The Eighth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices

Navigating the Public and Private: Negotiating the Diverse Landscape of Teacher Education
August 1-5, 2010
Herstmonceux Castle
East Sussex, England
The Eighth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices

Navigating the Public and Private: Negotiating the Diverse Landscape of Teacher Education
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Introduction

Welcome to the Eighth International Conference on Self-study of Teacher Education Practices.

Mandi Berry, S-STEP Chair

Welcome to the Eighth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP). The S-STEP special interest group within the American Educational Research Association (AERA) hosts this biennial conference, fondly known as ‘the Castle conference’ by its participants, located at Herstmonceux Castle, the International Study Centre of Queen’s University. The conference, begun in 1996, provides an international forum for educators to meet, share examples of self-study in teacher education, discuss methods and issues in self-study and consider the role of self-study in the reform of teacher education. Through the conference, we hope to initiate and extend conversations about self-study and teacher education.

The theme of this year’s conference is Navigating the Public and Private: Negotiating the Diverse Landscape of Teacher Education. This theme holds a fundamental significance for self-study researchers as it connects to the issues and challenges that first brought together a small group of academics at AERA in 1992, in a symposium to publicly question and discuss the private struggles, challenges, and issues they faced as teachers of teachers learning to negotiate new roles within the academy. The difficulties and concerns they raised through their research symposium about creating a professional identity that took seriously the work of teacher educators as both practitioners and researchers of their own practice resonated with other educators and connected with larger public concerns regarding the ways in which teacher educators’ work was being conceptualized and researched. A collective impetus around these issues soon led to the formalisation of self-study as a fully accredited special interest group within AERA, by 1994. Since that time, S-STEP has rapidly evolved as a growing, international community of scholars whose efforts have made a significant impact on the field of teacher education as a focus of scholarship, in and through teaching.

Teacher educators who adopt a self-study perspective understand well that they are navigating a changing and complex terrain. Negotiating the landscape requires not only being alert to the ways in which others have experienced and signposted their journeys but also being awake to the special topographies of one’s own “inner landscape” (Palmer, 1998), the self that is both created and explored through the lived experiences of doing teacher education. Self-study then is at once a private and public endeavour as self-study researchers are concerned to illuminate and map these inner spaces in an attempt to provide others with opportunities to reflect upon and build towards new possibilities for teacher education.

The Castle conference offers an important opportunity for colleagues around the world to connect and engage in open, sustained, and authentic conversations about self-study research and practice. We participate as a community of learners who are willing to ask ourselves difficult questions such as, how do we recognise and accept diversity, how do we navigate the shifts and ambiguities within the landscape of our work, and how do we deal with contradiction and conflict that we inevitably encounter along the way as we work towards enhancing our understanding of teacher education and improving the experiences of education for all participants? I hope you will find the Castle conference enjoyable, empowering, and challenging – whether you are a newcomer or a veteran.

Finally, while the Castle conference is very much the product of a collaborative effort of all of those involved, it would not be possible without the dedication, hard work and exceptional talents of the editorial group, Lynnette Erickson, Stefinee Pinnegar, and Janet Young, and Tom Russell and Queen’s University, for organising the use of this beautiful venue. Thank you!

From the Conference Program Co-Chairs

The Castle Conference has served both experienced and novice scholars in self-study of teacher education practices research. It has provided a forum for sharing scholarship on teacher education in a setting where we have opportunity to develop our understanding and skills as scholars and our practice as teacher educators. As editors, we have worked to make the review and editorial processes supportive and constructive for both novice and experienced scholars alike. Like editors before us, we sought to improve the quality of Castle Conference papers while making participation in the conference as accessible as possible. Although we are delighted with the conference’s growth over time, this growth also presents new challenges to the self-study community. As we consider how we remain open and welcoming to newcomers and as well as to those who have experience in self-study, we also must consider the size of the Castle venue and new opportunities to that allow for the community to grow beyond the Castle walls. We support and encourage the community to continue to consider how to best balance the goals of high quality scholarship with the goal to have an inclusive community that genuinely mentors newcomers into its fold.

This year interest in the participating in the Castle Conference was extremely high. We received 105 preliminary proposals, of which 69 of which were accepted for publication in the proceedings for the Eighth Castle Conference. The final acceptance rate for proceedings papers was 66%, compared to 64% in 2008, and 79% in 2006.

The editorial process for the proceedings for the Eighth International Conference on Self-study of Teacher Education Practices occurred in two stages. First, a double blind review process was used to assess short preliminary proposals, provide feedback to authors, and guide the selection of proposals accepted for presentation. Authors whose proposals were accepted for presentation at the conference were then invited to submit a longer paper for inclusion in the proceedings. A second double blind review process was used to assess submitted papers, guide their development, and provide a basis for the selection of the papers for inclusion.

As always, our deepest appreciation goes to Tom Russell. Managing the logistics involved in organizing an international conference in England from Queen’s University in Kingston Canada is not a simple task and we do appreciate the time and effort it requires. In addition to his regular contributions, Tom took the Castle preparations with him on his sabbatical leave! It goes without saying that it is Tom’s work in our behalf that makes it possible for us to have a great conference in a fabulous locale. We must also thank Tom for his ready advice and deep understanding of the purposes and procedures of the conference—many thanks to you, Tom!

We would also like to thank the members of the self-study community who generously offered their time and expertise in reviewing proposals and final papers for the conference. We acknowledge and thank the many reviewers who participated in the double-blind review process:


We appreciate the support we have received from Brigham Young University. In particular, we want to thank Brigham Young University undergraduate student Heather Morgan and graduate student Tyler Lewis for their organizational and design contributions.

In closing, thanks to everyone who has participated in the 2010 Castle Conference process from the submission of proposals, through reviews, paper construction, critique, and final editing. We thank you for your patience with our efforts to streamline the methods of submitting, receiving, and reviewing proposals and papers. Sometimes our attempts at something new worked and may be duplicated in the future, while others can be chalked up to an experiment—not to be repeated. Regardless, your graciousness was appreciated and we have learned much. We extend our sincere thanks to you for allowing us this opportunity to learn more about self-study of teacher education practices research, you as our colleagues, and ourselves as members of this community. Let the conference begin!

Castle Conference 2010 Co-chairs:
Lynnette Erickson
Janet Young
Stefinee Pinnegar
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah, USA
CASTLE CONFERENCE 2010

SUNDAY, AUGUST 1
6:00-07:00 Dinner in the Castle Dining Hall (Tom Russell)
7:00-07:30 Welcome: S-STEP President, Amanda Berry

MONDAY, AUGUST 2

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Past as Prologue: Recursive Reflection...  
Deb Tidwell, Melissa Heston  
Walking Toward Summerhill  
James Muchmore  
Confessions of Two Technophobes  
Nancy Brown, Jill Baliff Ferrell  
Change, Changing, and Being Changed  
Cheryl Craig |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 10:00-10:50  | Transitioning from Principals to Teacher Educators...  
Valerie Allison-Roan, Sandy Petersen  
Re-Imagining the Wheel: Becoming More of Who We Are...  
Joseph Senese  
Dialoguing About Our Teaching of Self-Study...  
Anastasia Samaras, Meike Lunenberg  
“Oh, I Say...!” Reflecting Upon My Role ...  
Jodi Meyer-Mork  
Professional Learning through Collective Self-Study...  
Ronnie Davey, Vince Ham, Fiona Gilmore, Gina Haines, Ann McGrath, Donna Morrow, Robyn Robinson |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 11:00-11:20  | Tea |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 11:30-12:20  | Living with Ghosts...  
Valerie Mulholland  
Collaboratively Exploring Our Tensions Through Book Study  
Arlene Grierson, Christina Grant, MaryLynn Tessaro, Maria Cantalini-Williams, Rick Denton  
What’s My Line? Considering the Teacher Educator’s Role...  
Bruce Robbins  
A Retrospective Analysis of Transformation  
Ilana Margolin  
Exploring the Landscape of Advocacy in a Junior High...  
Brian Rice  
Mary Rice |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 12:30-1:50   | Lunch |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 2:00-2:50    | Bowing to the Absurd: Reflections on Leadership...  
Geoff Mills  
Different Context, Different Job, Same Issues?  
Renee Cliff  
Engaging With Ethical Praxis...  
Robyn Brandenburg, Ann Gervasoni  
Lesson Study As Preservice Teaching Strategy  
Alan Ovens  
Navigating Multiple Personal Narratives of Entering Teaching  
Mary Rice |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 3:00-3:50    | Telling Tales after School...  
Mike Hayler  
Understanding Agency...  
Lynn Thomas  
Catherine Beauchamp  
Finding Grace  
Deborah Turnbull  
Kimberly Fluet  
Once a Teacher, Always a Teacher  
Janet Young  
Lynnette Erickson  
Invoking Self-Study in a School Adoption Project...  
Ari De Heer, Hanneke Tuthof, Martine Van Rijswijk, Larike Bronkhorst |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 4:00-4:20    | Tea |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 4:30-5:20    | Educational Knowledge and Forms of Accountability...  
Jack Whitehead, Marie Huxtable  
Searching For Meaning...  
John Loughran  
Making Deliberate Moves...  
Tom Russell, Shawn Bullock  
The Rhetoric and the Reality...  
Geneè Marks  
Feedback in the Online Classroom*  
Derek Anderson, Sandy Imdieke, N.Suzanne Standerford |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 5:30-7:00    | Dinner |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |
| 7:00-8:30    | After dinner discussions, PUB |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                 |                                         |

* Presentation canceled, paper included in proceedings.
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<td>Asking Questions ...in Guiding a Novice Teacher</td>
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<td>Passionate Voices...</td>
<td>Navigating Belief Systems of Mathematics Teacher Eds...</td>
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<td>The Birth of a Collaborative Self-Study</td>
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<td>Beyond Classroom Walls: Using Self-Study to Understand...</td>
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<td>“Teacher Privilege: A Slippery, Twisty, Dodgy Concept...</td>
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* Presentation canceled, paper included in proceedings.
### Wednesday, August 4

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### Thursday, August 5

**Conference Room**

**Conference closing session**

Session Leader: Amanda Berry (S-STEP chair)

1. Reconsidering the conference and attending to themes of navigating the personal and the private in negotiating diverse teacher education as teacher educator and self-study of teacher education practices. 
   **Discussant:** Linda Fitzgerald

2. Creating a theme for Castle IX
   **Discussion leaders:** Amanda Berry (S-STEP chair) and Deborah Tidwell (S-STEP chair elect)

3. Looking toward future opportunities
   **Discussion leader:** Amanda Berry (S-STEP chair)

4. Thank you’s and farewells
   **Castle Conference Program Chairs:** Lynnette Erickson, Janet Young, Stefinee Pinnegar

5. Final thoughts from the S-STEP chair

**Conference debriefing—S-STEP conference organizers, planners, and chairs. (Time to be adjusted as needed.)**
Living Contradictions in a Humanistic School: A Discussion

“We shall not cease from exploration, the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”
T.S. Eliot

Background
We have come back to the place we created forty years ago and are now seeing it through a new lens, our grandson. In 1970, we were part of a small group of parent/teacher families who started a humanistic, progressive co-operative school for our children. We had no vision of the school surviving for forty years, but we were committed to it surviving until the child in utero of one of the founding families was finished with 8th grade! Yet, here we are almost 40 years later still connected to and involved with this experiment. Again in support of our children, but this time in supporting our children to support theirs.

Coming back has taken a different route for each of us. For Donna, it has been doing research in the school which was presented at Castle Conferences (2002, 2004), working with the Administrative Committee since 2007, co-teaching the newspaper class she designed thirty-five years ago, and acting as a consultant/support to the Educational Coordinator of the school. Jerry spent last year working with several teachers in their classrooms as a teacher’s assistant. This year he is using his expertise as an academic educator of teachers to co-teach with the Educational Coordinator, a staff development seminar for the four most recently hired teachers. In addition, he is putting together a program of lecture/discussions for the parents in the school using the many professors of education and teachers from the community as presenters. His third task for the year is to teach an ethics and movement course with a parent and two of the school’s teachers to the Junior High students. With these new commitments, we are aware of how involved we have chosen to become in this project we started in 1970 and then retired from in 1992 and have now returned to (see Allender & Allender, 2008).

Aims
In returning to this setting, we have become increasingly interested in change—change that supports the initial vision and change that undermines it. Specifically, we will consider how and what changes strengthen the school and how and in what ways others might overwhelm the fundamental philosophy. This means looking at the living contradictions (Whitehead, 1993) that exist in the environment that we created but no longer manage.

Methodology
The data for this study are our own experiences both present and past. During the session, we will move our understanding forward by asking fellow conference attendees to engage with us laying their experiences both those based in life experience and those developed from reading, scholarly study and reflection as we analyze our experience. Together we will reflect, question, and probe. By inviting participants to join this examination during the session, we will model processes of reflection and analysis through the use of typical tools for analysis in self-study methodology: collaboration, dialogue, and critical friends. The process should also reveal to participants the way in which dialogue, collaboration, and critical friends provide a foundation of trustworthiness for data analysis processes in self-study (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). A series of questions have guided us in our construction of the set of experiences we will share and will be the focal point of our demonstration of analysis and reflection. The questions we plan to discuss will be explored in relation to the context of each person in the session and her or his understandings about humanistic education. Some of the questions will be:

1. How is our work of value to the school and to others?
2. How are we change agents and to what extent should we be change agents?
3. Having written about humanistic education (Allender & Allender, 2008), how do we or others apply what we have written?
4. To what extent should others change what we have written to fit into a new context?
5. How do we make/keep connection with those who have made changes to our precious words and ideas?

Outcomes
We believe that all educators come into the field with idealistic visions of what they will be doing to influence and inform their students. Some of us imagine we can do it better than our teachers did. Some of us want to be as good as our most wonderful teachers. All have an ideal in mind. Therefore, we are not proposing this session on the basis of academic research. Rather we propose to present our experience both past and present to examine its meaning and value in the practical world of educating others. Through discussion, collaboration, exploration of living contradictions, and tensions between belief and practice we will come together to develop new understandings of change and the relationship between theory and practice in living settings. We will do this by experiencing processes of analysis and reflection, which will hopefully help us to collaboratively develop new understandings about these processes.

We will briefly present some of what we have learned so far in our return to the school and what we will have learned by the end of the coming school year. What is important for us in this session will be the discussion with our colleagues about the process of change that happens for us as educators.

DONNA ALLENDER
Mount Airy Counseling Center

JERRY ALLENDER
Temple University
What we hope will happen for all of us who participate in this dialogue is a renewed sense of idealism coupled with a better sense of how we can structure practical applications of our idealism in a world that struggles with what education should be.

References


A Collaborative Self-Study of Transitioning from Principals to Teacher Educators

Context
Spanning 15 years, our relationship has taken many forms; instructor/student, supervisor/employee, and friends. We independently chose to leave administration, seeing teacher education as an avenue for expanding our needs for discovery about ourselves, the discipline of learning, and the teaching profession. This self-study explores our reflective practices and the lessons we learned embarking on careers as teacher educators. Sandy entered a tenure-track position at an open enrollment, public college in the Western USA following 25 years as a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent. Valerie began a tenure-track position with a small, selective, private liberal arts institution in the Eastern USA after 21 years as a teacher and principal. While our student populations appear similar on the surface (primarily female, white and of traditional college age) our institutions/programs are dissimilar and draw students from vastly different religious, economic, and geographic backgrounds.

Common in our educational philosophies is a belief in teachers' potential to be agents of change, promoting ideals of equity and justice. In order for teachers to realize this potential, they must be able and willing to critically examine their teaching beliefs and practices. Our roles as teacher educators include the obligation to model critical reflection of our practices and encourage students' reflective development.

Critical reflection has carried divergent meanings (e.g., Fisher, 1983; Gore, 1987; Harrington & Quinn-Leering, 1996; Loughran, 2002; Wade, Fauske, & Thompson, 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). We consider reflection critical when it is motivated by desire to be more just, fair, and compassionate, not simply more effective and efficient (Brookfield, 1995). Critically reflective teachers strive to examine their beliefs, biases, and experiences. However, the influences of social and institutional milieus create a solid context within which even honest reflections are often firmly contained. For over 20 years, we had participated in and influenced schools, specifically expectations held for teachers' practices. Despite a belief in democratic and participatory education, we felt trepidation in abandoning authoritarian titles and wondered if we were prepared to practice our beliefs.

Objectives
This study chronicles:

1. How did our experiences as administrators influence our sense making in our new roles and relationships with students?
2. What skills, knowledge, and attitudes promoted in our previous communities benefited us in our new roles and which were incongruent?
3. How were our efforts, including initiatives to enact democratic principles in our teaching, perceived and evaluated by students?

Methods and Data Sources
Reflection journals served as the backbone of this study. Periodically, portions of our journals were shared with students through discussions as we attempted to model or think aloud about our own practices for students (Loughran & Berry, 2005). These discussions served as springboards for students' suggestions about our practices and lead to their reflection about their own emerging teaching practices. Our goal was to establish a mutually self-disclosing context with students free to ask and answer questions, compare their own practice with others, and probe for deeper understanding. Jourard (1968) noted when we remain in authentic contact with a participant, “…consistently in dialogue, [we] may actually lead him to the edge of…clearing the way for the emergence of a new self” (p.124). Final data sources were anonymous mid-semester Course Feedback Questionnaires and end-of-course Evaluation Forms. Instrument items were adapted from Brookfield (1995) and utilized with permission. Prior to soliciting students' feedback, informed consents outlining the study's scope and providing the option to not participate were distributed.

Our own ongoing journaling allowed us to examine our practices, “self in action” (Elliott, 1989) over our first year, monitoring our professional and personal development. Equally important were notes from our discussions with students about our work. Their feedback shaped our practice in ways that also evolved over time. As we identified major themes in our notes, we had an opportunity to compare and share our work with one another. Students' anonymous feedback provided a mechanism for checking congruency of our perception and students' contributions in discussions with what they were willing to share through survey anonymity. At the conclusion of the academic year, we read our journals and the collective feedback from students looking for overlooked themes and considering again our in-process interpretations of the data.

Valerie collected student feedback from her fall and spring Literacy II courses. Two Course Feedback Questionnaires and an Evaluation Form were completed by students (n=19) during the fall. Three Course Feedback Questionnaires and an Evaluation Form were completed by students (n=12) enrolled in the spring. Results were shared with students in subsequent class meetings. Typically, the sharing of results sparked discussions.

Sandy collected a Course Feedback Questionnaire and an Evaluation Form on a Language Arts methods (n=18) and a Classroom Management course (n=13) in the fall and a Language Arts methods class (n=20) in the spring. Survey results were shared and discussed with students. Discussions most frequently centered on similarities of teaching and...
learning issues that seem to emerge in most classrooms. Students discussed these issues from their standpoints as both college students and preservice elementary teachers.

Outcomes

Sergiovanni (1994) contended an expansive collegial learning community requires a new kind of relationship among community members, transcending physical proximity that may contain thinking within confines of shared institutional and local norms. Sharing our experiences and supporting one another as teachers/researchers produced an effective professional collaboration that transcended our institutional and geographic boundaries.

The urgency of dealing with students in real time, asking for their perceptions and suggestions, and striving to legitimize their input meant we were constantly reinventing our questions, behaviors, and goals in response to students’ feedback. The creation of a self-transforming and self-renewing learning community, with members at different places in their personal and professional development and performance, created a complex whirlwind of praxis leaving us occasionally feeling threatened and insecure.

Learning our new landscapes and roles. We began to see similarities between ourselves and first year teachers we had once supervised as principals. Despite our combined half-century of experience, we exhibited novice behaviors and rationalizations. Our early complaints included some frustration with deans and department chairs not giving us support, information, and the mentors we needed. We were taken aback by how incompetent and overwhelmed we felt in our first weeks.

I am amazed at how much time it takes to prepare for each class. (Valerie, 9/5/2008)

The department chair is wonderful as are other faculty members, but everyone is busy and, after a while, I started to feel foolish with all my questions. (Sandy, 9/12/2008)

Perhaps our assumption was our transition into our new contexts would somehow be easier for us because we had both already been new to many other professional roles. Ultimately, we did not escape the turmoil inherent to starting down a new avenue. However, now concluding our first year, it feels as if we have made great strides in confidence and proficiency.

I’m really excited to have another shot at getting things right. Additionally, it’s remarkable what one semester’s worth of experience can do for one’s confidence! (Valerie, 1/14/2009)

I’m feeling the same sense of confidence this time around. Last semester…I couldn’t seem to get organized. I couldn’t grasp the big picture of my responsibilities, and I felt as if I were constantly falling short. (Sandy, 1/22/2009)

There is no way of knowing how our experiences as novices in academe compare to others’ experiences. To us the learning curve felt steep, though quickly we found it not insurmountable. We found opportunities to apply our background knowledge/experiences, finding success in our new surroundings and roles. Ultimately, we found our background as administrators aided us as we negotiated relationships with cooperating teachers and principals.

In going to a new location, I would ask to speak to the principal so I could introduce myself . . . most were courteous but somewhat distracted until I mentioned I, too, had been an elementary principal. That information created an immediate bond with principals who seemed to want to extend our time together . . . In subsequent visits, principals would sometimes flag me down and invite me into their offices for a visit. (Sandy, 3/3/2009)

Students’ interpretations of our efforts. Among the pitfalls we had not anticipated was students’ occupation with grades. Perhaps because we came into our roles after years away from classroom teaching, we failed to initially appreciate the importance of specific, concrete grading policies and communicating to students frequently how their efforts were evaluated against grading criteria. Sandy wrote,

I learned in my first semester I wasn’t being careful enough in my [grading] documentation. This semester I am using grading rubrics for almost every assignment. Still, I have students question and argue.

Feedback on Valerie’s course evaluations indicated many students felt she failed to give sufficient feedback. While many mentioned comments on written work were helpful, a significant number commented they did not know how their performance was being evaluated.

- We received a lot of information, wish I had received more grades.
- I don’t think there was enough feedback about our progress. (Student comments)

The most frequent complaint from Sandy’s students was they were unsure of their grade from moment to moment. Despite her initiation of what she believed to be a clearly defined point system outlined in all syllabi, Sandy repeatedly received feedback that students wanted the ability to view their grades online. Judged against our interpretations of what it means to enact democratic teaching principles in our classrooms, we were remiss in reflecting upon how grading practices are experienced by students. As we began our second semesters, we had to rethink our practices in an effort to both demystify grading and to avoid consequences of being perceived as ambiguous.

As learners, students wished to be beneficiaries of democratic principles which they defined as professors who were lenient and willing to adjust assignments, due dates and expectations in response to students’ feedback.

- Attendance policy, being flexible about due dates and assignments.
- Asking feedback from students, adjusting syllabus accordingly. (Students’ comments)

Our willingness to be lenient was a double-edged sword. Some students perceived it as not having tough enough standards, which they articulated was unfair to hardworking students.

- Expectations were not as high as they could be; high expectations force students to work hard and do their best, not just enough to get by. (Student’s comment)

Others seemed to perceive an opening for attempting to re-negotiate all aspects of courses and to not put forth effort.

Another obstacle we recognized was a conflict with students’ expectations that our role was to provide them with established sets of foolproof “teaching” skills. Students perceive learning to be teachers as a linear process of learning and practicing distinct strategies. Teaching was framed by our preservice students as a technical enterprise (see Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Their framework ran counter to our shared
ideology that teaching is an inherently messy endeavor requiring development of students’ capacities to analyze dilemmas of practice. Loughran and Berry (2005) use the term “tensions” to refer to this incongruity of expectations and goals between preservice teachers and their teacher educators.

Collision between our agendas and students’ resulted in discomfort and disconnects for some as evidenced in their feedback. In response to, “At what moment . . . have you felt most distant from what was happening?” Students offered,

- When discussing complex articles I don’t feel will help very much when I’m in the classroom.
- I lose focus when we talk about theory and theorists. (Students’ comments)

Simultaneously, we recorded frustration with what we interpreted as students’ unwillingness to engage in some aspects of the course; particularly activities that required them to explore conflicting theories and research. I did not clearly understand undergraduates’ unwillingness to tackle difficult texts and ill-defined problems. They seem to want me to lead them to an already discovered list of teaching strategies that will result in them being successful. (Valerie)

Students seemed to resist efforts to promote participatory learning communities. When Valerie’s students were assigned to lead discussions many of them interpreted the task as providing their classmates with lecture-oriented summaries. Sandy’s students reported they were most comfortable with a lecture format and were unhappy doing presentations of any kind. Numerous students reported they felt most disengaged during peer presentations, disliking both giving and listening to presentations. Bain (2004) says “Exceptional teachers ask their students for a commitment to the class and to learning” (p.112). This is a concept and a commitment that must be more directly addressed with students early in a course if they are to see themselves as active participants in their own and classmates’ learning rather than as recipient of teacher-bestowed knowledge. One of Sandy’s students wrote, “You’re the one that gets paid to teach…not me.”

Sandy’s students’ affinity for lecture was sharply contrasted with feedback Valerie received from her students. Valerie’s students reported feeling most distanced from the learning during lectures and discussions.

- I have a hard time focusing when we spend a lot of time discussing texts we read. I need some sort of activity component. (Student’s comment)

Whereas Sandy’s students wrote:

- Lectures are most interesting to me because you tell stories about real school experiences.
- I lose interest during student presentations. (Students’ comments)

Most of Valerie’s students preferred student-led discussions of readings over those presented by the instructor. However, toward semesters’ end, some mentioned they were weary of peer presentations, particularly when classmates lacked clarity or enthusiasm.

- Lack of effort of some presentations – some are fantastic others leave a little to be desired. (Student’s comment)

Students strongly preferred engaging in hands-on learning activities

- When we participate in group projects as “students” using the varying techniques, I feel most engaged. (Student’s comment)

A powerful learning opportunity mentioned by Valerie’s students was the requirement to tutor a school age student.

- Tutoring experience is very eye opening because it correlates with the text we read.
- That tutoring would be so helpful for me, and eye opening to importance of individual time. (Students’ comments)

Sandy’s students reported they were most engaged when involved in writing case studies required them to spend significant time observing a student, talking with teachers and parents, and analyzing the child’s behavior and learning. Despite initial trepidations about the amount of time required, students found this assignment universally valuable.

Students seemed much more invested in gathering skills and tools of instruction to fill their “bag of tricks” and less motivated by their professors’ urgings to be wise shoppers – carefully examining skills and tools they were introduced to. In most cases, students resisted our efforts to raise their consciousness about some aspects of current educational practices that reify inequalities in society. Valerie was struck by her students’ inability or unwillingness to see how some instructional practices used with students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds contributed to their poor learning outcomes. This desire to raise their consciousness was perceived as a wasteful use of time they felt would be better allocated to learning strategies.

- I was expecting to spend more time with the teachers’ guides.
- To learn more about teaching literacy while following the textbooks. (Students’ comments)

In Sandy’s college an ESL Endorsement is embedded in the teaching program so students’ learning is juxtaposed with constructing learning environments that meet needs of diverse learners. Yet, exploring ideas of social justice and equity were not always welcomed by students, some of whom feel discussions of equity issues should be limited to classes specifically designed for that purpose. Sandy’s students looked at data on upper level mathematics course-taking patterns of male and female students and discussed explanations for perceived gender inequities. They wrote,

- This is overkill. We already hear about equity in our other classes. We shouldn’t have to hear it in math.
- Who cares how many take what. There’s way too much made of this, in my opinion. (Students’ comments)

Significance

Incongruity between what students want and what we expect requires a delicate balance of give and take. Our commitment to creating democratic classrooms does not relieve us of the responsibility to facilitate student learning. Bain (2004) suggests, “Professors, as experts in their field, have a much better grasp of what learning the discipline might entail” (p.55). Our commitment to democratic principles requires that, while we do not abdicate our expert role, we may want to include our students in setting the educational agenda, designing curriculum, determining content, goals, and assessments, and crafting
As professors, we hope to convince them of the necessity of grappling with complex texts that will inform and enrich their teaching. When students study and reflect on their practice and connect it to research and theory they are more able to identify professional deficits, consider alternative strategies, and solve problems (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Our students’ resistance to studying educational theory might be addressed by weaving theory into their practices in meaningful ways, demonstrating that “a bag of tricks” is not a substitute for thoughtful evolving practice informed by theory and research. Case studies, portfolios, tutoring, performance tasks, journals, action research, and autobiographies infused into coursework may enrich opportunities we give students, helping them connect theory to practice.

Like us, students feel overwhelmed at times with the scope of their responsibilities. Our initial reaction to overload in our college teaching was to criticize others for not supporting us in ways we felt we needed and to blame students for not appreciating the validity of our teaching styles and policies. Our students, all with far less life experience, may also lash out at those they see as authority figures who could and should make their lives easier. We hope to bandage bruised egos enough to critically examine input we have received from students, talk more frankly and work more collaboratively with them in order to arm them with knowledge and skills they need to become great teachers who will look critically at their own practices.

Concluding our first year, we believe our initiation of transparent practice, ongoing questioning, and reflection with one another and students has helped us evolve as teachers and helped students evolve as learners. Additionally, we have demonstrated “teaching as research” can be conducted by novice professors alongside preservice teachers with the goal of modeling and inspiring collaborative relationships and reflective practice.

References

Feedback in the Online Classroom: We Need It, Too

Introduction
Online teaching is here to stay. The convenience of completing graduate coursework on one’s computer at a convenient time without having to commute to a campus has shifted the demand from traditional face-to-face (FTF) courses to those that are conducted online. To meet that demand, schools of education have increased their supply of online course offerings. The role of market economics in higher education is undeniable.

As with most transformational change events, the shift to online courses in education has not been without struggles. One of the primary challenges of this transition involves the willingness and capacity of the teacher to deliver instruction in this new format. At the core of this struggle lies the disconnect between the ways most instructors were taught to teach and the ways they are expected to teach online (Ham & Davey, 2006). In his seminal book, *School Teacher*, Lortie (1975) suggested the “apprenticeship of observation” has an anchoring effect on learning to teach, as teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. Perhaps for the first time in centuries, however, instructors now have to teach in ways vastly different from how they were taught and how they were taught to teach.

This paper portrays a yearlong self-study of three teacher educators who examined their individual and collective practice of teaching online. For over a year, we shared our course syllabi, assignments, and student work, wrote and shared journal entries, met semimonthly as critical friends, and revised and reanalyzed the ways we teach online. Throughout the study, we sought to challenge each other through open, broad, and critical analysis (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). We tested the emergent themes recursively, searching for recurring regularities or emergent patterns (Guba, 1978). We began our self-study by sharing with each other what we did in our online courses, including our syllabi, learning modules, assignments, online discussion transcripts, and student evaluations. We also recorded in detail for one week how we spent our time “teaching” our online courses. To search for themes, we used a general coding process, and we wanted to know how each of us was receiving and using formative feedback from students to improve our teaching and their learning.

Methods
We began our study sharing with each other what we did in our online courses, including our syllabi, learning modules, assignments, online discussion transcripts, and student evaluations. We also recorded in detail for one week how we spent our time “teaching” our online courses. To search for themes, we used a general coding process, and we wanted to know how each of us was receiving and using formative feedback from students to improve our teaching and their learning.

One theme to emerge from this analysis was the role of feedback in our online teaching. During these meetings, we sought to challenge each other through open, broad, and critical analysis (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). In addition to documenting our conversations at each meeting, following each meeting we wrote reflective journal entries and shared those with each other via e-mail.

In order to better understand the ways feedback played a role in our online teaching throughout one semester as we became more aware of the phenomenon, we examined and coded the transcripts of our meetings, our journal entries,
online courses, much like our FTF courses, are replete with satisfaction (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Rovai, 2007). Our and can make a profound impact on learning and student learning. There is little doubt that effective feedback increases discourse and analyzing the extent to which we are able to provide meaningful feedback to our students in our online courses. Maximizing our students’ learning, we frequently reflect on and analyze the extent to which we are able to provide diagnostic feedback of our practice. For example, Derek noted:

When I present a concept via a lecture supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation in an FTF course, I progress through the slides receiving signals, verbal and nonverbal, from my students. When I present that same concept to my students in an online course, I record my lecture, with my voice over the PowerPoint slides, and post it for my students to view and listen. Essentially, they are getting the same content—the same slides, the same description, and the same examples—as in my FTF course. In my online courses, I receive fewer formative signals from my students, and consequently, I am less able to monitor and adjust my teaching.

The number of postings on topics or references to particular content served as a type of feedback for Sandy, especially in the times when discussions seem to “explode.” For example, within the study of poetry, students discussed the merits of nursery rhymes for young children. This issue seemed to strike a chord as students discussed how they were or were not used in schools. Although students were not aware that their comments were being served as feedback to Sandy, the depth of the discussion revealed that this was a meaningful topic they wished to explore. Suzanne experienced the same types of “explosions” somewhat differently as she sometimes felt “left out” of the rich student conversations, interpreting them as feedback that her expertise was unnecessary to teach course content. An example of how our self-study broadened our thinking about student feedback was how Sandy’s perspective changed Suzanne’s understanding of such explosions. She came to see them as a form of positive feedback that confirmed the student-directed nature of online learning.

Since the 1980’s, researchers studying computer-mediated communication (CMC) have determined FTF learning has a higher media “richness” than CMC groups, based on four criteria: feedback, multiple cues, language variety, and personal focus (Barkhi, Jacob, & Pirkul, 1999). The more ambiguous a learning event is, the more one benefits from the media richness of FTF communication (Sun & Cheng, 2007). Certainly, teaching can be an ambiguous task. It often is not clear if we are doing a good

### Findings

Underpinning our teaching in general and our self-study specifically is our desire to teach well. We take pride in our craft. For us, like most teachers, teaching isn’t merely our job, it is a significant part of who we are as individuals, and our egos are directly related to our persona as teachers. Feelings of personal accomplishment are vital to teachers’ motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The reasons teachers are motivated to take intentional actions are varied, and expand beyond the commonly held dichotomy of intrinsic versus extrinsic. Self-determination theory suggests a continuum of motivations with intrinsic motivation as the most autonomous “characterized by enthusiasm, spontaneity, excitement, intense concentration, and joy” (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007, p. 762). At the core of autonomous motivations for teaching are the realization of one’s authentic self and personal accomplishment (Huberman, 1993). Bandura (1994) suggested that people with a high perceived self-efficacy approach difficult tasks, such as teaching, as challenges rather than threats. In short, good teachers teach because they love to do and because they derive value and a sense of accomplishment from the act.

Through our self-study, we leveraged the trust we had built with each other and risked portraying low self-esteem by acknowledging that ego plays a vital role in teaching. Much research has been conducted linking Maslow’s Needs Theory with teacher satisfaction. High teacher satisfaction is directly related to high self-esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization (e.g., Sweeney, 1981; Trusty & Sergiovanni, 1966). Perhaps more importantly, teacher satisfaction plays a key role in teaching effectiveness. According to Wigfield and Eccles (1992), teacher effectiveness is impacted by intrinsic value (how enjoyable teaching is), utility value (how important teaching is), and attainment value (how important it is to teach well). In other words, effective teachers think teaching is enjoyable, important, and that they are good at it.

As we began to explore why we felt less sure of our teaching effectiveness online, our study focused on the role of feedback in our teaching. As instructors committed to maximizing our students’ learning, we frequently reflect on and analyze the extent to which we are able to provide meaningful feedback to our students in our online courses. There is little doubt that effective feedback increases discourse and can make a profound impact on learning and student satisfaction (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Rovai, 2007). Our online courses, much like our FTF courses, are replete with various forms of effective formative and summative feedback. Feedback, though, is not merely an instructor-to-student construct. Instructors receive feedback from students, and student feedback can both affirm and improve teaching practice.

In our online courses, student-to-instructor summative feedback takes the same form as in our FTF courses, namely end-of-course evaluations. Although our student and peer evaluations suggest our teaching effectiveness online is equal to our FTF courses, good teaching is more difficult for students to determine in online courses (Ham & Davey, 2005). Compared with summative feedback, however, formative feedback in our online courses is substantially different, if not less, compared to our FTF courses.

In our FTF courses, we receive numerous signals confirming the correctness and adequacy of our behaviors (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). Students in our FTF courses nod, smile, and write down what we say, each of which validates our competence. Additionally, they signal uncertainty and confusion, providing us with diagnostic feedback of our practice. For example, Derek noted:

When I present a concept via a lecture supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation in a FTF course, I progress through the slides receiving signals, verbal and nonverbal, from my students. When I present that same concept to my students in an online course, I record my lecture, with my voice over the PowerPoint slides, and post it for my students to view and listen. Essentially, they are getting the same content—the same slides, the same description, and the same examples—as in my FTF course. In my online courses, I receive fewer formative signals from my students, and consequently, I am less able to monitor and adjust my teaching.

The number of postings on topics or references to particular content served as a type of feedback for Sandy, especially in the times when discussions seem to “explode.” For example, within the study of poetry, students discussed the merits of nursery rhymes for young children. This issue seemed to strike a chord as students discussed the merits of nursery rhymes for young children and the extent to which they were or were not used in schools. Although students were not aware that their comments were being served as feedback to Sandy, the depth of the discussion revealed that this was a meaningful topic they wished to explore. Suzanne experienced the same types of “explosions” somewhat differently as she sometimes felt “left out” of the rich student conversations, interpreting them as feedback that her expertise was unnecessary to teach course content. An example of how our self-study broadened our thinking about student feedback was how Sandy’s perspective changed Suzanne’s understanding of such explosions. She came to see them as a form of positive feedback that confirmed the student-directed nature of online learning.

Since the 1980’s, researchers studying computer-mediated communication (CMC) have determined FTF learning has a higher media “richness” than CMC groups, based on four criteria: feedback, multiple cues, language variety, and personal focus (Barkhi, Jacob, & Pirkul, 1999). The more ambiguous a learning event is, the more one benefits from the media richness of FTF communication (Sun & Cheng, 2007). Certainly, teaching can be an ambiguous task. It often is not clear if we are doing a good
job; thus, the richness of feedback provided to the teacher in FTF classes can make teaching feel more comfortable than the less easily discerned feedback in online courses.

Inseparable from our desires to maximize our students’ learning are our desires to verify and confirm that we are effective at what we are trying to do. Feedback informs practice and helps instructors regulate their behavior and meet their goals (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003). One purpose of seeking feedback from our students is to improve our teaching, and interconnected, their learning. In organizational behavior research, feedback seeking behavior is often regarded as a means to acquire information in order to improve one’s job performance (Ashford, 1986). At the core, it is this motive that drives any self-study – to improve one’s practice.

Changing Our Practice

Through our self-study, we uncovered our need for positive, affirming feedback from our students about our teaching. We also identified some ways we receive feedback in online courses that differ from those in FTF teaching. It is important to note, however, that feedback is different from other types of information (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). “As feedback is information about the self, it is more emotionally charged” (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003, p. 779). Feedback is directly related to one’s pride and ego. While negative feedback can damage one’s self-confidence, positive feedback can raise one’s esteem. Because we value feedback and because feedback in an online environment is different from FTF teaching, we have had to seek other means of receiving feedback from our students. End of course student evaluations are not sufficient. We have learned to seek feedback about activities and assignments regularly and explicitly. Additionally, we learned to look for additional clues from our students about our teaching. While we cannot see students in our online courses nod and smile, they might make a post in a discussion board that signifies not only their learning but also their excitement about the topic, both of which can be attributed to the instructor’s competence.

After we began to focus on student to instructor feedback, our data showed that Suzanne had become more aware of spontaneous student comments that were submitted with assignments and served as formative feedback much the same as smiles and nods did in FTF courses. Frequently, when students submitted a Module Assessment assignment, they would include feedback on how the assignment worked for them. For example, when submitting a multi-genre paper, a student stated, “My assignment is attached. I haven’t taken the time to write poetry for quite awhile. It was nice to have the opportunity.” Feedback was given when assignments did not work for a student such as this comment on that same assignment, “Attached is my Module 2 assessment. I found it difficult to write a response this way! I think I would enjoy writing a story in this multi-genre fashion, but writing a reflection on the strategies seemed strange for me!” Suzanne experienced these comments as affirming and helpful for improving course assignments.

To compensate for the uncertainty surrounding his perceived effectiveness, including both the extent to which his students were grasping the course material and valuing his course, Derek adjusted his teaching in an attempt to gain student feedback that was more formative. One simple, yet effective strategy he implemented was to require his students to post in WebCT one brief “take-away” each week. Derek asked his students to identify, in two to three sentences, one key learning from the week. For example, one week several students posted that the course readings accurately predicted the national standards movement that they had seen in the news that week. These brief posts validated Derek’s teaching and provided him information to regulate his teaching of subsequent activities.

Sandy described her initial search for formative feedback signals as one of “mining the postings” and reading between the lines of content, looking for hints of confusion, opportunities to add a resource, or student insights that could be stretched and probed. Student postings provided evidence on the directions students chose as they charted their own courses for learning. Sandy consciously searched for indications of those directions so that she could support students as needed. Providing resources in response to student interests would have been done in a FTF class in the same way, but it was in the process used to determine what was needed that Sandy found the difference. For example, in a FTF classroom, one might divide the class into groups, and although the instructor can circulate, it is not possible to hear all of the discussions. However, online, it is possible to “hear” it all, and everyone’s voice can be a source of feedback to the instructor.

Conclusion

As teachers, both FTF and online, we share many beliefs about effective teaching. We believe that feedback from our students is vital to validating our competence and to helping us modify our teaching to best meet our students’ needs. Furthermore, teacher satisfaction plays a key role in teaching effectiveness, yet the extent and ways in which we receive ongoing, formative feedback in our online courses is substantially different compared to our FTF courses. Feedback informs our practice, and if we seek to improve our craft we must determine ways to gather and analyze formative feedback from our students online. Online teaching does not provide the nonverbal and oral expressions that provide formative feedback in FTF teaching; yet, feedback is vital to our emotional and teaching well-being. This self-study expanded our individual and collective perspectives on what constitutes formative feedback in online classes. Each of us grew in our ability to provide opportunities for students to offer and for us to use such feedback in improving teaching and learning in our courses. The self-study gave us a deeper level of analysis and critical reflection as well as support and challenge by two trusted colleagues.

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Virtual Faculty Advisors: A Self-Study of Two Teacher Educators’ Practices

In the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, faculty members are assigned the supervision and advising of several student teachers during their four-month practicum experience in various schools in southern Saskatchewan. As part of the professional development process during the practicum, faculty members are expected to visit, observe, and conference with their student teachers three to five times per semester. While a reasonable expectation under some circumstances, such a “limited contact” approach is not conducive to creating and sustaining a relationship with the student teacher that is supportive of their professional growth. The visits are too infrequent and too short in duration for the faculty advisor to make a difference in the theory-practice transitions of K-12 teachers.

In addition to the problematic time and travel issues, there is the ongoing challenge associated with helping student teachers become more reflective in order to deal with the complexities, ambiguities, and implications associated with processes of learning to teach (Edens, 2000; Nolan & Exner, 2009). Computer-mediated communication has been shown to create a sense of community among student teachers, cooperating teachers, and faculty advisors where, as the community evolves and matures, participants grow closer to one another, enabling them to tackle increasingly complex issues (Goos, 2005; Nicholson & Bond, 2003). Effective communication (e.g., dynamic conversations among student teachers and faculty advisors) is fundamental to an effective field-based experience.

The purpose of the self-study project described in this paper was to create and sustain a professional development relationship between faculty advisors and student teachers through the design of video conferencing and other technology-based initiatives. In the project, it was possible for two teacher educators (the authors of this paper) to introduce “virtual” visits with student teachers such that the faculty-student conferencing process became ongoing, synchronous, and without geographical boundaries. This notion of an ongoing, feedback-oriented approach is a necessary change to the faculty advisor role and relationship with student teachers in order to establish a continuum between pre-internship university courses and the practicum.

Method
Each teacher educator conducted a self-study into his/her own practice as a faculty advisor with his/her own three assigned student teachers. For the purposes of this paper, self-study is defined as the intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice. In teacher education, self-study is powerful because of the potential to influence student teachers, as well as impact one’s practice as a teacher educator. Furthermore, self-study can have a broader impact by informing other teacher educators’ practice (Loughran, 2007).

Data for this study was collected from each of our reflective journals, notes from meetings with student teachers and cooperating teachers, written and video recordings of students’ lessons, and formal and informal conversations with one another. Having data from a variety of sources enabled us to compare our professional and personal development, to document our perceptions over time, and to expose successful and unsuccessful routes of our learning. Keeping reflective journals was useful because it enabled us to focus on everyday occurrences. Each entry was dated and contextual information attached. We scrutinized the data, separated the important from the unimportant, and grouped similar things together. From the start, we engaged in self and collaborative reflective practices. Our conversations focused on questions adapted from McNiff’s (1995) action research framework: Why do I do the things I do? Why am I the way I am? How do I improve my work for the benefit of others? This dual-pronged approach of the self-study pilot project made it possible to have a significant, more pervasive, influence on the current re-visioning and reshaping of our Faculty of Education’s practicum supervision model.

Sal Badali’s Story
It’s a glorious autumn day and I am on my way to meet my three student teachers and their cooperating teachers at the Internship Seminar, a 3-day orientation being held at a local hotel. We have only communicated via e-mail so I am a little anxious and excited at the prospect of meeting them for the first time. “It feels like a blind date, I want to make a positive first impression,” I think to myself.

I arrive early. I’m standing at the entrance to a large nearly deserted ballroom a little before noon. “Where is everyone?” Finally, I see Tom, a retired teacher who helps organize and lead some of the seminar groups. “Who are you looking for?” he asks. To my relief, Tom walked me over to a table and introduced me to my group. “Thank you, Tom!”

We got along very well. Because we had a great deal of information to cover and very little time, I emphasized that the primary goals, expectations, and roles for the practicum were unchanged, but the manner in which I fulfilled my faculty advising role would be different than traditional face-to-face relationships. I also outlined the Professional Development Process (PDP), a process that both student teachers and cooperating teachers were familiar with. To my relief, all participants appeared enthusiastic about the project, acknowledging that integrating technology would result in some additional benefits. Before I left, we agreed on a tentative schedule of electronic PDP cycles. I emphasized that I, too, was a member of the learning community and that one of my primary roles was to challenge them to critically reflect on their emerging practice. “This means I may be asking some challenging questions about pupils, the school, what you observe of your cooperating teachers, the...
curriculum and issues related to things like diversity, social justice, and inclusion,” I said.

Before I leave we agree on the following process: 1) on certain dates, student teachers would e-mail a copy of their lesson plan to me and to their peers. Within a day, each person was expected to provide written feedback/critique. Cooperating teachers were also invited to provide written critiques (but none did so). 2) Using flip video cameras, student teachers agreed to upload a video of their lesson (all or in part), that I would watch before de-briefing via a 20-30 minute Skype conversation.

It’s early October. “Why are my student teachers confused about the process? We had all agreed,” I said to a colleague, and “I even sent an e-mail that outlined the process.” I was frustrated but I needed to be patient. After a series of e-mails, I was able to sort out the confusion and the process we had agreed to worked well.

Let me conclude this story by saying that we overcame some access issues associated with video conferencing. Skype, for example, was blocked in the schools, which meant we had to conduct the de-briefing component of the PDP in the evenings. And two student teachers lived in rural communities with unreliable internet connection. In addition, uploading videos was often a very slow process that frustrated them. Nevertheless, the minimum 3 PDP cycles were achieved for each person.

I will conclude with an extract from an e-mail I received from one of the cooperating teachers near the end of the internship. In part it read, “Nancy has been a wonderful student teacher and I am really pleased with her performance, she is going to be an exemplary teacher, any school will be fortunate to have her in its employ. The reason for this email is to ask you if you could find the time to come and visit… to see her in person. I really miss not having you here in person.”

I took a deep breath, and pressed the reply button.

Kathleen Nolan’s Story

Making contact with my three secondary mathematics student teachers was not as straightforward as I thought it would be (or should be) in our overly virtual and digital focused world. Since the decision to conduct this pilot project was not official until the summer of 2009, I felt considerable time pressure trying to contact all of my student teachers in late August— a time when we were more focused on our upcoming teaching assignments for the fall. When the student teachers first responded to my e-mails they were surprised by the fact that I was not planning to meet every few weeks with each of them, in person, at their schools. Soon enough however, the student teachers seemed comfortable with the virtual process and with the fact that it would unfold differently for each person, depending on their interests, their time, and the contexts of their practicum placements.

