[O]nce the thoughts were captured (documented) further thoughts flowed more freely and subsequently were more constructive. I am aware due to previous analysis of my own cognitive processes that I have success after consulting with others – even if in the sense of a "listening board." I experienced a "mental check list" of the day – and procedures and processes were qualified.

Though, they did not expand further, Partner 4, commented that they looked forward each day to completing the diary entry. The researcher assumed this was because of the opportunity the diary provided a tool for recounting or reflecting upon the day's conversations.

In response to the pilot findings, the researcher made the following modifications or changes to format and processes to ensure effectiveness and usefulness of the data collection tool.

1. Changed size of printed diary from A4 to A5 to aid portability and meet the needs of partners in their context (Bolger, Davis & Rafale, 2003).
2. Defined curriculum and the types of conversations staff may have in more detail before the use of the diary. Perhaps use the Australian Curriculum and Assessment, Reporting Authority (ACARA) definition and brainstorm the types of conversations that may occur and who with during briefing sessions.
3. Ensured that research partners know that their decision about what to document in the diary makes them "informants" and that the researcher values these decisions.
4. Provided space in diary for partners to include intent of the curriculum conversation and what was actually enacted.

Recommendations

The findings of the pilot and the initial literature review have determined the following eight recommendations for researchers piloting or using a work diary:

1. That preparation and support to the research partners must be provided before, during and after the collection of data in a personal, yet non-intrusive manner (Alaszewski, 2006; Basit, 2010; Bolger, Davis & Rafaele, 2003; Camburn, Spillane & Sebastian, 2010);
2. The choice of format, audio or written, needs to be given to research partners (Bolger, Davis & Rafale, 2003; Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977) to meet the needs of the context and research partner preference (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977);
3. The diary is a time consuming though useful and simple recording tool that required commitment by the research partners (Bolger, Davis & Rafael, 2003);
4. The timing of when the diary should be kept needs to be negotiated with the research partners and the busyness of individuals in school settings may affect the completion rate negatively;
5. Not all partners will complete the data collection tool (Camburn, Spillane & Sebastian, 2010) though attempts to enroll all staff should be made;
6. The researcher should ensure that even if staff do not participate, that they are informed about the intent of the research;
7. Provision of incentives was not permitted by the government education department research ethics committee so personal, ongoing, respectful contact was vital;
8. The use of the diary as part of a wardrobe of data collection tools is recommended to assist the researcher to make meaning of the interactions and practices of a work team.

Conclusion

The diary pilot provided vital experience and information to the researcher about the significance and weight attributed to the disadvantages and benefits about its use. The development of the pilot enabled the researcher to experiment with, examine and refine processes, practices and the tool itself for the wider research project. The inclusive processes of enrolling, supporting and valuing partner participation through the use of the diary enamoured the researcher to the use of this data collection tool. The use of the data collection tool proved to reflect inclusive practices when applied in ways that reduced power relations and increased communication between the researcher and the participants. The extensive preparation for its use with partners allowed for in depth look into the interactions of the group through meetings and being at the site for extended periods. To be able to garner data from partners about what they saw was important, contributed to a sense of mutual value, collaboration and cooperation. By adhering to the inclusive processes of the pilot and ensuring the modifications and adjustments to it are carried out effectively, the work diary will assist the researcher join the dots, to expose a picture of the complex system of interactions, in a busy schoolwork group for the wider research project.

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Appendix 1 – Copy of diary used in pilot

Diary guide

Purpose of the research

The focus of this research is to explore how, when and why leadership is used to implement curriculum policy for students with disabilities in secondary schools.

Purpose of work diary

I have been researching this area and am interested in how individuals and teams in secondary schools use leadership to implement curriculum policy for students with disabilities.

When completed, your work diary will provide me with important information about the day to day leadership practices of your team to implement curriculum policy. Curriculum policy includes what you do when planning and implementing teaching, assessment and reporting.

This phase of the research is to seek a deeper understanding of when and how staff used leadership practices when working together to implement curriculum policy. At the moment I am not sure what these are. Your diary will help me identify these important practices. Later this information will assist me to develop questions for interviews with you about this.

By looking at your completed diary, I wish to get an understanding about

- what your teams' leadership practices are,
- when you use leadership practices, and
- how often and who you interact about curriculum issues.

The daily diary

It would be very helpful if you could make entries into this diary for five continuous days from to

I do not want this to be a tedious task. I have attempted to make the diary as easy as possible to complete. I will also be available to assist with any issues you find with filling in the daily entries via email or mobile phone.

Filling in the daily entries

You do not need to fill in every interaction you have about curriculum with your colleagues. One or two per day is great. Less or none is also OK. The following list may assist to determine what you might include

- curriculum planning meetings
- moderation of assessment tasks
- Individual Education Plan meetings
- resource allocation discussions e.g. teacher aide timetabling, use of specialized equipment, budgeting
- co-teaching planning
- conversations about adjustments for individual students
- behavior and health planning

There are probably many more. If in doubt please just add it to the daily entry. The daily entry page includes check boxes, a table and room for comments. You may record multiple events or just one in more detail. You can add entries by hand or I can provide you with an electronic version for computer.

Twelve entry pages are included in the diary. You do not need to enter more than two interactions per day if you prefer. If you do decide to make more than twelve entries, I can provide you with more pages.

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this diary. Please don't hesitate to contact me if needed.

Jennie Duke
[Appendix continues next page]

Date		
Time	Purpose	<p>Type of interaction</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meeting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone call</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brief conversation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Email</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other.....</p> <p>People involved</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> SEP Teacher</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> HOSES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Teacher</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Therapist</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> HOD</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Principal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Principal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Student</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Aide</p>

Can you please provide some feedback about the use of this diary in this space?

Thank you