As already mentioned in this paper, the student teachers were quite familiar with the traditional Professional Development Process (PDP), as outlined in their student teacher manual. In order to address limitations of this traditional PDP, I created several modified versions of the process that were more in tune with my desire to mentor student teacher theory-practice transitions. The first version left most of the traditional PDP in tact, but included an extended pre-conference time period. I requested that each student teacher send me an electronic copy of her lesson plan three days prior to the day I would visit to observe this lesson. I would then review the lesson and send back an electronic copy that included my suggested comments, edits, questions, etc. The student would have a day to read and consider my feedback and then we would engage in a Skype conference to talk about my review and their response to it. Once this process was complete (approximately 3 days), I would travel to the school to observe her (revised) lesson in action in her mathematics practicum classroom.

A second version of the PDP embedded this first modified version into the traditional PDP, but dramatically modified and extended the post-conference aspect. Due to time constraints, I was able to enact this version of the PDP only once with one student teacher, Robin. As it turned out, Robin taught two grade ten mathematics classes during her practicum, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. On one particular occasion, after post-conferencing with Robin about her problem-based geometry lesson, I offered suggestions for how Robin could make the lesson potentially more open-ended and more engaging for students, yet still have key structural elements to keep students on task. As is the response of many students upon listening to my feedback, Robin nodded, smiled and said she thought my ideas were quite good and that perhaps next time she’d think about these suggestions when planning and teaching her lesson. This time, however, Robin did more than nod and smile— she spent her lunchtime that day revising her lesson so that she could make the modifications for teaching the same lesson in the other class that afternoon. Of course, I was long gone at this point – back to the university to carry on with the rest of my day— but she used a flip camera to capture her revised lesson in action. Shortly after her class ended that afternoon, she uploaded the video for me to view and sent me the following e-mail message:

It went much better! Thanks for the advice… it worked wonders. Generally this afternoon class is a little crazier, being the last class of the day and all, so I think with the lack of structure I showed this morning it might have been pure mayhem with these guys. I decided to try what you mentioned and also pick their partners. I also had them finish by the end of class, and even though a couple didn’t quite finish, the work ethic was really good (even from some students that NEVER show good work ethic). All in all - success! Anyway it was good to see you, and thanks again for the feedback!

In a third, more extreme modification of the PDP, I did not visit the school at all. Instead, I asked that student teachers use the flip camera to videotape three (3) short segments of their lessons, which they would then upload to a website where I could access and view them. It was challenging at first for them to understand how this process might provide me with enough ‘visual and auditory evidence’ to provide appropriate feedback for their professional development. Once they were able to move beyond the notion of professional feedback coming in only one form and obtained by me physically being in the classroom from beginning to end of the lesson, I think that they actually enjoyed this process. After viewing each student teacher’s videos, I conducted a Skype conference with each person individually and then all four of us engaged in a video conference (using Adobe Connect). During the Adobe connect conference I was able to catch glimpses of the
promising possibilities for professional reflection among student teachers of mathematics through virtual communities of practice for.

Successes and Challenges

After we independently identified several key learnings gained from our experience working with student and cooperating teachers, we agreed on the following:

- One of the benefits we noticed associated with this virtual faculty advisor project is the potential to create a sense of community among participants. As the community evolves, it was clear that individuals developed a strong sense of camaraderie. Nonis, Bronack, and Heaton (2000) claim that encouraging a sense of community is a deliberate act. Knowing this, we made a conscious effort to be explicit about expectations and responsibilities associated with this virtual project.

- In this virtual faculty advising role, we each became more of a participant and less of a provider; thereby complementing the traditional role. Because we chose to situate ourselves as an active member of the learning community, we were able to gain additional perspectives about the ambiguities and complexities associated with teaching and learning. At times, we functioned as a professional community, sharing ideas and providing constructive feedback and suggestions.

- The use of video was helpful in not only documenting the complex events experienced by student teachers, but also in giving them a foundation from which to step back and reflect on what occurred from various perspectives. Because students usually have to deal with the dual tasks of teaching and learning to teach, it makes it difficult for them to isolate and analyze specific aspects of their teaching. In this project, video was a good tool because of its capacity for repeated viewing, by themselves or with other student teachers, their cooperating teacher or faculty advisors. Our experiences during this project are consistent with Staudt and Fuqua’s (2000) study that found video technology can be used as a tool in helping student teachers identify, assess, and transform their ideas through self-examination of their own teaching practices.

- The use of technology provided a valuable platform from which to make connections between theory and practice. We found student teachers to be less defensive and more analytical. In part, we relied on video evidence to challenge student teachers’ perceptions and perspectives in ways that were more direct than in face-to-face debriefing meetings.

- We were more involved as virtual faculty advisors than we had been previously in face-to-face settings. The video component was useful in engaging student teachers in the technical aspects of their teaching, but also to query them about what they were thinking when they did certain things (we could stop the video and discuss what was going through their minds, for example), about their professional goals, and other issues pertaining to critical self-awareness. This is in contrast to our experiences in traditional settings when there is often insufficient time to de-brief with students because they need to prepare for or teach another lesson.

- Although we both saw advantages in introducing a virtual component to the faculty advising role, we felt under appreciated and the least important member of the field experience triad. Often, we even felt like “outsiders” and were frustrated because we thought we could have done a great deal more to support one another in this virtual community. Furthermore, cooperating teachers and student teachers did not seem to understand that we had other responsibilities in addition to being a faculty advisor. In Sal’s journal, he noted that “they clearly don’t think my time is worth very much…. why don’t they just answer my emails, telephone messages? I would never let THEIR correspondence go unanswered. When they had a question or problem, however, they expected an IMMEDIATE response from me.”

What We Learned and Concluding Thoughts

First, being virtual faculty advisors was more time consuming but also potentially more satisfying. In some ways, the virtual faculty advising role reinvigorated our enthusiasm, serving as a catalyst for our own professional growth as faculty advisors. Second, we would prefer to meet student and cooperating teachers in April because there was insufficient time at the internship seminar (in early September) to establish a clear understanding of the virtual component of the practicum. It would be worthwhile to establish a clear understanding of roles and expectations well in advance. Third, the use of videotapes and video conferencing positively impacted our roles as faculty advisors because we were less rushed than in face-to-face contexts and, with the passage of time, we often noticed things in the student teacher’s practice that were missed in real time conversation. Fourth, establishing a supportive, critical, and caring learning community is at the heart of our practice as faculty advisors. We regularly modeled what we thought was best practice in terms of being reflective practitioners because we believe that student teachers will then be more comfortable in dealing with the tensions inherent in the learning to teach process. Fifth, despite the fact that many teacher education programs integrate protocols meant to enhance student teachers’ professional growth, prospective teachers still commonly experience isolation. A virtual learning community is one way to address this problem. And finally, in any collaborative setting, whether face-to-face or virtual, individuals are more likely to improve their teaching when they learn from each other—when they plan together, share resources, and reflect collaboratively on the impact of their pedagogical choices and behaviours.

Our competence and development as teacher educators and “virtual” faculty advisors evolved as we undertook this project; at times it was an introspective process of examining and re-examining our taken-for-granted assumptions about what we thought student teachers needed to know and do at a particular phase of their development. An important outcome of this research was that it promoted critical reflection among prospective teachers on their emerging
practice, on current and prior beliefs, and as part of their long-term professional development. As faculty advisors, studying our own practice, we think this is a very worthwhile outcome indeed.

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Navigating the public and the private within myself: Experiencing a “disorienting dilemma” as an opportunity for professional growth.

Examining one’s perspectives as a teacher educator is important in clarifying and developing understandings that frame practice, and creating opportunities for personal professional growth. One approach to examining perspectives is that of assumption hunting (Brookfield, 1995). Through seeking to uncover taken-for-granted beliefs or ideas that shape our decisions and actions, otherwise hidden dimensions of practice can be surfaced for scrutiny not only by ourselves, but also by others, and potentially, serve as powerful learning opportunities. Yet the process of assumption hunting can be very challenging since deeply embedded assumptions are notoriously difficult to detect. One way in which assumptions can become apparent is through being confronted with unexpected situations or disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991). In these situations preconceived ideas about what ‘normally’ should happen do not seem to fit. Reflecting on a disorienting dilemma and the way one responds to it offers a pathway to recognising embedded assumptions and how they contribute to a particular pedagogical perspective, and is key to reframing practice in ways that better align intentions and action. This paper reports my encounter with a disorienting dilemma and its consequences for my professional understanding and growth.

Context

At Millwood (pseudonym) University, the secondary science teacher preparation program was recently revised as part of a review of the teacher education program. The revised science program meant that instead of completing a full academic year (2 semesters) studying a specific specialism (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics method), all prospective science teachers now complete one semester of a General Science methods unit, followed by one semester of methods study in their science specialism. This change was imposed upon the five science teacher educators in the program (including the author) by the Faculty administration and was not one that the science teacher educators themselves sought, or welcomed.

As a consequence of the program change, the science teacher educators were required to review and redevelop their courses so that they fitted the new structure. Developing the new General Science unit (SCIED000), took many hours of discussion and negotiation about which aspects to emphasize and how our particular concerns for science learning might be incorporated. Many of the decisions about the content and sequencing of the curriculum were mutually agreed upon. However one issue proved difficult to resolve that related to the organization of the teaching. Four of the five teacher educators agreed that each science teacher educator should ‘rotate’ across the weekly classes rather than remaining exclusively with one group of students for the 8 sessions of the semester. The rationale behind this idea was to expose the preservice teachers to a range of different teaching styles so that they might be provoked to think that there is not ‘one correct way’ to teach science and to consider more carefully their own approach. This proposal deeply challenged my values as a teacher educator concerning the relational nature of learning and led to the pedagogical challenge that is central to this paper: How can I build meaningful relationships with student-teachers that, for me, lie at the heart of learning to teach, when I will not teach the same class of students more than twice? Reluctantly I agreed to the proposal and at the same time, recognised an opportunity to examine the assumptions underpinning this aspect of my practice.

Aim

A broad goal shared by those who undertake the self-study of their practice is to achieve a better understanding of the pedagogy underpinning their practice. This study sought to investigate how the experience of working outside my comfort zone became a pedagogical challenge that confronted my ‘self’, and helped me to gain deeper insight into my pedagogical approach and its connections with my professional identity as a teacher educator.

Korthagen & Verkuyl (2002) identify the importance of preservice teachers becoming more self-aware so that they can better support the learning of their students. They suggest that self-awareness can be developed through “reflecting on one's pattern of survival behaviour as a teacher, patterns that often surface when tensions in the classroom grow...[and] asking oneself what one is more than those patterns” (p.43). This study investigates this idea from the point of view of myself as teacher educator, as I considered several questions:

What patterns of survival behaviour did I enact in this professional struggle?

How did I navigate the tensions between the personal and public dimensions of my ‘self’ in enacting an approach that was personally uncomfortable?

What insights are offered through analysis of this experience for me, and prospective science teachers?

Method

Through identifying the “interpretive frames” (Barnes, 1992, p. 10) that guide their work, self-study researchers strive to understand their practice differently and to derive new meaning from it by drawing on alternative interpretations through reframing practice; thus offering new possibilities for more informed teaching. Self-understanding developed through self-study enhances the possibility that one’s actions achieve their intended effect.

Self-study draws on data sources that are appropriate to examining the issues, problems or dilemmas that are of concern to teacher educators and that can lead to reframing. Hence it is typical for such data to be drawn from a variety of sources, such as journals, observations/recollections,
I published a weekly public blog, reflecting on the main themes of each SCIED000 session and inviting students’ feedback about these themes or any other aspects. In this way, I hoped to maintain an ongoing connection with students I taught and develop a connection with new students in advance of meeting them. I also hoped to encourage discussion amongst students from different classes through the blog. I told students about the blog in class and provided a link on the Blackboard site for the unit. However, in the 8 weeks of classes, only one student posting was made that was unrelated to the work of the unit. At the same time, I know that students were reading the blog and there were five student ‘followers’ identified on my site.

In reviewing my entries, a strong and prevalent theme that I made explicit was the value I saw in building strong relationships as a component of good learning. In fact, it might be said that I was ‘advertising’ my standpoint to the lecturer rotation and responses to it. Findings are discussed according to these different data sources.

Findings

Blog

I believe that learning involves feelings and emotions and that the teacher has an important responsibility in learning about what might be appropriate experiences for particular students and when. These are complex things to write about - but something worth thinking about in terms of what matters to you when you are working with students in a classroom.

At the same time, I tried to make explicit through my blog entries the way in which I was processing my response to this challenge to my values and how I attempted to use the situation as a learning opportunity for all of us. In this way I hoped to model to preservice teachers an approach to reframing problematic situations. In particular, I wanted to draw students’ attention to two aspects: (1) that unexpected situations can present learning opportunities, and (2) that the teaching approaches we choose may be more aligned to our own needs as learners (and people) than our students. The following blog entries illustrate (1), then (2).

Week 2 (science lecturers and students had attended a science camp, and lecturers had to make an on-the-spot change to their lesson plan because of rain)

…we were challenged to change our lesson plan with the rainy weather at the start of camp. I felt a little uneasy about making an on the spot change, but I knew it had to be done. In hindsight, forcing me to change actually produced some good unintended effects in that the group seemed to come together well by all being in the same space doing the same activity (compared with doing a rotation of outside activities which we usually start with). Perhaps there is a message in this for me that routines sometimes need to be forcibly broken for new learning to take place. Routines can blind you to other possibilities. I’ll be keen to hear your responses.

Week 3

…I don’t mind saying that I felt reluctant to do this [rotation] from the outset. What I value as a teacher is the opportunity to develop strong relationships with students so that we can work at deeper levels because some trust (I hope) has been established. By deeper levels, I mean that students feel that they can speak up and say what is honestly being experienced (e.g., how particular experiences help or get in the way of learning?) and that we can have frank discussions about these and consider together how such discussions can influence how one thinks about being a teacher and a learner.
Interview

While only a very small number of preservice teachers participated in the interviews (6 out of 100 students), so that trends cannot be identified, the nature of participants’ comments helps to provide some insights into their different perspectives about their experiences of lecturer rotation. Two students did not like the rotations, one suggesting that it was “confusing” (K) and the other that it reduced the “cohesiveness” and “consistency” (R) of the sessions. Two students (R, M) raised the idea that changing lecturers made it difficult to build “rapport”. However, one student (M) was pleased with the rotation for personal reasons.

K: I think the idea is that they keep changing the lecturers so we get different ideas, different styles and things, isn’t it? I’m not sure about changing the tutorial person every single week. It feels kind of confusing to be honest... And because of that and so I haven’t had a chance to get to know them, I’ve only seen a very small snapshot of them... And, I’m not sure why that happened, to be honest. Is that just because of the different teaching styles? For example the other units... even though you might be confused to begin with, eventually you kind of get to know a bit and then [confusion] kind of passes a little bit... but for this one I just feel like, because it’s always changing I’m not so sure that’s a good thing to be honest, you know... on a personal level it’s difficult to see how different they actually are in only a couple of hours, you know, and it changes every week. I’m not sure about that.

R: With a different lecturer each week I didn’t find there was any cohesiveness between them... you see different styles and think, I want to be that person, I don’t want to be like that person. Um, so I guess that’s a good thing. But I think overall it’d be better to have the consistency of a single tutor, so that you can build up a rapport and you’d be more likely then to go and talk with that person about issues because you know them.

M: I found the rotation of tutors good in that I didn’t initially like my tutor. But I found it disjointed again as well, probably because it was hard to build up a rapport with your tutor when you’re seeing someone different each week.

On the other hand, two students did not appear to be concerned about the rotation. Their comments suggest that the relational component of their learning was not a high priority, and that they were (more or less) satisfied with their experiences.

P: Um, you could put any one of them there and they could do the whole course and it would be fine or you could mix them and that was fine. To be honest, it didn’t give me any problems, but I haven’t seen the alternative so I wouldn’t know if it was any better. But I found it fine, it was quite nice having a different face, people often have different strengths...

L: Well, to be honest, they’re friendly enough, friendly enough to say hello to them but I would consider they’re, you know, there to learn from and I’m not, maybe I’m different to other people. I don’t feel the need to be building up close relationships. They’ve been perfectly amicable if I ask them a question or anything like that, so I don’t see, I don’t see the need to be close to lecturers... I’ve never had that in the past...

In terms of whether the rotation achieved its purpose, that is, to expose students to a range of teaching approaches so that they might recognise that there is no singular best approach, and to consider the development of their own teaching approach, it appears that it had only a superficial impact. While these students seemed to recognise why the teaching was organised in this manner, they did not seem to be able to articulate any particular impact on their thinking about their practice, as a consequence. Also, very little time was allocated in sessions for explicit discussion of this issue, (for example, we were not intending that students choose to imitate our styles), so that potential learning from the experience was reduced.

Outcomes

As a teacher educator who has engaged in the long-term study of my practice and for whom the value of building responsive relationships is deeply embedded in my sense of self, the disorienting dilemma which was the impetus for this self-study has provided me with an opportunity to re-consider and reframe a deeply held value underpinning my teaching. Others who have lived though restructuring processes in teacher education have reported similar instances of being confronted with their assumptions and building new conceptualisations of their practice (c.f., Martin, 2007).

Though examining my response to this situation as well as students’ responses to their experiences of multiple lecturers in this unit, I recognise that my own needs for connection may be reducing my capacity to entertain alternative approaches to practice that do not depend on relationship building as a central component. Korthagen & Veryule (2002) raised this idea when they asked whether teacher educators tend to focus more on satisfying their own needs compared with those of their students.

In terms of ongoing aspects of my learning as a teacher educator, this small study has provoked me to think about how I might begin to work with student teachers more explicitly, to identify and begin to manage ways of satisfying their own and their future students’ needs in their teaching. I propose that this is a component of teacher educators’ work that is rarely addressed and yet holds much potential for enhancing the relationship between teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Examining and articulating personal understandings of pedagogy developed through experience is important for teacher educators in building their professional knowledge of practice and developing meaningful ways of supporting the learning and development of their student teachers. Teacher educators need to question the underpinning values, assumptions and beliefs that inform their teaching and challenge taken-for-granted aspects (Shin, 1992) of practice—which may be working against their intentions for their students’ learning (Brookfield, 1995). They also need to articulate these inquiry processes and understandings in ways that are accessible for others so that they might begin to recognise the complex nature of teaching and learning, and feel encouraged to examine these aspects of practice for themselves.
References


Engaging with ethical praxis: A study of ethical issues arising from self-study research

Context
“You’re going to Greece on the back of my teachers’ research.” This was a comment made to us by the principal of one of the school communities in which we conducted a research project, and was a critical moment for our self-study. For Australians, Greece is an exotic location, and although this comment was perhaps a ‘throw-away line’ it could also be a serious message about the way we conducted our research and the view of our research partners. The research presented in this paper examines this critical moment and provides an analysis of the ethical issues and dilemmas arising during a self-study that occurred while we were conducting a 2008 mathematics professional learning program with six primary teachers in a regional Australian city.

Our research project was based on two aims:
1. To discover whether a supported professional learning approach using self-study as a methodology and empty number lines as a catalyst would improve mental computation skills, thus resulting in better learning outcomes for students in Grade 3 and Grade 4.
2. To introduce teachers to self-study and Roundtable Reflective Inquiry (RRI) as a means of supporting professional learning.

Teachers met with us for five professional learning sessions (June to November 2008) where we considered the theoretical underpinning of the approach, teaching support and curriculum planning. Each RRI was recorded, transcribed and analysed by the researchers. Insight about the tensions that arose in this study was provided through analysis of themes emerging during a RRI session involving six teachers and two researchers.

What emerged from our self-study was the importance of ethical practices that support our relationships with teachers and school communities; these practices extend beyond a conventional adherence to ethical standards. Our self-study research had been approved by two universities’ Human Research Ethics Committee approval and we were conducting a 2008 mathematics professional learning program with six primary teachers in a regional Australian city.

As a result of our research in and on our practice and the analysis of ethical issues, we developed the term ethical praxis, which we define as an (inter)active, anticipated and intentional researcher response to issues arising as a result of self-study research, which may often be unforeseen and un(der)explored. Ethical praxis demands more than a conventional adherence to ethical standards for researchers.

Ethics in Educational Research
Ethical practice is conventionally defined as the adherence to commonly agreed upon ethical guidelines when conducting educational research. Appropriate ethical conduct is an important aspect of self-study research (Allender & Allender, 2008; Berry & Loughran, 2002, Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Proponents claim that Self Study is underpinned by ethical practice that is “pragmatic, relational and based on experience” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 106). However, few self-study researchers have explicitly articulated the role of ethical practice in self-study method, so this seems to be an under-theorised aspect of this research method.

Ethical practice is an important aspect of any educational research, and all educational research involving humans requires approval from university and relevant education system Human Research Ethics Committees to confirm that research activities adhere to the ethical guidelines for research involving human beings. However, Ernst (2009) for example, argues that ethics in educational research must extend further than conventional adherence to ethical standards, and suggests that ethics enters into education research in four ways: (1) informed consent of participants, no harm, and respect for the confidentiality and non-identifiability of participants and institutions; (2) publications and public conversation related to the findings of the research; (3) the principle of reciprocity; and (4) ethics as “first philosophy” which means that the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is but a secondary feature of a more basic ethical duty to the other (Levinas, 1969). We believe that Ernst’s (2009) view of ethics as a first philosophy for educational research has much to offer self-study researchers, and we use this as a framework for discussing our findings and the implications of our findings.

Method
We, (Ann and Robyn, teacher-educator researchers) completed a professional learning project with six primary teachers during 2008 and while doing so, conducted a self-study of our learning and teaching. We engaged in weekly conversations; maintained journals (using critical incidents, interactions and events as our stimulus for writing and analysis); conducted interviews with teachers and a
principal and kept/analysed written notes of interviews. An integral aspect of our data collection and analysis was the identification and analysis of critical incidents, interactions and events (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004; Tripp, 1993; Woods, 1993) and through using Kosnik’s (2001) framework, we came to understand more about the role of ethics when conducting self-study research.

**Critical Incidents in Teaching and Learning about Teaching**

The role of critical incidents in teaching and learning has increasingly been researched within both the reflective practice and self-study literature (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004; Kosnik, 2001; Tripp, 1993), as has the notion of critical incidents and critical events (Woods, 1993). In essence, all refer to a heightened sensitivity to the identification, experience of and response to an incident, interaction, event, moment or person, from which the learner can reflect and hence, promote further understanding about the learning that has occurred. According to Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) and Kosnik (2001), analysing critical incidents provides a means of moving reflection on practice from a descriptive process to one which represents deeper analysis, and it is through this deeper analysis that one comes to understand more about assumptions and beliefs in teaching and learning. One crucial aspect of developing our professional and ethical judgment as teacher educators was the ability to become critically selective about which incidents, events and interactions.

Kosnik’s (2001) self-study research provided an example of researching teaching practice whereby critical incidents provided a means by which to interrogate the intended from the actual in her teaching. Her study initially involved documenting and recording aspects of teaching that were followed in subsequent years by further refined questions including “What is [was] my response to the event saying about me?” and “What are the values inherent in my decision and the situation?” (p. 68). The incidents were analysed by way of a three-column chart. By responding to focus questions, Kosnik identified her inherent values and responses and illuminates understandings about her assumptions and beliefs as they influenced her teaching and learning about teaching. In this way a dynamic relationship developed between the actual and the intended in her practice. We adapted Kosnik’s (2001) approach to critical incident analysis for our own self-study.

**Critical Incidents and Ethical Dilemmas**

Throughout our self-study we noted critical interactions, events and moments that occurred and analysed these using an adapted version of Kosnik’s (2001) critical incidents analysis framework. Several of our recorded critical incidents were ethical issues that caused us to reflect on our ethical practice throughout the research. As an illustrative example, Table 1 presents the excerpt from one researcher’s journal.

Table 1 shows one researcher’s analysis of a critical incident that was significant for our self-study. The analysis highlights that what the researcher learnt that ethical practice and relationships were important to her, that she was concerned about her conduct in respect to both, and questioned whether the researchers had paid enough attention to both during their research. Further, the critical interaction presented in Table 1 led to the researchers assuming that the teachers involved in our professional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of the Critical Incident Analysis</th>
<th>Researcher Journal notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Robyn met the school principal in the supermarket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed description of event as it occurred</td>
<td>She mentioned that we [the researchers] were going to Greece on the back of her teachers’ research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was my response to the event saying about me?</td>
<td>Oh dear. It’s happened to Robyn too. This really is an issue that we need to address and think about. Where there is smoke there is fire. Robyn and I talked about this all the way around the lake [weekly walk]. It really made us think about how well our intended practice and actual practice align. Although mainly tongue in cheek, there is a message for us in what the Principal is saying. Also, the teachers need acknowledgement. My reaction and Robyn’s similar reaction reinforces that we are concerned about our relationships with the teachers and school communities and whether this has been damaged, and highlights for both of us the importance of ethical approaches to research beyond the human research ethics guidelines. We told the teachers that they would be partners in the research. Was this actually more rhetoric than reality??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the values inherent in my decision and the situation?</td>
<td>I value relationships - I value ethical practice in research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions and understandings and issues/questions for teacher educators/education</td>
<td>Being seen to be treating research partners fairly does not stop at the end of the data collection and reporting stage. It continues. This is brought into stark relief when you live in a community in which you meet research partners in the supermarket or picture theatre. Do researchers pay enough attention to this?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1: Excerpt from a Researcher’s Journal that Describes and Analysis a Critical Incident in the Research
learning program believed that we were gaining kudos at an international conference held in an exotic location on the basis of their work, and that they were missing out on this experience and acknowledgement. Were we being overly sensitive to a ‘throw-away’ line or was our assumption correct? Because this incident challenged our ethical practice and this was important to us (see values in Table 1) we decided to explore this issue more deeply and invited the principal (who made the comment) to discuss with us issues related to the ethical practice of our research in her school (January, 2010).

During this interview with the principal, we returned to her comment about “our going to Greece on the back of her teachers’ research” and asked her whether this actually was just a ‘throw-away’ line or an actual belief. Her response indicated that although her comment was ‘partly a throw-away line’ “there was an element of a real issue … somebody [teachers] doing hands-on work [that] they saw as their work … there needs to be an element of recognition, kudos”. Clearly our conference presentation in Greece was perceived to inadequately acknowledge the teachers’ role in and contribution to the research and the findings. Our interview with the principal clarified for us that our assumption was correct and that there was some tension related to the presentation of the research findings at an international conference. Although the teachers were pleased that the research was being presented, and were invited to accompany us, a lack of funding meant that they would have to do so at their own expense (as did we), and this was prohibitive.

Discussion
Ernst’s (2009) ethical framework for mathematics education research is based on four components: (1) informed consent of participants, no harm, and respect for the confidentiality and non-identifiability of participants and institutions; (2) publications and public conversation related to the findings of the research; (3) the principle of reciprocity and (4) ethics as “first philosophy” which means that the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is but a secondary feature of a more basic ethical duty to the other (Levinas, 1969). As we conducted our research, we had a heightened awareness of our ethical responsibilities due to the nature (and possible sensitivities) of our project. In this sense, we were well prepared and felt we had carefully prepared the teachers for the demands of the research. In terms of Ernst’s (2009) framework, we had ensured anonymity and maintained respect; we had invited the teachers to present the outcomes of the research at a University (Public) Research Forum; we had presented the research report to each school staff forum. In fact, it was only after the “going to Greece on the back of my teachers’ work” comment that we began to consider the deeper and unforeseen ethical impact of our research.

Analysis of the critical moments recorded during our self-study support Ernst’s (2009) contention that ethics in educational research must extend further than conventional adherence to ethical standards. He argues that ethical practice needs to underpin publications and public conversation related to the findings of the research. Although we ensured that, as researchers, we engaged in public conversation about our research, we had not paid enough attention to the importance of involving the teachers in this conversation. This was complicated further by the fact that the teachers remained anonymous in our presentations and publications, and in fact they may have liked their identity to be known, as they were proud of the impact of their work.

Ernst (2009) also highlighted the importance of reciprocity in research. Although teachers, students and researchers gained from the experience of the research, and in this regard the research activities were reciprocal, this was not so in respect to the perceived kudos arising from publication of the findings. In this regard, we failed the ‘other’ in our research (Ernst, 2009), and were deficient in our ethical conduct. As a result, we wonder whether other researchers experience similar ethical dilemmas, and whether a rigorous debate about how ethics enters into Self Study research needs to be undertaken to further develop this research method.

We propose that an under discussed concept in self-study is ethical praxis, and we propose that ethical praxis may be an integral component of self-study research. We define ethical praxis as an active, anticipated/awaited and intentional researcher response to issues arising as a result of self-study research, which may too often be unforeseen and un(der) explored. Ethical praxis demands more than a conventional adherence to ethical standards for researchers. As was evident in our research, even though we had carefully addressed our researcher responsibilities, it became obvious to us that ethical implications were “not always known in advance as much that occurs in self-study [research] is in response to unfolding insights” (Brandenburg, 2008, p. 164). We contend that it is important for self-study to focus on the ethical issues and dilemmas that arise, and to include analysis of data about this component as part of the research design.

New Understanding and Action
Ernst’s (2009) theoretical framework provided a guide for us to ensure that we addressed the multiple aspects of ethical responsibility as researchers and identifying and analysing critical incidents, events and interactions during our self-study enabled us to understand more about the way that ethical practice(s) impact others. However, new understandings about ethics have led to new learning and this has impacted our practice as self-study researchers. Through this research we have developed the notion of ethical praxis, a dynamic, interactional and intentional researcher response to issues arising as a result of self-study research, which may too often be unforeseen and un(der)explored. We recommend that self-study researchers: 1) collect data about ethical dilemmas that arise during (and following) research, 2) explore and systematically analyse these dilemmas and 3) work towards resolving them as an integral part of any self-study research. We argue that ethical praxis is an important lens for self-study researchers to further understand practice and needs to be more explicitly articulated and addressed as an important aspect of self-study methodology. Maybe, in relation to self-study, and indeed broader educational research, we need to more fully consider moving away from ‘doing no harm’ to actively and meaningfully ‘doing good’. Ethical praxis may be a good place to begin.

References


Confessions of two technophobes: A self-study of two teacher educators’ efforts to understand and develop a participatory culture within a technological environment

Context

Teacher Educator 1 (Nancy) is in her car in Michigan, talking to Teacher Educator 2 (Jill), who is in Florida typing notes on her computer, and they are looking at their portion of the same blue sky. Twenty years ago this scenario would have been impossible. The explosion of technology in all of its varied forms, not only makes this possible, but probable and highly likely. Most of our students function this way on a daily basis during multiple encounters, with friends and acquaintances in multiple settings. Yet we are old enough to still be amazed at this process. Given the proclivities of students to use Web 2.0 technologies and the unique capabilities offered by these platforms, it is imperative that we as teacher educators use and understand these tools and the ways in which they influence our teaching and learning.

For us, and other teacher educators of our generation, the very nature of teaching is an instinctual act. We soak up information as teacher educators use and understand these tools and the ways in which they influence our teaching and learning. How do I/we improve our practice? We anticipated that the new knowledge created between us, and within each of our respective communities, would be transformational. As self-study researchers we are committed to continual exploration of questions related to “How do I/we improve our practice?” We anticipated that the new knowledge created between us, and within each of our respective communities, would be transformational and generative, allowing for new learning to emerge simultaneously across borders and boundaries (Whitehead, 2008). We began to think about teaching in a virtual world as borderless and unencumbered by time, space, or walls.

The purpose of this self-study was to analyze what we learned and understood about teaching and learning within a new technological world. To that end we posed the following question: How have the new technologies forced each of us to rethink our professional identities?

A Twist

Our plan was to each separately integrate a digital media component into an existing class. While navigating this new addition and documenting our experiences and own personal development, we planned to utilize various communication tools, continuously engaging in on-going professional dialogue (Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton, & Pinnegar, 2004). We would simultaneously create a virtual community of practice to document and explore the use of technology to facilitate creating a virtual participatory community. What became apparent through our analysis was a conflict between our original intentions for the experience and the in-class outcomes that occurred. Simply stated, we became frustrated with ourselves as we avoided aspects of this project. As self-study practitioners, we have established the levels of professional intimacy that allowed us to enter into this new inquiry (Fitzgerald, East, Heston, & Miller, 2002). Why weren’t we? We began, as women everywhere—by blaming ourselves. “ I must finish my tenure process than we can begin”(TE 1 journal entry), “Family issues to deal with, let’s meet tomorrow,” (TE 2 message). We realized as we wrote an email asking for yet another extension to the deadline that something else besides being overworked middle-aged women was happening. Other work was being completed, other papers written, meetings attended, responsibilities met. We are both successful, overachievers adept in juggling our lives and careers. What was happening with this work that we were so eager to begin? To honestly answer this question our self-study had to take a new direction with a new question. Thus, we agreed to expand our study to include a re-conceptualization of our process and what could be realistically achieved (Loughran, 2004). Our new question: Why are two successful teacher educators resisting entering the web 2.0 environment? We hope this work helps other teacher educators attempting to use and be comfortable with e-learning and multimedia sources. We began this new self-study based upon a shared belief: To gain the knowledge needed about the potential power of these newer tools we must actively participate: Plan, DO, Study, ACT.

Theoretical Framework/Related Research

Rapid and pervasive increases in the use of a wide range of social networking software by the millennial generation have educators thinking how to build on these practices for educative purposes (Mason and Rennie, 2008). Using web 2.0 technologies to “harness collective intelligence” allows for the linking and connecting of emerging forms of theory and knowledge to be shared, built on and expanded across time, space and boundaries. As we write this, SS and AR scholars and researchers from around the world are interacting, peer commenting, and collaboratively doing research through an on-line e-seminar (one of many such platforms) devoted to “facilitating a global dialogue to explore the foundations, current applications, and future hybridizations of Action Research.
research and Action Learning in the field of Education across all life stages and sectors, on a world stage” (Whitehead, 2010). Our relation to knowledge has changed, along with the way in which one acquires knowledge (Brown and Duguid, 2000). Technology has increased our access to information, but that does not equate with gains in knowledge. It is almost impossible for individuals to personally acquire ALL of the knowledge and experiences they need in order to act within a changing environment. While technology can certainly enhance instruction, it cannot substitute for the insights revealed when students connect with each other, and their mentors through the shared construction of knowledge and understanding (Mason and Rennie, 2008).

Methodology
Our approach is motivated by our belief that human behavior cannot be understood without insight into the meanings and intentions that individuals attribute for their actions. Ascribing to a hermeneutic theoretical stance (Gadamer, 1962), we believe that the researcher is involved in and part of the interpretation of the experience. The truth of spoken or written language is revealed when we, as researchers, explore the conditions for understanding its meaning. Thus, it is essential that we both recognize and integrate what we bring to our research and the context within which our research exists. We began again by writing narratives to understand our resistance. As participants, we are high energy, over achieving, middle age teacher educators who are considered excellent teachers within our own institutions. Nancy (TE1) is on faculty at a large midwestern state university. For the purpose of this research she focused her efforts on her undergraduate diversity course. Jill (TE2) is the department chairperson in a small, private university in the south. She focused her efforts on a doctoral class in advanced curriculum. The following data sources informed our study through reflective inquiry: reflective narratives written separately by each participant, corresponding notes about the narratives written by the other participant, journal entries, phone messages, email notes, and field notes.

Our emphasis was on finding ways to understand our resistance. Analysis related to this self-study evolved naturally through the process of reading and rereading the narratives, comparing notes and supporting claims with other data (Barone, 2008).

Findings
In this section we present our two narratives followed by our understandings.

Narrative One (TE1). On a fine spring day, Max came into my life. He is the cutest, albeit undisciplined, golden retriever puppy. My nest was empty and Maxi filled it up— all 85 pounds of him. So what does Maxi have to do with Facebook? I met Max in New York City. Max’s “birth father,” a 30-something lawyer, thought owning a puppy would be a great way to meet women. After a little more than a week with the puppy and no girls in site, Max became mine. I picked him up and promised to send pictures via the Internet. My predicament— I had no clue how to send pictures to some guy in NYC without using an envelope and stamp. Thus, my daughter set up a Facebook account for me. I knew Facebook— it was the thing I had spent my daughter’s teen years trying to get her to shut off in order for her to complete her schoolwork. Why would I want this thing? Clearly, I am too old.

My guide explained how easy it to was to use and how I would love to share photos of Max with my loved ones.

So I have this account. Immediately people began asking to be my friend. Students wanted to be my friend. I did not want to be their friends. I made a decision: I would befriend my relatives and colleagues, but not my students. However, I quickly learned that ignoring friend requests was rude. My daughter taught me there was etiquette to Facebook. Who knew? Lesson number one.

My new face-friends sent me stuff. Stupid stuff— fill out your 100 firsts. Why would I want my colleagues to know the first time I slept with a man? Or ate grapes? I am private. I did not want to share my firsts. I also did not want to know the boring details of my face-friends’ lives. I do not care that my friend was going grocery shopping, or that her cat scratched her. De-friending is rude— lesson number two.

Lesson number three: this new medium has a language— I started hearing things like: “that’s a Facebook shot!” I started thinking about what a picture represented to me. I chose a profile picture where I was picketing our university. I received many comments. One informed me that picketing was not something to be proud of when one was going up for tenure. Wrong again. I thought I was supposed to share. Apparently, you can only share politically correct things like, the first time you had sex. I put a new profile picture, a picture of Maxi. Confession of a middle aged educator: I hate Facebook. How can I teach online when I cannot keep up with my Facebook page? I joined my colleague in a self-study to understand teaching and learning within a technological world. How can I do this when I do not know how to use the technology proficiently? When I type too slowly, and do not know the tricks? When I am frightened of admitting I do not know. Most importantly… when I do not have an Internet identity. My identity is fixed, not fluid yet I am intrigued by creating and recreating identity in a new way that is neither public nor private but virtual (Greenhow, Robelia and Hughes, 2009).

Narrative Two (TE2). When we began our self-study, we discussed the challenges we were each facing with trying to re-shape our professional identities in a digital age. We acknowledged that the methods we feel most comfortable using are those that involve F2F group structures, discussion, interaction, etc. While quite comfortable in my choice of content delivery over the last few years, I had to admit that I was beginning to feel like a luddite when the conversation turned to digital methods of interaction, and the tools that some of my students were using in their own classrooms. I struggled with the options I was offering students regarding assignments and was intrigued by my own questions related to the creation of digital content for my classes. Yet, when push came to shove, I fell back on the same old “tried and true” strategies for instructional purposes. My intent for this study was to utilize newer technologies in the development and delivery of a new doctoral course, hoping to be able to get myself “up to speed” and comfortable interacting with my students, and colleagues, in a new language. It seemed quite manageable in theory, but in practice, it was a whole different ball game! Unfortunately, the semester started with a personal family tragedy, and then my physical condition deteriorated. With each attempt at using digital methods, I took 2 steps forward, and 4 backwards! FEAR of practicing the new
language in front of others, FEAR of failing, and FEAR of the unknown, became impediments to my learning. I listened to my students, my younger peers, and my own children, as they shared Facebook lives, blogging experiences, and Skype sessions, while feeling more and more frustrated at my own lack of finesse with these new tools. Writing, speaking and communicating through more traditional venues was serving me well. While I did engage in experiences that added to my professional knowledge (i.e. participation in a PT3 grant, etc.) I was really behind the eight ball when it came to web 2.0 usage. While claiming to not be interested in connecting with people I might not have seen for 30 + years on Facebook, nor wanting to be a voyeur of other people’s lives, I was intrigued by the fascination of social networking tools for younger members of our culture. Never one to do what everyone else is doing because it is in vogue, I rejected signing on and connecting through these venues.

But when I began to think about my educational influence, and the concept of the relational dynamic crucial in creating new standards of judgment within our field (Whitehead), I was compelled to change my tune! My curiosity was piqued by the questions raised by Greenbow, Robellia, and Hughes (2009) regarding the proliferation of these technologies within our culture, but the lack of a corresponding pedagogy within the classroom. I began to see that I was, once again, a living contradiction! Did I dare to begin forming my own online identity as a teacher educator, and how would that change my practice? My question concerns not only the educative value of my students’ participation in these newer platforms, but also how this impacts our knowledge base in teacher education, and contributes to new theories, pedagogies and curriculum for all learners. There are many questions I have related to data collection, analysis, and evidence when navigating in this arena, as well as questions related to validity.

For now, I will concentrate on building my own skill set, developing more confidence in the use of multiple platforms, and exploring the way in which this transforms my interactions with students, from teacher to learner, and back again.

Furthermore, I recognize that my students all have different styles and ways of learning, understanding and using information. Have I been using my own preferred learning/teaching style while professing, “varying your instructional delivery”, have I done this? Not nearly enough!! As teacher educators, caught up in the work of the academy, are we so rushed and frazzled that we neglect our learners and just get by?? I think that this might happen more often than not due to all of the variables that come into play. Too much to do, not enough time, afraid of not knowing enough? These are merely excuses that impede my progress! As a teacher, if I am not always learning, I should not be teaching!

As a result of analyzing our narratives four findings were evident: (1) The importance of online identity formation, (2) fear and resistance goes hand in hand (3) proficiency is vital, and (4) a renewed commitment to the reconceptualization of knowledge as socially constructed, devoid of authority and power. For more mature educators such as us, the formation of our identities occurred throughout our lifetimes, in our experiences in school, organizations, and various public venues. Our family relationships, cultural connections, and recreational choices helped to shape who we were and what we would become. The line between our public selves and private selves is more fixed, more separate. In contrast the learners of today use Web 2.0 technologies to actually form their identities, and the more proficient they become in using this rapidly changing medium, the more they use these methods in shaping who they are. They come to the learning situation that we have shaped hoping and expecting to share their knowledge in multiple ways and they are frustrated by the authoritarian view of knowledge most often encountered. There is much to be gained from inquiring into their experiences with these tools, and the knowledge gained from the co-construction of meaning can enhance our collective knowledge base.

**Afterthoughts**

It has been months since we wrote the first eye opening draft of this paper. As promised we each took baby steps ahead.

Nancy: I have integrated on-line learning into one of my undergraduate classes. Asking my students to create a digital journey, a new multi-media assignment allowing students to represent thinking in a broader context. I want to understand student thinking within their time and place. So far the assignment has raised questions about equity and limited access.

Jill: I have confronted my own inadequacies as an educator, and asked myself, once again, “How do I improve my practice?” As a 21st century teacher educator, am I concerned with helping all those with whom I come in contact with to “be the best they can be”? Am I once again, a living contradiction, by not embracing the opportunities provided for me to jump into numerous Web 2.0 platforms for my own learning? Can I do this? What is standing in my way? Merely my own struggle with my “teacher identity”?

**Conclusion**

It is our belief that teaching with technology holds fabulous possibilities yet we do not believe it can move forward unless those of us who are great teachers bring our knowledge to the very place that is scary and unfamiliar, where we are novices not experts. Those of us who understand the possibilities of teaching must get out of our own way and develop expanded professional identities that incorporate and grow through a web-based culture. Teacher educator one and two are now ready to begin the original goals for this self-study: to utilize the web and 2.0 technologies within our classes, using new media to create learning communities that encourage and invite participatory experiences for ourselves and our students. We invite you all to become our Facebook friends!

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Being Authoritarian to be Democratic

Context
For several years, I have been immersed in a personal journey of transforming myself into a democratic teacher educator. Like Dewey (1966), I consider democratic education a process of learning to live in freedom, where self-governance and democratic citizenship are not naturally occurring phenomena, but are ways of living that must be purposefully cultivated through opportunities to actively shape the content and process of one’s studies (Morrison, 2008). As an undergraduate student and public school teacher—upon uncovering critical theorists like Freire (1996) and Rogers and Freiberg (1994)—I realized a world of possibility existed beyond conventional transmission teaching. In an effort to help students more fully maximize their personal growth and fulfill their human potential, I aspired to actualize such possibilities as a graduate assistant by experimenting with varied strategies for constructing relations of democratic authority in my teacher education courses (Brubaker, 2007). Nothing taught me more about the practices of the broader educational community than infusing democratic strategies into my pedagogical repertoire. While I implicitly believed students would embrace the democratic ideals while more fully accounting for the larger context of authoritarian teaching to which my students are accustomed. The course in which I conducted the study—Diversity in Elementary Education—was one of several core courses required of all elementary teacher education candidates at my institution. Its purpose—to guide students in critically examining their own perspectives regarding diversity, difference, and pedagogy—was more reflective than methodological in focus and therefore was ideally suited to having participants work collaboratively to construct an understanding of course concepts through cultivating a classroom community of inquiry (Lipman, 2003). Below, I discuss aspects of the course experience that, based on the literature and the data, illustrate the evolution of my teaching relative to my intentions for the course.

Method
I conducted the study over three semesters (Spring and Fall 2008 through Spring 2009) at a large comprehensive state university in a rural area in the Southeastern United States, with 186 undergraduate students across eight different sections of the course. During the first semester of the study, I involved students in actively establishing course obligations, defining collective purposes, and fashioning an interactive environment characterized by inquiry and dialogue. I did this through presenting to them in the course syllabus a combination of negotiable and non-negotiable requirements for earning their desired grade for the semester; continually inviting students to help shape our daily agenda, make decisions about course activities, and reflect on our progress as a group; and encouraging them to think for themselves and come to their own conclusions about course topics through continued deliberation about questions and concerns inspired by personal experiences and assigned texts. I used similar topics, materials and requirements in the second and third semesters of the study, though I presented students with increasingly fewer opportunities to shape our class agenda and assume responsibility for customizing the course experience to suit their individual circumstances—additional details for this narrowing are embedded in the findings below.

I collected data from three principal sources: course documents (including my lesson plans for each class session with written notes about my teaching strategies and outcomes), student reflections (including anonymous
course evaluations and required papers in which students examined their course experience and assessed its value for their future teaching), and personal reflections (an on-going journal consisting of several hundred pages of thoughts about my teaching). I analyzed the data as inductively as possible using the constant comparative method—in which I continually compared incidents in the data with previous incidents of similar and different attributes until stable categories emerged to give rise to the findings for the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The credibility of the findings was enhanced by my use of strategies like progressive subjectivity, negative case analysis, persistent observation, and prolonged engagement—by which I repeatedly reviewed and coded my data in ever-finer detail until my themes accounted for all known cases in the data over the course of multiple semesters (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). While several themes seemed significant, only those that were directly supported by the data were ultimately incorporated into the findings. Three themes emerged from the data about how my teaching strategies represented a process of being authoritarian to be democratic: seeking few solutions to the problems being negotiated, prescribing purposes regardless of mutually perceived relevance, and imposing predetermined experiences and outcomes.

**Seeking Few Solutions to the Problems Being Negotiated**

Seeking few solutions to the problems being negotiated—of which the problem of determining what projects students would be obligated to complete to earn their final grade for the course was central—was a frequently recurring theme of my efforts to revise my teaching practices. In the first semester of the study, students had communicated a sense of being overwhelmed by the opportunity to modify course requirements through designing individualized grading contracts (Brubaker, In Press). While Tasha (all names used in this study are pseudonyms) was “very thankful for having the opportunity to choose” her assignments for class, she wished for “some way to avoid all of the confusion” caused by needing to choose from the many options I had presented for assignments in the course syllabus. To Olga, having options conflicted with students’ “desire to always emphasize others’” preferences. This involved taking more control over your own assignments” and “really gives you a chance to give feedback,” to which she advised future students, “Take advantage of this!” While it was not a requirement to create one’s own projects, it was perhaps less daunting for students to consider doing so given the more limited array of possibilities I provided.

**Prescribing Purposes Regardless of Mutually Perceived Relevance**

My tendency to seek few solutions to the problems being negotiated was accentuated by my inclination to prescribe purposes regardless of mutually perceived relevance. This finding was evident from my continual efforts to focus students’ attention on my own perspective and priorities—in contrast to my previous efforts to jointly construct the course curriculum and explicitly identify with students shared purposes to which we were collectively committed to working. Trisha observed in the first semester of the study: “The dynamics of this class are different than those of any class I have ever taken in high school or college. She elaborated: “The entire class is completely student-centered”—which Lori considered a “bit unusual.” I recognized in my journal a need to be more directive in prescribing my goals for the course. I noted: “I’m asking students to assume too much responsibility for class.” and continued: “[M]y goals need not necessarily change, but my level of guidance definitely must.” As the study progressed, I used a range of direct and indirect strategies to emphasize my own outlook and goals while making fewer efforts to emphasize others’. This involved taking more time to communicate my purposes for the course through class presentations, e-mails, and strategically selected texts, videos, and guest speakers—with the intention of exposing students more deeply and consistently to my own purposes for the course with little regard for the extent to which they perceived actual relevance in these purposes.
process of the class—making students depend on me for constructing meaning from the course. From my perspective, I had become overly directive in making my purposes explicit to students. In developing an ever “tighter set of plans” for prescribing course activities, I was “completely abandon[ing]” my prevailing tendency of “trying to walk [students] through a process of actually…think[ing] like a teacher.” While rigid and prescriptive, my approach was nevertheless democratic to the extent that it helped create a common understanding of course topics that invited ongoing examination and appreciation of diverse perspectives. This was particularly evident from students’ written remarks in the third semester of the study about the impact of the course on their overall outlook as teacher education students. Leslie learned that teaching is “all about collaboration and working together,” while Betty discerned the importance of walking into the classroom “with an open mind” in order to “view the world with different eyes.” Nelson concluded that closed-mindedness will “make it hard for you to reach your full potential” as a teacher. “Even if you consider yourself to be an ‘enlightened’ and accepting person, keep listening; you might find that there is more for you to learn!” Focusing on my purposes helped students critically examine their own perspectives about diversity and difference and realize important course aims.

**Imposing Predetermined Experiences and Outcomes**

My uncompromising approach to the course curriculum was reinforced by my efforts to impose predetermined experiences and outcomes in each of our sessions throughout the semester. Unlike my prior attempts to cultivate a classroom community of inquiry in which students’ concerns provided the central basis for all class activity and which unfolded in an emergent fashion, I perceived a need in the first semester of the study to “ease off the really heavy discussions,” demonstrate “more varied approaches,” and avoid “getting into a rut” with my discussion-based approach. This view was supported by students’ perception that my approach could benefit from more variety. Marion considered my practice “not very diverse” since “it promoted a single method of instruction,” which Terri considered “a little repetitive” and not as “lively” as alternatives like media clips. Donna wished we had spent more time doing “group activities rather than just discussing topics” and Terri felt the class could have used just a “bit more structure.” Consequently, I employed numerous strategies to orchestrate, direct, and enforce class participation, of which strategies like role playing, fishbowl, line up, four corners, say something, and Outcomes helped strike a balance between engaging students in experiences that were completely different from anything they had previously experienced and reproducing conventional practices they had long known—constructing a class climate that aligned more directly with what students were ready to experience while reflecting a more gradual approach to educational change.

As a reflection of my own teaching practice, I have mixed feelings about the outcomes presented in this study. In one respect, they reveal considerable growth in modifying my practice as a teacher educator and responding to student feedback in ways that positioned me to better meet their needs. Of this I am proud. Nevertheless, I cannot help but feel pulled by competing worlds in my commitment to help teaching candidates experience a more democratic classroom reality. What students have experienced in my teaching as democratic has represented to me a precarious movement towards the educational status quo—affirming teacher-centered practice and leaving largely unchallenged existing patterns of student dependency and passivity. Perhaps my initial approach was too democratic and therefore the actions I took in this study were necessary steps towards assuming increased responsibility for guiding students’ learning. I intend to continue venturing in this direction. Perhaps also the larger context of educational practice is

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**Educational Relevance**

Fostering active participation in democratic life is a major priority of many teacher educators, though this task is complicated by the authoritarian direction of the broader educational context. The insights into an undergraduate teacher education course provided by this study suggest that being authoritarian is one possible framework for being democratic when compromising with the larger educational context. Through including fewer options for class requirements, being more prescriptive with course purposes, and assuming increased responsibility for directing class activities—being more authoritarian than I had been in my previous teaching—I was able to modify my practice in ways that helped students more comfortably adjust to my efforts to construct a democratic classroom. The combination of seeking few solutions to the problems being negotiated, prescribing purposes regardless of mutually perceived relevance, and imposing predetermined experiences and outcomes helped strike a balance between engaging students in experiences that were completely different from anything they had previously experienced and reproducing conventional practices they had long known—constructing a class climate that aligned more directly with what students were ready to experience while reflecting a more gradual approach to educational change.

As a reflection of my own teaching practice, I have mixed feelings about the outcomes presented in this study. In one respect, they reveal considerable growth in modifying my practice as a teacher educator and responding to student feedback in ways that positioned me to better meet their needs. Of this I am proud. Nevertheless, I cannot help but feel pulled by competing worlds in my commitment to help teaching candidates experience a more democratic classroom reality. What students have experienced in my teaching as democratic has represented to me a precarious movement towards the educational status quo—affirming teacher-centered practice and leaving largely unchallenged existing patterns of student dependency and passivity. Perhaps my initial approach was too democratic and therefore the actions I took in this study were necessary steps towards assuming increased responsibility for guiding students’ learning. I intend to continue venturing in this direction. Perhaps also the larger context of educational practice is
excessively authoritarian and teacher educators more broadly should involve students more fully in processes of doing for themselves what they will later be expected to do for others as teachers. Both routes seem necessary for cultivating democratic dispositions in teachers and helping students realize new heights of human potential in contemporary times.

References
The Turning Point: Troubling the Transition into Academia through Collaborative Self-Study

Objectives
A growing body of literature troubles the assumption that moving from classroom teacher to teacher educator is linear and unproblematic (Berry, 2007; Bullock, 2007, 2009; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006; Kitchen, 2008; Ritter, 2007, 2009). As two individuals who contributed to this literature by studying and writing about our developing pedagogies during our doctoral programs, it seemed appropriate to turn to each other as “critical friends” (Costa & Kallick, 1993) as we both began our formal careers as assistant professors in two different Faculties of Education, one in Canada and one in the United States. To that end, we engaged in a collaborative self-study of our development.

Context of the Study
New teacher educators take about three years to establish their professional identities because they struggle with becoming research-active and developing pedagogies for their work (Murray & Male, 2005). As a pressing aspect of faculty responsibilities, research expectations can figure prominently into how teacher educators perceive of their roles (Burch, 1989; Ducharme, 1993; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Labaree, 2004). This pressure can compel teacher educators to shift their focus away from teaching (Raths, Katz, & Labaree, 2004). Such a shift is troublesome because the knowledge of pedagogy acquired through classroom teaching may not be sufficient for the task of teaching about teaching (Burch, 1989; Ducharme, 1993). Murray and Male (2005) noted how teacher education “demands new and different types of professional knowledge and understanding” (p. 136). But little is known regarding the extent to which beginning teacher educators develop their pedagogies as they struggle with other obligations of their new roles.

Informal conversations between the authors at the Castle Conference (Heston, Tidwell, East, & Fitzgerald, 2006) and at the annual meeting of AERA (2009, San Diego) led to a shared realization that collaborative self-study could be a meaningful way to study the transition from graduate students to assistant professors of education at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) and at Duquesne University. Founded in 2002, UOIT has a commitment to integrating mobile technology with student learning in all faculties in the university. The Faculty of Education offers both a concurrent and consecutive education program leading to a B.Ed. and teaching certification for approximately 300 teacher candidates each year. Founded in 1878, Duquesne is a mid-sized, private Catholic university located in an urban environment; all conditions which serve to guide the work of the faculty. Although the university is able to offer undergraduate and graduate degrees with initial teaching certification in all subject areas, most of the programs consist of only one to two faculty members.

Objectives
Given these varying contexts, we decided to set up a blog to facilitate communication around our evolving understandings of our new roles. Shawn started the discussion:

The main issue I am interested in exploring is the notion of becoming a new teacher educator, something we both have thought about already. I have a feeling that “everything changes” when you become a Faculty member. Of course, I’ll have to wait until July 1st to officially be a new faculty member, and my teaching doesn’t start until August 17. But I already am experiencing questions of “Can I really do this?” How will I avoid the trappings of “tips and tricks” as I struggle to figure out what it means to keep up with research and service requirements? (March 23, 2009)

Jason, who at this point was nearing the end of his first year, responded based on his initial experiences as an assistant professor:

I have to admit that seeking answers through self-study largely escaped my attention during my first semester. That probably indicates something about my sense of “everything changing” as a full time faculty member—and not in a good way. After all, I am someone who values self-study and has experienced its power in helping me to purposefully think about my practice. But I felt so overwhelmed learning my new role and trying to stay ahead of the curve in terms of my research that I am afraid I let my priorities shift a little away from teaching. (March 27, 2009)

Bearing these issues in mind as new academics charged with teaching future teachers, each of whom may teach hundreds of children, we saw little choice but to regard seeking clarity on our roles—and how we wanted to enact them—as a moral imperative. Sarason (1996) suggested that teachers are unlikely to facilitate contexts of productive learning unless they have experienced such environments themselves. We considered our work in higher education as an appropriate venue to facilitate such contexts, and self-study as one powerful way to frame our work. The purpose of our study was to identify the shared turning points in our experiences as beginning teacher educators that revealed our critical learning.

Methodology
Self-study is more complicated than simply describing the effective or successful features of one’s work. The problematic features of practice are often of the most interest, particularly when self-study “looks for and requires evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice of the researcher” (Laboskey, 2004, p. 859). Focusing on these features of practice requires not only honesty, but a willingness to share uncertainties.

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The primary source for our data was a blog kept throughout the course of the study. We did not have any particular timeline for posting, rather each author wrote a post whenever he encountered a problem of practice or a situation that he wanted to share. Usually, the other author would comment on the post in a timely fashion. Often the comments related to the post would catalyze subsequent conversation. Shared commitment to writing on a blog helped us to track how our understandings were challenged and reframed. The blog posts were supplemented by email conversations. Emails took on a more immediate, conversational feel and likely helped to ameliorate against the inherently asynchronous nature of posting on the blog.

Data were collected between March 2009 and January 2010. The data collection period reflects a time of transition for both authors: Shawn defended his PhD in April 2009 and began his first year as an assistant professor in July 2009; Jason successfully completed his first year as an assistant professor in July 2009. Both authors frequently wrote about the degree to which their prior assumptions about their roles as faculty members and teacher educators were challenged by conversations with colleagues, interactions with teacher candidates, and the expectations associated with research, teaching, and service at the university level.

Over 4000 words form the data set, which was analyzed using familiar qualitative procedures such as content analysis, coding, and constant comparison (Patton, 2002). In particular, our data analysis focused on identifying and interpreting what we refer to as turning points in our understandings of ourselves and our teacher education practices. Turning points were readily identified by a rich description of a problematic issue by one of the authors. Jason captured the sentiment of these turning points when he closed a post by stating that he was “really at a loss for help that someone out there, even if he is in Canada, might find my problems interesting” (November 8, 2009). For purposes of analysis, a turning point was characterised as a situation that challenged the authors’ prior understandings of a particular context of situation; these situations turned our thinking toward new perspectives. This sense of reaching out to someone who might be experiencing the same feeling of being “at a loss” characterized our understanding of turning points. In this paper, we report on and interpret three turning points in our development between March, 2009 and January, 2010.

**Turning Point 1: I thought teaching was my strength?**

Given that we had both been teachers before entering graduate school and that we had both devoted considerable time in our PhD programs to self-study as a means of developing our pedagogies of teacher education, it is not surprising that Jason expressed confusion over a discussion with his Dean about the quality of his teaching:

> Per our tenure and promotion guidelines, we must demonstrate excellence in one of the areas and effectiveness in the other two. The Dean told me that she saw me being able to make a strong case for excellence in research, and effectiveness in teaching and service. … I was a little surprised that my teaching was only seen as effective. My evidence for many of the teaching indicators included “studying and writing about my own practice.” This evidence was apparently not viewed as favorably as other (what I would consider) more superficial forms of evidence, like teaching awards and high averages on student evaluations. It is my view that I could win university teaching awards and raise my averages on student evaluations without engaging in excellent teaching. I have seen many enact a pedagogy of pandering that wins them accolades. But that does not equal good teaching to me. (March 27, 2009)

Shawn responded to Jason’s concerns by supporting his commitment to self-study as a valid way of making claims about a pedagogy of teacher education:

> I also agree that indicators such as student evaluations/teaching awards are not necessarily indicative of “excellent” teaching. I guess I wonder how I could even begin to think about how I challenged students’ prior assumptions about teaching and learning unless I engaged in self-study. (March 31, 2009)

This turning point was characterized by a shared realization that becoming an academic entails constructing an identity that, in some ways, must conform to a new set of institutional demands. In particular, as institutions competing against other institutions, universities tend to define desirable faculty activity in terms of quantifiable faculty activity. So even though we learned it was acceptable to value teaching, and to demonstrate that value by studying and writing about our practice, we also discovered such commitments were not enough on their own.

Indeed, perhaps owing to the difficulties associated with defining and measuring good teaching, the university context seems prone to sending both implicit and explicit messages that ground-level teacher education and inquiry is not as highly valued as other activities. Consequently, we now recognize one of the more serious challenges facing beginning academics is the need to balance externally imposed definitions of success with their own beliefs and commitments as teachers of teachers.

**Turning Point 2: Who am I? Who is dictating the terms?**

At the same time Jason was experiencing some doubts about his identity as a teacher educator, Shawn was experiencing some doubts about his identity as a researcher “wondering how far [he] can try and push the envelope and still get an article accepted for publication” (March 31, 2009). We both theorized that self-study was a way to focus on teaching and research simultaneously, an idea which has obvious practical benefits when considered in light of the expectations of renewal, tenure, and promotion.

> We also developed a sense that, to a certain extent, meeting the research expectations of our positions involved some measure of strategic thinking. Was it better to work on an article that really pushed the envelope, and hence might not be accepted for publication, or was it better to “play it safe” (April 1, 2009) for the sake of getting publications? (April 1, 2009)

Jason remarked:

> Given all of these tensions, I sometimes wonder the degree to which my identity as a teacher educator is being constructed by others . . . it sometimes seems like I am deliberately being pushed into a certain identity mold. (April 1, 2009)

Our data in this section speak to the overwhelming concern new academics may feel to establish themselves
as active participants in the larger educational research community; an important ambition for most of their career trajectories. It also speaks to the type of participants they aspire to become.

Although teaching is obviously important, academics—including those who proudly refer to themselves as teacher educators first and foremost—are most readily known nationally and internationally through their research. So, while new academics may want to tackle perplexing problems in novel ways, they must also always be concerned with the frequency with which their work finds formal acceptance. This can occasion difficult decisions that add a layer of complexity to their transitions into the academy.

**Turning Point 3: Excel at Everything**

Early in our conversations, Shawn stated that it is “rough work to constantly feel like we have to prove something” (March 31, 2009). Jason commented that, during his first year, he felt “unbalanced” and that he was “missing any sense of rhythm,” quickly learning that if he did not “actively set [his] priorities,” others would (April 1, 2009). After his first teaching semester as a faculty member, Shawn expressed the same sense of unbalance, and an institutional pressure to excel at everything:

> The regular classes start next week, and I must admit that I am a little worried about my apparent lack of ability to keep myself on a research track so far. I feel like I’ve been on a bit of a treadmill since starting at UOIT. I had a new “prep” last semester (technology) and this semester I am taking over the math methods course for someone who is on leave. So, I am teaching physics and math methods this semester. December is still a blur, as I was working on putting in proposals for new research, proposals for conferences, and working hard to meet a few deadlines. I fear, though, that in my push to redefine myself in a new academic direction (something that I think is useful for RTP), that I haven’t yet had the time to push myself to produce from my doctorate or from the research projects that I worked on toward the end of my time at Queen’s. For that reason, I feel a bit lost, like I pushed too hard in the fall to become something that I’m not yet ready to be, while not quite fully exploring who I was before. (January 9, 2010)

Shawn felt pressure to do an outstanding job teaching the technology course, given that his university has made a strong commitment to integrating mobile technologies into its programs. He also felt the pressure to perform from a research perspective, yet he acted on that pressure by defining a new research agenda that focuses on how people learn through digital technology. Although he has a genuine interest in this line of research, Shawn also realizes that there is a strategic element to the more traditional research he is undertaking in this field. While Jason felt “unbalanced” because he was not able to focus on his teaching during his first semester, Shawn felt unbalanced because he was not true to his former research self, the self that cares deeply about teacher education and how teacher candidates learn from experience.

**Conclusions**

In this paper we have not explored specific issues of teaching preservice teachers. Rather, we have taken a big picture view that highlights what we consider turning points in our understanding of our new roles as assistant professors. These turning points highlight the impact of our new roles on our pedagogies of teacher education because they are powerful reminders of the challenge of thinking deeply about teaching teachers in light of the pressure to perform as researchers. We both have felt that the ways in which we re-construct our identities as beginning academics have been subject to the external constraints, both tacit and explicit, of our institutions and of our perceptions of the challenges associated with peer-reviewed research. It is fair to suggest that the turning points we cited in this paper were concurrent with at least some loss of confidence. Jason was affected by what he perceived as a negative review of his abilities as a teacher educator. Shawn struggled with his identity as a researcher and outlined a new, somewhat more traditional, research program as a way of safeguarding himself on the road to tenure.

Although the turning points highlighted in this paper focus on the tensions that we experienced in our initial induction into the academy, our paper also captures some of the power of collaborative self-study in two ways:

1. Collaborative self-study provides a methodology through which beginning professors can reach out to one another to discuss issues related to the challenges of focusing on becoming a teacher educator given the competing demands of the academy.
2. We realize that the methodology and research opportunities associated with self-study of teacher education practices provide one way to mediate the tension between our identities as researchers and our identities as teachers.

Our second conclusion is particularly relevant as we both seek ways to more effectively meet our responsibilities as teacher educators and researchers. Although it might be said that the sole challenge of a beginning an academic is to work toward tenure, our collaborative self-study has helped us reframe this typical characterization toward the idea of understanding that we are constructing identities both as teacher educators and researchers simultaneously, and that the two need not be mutually exclusive.

For us, collaborative self-study has been both a way to think about turning points in our transition and a catalyst to help us reframe our roles in terms of how we teach teachers. In this sense, collaborative self-study can be thought of as a form of professional development. But it also seems to represent something more powerful. When conducted earnestly in a supportive but critical manner, collaborative self-study has the potential to push its participants out from the solitude of their own mind’s eye, to engage with their own values and the values of others, and to realize new meaning for their roles as academics. In this way, collaborative self-study represents nothing short of a way to fulfill the ontological commitment we should expect from teachers of teachers.

**References**


The proliferation of mentoring programs has led to a tremendous interest in the skills that mentors develop in order to effectively assist novice teachers. Consequently, a substantial body of research has focused on the practice of mentoring and mentored learning. The majority of these studies have relied upon data collected at single points in time with less emphasis on exploring how the mentoring experience develops and changes over time with an emphasis on the specific learning needs of the beginning special education teachers/mentees.

**Context**

The purpose of this self-study is twofold. First, it focuses on the individuals (the mentees) who are living the mentoring experience, and second it systematically documents and examines the learning process of a reflective mentor who was working with four special education teachers over a period of one year. The study explores what transformations the mentees went through over the year, as well as what specific interventions the mentor did to support and assist in the learning process.

This research makes a valuable contribution to the area of teacher education and, in particular, the mentoring process because if focuses on the individuals (the mentees) who are living the mentor experience. The study included systematically studying what transformations the mentees went through over the year, as well as what specific interventions the mentor did to support and assist in the learning process. Few empirical studies have been conducted that examine the relationship between mentoring practice and adult learning. What has been demonstrated empirically is the effectiveness of induction programs that include mentoring (Billingsley, 2003; Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004; Boyer, 1999; Whitaker, 2000; White & Mason, 2003).

This paper discusses the self-study method of inquiry that was incorporated as a means of exploring and inquiring into the mentoring experience. It should be noted that this self-study is part of a larger study and the main focus of this paper will focus on the self-study of the mentor and the transformations and framing and reframing that took place as a result of this study. This was done from the perspective of those who are living the mentor and mentoring experience. Mezirow’s theory of transformational learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) provided the theoretical lens for framing the study. Transformational learning is defined as: the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world, reformulating these assumptions to create new meanings and making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14)

According to Mezirow and Associates (2000), there are two basic types of learning: informational learning and transformational learning. Informational learning is described as learning that focuses on increasing one’s knowledge base, skills, or to extend already established cognitive capabilities (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Transformational learning goes beyond simply extending one’s knowledge and more specifically seeks to change or reformulate one’s thinking to create new meanings (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). The role of the adult educator is to support the individual through the process of transformation by fostering self-reflection as a means of assisting adult learning.

The use of reflection was a major component of the study. Reflection was influenced by a Deweyan model as well as the work of Schön (1983), Loughran (1995), and La Boskey (1993). Loughran (2002) believes that reflection is enhanced through the use of concrete examples and experiences. La Boskey contends (1993) that productive reflection requires certain features that include being taught how to reflect, having a purpose for reflection, drawing on one’s experiences, and having a focus for informing and refining the reflective process. In this study the use of critical incidents provided the purpose and concrete examples for reflection. Specific structures were embedded in the study and were modeled by the mentor. The modeling by the mentor provided a shared understanding of how to reflect and for what purposes.

**Aims**

Drawing upon the current research on mentoring, adult learning, and the process of reflection, the study revolved around capturing the complex process of mentoring and learning in order to better understand the mentoring experience, through the eyes of the mentees as well as the mentor. Although there were two parts to the complete study, this paper focuses primarily on the self-study of the mentor. Specifically, the goals of the self-study included:

- To systematically examine how a mentor’s thinking shifts regarding her mentoring practice.
- To identify what activities or supports contributed to the beginning special education teachers’/mentees’ learning or transformation.
- To identify what activities or supports contributed to the mentor’s learning or transformation.

**Methods**

The participants included the special education mentor and four beginning special education teachers (mentees). The mentees selected for this study were receiving mentoring supports as a component of their on-the-job educational program. The mentees were in the induction program during their first year in the field as fully licensed teachers. The mentor (researcher) had been in a mentoring relationship with the four participants from the beginning of their...
program and this study embarked upon our third year together.

The methodology is consistent with the characteristics of self-study as defined by LaBoskey (2004). The study was self-initiated by the special education mentor/researcher and is improvement-aimed. In other words, its purpose was to improve the practices of the mentor. The study was self-focused and interactive as the study involved the mentor reflecting on her practices via journaling, as well as reflecting with her critical friends/colleagues.

In this study, the practice of journal keeping was an important vehicle for reflecting and documenting the collaborative work of the beginning teachers and mentor. The journal was a powerful device for the participants to clarify their thinking, to focus on concerns, jot down ideas and insights, as well as to trace their professional growth (Cranton, 2006). Two parallel sets of practices and data collection were going on simultaneously. The mentees reflected in their journals and the mentor/researcher did the same thing in her journal. The journaling was a place where the mentor and beginning teachers could together resolve concerns and issues.

The journals were written via e-mail and the format of communication was based upon the style of letter writing. In letters, “we try to give an account of ourselves, make meaning of our experiences and attempt to establish and maintain relationships among ourselves, our experience and the experience of others” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 106). Letters also are written to someone else with the expectation of a response (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and letters establish a give and take quality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Davies (1996) reflects on her use of letters as field texts: “The thing about letters is that you can get in touch with your own thoughts and feelings, in your own space and time. It allows for a deeper level of reflection on the part of the writer and offers privacy of thought and clarity” (p. 176). Hence, letter writing in the form of field texts for the purposes of this study allowed participants to respond and share their stories in a familiar yet powerful medium that contributed to the richness of their stories.

The reflections focused on critical incidents as a frame of reference. To ensure maximum freedom, all participants (beginning teachers and mentor), were allowed to include any incidents they wished to write about. In this study, a critical incident was purposively defined very generally according to the selection and interpretation of an event or events that were of particular significance to the participant (Cranton, 2002; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). General guidelines for the form of the stories were provided in order to preserve the open nature of the task as the prompts were phrased as open-ended statements (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). Reflective learning involves questioning one’s beliefs and perspectives, and as part of the process the mentor prompted additional responses via probing questions. The mentor included a colleague who served as a “critical friend.” All of the mentor’s journals/letters were sent to the “critical friend,” who read the letters, asked questions to probe the mentor’s perspective on the critical incidents, and provided critical feedback. The mentor inclusion of a “critical friend” who reviewed the data and the journals was utilized in order to provide another perspective and decrease researcher bias.

The data were analyzed using the constant comparison method looking for dominant themes and tensions. The focus on the initial data analysis was on tracking the critical incidents and identifying themes that emerged between the mentor and the mentees.

The first layer of analysis revealed three themes: (a) relationships, (b) mentor expectations, and (c) reflection. The first theme revealed the mentor’s belief about the importance of relationships. This was clearly evident in the language and words that kept coming up in the descriptions of the mentoring relationship: words such as trust, cooperation, and support. The second theme revolved around the belief about mentor expectations. This theme was very strong and was evident across all the mentor’s journal entries. Reflection was the last theme that emerged across all journal entries and this indicated how important it was to the whole process of mentoring. For example, the reflections with the mentees helped the mentor understand the importance of questioning and the fact that the questions needed to be purposeful, intentional, thoughtful, and thought provoking.

Beneath the Surface

As noted above, the first layer of analysis revealed three themes. However, it was discovered through a second layer of analysis that there were unanticipated findings that contributed new and valuable insights to the mentor. This second layer occurred as a result of discussions and probing questions with the mentor’s colleague, a university professor. In the second reading, the focus was on the specific language used in the mentor journals, in particular the description of the mentor’s reaction to events as well as the probing questions and responses in the written communications/letters to the mentees. This “meta-analysis” of the journals was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the words written and the language used in the journals. Essentially what the mentor did was to reflect on her reflections. This meta-analysis revealed valuable insights. As the mentor re-read her journals, she discovered new understandings regarding the transcripts and e-journals from her critical friend. As she had some time and distance from her writing, and analyzed it with more objective and fresh eyes, she discovered the way she was framing the events at the time of the writings. This data provided valuable information about the assumptions she carried, her beliefs, and how these shaped her thinking and her actions. As the mentor began to scratch beneath the surface (Newman, 1987) she noticed an important finding. She asked herself, “Whose process was this?” The mentor began to see how she had personalized her role as mentor and framed it primarily from her own perspective, without necessarily acknowledging or honoring the perspectives of the mentees. For example, in one case she found that her beliefs regarding her sense of obligation to her job and role as a mentor were prompting her to impose her beliefs on the mentees. This was revealed when she analyzed and identified her use of language such as, “It was my duty to ‘improve his practice,’ my obligation as her mentor to get her ‘to meet her goal.’ That was what I am paid to do.”

In this beneath-the-surface analysis, careful attention was paid to evidence of shifts in thinking of the mentor, unanticipated insights regarding her beliefs and the framing and reframing of her beliefs and practice.

Outcomes

Data analysis revealed that at the beginning of the study the mentor viewed her role and responsibility as fulfilling...
the “job” of being a mentor. Over the course of the year, she shifted her mentoring approach. Her thinking “transformed” or changed from focusing on her feelings of accountability and responsibility of her “mentoring role,” to that of a mentor who “guides and assists” the mentees. Following is an example of a journal entry that describes this. In the journals, the mentor often wrote about the importance of relationships, and at one point, described how she carried the “burden” with the mentees. This notion of carrying the burden together reinforced the idea that the mentor and mentees were “connected” in the relationship. When the critical friend questioned the mentor’s thinking about the notion of carrying the burden and asked how this incident affected the mentoring, the mentor identified this as critical to her belief in the importance of fostering and building relationships and trust. However, as a result of the critical friend’s questioning, the mentor realized that building relationships is important, but it was even more important to move from carrying the burden of their issues to providing guided assistance and “letting go.” In this particular incident, the mentor wrote in her journal that she needed to get to the “root” of understanding the mentee’s motivation in contemplating leaving teaching. Instead of trying to problem solve the dilemma for the mentee, the mentor became more systematic, purposeful, and intentional in her probing. She asked the mentee to reflect on the situation and write a letter responding to specific probing questions. Through reflection the mentor was able to “let go” and, in turn, helped the mentee assume responsibility. This incident resulted in the mentor writing in her journal, “True transformations could only occur through ourselves.” As a result, the mentor realized the importance of providing guided assistance to the mentee through probing questions about her hesitancy, which led to her to ultimately identifying her fears.

Valuable insights and findings from this self-study included the following:

- It is important for the mentor to give the mentees time and space.
- By “letting go” and asking systematic, purposeful and intentional questions, the mentor shifted the responsibility and allowed the mentees to “dig deep” into their thinking.
- The mentor framed and reframed her thinking, and the shifts in thinking resulted in moving the mentoring practice from support, to relationships, to guided reflection, and ultimately to transformation.

This study revealed the importance of having someone else to reflect with in order to gain new understandings and view the critical incidents from another perspective. The meta-analysis also revealed the value of self-study and taking reflection to another level. As a result of the systematic data collection and analysis, the mentor gained a greater understanding of the stages and process of change the mentees go through, and captured the complex process of mentoring. Finally, the study provides a new way of looking at mentoring through the framework of Mezirow’s theory of transformational learning and self-study. The findings have direct application to the literature of adult learning and the complex process of mentoring.

Conclusion

There are many lessons to be learned from this study. This study provided four novice special educators and me, the mentor, with the opportunity to chronicle and systematically document our learning and development over the course of a year. Of particular importance was what I learned from my participants in terms of the incredible challenges they face as new teachers. Their invaluable insights and openness in sharing is to be commended, especially in providing an inside view from those who were living the experience. This self-study has prompted the following question: Am I a better mentor as a result of this collaborative self-study? This year-long study allowed me the opportunity to see my practice from a variety of angles and in depth. This process was full of learning, confirmations, and surprises. When I began to think about what I wanted to learn more about, little did I realize what I was about to embark upon. My initial goal for the self-study was to learn more about my practice by systematically documenting what I did as a mentor and using reflections as stepping stones to learning more about my practice. The goal was my mentoring practice; however, I learned so much more. What I saw more clearly after going beneath the surface was that I needed to acknowledge the contradictions between my beliefs and my practice. I also realized that the learning would have remained hidden had I not had this opportunity to make it explicit. I learned, too, that when things did not go as I thought they would, or should have, or when my assumptions were disconfirmed, I was forced to see with new eyes. My challenge is now to become adept at noticing those moments and then doing something about them. Changing what we do in any way or form, in any meaningful way, involves changing assumptions and beliefs. However, what I now know is that before we can change our assumptions and beliefs, we must first bring to the surface what they are. What I learned is one way to uncover my assumptions is by going beneath the surface.

References


Enhancing the Induction Process of New Teacher Educators through a Self-study Group

Context

This study is set within a large School of Education in a university in the United Kingdom. Our focus here is on the ways in which a self-study group of four new teacher educators, supported by three experienced colleagues, enhanced the existing institutional induction process. The group was set up by two staff developers to fill what they perceived to be a gap in the induction process for new teacher educators. They were aware of two main areas that were not addressed in the taught course, which was generic and not specific to teacher education. These were the complexity of the roles that new colleagues were entering (Loughran, 2006; Russell & Loughran, 2007) and issues around changing identities as they moved from one professional role to another (Swennen, Volman, & van Essen, 2008). They were also aware that, as Murray (2005) found in her survey of professional development for teacher educators, much induction happened within a small teaching team that was useful and important, particularly for practical aspects at the beginning of the induction period, but could limit the perceptions and understanding of roles within higher education. While informal learning is often central to the induction process, it can be limiting and difficult to access in some cases (Martin & Barlow, 2008).

The two staff developers wanted a needs-led form of professional development to complement the formal taught course and mentoring. This development would explore role complexity and identity, and include support for research and writing because these were not included in the formal university induction programme. They were, however, aware of the pressures on new staff and the difficulty of finding ‘learning spaces’ (Savin-Bevan, 2008) in academic life, so they were unsure whether new colleagues would be prepared or able to allocate time to a voluntary self-study group.

Aims

The research, undertaken collaboratively by the writers of this paper, was designed to examine the efficacy of a self-study (‘new academic’) group as part of an induction process. It explored the developing professional identity of the teacher educators, the role of the group and the effects of collecting visual research data for reflection and analysis of personal and group themes. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate, through the presentation of their accounts, how the four new staff explored the nature of their emerging identities and the outcomes of this process in relation to professional development.

Method

A self-study group approach to professional development was chosen. This allowed individuals to explore their own changing identity within the context of the others’ developing identity, “attending to the experiences and understandings of others, bringing this thinking back to ourselves . . .” (Latta & Buck 2007:191). In this way private development would be enhanced by public sharing within the group.

This group was made up of the two staff developers, a research fellow and the four permanent (tenured) members of staff new to the school. The group first met at the beginning of the academic year and thereafter the new staff determined the frequency of the meetings and topics discussed. The process was designed to build trust so that all members could share their ideas, anxieties, difficulties, and achievements.

Data were collected in the form of visual images which participants drew in sessions to represent their current perceptions of their experiences and role. This form of representation allowed for the metaphorical, the ability to express something difficult to put into words (Gauntlett, 2007). These drawings were an important means of self-expression, which also provided a clear way of looking at individual development when images were ordered chronologically; themes were then identified within the group when these sequences of images were laid beside each other.

At the end of the year the new teacher educators prepared a reflective account of their experiences, summarised below.

Leo’s Story. This technique for reflecting together on our development facilitated a shared awareness and confidence that surpassed the more performative traditional approach taken in our formal ‘induction’. This was not a task-list approach to things I should know or do; this was a tentative process that encouraged us to reflect on how we could be.

On drawing the images we began to employ visual metaphors for our predicaments at the time. East, (2009: 21) talks of the use of metaphors for teacher educators as “self-study tools”. The process of sharing our drawings induced much merriment concerning the topics and our varying artistic capabilities, but also enabled us to see through each other’s eyes. We were able to empathise with colleagues from diverse professional backgrounds and to realise that we were not alone in our struggles and insecurities. In short, we came to understand we were all in the same boat. This notion was immensely supportive for new staff struggling to come to terms with self perceptions of themselves as imposter-academics.

My first image depicts a complex and challenging work environment consisting of myriad corridors and lecture-halls full of eyes. On discussing this image with colleagues I was deeply relieved and somehow comforted to learn that these fears were largely shared. I was able to understand that other new colleagues also felt this lack of confidence and that I was
not alone. The power of this shared understanding cannot be underestimated as I now look back on this aspect as being one of the key opportunities or spaces for reflection given to me that helped me to be less alone. I say ‘alone’ in the sense that aspects of professional development can arguably be linked to a sense of ‘belonging’. It could be said that the self-study group served as what Lawrence (2004: 135) termed ‘an interaction ritual’ for allowing different professionals to participate as a single group and therefore help synthesis or integration of previously private and individual positions.

The second image I created indicates a shift in my self-perception. I have now become a clearer being or entity within my environment: a spider straddling various settings and programmes. This arachnoid self-image served to illustrate my struggles to connect the complex variety of roles that I was undertaking. These were roles that actually involved being a different professional in various geographical and practice settings, such as researcher, facilitator for a national leadership programme, and lecturer at the university.

The third picture indicates yet another shift in self-perception and efficacy. It is a relief to see that I have made the transition to human form within my professional context. There is an attempt at an almost truthful depiction of my human form—albeit in a self-deprecating cartoon of my frazzled state of mind. The intent was to convey the business and busy-ness I was coming to terms with; juggling competing priorities and demands within my professional role and context. Whilst the picture clearly indicates that everything is still not rosy in the garden, I have placed myself at my desk, with a clearer understanding of my job and identity.

Using the pictures to chart my development has enabled a significant growth in my self-awareness. My embryonic perceptions of myself as an ‘academic’ working within a university were constrained by fears I would never be ‘academic’ enough. Now, I realise the process has provided a safe place for reflection, for sharing and constructing new forms of knowledge, as a way to grow our selves as academics.

Chris’s Story. The new academic group identified that we all came from different professional backgrounds and had a wide variety of experience, all of which were valued and acknowledged by senior academics in the school, which was affirming and containing. This enabling environment encouraged reflection and analysis of our feelings and thoughts, which I found useful when coming across challenges in practice. Seeing that other people were also experiencing challenges made me feel less of a failure. It was interesting that our challenges were so different and I think this was supportive because it helped self efficacy when we felt that we did know something and could even help other people.

Our differences in terms of experience and personalities made for interesting group dynamics and a sense of community developed. We were never made to feel we were being taught or that anyone had the answers; it was more of a collaborative exploration of topics identified by members with the needs of the new academics at the centre. This andragogical approach (Knowles, Holton & Swanson 2005) enabled and supported the development and exploration of a complex new role, professional identity and potential.

One aspect of my new role involved working closely with external partners and making on-the-spot decisions. I was delighted to have this opportunity, but there were times when I needed to take responsible risks. It was helpful to discuss these with colleagues who were more familiar with university procedures and policies or just to voice my insecurities or concerns. This group felt like a safe place to do this and affirmed my practice which helped me to trust myself and my decisions. This, in turn, increased my confidence in my ability to be successful in this role and develop my identity as an academic. I have been able to lead on new internal and external business-facing initiatives as well as teaching, researching and studying.

Pictures and the use of metaphors enabled less conscious and less rational aspects of development to be considered, as described by Swennen, Jörg and Korthagen (2004). The pictures have been valuable tools when reflecting on professional development, constructing our understanding and supporting the transition into the University.

An early picture shows the piecing together of the different aspects of my role and shows the gaps in experience or knowledge. A net represents the support of the group and the support of other members of the school. As I continued to reflect on this, I realised that from a different perspective, the picture could be seen as a quilt which was growing and developing like my identity and role.

A later picture, drawn at the end of the first year, shows me as a confident, forward looking figure, sailing my own boat but with the tools and people necessary to support me on my journey.

The process and elements of the early academic group described here have eased a transition towards a new identity as an academic. The process has also meant we have become immersed in research and presenting at conferences. This has opened up for me a whole new perspective that I am looking forward to investigating further in formal study programmes and within my practice. I am also keen to continue to develop more new initiatives and feel that the group has given me the professional confidence to do this.

Libby’s Story. There were several key elements of the group, which I found particularly helpful. Firstly we were given the space and forum to openly express our feelings and concerns about our new roles. The sessions had an unstructured approach, which meant that we led the direction that each session took. This safe environment helped us to develop trust both in each other and the senior members of staff who were leading it. This has led to the development of friendships with people I would not otherwise have had much contact with, thus providing another valuable form of support in our first year and beyond.

An unusual aspect of these sessions was the use of drawings for us to express and reflect on our thoughts and feelings in images and metaphor. However what I found most powerful about this approach was the ability to look back over the whole year. Spread out and looked at as a whole, the pictures provided a very clear path of development and growth in confidence and in my identity.

My first picture of a jigsaw puzzle with lots of pieces missing clearly shows my sense of feeling rather overwhelmed by the unknown, and the fear of all the new things that I had to learn very quickly.

By contrast, my final drawing is much more confident and detailed, which reflects the development of my confidence after one year in my new role. It is mainly an illustration of two key events that have helped begin to
define my professional identity. These events involved taking responsibility when working in Malaysia and India, leading to many conversations with members of the research team. These conversations have helped me to develop much greater self-confidence and a sense of direction in my professional identity.

The process of talking and drawing during the staff development sessions has helped me to reflect on key events in my first year as a lecturer. I have begun to see themes emerge about my interests and developing identity as an early academic.

**Dianne’s Story.** Looking back on the year, the process has been invaluable in many ways. The initial information-giving sessions were essential to provide the ‘how to . . .’ and ‘what do I do when . . .’. Following these sessions, the development of becoming an early academic began. The understanding of my role was becoming clearer to me but I was always aware that the support of colleagues was available when needed, either those in the school generally or specifically within the self-study group. Members of this group had developed a trusting relationship, allowing any one of us to share concerns and high points.

My role has evolved and the self-study group has enabled discussion around a number of themes which were new to me—for example: how do I support students who are not intending to become teachers or how do I encourage learners to take an active part in group sessions? Developing a learning community has always featured in my teaching, whether it be with young children or adults. The self-study group has been an invaluable learning community for me.

I have been appreciative of the process I have been a part of and am aware that the process is not coming to an end. I have been encouraged to reflect on my developing role and to consider the way forward. The leaders of the group have taken us along an unknown road—unknown in the sense that they did not know either where it would lead, where we would meet a T-junction or a traffic jam! My final picture shows me at a roundabout. I am aware of having introduced yet another metaphor, but these have played a major part in our discussions.

There are many turnings off this central role which I am keen to follow. These include the road to writing, the road extending my knowledge, the road which takes a risk. From now on I would like to extend my experiences to include many of the roles expected of an early academic, these being completely new to me. I am not an outwardly confident person and would not take on unknown roles without having had prior support, supervision and guidance. However, I do feel that one of the outcomes of the group has been to increase my professional confidence. There is a feeling of trust within the School of Education that has enabled me to grow in confidence. I know that I am trusted to make decisions. I think the meetings this year have enabled me to become more effective, but as always, there are many gaps to be filled. I feel I have been ‘inducted’ but allowed to find my own identity and develop my own professional needs.

**Themes**

These narratives reveal a number of shared themes. Participants perceived that the self-study group supported openness and risk taking that would not have happened without the trust that had been built up through the self-study group process. Collaborative group support and the space provided to reflect were also key themes. The value of using images as a means of self expression was important to all participants; this was seen as significant for revealing individual and collective insights. All participants identified confidence and self-efficacy as being developed by the process. These went hand in hand with an increased awareness of participants’ changing identities.

**Outcomes**

The purpose of the research was to examine the efficacy of the self-study group as part of an induction process; exploring the developing professional identity of the teacher educators, the role of the group, and the effects of collecting visual research data.

The outcomes of this process were new staff members’ increased confidence to work in the context of complexity, and the ability to embrace their changing identities, including that of researcher and writer. This confidence was also evidenced by group presentations to colleagues in the school, at a university conference, and for national conferences. Although these outcomes were experienced by all four members of the group, the individual stories illustrate the uniqueness of their experiences of the influence of the self-study group.

Neither the experienced staff nor the new staff had anticipated the impact of using visual representations of feelings and experience. This is an issue we intend to research further.

**Implications for the Induction of New Teacher Educators**

This study suggests the importance of a participant needs-led approach to induction that is about exploring complexity and identity.

. . . if you want to help people to change, you must first understand the construction they are placing on their world, the theories they hold, and the questions they are asking. (Butt & Burr 2004:3)

Perhaps what we achieved was partly due to the fact that the process rather than the quantifiable task of induction was attended to by the leaders of the group.

Learning to work in a complex organisation involves more than gaining information about systems and processes, many of which need to be created to meet changing situations. A developing confidence in one’s identity as a professional who is able to undertake and create new roles and ways of working enables new colleagues to engage effectively in their new context. A self-study group process can help facilitate the development of the professionals needed to work in the dynamic context of the university of today.

**References**


Different Context, Different Job, Same Issues?

I attended my first self-study conference in 2002, where I announced that I had just resigned from a position as Executive Director of the University of Illinois Council on Teacher Education. I thought I was, happily, through with university administration. I was wrong. In 2003 I agreed to serve as the Associate Department Head; in 2004 I worked with stakeholders from across Illinois to create the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (INTC) and was named director. And so, when I was offered a job as Associate Dean for Professional Preparation at the University of Arizona (UA) it was, in part, because of my prior administrative experience.

What I like about administration is the chance to make a difference; what I don't like is the way the administrative role necessarily shapes one's time, actions, and often the perceptions of other people. In moving from one state to another I thought that I might learn more about the diverse contexts of teacher education within the United States—a topic I return to at the end of this paper—and I thought I might be able to help a university I respect to continue their work to improve their professional preparation programs.

Following is a brief timeline of the beginning of my journey from Illinois to Arizona.

June 2008
My husband visits UA to see if there is a job for him and to explore whether we might move to a new state after eighteen years Illinois.

September 2008
After months of indecision and based, in part, on advice from colleagues during the 2008 Herstmonceux conference, we both accept UA offers. I resign my professorship at the University of Illinois and begin a search for a new Director for INTC.

January 2009
I visit the UA campus and learn that the state, and therefore the university, is experiencing severe budget cutbacks. Staff will be cut; programs will be cut; departments will merge. We put our Urbana house on the market and cross our fingers for a sale.

April 2009
I visit the campus again and learn that there will probably be furlough days—days for which we will not be paid. We look for a house to rent until we can sell our house and find nothing.

June 2009
Our house sells at the last possible minute. We pack; the movers load; we move—not knowing where we will live in AZ.

July 2009
We arrive at our motel in Tucson. I report in and begin coordinating a large proposal to the US Department of Education and, at the same time, begin working with a second proposal written in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education and a private foundation—we have two weeks to write and submit. We find a house; we begin to move in and unpack. Both grants are submitted.

August 2009
I begin meeting staff members from the Arizona Department of Education and also begin meeting with local superintendents. I represent the Dean at freshman convocation, at several campus meetings, and at a statewide meeting. I begin working with colleagues on a proposal to a private foundation.

September 2009
I ask for (and receive) permission to submit my 2010 S-STEP proposal late.

Focus of the Study
In my proposal I wrote:
I hesitated to write this proposal because the data are only now being collected and the outcomes I discuss below are, at this point, only tentative. At the same time I felt that if I did not write the proposal and did not strive toward attending the Castle conference I would be taking a first step away from scholarship and toward a self I might not like.

One of my reviewers did not appreciate this and suggested that, among other shortcomings, this paper and presentation was premature. Another was intrigued by the emerging data and offered both encouragement and suggestions for strengthening my work. In the ensuing months I found myself talking (in my head) to my reviewers every week and, sometimes, every day. Can the administration of teacher education programs serve as a context for self-study? If so, what counts as ethically reliable data? Should I wait until 2012 to write about this? If I wait will that part of myself that is engaged with the S-STEP community wither? Is it important to capture the immediacy of the change, to document and make sense of the change early in the process? I answered that last question in the affirmative and proceeded to write this paper.

I will address three related objectives:
1. To examine issues in professional preparation that cross states and institutions;
2. To illustrate the ways in which the lenses ground in my prior practice are influencing my current practice;
3. To identify the professional costs and benefits (what is lost and what is gained) of moving states and institutions late in one's career.

Conceptual Framework and Related Literature
Manke's (2004) review of literature on administrators and self-study sorted the research into four related issues: power, community, social justice, and reform. She found that most of the authors acknowledged their power, but that most...
hoped to use that power in working with others. This idea of power with was positive when community among educators was formed and many of the self-studies talked about working to create a community with practitioners, as well as other university faculty members. A few studies chronicled attempts to infuse social justice in teacher education and more worked to broaden the definition of reform. She concluded her review with the hope that the self-study of administration would contribute to our understanding of context and practice. While this paper is not focused on any of the four categories Manke identifies, it is intended to inform the understanding of the interplay between context and practice.

When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both. (Goffman, 1959, p. 27.)

For me, a conceptual framework can be helpful in ordering my experience. And, since my background includes eight years teaching high school drama, role theory presents a set of concepts that I have always found useful. Biddle (1979) defines a role as “those behaviors characteristic of one or more persons in a context” (p. 58). As Goffman’s quote suggests, roles are socially constructed and the people who occupy the roles are impacted by others’ expectations of what the role requires. In my particular case, a seasoned, well-respected school administrator defined the role of Associate Dean in the UA context most recently, and I am acutely aware that I am very different from him.

Bourdieu’s (1972/2002) complex description of social practice argues that environments produce “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” (p. 72, italics in the original), which regulate behavior without seeming to do so on the surface. Thus, the habitus produced by these systems is a strategy-generating mechanism that guides current behavior or social practice based on past behavior or social practice. It is:

\[
\ldots \text{the source of these series of moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention—which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies. (p. 73)}
\]

The shrinking budget context at UA and in the state of Arizona challenges people and their experiences in ways that lay open strategic moves and options that in other times may be taken for granted. And, for me, the move from one context to another has made me highly sensitive to the choices I perceive and the decisions I choose to make.

Methodology

My primary data sources are my calendars for 2008 and 2009, my notes during meetings since July 2009, my e-mails to others, and my notes to self, written almost daily. These data provide anchors that represent what I am learning about my practice as a result of a combination of my experience, interactions with others, and events that I plan or are planned for me. Indeed, one of the challenges to administrator self-study is that practice is not as spatially or temporally well bounded as a classroom or even a field setting. I have not used any data from anyone other than myself because I have no permission to do so. One of my reviewers saw this as a problem because there was no collaboration or interaction and, indeed, that is true. This self-study was not conducted with anyone else, but my presentation will be collaborative in that two other self-study researchers (who are also administrators) have agreed to be critical friends (Loughran and Manke).

To analyze the calendar data I examined the frequency of working in the office vs. working at home and the nature of meetings I attended, including who called the meetings, the topics, and the professional roles of those who attended the meetings. This analysis provided partial information on issues that crossed the states of Illinois and Arizona. The notes taken during the meetings were sorted into three categories: topics that were new to my professional responsibilities, topics that were similar to previous responsibilities, and topics that I did not understand. These categories provided partial information on the lenses I brought with me to my new position and on issues that were new or familiar to me. I also identified actions that I took as a result of the meetings and actions taken by others. I did not specifically analyze all of the e-mails I sent, but as I wrote this paper I returned to selected e-mails to elaborate on meeting notes and calendar entries. The same is true for my notes to myself in that I used them to provide information on meetings, as noted in my calendar and on duties or tasks between meetings. Analyzing the costs and benefits of moving entails value judgments on my part—and is more of an interpretation of events in relation to my new role and context.

What Has Changed

The majority of the meetings in the year prior to the move fell into one of five categories: individual meetings with students, staff meetings, individual meetings with staff, classes, state-level meetings. Typically such meetings occupied about one-half of my time and there was considerable time (approximately 1.5 days per 5-day week) spent at home writing or reading.

Once I moved, the categories changed and became more numerous: meetings with other college administrators, meetings with district superintendents, problem-related meetings with faculty or staff, meetings with donors, meetings with alumni, grant-writing related meetings, program development meetings, individual meetings with the Dean, and staff meetings. Time to work at home on writing or reading has decreased to approximately two days per month—not counting weekends or holidays.

The topics of the meetings have also become more diverse. Prior to moving, typical topics were graduate student progress, use of technology, INTc, my department, my longitudinal research, or coursework. Now topics cover grant opportunities, grant revisions, college budget, course enrollments, outreach to the community and the districts, college–district relationships, policy, personnel, student problems, faculty or staff problems, meeting state program requirements, state-level policies, marketing, alumni development, and articulation with community colleges. I am more visible and more accessible to a wider group of people than before. I struggle to remember names and affiliations and I worry that I do not always know the contexts and subtexts of some conversations.
**Familiar, but Different**

In terms of role theory, my role has become more complex and discontinuous. But that is not a bad thing, nor is it unfamiliar because the questions or issues in my current and prior positions are much the same. What can we do given the budget and personnel we have or can hire? What should we prioritize in curriculum or program reform? How do we best present education and teacher education to the public and to policy makers? The scale is different now—and so is my level of responsibility. The following example illustrates this shift.

**August, 2009**

At the beginning of the month I am in a meeting with educators from all over the area to plan for the year’s activities of the Professional Preparation Board (PPB), formed in 1999 to promote collaboration between the college and the surrounding school districts. I have never met most of these people. By the end of the month I am in charge of putting together two consecutive panels to discuss teacher quality—a topic that is very prominent nationally.

**October–November, 2009**

I am in charge of making sure that the PPB panel presentations occur, that there is follow-up, and that we move forward with a policy statement. I have help from a local Assistant Superintendent with planning and implementation. I draft a summary of the two panel presentations with a suggested organization for the paper.

**December, 2009**

The PPB Executive committee takes the paper in a new direction. I meet with several people to prepare a draft, which is shared on December 30.

**January, 2010**

I take the feedback on the draft and write a second draft for the Dean to revise.

At stake here is not only my ability to present myself in a way that is accepted and approved of by others—I am also presenting my college. Fortunately, I am not in this alone.

**Influence of Prior Lenses and Experience**

As I noted above, the experience in which I find myself is not unfamiliar. Most of the time this is quite helpful in the current context, but there are some missteps when what may seem to be similar is actually different. Two of the topics listed above will serve as examples. The first illustrates the ways in which habitus and self had a productive result; the second illustrates the ways in which my actions were not as productive.

**Grant Opportunities.**

**July, 2009**

I get a call from the Dean and I follow-up by calling a foundation representative to work on a grant. I work with her off and on for two weeks and the grant is submitted.

**August, 2009**

The foundation representative visits to learn about what the College is doing in relation to early childhood education. Five days later I meet with the Dean and early childhood faculty to follow up, and I leave the meeting charged with heading up a new proposal-writing group.

**Grappling with Change—What Is Lost and What Is Gained**

Changing contexts—from the act of moving, through meeting new people, to learning how to get from place to place—can be a steep learning curve. Changing roles and assuming an expanded and more visible (and possibly consequential) position can also be a steep learning curve. When both curves are merged they challenge one’s proclivity (or at least they have challenged mine) to continue reading, writing, and collecting and analyzing data. Scholarly writing can quickly become less important than learning the new names, faces, cultures, and skill sets. Since July I have been
able to work on editing a book or writing at home for five (total) weekdays and on some weekends and holidays. In other words, my time is no longer under as much of my control as before. This is in some ways a professional cost, but it is also something for which I was prepared. Use of time, however, pervades every aspect of the professional costs and benefits of my moving states and institutions.

It is clear to me that my self is being stretched, challenged, and made both comfortable and uncomfortable all at once. I have lost the security of a familiar environment and of social support structures that were nurtured over many years. I am losing two research foci to which I have been committed for eight years. I am finding it necessary to re-present myself and, at the same time, to redefine the role I play in ways that are different from my predecessor, but important and useful to the institution to which I have committed my professional allegiance. I am excited to be in a place where collaboration is a strong norm and to be able to work with and for schools and districts. I am excited to learn more about university administration and about how administrators can and cannot influence policy.

But I do not know if I will be able to continue self-study in general and self-study of self as administrator in particular. I have many, many unanswered questions. Will I be able to gain IRB approval to include data from others? Even if I am, will the acts of documentation and validation inhibit and diminish my relations with others? Is the researcher role compatible with the administrator role? Will I be able to collaborate with others without sending signals that my institution or I am failing in some way? Will I be able to publish without harming those who may read my work? What other changes in budget, in my role, in my work with colleagues will occur, and how will they impact my work? Some may be resolved; some may not be resolvable. I do know, however, that my identity as a researcher is something I hope I do not have to relinquish.

References
Continuing the “change, changing, and being changed” theme of my self-study research program (Craig, 2006a; Craig, 2010), this paper focuses on the creation of two new degree programs in my Curriculum and Instruction (CUIN) Department (Executive Ed.D. and Ph.D.) to supplement our existing Ed.D. program and the associated new course syllabi I was asked to create for the introductory research methods courses. The tensions that arose around those syllabi strike at the heart of a maelstrom of issues which those employed in teaching and teacher education programs routinely face, particularly the primacy of syllabi in outlining student experiences and the politics of method (Eisner, 1988); that is, who decides Colleges of Education (COE)’s curricula and how decisions are made.

**Context**

At one level, the origins of the two new doctoral programs trace to my major commuter university’s desire to compete with six other urban campuses, two Tier I universities funded at a preferred rate, and a mass of online graduate degree programs. At another level, it is a tale situated in a highly conservative political milieu that never experienced a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1970) because philosophies such as those of Dewey (i.e., 1916) were purged from the institution during the McCarthy era and/or prelude to the desegregation of the local public schools (Craig, 2002). At a third level, the study revolves around the death of an iconic faculty member who served as Department Chair and who guided, protected, and owned the research courses and, to a certain degree, the students. The fourth—and major—piece of the context addressed in this study is me: a teacher educator and a qualitative researcher who instructs advanced courses having to do with narrative inquiry and self-study. But the backdrop also includes my gender and my tenuous positioning as one of the few senior professors (and even fewer females) in the CUIN Department and in the COE. Thus, distinguishing features of self-study—context, process and relationships—imbue this work (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

**Method**

This self-study into the lived experiences of my teacher self (Allender, 2001) in context involves reflectively looking at my practice in the throes of course syllabi creation, but reaches far beyond that to contribute knowledge about the profession (Loughran & Northfield, 1998) to other teacher educators embroiled in similar program start ups and course development. Undertaken as a narrative inquiry (i.e., Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Kitchen, 2005; Pinnegar, Lay, Bigham, & Dulude, 2005), this research involves me approaching my topic from the inside, outside, backward and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the process, I inquire into my self as a person in relationship with others, in addition to me playing professional roles such as my COE designation as a research methodologist and my CUIN Department responsibility as Teaching/Teacher Education Coordinator.

I gather data in the form of field texts, which includes historical documents, old/new versions of syllabi, meeting notes, and my research journal. I then use the following interpretive devices to make sense of the story I lived and told, and relived and re-told: broadening, burrowing, and storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Broadening allows me to situate the course syllabi saga in my institution’s social-historical-political backdrop and its surrounding community; burrowing enables me to unpack unsettling situations; and storying and restorying illuminates the snail’s rate of change in COEs in the midst of continuities that seemingly transcend time (Dewey, 1938). More importantly, the study forces me to focus on my practice and refine my identity (Kelchertermans, 2007) amid everyday issues that bear far-reaching consequences not only for me, but for all future graduate students enrolled in COEs and ultimately, how education is approached on local campuses peopled by primarily minority students. I now present my story of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) as it unfolded in my higher education milieu. It is divided in sections to illustrate modulations in how the course syllabi were received.

**Story of Experience**

Part 1. My story logically should begin with the invitation I received to revise the introductory research course outlines for two programs: a Ph.D. program for resident doctoral students and an Executive Ed.D. program for school-based leaders, a program sponsored by the Carnegie Project of the Education Doctorate (CPED). But that was not how it started—at least for me. My narrative of experience became launched with the untimely death of a colleague while I was paradoxically off-campus at the seventh biennial Herstmonceux Castle Conference. While in the U.K., a mass email communiqué arrived regretfully announcing his passing. Later, I received another email transmission instructing me that I would be moved from my inside office space into what had been my deceased colleague’s office. Returning to the U.S., I wrote in my journal how delighted I was with the large corner office with its wall of windows, while I was concurrently devastated by the morbid circumstances under which the coveted space became mine. It did not help when an internationally renowned professor returned for my colleague’s memorial service and queried whether the office, previously his, was still “cold enough to hang meat in it.” Although I later came to agree with him, his words sent “shivers down my spine” as my journal entry indicated. But feeling ill-at-ease in my new space did not peak until another well-respected professor...
dropped by, requesting that I revise our deceased colleague’s research courses. I was overcome by the irony of me being asked to rework his syllabi in his former office. I quickly supplied reasons why I should not participate. My senior, male colleague countered with a rationale as to why I should be involved. He told of people complaining about the over attention paid to statistics and the lack of attention given qualitative methods; he spoke of the university entering a new era and needing to compete with two privileged state universities; and he talked about others needing to “step up to the plate” (Notes to File). He furthermore reminded me that I would be personally helping him and another senior male professor, both of whom were chairing the design of the two new doctoral programs. Under the circumstances, what else could I say but “yes”? But as soon as I answered in the affirmative, the change theme of my self-study research program recalibrated into a new iteration of experience, this time centering on the primacy and politics of course syllabi creation.

**Part 2.** Shortly afterwards, I penned the following lines in my journal: “When I take on a project, I do not go about it passively. I am a hard task-master where my self is concerned. . . . I have to be careful what I sign myself up for. . . .” Following this self-assessment, I characteristically immersed myself in the course revisions. After all, I agreed with my esteemed colleague: The two courses needed updating and fate had positioned me as the COE’s senior methodologist.

Rather than accepting others’ evaluations at face value, I informally canvassed faculty/students to solicit suggestions for course improvement. I learned that the problem was not with what was included in the syllabi, but with what was left out. In my field notes, I identified two concerns: the courses tended to focus on statistical methods as opposed to pedagogical choices. Two things rolled through my head about it passively. I am a hard task-master where my self is concerned. . . . I have to be careful what I sign myself up for. . . .” Following this self-assessment, I characteristically immersed myself in the course revisions. After all, I agreed with my esteemed colleague: The two courses needed updating and fate had positioned me as the COE’s senior methodologist.

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The findings confirmed something I already knew. If I set about rewriting the courses as a “lone wolf methodologist” (my words), I would replicate my colleague’s approach and yield the same results. Hence, I crossed departmental lines and asked a quantitative methodologist from Educational Psychology to assist me. The individual agreed if I would undertake the bulk of the work.

**Part 3.** When my colleague and I met, we discussed three central ideas that would inform the changes. First, the concept and conduct of research would underpin the development of every topic. Second, methodological balance would be sought. Third, relevance was important, given it was the impetus for the course updates and the underlying reason why we were engaged in syllabi revision when we realistically should have been focusing on scholarship, given our institution’s bid for Tier 1 funding.

Soon, I had skeleton syllabi prepared. I started the first survey course with stable and fluid research and their importance to the flow of inquiry and the process of discovery. I centered on the foundational idea that both are integral to scientific method and how one’s inquiry question informs the research approach and tools one uses (i.e., Schwab, 1962). Within this framework, I then focused on relevance and balance. It seemed to me that the courses needed a timely idea—something within students’ realms of experience—around which to cohere. Otherwise, they would be a string of methodological approaches with some being fluid and others being stable. While more conceptually elegant, this change would still not address the breadth of concerns. Concurrently, I was seeking a commonplace entity that would more closely bind us together in syllabi writing.

Then an idea struck me. We could make No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002), the current elementary and secondary school policy in the U.S., the topic of inquiry and we could create a digital story to summarize the available research. All doctoral students experienced NCLB in one way or another, and my quantitative research colleague had written about it (Madeus & Horn, 2000), as had I (i.e., Craig, 2006b). Furthermore, a bevy of other researchers had addressed it from almost every conceivable angle, including Manke (2004), Kornfeld et al. (2007) and Kosnik (2005) from the self-study genre of inquiry, Cochran-Smith (2006) from a teacher education perspective, and Kelchtermans (2005) internationally, using the European term, performativity. NCLB could be the encompassing idea around which the survey of research methods and tools would circle.

When my colleague and I met next, we agreed the organizing idea “worked” at the same time as it advanced the revision process. We had found three ideas to frame the syllabi: fluid/stable inquiry, accountability, and a range of topical exemplars. We supplemented these with research issues discussed by Cresswell (2002), Eisenhart (2005), and Guba and Lincoln (2008), among others (i.e., Anderson & Herr, 1999; Ball & Forzani, 2007; Bullough, 2006; Florio-Ruane, 2002; Torbert, 1981) and wove in faculty visits. In my journal, I listed five obstacles we had skillfully navigated: one, the problem of a prescribed text becoming the curricula; two, the failure to use primary sources and to facilitate electronic access the library; three, the difficulty of not introducing doctoral students to historical and contemporary literature; four, the error of not familiarizing students with human subjects protocols, and five, the challenge of not introducing students to other faculty.

Soon, an invitation to attend a retreat sponsored by the doctoral program committees was received. Those selected to revise curricula were requested to supply copies so feedback would be received. At the meeting, we shared our content/pedagogical choices. Two things rolled through my head at that point: one had to do with the occasion being the first time the scholarship of my teaching had been locally considered; the other involved committee composition. In my journal, I wondered why people, principally males, who supervised few doctoral students had committee appointments, while others who advised substantially more were only peripherally included. But those reflections were fleeting. The two courses sailed through the approval process. No one quibbled about them being team taught. Glowing praise was proffered. I was elated. Unfortunately, I had no idea of how innocently I was approaching the situation and how premature and erroneous my reading of it was.

**Part 4.** How the circumstances transpired from here remains a blur, largely due to my erroneous belief. I was genuinely puzzled when one doctoral program leader ominously declared that that the Executive Ed.D. research courses needed to be approved because the “department’s fate rested on them.” (Note to File). I also wondered why another senior male approached me, declaring he would
make the motion and insinuating I should second it (Note to File). Despite these oblique clues, I naively believed that the department would approve the courses for both programs because that was the context in which the syllabi were revised; those were the terms within which I had participated. Imagine my chagrin when the motion was made—and passed—that the methods syllabi would only be used in the Executive Ed.D. program. Consider how upset I was that my colleagues had not overtly forewarned me of what was going to happen. In hindsight, I have a broader view of what occurred, but in the situation I was totally taken off guard and barely able to retain my composure. Privately, I was fuming over politics trumping excellence.

But, as I now understand it, problems did exist—not in the department, but at COE Graduate Studies where my colleagues were representatives. The methods syllabi had the support of Psychology due to the interdepartmental collaboration. However, our COE also had a highly quantitative Health and Human Performance (HHP) Department. More significantly, turf wars were underway between my department’s old male guard and that department’s new male guard. So as not to completely derail the process, those in my department unilaterally decided that the syllabi would only be attached to the Executive Ed.D. program, presumably under the guise of the CPED funding, but also because it was more practitioner-oriented and more likely to garner approval. In this way, the work moved forward—albeit on a smaller scale. And, in the larger scheme of things, consulting with me about tangential developments, a major relational faux pas, in my view, was but a minor oversight from their gendered perspective.

Later, the revised Ph.D. program also encountered difficulties. In its case, the government would not approve the application if CUIN’s entire roster was the faculty. Hence, a smaller program was submitted—one located in my program area—with my Curriculum Vita ironically leading the way. I now focus on what happened in the Executive Ed.D. program where I was slated to teach as the COE-approved syllabi moved—at least so I thought—toward lived reality.

**Part 5.** From the outset, the Executive Ed.D. program has involved hand-picked faculty and has had frequent meetings, probably because two former principals (male) coordinate it. As anticipated, I was invited to teach the research/curriculum courses. Shortly thereafter, however, new challenges surfaced. First, my syllabi co-creator was unable to co-teach. Second, there was no institutional memory whatsoever concerning the courses being co-instructed—despite at least four members of the program committee (male) now being Executive Ed.D. faculty members.

As for the introductory research syllabi, further changes occurred. Another faculty member was asked to teach the quantitative part and instructed to prepare her own outline. This left me teaching a collapsed version of the approved courses (the qualitative part) and her teaching statistics. All the while, I was praised for my patience and generosity. Amid the platitudes, I did not divulge that studying my experiences of syllabi creation tempered my responses.

As an aside, other interesting paradoxes also occurred. First, the department secretary (a female) assigned me the first course number in the two-course sequence despite the committee—with its innate quantitative preferences, supported by the methodological orthodoxy of the local superintendents on the degree program’s board—authorizing that the quantitative course should be given the lead number. Second, when I visited Program Officers at the National Science Foundation (NSF), they demonstrated as much interest in funding my revamped course outlines as they showed in my proposed research project. Third, amid the modulations to my story of experience, the department chair (a female) stalwartly supported me, funding a research assistant who worked diligently on my digital story idea. With the assistance of former doctoral students who served as narrators/interpreters of different research methods, the initial conception became realized, despite all of the other issues swirling around it. The final quirk of fate is this: This conference paper is being submitted for publication before I began to teach the course. Thus, I cannot report how the abridged version of the syllabus became lived by doctoral students whose enlarged experiences were to be our prime focus of attention.

**Reflective Analysis**

My experiential story revolving around the introduction of the new doctoral degree programs and the overhaul of the introductory research courses was riddled with situations where circumvention of democratic process, politics of human relations, prejudices surrounding methodological orientation, denial of existence of agreements, and issues of gender and power prevailed. While I imagined this self-study to be an innocuous investigation, I quickly learned that it brought into full view the contested nature of the higher education classroom space (Craig, 2009) through spotlighting ongoing narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy (Crocco & Costigan, 2007) and limitations placed on targeted kinds of professional discretion (Boote, 2006). Also, job satisfaction (Ross & Reskin, 1992) and professional identity were highly implicated because methodological bias—not professional stature, competence or contribution—frequently surfaced as the measuring stick. Mostly, I came to know—in a firsthand way—that under the pretense of change, things would mostly remain the same because problems resident inside of COEs are as daunting and pernicious as those emanating outside of them. Finally, my self-inquiry lays the groundwork for more informed and awake action not only on my part, but also for those who find this narrative exemplar of the self-study variety a trustworthy guide (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002) within their respective institutional milieus. In this way, this inquiry is ripe for knowledge accumulation across self-studies and over time (Zeichner, 2007). Overcoming barriers having to do with the primacy and politics of syllabi creation is vital to self-study’s acceptance as a viable research genre, one whose fluid approach reveals hidden impediments to healthy change, one that rightfully deserves inclusion within the field’s palette of legitimate research activities.

**References**


Context of the Study

Once upon a time a social studies teacher education program with two full-time faculty members, Bette and Alicia, were overjoyed to hire a new member, Todd. Then, this new colleague arrived. He was asked to teach two classes that were in the middle of the sequence of social studies courses in the program. This brought up many questions about why we do what we do (e.g. Why this reading? Why not this reading? Why this assignment? Why this order?). There are two options when this occurs, either ignore the new person or begin a self-study of teacher education practices. We opted for lots of work for ourselves—a self-study.

We are faculty members with differing ranks, status, and roles at our institution and with differing experience with self-study. Todd and Alicia are expected to do research and Bette is not. Alicia is tenured; Todd and Bette are not. As we began, Alicia was an associate professor in her eighth year as a faculty member in the social studies program and coordinator of the Adolescent and Young Adult Education program (7–12th licensure program for science, social studies, math, and language arts). Todd was a brand new assistant professor and new to the program, and Bette was a non-tenure track assistant professor who had been at the university for more than ten years and had been teaching in various capacities in the social studies program for five years. Todd and Alicia had several years experience with self-study and Bette was new to self-study. Although different in experience and roles, we, three social studies teacher educators at the same institution and in the same program, came together with a shared interest in:

1. Rethinking the vision of our program so that all of us were included;
2. Bringing the three of us, different faculty with different interests, together into one coherent group where all three of us have and feel like we have equal voice in the structure and enactment of the program; and
3. Beginning to look in depth at the content and pedagogy of our teaching to make an even stronger, even more coherent social studies program that influences our students’ teaching during their first years of professional social studies teaching.

The result of these interests and our initial conversations was the design of a two-and-half year study to examine our experience with this re-envisioning, how our students—undergraduate pre-service teachers—experience our teaching and the program, and how these relate to the ways our pre-service teachers teach in their first two years of teaching.

Aim/Objectives

This paper reports on the self-study aspect of the larger study. We focused for this paper on three questions: How are we meeting our first three purposes? How are we changing as teachers? How has the vision been a part or not a part of our thinking as teachers and as a program?

Related Literature

Berry (2004/2007) highlighted three motivations guiding teacher educators’ self-study research: “Articulating a philosophy of practice and checking consistency between practice and beliefs, investigating a particular aspect of practice, and generating more meaningful alternatives to institutional evaluation” (p. 1310). The self-study aspect of our larger study was designed to document our attempts to rethink and reform our social studies teacher education program. Simultaneously we hoped to explore how we were changing as teachers and how the program’s vision was influencing our work. Focusing on the value of self-study to enhance personal and professional growth in teacher educators as well as attempts at programmatic reforms has been well documented (Kosnik, Beck, Freese, & Samaras, 2006). This work, however, is often detailed as three separate processes instead of three related, interconnected processes. We hoped to show how the personal, professional, and programmatic growth occurred together.

We began our work understanding that to really understand our program we would also need to understand ourselves. As Loughran (2006) explained when discussing the pressures placed on teacher educators, “For teaching and teacher education to become better equipped to respond to the growing expectations heaped upon them there is a realization that change in teachers and teacher educators themselves must occur if there is to be genuine educational change” (p. ix). Two of us had experience with self-study and recognized that this personal growth could be time-consuming and uncomfortable but worth it. Zeichner (2006) also noted similar issues with “developing innovative programs and courses can be lonely and at times disheartening” (p. xiv).

Collaboration is one way to provide support for both self-study and program (re-)design. Zeichner shared that “when we collaborate we often receive much needed support from other committed teacher educators” (p. xiv). Given this reality, we approached our endeavor understanding the value of a self-study collaborative to improve and understand our practice as teacher educators, improve and understand our program, and deepen our own understandings of ourselves as teachers (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmu, 2004/2007; Clift, 2004/2007; Dinkelman, 2003; Johnston, 2006).

Methods

For the larger longitudinal study, we chose many ways to collect data that would document multiple aspects of our teaching lives and our students’ experiences within the program and after it. These included multiple interviews of our pre-service teachers from before they began our social studies education courses through their first years teaching,
upon.

We began meeting on a regular basis to talk about our ideas and interests, develop a shared vision, and plan future classes. We chose not to record and transcribe every conversation as we often talk about the program and the classes. We chose to focus on recording a few specific, longer meetings that focused on creating the vision and planning or reflecting on courses. For example, we recorded our early conversations in October 2008 about the development of our vision as well as some of our later meetings in February and March of 2009 and November of 2009 when we discussed how the study was progressing and planned for future classes.

To approach the self-study aspect embedded within the larger study, we focused on the data that would help us understand more about this process and our growth. The data for this came from syllabi from our courses before and after our self-study of teacher education practices began, observation notes, the recorded and transcribed in-depth conversations, and the reflections we wrote. To begin to see what our data told us about the experience, Todd and Alicia reviewed all of our reflections, syllabi, and the transcripts of our conversations making notes and discussing what we saw. We looked at these items both broadly for what we might see but not expect and specifically for changes in our thinking and teaching over time. Looking at all of these sources of data helped us recognize change as a major theme. Considering this further, we saw that the changes in our thinking and our practice were clear but subtle and slow. Our conversations and reflections helped us see evidence of increasing intentionality in our practice and evidence of increased interconnectedness between what we were doing for this project and our practice and thinking in our other work as teacher educators. After we found these themes, we shared with Bette what we were thinking to see if she agreed.

What We Learned from Our Data

Change is Subtle and Slow. This theme most closely relates to our question: “How are we meeting our first three purposes so far?” One important result of our deliberate efforts to come together as a group is that we did in fact come together. Overall, we are very pleased with the changes that we are making and how we have grown as teacher educators and as a program. We created a common vision that has influenced how we make decisions about curriculum and pedagogy as well as how we talk with each other about our teaching and the program. As we grew together it became something we all believed and enacted as we taught, but the changes were slow to show.

To begin, we met for two longer meetings in October 2008 to develop a vision, shared below, that we all agreed upon.

The Integrated Social Studies (INSS) program is designed to prepare prospective teachers to be purposeful, deliberative decision-makers, reflective practitioners, who prepare citizens who will continue to contribute to the deepening of democracy, and promote the common good. The vision is designed to prepare pre-service social studies teachers who:

1) Cautiously reflect on their practice to learn from practice, 2) Engage in collaborative inquiry and partnerships to promote student learning and continued professional growth, 3) Create equitable classrooms that are responsive to the needs of all students, 4) Plan/organize meaningful lessons and assessments that promote active student engagement in worthwhile learning, and 5) View themselves as curriculum developers who recognize that social studies content and curriculum are more than information in textbooks and standardized curriculum guides. (Integrated Social Studies (INSS) Vision Statement December 2008)

Initially, this vision could be described as a set of ideas that we each liked individually.

It became part of one of the social studies education course syllabus for the new term (January 2009) as a statement on the first page but otherwise it was not clear how it influenced our thinking.

As we began teaching with this vision in mind, reflecting on the use of the vision as part of the observation debriefing and writing our reflections, the vision became less a list of things to make sure we were teaching and more an overall purpose that guides thinking. This is clearly reflected in one of Bette’s reflections when she shared:

At the beginning of the semester . . . I sought to make certain that each day’s objectives and activities aligned tightly with the vision and that the lesson content was not only compatible with the vision but was also an exemplar for a particular aspect of the vision. Now, I’ve discerned a subtle shift in how and what I’m thinking about as I enact the vision with students. It remains a focus of the lesson planning, but now it is not the sole focus of the lesson content . . . It is as though the vision has receded into the “field” or “ground” rather than being the subject—still present, it articulates the context within which the class and I work. (Reflection, March 2009)

Only by the beginning of our second academic year together did we begin to make clear connections between the vision and our syllabi. We saw that the bigger study brought us together as a group but looking across the courses, change to the syllabi was slow. Change in us as teacher educators happened first (us as a group, us as individuals) before obvious, substantial change in the program/classes. Basically, for a year, syllabi did not look substantially different.

By August 2009, the vision began to become something we used to consider the structure, goals, readings and assignments of the course. For the next course to be taught beginning in the Fall semester of 2009 (August–December) we replaced an assignment about developing social studies content knowledge with an assignment we called “Creating Equitable Classrooms that meet the needs of all students.” This assignment was designed to help give our students the opportunity to explore one topic in depth and begin to contemplate how this new knowledge would help them better create an equitable classroom that meets the needs of all of your students. We gave them five areas of focus: English language learners/learning, socio-economic status, gender, race, and sexual orientation. They were allowed to offer other options based on their interests or classrooms in which they were working. Most did not do this, however one focused on making his classroom more equitable for students with special needs. This new assignment reflects a direct connection to number three in our vision, the one area we
saw as least addressed in our class assignments, readings, and teaching from the previous course.

**Becoming More Intentional.** This theme most closely aligns with our question: “How are we changing as teachers?” The journey and individual learning has been different for each of us, yet a common theme exists—becoming more intentional. Bette has become more intentional in both her pedagogical decision making and what she shares about this process with her students. Bette explained herself in a reflection:

I have realized that I am attending to planning, reflecting on, analyzing each lesson with greater intentionality, carrying lessons I’ve learned from one class meeting into another. I am more open and therefore more transparent about my own planning processes and about my reflections, both those done while teaching and those done afterward. (Reflection, March 2009)

Todd has become more intentional about becoming a better teacher of social studies teaching—focusing on the planning for the pre-service teachers’ learning about social studies teaching.

I have been working with an idea that I am calling the pedagogy of the process. Originally I was thinking that it was a way to assist teacher candidates to think about how they could incorporate teaching for civic competence, the common good or any other goals they had as part of their rationale. This research study has given me a chance to focus on how I work to use the process of the class to bring the vision to life for our students. (Reflection, March 2009)

Alicia has become more intentional about her focus on some of the big ideas of social studies, including democratic ideals and creating a democratic classroom.

I have noticed that I am much more focused on some social studies aspects of teaching and learning than before. Democratic ideals is something that comes out. . . . I have always pushed my students to think about different ideas and to be thoughtful, caring teachers. But, I do see that the sustained focus on the vision has helped me to bring the social studies (democratic ideals in particular) out even stronger. (Reflection, December 2009)

Upon looking at the ways we have become more intentional we can see how we have learned from one another. Todd came to the program with a strong emphasis on the big ideas of social studies (e.g. democracy, diversity, civic engagement) and on modeling how a teacher thinks in action. Alicia began this process with a strong emphasis on pedagogical decision making and what she shares about continuously reflecting. We never talked about it as “cautious.” It took several months for us to notice that we had mistyped our own vision. We revised it to read as we had intended, “continually reflect” in September 2009. Without doing the self-study aspect of the larger study, we would have no documentation of how the program changed, how we changed as teacher educators, or how we came together as a group as a result of the study. Analyzing our data helped us to see that changes to official documents of a program (e.g., syllabi) are slow to reflect the ways that our thinking and teaching have changed. For example, one of the classes, the student teaching seminar, was taught from January 2009–May 2009 but it did not reflect our changes or the changing program. It is being taught again beginning in January 2010 and we have begun to make changes that reflect the vision and our developing program coherence.

**Concluding Thoughts**

As coordinator of the larger program in which social studies resides, it is clear that Alicia’s work with this study has helped her attempts to facilitate the development of coherence in the larger program. Conversations over the last year have begun to occur around what we value individually, why we value it, and whether we all value it. Alicia and Todd work with experienced teachers in graduate programs as well. It has made us begin to talk about and consider what we want out of the graduate program with experienced teachers, not just the pre-service program. It also has influenced our advising, as Alicia shared in a recent reflection, “I find there are lots of connections to other classes and my advising and work with the doc students as well” (Reflection, December 2009).

Bette also teaches classes in social studies teaching and learning for special education teachers and middle grades teachers. She has made changes to her teaching of the special education course based on our work and what she has learned about herself as a teacher educator and was already beginning to contemplate the middle grades course three months before it was to begin (Reflection, October 2009). We all also work with our graduate level pre-service teachers. The vision, although created for the undergraduate program, has become part of our teaching in the graduate program as well (Hawley, MAT Methods Syllabus). As well, the act of being coherent itself has become a natural part of our program. For example, Bette asked us to contemplate specific areas to focus on in conversations with these graduate level pre-service teachers while she supervises their student teaching (e-mail, 12/14/2009). We have now begun to find ways to connect all of the aspects of our work more strongly.

**Endnotes**

1 From the beginning, our conversations were always about continuously reflecting. We never talked about it as “cautious.” It took several months for us to notice that we had mistyped our own vision. We revised it to read as we had intended, “continually reflect” in September 2009.

**References**


Professional Learning through Collective Self-Study: Sharing tales from the field.

Collaboration and Collectivity in Self-Study

Much of the self-study literature characterizes self-study as a collaborative activity, involving various degrees of cooperation and interaction with others—both the others that are our students, and collegial others who work with us in some way to assist our enquiries into our own professional practices (LaBoskey, 1998; Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Collaborative and collegial relationships have been found in both individual case studies and meta-analyses on professional learning to be a cornerstone of effective professional learning practice in teaching and teacher education, especially if that collaboration and collegiality in professional learning is formally structured and mentored in some way (Timperley et al., 2007; Ministry of Education, 2008; Davey & Ham, 2010). Transformative professional learning through self-enquiry methods, it seems, is seldom achieved rapidly, comfortably, or alone.

However, while many self-studies in teacher education mention using collaborative or team approaches to self-study as a matter of self-study method, very few seem to have made that collaboration or collegiality itself the key focus of empirical interest in the analysis and reporting of the study. While we have a number of stories of collaborative self-study improving specific practice, we have relatively few that analyse the specific contribution made to either the self-study or to the teacher education practices involved, by the collaboration itself (Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 2000; Fitzgerald, Farstad, & Deemer, 2002; Davey & Ham, 2009).

In analysing and reporting our own collaborative self-studies over the last year and a half, therefore, we have particularly focussed on the issue of collaboration and collectivity in terms of its role in the self-study process itself, and its contribution to our self-studies’ impact on our respective practices. For this paper, we addressed two particular questions: What do, or can, various forms of collaboration, partnership or collectivity contribute to the process of self-study, and how have aspects of such collaborative or collective approaches contributed to our own professional learning as teacher educators?

What We Did

We are a group of seven experienced pre-service teacher educators at Canterbury University in New Zealand, who for the last year or so have been involved in a collaborative self-study project investigating effective professional learning in teacher education. In our part of a wider national project on teacher educators’ professional learning (see: www.instep.net.nz), we employed collaborative-collective self-study methods to investigate and improve aspects of our own respective professional practices. Over one academic year we each conducted formal action research projects on our own practices at the same time as we engaged in ongoing collective workshops and collective learning conversations as a sort of ‘(self) study-group’. In these group sessions, we critically reflected on and shared evidence of our respective professional learning from our action research, and we evaluated our respective experiences of self-study itself as effective professional learning with respect to those practices.

Collaboration and collectivity existed in our project in a variety of ways. As a group we met formally five times over the year for up to three hours at a time, and pairs and threesomes among us had various ongoing conversations and collaborations to support each other in between these whole-group sessions. In various pairings we collaboratively gathered data in each others’ classes, conducted joint stimulated recall sessions watching videos or listening to recordings of our class teaching, observed each other’s classes, shared our journal reflections, assisted each other with learner interviews, and co-coded each others’ qualitative data.

The main data collection about the collaboration itself occurred during the group workshops conversations with the mentors over the year, supplemented by journal notes and the numerous informal corridor conversations we had amongst ourselves. The group workshops and mentor conversations not only provided support to group members planning and conducting their own self-studies, but also reviewed evidence in respect of our own working as a collective. We also did a collective presentation to a College research seminar and got together in the next semester for two additional two-hour collective debriefs. In the latter we specifically addressed what had worked for us in hindsight, and analysed some of the archive evidence with a focus on the role of collectivity and collaboration in our process. The main data sources regarding collaboration in the project were thus transcripts and archives of all these meetings and collaborations, plus our own journals.

Synopses of Individual Self-Studies

Gina—primary visual arts education. My puzzle of practice asked, “How well do I model ‘teaching to my strengths’, and how can I use positive psychology principles to help pre-service teacher education students develop their sense of professional identity?”

Creating teachers of the future who inspire and encourage their learners challenges me as a teacher educator. I am interested in ways to be your best self, in human flourishing. I am also interested in how knowledge about self, associated with reflection, can lead to improved teaching.

Data were collected through a combination of qualitative survey, student teacher interviews, and collegial feedback on videoed lessons, provided evidence about my
students’ perception of my strengths, and my modelling strategies. My in-class modelling of these perceived strengths were analysed by both colleagues and myself. Archives of our self-study group learning conversations and a personal journal also added to the record.

Knowing who you are adds value to what you do. I found that I am seen as ‘walking my own talk’ in teaching to my strengths, and I found that not only the modelling itself but also talking about what and how I was modelling were useful strategies in helping my student teachers develop their sense of professional identity. This encouraged them to review their own uniqueness and diverse skills, thereby increasing their awareness of the impact they will have on their future learners.

Robyn—secondary English education. My puzzle of practice asked, “How can I evaluate and improve my mentoring skills in learning conversations held after observation lessons on teaching practicum?”

For data I took sound recordings of five learning conversations after observing students teach a lesson. I then analysed and coded the types of questions, prompts, probes and statements I used and the responses made by the pre-service students.

I discovered that I used a variety of question types and prompts to encourage student self-evaluation, often using different language techniques depending on the level of development of the student. I used more questions with students who were less confident, and more statements with more competent students. Overall, the analysis heightened my consciousness of the variety and effectiveness of the language I was using, and helped me detect one specific area in which I could develop further. In addition, sharing of my own self-study purpose with the students beforehand made them aware of the importance of their role in the learning conversation, which was not designed to be simply an advice-giving session by me— as some of them had expected.

Donna and Ann—secondary information technology.

Our puzzle of practice asked, “How can we better engage students in a compulsory ICT course where varying levels of ability are compromising positive outcomes for students and lecturers?”

We gathered and analysed data in the forms of:
• An initial survey to ascertain students’ knowledge, skills and pedagogical preferences.
• Personal reflective journals shared with each other.
• Peer observation and review of each other’s teaching.
• A post-course survey and student evaluations of our teaching.
• Archives of our self-study group learning conversations.

We found that reflecting on our own teaching methodology and our own dissatisfaction with the course gave us the opportunity to try a different approach to teaching. This had positive effects both for the students and for us. Implementing the TPACK model as a theoretical framework, in particular, shifted the focus away from students’ ICT skills and made more explicit the importance of pedagogical content knowledge.

Changing our approach to the delivery of the course and getting regular feedback from the students ensured that students’ voices were not only heard, but also listened and responded to. It also confirmed for us the value of reflection on action. The students knew from the first day that we were engaged in action research to ‘improve’ our teaching. This, in its own way also helped ensure that they understood the importance of reflection too.

Fiona—primary literacy education. My puzzle of practice asked, “How can I best introduce theories of literacy education (content and pedagogy), and allow my students to explore these in relation to their espoused theories, beliefs and experiences of literacy education?”

During my introductory literacy course I implemented a variety of teaching strategies to enable students to reflect more deeply on their beliefs of effective literacy practice and recorded their responses. Data thus came from taped student conversations as they discussed their literacy beliefs during the course, an end-of-course stimulated recall interview with students, and my reflective journal and archives of our self-study group sessions.

The research highlighted for me the importance of (a) allowing students to have time to explore and uncover their espoused beliefs on literacy teaching, and (b) the opportunity for them to complete this within a group situation, rather than as an individual activity.

I also found myself continually challenged to solidify my own core beliefs about effective literacy practice, and had many conversations with colleagues to help articulate and record these, replicating the experiences of the student teachers. As a teacher educator, the challenge that I am now presented with is how to retain this valuable practice within my courses. The opportunity to talk in a group or to complete shared activities is essential, but this is difficult since mass lectures have become the norm in our programme.

What We Found

Davey and Ham (2009) suggest that collaborations and collegial partnerships in self-studies can exist in forms that vary along a continuum according to the number of people involved, the dominant purpose for collaborating, the locus of decision in the enquiry questions addressed, participants’ locations, and the intended spread of benefit. At one end of the continuum are what they call “assistive-individual” collaborations which involve one or possibly two individual colleagues acting in effect as research assistants or critical friends in support of another’s self-study. In the middle are “co-formative” collaborations in which two or more individuals share their respective enquiries to mutual and equal benefit. And at the other end of the continuum are “cultural-collective” collaborations in which larger groups of faculty collectively study a topic as a community of enquiry.

Collaborative activities (common to all modes) include, but are not limited to the following:
• formal and informal meetings and conversations
• co-coding of data
• joint authorship of reports and presentations
• shared readings and reviews of readings
• observing, videoing, and audio recording each others’ classroom practices
• stimulated recall sessions
• ‘third party’ interviewing of student teachers
• negotiated timetables, targets and deadlines
• co-participation in online forums
• resource exchanges
• shared personal / professional journals
• co-interviewing of student teachers
A continuum of collaboration in self-study (after Davey & Ham, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistive-Individual collaborations</th>
<th>Co-formative collaborations</th>
<th>Cultural-collective collaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- small groups, often pairs.</td>
<td>- small- to medium-sized groups, often 2–6 members.</td>
<td>- medium to large groups; can be whole faculties or school staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- dominant purpose is to support an individual in their enquiry.</td>
<td>- dominant purpose is joint or mutual professional learning.</td>
<td>- dominant purpose is to build and use a strong community, or create a collective culture of enquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- enquiry topic determined by individual.</td>
<td>- enquiry topics determined by individuals.</td>
<td>- common or closely related enquiry topics, collectively negotiated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- usually co-workers in same institution.</td>
<td>- collaborators group can be in the same institution or geographically distributed.</td>
<td>- collaborating group usually within a single institution or organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- unequal spread of benefit, may or may not involve a mentor-mentee relationship.</td>
<td>- equal spread of benefit, may or may not involve a mentor-mentee relationship.</td>
<td>- equal spread of benefit, often formally mentored or facilitated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On this continuum our project (see Table 1) was probably an example of a co-formative collaboration, in which we all helped each other on our separate self-studies but to our equal and mutual benefits. However, our project had elements of a cultural-collective approach in the extent to which we used formal external mentoring and in our intent to ‘pilot’ forms of professional development that might be sponsored in future by our university department. Across our various self-studies we employed almost the full range of collaborative activities listed above.

In evaluating the significance of the collective or collaborative elements of our project we concluded that the collaboration contributed in four main ways.

1. Being part of a group helped keep the momentum in our projects going, partly by providing deadlines for reporting progress, but also through the reinvigoration of interest that always came after our group discussions, and through our colleagues’ ongoing probing about our enquiries. As Ann put it:

   Because of this sense of collegiality, and because Vince and Ronnie were driving something, and there were expectations, so therefore we met our deadlines and our goals. All the time there was this sense of urgency and commitment. If I had done this by myself it could easily have just gone into the cupboard and been put away.

   Related to this was a growing sense of accountability to the group as well as to ourselves. Having a timetable of regular reporting back to sympathetic ears was highly motivating, more motivating than if we had been working in isolation:

   When talking about the collectivity in the work, [it] is that ‘community of practice’. As you build up a rapport you also develop a sense of responsibility to each other, a level of accountability - which is an accountability that is a self-chosen one rather than a compliance one. A sort of sense of commitment to the community which means it helps the momentum when you know you are part of a group, and you want to keep the group intact and not let the group down, and that kind of thing.

2. Collaboration provided lots of personal and professional validation of our efforts, and helped our growing confidence as researchers, as reflected in statements like the following comments:

   “It’s actually quite useful to be on the outside of someone’s project because you’re looking in, and so you often end up asking the questions that you might not necessarily think about yourself in your own work. . . . Other people challenge you to clarify your thinking … I found that really valuable.”

   “What is important about the group process is that it validates what you are doing—that what I’m doing is OK. But also the listening to other people. For instance, like, Gina talking about ‘walking the talk’. . . I hadn’t really thought about it as deeply like that until we were sitting in a group talking about it. So it sort of stimulates you and gets the juices running when you are in a group situation.”

   We were all very experienced teacher educators but most of us were not experienced researchers, and so this was a collegial way of building our confidence and experience base in this regard. By sharing our experiences, frustrations, and successes, we found ourselves validated as practitioners and researchers. Although we each studied our own specific puzzles of practice, our enquiries were all in one way or another related to teacher education processes and therefore of inherent interest to others. Hearing others’ stories of practice and the narratives of their respective enquiries did much to validate and to challenge our own. The formal mentorship aspects and guidance from more experienced researchers were also important in generating this validation-challenge effect.

3. Collaboration was felt to increase the validity of our respective enquiries and findings, and to foster ‘depth’ and rigour in the studies. Statements like those below all exemplify our sense that the group ‘kept us honest’ in relation to the data gathering, triangulation, developing analytic frameworks, and the like:

   “There’s no hiding, so it’s quite raw in terms of what you are finding—which should add to its authenticity”

   “It was self-study but having the shared perspectives
meant that if I wasn’t clear for myself someone else could make a suggestion or point something out to me. Having those other perspectives took away the sort of, the sort of navel gazing aspects”

“The others who listened to us last week talked about deep listening [coming from the fact] that we were in a group. . . . [In fact] I wonder how easy it is to critically reflect on something without others?—I mean to really critically reflect?”

The group prevented the studies becoming too self-fulfilling, too self-critical, or too self-congratulatory.

4. Collaborative activity provided the opportunity to see into our colleagues’ professional lives. “What’s great,” said Robyn in one meeting, “is actually working with people in my own school but outside my own curriculum area. Because we very rarely interacted. . . . All of that’s been another layer that I don’t think I would have had if we hadn’t been thrust together to do this work.” Or, as Gina expressed it:

It is interesting what other people have looked at . . . because we don't often talk across 'the wall'. Being in a classroom you are in a cell . . . and that becomes your little world. Whereas this way it has given us intersections into other people's worlds, and I like that.

It's collaborative.

Like school teaching, teacher education can be a very isolated and isolating practice in which we know only our own classes and our own students. There are few ‘natural’ occasions for sharing what we do with sympathetic others, and fewer still to learn what others do in the privacy of their own classrooms. Collective self-studies along these lines can provide opportunities to critically ‘view’ the teacher education practices of others, and to use the lessons drawn from that to improve our own.

References

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**Invoking Self-Study in a School Adoption Project to Foster a Community of Learners**

**Context**

As teacher educators working in the same team, at IVLOS, the teacher education institute of Utrecht University, we have regular collaborative meetings. In these meetings we expressed the desire to prove if we are a learning community or if we need to become a learning community. So we wanted our collaborative activities at the teacher education program to move beyond a practical focus. Next to that, we thought that sharing our individual learning and understanding might help us reach a higher, collaborative level of learning.

Our team consists of teacher educators concerned with the subjects geography, social sciences, history, philosophy, religion, culture, and arts (in Dutch, “gamma-cluster”). We planned four meetings with our team to set our goals and determine procedures. In the first initiating meeting we arranged a meeting with our Dean (Robert Jan Simons), who is an expert in the field of learning communities. He was a great supporter of our initiative. In this meeting the following building blocks were discussed:

1. Create a collective learning agenda.
2. Decide if we are a community of practitioners, or a community of learners.
3. Create and look for a common interest.
4. Determine our collective identity?
5. Take care of safety in the communication.
6. Try to make things visible, that means “try to show products”. (See also Wenger, 1998)

In the second meeting we discussed our ways of learning. We asked, “How do you learn as a professional?” Every teacher educator made a representation of how he or she learned on a large piece of paper. We exchanged our representations pairs and concluded with a plenary inventory. The social aspect and the aspect of learning together were most frequently mentioned during this time. We considered that to be sufficient reason to move forward with our ideas about a learning community.

In the third meeting, our first objective was to create a common learning agenda. A second objective was to make clear what common interest we have as a team. We exchanged thoughts about this in groups of three. All groups got the assignment to go for a walk—in the rain at that moment—and to return with an idea that energized all three persons. During this walk we explicitly agreed to never say “no” or “but”, but to always see the possibilities of the speaker. These sub-teams reported three ideas:

1. School Adoption (i.e. student teachers take over a school for a few days)
2. Sharing good practices
3. Thinking out of the box

We also discovered that there were differences in our interests.

In the fourth session we looked back on our endeavors so far. We made an inventory of the desires and the needs to do justice to all team members (working on point 3 of our building blocks, see context of the study). In the discussion about this process we took one important decision. We took on the challenge of organizing a project called School Adoption (sub team 1), which is a project that rests on ideas outside the box (subteam 3), and also afforded sharing good practices (sub team 2). We envisioned that the approach towards a collaborative project of School Adoption would be a possibility to function and grow as a community of practitioners (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994).

**School Adoption**

The idea of the School Adoption project came from Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. At their institute, they let their student teachers take over all organization of a school for one week as a way to increase the learning experiences and have them experience increased responsibility. We adapted the project to fit our context. One team member felt and took a special responsibility to coordinate this process. This created a kind of informal leadership which fueled the process (Wenger, 1998). That team member coordinated the activities of the project School Adoption, but also organized the meetings of the team. Later that year we received a grant to realize the project, without which such an extensive project would be impossible to organize.

To meet our goal of sharing good practices, as well as growing towards a community of learners, there was the desire to be more actively involved with examining the project using research. This desire was greatly stimulated by the management of our institute (in the trend of evidence-based education, Hargreaves, 1997). We all welcomed the possibility to collaboratively learn more from our experiences. Therefore we combined the School Adoption with practitioner research (i.e. self-study) to stimulate collaborative learning in our team.

In a following meeting, we discussed the details of our plan. All members of the team would not only cooperate in the execution of the project week, but everyone also formulated a personal research question. To ensure ownership and participation, everyone was free to choose a research topic of interest and preferred instruments of data collection. In the next meeting two members introduced some theory about methodology of doing research. The goal was to show the possibilities of doing research, but also to speak about researching as a normal way of looking to your work from a more analytical perspective (in line with the idea of a reflective practitioner, Schön, 1983).

In January 2009, 20 student teachers participated in our School Adoption: they took over all teaching and
organization of a Dutch secondary school at level 4/5 (pupil age: 16/17 years old) for 4 days. The student teachers had been enrolled in the teacher education program for half a year, with a practicum at different schools. After this School Adoption week they went to their second, final, and independent teaching practice. The teacher educators of our team that were allocated as their institute supervisors organized and facilitated the learning process of the students before, during, and after the school adoption took place.

Other teacher educators of our team participated as researchers. The teachers of the school participated in the preparation of the project, but received professional development training during the School Adoption week and therefore hardly participated.

**Objectives for Our Team**

Because of the multiple roles that our team members needed to fulfill during the actual adoption of the school, the cooperation of all teacher educators was required. Because we knew this project would only be successful if our whole team was involved (Wenger, 1998), a few team members planned carefully how we would work with all of the research questions and collect our data. Our central and main question for this project asked, “What is the effect of working with research questions on developing towards a community of learners?”

**Methods**

**Procedure and instruments.** This process leading to the School Adoption week has been described above. We used our own logs and portfolios to reconstruct the beginning of the process. In the week after the School Adoption, in-depth interviews with all teacher educators of our team were conducted. The interviews lasted about an hour and revolved around two main themes: 1) the way of working with and the results of the personal research questions and 2) personal experiences in the project. We used grand tour questions to provoke the most revealing answers (Lichtman, 2006).

Based on the knowledge gained from the interviews, together with data concerning student teacher learning and experiences (reported elsewhere), two team meetings were dedicated to collaborative reflections on the outcomes. In one of these meetings, about one year after the initiation of the School Adoption project, and two years after the start of our community process, we asked the members of the cluster to reflect on our general research question. The question each member was asked to respond to in writing asked, “What did we learn together as a team and what did you learn personally and what we learned as a team.”

We interpreted the learning gains in terms of the model distinguished in the onion model (Korthagen, 2004). We choose this model because it shows not only a human being in his daily action, but it also shows the less visible and deeper layers that steer our interactions. For the definition of the professional identity of teachers, Akkerman and Meijer (2009) emphasize “that teacher identity is not an end point, but must be seen as an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple ‘I’ positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various positions and self investments in one’s (working) life.” (p.18). From this dynamic viewpoint we interpret professional identity. We have discussed these results and our interpretations among ourselves extensively in order to establish sufficient inter-subjectivity, but the process also gave rise to a deeper understanding (LaBoskey, 2004).

**Outcomes**

**Interviews.** In the interviews were three main gains of the project School Adoption we discussed. Most of the learning gains were conceptualized in terms of new knowledge and understanding about student teacher learning. One of the main conclusions was to reconsider safety in learning to teach: although still considered important, being in a challenging situation can also foster student teacher learning.

In terms of the project and its effects on fostering a learning community, there was mostly praise. Three aspects were considered crucial. First of all, the teacher educators appreciated the challenging, yet still collaborative nature of the project:

“It was challenging for them [student teachers], but also for us. We all took a plunge.”
“It is really special to experience this...to go through this as a group.”

Secondly, taking a research or self-study approach was also considered very valuable, especially by those team members who continued in their research role throughout the project. As one of them commented, “Being there with a research question in mind steer you to look more at processes taking place.” Another said, “It was valuable to structure all my impressions from a particular point of view.”

All these exemplary quotes give support the impression that doing research was a new aspect for their professional identity, and gives a new aspect to an implicit self-investment in one’s own professional roles.

The teacher educators that had a dual role (i.e. both supervisor of the student teachers and observer/researcher) responded differently. One of them mentioned:

“Properly executing a small research project was difficult, as the processes that were going on seemed so . . . intangible. And I saw my student teachers struggling. I felt I would be of more use to their learning process by supporting their learning process than being a researcher.”

Here we see a tension between the outer layers of the onion model and her beliefs, or even mission. The urge of the process made it possible for her to make a choice. And another teacher educator with a dual role stated, “My research question turned out to be, frankly, irrelevant. And I had a different, more important role to fulfill: to be there for my students, who were struggling.”

Even though intended for evaluation, the interviews in and of themselves also proved to be the source of learning: “This interview also helps to put things in perspective. It accommodates my own learning process.” Or, as one of the interviewees said, “It is very special to have a discourse with your own colleagues in such a structured way, we never did this before, this so rich . . .”

Thirdly, the way in which the School Adoption was carried out, also contributed to our learning. “Seeing your students working authentically, in an unfamiliar context, can be really enlightening when you see this in terms of their capabilities. And in their learning needs.”

Collaborative Reflection Meetings. In the two collaborative reflection sessions of our team, everybody mentioned as learning gains the “involvement and vision development as a teacher educator”. As a team we had learned about organizing and developing a considerable project. These are competencies in terms of the onion model (see figure 1 below). Yet, the learning gains of our team most mentioned were the discussion about pedagogies and the feeling of team building. The two new members of the team said it had been an ideal way to learn about our informal culture and ways of working. In terms of the onion model, our team learned mostly in the inner circle (the core) of the onion, what has also been called professional self-understanding (Berry, 2009). The teacher educators with a research role mentioned taking such a perspective was an especially fruitful in that respect. “This is very special way to have the possibility to discuss with your colleagues about concerns of our educational program.”

What team members learned for themselves was different in terms of the onion model. They learned a lot about the process of school adoption, and they learned about educational innovation and the way to support student teachers in stressful circumstances. They learned about their own capabilities to manage the process and about the capabilities, or lack thereof, of their student teachers. They got a more realistic vision on educational innovation. In other words, their learning process was more on the outer layers of the onion. This was particularly the case for all participants in a more distanced role. For the teacher educators with a dual role, combining research and student teacher supervision, there was again tension between the layers of the onion model. They in particular had to deal with what has been called the tension between Safety and Challenge (Berry, 2007).

Conclusion

Overall, the School Adoption proved to be a catalyst for the collaborative learning of our team. We had more discussion about content and moved beyond collaboration focused on practicalities. The experiences stimulated a discussion about our pedagogies and how that influences student teacher learning. A highly important aspect in this respect was the fact that we all worked together in this process; we had a collective preparation and all of us were present at the school during the adoption. Hence, we were successful in creating and maintaining a collective agenda (building blocks 1 and 3, see context of the study). More important and very fruitful was our collective reflection in the interviews and team meetings after the School Adoption. By collectively sharing these new understandings (building block 4), we developed towards a community of learners. From the interviews with teacher educators in the role of researchers, we developed new professional understandings. So we learned that the student teachers did learn a lot, and that a large part of the students did recontextualize very quickly (Van Oers, 1998), which enabled them to transfer the gained knowledge to their subsequent practicum. Therefore, collaboratively we learned that although safety is important in learning to teach (Oosterheert & Vermunt, 2001), it is not the only thing. Good coaching and some basic skills (e.g., in coaching learning processes) can help student teachers deal with unsafe situations. Based on our experiences there will be more attention in our teacher education program for those skills in the future.

To answer our research question, by introducing self-study methods we learned about our pedagogy as teacher educators. Due to of the fact that there were also teacher educators in the role of observers/researchers, it was possible to look (during and after the project) in a way with more distance. The observers/researchers were not overwhelmed by the experience—some supervisors were—and stayed in their research roles. We found that we learned more from this project by using research. From the whole process we found that looking back systematically creates something special. To put it differently, we created a process of evaluating that we did not have before, but we found that it greatly stimulated our development towards a community of learners. In terms of the six building blocks with which we started our development towards a community of learners (see context of the study), it especially contributes to the last, in that the self-study made our collaborative learning gains visible. As this is notoriously difficult in professional learning (Tynjälä, 2008), we feel this is something to hold on to.

In conclusion, what we think is relevant for future projects like the School Adoption in 2010 is to have systematic, yet involved evaluation, as self-study basically
is. Both structured and being connected are crucial. The fact that it was a collaborative endeavor of our team and that we ourselves conducted the research (i.e. self-study) greatly contributed to our shared community perspective. We felt as though together in one project, we see more and our perspective is wider. We just learned a lot from working with the extra layer of doing research. Still now we are reflecting and writing about this process and these analyses and reflection were only possible by the “new” way we looked to our work. And for the next year the School Adoption is included in the teacher education program, again coupled with research. We are still developing as community of practitioners and learners.

References


Providing Situated Learning in a Child Development Course for First Year Pre-service Teachers

I am often part of groups of colleagues discussing teaching. These discussions sometimes include complaints about students and much to my chagrin I sometimes join in; especially on frustrating teaching days. At the same time I am always on the quest to understand and improve my teaching so I have positive impact on student learning. In the past I have adopted ideas from social science into my teaching of child development (East, 2009). Here, I explore how an approach from mathematics teaching had a positive impact on teaching and learning in my child development course for pre-service teachers.

I instruct a course in child development at a Midwestern university in the United States that has a strong teacher education program. The majority of my students are sophomores and teacher education majors. The students are commonly residents of the rural state where the university is located. The course addresses development from conception to 18 years and is the first professional course that teacher education students take. The course connects more directly to students' future than did their general education coursework, but it is not specific to children the age they see themselves teaching. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to engage students in the course content and its application to their future practice.

Background for this Study

In the summer of 2009 I was introduced to Stein, Smith, Hinningsen, & Silver’s (2009) math task demand framework. They categorized tasks into four ratings: two low level (Rating 4: memorization; Rating 3: procedures without connections) and two high level (Rating 2: procedure with connections, Rating 1: doing math). Rating 1 tasks require students to use content to solve ill-defined problems similar to those found in the real world. By comparison, low level tasks (Rating 3 & 4) can be accomplished with little understanding. Stein et al, make it clear that the level of the task is critical, but maintaining task demand during the activity is also pivotal. Without maintaining a high level task can be degraded to a lower level.

After this introduction I was certain that structuring my course to require students to do development would lead to better learning and help them determine the role development would play in their future practice. I believed my course asked students to do development, to Rating 2, process with connections. Both are high level tasks, but Rating Two tasks demand less from students thus provide fewer learning opportunities. In the second case I degraded the task to Rating 3, process with no connections, by giving the students a process that they could apply with little thinking. It became a low level task with even less potential for learning.

Students can also degrade tasks. They do this by narrowing the ambiguity so the task fits some specific information in the text. Such a student response to the above example was “The person counts to determine number in each row so level is concrete.” With that one sentence they believe the task accomplished and stop learning. The other way students degrade tasks is to supply a plausible example without connections to development. Learning about task degradation helped me understand the need for focus on task maintenance.

Aim

Focusing on task maintenance led to these research questions:

- Does the course present students with maintained opportunities for doing development?
- Is there evidence of improved ability to do development across the semester?
- Does doing development affect student use of development content?
- What does this process indicate about my practice and myself as a teacher?

Framework

My goal for the development course is to prepare pre-service teachers to use development as a tool for making educational decisions for children. Students accomplish this by engaging in tasks similar to those of practice. Known as legitimate peripheral participation, this learning provides opportunities to “participate in the actual practice of an expert, but only to a limited degree and with limited responsibility” (Lave & Wenger, 2003, p.
Each student had three individual scores and three group scores. Because review of each student's score set revealed no clear patterns (e.g., 8, 7.5, 8.8), statistical analysis was required. The grade sets were analyzed with a mixed design 2x2x3 ANOVA. This tested for any statistically significant difference in scores between the sections. There was none. It also tested for any statistically significant difference in scores related to time, group or individual (see Table 2). Statistically significant difference was found across time 1, 2, and 3 for both Group (p<.001) and Individual (p<.001) scores. As a group, scores on group applications and individual applications improved over the semester. The main effect for Group (.385) was moderate. The main effect for Individual (.218) was small (Cronk, 2004). Group application scores started higher and improved more than individual application scores. (See Table 2.)

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η^2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Between subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.998</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.128</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.436</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type x Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the semester, 85 students provided anonymous written responses to the question, “How has the idea of doing development affected your learning in the course?” Each response was coded for theme. Through recoding, similar themes were collapsed into the set of themes presented in Table 3. The percent of students whose responses fit each theme are given by section and in total. This data is based on students’ perceptions and was reported during the class and that may limit it. The majority of the students reported an effect on their learning from the idea of doing development. The range was wide and only 5% of the students reported actually doing development beyond the classroom. Comments ranged from, “No, it has not affected my learning. I have not applied this to anything,” to “This idea has helped me better understand how the concepts play into real life. It has also allowed me to make connections between peer interactions and development in various places” (Personal communication, 12/11/09). The bulk of the students (59%) reported using the idea of doing development for specific tasks or application in specific instances. This likely reflects a reasonable result for a first college development course.

The analysis of the data thus far established that students have opportunities for doing development, students improve their ability to do development, and students generally report positive effects on their learning from doing development. The next section examines questions of task maintenance and
what the findings indicate about my practice and my self as a teacher.

**Task Maintenance and Assertions.** My teaching journal offers another set of data. Themes were recorded for journal comments, resulting in nine themes. The themes were tested by sorting the entries by the identified themes. The majority of coded comments fell into three themes: strategies for maintaining task demand (34%); determining level of task demand (33%); and difficulty in maintaining task demand (17%). I discuss this focus on course tasks below along with the related assertions.

**Rating Tasks and Its Process Is Challenging.** This is demonstrated in the variance between my ratings and those of my peer. We agreed that 43% (22/51) tasks were high level (Rating 1 & 2), but rated only 24% (12/51) tasks numerically the same. We planned together and taught the same course yet judged tasks differently. Additionally, I often questioned my own ratings: "I ask them to now explain the diagram in sociocultural learning theory terms instead. This may be a low level task. They know the steps of the child moving from butterfly to bird in Piagetian terms, do they just have to substitute Vygotskian terms to do it or is more required?" (Journal, 10/09/09)

**Taking Students’ Perspective Is Crucial to Good Teaching.** Student struggles with low-level tasks proved to be particularly eye opening. For example:

Today [I gave students] what seems to me a low level task—recall. Who wants to be Gallahue? I have Gallahue's hour glass heuristic with all of the labels removed and team by team they get a chance to fill in a word on the graphic. Team with the most points gets 2 points toward the next exam. What to do? They are very engaged but [the task] is not easy for them. They do not move through it lickety split filling in one word after another. [Instead] it takes the whole 50 minutes to complete the labeling. Not sure how to think about this. This is the kind of learning I want them to come to class for. "Aha, this is a task maintenance issue too! They have to maintain motivation/interest to study/learn."

**Feedback Plays an Important Role in Learning.** One identifiable difference between the group and individual applications was the quantity and quality of feedback received. Students received written feedback on all group applications, but time constraints permitted written feedback for only individual applications 1 and 3. Perhaps more pertinent was the student–teacher interaction permitted during the group application. This allowed for questions, prompts and encouragement through specific feedback which helped maintain task demand and may explain the more moderate improvement on group applications over time.

One of the feedback strategies I use is to comment on a student contribution and then suggest other potential connections. I recorded one such incident in my journal, "I heard someone in the group begin talking about context and I follow up by saying, ‘Just watch . . . he is going to use Bronfenbrenner to support his idea that context is important.’ At that point another student in the group looked at me and said, ‘You are not a sports commentator, you’re a thinking commentator!’” (Journal 11/18/09).

This strategy represents the best of task maintenance by motivating the students and extending their thinking.

**Implications**

In my development course students had opportunities to do development. They improved their ability to do development, and recognized it positively affected their learning. I also learned about my teaching. While I used the framework of doing development throughout the semester, students only heard about it explicitly at the end of the semester. There were positive outcomes from incorporating the framework in course planning, but there may be potentially greater outcomes if students enter the course

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### Table 3

**Student Reported Effect of Doing Development on Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No effect</th>
<th>Caused confusion</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Lead to a specific effect</th>
<th>Assisted me in applying development</th>
<th>Helped me make connections to other courses</th>
<th>Allowed me to do development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1</strong> (28)</td>
<td>10%(3)</td>
<td>4%(1)</td>
<td>11%(3)</td>
<td>43%(12)</td>
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<td>14%(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2</strong> (30)</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>10%(3)</td>
<td>47%(14)</td>
<td>23%(7)</td>
<td>7%(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3</strong> (27)</td>
<td>4%(1)</td>
<td>4%(1)</td>
<td>4%(1)</td>
<td>22%(6)</td>
<td>19%(5)</td>
<td>33%(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong> (85)</td>
<td>7%(6)</td>
<td>5%(2)</td>
<td>8%(7)</td>
<td>38%(32)</td>
<td>21%(18)</td>
<td>18%(15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and are immediately acquainted with the framework. Also, structuring the course to regularly call students’ attention to doing development may benefit learning.

Since Doyle (1988) wrote his seminal text on the role of task in the classroom and student learning, much work has been focused on classroom tasks (Holt-Reynolds & Johnson, 2005). Stein et al (2009) have broadened the definition of task to include the tasks’ design, set-up, and implementation. As I rediscovered here the study of task implementation is confounded by student goal orientation and motivation (Locke & Latham, 2002; Steele-Johnson, Beauregard, Hoover & Schmidt, 2000). To provide students with legitimate peripheral participation in the course, I need to continue to improve my ability to meet students at their level, maintain task demand during instruction, and support students in maintaining motivation and task demand. This kind of learning is hard work, so students need more guidance, especially related to motivation. I need to be cognizant of which of my teaching behaviors have the most positive impact on student learning and concentrate my efforts there.

References


Appendix
Doing development framework:
High Task Demand Level
Rating 1. Doing development: An ambiguous task with no specified solution pathway focused on underlying developmental structures and requiring exploration, understanding development concepts, self-monitoring and regulation for completion.
Rating 2. Procedures with connections: A somewhat ambiguous task that uses a procedure in meaningful context requiring a degree of cognitive effort for completion.
Low Task Demand Level
Rating 3. Procedures without connections: An unambiguous task that uses a specified, known procedure with little or no connection to meaning or explanation.

Adapted from Stein, Smith, Hinningsen, & Silver (2009, p. 6)

Application Prompt: The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows employees to balance their work and family life by taking reasonable unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons. The act requires (most) employers to allow a parent to take up to 12 weeks off work in a 12 month periods to care for a newborn or a new child (adoption or foster care) in their family. Is the 12-weeks indicated by the FMLA developmentally adequate?
A Cross-Continent Collaboration: Seeking Community to Support Critical Inquiry in Teacher Education

Context

Sandy and Valerie, two novice assistant professors from colleges on separate ends of the United States, spent their first year journaling and giving feedback to one another while soliciting student feedback as they attempted to create democratic classrooms. Both found value in opening their teaching practices to scrutiny of others. In this, their second year, they invited two other relatively new professors, Susan and Laurie, into their self-study project, selecting teacher educators working in different universities in the United States and Canada. The initial collaboration between Sandy and Valerie grew out of a long-standing friendship. An invitation to Laurie, a graduate school classmate of Valerie’s, was extended when she accepted a tenure-track position. Susan was invited to participate after meeting Sandy and Valerie at AERA where the three discussed their commonalities and self-study interests.

Our goal was to cultivate further inquiry with others that were like-minded in their commitment to critical dialogue, transformational inquiry, and democratic classroom practices. We wanted our new colleagues to also be in the early stages of university teaching because of the unique nature of problems and issues we face. Many learning organizations intentionally and explicitly seek feedback and change but are somewhat bound by organizational context itself. According to Katz and Kahn (1978), “The organizational context is by definition a set of restrictions for focusing attention upon content areas and for narrowing the cognitive style to certain types of procedures” (p. 277).

Ideals of critical reflection and collaborative inquiry are central to this self-study. Positioning our interpretation of what it means to be critically reflective among the divergent meanings (e.g., Fisher, 2003; Gore, 1987; Kraft, 2002; Loughran, 2002; Rodgers, 2002; Wade, Fauske & Thompson, 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), we have operationalized it to be distinguished by the desire to be more just and compassionate, not simply more effective and efficient (Brookfield, 1995). Critically reflective teachers strive to examine their beliefs, biases, and experiences for the purpose of transforming their practice to be more congruent with their ideals. However, influences of social and institutional milieus create a solid context where even honest reflections are often firmly contained. The decision to go beyond our organizations and transcend geographic boundaries in search of a support system was intended to overcome taken-for-granted beliefs and values in our individual institutions (see Brookfield, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994), introducing new ways of thinking to help us recognize our own cognitive distortions and reinterpret our beliefs and practices.

Objectives

Three research questions framed our inquiry:

1. What does it mean to have a “community of practice” without geographic boundaries?
2. How can we support one another and our shared quest to model democratic teaching and critical reflection for students?
3. How are individual efforts to be critically reflective practitioners and to enact democratic principles in our teaching perceived and evaluated by our students?

Methods/Data Sources

Our goal was to establish a mutually self-disclosing context with one another and our students, making us free to ask and answer questions, to discuss practice with others, and probe for deeper understanding of complex issues. Journal keeping over time allowed us to look back at practices, the “self in action” (Elliott, 1989) over the course of the year, and to monitor our own professional and personal development.

Reflective journals kept by the researchers served as the study’s backbone. Content of journals included personal reflections, perceptions, and questions. Using Blackboard, an online conferencing tool, we shared journals biweekly. We read and responded to one another’s journals, creating a four-way dialogue. Periodically, we shared selections from our own journals with students. These selections served as springboards for discussion with students concerning their suggestions for improving our practice and encouraged students’ reflections on their own teaching and learning. Making public and transparent potential gaps between instructor goals and practices allowed us to re-view our work as collaborative researchers.

Final data sources for the study were anonymous mid-semester Course Feedback Questionnaires and end-of-course Evaluation Forms. Instrument items were adapted from Brookfield (1995) and utilized with permission. Informed consents outlining the study’s scope and providing the option to not participate were distributed prior to soliciting students’ feedback. Throughout the year, we engaged in an iterative process, reading and re-reading our journals and students’ feedback. Emerging common and divergent themes were identified and discussed. Themes were analyzed as they related to our research questions. Near the study’s end, we reflected on our valuing of the community created: How did we each appraise the experience and its influence on our aspirations to be critically reflective practitioners and enact democratic practices?
Outcomes

Through journaling, dialoguing online, and soliciting feedback from students, we gained insights into taken-for-granted assumptions, developed greater awareness of how our efforts were interpreted, and acquired increased understanding of how our thinking might be shaped by characteristics of our contexts and relationships.

The community we developed with one another also served to strengthen our resolve to maintain efforts to be critically reflective and enact democratic principles in our teaching. Finally, it provided an important arena for exploring vulnerabilities in our fledgling professorships, alleviating some of the anxiety inherent to beginning new careers in new communities.

Community. The experience of participating in a collaborative self-study resulted in a range of outcomes for each of us. Below are some excerpts from our individual reflections on the significance of having a “community of practice” without geographic boundaries:

Laurie: Being part of this collaborative community provided me with a “safe space” in which I could question my teaching practices and the institutional practices in which I am now immersed. Often, my colleagues in this community provided the support and mentoring I was not afforded as the only new faculty member in a long established, nationally respected program. . . . Simply knowing it is not “just me” affirmed my commitment and renewed my passion for teacher education.

Sandy: I have felt a certain sense of isolation in my fledgling professorship and a concern about rocking the boat in a well-established department. I am struggling with both improving my own practice and making a contribution to my department. With so little experience with other universities, I’m not sure how to gauge some taken-for-granted policies and practices and am hesitant to initiate controversial conversations with my college peers. Questions can be perceived as criticisms. Suggestions can be threatening. The collaboration group provides a safe space to ponder question and test ideas.

Susan: From Ontario to Pennsylvania, Utah and North Carolina . . . “just who do we think we are . . . and how do we know this?” (Mitchell, Weber, O’Reilly & Scanlon, 2005). For me, the community has enabled a “revision of pedagogical spaces” for studying my teaching self.

Valerie: Our community provided me with a space in which I could think “aloud” about my practice. Not always for the purpose of soliciting input; sometimes, simply to organize and analyze my own thoughts. Others’ responses to my musings provided opportunities to see my practice through different lenses and prompted me to consider further my taken-for-granted assumptions.

Thus our community has provided a safe space in which to question, examine, enhance, and develop our practices as teacher educators, and has provided support and critical friendship. The potential for feeling isolated and under pressure as new professors has been diminished by the opportunity for self-study and collaboration with others facing similar dilemmas in other locations.

Democratic classroom: Expectations and issues.

We agreed we were committed to democratic classroom practices: creating classroom communities in which students and professors openly communicate, mutually respect one another, and jointly engage in critical inquiry intended to inform and transform practice. Discussions in this collaborative community often centered on challenges in conducting classrooms that are democratic. As we sought feedback on our curriculum and instruction from students, we noted some difficulty in having genuine, non-coercive dialogue because of the inherent power differences. We noted patterns between non-traditional and traditional students. Non-traditional students were more willing to participate in these critical conversations, offering constructive feedback that was useful and could improve our courses. Younger students were more often less willing to offer substantive feedback and seemed to experience more discomfort. Some did not immediately see value in the process and wanted us, as the ones “in charge,” to give them explicit directives rather than work collaboratively on developing and improving the course.

Despite commitment to an engaged pedagogy and our intentions to include all students in designing and implementing the learning process, each of us had isolated but difficult encounters with students who ranged from unresponsive to hostile. Like first time parents, we assumed our good intentions and caring attitudes would evoke perfect attitudes and behaviors in our charges. We anticipated they would be excited by the prospect of exploring educational issues, questioning, unearthing biases, bearing witness to gaps in traditional thinking, and creating new ways of thinking.

Many were, as seen by the following comments:

• I have felt more engaged when I was required to question my own ideas and defend my standpoint.
• You really had me thinking on my drive home about spelling and the use of the games, vs. worksheet and test. Oh wait, I meant reflecting <Grin> on the many things we do in education out of habit or false beliefs. Thanks, I like to challenge conventional thinking!

However, some students were confused and frustrated by our failure to provide formulaic responses to their questions:

• Examples. Explanations are okay but having concrete examples as to what to do in the classroom are more helpful.

They wanted clear, precise, and infallible answers to thorny issues. When none were forthcoming, or when questions were turned back to them for deeper examination and thought, a few became hostile and frustrated. We, as instructors, sometimes became defensive. Our first and easiest response tended to blame students and/or their previous instructors, sometimes became defensive. Our first and easiest response tended to blame students and/or their previous instructors, sometimes becoming unresponsive to hostile. Like first time parents, we assumed our good intentions and caring attitudes would evoke perfect attitudes and behaviors in our charges. We anticipated they would be excited by the prospect of exploring educational issues, questioning, unearthing biases, bearing witness to gaps in traditional thinking, and creating new ways of thinking.
typical in our departments and comfortable. Although we claimed a commitment to democratic practices, all of us struggled with defining and describing a democratic classroom as we nibbled around the edges of democratic practices:

Sandy: I want each of my first class sessions to focus on the shared responsibilities of students and instructor in making the class meaningful . . . the notion of shared responsibility is really foreign to our college culture. (9-21-09)

We were excited about asking for written, anonymous feedback during the course and moved tentatively into exploring responses with one another and with our students.

Susan: It will be interesting to gather responses that help me better understand if what I’m perceiving reflects participants’ experience, and what else may surface - and to have examples of their perspective to interrogate. (9-26-09)

We struggled with how to use feedback so students understood they valued their voices and were willing to adapt to their needs. We struggled with balancing our roles as “experts” with our commitment to democratic processes in designing and implementing coursework.

Valerie: Again, I’m faced with what to do with their feedback. I want to be responsive, but I’m not sure I can. They don’t want lectures, but they want a little less group stuff. The large group discussions seem to leave a lot of folks out. I have a need to make sure they actually do the readings and have something to grade them on. A test would really feel out of place. (10-4-09)

Students sensed, and we acknowledged, the unequal power in the classroom that presented itself in a variety of ways. It would be difficult to deny the professor is situated in a privileged position. We issue grades and recommendations to their needs. We struggled with balancing our roles as “experts” with our commitment to democratic practices, all of us claiming a commitment to democratic practices, all of us exploring responses with one another and with our students. Dialogue served as a foundation for self-critique and as a foundation for relationship building with our collaborative group and with students. Turning the lens directly upon the classroom as we nibbled around the edges of democratic practices.

Giroux (1983), in his writing on critical pedagogy, suggests experience must be situated within a theory of learning. Professors must respect the way students feel about their experiences and allow them to express those feelings in a classroom setting. Situating their experiences within a theory of learning is the next step, requiring time, patience and practice. The kind of feedback gathered delved more deeply into understandings of students’ perceptions of course content and our approaches to teaching than the usual end of the term evaluations distributed for tenure and promotion purposes. In this regard, we felt we were genuinely “navigating the public and private” as we “negotiated our own diverse landscapes of teacher education” for the purposes of this study. The processes of actually collecting the data resulted in further questions, “soul-searching,” subsequently resulting in supportive, thought-provoking responses from others in the group:

Valerie: I asked for feedback, they gave it to me, I shared it with them, and invited them to discuss it with me. Now what? As a critically reflective practitioner who claims to want to make her practice more transparent, what am I supposed to do next? (9-24-09)

Sandy: I was impressed with feedback from your Literacy group . . . my impression was that they feel actively engaged and they are learning a great deal. What more can you want? Why the mixed feelings . . . ? (9-24-09)

“Seeing ourselves through our students’ eyes” was another consistent thread through discussions related to feedback as well as more ‘informal’ responses resulting from day-to-day interactions on campus and in classrooms:

Susan: I found myself wondering . . . when (did) I ‘lecture’ in class? . . . fascinating how perceptions of what I think I’m doing, and how teaching behaviors are perceived (differently) by students . . . all the more reason for gathering valuable feedback of this nature . . . (11-18-09)

Patterns in the analysis of feedback collected for our own purposes gradually began to highlight students’ needs and helped us realize that the issues they were questioning also informed our practice and programs. As an example, Laurie talked about explaining the purposes of the study to a class group who then made it clear they were “in”:

Laurie: They have very strong opinions but tend to be more productive and constructive, less critical and “rude” about their program . . . they are eager to help the program improve and willing to share their experiences and frustrations . . . . (12-2-09)

Along with our collaborative discussions, data from the questionnaires have been catalysts for self-questioning, reflections, further shaping and re-shaping our teaching, interactions with students, and ongoing planning and
presentation of responsive course content.

**Significance**

The significance of this study was threefold. (a) There was substantive benefit for us as novice assistant professors—working together to better understand challenges and questioning our practice so we may ultimately improve and better meet the needs of students and communities. (b) We believe there was significant value in modeling provided to students, in collaboration across contexts and in critical reflection. Research overwhelmingly suggests critical reflection does not typically occur without sustained support and modeling from mentors/teachers (Bullough, Young, Hall, Draper, & Smith, 2008; Garmon, 2004; Milner, Flowers, Moore, & Flowers; 2003). By involving students and making our goals struggles transparent, we explicitly demonstrated “navigating the public and private” as we explored diverse landscapes of teacher education. (c) Our research and collaboration from an ‘emerging scholarship’ perspective offers opportunities to initiate shared discourse with others in the broader self-study community.

We have learned much about interrogating our own practices, reframing, and sharing findings. Ultimately, we believe our initiation of transparent practices, ongoing questioning, and reciprocal and dynamic reflection has undoubtedly influenced our evolution as teacher educators. Additionally we have demonstrated “teaching as research” can be conducted by novice professors alongside pre-service teachers with the goal of modeling and inspiring collaborative relationships and reflective practice.

**References**


Context

This study looks at the ways in which self-study can enable educators to engage in and apply systematic examination of life interests and concerns to their work as professional teacher educators.

As part of a professional development program during the 2008–9 academic year, faculty members at Bank Street College of Education were asked to identify topics of interest and meet in small monthly study groups. One group began with a focus on the brain development of young children. By coincidence, several members of this group were new grandparents. Almost immediately, they began comparing what they were experiencing and observing about infant development in their roles as grandparents with that which they were learning from the texts.

Bank Street has always placed child development—observation and theory—at the center of teacher education. Faculty members are deeply steeped in this literature. And yet, we found that as we brought insights and questions emerging from our roles as grandparents into a discussion of theory and research, we were beginning to think about the relationships between nature and nurture in new ways. As we talked, we realized that we wanted to know more about neurological and cognitive development, but we also wanted to know more about each other’s observations and experiences. There were as many questions about what it means to be a grandparent in today’s world as there were about the brain research. We wanted to learn from and with each other as we learned from the research.

And so, a group, including the authors of this paper, broke off to explore the ways in which our personal experiences as grandparents and the perspectives of other grandparents could inform our understanding of content and the ways in which we share this content with students. We decided to put aside brain development as our primary focus and begin an inquiry into grandparenting. The purpose of this inquiry would be twofold.

1. To identify and examine different visions of the role of grandparents: How do individuals, families, and communities experience grandparenting? How can the grandparent role be most helpful to children and families in today’s world? How can the knowledge and experience of grandparents support teaching and learning in formal and informal settings?

2. To explore ways in which we might use our roles as grandparents and researchers exploring the roles of grandparents to grow both personally and professionally. What implications does the intersection of this life stage and this research project have for our practice as teacher educators? It is the latter purpose that is the focus of this paper.

What have we learned through our research, the discussions around this research, and the reflections we have made on our new personal and professional roles that will help us to reframe the ways we interact with our students and the teachers with whom we work in schools over the course of the years?

Theoretical Basis

Our work, both in teacher education and in research, is deeply grounded in a Deweyan perspective. We believe that our own learning and that of our students must be relevant to the worlds in which we live and the worlds we hope to actualize through our work (Dewey, 1916, 1938). We further believe that learning and—by implication—meaningful research is social and constructivist in nature. It builds upon prior knowledge and experience and takes shape through these experiences and the discourse that surrounds them (Grinberg, 2002; James, 1907; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978).

The mission of Bank Street College, where we teach, grows out of these perspectives. It calls for:

- a constant questioning of old procedure in the light of new observations; a use of the world as well as of books as source material; an experimental open-mindedness; and an effort to keep as reliable records as the situation permits in order to base the future upon actual knowledge of the experiences of the past (Mitchell, in Antler, 1987, p. 309).

We see this need to question, observe, gather data, frame, and reframe as a way of being for teachers, leaders, and teacher educators. Bank Street has always been a place where there has been a focus on young children. In the literature of early childhood, the practice of grounding one’s research in observation and experience has long been considered an essential component of meaningful work (Mitchell in Antler, 1987; Weber, 1984; Cohen, Stern, Balaban, & Gropper, 2008). These beliefs and practices extend to the ways we work with older children and adults as well.

Today, this tradition of beginning with the observable experience is supported by the literature of self-study research. Our approach to inquiry is consonant with the discussion of personal history in self-study (Samaras, Hicks and Berger, 2004). We bring our life experiences to the table, examine them collaboratively, and add to the data pool through open-ended interviews with other grandparents, teachers, and caretakers who see grandparents as part of their classroom community. In the words of Samaras, et al, this exploration pushes “the boundaries of what we know by creating alternative interpretations of reality” (2004, p. 905). In this case, the realities we are exploring are our roles as grandparents, teachers, and teacher educators, and the ways in which these roles intersect.
Aim

The goal of this paper is to explore the ways in which the grandparenting role and our study of this role inform and are informed by our work as teacher educators. Three questions guide this study:

- What can we learn about ourselves personally and professionally through our role as grandparents?
- What kinds of actions and interactions support the kinds of dialogue that enable generations to learn from each other?
- How can this research support the content and delivery of graduate school coursework, student advisement, and classroom practice?

Methodology

This inquiry takes the form of collaborative self-study research in narrative form. Narrative inquiry requires the investigator to interrogate an experience, to probe beneath the surface of common words and practices to understand the how and why of what transpires. By painting a verbal portrait of practice—in this case the multiple practices of grandparenting, teaching, and teacher education—narrative opens the nuances of practice to scrutiny and analysis. Research findings are shared in a carefully contextualized way that makes it possible for both insiders and outsiders to probe for meaning and validity. Narrative encourages the researcher and the reader to consider: Is a particular interpretation of events to be believed? Is it consistent with experience? Is it supported by theory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Loughran, 2004; Lyons & Freidus, 2004; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002)?

Self-study in narrative form encourages collaboration and critique as ongoing components of both research and practice. Research is conducted “with” rather than “of” or “on.” It reminds researchers and readers of the connections between personal and professional. Self-study in narrative form is particularly compatible with the goals of the grandparent study: interrogating our data, identifying patterns that resonate with our practice as teacher educators, working together to consider the implications for our professional practice, reframing these practices in light of new insight, and sharing our findings with others in the field.

Data collection. This research project consists of two separate but interconnected components. Part One focuses on the discussion group in which faculty participants shared their own stories and experiences, looked at theory and research data, asked questions and engaged in a meaning-making process. The questions that emerged from these discussions shaped Part Two of the research, a study of contemporary grandparent beliefs, practices, perceptions, and needs. The findings of part two then informed and shaped the discussions described in Part One; and so the process continues in a recursive way.

During the 2008–9 academic year, faculty participants in the Grandparents Project included three Caucasian grandmothers, one African American grandmother, and one Caucasian grandfather. They represented several fields of education: Infant and Family Development and Early Intervention, Literacy, Special Education, Leadership, Child Life. Participants met on a monthly basis to tell stories, share experiences, and look for connections between their own experiences, the literature in the field, and the data from open-ended interviews and surveys conducted as part of Part Two of the research design.

Data analysis. Data was systematically collected over the course of the academic year. Faculty conversations were documented—some digitally recorded, all documented with field notes. These were transcribed and/or summarized and distributed to all participants to check for accuracy and to revisit and use as reference points for subsequent discussion. Through these discussions, themes and patterns were identified, and additional relevant literature was identified. These readings were shared and discussed. A process of constant comparison (Glaser 1992; Bogdan & Biklan, 1998), referring back and forth between records of past discussions, the literature, and the emerging interview and survey data, enabled participants to explore themes and patterns from diverse perspectives.

Findings

Although we are just in the early stages of this project, we are finding many themes emerging that suggest parallels between the process of grandparenting and the process of teaching. By examining these themes through multiple lenses, we are able to make familiar concepts unfamiliar and probe their significance more deeply (Geertz, 1973). There are three themes that we found particularly interesting.

- The myth of “anyone can do it”: It is often assumed that effective grandparenting, like effective teaching (Lortie, 2002), is an innate ability. We know that effective teaching is far more complex than generally acknowledged; we are discovering that grandparenting too is a complex process. And, we are discovering that reflection is an important component of efficacy and “job satisfaction” in both roles.
- Models of interaction: We are finding that in grandparenting, as in teaching, there are different paradigms that shape beliefs and practices. In transmissive grandparenting the guiding question is “What can our children and grandchildren learn from us?” In transactional grandparenting the guiding questions are “What are we learning from our children as we watch them interact with their children? How can we learn together?”
- Culture and context: We have found that just as teaching is influenced by culture and context, so is grandparenting. Culture, community and personality all shape actions, expectations, and outcomes. Recognizing and learning to listen respectfully to these differences contribute to both effective teaching and effective grandparenting.

Since space will not allow us to explore all of these issues in this paper, we have chosen to focus on this last theme, culture and context, to provide an example of what we have learned from the process and the findings of the Grandparents Project that informs our work as teacher educators.

From the very beginning, we found that as we were sharing our own grandparenting stories, diverse cultural and gender perspectives were being placed on the table for examination. For example, Nancy, a Caucasian woman who is a long-term faculty member in the Infant and Family Development and Early Intervention Program at Bank Street holds what might be described as a Liberal Progressive perspective. She describes her role as a grandparent as an
extension of her children's values and practices, supporting them in implementing their vision of parenting in a cohesive way. Troy, the Child Life Specialist, speaks from a different perspective.

In my community, we see things very differently from the way many people do. In the African American culture, it is the norm for grandparents to step in and play a major role in raising grandchildren. They often set the tone for and take a strong stance in framing the ways in which their grandchildren are raised. In my own experience, many people have said to me: “This is not your role.” However, others who come from a background like my own have said, “We understand. This is what we have always done.” (Field Notes, 3/09)

Helen, the newest grandmother in the group, listened carefully to this discussion. As she listened, she felt as if she were hearing a dialogue that had been sounding within her head during each visit with her growing family. How did she/should she see her role as a grandparent? At the next month's meeting, she recounted:

> Each time something happens, I hear Nancy's voice in one ear and Troy's voice in the other. It doesn’t necessarily change what I do, but it gives me pause and keeps me from shooting from the hip. It puts me in a different space. It helps me think more carefully about what will be helpful. (Field Notes, 4/09)

The discussion that followed explored the many ways in which culture and context shape actions and perspectives. It led to a discussion of the meaning and value of what Barrera (2003) refers to as third space, a model of skilled dialogue in which different points of view can be discussed and seen as resources to be mined rather than as obstacles to collaboration. In working to better understand the relevance of Barrera’s concepts for discussions of grandparenting, we shifted the focus of our conversation from grandparentals to our work with teachers, teacher leaders, and childcare providers and the ways we support them during conference group, the weekly seminar that accompanies fieldwork at Bank Street.

Reflecting on this discussion at a later date, we revisited the concept of third space and elaborated the ways in which it applied to our ongoing work in teacher education.

Nancy: In conference group, faculty create a third space and invite students into it.

Helen: How do we create it?

Nancy: I can’t say what you do; I can only tell you what I do.

Helen: Go ahead.

Nancy: At the beginning of the semester, I say: “The conference group is an opportunity for everyone to bring to their experiences, their thoughts, their conflicts, whatever they want to talk about related to their job or their student placement to our meetings . . . to talk about them here, and to learn how, if necessary, to disagree with someone without having an argument . . . to learn how to understand what each person is bringing to the group. We are setting up parameters for how to behave or how to act in a conference group. A lot of students have never done anything like this before.”

Helen: That is really interesting, I have never explicitly said anything like this. However, one of the things that came out in the most recent self-study research done by the Bank Street Reading Alumnae Group was that the language they [our graduates] learned to use when they were in conference group has enabled them to bond as a group and grow professionally over the years. They said that they intuitively apply the ways they learned to talk about their students and their work in conference group to their discussions in the Alumnae Group; the idea of putting people down or speaking disrespectfully just isn’t part of the permitted discourse.1

Nancy: And isn’t that the goal?

The focus of the discussion then turned back to the process of the Grandparenting Group. We realized that we have been applying the protocols of third space during our meetings. The participants in the Grandparenting Group are all peers; there is no leader. No one invites us into the third space; we make it. We have internalized the model. When we bring our professional selves to the table, we are able to examine beliefs and practices that differ from our own without making judgments about them or the person who shares them. We want to hear everybody’s ideas; that was the point of our coming together.

There are some important implications for our work as teacher educators that emerge from the identification of this process. By working together to look at our practices as grandparentals, as researchers, and as teacher educators, we are better able to name what we do, describe how it works, and identify why it works. This finding is triangulated by the finding of the Alumnae Group’s self-study. It supports the development of a shared language that enables us to become more conscious, more deliberate, and more strategic in our work with our students and more articulate in the ways we share this work with colleagues (Little, 2007). We become more cognizant of our own culture and the cultures of others, better able to recognize the power of culture in shaping practice, and more skilled in listening to and learning from those whose values and practices differ from our own.

This, in turn, better enables us to help our students to do the same and to consciously pass this process on to their students enabling them to build meaningful relationships in classrooms and beyond.

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1 In this study (Freidus, H., Baker, C., Feldman, S., Hirsch, J., Stern, L., Sayres, B., Sgouros, C., Wiles-Kettenmann, M., 2009), one group member wrote and the rest concurred “that the language we internalize at Bank Street, regarding how we honor and respect a child, seeps into the ways we interact with each other. By this I mean that not only do we talk about children using this language, but that we bring this language to our own interactions, the ways in which we honor and respect each other. It’s really our framework. We each have our own experiences and ways of looking at other people—but I think this framework allows us to be less ‘reactive’ with each other—to stand back, the way we do with a child, and analyze the different ways each of us may enter into conversations.”
References


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Teacher Educators Negotiate Public and Private Selves and Work: A Collaborative Epistolary Romance in Three Acts

“Letters are above all useful as a means of expressing the ideal self; and no other method of communication is quite so good for this purpose. In letters we can reform without practice, beg without humiliation, snip and shape embarrassing experiences to the measure of our own desires.” Elizabeth Hardwick (1962, p. 24)

We are three teacher educators at different academic institutions. We came together to conceptualize and edit a book about the various methodologies of self-study research in teacher education. We worked collaboratively online. Our public work as teacher educators and our efforts to help new scholars learn about the power of self-study methods through our book constituted an overt agenda, but our collaboration became more. We weaved in and out of the private and public, the personal and the professional. We shared our lives and work in emails throughout our collaboration—the letters of an “epistolary romance”—and became not just co-editors and co-inquirers, but friends. As we edited the pages of our book we saw how self-study research is fundamentally about making connections between private and public, and synthesizing what is found there. Now that our project is complete, our work together continues; we want to develop a deeper understanding of how our collaboration traversed the public and the private, and how our work as teacher educators does the same. This study is an analysis of our “epistolary romance”—analyzing the texts we generated. By understanding how we negotiated the complex terrain of self-study, we will know more about effective collaboration among communities of S-STEP.

The aim of the study was to answer three research questions:

1. How did the private and public foci in our collaborative work ebb and flow as we worked together on our methodology text?
2. How did our collaboration work in personal/professional and private/public ways? Did working together on our book influence our selves?
3. What does it mean to bridge the public and private as a scholar, researcher, teacher educator, partner, mother, daughter and/or friend? How can challenging dichotomies serve self-study?

Research in both the self-study of teacher education practices and feminist pedagogy have long acknowledged the difficulties of merging boundaries between the public and private and emphasized that quality collaboration can involve intellectual and emotional connectedness (Hug & Moller, 2005). Furthermore, feminist pedagogies require that we address relationship, question or even relinquish our ties to traditional ways of being scholars and teachers and emphasize, rather than bracket, the personal/private sphere (Sanchez-Cazal & MacDonald, 2002).

Methodology

This study adhered to LaBoskey’s (2004) tenets of self-study research. Our inquiry was grounded in our self-initiated collective search for deeper understanding of the quality and significance of our work together as a model of collaboration in self-study. Our data were qualitative, and its collection and analysis were interactive and focused in nature. Data sources include 1) the email correspondences between us over the course of the book project, Spring 2007 through Spring 2009 and 2) the collaborative reflective journal that we wrote immediately upon completing the project. The journal took on an epistolary flavor to match the first data set in the sense that we wrote in response to one another, answering one another’s questions and addressing each other in what we wrote.

Data analysis took place in a multi-stage model, beginning with an exploration of the correspondence data and using that to frame the analysis of the journal. By using the data sets to illuminate one another, we were able to develop a deep sense of the phenomena at hand. We used a modified grounded-theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) approach to data analysis, working with the correspondence data and then using those categories as start-codes for analyses of the journal. Standards of authenticity and truthfulness were maintained by 1) explicitly including the authors in the “story,” 2) comparing that “story” to its impact on our practices, or its cathartic validity (Lather, 1986), and 3) using systematic procedures to examine and analyze data.

Outcomes

Self-study requires collaboration (LaBoskey, 2004). Considering that we have framed our project as an epistolary drama, we have organized our findings into three distinct thematic “acts” that characterize our successful collaboration: Legitimacy, Connection and Evolution.

Act I: Legitimacy. While each of us occupied a different place with regard to our feelings of scholarly legitimacy, our confidence as scholars and the legitimacy of scholarship were recurring themes in the data sets. This may be related to the legitimacy of work in teacher education when higher status is awarded to other areas (Liston, 1995). Our collaboration and the trust and responsibilities implicit in these relationships created a space for frank discussions about legitimacy and provided routes to increased comfort and confidence.

When Clare first became involved with S-STEP, she and fellow newcomer Anne Freese spent hours trying to sort out “what” self-study is. Sally and Cindy, as relative newcomers, went through a similar process—trying to understand self-study, how to “do” self-study, and where to locate this work in their scholarly practice. Initially, they both read an array of texts on self-study but felt that it was still not completely accessible or clear. They recognized the need to become
more involved with the S-STEP community if they were to understand self-study.

They felt that Clare helped with their introduction in S-STEP, which led to them both becoming more active in the SIG. This helped deepen their understanding of the intricacies of self-study. Cindy commented, “Clare knew the SIG better than any of us, and we were thankful to have her guiding us.” Sally and Cindy both felt that Clare taught them the “secret handshake” and helped them understand the dynamics with the SIG. Similarly, writing and editing chapters in this text gave Cindy and Sally a sense of legitimacy within S-STEP and in their university departments.

One set of questions that each of us addressed in our writing and peer debriefing focused on our attraction to self-study. Cindy responded to our collective writings:

Reading Sally and Clare’s responses, what strikes me is 1) our attraction to self-study based on its humanistic nature and 2) our quest for continuing our learning as researchers, teacher educators, and people. It seems we’re drawn to self-study because we want to improve ourselves not only intellectually but also internally as people who interact with others. We’re all so conscious of our positions among others and how those perceived positions influence us and those we’re associated with.

In addition to allowing Cindy and Sally to develop perceptions of ourselves as legitimate members of the self-study community, the collaboration helped each of us deepen our understanding of ourselves as researchers. Clare commented, “One of the things that I struggle with is the tension between traditional research and SS. I often think that I am more inclined to traditional research because I am so unlike many SSTEP folks—I am not artistic, I don’t do narrative, and I am very systematic. What the book did for me was show that traditional research methods can be complementary to SS and vice versa. What I truly loved about the format for each chapter was that we were showing that SS is systematic.”

Sally had different issues with herself as a researcher: I am still figuring out where I stand as a researcher, and what it means to do research—to frame it as just that, a “search”—but writing this book has made me perhaps more confident in thinking about myself not as a cottage-industry-of-one, sitting in my university office churning out manuscripts, but rather as a ‘researcher’ and as someone employing a variety of strategies to get at the big questions of teacher education. . . . Maybe this book has made me more confident. Maybe it has shown me that being a “researcher” can be more connected to these questions and less connected to goal displacement that often occurs in the tenure race. Interestingly, Cindy had a third set of questions regarding her work as a researcher: Will others actually cite our book in their research? How does that influence my identities? Personally, it makes me feel we’ve really created something that makes a difference in the world. People will be using the methodologies in the book as models to design their research. Their research will inform their practice. They’ll disseminate their findings, and others will improve their practice as a result. Many people will be reached. That makes me feel great that teaching will improve as a result of our collaboration.

Through our collaborative efforts we not only learned a good deal about self-study research methodologies but we also realized that none of us fits neatly into one category of researcher and that our identities as scholars—like our identities as women—will shift and evolve over the course of our careers.

Act II: Connection. A recurring theme characterizing our collaboration was the importance of making meaningful connections with others and the primacy of relationships in public and personal life. Our metaphors emphasized connection and relationship and revealed the intersections of our personal, scholarly, and other selves and relationships as particularly fertile ground for reflection and illumination. We are attracted to self-study because it emphasizes connection and humanism and furthers our ties to the K–12 classroom and the people who work there.

Although we rarely overtly discussed our values, the threads of our values were subtly revealed in our email conversations about our teaching, our work on the text or our interactions with our graduate students or colleagues. As we analyzed the transcripts for this paper, we saw that we shared certain values: respect for others, integrity of our work, and caring (kindness) toward others. Holding values in common shaped our approach to our collaboration. Cindy describes our common values as such:

I wanted to comment on how while we were working we moved forward in small steps waiting for each other’s approval. We still do that. Mutual respect is an unvoiced priority in our relationship. We take turns leading and pushing forward and following and sometimes, just trying to keep up. As the months went on while we were working, each of us had times when we were free and times when we were too overwhelmed to focus on the book. We leaned on each other to keep things moving, and we were very respectful when we made suggestions to each other.

Our online discussions were rich and varied, and bridged the personal and professional. Interestingly, we all felt isolated within our own schools of education. Sally commented:

I also crave connection and collaboration—I am isolated in my department, and didn’t really have much of a welcome wagon when I arrived in August of 2005, and since then my attempts to get people together to read and think and do research together have not been productive. So, until now I have worked most productively with either my graduate students or my colleagues at other institutions. It was hard to be excited about the work, try to engage others in the excitement and be met with a brick wall, or silence. So I got involved with SSTEP because I felt like I had found “my people”—and then I started reading the newsletter, read something Cindy wrote, and dropped her a line. The rest is history!

Clare and Sally recognized that it was Cindy who took the initiative and provided startup momentum on this project and were thankful that she did. By the time Clare made the following admission, the bonds between us were so strong that she felt comfortable revealing her initial reservations:

I get lots of requests for collaborations but I decline 99.9% of them because I either feel like I am being used or I am not keen on the individual. With you ladies it has been magic from the get go. When I first met Cindy at IRA, I liked her immediately. I thought that she was
so smart and interesting and fun. Initially, I had only planned to help you get started with the book mainly because I was committed to helping junior scholars. Something happened on the way: I really got to like the way C & S worked. I liked the tone of the emails, we had similar work ethics, our philosophies were so in sync it was scary, and I believed in the project. I was so busy with other work doing another book was lunacy but I did not want to give up working with you ladies. I am not sure you realize just how exceptional you are—I have learned so much from both of you and I consider you friends. I wish that we lived closer to each other so that we could get together.

Cindy noticed that over time our emails moved from the strictly professional to the personal. I think our correspondences (emails) have taken on a different tone since we’ve been sharing our journals. I’m wondering if as each of us reads what we say about the relationship that has developed among us, the words we read are actually bringing us even closer. Are we becoming even more trustful of each other because we’ve confirmed that each of us genuinely likes each other? I’ve noticed we’re sharing more details about what we’re doing on a day-to-day basis. Our emails have taken on an excited, happy voice. Have you guys noted any changes?

Sally added an interesting observation on why she seeks others.

As a Feminist scholar, I think that the connection between our personal and home lives, ourselves, our emotions and experiences and our work is an important fluidity. Rigid divisions between “home” self and “work” self cannot thrive. . . . I still can’t get over that Cindy and I haven’t met in person! I have seen Clare twice at AERA in 07 and 09 and she lives in Toronto, while Cindy lives just a few hours away in New York State. Then again, I also have dry cleaning from 2006 I haven’t picked up. Life is hectic!

In the summer of 2009 the three of us gathered in person for the first time in Northampton, Massachusetts, for brunch. Greeting each other with warm hugs suggested that we were close personal friends but Cindy and Sally were meeting in person for the first time. We suspect that the patrons in the restaurant would never have suspected that we were a geographically far-flung on-line community (of three) that formed strong personal and professional bonds across the internet.

Act III: Evolution. We were attracted to self-study and the book project because we saw them as essential to our evolution as teacher educators. As the project concluded, we realized that no project simply “is”—they are all interconnected to larger goals of growth, learning and better classrooms. This may be one reason why we all talked about definitions being fluid and ever changing, and evolving relationships as having primacy. One important commonality we discovered was that each of us not only felt somewhat isolated in our departments, but we also felt somewhat distanced from our families and friends. Clare commented:

My friends and family for the most part have no idea what I do. I show them my books and the dedication (often it is to them). They like seeing the title, my name, and the dedication and that is it. Ok—that’s it. I love that description of being in the closet. At the gym the other day, some women were asking me what I was doing for the summer. (Everyone, including my Mom thinks that professors have 4-month holidays in the summer.)

After Clare’s admission Cindy and Sally chimed in with similar sentiments. Cindy added:

Still in the closet. For the most part, I don’t share my publications or my work with my family or friends. I always assume they just won’t be interested. The fact that they don’t ask me about my work attests to that. I’m somewhat of an anomaly in my family and circle of friends. In my family, I’m the only one who attended college out of 4 kids.

Sally concurred:

Like you, I often don’t “go there” with my husband, almost because (and I am not sure why this is) I don’t want to invite him into my world of work, and my world of ideas. I’m starting to realize that I keep this world very private. . . . I have to do some thinking about what it means that I don’t talk about my work with him. By sharing our dilemma, we had given ourselves permission to “come out of the closet” with our friends and families. Cindy then took the fairly dramatic step of talking to her husband about her work.

So, today when Mark and I were driving back from Albany, I thought I’d start talking about my work. I just kind of bumbled into it and told him about how I’ve figured out how to work with people on different projects. Part of why I started to talk about it was because of this journal. I thought, Let’s give it a shot and see what comes of it.

This led to Sally talking to her husband about her work and Clare telling her friends about her research. We seriously doubt that any of us would have taken these steps without our on-line discussions about feeling closeted in the spaces between our work life and home lives. Again, this is an example of how our collaborative relationship, and the un-bracketing of private/public and personal/professional in that context, moved us toward transformations in other areas of our lives.

Conclusion

A central strength in our collaboration was how we challenged and un-bracketed the dichotomies of personal/professional and private/public in our work and relationships. This created a collaborative project that became an efficient, rewarding and transformative experience for us across multiple facets of our lives and selves. We have a sense that writing about our process helped sketch out the details of what was a transformative experience of geographic barriers surmounted by using online collaborations. Collaboratively challenging dichotomies with trusted colleagues serves self-study and the collaborative process by allowing researchers to explore how the positions we take and the roles we perceive as ours and others can influence how we look at and interpret our selves, the world, and the people around us.

References


A Tale of Two Blackboards: Team Teaching

As experienced teachers with specific strengths in teaching science, we were confident in our own knowledge of the science education content and skilled in the ways of making this content accessible to students enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Primary) programme. Standard practice for lecturers in the science education methods course had been to model exemplary practice by demonstrating how to run well-organized and dynamic practical sessions. The student teachers were eager to learn science content and the pragmatic, yet superficial, aspects of delivering information and organising successful experiments. Since students who graduated from the one-year programme had to be capable of teaching all eight curriculum areas to any children aged between 5 and 12, this was a high priority for them. Many of the other lecturers saw this as their prime focus too. However, we wanted our students to see “beneath the surface to the complex thinking and the wealth of experience so crucial in shaping pedagogically meaningful learning experiences” (Loughran & Russell, 2007, p. 218). We were not content to ply them with resources and strategies.

Objectives

In this paper we examine the impact of team teaching on making teaching transparent to show the complexity of pedagogy when teaching science. Teaching classes together has enabled us to reframe assumptions that centre on the simplistic and misleading idea that teacher education is the modeling of exemplary practice. This self-study, currently in its third year, has evolved from a concern that this practice is inadequate preparation for our students. We were faced with the tension between modeling exemplary practice to teach science education and content versus taking time to make our teacher education practices explicit to the students. We aimed to manage this tension through team teaching.

Contextualising Literature

Traditional teacher education programmes work to provide student teachers with content and pedagogical knowledge based on a theory put into practice or application of knowledge model. This view largely ignores that much of the expert teacher knowledge is embedded in tacit background knowledge developed throughout teaching practice where the competent practitioner acts appropriately in the situation, “on the spot”, “in the twinkling of an eye” and “in the heat of the moment” (Roth, 1998, p. 372).

In team teaching we were working to create an innovative teaching format which would make this tacit knowledge more explicit to the student teachers and therefore would more adequately prepare our student teachers for their classroom realities. We felt this to be particularly significant for science education since this is a curriculum area which is ineffectually taught in most primary schools (e.g., Appleton, 2008).

Team teaching entails two or more educators working together to plan, teach and evaluate courses. It is well recognized that working within a university is largely an isolated profession and collaborations among lecturers in university classroom settings are rare (Kirkwood-Tucker & Bleicher, 2003). It is also suggested that collaborative teaching is untenable at university level given the constraints of time, workload, and research demands (e.g., Fish, 1989).

In aligning our research with existing studies, a variety of models of team teaching were apparent. When considering team teaching approaches, Helms, Avis and Willis (2005) have the rotational model, the participant observer model, and the interactive model. Kirkwood-Tucker & Bleicher (2003) suggest the series model, alternating model, and the interactive model. Our team teaching style and purpose does not fit neatly into any of these or other models but rather is a nexus of the alternating model and the interactive model proposed by Kirkwood-Tucker & Bleicher (2003) or of the interactive model and the participant observer model presented by Helms, Avis and Willis (2005). At times we were both teaching as a side-by-side team, equally engaged in the teaching process, but mostly we alternated the teaching so that while one was teaching the other was acting as a vocal participant observer.

Bullock and Russell’s (2006) team teaching situated one as a teaching assistant in the more experienced teacher educator's course. Shawn Bullock as the teaching assistant observed Tom Russell’s sessions and provided feedback after each session. Russell wrote, “As Shawn worked to critique his assumptions and practices by listening to teacher candidates, I [Tom] worked to critique my own assumptions and practices by looking through his eyes at the experiences of someone learning to teach teachers” (p. 49).

The key point of difference in our study however, is that the critiquing by the participant observer was not done after the course sessions but rather was articulated to the students in an on-going dialogue during each of the sessions. We alternated the teaching and the critiquing roles throughout each session. In this way our own study was more closely aligned with Berry and Loughran’s (2002) self-study. They taught together in a similar situation to ours and were critical friends to each other, making their teacherly decisions explicit as they taught and reflecting on their practice through email communications.

Method

In our team teaching research, both of us were always present at the sessions. One of us took the science education teaching lead while the other acted as the critical friend or provocateur, drawing the students’ attention to teacherly decisions that the students may not have otherwise been aware of.

We documented planning and debriefing discussions that we held prior to and following each session. During
the session when in the role of the provocateur, we kept a shared, handwritten log of thoughts, questions, and ideas that we wanted to draw the students’ attention to as well as additional comments that we wanted to share with one another. We surveyed our students and asked for their responses to team teaching at a mid- and end-point of each course. Their perspectives influenced our team teaching and lessened the opportunity for us to indulge in self-justification and self-satisfaction with our team teaching practices.

A year after our first team teaching trial we revisited whether we would continue with this as an approach. We collected our thoughts by writing a survival memo (Brookfield, 1995) in which we detailed what team teaching meant to us, the advantages and disadvantages for the lecturers and students and suggestions for colleagues considering this approach. Through reading and discussing each other’s survival memos we reconstructed an understanding of our roles in the team teaching trial. This was impetus for further changes to our pedagogy and encouraged us to continue team teaching.

Pattern analysis was used to examine the data generated. Revisiting the data numerous times to re-read, compare, contrast and sort meant that themes which appeared most significant and meaningful were identified and discussed. This method of pattern analysis differs from open coding or categorical analysis in that it works from the general to the particular (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). As we have prepared this paper we have continued to collaborate and reflect on our pedagogical assumptions.

Outcomes

Throughout this self-study project several threads became very significant to us. The most dominant were the cost of team teaching; the shift in priority towards less science education but more teacher education; our own growth in expertise; and the transformation of our practice.

The cost of team teaching. Firstly, with two of us planning, teaching and debriefing each session, we realized that we were investing heavily in the project emotionally, intellectually and in terms of time and energy.

It is a big time commitment but even bigger than that is the emotional and intellectual commitment to it. You actually have to think about teaching about teaching! (Journal, April 2008)

Neither of us particularly enjoyed teaching in front of the other for numerous reasons largely associated with self-confidence and self-efficacy. In the sanctuary of our own classroom, behind a closed door, each of us felt that we had more autonomy and control. We also felt that we developed a closer relationship with classes we taught individually.

The thought that we were adding more depth to our lessons often appeared to be small recompense for the extra effort. Both of us wrote that teaching by ourselves was easier, more relaxed and familiar. We felt that the other was passing judgment on our teaching—even the look on our faces when we were writing comments in our log became a topic of discussion “Please smile when you are writing—I get so worried when I see you frowning!” (Journal, May, 2008).

When we moved beyond these feelings of anxiety about being appraised we found an even deeper level of dissatisfaction with what it was that we were actually capable of achieving in making the implicit explicit.

We perform as teachers for the students in our science education classes and we are expert science teachers. Teaching them about teaching is a lot more mercurial. There seems to be a huge gulf between a series of “how to” trying to workshop what it is to be a teacher. (Journal, April 2008)

If I can teach with my eyes closed how do I open my eyes to see what it is that I am doing and what it is that I am doing that the student teachers are not seeing? (Journal, April 2008)

We also had our doubts about whether we had the capacity to pick up on that teachable moment when we were in the midst of teaching science.

Arrghh, I worried that I wouldn’t be able to think quickly enough and in fact I couldn’t. I didn’t see the artful things you did—they were just part of your teaching repertoire and then they were gone and in the flow of things I missed the opportunity to comment. The students wouldn’t have noticed, you didn’t notice and so it went unnoticed and unheeded in the milieu (Journal, April 2008)

Less science education, more teacher education content. The science education content that we covered while team teaching was pared back so that we had more time to discuss the aspects of teacher education that we considered had been missing in previous iterations of teaching the course. A number of content-based activities were omitted in favour drawing the students’ attention to teaching decisions.

We were constantly aware that the students did not necessarily appreciate the real intent of what we were trying to do. For example students wrote: “Team teaching is a double blessing.” “Better student: teacher ratio.” “The teaching is more effective with two teachers.” (Student evaluations, October 2006)

This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that in team teaching each of the lecturers are contributing their unique backgrounds, strengths and expertise and that this combination of a mix of teaching styles and skills, varied expertise and viewpoints “can produce a synergy in the classroom that is not possible when only one professor is present” (Helms, Alvis & Willis, 2005, p. 30).

However, our intent was for a much deeper level of learning than the students’ pragmatic responses suggested. We were concerned that despite our efforts, the students missed the critical importance of addressing the subtext of teaching about teaching, as evidenced by this comment, “We see the point, we’re OK with it, can we just move on?” (Student feedback, September 2006)

However, there were other comments that indicated to us that some students recognized our efforts to examine our practices more explicitly. For example we believe that the student who wrote, “I have no criticisms except you are both too good at making things look effortless” (Student evaluation, September 2006) had seen through the façade of us being experts. This comment epitomises the real tension that we have grappled with in reflecting on our team teaching efforts. We are both accomplished teachers and not only do we make it look easy, it is in fact the default position to which we would return in times of stress.

Growth in expertise. Another theme which emerged though our survival memos and through analysis of our journal entries was that we did develop more confidence...
and self-assurance in our teacher education practices as our study deepened our understanding of the complex challenges involved in teaching about teaching. We started to improvise more confidently.

We gain from each other’s experience. This was such a valuable form of PD. It allowed me to challenge and sharpen my own pedagogy. I was encouraged to take more risks, try different strategies, be more innovative. (Journal, April 2008)

I thought the debrief where we tag-teamed and talked about what we had and hadn’t included and the reasons worked quite well. I actually think they can see the point and appreciate it which is a big improvement. Maybe it is because we are more confident? Perhaps we are less apologetic—we think this might be useful but we aren’t sure. What do you think? Now we are saying this is what we are doing and why. I am enjoying this much more now. (Journal, May 2009)

Towards the end of our last iteration of team teaching, our growing confidence in each other and in team teaching led to the use of two whiteboards at the front of the room. We used one of the boards as a standard white board to emphasise science education content. The other white board became a public record of the teacher education points that were being made as the other taught. We found that we switched between the roles and wrote on each of the boards seamlessly. Now the students could watch us both teaching and deconstructing at the front of the class in stereo.

One student commented after our first session with using two boards:

“That was the best session. I can see now what you have been trying to do. Why haven’t you done that from the start?” (Journal, May 2009)

We asked ourselves the same question. Obviously, we hadn’t thought of it before! Using two whiteboards meant that we were both in front of the class teaching alongside one another. For example, on the ‘science content and science education whiteboard’ we wrote an advanced organizer outlining the session structure and built up a list of commonly used words when discussing living and non-living; animals as consumers; invertebrates and vertebrates.

At the same time we built up a list of points on the ‘teacher education whiteboard’ including what is the purpose of an advanced organizer?; note use of tangible objects (humans versus dice); wait time so all can think of a response, not just the first few with their hands up; avoid playing “guess what is in my head,” etc.

Because we had developed confidence and experience at highlighting “teaching” decisions that the other made intuitively while teaching, capturing those moments simultaneously was very effective.

**Transformation of practice.** The major benefit of team teaching has been our increased awareness of the problematic nature of teaching about teaching. Team teaching provided recurrent opportunities for reflection on our individual practice. We were challenged to interrogate our long-held and comfortable beliefs about what it means to be an exemplary science educator.

They think that teaching is about delivering information and processes, how to keep neat records, how to write lesson plans, how to transmit information logically, sequentially, but I am trying to get under that level of technical proficiency to something deeper. (Journal, April 2008)

It made me look at my own practice through a different lens. How can I move away from tips and tricks, fun classes, and modelling good practice to actually making explicit the skills, pedagogy, PCK and teaching philosophy to enable them to go out and begin their journeys as teachers? (Journal, April 2008)

Our perception of ourselves as exemplary teachers practicing in safe and predictable ways was pushed into a space outside of our comfort zone as we realized that there was much more to being a teacher educator than we had appreciated despite our years of experience.

We perform as teachers for the students in our science education classes and we are expert science teachers. Teaching them about teaching is a lot more mercurial. There seems to be a huge gulf between a series of “how to” to trying to workshop what it is to be a teacher. (Journal, April 2008)

The very act of positioning myself as a team teacher causes me to be more aware of the bigger picture of what I am doing. A wind that keeps nudging me in a different direction. (Journal, April 2008)

By acting as the experienced eyes in each other’s classes we were able to make more explicit to the student teachers the teacherly decisions we were making in practice. In doing so we also transformed our own practice.

I thought that team teaching might be able to help them to see behind the scenes, to a deeper level of the teaching that was taking place. I hoped that team teaching would be able to strip away the polished performance and allow them to see that teaching is incredibly complex. Not only do I make it look simple, but after all my years of experience and working with student teachers in a tertiary institution, it actually is simple. So team teaching is a way to interrupt that complacency. Team teaching is a way to jolt me out of my normal accomplished role into one of actually having to think about what it is I am doing. (Journal, April 2008)

**Concluding Thoughts**

Professionally, team teaching has been a transformative and stimulating experience. We have appreciated that being a teacher educator requires more than modelling good practice. In making our implicit practices explicit to our students and each other we have made our teacher-selves visible and even when we teach alone now we are reminded to make that teacher-self present. Our experience transfers to other settings but not necessarily to other partnerships. We question what makes our particular team successful and conclude that we have established a setting in which we are equally confident in allowing our teaching selves to be exposed to our students’ gaze and to each other’s.

**References**


Despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of teacher education, faculty development of those who teach teachers is underexplored (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Martinez, 2008). This paper profiles the experiences of teacher educators who engaged in faculty development through a collaborative self-study focused on exploring the text Developing a pedagogy of teacher education: Understanding, teaching and learning about teaching (Loughran, 2006).

We first provide an overview of the complexities of teacher education with attention to Berry’s (2008) tensions. Following our methodology, we use transcript excerpts and poetic transcription (Glesne1997) to illustrate the complexities of our reflective exploration of the Loughran (2006) text. We document the pervasive presence of Berry’s (2008) tensions in our teacher education practices, noting how we also encountered these same tensions in learning about teaching teachers through self-study. We then detail how shared understandings of our tensions later provided a common language for collegial discourse.

**Theoretical Framework**

Teacher educators engage in promoting the development of candidates’ knowledge for practice, knowledge of practice, and knowledge of self (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Loughran, 2006). Further complicating the process of fostering these complex understandings is the need to simultaneously foster candidates’ abilities to develop positive student-teacher relationships, and the flexibility required to respond to unpredictable classroom situations (Loughran, 2006).

As they attempt to meet their candidates’ multifaceted needs, teacher educators encounter many contradictions and competing concerns (Berry, 2008; Loughran, 2006). Berry (2008) described these dilemmas as tensions that teacher educators must learn to negotiate. Through self-study of her practices, in conjunction with analysis of the literature, Berry (2008) identified six interconnected tensions:

1. **Telling and Growth:** telling candidates about teaching and facilitating their growth through active learning;
2. **Confidence and Uncertainty:** promoting confidence in candidates’ teaching abilities, while making explicit the uncertainty of teaching;
3. **Action and Intent:** managing dichotomies that may exist between teacher educators’ actions and candidates’ perceptions of their intents;
4. **Safety and Challenge:** negotiating when and how to move beyond safety and embrace the challenges of uncomfortable learning experiences;
5. **Valuing and Reconstructing:** valuing candidates’ experiences and conceptions while enhancing their abilities to reconstruct them; and
6. **Planning and Being Responsive:** balancing planned learning opportunities with being responsive to unanticipated opportunities.
7. **Researchers have called for clarity in identifying the common dilemmas of teacher educators (Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Zeichner, 2007). Berry (2008) suggested that the six tensions she described provided a framework to enhance understandings of the issues that characterize teacher educators’ practices.

Teacher practitioners’ understandings of their shared dilemmas have been enhanced through engaging in reflective collaborative exploration of their practices and concerns (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Such collaborative inquiry is anchored in authentic conversation, which requires safety and trust, voluntary response, occurrence on a common ground, good content, resistance of the bounds of definition, development over time, and possibility of a future (Clarke, 2001). Although there was evidence that learning communities could promote such discourse amongst teachers (Clarke, 2001; Dufour & Eaker, 1998), faculty development within these contexts appeared to be underexplored.

While it is more common for individuals or dyads to engage in self-study (Loughran, 2006, 2007; Russell & Loughran, 2007), the benefits of collaborative self-study as a form of faculty development have been documented (Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Gallagher, 2008; Latta & Buck, 2007). Latta and Buck (2007) described the professional learning of faculty during a collaborative self-study focused on responding to articles, while Kitchen and colleagues (2008) documented how collaborative self-study promoted authentic conversation amongst faculty. Our collaborative self-study builds on these by exploring faculty development through book-study.

**Methodology**

This qualitative case study (Merriam, 2001) took place at a regional campus of an Ontario Faculty of Education, with a full-time equivalent student population of approximately 150. The seven participants included six full-time faculty members, Maria, Mary Lynn, Arlene, Christina, Jeff, and Keith, and one part-time faculty member, Rick. Our experience as teacher educators at the onset of the study ranged from zero to six years.

The catalyst for our group’s formation was Arlene’s self-study that recommended faculty development through collaborative self-study (Grierson, 2010). During a faculty meeting, she introduced self-study and invited others to form a group within which to collaboratively explore the Loughran (2006) text.

During our first meeting we developed group protocols (Stringer, 2004). For example, we discussed the
importance of honoring diverse views, mutual respect, and confidentiality.

Over an 8-month period we met monthly for between one and two hours to discuss predetermined text chapters and engage in discussion relating the text to our practices. Our readings prior to each meeting were focused on seeking answers to the questions:

1. What connections/points of resonance surface for me as a teacher educator?
2. Which ideas do I experience dissonance about as a teacher educator?

As the group facilitator, Arlene circulated an agenda prior to each meeting. Mary Lynn gathered and circulated meeting minutes. All group sessions were audio recorded, with the transcription and minutes of the previous meeting reviewed at the onset of each.

Our primary data sources were transcriptions of eight meetings, with minutes and surveys used to triangulate evidence (Creswell, 2002). Initial surveys completed prior to commencing our book-study documented our individual perceptions of the key components of teacher education, challenges and strengths as teacher educators, and objectives of engaging in this self-study. Final surveys completed at the end of April solicited post-initiative perceptions of the initial questions, and if, or how, this self-study affected our knowledge and/or practices.

These data were analyzed at the end of the 8-month period. First, we reviewed all data independently, meeting next to discuss our individual interpretations, look for common patterns, and negotiate a shared understanding. While most analyzed these data through coding and categorizing as described by Creswell (2002), Christina used poetic transcription as a vehicle for analysis of reoccurring concepts (Glesne, 1997). In so doing she first identified key phrases and idea units within the transcripts, and then reorganized them into poetic form, capturing the voice of all participants, incorporating information from the Loughran (2006) text, and infusing her interpretations (Leavy 2009).

As we shared our individual interpretations and began to organize the coded ideas into categorical clusters, Berry’s (2008) tensions resonated. As a result, inductive coding followed whereby this framework was used to interpret our findings (Creswell, 2002).

Findings

Our findings support Berry’s (2008) assertion that the six interconnected tensions she outlined were pervasive issues that characterized our practices. Through this collaborative self-study we developed shared understandings of these tensions and a common language to engage in discourse about them.

In presenting our findings, we first use transcript excerpts to reveal the complexities of our interactions and illustrate how relating the Loughran (2006) text to our practices fostered authentic conversations (Clarke, 2001) about our tensions as teacher educators (Berry, 2008). Next follows a poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997) of these same interactions that includes the key ideas outlined in the preceding transcript excerpts, and identifies the tensions we encountered. We use this format of presentation in attempts to broaden reader accessibility (Cole & Knowles, 2008) and enhance understandings of how our different data analysis methods revealed common findings.

As teacher educators, we each reiteratively negotiated all six tensions outlined by Berry (2008). Our interconnected tensions between planning and being responsive to unpredictable learning situations; between telling and fostering growth through active learning experiences; together with the complexities of our tensions between safety and challenge, and between confidence and uncertainty, are illustrated in the following discussion.

So I did share with them [candidates] and started talking to them about it [my teaching dilemma] and how would I do this differently… But in any case I didn’t come from a place where I was confident, like explicitly discussing the process of being a teacher educator as a way to model, but rather out of reaction, which he [Loughran] talks about too. So my discussion with them about this [lesson] fell apart and how come, was out of reaction and not a place of confidence. That is the only thing I can think of in my head that would separate having to worry about whether they were going to judge me and criticize me for being vulnerable. (Christina)

I get exactly what you are saying and I know that we have all experienced those moments just as classroom teachers experience those moments when everything kind of falls apart…having to make that decision, do I expose my vulnerability or do I just continue on? (Mary Lynn)

But is he not talking about making that process explicit to your students? (Christina)

He is talking about…the whole notion of problematizing whatever it is you are doing…if you make everything seem stable and certain, you don’t create thoughtfully adaptive teachers because they think that there is a script. They think that there is a right way to do it and if you do a, b, c, d, you are going to get to the right answer. And that is really to everybody’s detriment. (Arlene)

Of course. (Christina)

But of course in problematizing things and illustrating how the wheels come off the bus when you are teaching too, you are right, you make yourself vulnerable. And it takes an incredible amount of confidence. (Arlene, Meeting December 12, 2008)

In exploring the need to value and enhance our candidates’ abilities to reconstruct experiences, the importance of also developing understandings of our own beliefs as teacher educators, and making these explicit to candidates resonated.

There is something on page 61 that I highlighted…they can’t be expected to know what we stand for without making an explicit and vigorous effort to communicate this. I mean if we want them to be the best teachers they can, they need to know who we are and what we stand for. (Rick, Meeting December 12, 2008)

As we next began applying practices recommended in the text, such as articulating our principles for practice and our pedagogical decision-making, our tensions between action and intent, telling and growth, and planning and being responsive increased.

There is that dichotomy too that he [Loughran] recognizes, that tension between modeling and giving them enough information that they can practice and apply. (Arlene)

Sure enough it showed up in the chapter for me…. when modeling what your own practice is you cannot meet the balance, because I have been trying consciously to make it [my pedagogical decision-making] explicit. (Christina)

To try it out. (Maria)
So now I have come to a point where I have to stop myself. I talk too much about myself as a teacher educator. And it is almost taking up too much class time, explaining about what I am doing and why, and it is taking away from the energy of the activity itself. (Christina)

And again, it is like the tension of unpacking, of covering and uncovering that we talked about, which is really embedded in everything we do. How do you balance that, between a teacher-directed versus a student-centered approach? How do you be student-centered and responsive to the needs of the students and allow time for them to articulate their needs? (Arlene, Meeting January 9, 2009)

“Another Big Dilemma” depicts the key ideas and tensions outlined in the preceding transcript excerpts.

Here is the issue.

How do I show teaching as simultaneously simple yet problematic?
How do I separate the topic from the process?
How do I provide my students with the ‘how to’, while still helping them realize there is no “one-size-fits-all”? (Confidence and Uncertainty)

Making the tacit explicit, “unpacking” what I am doing in my own teaching process. This is a solution I am exploring. It’s not enough just to model a strategy. They have to understand the why and the how of it. (Telling and Growth)

And if I give the impression that I just breeze through my lessons – if I make everything seem stable and certain, how do I create thoughtfully adaptive teachers? So I am making an effort to problematize my own teaching, illustrating how the wheels come off the bus for me, too. That I have the same periods of struggle that they experience when they teach their own lessons. (Confidence and Uncertainty)

But this solution is not without its challenges… To begin with, I can’t unpack everything. So how much time do I spend covering material, and how much time do I spend uncovering what they understand?

— coverage and uncoverage. (Valuing and Reconstructing)
I attempt to do my “unpacking” as needed. It is being conscious, finding authentic moments that allow us to step back and say “Why didn’t this work?” But it takes so much time. (Planning and Being Responsive)

And in uncovering my mistakes, I am vulnerable.
I want to give the impression that it is never easy – without seeming incompetent. (Safety and Challenge)
To discuss what to do differently, to ask for feedback. This takes an incredible amount of confidence. And no small amount of skill.

Lately I have come to the point where I have to stop myself, because I am spending all of my time telling them what I am telling them – discussing what we are discussing. And it is taking away from the energy of the activity itself. (Action and Intent)

In negotiating a shared understanding of our experiences, we noted that Christina’s poetic transcription represented our collective voice.

Certainly, this [poetic transcription] resonates with me, and I really thought it was a wonderful way [to depict this] because you are speaking to the student teachers and you’re acknowledging that it’s a wonderful journey but it’s a messy journey. So, don’t be afraid to take risks because that’s what we try to do. (Mary Lynn, Meeting, May 15, 2009)

Reflecting on our experiences independently, we recognized that our dilemmas as teacher educators were not unique:

The most profound moment for me was the revelation that other teacher educators experience the same tensions as I have experienced for many years such as the bond with students, the use of practical examples, and the ‘walking the talk, while talking the walk’ experience. (Maria, Final Survey, April 30, 2009)

However, it was through collaborative analysis that we developed the ability to name our dilemmas and recognize that they could not be eradicated (Berry, 2008). “So, all you can do is manage, it’s not a matter of finding a solution (Jeff, Meeting May 15, 2009).”

Interestingly, during analysis we discovered that we also encountered Berry’s (2008) tensions in learning about teaching teachers through collaborative self-study. For example, like our students, as learners at times we wanted to be told what to do, and negotiated the tension between telling and growth.

I am starting to read this wonderful anecdote of this teacher that goes through this process, but at the beginning he says but this is not a model for how to do this and I am like ugh, well I want the model! (Mary Lynn, Meeting April 3, 2009).

Importantly, the shared language we developed, later enabled us to engage in discourse about the tensions between confidence and uncertainty and safety and challenge, that we negotiated when debating our members’ diverse opinions over whether to share this self-study.

The tension between confidence and uncertainty that we all experience as teacher educators is also exemplified in collaborative self-study work, and incrementally so when we look at sharing our work with the teacher education community at large. This may explain why many are unwilling to engage in self-study and expose their vulnerability through admitting that being a teacher educator is uncertain, complex, and imperfect. (Arlene, Email Communication, August 22, 2009)

By the onset of our second year, exploring how we negotiated Berry’s (2008) tensions in our teacher education practices had become an objective of most group members. Berry’s tensions hold a great deal of interest, and continue to be a focus. This area was new learning for me and these tensions became a way for the self-study group to work with common language and understanding. (Mary Lynn, Initial Survey, October 2009)

As I am aware that the dilemmas represented by these tensions are not resolvable, I have been focusing on finding balance. (Christina, Initial Survey, October 2009)
Implications and Conclusions

Authentic conversations demand good content (Clarke, 2001). Our experiences illustrate how the substantive content of the Loughran (2006) text provided a springboard to engage in discourse about the complexities of our practices. While this text was an important point of departure, discussing it alone did not promote our increased understandings. Rather, it was through collaborative analysis of the data documenting our reflective exploration of the text that we came to understand our tensions.

Our experiences support Berry’s (2008) assertion that the tensions she outlined provide a framework to understand our shared dilemmas as teacher educators. Moreover, we extend these insights by documenting that we also encountered these tensions in learning about teaching teachers through collaborative self-study. In response to our tensions as collaborative self-study researchers, we began our second year developing collaborative research protocols to enable those who seek to share their experiences to do so, while protecting the confidentiality of others. How awareness of our tensions affects our teacher education practices is yet to be determined. Nonetheless, awareness of our dilemmas is a vital first step towards this outcome (Berry, 2008; Grierson, 2010; Loughran, 2006).

Importantly, our authentic conversations have a future (Clarke, 2001). We look forward to exploring whether the insights developed during our first year provide support as we document our continued negotiation of our tensions and engage in book-study of Enacting a pedagogy of teacher education: Values, relationships, and practices (Russell & Loughran, 2007).

Increased understandings of the professional growth of teacher educators are required to advance the field (Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Zeichner, 2007). This research adds to the literature by documenting how collaborative self-study protocols to enable those who seek to share their experiences to do so, while protecting the confidentiality of others. How awareness of our tensions affects our teacher education practices is yet to be determined. Nonetheless, awareness of our dilemmas is a vital first step towards this outcome (Berry, 2008; Grierson, 2010; Loughran, 2006).

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Re-visionist self-study: If we knew then what we know now

Context of the Study
Arguably, backlash against interest in qualitative research methodologies, particularly those like self-study and narrative inquiry, can be identified as a cause for the recent turn toward more “scientific” research. When the enormous interest was garnered by these methodologies, researchers engaged in quantitative research saw their worlds reduced and their power-share threatened. Earlier versions of these tensions can be found within the annals of Educational Researcher (for example, Howe, 1988; Phillips, 1983; and Smith & Heshusius, 1986) and reverberate even today in the current issues of ER where Howe (2009) expounds on pressures from the new scientific orthodoxy. Naturally, advocates of more reductionist methodologies respond to their shrinking world with methodological critique of their perceived adversaries — about strategy, about approach, about abilities to reach beyond a few individuals. And critique of self-study methodology has not just come from foes, but supporters as well. For example, Zeichner (2007) claims that these researchers need to provide a broader context to their work, situating small studies within previous research. In addition, Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) call for tighter methodological detail in this work.

Given this testy ground, what are self-study researchers supposed to do? As not all critiques are completely off-the-mark and no research study reaches perfection, where we all go next in self-study will be important for those who engage in this work. In this paper, we suggest that a re-vision of our past to inform our future may help us respond to, learn from, and be strengthened by this current turn.

Aims
Initially those engaged in the work of the self-study of teaching and teacher education practice research focused more on the struggle for recognition than on the perfection of methodological understanding. In our collective past as self-study scholars, situating our work within the larger realm of qualitative research seemed less important than doing the work. And doing the work seemed more important than offering details that might have strengthened other scholars’ readings of our work. Now, with recognition in hand (Borko, Liston and Whitcomb (2007) recognized the self-study of teaching and teacher education practice research as a genre of teacher education research), we can turn to a more rigorous inquiry into and critique of our work in order to consider how we might improve our practice as researchers in order to support and strengthen self-study of teaching and teacher education practice research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005), in a recent discussion of the history of qualitative research, identify critical moments in qualitative research, including the crisis of representation (1986-1990s) and the postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing (1995-2000) that cover about fifteen years of change within the approaches to both general and educational research. For Denzin and Lincoln (2005) the crisis of representation carries a triple threat to representation, legitimation, and praxis. During this span, the voices of the researcher and the researched shifted as qualitative research scholars questioned ways to interpret experience (for example, Crapanzano, 1985; Clifford & Marcus, 1986) along with the use of positivist terms to define postmodern experience. While generally these questions propelled qualitative researchers to consider alternative methodologies, educational researchers brought the self-study of teaching and teacher education practices research into this research landscape. Dissatisfied with the notion of the distanced researcher that lacked a focus on the moral commitment to improvement, a stance for the researcher, or recognition of dialogue as a part of the coming-to-know process, self-study researchers joined these discussions with a desire to enact their practice and bring personal knowledge and understanding of practice by teacher educators to research on teaching and teacher education. To re-vision self-study and address the statement — what if we knew then what we know now — we re-examined selections of earlier works using frameworks suggested by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) to identify the strength of our work (or lack thereof) against the critiques of self-study. From there, we consider the understandings we gained against the tenets of those who propose the new scientific orthodoxy considering implications for our future work as self-study scholars.

Methodology
Having framed our study to address the statement “what if we knew then what we know now,” we decide to situate our study within our own works because (1) this study is a self-study and because (2) we have been doing what we call self-study for a long time.

To begin our study we selected the works we would examine and agreed that we would analyze these articles or chapters using the Analytic Framework (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). To do that we selected examples of our own self-studies that have been published (Arizona Group, 1994 etc.) in refereed journals and/or book chapters. While book chapters are not always refereed, in the early days of self-study work some level of review occurred to strengthen our standing as researchers in the field of educational research. For our first selection we chose a piece presented at Bergamo in 1993 and turned into a chapter (Arizona Group, 1994), selecting it for its “first-ness.” Then, we selected our earliest AERA work because it was presented at that conference and then published in Teacher Education Quarterly, looking specifically at the articles written by Hamilton (1995) and Pinnegar (1995). These are considered to be some of the earliest works in the self-study of teaching and teacher education practice. The next selection was a book chapter (Arizona Group, 1995) because we felt it captured our sense of the tensions among our roles of teacher/teacher...
educator/scholar. Next we selected (Arizona Group, 1996) also published in Teacher Education Quarterly. We selected this article because we felt it represented a movement in our thinking about self-study of teaching and teacher education practice. We selected an additional chapter (Hamilton, Pinnegar & Guilfoyle, 1997) because methodologically and theoretically we thought we had taken some risks in the writing of it. Finally, we selected a piece presented at the 2006 Castle Conference and published (Arizona Group, 2006) because we thought it demonstrated our turn (along with Arizona Group, 2004) toward an explicit discussion of dialogue.

Once we identified the articles/chapters, we individually examined each article using the Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) analytic framework to critically inquire into the merits and deficits of each of these pieces. In short, the Pinnegar and Hamilton framework asks the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the study?
- What definition of self-study does the author use in the work you are reading? Where is the self situated in this study?
- When describing her methodology, how is it apparent that the researcher is engaged in self-study? How do they describe their methodology?
- What data collection and data analysis tools do the authors use? How are the aspects of their methodology described? How do they make apparent their thoughtful research practice? Part of making a study rigorous, comes in the context authors select to study, in what way or ways does the context support the rigor of the study?
- In what ways do the authors connect the data collected with the assertions made in their study? For example, if they said that they interviewed people, how do they display the data collected? Do the evidence they collected allow for the insights they claim?
- How do the authors situate the authority of their experience in the study? How do they situate themselves in the study so that the readers will accept their work as trustworthy?
- In what ways is the self portrayed in the study? Where is the self in relation to others?
- Within what research literatures do the authors situate their work? How do they bring depth to the understandings of their field of focus?

We situated each of our selected studies within this framework answering every question if we could. We individually scrutinized each piece. We analyzed the selected texts individually, then, to deepen our analysis, we explored our frameworks together. As we considered our charts together we identified what was absent and present in each piece according to our responses. Using the framework questions as a guide, themes formed around our answers to those questions. We then talked to each other about what we saw in the charts. Our main concern was with the lack of completeness in our accounts of exactly how we moved from data collection, through data analysis and reduction, to the development of trustworthiness and finally to representation. Ironically, the particular pieces that provided more detail about what we were doing and pieces that provided almost none were most helpful in our re-visioning effort. We identified two main themes of our re-vision and critique, in the midst and interpretation. We selected these themes because they broadly captured issues that seems to emerge from the data, our texts. We then returned to our data again and cooperatively considered each piece in terms of whether or not our themes captured our understandings from these pieces.

The next step, which will come in a future paper, involves a look at the critique of those researchers who advocate the new scientific orthodoxy. We identified works like that of Grossman (2005), Shavelson and Towne (2002) and Feuer, Towne and Shavelson (2002) as representing this perspective and then situated our research process against their view of “scientific” research. Understanding those critiques in relation to our work may inform our future work as self-study scholars but we will take that up in a separate paper.

**Wonderings**

After carefully answering the Pinnegar and Hamilton questions from the texts and identifying any absences, we returned to our completed frameworks to read and re-read our findings, first individually, then together. As we identified absence and presence of information in our pieces, we asked our question: IF WE KNEW THEN WHAT WE KNOW NOW. During our analytic process, we had many insights into our works as well as how what we did then played into hands of the critics. We began by considering what we came to understand about our sense of “being in the midst” and our continual assertions about interpretation. Next we examined what our understandings about “being in the midst” and interpretation revealed to us about how we attempted to attend to trustworthiness and finally how in re-visioning our work we came to new understandings of the fundamental nature of Dialogue to self-study as a way of knowing, how that could impact self-study research accounts and the relationship of all this to adopting ontology rather than epistemology as a central concern in establishing the veracity of self-study research accounts.

For purposes of brevity, we bullet most of our findings, offering short statements, and highlight our last – and what we consider our most important – point. As we delved into our work we were sometimes surprised. When we asked IF WE KNEW THEN WHAT WE KNOW NOW,

- We would have provided more detail about our data collection and analysis processes. While always considering ourselves good methodologists, we found that we lacked explicitness in our descriptions of our data collection processes. Moreover, we found that we did not always make the connection between the data we had collected and the evidence we provided.
- We would have been more explicit about our connection to research literature. While we connected our thinking to the literature, that thinking did not transfer to the published page. We anchored ourselves in the literature and used those issues to structure our thinking, but the explicit use of that literature was sometimes absent in the text of the articles themselves.
- We would have written more transparently about our interpretation and understanding of the data analysis process itself. While we talked a lot about
interpretation, we did not address interpretation specifically. Discussion of how we moved from having the data and how we moved from analysis to interpretation and how we made the data explicit in the analysis and in the interpretation seemed to be missing from our work. In many ways we were writing ourselves toward knowing: talking ourselves toward knowing and engaged deeply in our communicative processes rather than making our knowing rather than the process behind it clear.

- We would have explicitly addressed trustworthiness. While we used all kinds of strategies to be trustworthy, we did not talk about what we did. We mentioned emails and journals and faxes and phone calls, but we did not offer a systematic review of how these not only emerged as data but also how they support the trustworthiness of our findings.
- Most importantly, as we examined our work we came to understand the ways in which Dialogue was, for us, the process of knowing in which we engaged.

Dialogue

As we reviewed the pieces and found that we had not clearly articulated the processes of data analysis, interpretation, and trustworthiness, we began to question what we did do to demonstrate and establish ourselves as rigorous and scholarly in our work. Ironically, what we were doing was most evident in those pieces such as Arizona Group (1995) and Arizona Group (2006) when we more cogently explained our methodology. As we read these explanations and returned to the details and explanations we articulated in our analytic framework, we realized that in our texts across time we had, even in pieces where we included almost no methodological explanation at all (such as Arizona Group, 1994 and Arizona Group, 1996), provided evidence that we were engaging in Dialogue in order to come to know and as a way to establish our authority of experience and ourselves as trustworthy and rigorous. We present ourselves (our beliefs, our contexts, our experiences) in tension with the research literature. We have done this for many years. In analyzing data, making meaning of it, and establishing it as trustworthy, we are trying to understand ourselves by bringing together our own experience against the research literature, against a memory of our experience, and against our records of our experience, our analysis of those records, and our critique of our analysis. We try to represent this process in the form of the text—the way in which we represent what we know.

In Arizona Group (1996), we provide the clearest textual example of the ways in which we lay our experience alongside the research literature. We do this by carefully establishing the diversity of the contexts we come from, then present an analysis of the research literature about new faculty and teacher education reform. We periodically interrupt the text with quotes from data we have collected in our self-study of teacher education practice research. What is not stated in the text at all is the process we engaged in to select the texts we did. In the research process that resulted in the article presented, we engaged in a process re-analysis of our data, by reading the data we had, selecting elements from the data where we explicitly addressed reform and being new faculty. Against our interpretation of the research literature we selected examples of our own experience that resonated (either in harmony or discord) with the literature. We critiqued and debated extensively as we selected which of our experiences would be inserted and we worked until we agreed which fragments of our data needed to be included.

We engaged in a similar process with the letters in Arizona Group (1994); however, in this piece we engaged in a rigorous iterative process of selection and editing of our letters to capture the themes of the literature on new faculty, the learning to teach process, and teacher education research. While our reading of the research literature was very much a part of the process, it is almost completely absent in the text.

Our pieces represent Dialogue as a process of coming to know, we include in our analysis data from our experience, reviews of relevant research on the topic as well as concerning qualitative analysis, and our own contexts and selves. We provide some description of us and the contexts we come from, being clear about the differences and commonalities that are important if a process of critique and inquiry amongst us is the basis on which we are developing knowledge. We also position (sometimes implicitly (see Arizona Group 1994) sometimes explicitly (see Arizona Group 1995, 1996, 2006)) a review of the research literature on the topic. We then articulate the databases we will analyze and examine in order to uncover our experience. Our texts provide evidence of Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2008) definition of dialogue. We articulate Dialogue in self-study of practice as a process of coming to know, on which we base our assertions for action or understanding (the claims that emerge from such study). It exists in zone of inconclusivity. The characteristics of the space of dialogue include community, respect, caring, strong voices/listening.

Outcomes

We explored how do we come to know from data along with how we might best present self-study methodology in ways to successfully challenge traditional presentation of research. We believe that the re-vision of our work suggests the need to: link our work to a larger discourse about teacher education, confirming Zeichner’s encouragement to do that; address context in ways that others who care to know can then use in their thinking; and make transparent our methodology to emphasize trustworthiness.

References


Another Type of Teacher Education: Collaborative Self-Study and the Education of Experienced Teachers

Context

During fall semester 2008, Alicia taught a graduate-level social studies education course for social studies teachers. Todd, a new faculty member, attended each class session. The class was composed of a mix of full-time graduate students and full-time classroom teachers. Of the eight students, there was one graduate level pre-service teacher who was in a field placement throughout the semester, three full-time teachers, and four full-time graduate students who had been social studies teachers. The content and process of the course, along with the mix of students and faculty, generated lively, thoughtful discussions focusing on purpose and pedagogy, frustrations with state-mandated curriculum and high-stakes testing, and the desire to become more creative teachers. Our conversations consistently returned to an ongoing debate over the proper role of research and how it could/should influence the work of classroom teachers.

As the semester progressed, Alicia and Todd became excited about the potential to take advantage of the momentum building among the graduate students and extend the conversations started in class. Ultimately, Alicia and Todd chose to approach six of the graduate students regarding their willingness to join us in forming a self-study research group. Invited included three women and three men. Four were doctoral students, one was a master’s level experience teacher who was on leave for a year and one was a master’s level pre-service teacher. Three were teaching high school social studies in different types of districts (a wealthy suburban district, a middle-class suburban district and a rural district). One was a graduate level pre-service teacher teaching in an urban setting. One was on leave for the year from a career and technical high school to which he would return to teach in the fall. One had taught in an urban middle school before coming to graduate school.

After a flurry of emails, all initially accepted our invitation, some with more hesitation than others. One who showed interest made a decision to change institutions before our first meeting and so decided not to continue. After our second meeting, the only person working on initial self-study research withdrew from the group citing a lack of time to commit to the research. In the end, our collective consisted of two women and four men. The group included two university professors (Alicia, a tenured associate professor in her eighth year as a faculty member, and Todd, a tenure-track faculty member in his first year), two full-time graduate students (Michael, who had taught six years and taken a leave for one year to work full-time on his Master’s degree and would be returning to teach in the career and technical high school he had taken a leave from and Katie, a full-time doctoral student who had taught for nine years, most recently in an urban middle school), and two full-time teachers who were part-time doctoral students, Andy, a teacher in his seventh year of teaching who was teaching in a rural district and Bryan, a teacher in his fifteenth year of teaching who was teaching in a middle class suburban district.

Literature

There is a rich history in self-study literature focused on the content, pedagogy, structure, and philosophy of preservice teacher education programs (Clift, 2004/2007). Many self-study researchers are teacher educators, only a few are P-12 classroom teachers and/or administrators (e.g. Austin & Senese, 2004/2007; Senese, 2005).

As a field, we see the power of self-study for classroom teacher’s professional development (e.g. Austin & Senese, 2004/2007). Unlike the typical professional development experiences (e.g. establishing professional development communities to align the curriculum with state standards, learning to integrate technology into a secondary classroom) self-study is a more engaging form of professional development because, according to Berry and Loughran (2005), “it is through ‘unpacking’ pedagogical experiences that understanding the complexity of teaching can come to the fore” (p. 173). But, little focus has been placed on the ways in which experienced teachers who are in graduate school (in-service teacher education) use, experience and learn from participating in self-study research and how it connects with expanding/extending/enhancing their graduate school learning experiences.

Collaboration has become a distinguishing feature of self-study research (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2004/2007; Johnston, 2006; Kitchen & Parker, 2009; Lighthall, 2004/2007). As part of forming our research collective we sought to build on the power of collaboration and to draw upon Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (2009) conception of inquiry as stance. Inquiry as stance develops an “intentional conceptual blurring of theory and practice, knowing and doing, conceptualizing and studying, analyzing and acting, researchers and practitioners, and public and local knowledge” (p. 3). We also envisioned our collective as a chance to engage in the process of “working the dialectic,” which Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) see as “the reciprocal and recursive relationships of research and practice (or of theorizing and doing), as well as the dialectic of generating local knowledge of practice while making that knowledge accessible outside the local context” (p. x). Our project was an attempt to leverage the potential of collaborative, inquiry-based, self-study research to improve the connection between graduate school and teaching for experienced teachers.

Aims and Objectives

Todd and Alicia originally organized the group to explore self-study as a means within the graduate school
context for experienced teachers to 1) examine and possibly rethink their teaching and 2) extend and deepen the experience of graduate level education for these teachers. This paper specifically reports on the development of a self-study collective, affectionately nicknamed “the A-Team” and how the collective enhanced the graduate school experience for these graduate level teacher-students. This paper’s aims are twofold:

1. provide an example of one way to pursue a self-study collaborative that connects experienced teachers and university faculty while developing research projects, collecting and analyzing data, and writing research reports
2. highlight the power of collaborative self-study collectives to bring together graduate school and teaching to support and push experienced teachers to examine and reflect on ways to improve their practice.

Methods for Data Collection and Analysis

This portion of our overall project focused on understanding how the self-study collaborative enabled the teacher-students to bring together their graduate school learning and their work as teachers. Data to examine this included artifacts of our time together (recordings of the meetings, emails, the blog, and member’s written reports) and a reflection on how each teacher-student saw self-study changing their thinking and teaching six months after the collaborative finished its intense work. All group meetings were audio recorded and the recordings transcribed. Each member of the collaborative group transcribed a recording. After the last meeting each of the graduate students analyzed their data and wrote a research report focusing on the findings of their individual self-studies. These reports were used as a data source in our ongoing efforts to understand how each member understood our collaborative work.

To develop a clearer description of how the group began and evolved Alicia and Todd examined emails from the beginning of the group and transcripts from the meetings. To understand what the data told us about the collaborative for the members, we analyzed data from the meeting transcripts, the postings on the blog, the final research reports of the four teacher-students, and the research reports. Once we analyzed these sources and developed findings, we sent this work to the group for feedback.

Although the individual self-studies are not the primary emphasis of this paper, an overview of each provides context for the group’s work as a whole and helps readers see what each teacher-student focused on (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher-Student</th>
<th>Research Question(s)</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Bryan           | How can I become a teacher who is a risk taker? | • Lesson plans from five, two-day mini lessons  
• Videotaped interviews with students as part of a lesson on race relations  
• Journal notes taken following each mini lesson  
• Student posts on classroom blog  
• Student Surveys | Read and reflected on my own journal posts.  
Examined student responses to surveys to determine if my instructional changes were seen as productive.  
Examined student responses to blog posts to determine if my instructional changes were seen as productive. |
| Katie           | How do students deal with controversy in the classroom?  
How are their notions of citizenship and history becoming more complicated?  
What role have I played in their changes in thinking? | • Journaling  
• Blogging  
• Student Surveys  
• Weekly exit slips  
• Student work samples  
• Culminating piece of art work | • Read and reread all data  
• Coded for themes and identified data that supported themes  
• Looked for discrepant data and explored anomalies |
| Mike            | How can I become a more creative social studies teacher? | • Brainstorming  
• Idea dumping  
• Stream-of-consciousness writing and journaling  
• Blogging  
• Writing a personal teacher rationale | • Reading and rereading writing and notes in search of patterns and/or themes  
• Returning to relevant data sources and connecting data to emerging themes. |
| Andy            | In what ways does my graduate work affect my teaching practice and thinking as a teacher?  
How is this tied to my effectiveness as a classroom teacher and graduate student?  
Are these roles (teacher/learner) independent of each other in my practice or does improving in one role result inevitably in improvement in the other? | • Daily journaling  
• Blogging  
• Student work samples  
• Reflections on work as teacher and learner  
• Transcripts from self study group meetings | • First read and reread all data  
• Coding data based on frequency codes appeared  
• Second round of coding looked for connections to research questions and connections between teaching and graduate work |

Table 1: Overview of the teacher-students’ self-studies.
Creating and Nurturing Our Self-Study Collaborative

Understanding how the group began and evolved helps in understanding the influence of the group on members. After the invitation, Todd and Alicia sent an email two days before we met for dinner and conversation at Todd’s house in December 2008 to set the stage for the collaborative. In the email, Todd and Alicia proposed questions to consider before the meeting.

This semester we’ve heard many of you mention how much you’ve changed, how you think about things differently, enjoy hearing different perspectives and so we want to focus in on the relationship between this and your teaching/learning as a social studies teacher.

So far our main questions are: How have you experienced graduate school? What relationship has this had with your teaching? How has your thinking about, and conceptions of, social studies teaching and learning changed as a result of your graduate school experience?

(Excerpt from December 15, 2008 email)

We then asked them to consider how often they might want to meet, how we might prepare for each meeting, how we might focus our research, what kinds of data we might collect, and where we might take our research. Initially Todd and Alicia had considered the group to be a place to conduct a single group research project but during the meeting the focus changed to individual self-studies and the group became a place to think about questions, analysis and what they were finding. At this point several were quite unsure of what self-study was but they thought that, at the least, the group meetings would be helpful. So, after this meeting Todd and Alicia gave each member the Laboskey (2004/2007) and Loughran (2004/2007) chapters from the ‘Handbook to read before our next meeting.

During this first meeting we discussed how a blog might be useful and ways we might use it. So, after the meeting, Alicia created a private blog space for the group to use as needed. In the end we used it to share ideas, our reflections, recommend/share readings and provide support while not together. We agreed to meet once a month during the spring semester 2009, once at the home of each member.

Meetings were held at the home of a different member of the collective and began with a meal that led into discussions. These sessions lasted between four and six hours and we talked about our work as teachers, learners, and researchers. Throughout, we decided together how to adapt and change all aspects of the collaborative. During the fourth meeting, Katie suggested that we each bring a visual representation of our experience of self-study to share the next time. So the next time, we shared these and Alicia brought several self-study books. Each member took one to three books to learn more about self-study. At the final session, Michael and Andy helped the group structure how to move into writing and making the experience public.

Looking at the Power of the Collective

In the previous section, we shared how the group came to be and morphed into a research collective. This section looks inside the collective at how the four teacher-students described the experience of the self-study collaborative and how it influenced them as teachers and students.

The experience. Based on the final meeting conversations, each of the participants wrote in their research reports about how they used the collective as both a means to increase their ability to imagine possibilities for their research studies and their ability to analyze data and discuss their findings. Bryan shared that the group:

• provided encouragement and advice in what directions I should head in order to become a risk taker in my classroom. I found that having non-confrontational criticism from individuals you respect and trust is vital to the success of my self-study research. The ability to get outside my own thinking and to hear other educators’ ideas is the driving force in creating meaningful change in my teaching. (Research Report)

Michael made multiple points:

By participating in vast, profound, provocative dialogues in our courses, at our monthly meetings and off-campus gatherings, and throughout the process of our self-study groups’ blog site, my thinking was pushed and refined. My peers served as a lifeline back to the classroom I had vacated for the year; and their collective, shared experiences and deep perspective facilitated my contemplation of what needed to be present in my own thinking about the social studies environment I hoped to generate. Our self-study group helped to rein in my thinking when it went astray and provided necessary boundaries in the kites in a strong wind that would blow away should someone cease to hold the string. The sharing of our studies was a constant influence and stimulus that helped to provide valuable connections within the social studies discipline. (Research Report)

Each participant made strong connections with the group as a source of motivation and support. Three specifically discussed how the process of collaboration served as a source of inspiration, accountability, and motivation. Another focused on the ways in which the collaborative pushed his thinking and managed to pull him back when his thinking started to stray from his intended goals.

The influence. By the end of the self-studies, the four teacher-students began to see themselves as teachers in different ways than they had before joining the collective and doing their self-studies. Bryan began to take risks in ways with the support of the self-study that he had only imagined before. Andy felt more confident in his pedagogical decision-making and recognized that he had greater agency to make changes in his school because of the self-study. Michael's self-study left him with the sense that creativity in schools was not only possible in theory but within his own practice, and Katie’s self-study increased her confidence as a teacher educator who could step out of the shadow of her mentor.

Over the longer-term the self-study has influenced how the members think about their teaching on a day-to-day basis. Andy shared how his thinking about graduate school and teaching changed:

As I reflect on my experience with the A-Team and our self-study endeavor I cannot help but recognize that my experience has influenced my thinking as a teacher and student. … This experience has helped to show how a more focused and disciplined reflective practice including the collection of data can lead to more meaningful and rapid growth as a teacher and, unexpectedly as a graduate student. Self-study offered me a means through which to more clearly
and systematically collect and analyze data as opposed to a more ambiguous and emotional reflection on my practice. While these fleeting impressions may be useful and the notes I left myself for the following year helpful, I realize they seldom led to a sustained and substantive change in my practice. What I did not expect was for the experience to open up doors and push my thinking as a graduate student and future scholar. As we met to discuss and question each members’ work it became a catalyst for learning in and connecting to graduate school, as much as for positive change in teaching practice. (Retrospective writing)

Katie’s thinking about teaching has also changed: As a result of being on the “A-Team” and engaging in self-study, I have become more systematic about reflecting on my own teaching. It’s almost as if I’m observing myself while teaching now. I’m constantly questioning and discussing why I make the choices I make in regards to curriculum and instruction as well as how I’m building relationships with my students. Rather than just taking an end-of-the-semester retrospective look at what worked and what didn’t in a course, I am continuously engaging in asking for feedback and making changes in my teaching. It has become more of a process of formative self-assessment than a one-time act. (Retrospective writing)

Summary
Our self-study collective helped all members develop a stronger relationship between graduate school and teaching. We found this process to be a powerful way for inservice teachers in graduate school and the faculty in their program to develop stronger relationships and to support and push one another, in the end improving both classroom teachers’ teaching and teacher educators’ teaching. We have decided to expand our collective and will soon be meeting with possible new members, other experienced teachers in our graduate program.

References


Telling Tales after School: Self-Narrative and the Pedagogy of Teacher Educators

This paper offers an outline of a research study into the professional identity of university-based teacher educators in England that emerged from my experience of working as a teacher educator in a university school of education. The research took an autoethnographic approach examining my own narrative of experience alongside those of six other teacher educators.

My interest is in how we articulate our own selfhood as educators of teachers through narrative and how this informs and develops our professional identities, which we construct and re-construct in response to some of the uncertainties and ambivalences within the initial education of teachers in England.

The study examined what it means to be a teacher educator in the first decades of the 21st Century through a number of themes that arose from the writing and sharing of self-narratives and interviews with six teacher educators. Various types of autoethnography such as narrative self-study writing and life history interviews (Hayano, 1979; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Goodson, 1992) were employed as a lens with which to examine aspects of the memories, perspectives and experiences of university-based teacher educators such as how we came to be teacher educators, what it is like to be a teacher educator, how we see our role, why we believe what we believe about initial teacher education and how we think this, all of this, affects our practice and the practice of the students of teaching and learning with whom we work.

Context and Aims

The research has informed my work as a teacher educator and educational researcher. Research within S-STEP has included seeking to develop practice by placing teacher educators’ own narratives at the centre of the process in order to examine the role of collaboration in self-study (Chryst, Lassonde, & Mckay, 2008; Crafton & Smolin, 2008) and exploring the tensions between teaching, methodology and theory in teacher education (Hamilton, 2008; Russell & Loughran, 2007). Kitchin’s (2008) study of his own experiences of moving from school teaching towards tenure as a university professor reveals the struggle of balancing teaching and scholarship for teacher educators which was a prominent issue for the participants of my own project. My approach was strongly influenced by the ways in which the methods used in S-STEP bring narrative inquiry together with teacher education, although my central aim here was not to directly investigate and change methodology within the practice of teacher education (Heston, Tidwell, East, & Fitzgerald, 2008), but rather to develop an understanding of the professional identity of teacher educators is both formed and represented by narratives of experience. For me, the focus was upon teacher educators who work in English university schools of education, partly because that is where my experience lies as a student and a tutor and also because I believe this remains one of the most important, contested and yet under-researched areas within education in the UK. The term “teacher education” remains itself an area of significant dispute that to some extent represents the trends and developments of three decades of reform. While there is a growing body of research into the education and training of teachers in England, the voices of teacher educators themselves have remained largely absent from this literature in the UK.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Lots of people are involved in the education of teachers in England, and while some features remain consistent and grow at the core of practice, in education and in ITE, change itself has been the centrally consistent feature of the last thirty years (Department for Education and Employment, 1996; Bottery & Wright, 2000; Burn, 2006).

All courses offering Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) are ratified and largely funded by the Training and Development Agency (TDA) and now referred to throughout all government literature as “teacher training”. University schools of education can be seen as the places where higher education and the education of children meet and where differing ideas and beliefs about the purposes of education come under intensive scrutiny and contest (see for example Bailey and Robson, 2002; Bristed, Menter, & Smith, 2006; Furlong, 2005; Hartley, 2000; Richards et al, 1998; Winter, 2000).

Working in ITE

As “training” is used instead of “education” throughout government documents and ‘students’ become ‘trainees’ in the late 1990s so the teacher educators were framed as “teacher trainers” and schools of education became ‘providers’ of “teacher training”. There has been some resistance to this nomenclature of re-branding from within the profession but it continues to represent and play its part in the reconstruction of power in teacher education away from the more autonomous situation of universities before 1998. Accounts from the participants in my research confirm the significant influence of what Ball (2003, p. 216) sees as the dominant force of managerialism upon their work as teacher educators. As, Jan, a participant in my project, put it, “Lots of the changes that happened in schools in the 80s and 90s seemed to filter through into teacher education especially since 4/98, the notorious memo . . . Over the next 18 months or so things really turned on their head. We re-wrote the course and I found myself teaching the teachers to teach the literacy hour which I ran away from” (Hayler, 2007 p. 106).

Peter Gilroy (Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley, 2002) concluded that by 2001 his own professional life “consisted of negotiating a series of ambivalences – and indeed outright contradictions” (p. 1) between what he professed in his
teaching and writing and his actual experience and practice within teacher education. He describes an academic life where he needed to accommodate the fact that teacher education was being fixed into apparent certainties along with his work on the contingent and shifting nature of knowledge in professionalism. Such sensations of dissonance arise in all professions in times of change but are rarely as apparent as in teacher education where the articulation of beliefs about teaching and learning is a central feature of the job. In my own self-study I remembered; “At the university I had the unusual experience of becoming less confident the longer I worked there and I felt less and less authentic as the months went by” (Hayler, 2007, p. 83). Co-participant Sian agreed that: “All you’ve got and it matters, is your experience, that’s what gives you the credibility, only it loses its value fast because schools change all the time. After a year your career’s worth of experience is worth less than it was” (p. 100).

Autoethnography: Self-culture Research
Anderson proposes the term “Analytic Autoethnography” as a way of reframing and reclaiming autoethnography within what he terms “the analytic ethnographic paradigm.”

My own approach was to use a number of research methods that come from this toolbox because I wanted to examine some of the commonalities that arise in the experiences of teacher educators while recognising the individual nature of experience. I wanted to examine and construct my own story towards and within ITE in collaboration with and reference to others. I also wanted to experiment with and attempt to introduce more reciprocity within the process of the research itself.

I began the research by writing a self-narrative of my own memories of learning as a way of “bending back on the self to look more deeply at self-other interactions” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). Through this method of enquiry (Richardson, 2000) I produced a piece of writing that was shared with six university-based teacher educators for them to read as a way of examining their own memories after reading mine, before I met each of them for a recorded interview discussion. These participants are colleagues, friends and associates who expressed an interest in being involved in the study. Following each interview I began transcription of the recording with some simultaneous note taking and early analysis which initially considered ‘turning point moments,’ commonalities, and differences.

The relationship between my own experience and the experience of the other participants, which was always difficult to identify and untangle, became one of the most interesting areas of the study. This was not an issue to be resolved. How our narratives of self are informed by others’ stories became a central theme and I found methodological support in the material on analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) with its insistence on including the voices of others in ethnographic work that begins with self-narrative.

To summarise my research “bricolage” (Levi-Strauss, 1966): I used a methodological approach framed by Anderson’s (2006) five features of: complete member research; analytical reflexivity; the narrative visibility of the researcher’s self; dialogue with informants beyond the self; a commitment to theoretical analysis.

I developed my narrative analysis from Sartre’s (1963) progressive/regressive method informed by Pinar (1981) and Denzin’s (2001) critical interpretive approach.

Sharing the self-narrative with six people who work as teacher educators in university schools of education was the way in which I attempted to situate and contextualise the narrative alongside others. I wanted to draw out some commonalities as well as stimulate contrary perspectives while recognising the “ethnographic imperative of dialogic engagement with others in the social worlds that we seek to understand” (Anderson, 2006, p. 385).

Analysis
I used a narrative analysis and organisation that drew on the ideas of Sartre’s method of analysis and pursued what Denzin (1997) calls the “conjunctural, contextual, performance-based, messy approach to reading (and writing)” (p. 246). This is clearly not an approach that attempts to capture the totality of an individual or a group’s way of life. The focus here is upon:

- . . . interpreted slices, glimpses and specimens of interaction that display how cultural practices, connected to structural formations and narrative texts, are experienced at a particular time and place by interacting individuals (ibid p. 247).

I strategically selected sites for interpretation and presentation that constitute points at which the narrative texts of our stories intersect and interact offering a picture of what Fiske (1994 p. 195) describes as “culture in practice” within ITE by placing one set of experiences and perspectives alongside others.

Some Confirmations and Surprises
The accounts reported in the study are subjective versions of becoming and being a teacher educator. I am conscious that multiple readings and interpretations can be made of the accounts I have organised through the themes that emerged from the writing and sharing of self-narratives and interviews. My central concern has been upon what Bruner (1990) calls “meaning-making” and how it connects with what he terms “folk psychology,” (p. 137) within initial teacher education.

These glimpses and patches demonstrate how experience is continually construed and re-construed as our lives are constructed, not recorded, through the different forms of self-narrative. The telling of the tale itself becomes part of our experience informing who we think we are. Thus we remain in the middle of these stories which develop in a relational dialogue with our developing understanding of the context within which they are set. The critical moments, conversions, awakenings, turning points, emerge in the process of writing self-narrative and form key passages that are recognised by and stimulate responses in others. Meaning emerging as narrative can be one means of opposing institutional power and a way in which teacher educators can speak back to educational policy initiatives that narrow our understanding of professional development.

While sharing my story with the other participants had an influence by design, and not withstanding significant individual differences, I was surprised by how similar many aspects of our stories appeared to be, and how many values and beliefs about teaching and learning and the education of teachers we share with each other. On reflection this is of course not surprising at all given that our experiences have been shaped within a broadly similar era of education.
policy. Many of our common experiences as learners, for example, relate closely to the policy contexts of the time such as the long post-war consensus on education as a means of social improvement, the eleven plus, the comprehensive system, the first and second waves of widening participation in Higher Education and what can be fairly described as the ideologically/theoretically-informed teacher education policies of the 1970s and 80s, at least as compared to more recent policy. While our length of professional experience varies, we were all learners at points within that era as we were as teachers within the turbulent and often personally shredding era of school reform that began in the late 1980s. Our experiences differ but we were all part of that time. When considered from this perspective it is the differences between us that seem surprising. Our individual stories and, what Goodson (1992, 2003) calls our “genealogies of context” blend and mix here to make the larger picture where our unique shades of identity can be drawn from the palettes of experience that we often share.

Impact On My Learning and Professional Practice

My speculation and hope that the process of structuring and writing a thesis based upon this research would make me more resilient to the difficulties and challenges of working in teacher education has been realised to some extent over the past two years. I would like to be able to claim that there has been a sea-change and that the process has given me a new un-shakeable confidence drawn from my newly developed perspectives of ITE. There has been a change but the truth is that I have occasionally felt undone by the job and that I have not quite managed to live consistently comfortably with uncertainty through the academic year. Working in Initial Teacher Education remains a challenging, stressful although often rewarding job. Knowing why can help, but not always. Perhaps that is just the way this work, or all work, is. I should really know that by now.

The research experience has helped me to work in new ways with students. I have used versions of self-narrative with students in getting them to reflect upon and analyse their own experiences of learning and teaching and to consider how this informs and will inform their practice. I worked with final year students as they used the progressive/regressive method to identify events from the course that they were about to complete, consider the significance of these for their work in schools and then make links with corresponding educational policies and initiatives. This brought a number of things to the surface including areas where students felt less prepared. The biggest response was in supporting the soon to be teachers to recognise how far they had come and what the key events were for them. The students were able to share their responses and analysis with each other in small groups allowing them to consider shared and differing perspectives in relation to their own analysis.

Autoethnography as a Tool for Teaching and Reflective Practice

I remain convinced that autoethnography can be used in a number of ways in teacher education. I see autoethnography as a way to employ reflection in study and practice with significantly enhanced self-visibility. Understanding how what we know, what we feel and what we do informs, makes and remakes our pedagogy allows us to understand, adapt, respond and remake again. Autoethnography offers a way to situate the self within the teaching process as it allows us to situate the self in the research and writing process. This combines an individual’s personal story with his or her scholarly story in an attempt as Burnier (2006) puts it to erase the false dichotomy between the scholarly and the personal where “the actual scholar is embodied and present, as he or she examines closely the personal, political and scholarly situations that have shaped his or her life” (p. 412).

I have been developing a serial writing assignment with the focus upon reflective practice where students will examine their own educational and life experiences in response to course readings, concepts and educational policy. I now more often let students know how my own views and practice have changed over time and how I think these have been influenced by experiences within the context of particular situations and relevant policies. I might for example talk about my own experiences of assessment as a pupil in the 1960s and as a teacher in the 1990s as a way of discussing the development of both assessment policy and my own beliefs about and approach towards assessment in my practice as a school teacher and now in ITE. I see that as part of the self-narrative character of this teacher educators’ pedagogy.

Blending the personal and the scholarly may be easier in the seminar room than on the published scholarly page within ITE but it is the combination of the personal and scholarly or indeed the evocative and the analytical that appeals to me as both teacher and researcher.

Central to analytic autoethnography as proposed by Anderson (2006) is the notion that the personal story is subordinate to the larger empirical-theoretical story. While I attempted to follow this approach I remain torn on this point. Anderson’s characterisation of two types of autoethnography can be seen as an attempt to contain, limit and silence the personal or the self. I do share the view that social science writing should not slip into narcissistic self-absorption. We clearly cannot learn only from the particular events of our own lives. One of the defining features of analytic autoethnography whether used for teaching or in research is that it requires dialogue with others. This enables the researcher, teacher and/or student to identify a range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural understandings within the phenomena they are seeking to understand. Dialogue with others also provides a site for reflective engagement where different perspectives can challenge and enrich the researcher/teacher/student’s own perspective and deepen analytic insights.

Clearly the most effective way to demonstrate the value of analytic autoethnography is to exemplify it in actual practice. This applies to its use in teaching and learning as well as research and writing. This research project was my first attempt to exemplify a version of this approach, which now continues as part of my work in the education of those who wish to teach.

References


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Using Core Reflection to Navigate the Public and Private: Facing the Challenge of Authenticity in Teacher Education Practice

The goal of core reflection is to expand awareness and one’s sense of being. This can, in turn, lead to personal empowerment, a clearer perspective on facing challenges and solving problems, and put individuals in touch with their deepest sources of passion and strength (Korthagen, 2004).

Being a teacher educator means not only preparing our students to teach but preparing ourselves to teach as well. In this regard, Palmer (1998) asks, “How can schools educate students if they fail to support the teacher’s inner life? … How can schools perform their mission without encouraging the guide to scout out the inner terrain?” (p. 6). These questions expose a major void in the initial preparation of teachers and in the professional development typically offered for practicing teachers. With prominent national standards emphasizing content, pedagogy, and learning outcomes, rarely do we see any recognition of the importance for a teacher to understand herself, to engage and expand her awareness and sense of being in the world, and to teach from her soul so she can touch and know the souls of her students. Evoking and nourishing the inner life of teachers can provide the opportunity for them to re-energize both their commitment and passion for teaching because it re-connects them with their core qualities (Korthagen, 2004), their sense of purpose (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006), and their authenticity as an individual (Palmer, 1998). Cultivating these inner qualities and the “capacity to teach with greater consciousness, self-awareness, and integrity” loom large in the literature on reforming the profession of teaching and are posited as a necessary condition for successful professional development (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006, p. 39).

This study was initiated after the authors attended a 4-day workshop on core reflection taught by Fred Korthagen and Angelo Vasalos. The approach, described in Korthagen and Vasalos (2005), had a profound impact on our view of teaching and of teacher education. Synthesizing insights from psychology, psychotherapy, various wisdom traditions, and research into human consciousness, core reflection seeks to put individuals back in touch with their essence (Almaas, 1987) with the ultimate goal of unlocking human potential. The idea behind core reflection is that a teacher’s awareness of her core qualities—including her identity and mission—determines to a great degree how she will answer the questions, “Who am I, and how do I reflect who I am?” (Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002, p. 44). This becomes a critical point of intersection in the process of exploring one’s inner landscape as a teacher: the point where one’s identity as a human being intersects with one’s professional development (e.g., Palmer, 1998; Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002).

Core reflection is based on the so-called onion model (Figure 1). This is a model describing the relations between a person’s inner self and his or her behavior in the outer world (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). The six levels of this model are (1) the environment, (2) one’s behavior in relation to this environment, (3) the competencies determining one’s behavior, (4) the beliefs guiding one’s functioning in the outside world, (5) sense of identity, and (6) mission. The sixth level is also referred to as the level of spirituality. Reflection at this level is concerned with what inspires us, with what gives meaning and significance to our work or life. The idea behind the onion model is that the various levels influence each other. More specifically, that the inner levels determine the way individual functions on the outer levels, but also that there is a reverse influence (from outside to inside). When people experience problems in their lives or work, a friction exists between the levels in the onion model. When there is alignment between the levels, one experiences what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls flow, that is, a state of optimal functioning in which one feels that one’s expression in the real world reflects ‘the real me.’ In other words, there is a sense of identity and integrity. Flow has been shown to lead to both effective behavior and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Figure 1: The onion model.

Hence, the underlying assumption here is that alignment between the levels translates to a positive impact on teaching
and student learning. In this approach, people’s personal qualities (character strengths) are referred to as core qualities, a term coined by Ofman (2000). For example, a teacher competency such as asking questions is deepened when embedded in qualities of curiosity, empathy, connectedness with the students, flexibility, and so on. Moreover, drawing on core qualities (like courage, caring, and perseverance) is crucial to overcoming internal obstacles and limitations, for example limiting beliefs or limiting behavioral patterns. Believing in the promise of this approach to transform the nature of our work, we embarked on this collaborative self-study to investigate its sustainability and potential in our day-to-day lives as teacher education professors.

Barth’s (1990) statement that “humans learn through reflection, pleasure, and interaction with colleagues” resonated with our desire to form a collaborative team (p. 174). Loughran (2004) points out that the term “self-study” defines the focus of study (one’s self or one’s practice), but not the way the study is executed. He makes an important distinction between individual and collaborative self-studies, highlighting the difficulty that individuals encounter in reframing questions and in seeing taken-for-granted assumptions through a new lens. “At the heart of this issue is the argument that reframing is much more difficult from an individual and personal perspective as opposed to acting in collaboration with others” (Loughran, 2004, p. 21). Thus, the collaborative self-study design described in this paper was conceived to offer greater possibilities for development through shared inquiry, an acknowledgment of the inherent limitations of viewing “a situation from one solitary perspective” (p. 21).

Aims

The purpose of this collaborative self-study was to examine the impact of core reflection (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) on our private and public landscapes as teacher educators. The questions framing this research identify the key themes used to explore authenticity and the actualization of core qualities in our professional lives.

1. What insights and challenges emerge through attempts to implement core reflection principles in our private and public lives as teacher educators?
2. How do we negotiate the risks and benefits that we experience in our pursuit of authenticity?
3. What effect has this study had on our teaching practices and on our relationships with colleagues, students, and each other?

Method

Our two and a half year self-study collaboration began in May 2007 after we agreed to meet regularly in order to deepen our understanding of core reflection and its place in our work. Our initial research questions captured the hopes and curiosities we had about the transformative power of expanded awareness. We realized that because this would be a highly personal and subjective journey, our method and process for exploring these questions should involve frequent contact in order to articulate thoughts and feelings about the effect core reflection, capture fresh examples from our daily lives, and be rich in dialogue from multiple sources over time. Our regularly scheduled study meetings provided an anchor point for extended conversations, for revisiting questions and raising news ones, and for capturing snapshots of our inner landscapes in written notes and digital recordings.

Data on core reflection were gathered from bi-weekly meetings over a 2-year period, monthly meetings with new teachers, bi-monthly brown-bag discussions with colleagues, and feedback from current and former students. Written data from meeting transcriptions, journal and book notes, email communications, and summary reflections were compiled into 37 single-spaced pages and ordered chronologically to provide a clearer sense of impact and change over time. The constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze the qualitative data following an iterative cycle of simultaneous data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). This proved helpful in identifying the appearance and recurrence of themes and also highlighted the cyclical nature of consciousness and awareness. It allowed the authors to examine newly collected data, compare it to previous data categories and insights, generate additional questions, adjust data collection, and implement new understandings and strategies related to the three research questions framing the study.

Outcomes

Data analysis has revealed prominent threads and issues that recurred across multiple meetings and data sources, for example: reconstructing teaching identities, confronting our own hypocrisies, experiencing a greater capacity to hold our own and others’ tensions objectively, taking risks to sustain authenticity, and establishing new priorities to evaluate the strengths of our students and effectiveness of our courses. Our students’ reflections from two cohorts have, for the most part, indicated a high level of interest and resonance with the core reflection approach and contained numerous examples of how their teaching awareness changed as a result.

Allowing ourselves to let go of old identities and to reconstruct teaching identities more aligned with our core values became a goal for us early on. One early comment illustrates this outcome: “I feel more competent about myself as a teacher educator because I feel like I’m more aligned with my own identity.” We realized that fundamental shifts started to occur in how we viewed and wanted to respond to our students and to others we encountered. These shifts were magnified when we applied core reflection to our beliefs about our roles, competency, and behavior. Part of the core reflection process involves using the onion model (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) to help individuals clarify and analyze tensions they may be experiencing and to deconstruct blockages or perceived limitations in achieving “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Through questioning each other and talking through tensions using various layers of the onion to explore perceived limitations, we understood more clearly how core alignment was being affected by identification with old, well-established response patterns. “Maybe I more often check my decisions—are they coming from my core? Or another place?” This comment is an example of how an old pattern of decision-making was undergoing changed through awareness to allow connection with our core qualities to be more often present.

Another related theme surfaced around paradoxes through our struggles to understand the tension we experienced as we sought to bring greater levels of presence and core alignment into our work. We came to accept the notion that core qualities carry with them an ostensibly
contradictory appearance. When can sensitivity in an individual be construed as strength? When a weakness? The power of a core quality, like sensitivity, to transform and energize us from within is related to its paradoxical nature. Like other core qualities, our sensitivities possess their own potential to be strengths or weaknesses depending on how we actualize them. Thus, we had to move beyond the apparent contradiction of an experience in order to find the space within it to grow. We explored in our meetings that we truly could learn from the tensions created by our contradictions, although the pain of facing these tensions can prematurely lead to seeking a resolution rather than allowing ourselves to fully experience the depth of that pain. As we struggled to better understand this phenomenon in our daily experiences, we remembered Palmer’s (1998) words that suffering in this way is not to be avoided for through it our hearts expand.

This realization helped us to be more accepting of these feelings within us and to allow ourselves time to learn from them. An example that surfaced on multiple occasions involved the paradoxical nature of “demandingness.” When is this a desirable quality and when is it a liability to oneself or another? The paradox is exemplified in this statement:

I'm having trouble letting go of expecting others to do as I would do. How do I maintain my response as a professor that balances my beliefs that things should be done in certain ways with my desire to let go and be gracious? When I fail at this, it goes against my core beliefs.

This comment led to a discussion about the paradoxical nature of demands. On one hand, it can be helpful to model high expectations and standards for others to achieve and follow. On the other hand, it can create conflicts, tensions, and confusion. We have just begun to explore the dialectic relationship inherent in core qualities, but we think that it is in the tension, the void, the contradiction that we find the catalyst for growth. However, the shadow side of this kind of insight is that we began referring to ourselves as hypocrites when we did not feel successful living up to our new levels of awareness. The gap between what we said we want to do or how we want to be and what we actually did in practice appeared frequently enough that it almost felt like we made no forward progress at all, as exemplified here.

I feel I failed to live up to our ideals... Maybe I'm more aware that I'm not meeting my own ideals to live core reflection in my daily life. So I would say this is a deeper level of awareness, a realization that I see I'm not living up to... That's just being honest. It's very painful to say that.

Yet it appears that confronting that sense of hypocrisy we sometimes felt through core reflection made a positive impact, as two weeks later the following comment occurred:

I feel less split in my thoughts and actions, but more aligned in the bigger part. When I can stay connected with my inner essence and my own being, I have stronger flow to notice who I am and what I want to become. I am more aware of my own values, feelings, and wants.

Another confrontation with hypocrisy appears in the following email exchange in which the apparent contradiction between ideal and practice serves as a catalyst for deep learning.

I truly want to do a good job, and I feel I'm not reaching enough of my internal goal, so I'm experiencing some tension or even conflict within myself (like frustration for not holding myself to my promises), and that bothers me because I'm more aware of it.

Both of us found that we “still have trouble changing thought patterns with certain issues” and that embracing the paradoxes in our lives for the purpose of inner growth is an inconsistent pattern at best. However, this aspect of our self-study helped us to remind each other that our critical voices give us places to grow from our own weakness and vulnerabilities.

When we talked about how we could sustain core alignment during critical moments throughout the day, several techniques or strategies appeared to be developing as we faced the challenge of theory into practice. One thing that we both tried to be more mindful of was taking the time to build in a regular pattern of preparing ourselves to be fully present. This went hand-in-hand with the strategy of imagining ideal scenarios when we thought about situations we might find ourselves in, as these examples show:

I was weak last week, and I came away from a few interactions feeling powerless and vulnerable, and yet I had some other interactions that didn’t affect me that way but could have been just as powerful. The times I felt it got to me was because I was taken off-guard, I wasn’t ready for it… Are there triggers I can find to get where I need to be in those unexpected and challenging situations?

These comments encompass our use of visualization, taking time to reconnect with our core qualities as teachers prior to meeting our students, and activating self-knowledge and memories of past experience to restore confidence and courage. Such strategies represented key areas for us in how to be more consistent within ourselves amid the vicissitudes of daily interactions.

Changes in Teaching Practice

Through regular practice with core reflection, we have learned to become more aware of the effect that the actions of others—in and out of the classroom—can have on us. We now use core reflection to manage our perceptions about our own and others’ overt behaviors. When we used to look at behavior as a validation of our authenticity or of our students’ ability to be fully present or engaged, we realize through the lens of this study how misleading that perception often is. This has made us less susceptible as teachers to internalizing any behavior as negative or personally disinviting, and we think this change has strengthened our ability to remain authentic in critically challenging moments. In our curriculum, class assignments are less task-oriented and more holistically focused on student growth. We allot more class time, readings, and specific assignments to allowing students time to explore their inner-lives as future teachers, and we do so by sacrificing some of the more traditional course content but with a certain new awareness of the value of that sacrifice. We still produce some of the same course and program outcomes (e.g., the capstone portfolio), but our focus is much more strongly aimed at connecting with students’ core strengths and aligning those to the outcomes of their course work in authentic ways.

Conclusion

Supporting whole teacher development in teacher preparation programs and new teacher mentoring can
transform the inner landscape and provide a strong source of resistance against the disempowering effects of institutional socialization many early career teachers face. Are we fostering connectedness or fragmentation, beginning with the way we prepare teachers? We do little, it seems, to promote the idea that learning to teach is a lifelong vocation. It begins for many, and we certainly set the tone, in teacher preparation programs. While it can be painful to confront our own fears, weaknesses, and self-doubts, we have experienced the potential in these confrontations to grow by embracing rather than ignoring the contradictions we face daily. This validates for us that “the aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle” (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001, p. 20).

In the recognition and bringing forth of the best in ourselves and in others, we create or foster the condition for deeply connecting with one another, for opening up hearts and minds as a learning community, and for realizing the transformative power of education. Our study suggests that using core reflection in teacher education holds promise for empowering teachers and students and should not be marginalized nor framed as outside of the “real” work of education. For us, core reflection served as a useful tool for aligning our consciousness with our sense of purpose, passion, and potential as teachers and as human beings. This directly impacted the priorities we enacted in relationships with others and in our teaching practice. With more conviction than when we began this study almost three years ago, we share the belief that an essential role of teaching in current times is the need to address the spiritual or inner condition of both teachers and students. Palmer (1998) talks about the spiritual path this way: “…the diverse ways we answer the heart’s longing to be connected with the largeness of life—a longing that animates love and work, especially the work called teaching” (p. 5). It is important, even if for no grander reason, because the truthful connection we have with our students has a lot to do with how and at what level they will learn, their motivation, their trust, the way they will interact with others—in short, with virtually everything we would strive to model in teaching that is responsive and meaningful.

References
Redesigning a Teacher Education Program: A Story of our Challenges and Successes

Context

This is a study of our work in a two-year post baccalaureate teacher education program that was floundering. The Master of Teaching (MT) program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE) which annually admits approximately 70 students prepares teachers for one of three divisions: kindergarten to grade six; grade four to grade 10; and grade 7 to grade 12 (in select teaching subjects). The majority of teacher education students at OISE complete a one-year post-baccalaureate degree. The MT academic program consisted of 16 widely disparate courses; the program vision was very vague; the four practice teaching placements each of five weeks used a peculiar model that left students with a crushing workload; and the capstone experience was a research project that was poorly conceived and inadequately supervised. Approximately twenty instructors taught in the program, a combination of tenured and contract faculty, and doctoral students.

One of the researchers, Clare, had taught in the MT for two years when she was asked to take over as Director to reconceptualize and reorganize the program. The department Chair who had heard endless criticisms of the program realized that a strong leader with extensive experience in teacher education was needed if the program was to gain a more positive reputation both within and beyond the department. Surprisingly, the MT faculty team who had been together for years was happy with the program in spite of the student teachers feeling differently. At Clare’s encouragement, Clive began teaching in the program the year that she took over as Director.

Darling-Hammond identified common problems in teacher education: inadequate time, fragmentation, uninspired teaching methods, superficial curriculum, and a traditional view of schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2006). These criticisms may seem harsh but the program in question embodied most of the problems except that there was sufficient time. The program lacked coherence, curriculum was not covered in a systematic way, and the students spent countless hours completing busy-work assignments. Kennedy’s (2006) views were particularly appropriate for this program: “teacher educators [should] facilitate the development of practices that (a) optimize the numerous concerns and ideals that teachers must accommodate and (b) are sustainable” (p. 207). This is apt because much of the program tended to ignore the reality of classroom teaching with courses that were either highly abstract or based on generic teaching strategies. Having read about and adopted Loughran’s belief that we need a pedagogy of teacher education (2006), we felt committed to using the research literature to guide our work and to be mindful of using particular pedagogies as teacher educators. For example, the principles he identifies using such as need for sensitivity, building trust, being honest, valuing independence, reflection, and risk-taking were sorely missing from the MT program.

Knowing the literature on teacher education, we are aware of the elements of effective teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Having written extensively about priorities for teacher education and having intensely studied teacher education programs (Kosnik and Beck 2009), we had a good sense of the issues. Since Clare had previously conducted self-study research about her work on renewing a teacher education program (Kosnik, 2007; Kosnik, 2001), she could see the value of tracking and analyzing the change process. She was prepared for resistance and realized that doing the self-study with Clive would be a richer experience because he could provide a different perspective (and moral support).

Aim

The main goal of this study was to study the impact on two faculty members of the experience of going into a teacher education program to improve it. Three questions guided our self-study:

1. How did we go about the change process?
2. How did we prioritize our initiatives?
3. How did we change in the process of changing the program?

Method

We used a grounded theory method for this study, which Punch (2005) describes as “both a strategy for research and a way of analyzing the data” (p. 154). Since self-study research is focused on gaining an understanding, grounded theory is appropriate because it does not apply an a priori set of categories. “The rationale for doing a grounded theory study is that we have no satisfactory theory on the topic, and that we do not understand enough about it to begin theorizing” (Punch, 2005, p. 159).

We had six data sources.
1. Drawing on the research on teacher education, we began by outlining our vision for an effective teacher education program (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Some of the principles of our vision included: both students and faculty become a community, students acquire in-depth knowledge of their subject areas (including appropriate pedagogical strategies), and students develop a professional identity, which sees teachers as decision-makers.
2. From there we wrote about what we thought was wrong with the program. This was a highly personal (and confidential) document, which we did not share with the faculty.
3. We used a Stop, Start, Modify commentary on the program that the students had initiated.
4. We began a photo history of the program (program-wide activities and special events).
5. We conducted some exit interviews with students, including a survey of students to see how well the program matched their expectations. (The exit survey data was not included in this paper but the construction of the survey helped us refine our priorities for the program.)
6. As we worked with colleagues and attended faculty meetings, we kept notes. In particular we tried to identify critical incidents and write about them. There was substantial email correspondence which we analyzed.

The data analysis followed a multi-step process: first, we read through our data to get a sense of what topics kept recurring and recorded these. Secondly, we used the categories from our vision (mentioned above) and placed data (e.g., email correspondence, agenda items) under the headings. Thirdly, we returned to our research questions and placed data under each question. There was a fairly strong consistency between our priorities for the program and the findings. Then we matched the various critical incidents (e.g., resistance to revising the admission process) to the research questions. And finally we identified a few new themes (e.g., leadership style).

**Outcomes**

In this section we return to the objectives of the study and describe some of the outcomes.

**How did we prioritize our initiatives?** Our reputations as leading teacher education scholars and highly effective administrators immediately caused anxiety for some faculty while others welcomed us. As experienced administrators, we knew that we could not tackle “everything” immediately. We needed to develop a plan and timeline for change. In determining the priorities, we used our own research on teacher education (Kosnik and Beck, 2009) and the data sources (e.g., Stop, Start, Modify). We laid out a timeline for change that we continually adjusted throughout the year. Although the timeline was adjusted regularly it was useful to have a plan for change. Deciding the order for change was based on two criteria: what problem is most glaring and what can be changed without having to go through the cumbersome process used by the School of Graduate Studies for major program changes. These might seem like flimsy reasons but we had to be realistic about what could be accomplished. Over the course of the year (and this part of the study), some of our initiatives logically followed the school year: revise the admissions process, redo the budget, organize assignment due dates, and review hiring practices.

Clare’s decision to initially tackle two issues - develop guidelines for the research projects and build community -- was a wise one. Although she did the bulk of the work on writing the guidelines for the research projects, the faculty was pleased that something was finally being done about the projects that were a source of aggravation for both faculty and students. Developing a community was much more difficult: some faculty were angered that they had to work together while others were delighted. Clive was particularly instrumental in building community; for example, we worked with the doctoral students who were part of the faculty team and made extraordinary efforts with the students. Some enjoyed the community-building activities while others were highly resistant.

**How did we go about the change process?** Since one of our priorities was to build community, one of the logical ways to begin was to have faculty meetings, an opportunity both for discussion and for faculty to get to know each other. When Clare instituted monthly faculty meetings she studied the agenda to see if there was space for discussion (rather than her dominating the meeting). After each meeting, she looked at the minutes and notes to see how she had handled herself and over time saw that some faculty were taking more initiative. To move the program forward Clare organized a day-long retreat for faculty, but setting the agenda for the day was complicated because any discussion was perceived as a criticism of the program which in turn was seen as an indictment of the faculty who had been teaching in the program for years. She chose to frame the day around the question, What has the research on teacher education revealed in the last ten years? Constantly coming back to the research was a strategy she used over the course of the year because she felt that it was less personal. In the afternoon of the retreat, we broke into two groups: academic program and practice teaching. Clare took the brave step of chairing the group on practice teaching (rather than the coordinator of practice teaching who is part of the problem) and having Clive (the newest member of the MT but a senior faculty member) facilitate the group on the academic program. These choices made a statement about the leadership of the program; some found this unsettling while others were pleased. The simple fact that there was discussion about the program was upsetting to some.

Finding a few trusted others with whom to work was essential. We hired a few new instructors who became allies and these individuals all had a history of building community in their teacher education program. This resulted in a split faculty but Clare and Clive needed to start building a critical mass of instructors who had views and practices that were consistent with a pedagogy of teacher education (Loughran, 2006). In some of the dark days, we reread Wenger et al. (2002) about communities (e.g., shared values) that helped us understand the dynamics within the faculty team. We did not all hold the same goals; we may have uttered the same phrases such as prepare student teachers to be effective teachers, but what this looked like in practice varied tremendously. Understanding the problems (e.g., lack of interest in community) was essential if we were to solve them. We had not factored in having to spend so much time understanding the issues; rather, we had naively thought the problems were so patently obvious that the faculty would want to come together to solve them. Over and over we said that this program embodied the moral of the children’s fable of the Emperor’s New Clothes – denying the problems had become this faculty’s practice. This was not Clare and Clive’s approach.

Building community with the students was exceptionally difficult. As their Stop, Start, Modify data clearly showed, they felt alienated from the faculty and in many cases from each other. Clare and Clive used various strategies to build community: forming a social committee, holding potluck dinners, and organizing a mentoring program. A big part of building community was simply listening to the students. Clare and Clive made themselves available to students and set aside class time for students to raise their concerns. We held informal meetings for students...
over the spring and summer to help them with their research projects. These meetings provided an opportunity to chat with students about the program in a less obvious way and to tell them about the changes we were making. In September in their second year of the program, Clare held a class meeting for students to outline the changes; this made them happier because they felt “listened to.” It was important to respond to their concerns and to outline the changes we were making since some of these were “invisible” to the students.

In terms of the actual program we embarked on several initiatives such as revising the admission process, organizing due dates of assignments, and revising the content of some courses. We were simultaneously working on both the structure of the program and the content of the courses. For example, Clive completely revamped the course he was teaching to make it more focused on helping the students with their research projects.

To use research on the program as a basis for program development, we decided to develop a survey to study student expectations for and experiences in the program. We designed an on-line survey that was a method of research neither of us had used before but which proved to be an excellent strategy in terms of gathering student feedback and accommodating students’ demand to be heard. It demonstrated to the students and faculty that we were very serious about changing the program.

How did we change in the process of changing the program? In this section we describe four ways that we changed in the process of changing the program.

Finding a new balance. The amount of work to be done was immense. At times it seemed like everything needed to be done at once. Since we were so committed to improving the student experience in the program we spent an inordinate amount of time in discussion with students. However, we felt a real tension between the students’ desire for change and some faculty’s reluctance to change. Balancing listening to students and protecting ourselves became a constant juggling act.

Learning to live with mediocrity. Initially, Clare was spending an inordinate amount of time complaining; Clive helped her see that if she continued it would undermine their enthusiasm for teacher education. We had to celebrate successes, no matter how small. We had to accept that the road was going to be long and hard — the barriers in the path are the path became Clare’s personal mantra. We kept a running record of our accomplishments that we referred to regularly. This helped us see that we were making progress and kept our spirits buoyed.

Changing our leadership style. Clare finally realized that some instructors were not going to cooperate — period! They created circular arguments such as we cannot change the practice teaching model until we talk to our school partners but we cannot talk to our school partners until we talk to faculty. Towards the end of the first semester, she accepted that she would have to be less democratic. Some faculty simply would not compromise or change no matter what evidence was presented. When she first used the line “I am the Director of the program and this is what we are doing” she was a bit horrified but realized this was the only course of action left. Clare and Clive who have written extensively about building community in teacher education knew that the faculty needed to be a community before the students could become a community. Program development and community building have to go hand-in-hand, yet building community with those who do not want to be part of the community is nearly impossible (Kosnik & Beck, 2007). Novak and Purkey (2005) maintain that in some cases we need to extend invitations over and over again to some students; similarly we must do so with faculty, but eventually, we must accept that some simply do not want to be part of the community. And in those cases leadership (e.g., decision-making) may have to be less democratic. Extraordinary situations require extraordinary measures. As Clare said over and over again, “this is not a popularity contest. If some people don’t like me then so be it. We are changing for the sake of the program and the students. Either get on board the train or get on another train.” As teacher educators, we have been vilified by others (e.g., Levine, 2006). We do not expect criticism from our own ranks but programs such as the MT do teacher education a disservice. We cannot sit idly by because the stakes are too high.

Being prepared for surprises. We grew to recognize that there were minefields littered throughout the program. For example, Clare had not closely read the website but vaguely knew that it was poorly designed and not particularly helpful. When she did finally read through it she was stunned at the amateurish quality, the poor quality of the writing, and the lack of information on how to actually apply for the program. The description of the program included sentences such as “the program depicts the epitome of the amalgamation of theory and practice.” No wonder we were not attracting quality applicants. She quickly readjusted her priorities and spent weeks rewriting all of the text for the website, hiring someone to remount the site. Both Clare and Clive became wary, always looking over their shoulders for the next catastrophe.

Implications for Others Embarking on Renewing a Teacher Education Program

Our story and analysis reveal that the change process is a highly complex one with layers of the personal and professional continuously overlapping. It has been exhausting and trying. We needed to constantly be reminding ourselves that we were reshaping the program for the students; it was not about us. Program development must be guided by what we know about good teaching followed by creating opportunities for learning, all of which must be done in a supportive learning community. The constant reference to the research literature must be the foundation for program renewal. Knowing the literature, doing research, and using research to guide decisions should be the modus operandi. Comments from resistant faculty can then be countered with statements from the research. The place of research in teacher education (including longitudinal research on graduates from the program) must guide program decisions. It also helps take the personal out of decisions. Having priorities, a plan that we were willing to change, and a few trusted colleagues were integral to our success in reshaping this troubled program.

References


Evolving Pedagogical Practices to Support the Development of First Generation and Non-Traditional Teacher Education Undergraduate Students

Introduction

A P-16 view of the education lifespan has become popular, but the reality is that many students are not ready for college work (Schemo, D., 2006; Venezia, A., Kirst, M., & Antonio, A., 2004). Our college’s mission is committed to students who have traditionally been excluded from higher education, to realizing their intellectual and personal goals. Nearly half of the College’s full- and part-time students are over 25 years of age. More than 95% of full-time students receive financial aid; 36% come from families below the poverty level.

Most of our students come from substandard urban schools, which have not adequately prepared them for college. Although they face daily challenges in their lives that compound the difficulties of completing college, we face an ethical dilemma: the tension between providing the scaffolding to support the learning of all students in our college classrooms, believing that all children can learn, and our ethical responsibility to prepare students who have the necessary skills and qualities to become excellent teachers (Krieger, 2006). While we expect them to come to us with a certain level of preparedness, in most instances this has not been the case. According to London (1992), “Any understanding of [our students’] experiences and any programmatic attempts to ease their transitions into higher education require that their stories, individually and collectively, be placed in the context of the cultural challenges they encounter” (p. 5). We have had to adjust our practices to meet our students’ needs so that they are able to go back to their communities and provide effective learning experiences for children. We must find ways to provide a culturally relevant classroom experience for our students, and be cognizant of the goals and expectations they have of the teacher education program and of us.

Relationships are at the heart of the teaching process. Teaching is complex work. The relationships need management, in which our “skills, ability, and professional autonomy come to the fore . . . eliciting possibilities for understanding teaching as being problematic” (Loughran, 2006, p. 35).

Our view of the teaching process and the structure of the college classroom create tensions between the content we need to cover and the teaching and learning practices we choose to implement to meet students’ needs. As Loughran (2006) points out, teacher educators must be aware of not only what they teach, but also how they teach. We came to teacher education with an early childhood frame of reference, which created tensions for us. But we also came to the college classroom with our college experiences that had not been fully articulated. A result of these tensions is that we have become people who reflect in action, becoming researchers of our practice context, a place filled with uncertainty (Schon, 1983). Loughran (2006), using a quote from Mason (2002) from Researching Your Own Practice: the Discipline of Noticing, points out that one aspect of being an expert is having a sensitivity to noticing – being able to see things that “novices overlook,” having a rich repertoire to draw on when deciding how to act, and then reflecting on the results of our choices (p. 33). Our education and experience gave us that expertise, but it did not eliminate the daily tensions. This “expertise” did provide us with the means to make decisions more easily about what we do in the classroom. But expertise alone did not ensure that our decisions took us where we wanted to be. In fact, it did not.

MacDonald (1992) describes teaching as “an uncertain craft, occurring within a wild triangle of relations among teachers, students, and subject” (p. 1). What he writes holds true for the college classroom as well. The majority of the students we teach are first generation college students. But as Snell (July-August, 2008) emphasizes, “being a first generation college student is only one issue impacting success in college for them; social class and their local social environment, particularly the effects of this on students’ literacy, complicate and bring additional challenges to their ability to reach their goal, graduation” (p. 28).

Each semester, we have a diverse group of college students with varying experiences and needs. They expect certainty from us, but there is no certainty. Some of what we have developed “fits” our students over time, but each semester we must reassess the wild triangle and all the factors impinging on it from without, which creates unforeseen elements of uncertainty for us. We think that we have acquired “a craft,” but again, as MacDonald (1992) points out, these successes highlight failures – our inability to reach some individual students and enhance their fundamental skills and knowledge of what they need in order to effectively teach young children. Many of the students expect us to provide them with gimmicks to use in the classroom while we are trying to give them a framework for thinking about how they teach. These tensions led us to explore our practices, “stepping outside the room, figuratively speaking, and to search for perspective [deeper understanding of our students in order to rethink our own pedagogy] of the events inside” (MacDonald, 1992, p. 10).

Objective

Our objective was to use stories of our students’ lives to explore our understandings of our teacher education practices. In a similar way to Richardson and Skinner (Winter, 1992), our goal was to gain insights about our students’ learning needs from their stories and then use that knowledge to improve our pedagogy.
Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks guided our thinking: the Andragogy in Practice Model (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005) and Crowe and Berry's (2007) five principles of pedagogical practices to support prospective teachers learning about teaching.

We used The Andragogy in Practice Model to understand our students’ needs and what our teaching practices should look like. Adult learning principles have to be adapted to the goals and individual differences of students (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). The model has three interactive dimensions: (1) Goals and Purposes of Learning, incorporating institutional, societal, and individual growth; (2) Individual and Situational Differences, incorporating subject matter differences, situational differences, and individual learner differences; (3) Andragogy’s Six Core Adult Learning Principles: the learner’s need to know; the self-concept of the learner; the prior experience of the learner; the learner's readiness to learn; their orientation to learning; and their motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

Crowe and Berry’s (2007) Five Principles reflected the essence of our pedagogical practices in preparing prospective teachers. They served as a guide for reviewing what we were doing in light of what we learned about our students from our interviews: (1) Thinking like a teacher, seeing teaching from the viewpoint of the learner; (2) Creating opportunities for “prospective teachers” to understand thinking as a teacher; (3) Providing opportunities for students to “try out thinking like a teacher in order to develop their thinking as a teacher”; (4) Providing scaffolding to support them in this process; (5) Developing responsive relationships as being the essence of learning to think like a teacher and in supporting students’ learning (Crowe & Berry, p. 33). Crowe and Berry (2007) point out that their principles “are a complex set of interconnected ideas that are enacted differently with different students…according to the concerns, contexts, and challenges that we and our students encounter” (p. 33).

With these two conceptual frameworks guiding us, we used the knowledge about students from the interviews and our ongoing conversations to explore our current practices and how to better design and teach courses to fit the needs of our particular students.

Methods

Looking at Our Practices. In order to learn more about our teaching, we began to inquire into our lived experiences as college students. This study began as an informal dialogue between the authors, in which we expressed frustrations about our students’ difficulties in meeting our expectations.

Listening to Our Students’ Stories of Lived Experience. Stories of lived experience are a resource for experiential material, which gives us insight into the lives of particular students in order to understand them. We explored the lived experience of four first generation college graduates and what those experiences meant for our teaching about teaching them. We hoped that the autobiographical/lived experiences of some of our former students would provide insight “[into] the ways in which students’ actions and words provide glimpses into how they construct and make sense of the world” (Clark & Erickson, 2004, p. 4). In addition, Van Manen (1990) points out that “educators have a professional interest in (auto)biographies because from descriptions of individuals, they are able to learn about the nature of educational experience and individual development” (p. 72).

Re-examining Our Practices. The students’ lived experiences created a context for us to inquire into our classroom practices. Our inquiry then turned inward. We looked at our beliefs and concerns about teachers and students, and our role as gatekeepers to the profession. We explored our own experiences as college students and how that influenced our expectations of students and the way we were teaching them. By externalizing our reflections to make our “individual variation in frames of reference, values, and levels of understanding” (Mishler, 1986, p. 4) clear, we were able to lift the fog that made it difficult for us to “hear” fully our students’ stories as well as interpret their stories in a way that is usable in our teaching decisions.

Data Collection. A series of meetings with a small support group of recently graduated students served as the catalyst that led to the research. The actual research data came from two sources: (1) articulation of our assumptions from our lived experiences of growing up and going to college; (2) in-depth interviews of four 2006-2007 graduates about their lived experiences.

We examined our assumptions about college students and teaching them. This data came from ongoing online dialogue where we examined our lived experiences including college.

The four graduates who participated included one black male, one white female, and two black females. All signed papers allowing us to interview them and use their interviews for this research. Each interview was 1-½ hours in length, semi-structured, and open-ended. We provided the topics: family, schooling, community, and finding college. We asked clarifying questions when we had trouble following their accounts, but we did not ask interpretive questions. Occasionally, without prompting, they offered explanations of some of the events described in the interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed during a one-week period in July 2008. After the stories were transcribed, we took them back to our interviewees to check for accuracy and to see if they had anything to add. So, the interviewees became “co-investigators” of their own stories (Manen, 1990, p. 98).

Data Analysis. First, we extracted our “beneath the surface” operating assumptions that came from our lived experiences. Bracketing them allowed us to examine them as data.

Second, we analyzed the interview transcripts for the thematic aspects of graduates’ stories. Story themes are like “knots in the web of experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun…” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 90). We read through each transcript highlighting the themes that emerged related to the topics of family, schooling, community, and finding college. From this, we explored the similarities that ran across all the interviews. Then we did a second reading, inquiring into the differences in themes from individual interviewees.

Third, we returned to our bracketed assumptions to explore the meaning of our students’ lived experiences and how what we learned would help us to reframe our understanding of teaching about teaching with our students. As Samaras and Freese (2006) point out, we asked ourselves “what this information is telling [us] about [our] teaching, about [our] students’ learning, about [our] classroom…” (p. 89). In addition, we asked ourselves about how these new
Results

What We Learned About Us From Bracketing Our Assumptions. Even though the hard economic facts of our backgrounds were in many ways similar to our students, there were many soft issues that made our experiences different. In terms of family, both of us are children of immigrants who did not graduate from college; we were raised in an urban environment; we held jobs throughout high school and college; family expectations were high, which included respect for adults, doing well in school, and a college degree. Our communities were basically safe and neighbors were aware of who we were - a second set of "parental" eyes. We performed well in school, partially because of the underlying support and value that was placed on schooling as the only way to have a better life than our parents. It was a tacit expectation that we would do well and be responsible for anything that was asked of us by our teachers.

What We Learned From the Interviews. Themes emerged from the interviews that were related to specific topics discussed by the graduates. The topics covered were family, schooling, community, and finding college.

The students split into two types: the traditional-aged student and the older adult student. The traditional-aged students had no outside responsibilities but as first generation college students, they also did not have the supportive understanding of their families that students whose parents attended college have. The first generation, non-traditional students had many outside responsibilities, including raising their children, but just as with the traditional aged student, they did not always have the supportive understanding of their families. However, each student had a significant adult in their lives that encouraged them and showed them the possibility of a different life.

Family. We learned that our students were often raised by single mothers and many times there were extended family or unrelated adults living in their homes. The titles given to various adults in their lives were not based on blood ties, but on how close the relationship was between the adult and the student – the caring quality of the relationship.

Schooling. Entering middle school was a pivotal time in our interviewees' lives. Doing well in middle school took second place to peer relationships. For some, this extended right through high school. We also learned that their schools, particularly high school, were dysfunctional. Goal setting for the future was not part of their experience.

Community. The influences of the community and peers did not support the idea of college. All the students grew up in poverty. On the whole, their lives were very transient. They were exposed to community violence and drug use.

Finding College. All of the students interviewed had someone who encouraged them to attend college. Sean developed a friendship with a young substitute teacher. Their relationship helped Sean think about going to college. Deena got a job in a special education school, a school to which she was sent as a younger child. The director of the school said that the only way she could have this job was if she enrolled in college courses. Kisha had a friend who attended our college who encouraged her to enroll. She had already attended several colleges prior to this. Fanny had an older sister who was enrolled in a state college. She followed her sister's example and enrolled in college, although after the official deadline for admission.

Completing the Circle: Re-examining Our Practice. We need to know our students' stories to know where they have come from to help them meet college expectations. We must maintain our focus on our practices and the skills and qualities students need to become effective teachers.

We used the results of our analyses of graduates' interviews to explore the changes that we would implement in our courses to strengthen the connection between our vision of what prospective teachers need to know and be able to do and the learning strengths and needs of our students interpreted through adult learning principles.

Reframing Our Practice Based on What We Learned. We reframed our teaching strategies based on what we learned about the characteristics of our first generation, non-traditional students. We expanded our syllabi to make explicit our former tacit expectations, and discussed them with students on the first day of class. We discussed procedures that would enable them to do well – get the high grades they wanted (Wong, 2009).

We implemented more ways to build personal connections to students, such as starting the semester with sharing artifacts that illustrated who they are, and sharing our personal backgrounds. To know our students more deeply, we had students write reflections at the end of class. These reflections were private and not shared without their permission with peers. They wrote about their personal thoughts to which we always responded. In addition, we strive to provide continuous, timely feedback on all assignments.

We began to hold midterm conferences to review student progress and help them set goals. This began a process where students reflected on their role as learners and their responsibility for improving their performance.

We wanted to connect our assignments to the "real world." We built in more field experiences and created assignments that linked the theory and information they were learning in class to what they were doing in the field.

To scaffold their learning, we established greater clarity in assignments, developing well-thought out guidelines, which included breaking down assignments, providing rubrics that detailed the levels of quality for assignments, and giving students opportunities to work together in and out of class. We also built into class time small group collaboration, discussion, and sharing of work in progress for peer feedback and teacher assistance.

In an effort to develop students' understanding and responsibility for their own learning, we used Blackboard extensively. Blackboard became an avenue for students to keep up to date with assignments, check for due dates, and track their progress. We also gave students opportunities for self-assessment to help them make their learning visible.

We reassessed our thinking based on what we learned about our students and how we teach. Do we now see our students and their needs in a different way? Do we see how we need to teach them as shifting? Will we now be able to better engage them in their own learning, help them to see the "why" of what we ask them to do?
Discussion

Since completing the research and implementing changes in our teaching, we observed that students who have taken one of our classes are more able to take greater responsibility for their own learning, to inquire about alternative ways to fulfill an assignment, have better time management skills, hand in more “finished” work, and hand it in on time. They ask more questions and more freely provide their opinions during discussions and in their written work.

In our context, the students are almost all first generation and/or non-traditional. We design courses to address this group’s needs. This is not the case across all of higher education. Further research is needed to address the following questions: What if the students who are first generation or non-traditional are a small segment of a very large class, how would we accommodate their needs within the context of the larger group? How could we flexibly structure a class using Knowles’ Core Andragogical Principles to accommodate the learning needs and prior experiences of the different students?

References:
American Association of University Professors.
This study derives from my interest in meaningful mathematics learning for all children and mathematics teaching that promotes understanding. Through my work as an elementary school teacher and a teacher educator, I have learned that many classroom teachers find it difficult to teach mathematics in diverse classrooms. Children with special learning needs are now included in mainstream schools in Iceland and the country has changed in the last decade from being a homogeneous society to developing as a multicultural community.

The research builds on my former research on teacher development in mathematics teaching as well as other researchers’ work. In an ongoing self-study with my colleagues of a graduate course Mathematics for all, we have found that the participants of the course see themselves more as guiders and supporters than investigators and promoters of learning situations. Their own experience as mathematics learners is as passive receivers who practiced rules and procedures introduced by teachers and in textbooks. They experience a lack of competence in teaching mathematics for understanding in inclusive schools (Guðjónsdóttir, Kristinsdóttir, & Óskarsdóttir, 2009).

Given opportunities to collaboratively investigate mathematics and solve mathematical problems, teachers discover how the different experiences they bring into the community contribute to their understanding of the mathematics involved and how people learn mathematics (Guðjónsdóttir, & Kristinsdóttir, 2006; Gunnarsdóttir, Kristinsdóttir, & Pálsdóttir, 2008). We, the teacher educators, have found it important to model teaching that enhances inclusive education. If teachers are expected to teach for diversity and understanding, they need opportunity to develop and enhance their pedagogical knowledge. They need to experience their own mathematics learning in an environment that reflects the environment they are expected to create in their own classroom (Moore, 2005).

Researching my own practice while still a primary school teacher, I learned that when giving children opportunities to engage in activities that made sense to them, they brought new ideas into the classroom that helped all of us to gain deeper understanding of important mathematical principles and of their thinking and understanding of mathematical concepts. In collaboration with colleagues that became my critical friends and who were also enthusiastic to learn to understand the development of their own students’ mathematical learning, we built communities in our classrooms that promoted meaningful learning opportunities for all children. Our collaboration had a major impact on our development as teachers (Kristinsdóttir, 2007; 2010).

Aim

As a teacher educator, I have the desire to identify approaches to teacher education to insure that teachers meet the demand to develop relative to the complexity in mathematics teaching. Wood & Berry (2003) discussed the need for identifying such approaches and claimed that, in spite of the continuing efforts of researchers, archived research knowledge has had little effect on the improvement of practice in the average classroom.

In this study, I am trying to learn not just from my own research but also from the others I’m researching with, the eight 5th and 6th grade teachers in two neighboring elementary schools who are participating because they have the desire to become better mathematics teachers in their schools with diverse groups of students. The main goal of the research is to learn to understand how teachers meet new cultural and mathematical challenges and how participation in a learning community with their colleagues and a teacher educator can lead to changes that are valuable for their work.

The teachers have no former experience of researching their own practice and rely much on my expertise in planning the research and leading our collaborative work. The study started last fall and involves teachers researching their own practice with my support, and myself researching this collaborative process as a whole and my development as a researcher.

In this paper I will focus on my role as an initiator to the work, my intentions with the research, the initial steps in carrying out the research, my reflections on our collaboration and the decisions I made while leading the collaborative work. Leading the collaborative research, I have to be aware of our different backgrounds and experience in researching own practice. As a specialist and an outsider to the project my role is different from the teachers. The teachers were all eager to participate in the project, but may not have been aware of what is required of them, as researchers, to integrate into their teaching. In discussing coaching self-study in teacher education Loughran (2008) argues that without a dilemma the impetus of conducting a self-study would be diminished. Capturing a real reason for doing a self-study is very important and the question is how one does create that desire in others?

In preparing for the workshops, I try to be loyal to the teachers’ expressed visions for the developmental project, but my own beliefs and goals for the project also play an important role. According to Kise (2006) the core of coaching teacher development is to help teachers understand where their strengths and beliefs lock them into practices that limit their freedom to help students learn. Their possibilities to stay open to new avenues for professional growth need to be enhanced by engaging in deep conversations in which we can honor different positions and acknowledge diverse opinions.

Methods

The study is a collaborative inquiry into mathematics teaching and learning (Goos, 2004). The collaboration implies that we have different roles. The teachers are the
insiders because the research is focused on their practices. Insider research involves research by teachers into their own teaching (Jaworski, 2003). As an outsider to the project I help to provide a community of teachers and an educator where the teachers can share their research practices and discuss their ideas. I’m researching the collaborative program and my own practice as educator in supporting teacher research. In doing so, I become an insider researching my own practice (Jaworski, 2006).

Starting the project I interviewed all the teachers and the schools principals and visited all their classrooms. From the interviews and classroom observations, I got insight into the teachers’ world and their visions for the project that guided me in leading the research. On a monthly basis we met in workshops where we explored mathematics, discussed and reflected on our investigations, discussed the teachers’ stories from their classrooms and reflected on their students’ learning. We also discussed new research on mathematics teaching and learning and each teacher’s professional development. The workshops are audio and video taped and I wrote my reflections after the workshops.

Case writing from classroom experiences is an important part of the teachers work to stimulate their inquiry and analysis on the real challenges and dilemmas of their practices. Describing their practice, they adopt discourses for interpreting the action and construct their personal theory of the practice described. Theorized practice presents practitioners with opportunities to propose and try new practices, make decisions or conclusions, and develop and improve their practice (Kruger & Cherednichenko, 2006). Through refinement of their teaching, I hope that spirals of experience will emerge and we can learn from former cycles while building new ones.

The workshops have a mathematical focus and all participants explore mathematics together. Mason (1999) is used as a guiding tool in our explorations with the mathematics. The workshops are organized using a circular approach and involve a ‘spiral of building confidence’ through manipulating; getting sense of; capture in pictures, and words and symbols; which are fodder for further manipulation, etc. The problems we explore have the potential to promote mathematical activity and thinking and stimulate collaboration where the discussion and sharing of thinking is meaningful (Jaworski, 2007).

This research aims at improving teaching and looks for and requires evidence of the reframed thinking and transformed practice of the research. This, according to LaBoskey (2004), is derived from an evaluation of the impact of developmental efforts. It is interactive and demonstrates interactions with colleagues, students, the educational literature and our own previous work confirming or challenging our developing understandings. It employs multiple primarily and qualitative methods, many of which are used in general educational research and some that are innovative.

Austin and Senese (2004) encourage teachers to include self-study in their list of professional expectations and responsibilities. Self-study evaluates what teachers are and there is no better way to strengthen teaching practices, to recognize personal values and beliefs, and to enrich students’ learning than through self-study. Mathematics educators emphasize the importance of teacher research into their own teaching. Stigler & Hiebert (2004) claim that teachers have a central role to play in building a useful knowledge base for the profession. They need to analyze what happens when they try something new in their own teaching, record what they are learning and share that knowledge with their colleagues. Artigue (2009) stresses the importance for research within schools and stresses the need to take into account factors internal to the development of the field itself. The progression of research has made it more and more evident that research methodologies have to organize a relationship with the situational, institutional and cultural dimensions of learning and teaching processes. Researches within schools where teachers are active participants in the research process meet these requirements.

Outcomes

Visiting the teachers’ classrooms I found that most of the lessons started with review of homework; then the teachers described what the subject for the lesson was and exchanged some words with the students about procedures for solving the problem types on the agenda. The students then worked individually or in small groups with problems in their textbooks and the teachers explained procedures for students that asked for help. There was no common discussion during lessons or round up of the topic at the end of lessons. The students are tracked into groups depending on how much support they need according to the homeroom teachers analysis of their mathematical ability. The students that are labeled slow learners work in small groups with help from special-ed teachers and those labeled as more able work in larger groups.

In the initial phase of our collaboration the teachers expressed their need for help in teaching mathematics for understanding in inclusive schools. They told me that they had found that tracking students in mathematics classes was important for their possibilities to develop in their mathematics learning. What I observed was not unexpected. It was in accordance with many of my former observations in schools and was similar to the expressed attitudes of former teachers toward teaching and learning.

Collaborating with the four teachers that were my critical friends while I was studying my own teaching, I observed classrooms where the learning environment was different. The teachers introduced the topic on the agenda by referring to former work or asking for children’s ideas about the topic. The children worked in groups and the teachers encouraged them to explore, investigate, draw conclusions, discuss problems they were facing or things they had discovered both within their groups and with the whole class. This fostered a feeling of support for each other in their learning. The teachers had experience with flexible groupings and their conclusion was that all children gain from working in diverse groups (Kristinsdóttir, 2010).

From my observations and research of my own teaching, I know that teachers are capable of creating a learning environment where all students are supported and work cooperatively. My dilemma at this point was how I could help these teachers to rethink their teaching? While planning the first workshop, I decided to draw from my former experience of working with teachers and gave the participants a problem to work on that inspired them to explore into their own understanding of mathematics and to discuss how their own students might have solved the problem. In the beginning, the teachers seemed frustrated
and insecure about how to address the problem. I urged them to discuss their ideas and then they started to draw pictures and write numbers to explain their thinking. Our discussions on the different ways of solving the problem and the teachers’ struggle to explain their thinking, paved the way for discussing the children’s way of learning, how they might have solved the problem and how they explain their thinking. Some of teachers were determined that their own students would not be able to solve the problem unless the teacher explained the procedures carefully to them. Others believed that their students could, if they were inspired to approach the problem from their own way of understanding and discuss it with their classmates and their teacher.

We also discussed what might be the goal for posing this problem to young children, teenagers etc. What will children learn from solving the problem? Will all children learn the same and how can the teacher understand what each child is learning? I urged the teachers to think about individual students and how they might approach the problem. These discussions opened up for reflecting on individual children’s needs and support and how all children can add to the learning in the classroom.

When I asked the teachers at the end of the first workshop what they would like to do at the second workshop, they all expressed that they wanted to learn more about cooperative learning. Some of them had taught their children to work cooperatively but not in mathematics classes. I also asked them to bring to our next workshop a short story from their classrooms that they would like to share with us.

We started the next workshop discussing different ways of computing number sentences and the teachers were all assigned a role to play in their groups: supporter, writer, time keeper etc. We then discussed the different roles and the goals for teaching children cooperation and what they felt about being assigned roles to play in their groups.

Inspired from their experience at the first workshop the teachers had investigated with problem solving and cooperative learning in their classes. They told stories from their classes and discussed what they had learned from their work. They all gave me copies of their students work and one team of teachers (a homeroom teacher and two special-ed teachers) had written some conclusions about the lesson they had described. I then gave them guidelines for case writing (Kruger, & Cherednichenko, 2006) to help them analyse their cases to discuss further at the third workshop.

Preparing for the third workshop, the homeroom teacher, mentioned above, sent me an e-mail, and told me that she was working with the special-ed teachers and they were trying to answer the questions I gave them. They felt they had answered the questions in the paper they gave me at workshop two. I found it important to reply the mail while they were still having their meeting and was careful to explain to them that I would like to see more nuances in their analysis. What they gave me the first time was a general description, they mentioned that this was a diverse group of children but there was no description of how different children had approached the project. The next day I got a letter from the same teacher where she expressed that she had doubts about writing the analysis, asked where this data would be stored and who would read it. She also expressed that as a professional, she did reflect on her work every day and constantly asked herself how to respond to individual students needs.

In reading her mail, my first response was that I had been too quick to answer their first mail and could have phrased my reply differently. This teacher has deep concern for her children and is prompt not to give any personal information about individual children to people outside the school. She also has expressed that she does not want any recording from her classroom. Reflecting on her response, I realised that this was a good opportunity to discuss our collaboration and our different roles in the research project.

When we met at the third workshop we discussed the goal of writing the cases and keeping records from their teaching. I urged them to write what they themselves think is important to write, not what they think I would like them to write. I also asked them to keep their own data in their files to be able to go back to them and use as resources in their analysis of their work and own development.

The teachers were all eager to share their thinking about their cases and we had some in depth discussions of their observations in their classrooms. One of the teachers said, “We need to teach them collaboration. Every one has his/her role in the differentiated classroom and everyone’s contribution is important for the group, but it takes them time to learn it”. She told us that one of her former classes had developed good cooperative habits but her group this year was still struggling with learning cooperation. The teacher who I had been exchanging mail with was the only one in the group that did not develop her story from last workshop further. She eagerly told us about an instance that had happened the day before. The other teachers were interested in her story and asked questions. I listened carefully and decided not to interrupt the conversation. There was therefore no time left for developing further her story from last time.

Reflecting on the third workshop my concerns were about this teacher who feels that she works as a professional and responds to students needs, but is not willing to share her work with others. She is reluctant to record any of her teaching and I decided therefore to propose that the teachers would observe each other’s classrooms. She immediately responded by telling that she does not believe that they gain anything from visiting each other classes: “We often do that and we of course see how the other teacher conducts the lesson, but we know pretty much how our colleagues work.” The other teachers wanted to observe each other’s classroom and decided to organize mutual visits to discuss at our next workshop.

Conclusions

Our different background (both mine and the teachers respectively), affects the process of our work. I see professional mathematics teachers as teachers that are capable of using their knowledge of mathematics, and the teaching and learning of mathematics in their classrooms; they are aware of the learning that takes place in the classroom, both students learning and their own learning developed through critical awareness and reflection. The teachers have expressed similar visions for their teaching but are not used to studying their own teaching. Telling them what to do and what to avoid is attacking their core beliefs and identity as a teacher and a person and I therefore try to listen to their expressed desires and help them find effective ways to reflect on their
work and unlock practices that do not limit their freedom to help their students learn mathematics.

References
Encounters with Hermes: Self-Study through Hermeneutic Text

Hermes, the trickster, slipped into our room today, invisible and unnoticed, yet with his usual impudence, interrupted us as we edited our self-study. It is true that we left the door open and called his name in dutiful hermeneutic style. As self-study researchers we were questioning how the "thing" we were writing about, once so familiar had become so elusive. Were we researching our lived experience of writing interpretively online or were we researching our lived experience of writing an interpretive self-study? Were we studying ourselves as teacher/students, our practice as educators, or the methodology of our self-study? When were we the “we” who wrote online, when were we the researchers? We considered that perhaps we merely had a technical problem easily remedied by writing more eloquently. Then Michaela suggested we begin with who we are now rather that who we were when we began our self-study. We stopped, interrupted: “But that changes everything!” As Hermes slipped away, did we hear him say: “Yes it does, but isn’t that why you came to play in my circle?”

We began this self-study to research our lived experience of teaching and writing interpretively in an online course. We wanted to know if this experience had changed us as educators and enhanced our pedagogical practice. We also wanted to know how hermeneutic phenomenology might be situated in self-study research. We ended our self-study knowing that we had entered the hermeneutic circle. Our self-study had itself become a form of interpretation developed through a playful back and forth of understanding self as student, teacher and researcher embedded within multiple layers of inquiry.

The Context: Where our Writing Begins

We first came together as instructor and students in an online graduate course on interpretive discourses. Because writing is the methodology of interpretation, students were required to create a paper describing a pedagogical phenomenon. To guide the writing we turned to van Manen's (1997) approach for researching lived experience through hermeneutic phenomenology.

The interpretive papers were to unfold in four stages from an initial interest in a phenomenon to a paper that demonstrated a rich and meaningful understanding of the topic at hand. First, students posted their topics and were assigned to writing groups. Then they posted one-page papers expanding their ideas. Next, students presented strong first drafts of their papers. At each stage the instructor and students responded to the papers to extend and deepen understanding. Final papers were posted near the end of the course.

After the course was completed, Annette, the instructor, invited Joy, Carolyn, and Michaela to study the writing experience. She selected these students because their papers were thoughtful and poignant ontological portrayals of themselves as teachers, and they were interested in self-study research.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Methodology for Self-study

Van Manen (2007) describes hermeneutic phenomenology as a descriptive and interpretive methodology. It is descriptive because "it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves" (p. 180) but it also asserts that all phenomena is interpreted. Van Manen, (2007) Sartre (1977) and Barthes (1986) also assert that writing is the method of hermeneutic phenomenology.

According to Gadamer “Hermeneutics is the doctrine of understanding and the art of explaining what one has understood” (2007, p. 361). He suggests that understanding and interpretation are inextricably connected. Hermeneutic research is not about recreating someone else's meaning nor is it about affirming one's own point of view. Rather, understanding is found in a fusion of horizons where one is transformed and in the process we “do not remain what we were” (Gadamer, 2006, p. 375). “Hermeneutic research demands a self-reflexivity, an ongoing conversation about the experience while simultaneously living in the moment, actively constructing interpretations of the experience and questioning how those interpretations came about” (Laverty, 2003, p. 7).

It was not without some trepidation that we considered hermeneutic phenomenology as a possibility for our self-study. We could not find explicit descriptions of its use as a methodology in self-studies, although Feldman, in explicating how “existentialism can form a theoretical basis for self-study” (2009, p. 39), draws upon the works of Sartre (1956; 1972), Greene (1988; 1991), Grumet (1991), Britzman (1986; 1998), Buber (1937), and Taubman (2007), all scholars who also influence the hermeneutic orientation.

This hermeneutic phenomenology was congruent with our own research questions for as van Manen states:

The questions themselves and the way one understands the questions are the important starting points, not the method as such. But of course it is true as well that the way in which one articulates certain questions has something to do with the research method that one tends to identify with. So there exists a certain dialectic between question and method. (2007, p. 2)

Thus our self-study became a complex movement between our past experiences as writers in a dynamic and engaging learning environment to our present understanding of self as teachers, interpretive writers and researchers.
Data and analysis in hermeneutic research. Feldman (2009) states: “when teacher educators research themselves in practice, they rely on their experiences as data and other resources for research” (p. 37). Turning to lived experience is central to hermeneutic phenomenology, but van Manen reminds us “the notion of data is ambiguous within the human science perspective” (1977, p. 53).

Still, one does capture information from and about lived experiences. In our self-study we gathered online posts, papers written by the student co-authors, digital recordings of our conversations in our three face-to-face meetings, our emails to each other, and reflexive texts about the writing experience that we created as part of this self-study (Hermes might chuckle at what we propose to be data. Would he notice that our reflexive texts are already an interpretation of the data and yet are in themselves data?)

As we immersed ourselves in our “data” we entered into the hermeneutic circle in which our conversations returned us to our writing and our writing elicited new conversations, for as Smith (1999) tells us good interpretation is “a playing back and forth from the specific and the general, the macro and the micro” (1999, p. 30). In the following sections we present two of the notions that emerged through this process.

Seeking permission. Interpretive research begins when one is struck by something (Jardine, 1992) or when truly interpretive, something addresses us (Gadamer, 2006). We encountered the notion of permission when we revisited our struggle to find the question that was at the heart of our inquiries. In our reflexive texts we wrote about seeking permission to write about what was meaningful using our own voices and experiences as teachers.

Each of us had come to writing the paper and the self-study with our own desires. Joy, a teacher and principal, studies the phenomena of hope. Carolyn, a preschool teacher and college instructor, is interested in the phenomenon of silence in pedagogical practice. Michaela, also a teacher, was compelled to write about her mother’s diagnosis of terminal cancer and the affect this had within the life-world of her classroom. As the instructor, Annette wanted to understand how the writing experience could be made deeper and more meaningful for herself and her students.

Michaela’s topic found her in the midst of her lived experience as a teacher/daughter. Yet she needed permission to write about something that was at once both deeply personal and deeply professional.

The moments within the classroom, those that were most powerful, the most compelling were the most raw and intimate. To write about such experiences not only seemed to require academic permission to write so personally, but also required me to give myself permission to delve into something so personal, so exposed. To explore this phenomenon was to explore my relationship with my colleagues, the students and myself. It was to explore the very essence of the life-world of the classroom. Carolyn tells us:

I wrote about silence at a time in my life when I needed it most. My mother was diagnosed with cancer in early December at the end of a very busy term. I remember feeling like I was standing in a cyclone searching for the eye—that still and silent place at the centre. How can I teach, research and function in a state of deep suffering? The group encouraged me to link my life-world experiences to my practice and research topic. As Pinar shows us, when we ground our reflections and pondering in our own experiences, we create a place where we can develop new understandings within a contextual framework. This grounding also gives our audience a place through which to view our ideas. Permission to link Self to the work profoundly changed my approach to writing the piece and I felt more confident to express my ideas.

It took courage over a long period of time for me to move away from the prescribed methods of writing that I was indoctrinated in during my undergraduate science studies. It required bravery to place myself and my own life-world experiences into my writing. If I “live” or become the question or the phenomena that I’m researching, then I also become “the writing or the text” (van Manen, 2007, p. 44). Although Joy knew that she wanted to attend to the notion of hope she comments:

My classmates welcomed my struggles with my topic. Their questions, personal thoughts, suggested references and encouragement helped me through those beginning stages. I wonder if I would have had the courage to pursue my inquiry into hope if I hadn’t had this feedback from my colleagues. As they told their own stories of hope and despair in teaching and shared their own questions about the topic I felt like I had permission to move forward with my writing. Their responses validated for me the worthiness of my topic.

We were asking for explicit permission, for space and for time to bring together the private and the public in our writing. Annette recalled that in the online course other students seemed to need permission to write more personally about their work and need time to develop their precarious voices in a supportive space.

Uncovering Self in the Life-world of the Classroom

Through our original writing and conversation during the self-study another notion emerged: writing the papers had in some ways transformed us. Our self-study brought us to a deeper understanding of ourselves as teacher/writers, an understanding that makes a difference in our educational practice.

In her reflexive texts on her writing, Michaela tell us: I was able to reflect upon both the paradoxes and the similarities found within these two aspects of my life (teacher and daughter). I wrote of the emotional turmoil found in the loss of hope, the loss of life, and the loss of my mother as the cancer took over. I became acutely aware and accepting that my personal life and my public life as a teacher are profoundly intertwined and are inextricably one.

Online writing allowed me to be self-indulgent. The process of writing during this course was simply for the writing and the reflection. However, once completed, this was the first paper I have ever written that I have wanted to share with others. It is the first paper that I felt could possibly have a reader.

In her silence, Carolyn found a way of being a teacher that now reflects the pedagogical relationships she wants with her students. She wrote this paper at a time when she needed silence, needed some things to be still so that she could find herself as teacher in the upheaval in her own life. She writes:

How do I learn to be silent? In a post modern culture that is uncomfortable with silence, misinterprets it and attempts to ‘fill’ it, Palmer (2007) says, “Silence gives us a chance to
reflect on what we have said and heard, and silence itself can be a sort of speech, emerging from the deepest parts of ourselves, of others, of the world” (p. 80). I discipline myself to be silent in order to watch, hear, record and interpret meaning. In the paper I analyzed how silent encounters with Self construct deeper understandings of Being and how this impacts my ways of seeing, listening and knowing my students and what they say in multiple languages. I relished time to enter both into the silence of my office and my reflective thoughts and self-study. Only the tapping of the computer keys was audible as I read and responded to my classmates.

In her paper, Joy sought to understand the phenomenon of hope as experienced by classroom teachers. She reflects, “Conversations with my writing group challenged me to consider specifics of writing interpretively as well as the larger implication of the phenomenon of hope as it plays out in the pedagogical life-world. Our conversations became a comfortable movement of dialogue - probing, questioning and a sharing of anecdotes and further resources. As an example, one of my group members shared: “I hear you in between the lines of your writing lingering in the background, but I am attentively listening for more.” What a gift that comment was! I reread my work and saw that I needed to place myself more fully into my text; to place my stories and myself more fully in the phenomenon I was exploring. Taking the risk to share my writing through its messy ambiguities allowed others to help me untangle the complexities of my phenomenon resulting in a much richer and more provocative text.

Michaela’s mother passed away shortly after the course finished, yet three days later she was in her classroom Gaining strength from my students, as they supported me through this initial process. This course was not a 4-month moment in my life; it became my life, my voice, and my ability to share this with others. It has not ended, merely changed. The voice I found to write my paper and then my self-study text resonates within every moment since and continues to grow.

As she listens to Joy, Michaela and Carolyn describe their experience; Annette acknowledges that the writing had enabled students to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their practice. She could not have understood the meaning of these interpretive papers in the lives of her students without this self-study.

As van Manen (2007) states: “there is no denying that this phenomenology of everyday life is a deepening experience for those who practice it. And phenomenological inquiry has formative consequences for professional practitioners by increasing their perceptiveness and tactfulness…these reflective experiences may even have the effect that they put one’s entire existence into question (p. 8)”.

Towards New Beginnings

Through the self-study we reencountered ourselves, our practice and our research—we came to recognize our teaching and writing anew. With each encounter we recognized that writing, as van Manen (1989) tells us, is a form of self-making in which we come to a sense our own depth. We strive to find ways to allow for this self-making when we teach, write and research. We are reminded of Feldman’s proposition that existentialism can be a theoretical basis for self-study because it puts the self “as a person becoming as its focus…It also makes an explicit connection between the experiences that we have and who we are as a person. Because of this it would not be possible to make the self problematic in inquiries without using personal and professional experiences as the resources for research” (2009, p. 39).

We came to understand that writing interpretively requires us to reconsider our practice as teacher/writers. It requires us to create permissive and generous spaces in our teaching and in our lives. Whether we teach online or in traditional classrooms, the nature of that space defines our capacity to summon our hermeneutic imaginations. These spaces have a temporal dimension as well. Hermeneutic writers need time to hear their phenomenon in the life-world, to dwell in the complex movement between experiences and their portrayal. Can we design our courses in ways that allow time to be used more effectively to achieve deep understanding? Being attentive to and deliberate about the nature of space and time is a pedagogical act, for as Smits (2001) reminds us, “the space of human understanding is within the lived world of practice and human relationship. That space cannot be presumed to exist without the active intervention of human thought and activity” (p. 293).

We enhanced our understanding of self-study by exploring the possibilities for hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology for self-study. We experienced tensions and ambiguities in writing a self-study in an interpretive voice, but we learned that hermeneutics, with its attention to lived experiences, can live at the heart of a self-study. For as Jardine (2007) assures us, interpretative inquiry in education becomes the movement of shaping and making something of the life-world of schools, “while at the same time, shaping, and making something” of yourself in the midst of the world of “work as a teacher, a writer, a scholar” (p. 13).

We accepted that the life-world, despite its messy ambiguities is a valid place for scholarly work. We are now compelled to understand more deeply where this approach to self-study may take us. As we end our self-study we reenter the hermeneutic circle in which our endings are new beginnings. We return to our writing with Hermes in the room.

References


Searching for Meaning in Structuring Preservice Teacher Education

Background

Loughran (2005) described three categories as one way of thinking about forms of self-study, they included: individual, collaborative, and institutional. There have been numerous self-studies that concentrate on individuals’ teaching practice (see for example, Berry, 2004/2007; Brandenburg, 2004/2008; Pinnegar, 1995; Tidwell, 2002) as well as a number resulting from collaboration (Crowe & Berry, 2007; Fitzgerald, Farstad, & Deemer, 2002; Russell & Schuck, 2004; Schuck & Segal, 2002). However, beyond the work of Hamilton (2002) there are few examples of self-studies that genuinely examine the nature of teacher education programs from an institutional perspective. As this paper illustrates, one reason for the paucity of quality self-studies at an institutional level may well be that such research imposes data source and collection demands that are not so prevalent in individual and collaborative self-studies and that ethical issues abound in unanticipated ways.

This self-study was initially conceptualized to add to the literature that examines teacher education practices at the institutional level. However, as will become apparent through this paper, such self-studies pose problems and difficulties that need to be carefully thought through in advance because they create new and different issues in the research than those that revolve around learning about individuals’ teaching practice. Hence, Hamilton’s (2002) paper stands out as an exemplar of how to conduct work of this kind—not least for the fact that her preparation for the study, the data sources and the manner in which she drew on them and her overall rigorous, thoughtful and ethical approach, offered a powerful example of how to study teacher education practices/policies at an institutional level in a structured and organised manner.

Context

Teacher education at Monash University has recently experienced considerable change as a consequence of top down approaches to restructuring and reorganisation of the program. For many teacher educators, the changes were seen to be imposed, unpalatable and some flew in the face of long held beliefs and practices that had been important to the way in which some did their job and viewed their identity as a teacher educator. Some meetings associated with the ongoing process of ‘rethinking the program’ had a heavy concentration on issues related to program structure with little serious attention being paid to pedagogy, program purposes or principles. Inevitably, this led to tensions not only in how the program was being reshaped but also how the intended changes might be implemented.

Further, the Secondary Teacher Education program had five directors in the previous five years and three of those incumbents had moved on to other positions in different universities. For some, it seemed as though those who had driven the ‘rethinking process’ had imposed change but then were not around to share responsibility for the consequences of those changes. Not surprisingly, accepting the role of Director inevitably carried with it concerns about flagging staff morale as a consequence of a growing sense of disenfranchisement from change weary staff.

Aim of this Project

As incoming Director I was concerned to create a shared sense of commitment to the program and to move beyond concerns created by the constraints of the existing program structure. The aim of the project then was to find ways of encouraging colleagues to engage in critique of our approaches to teaching and learning about teaching by refocusing attention on our teacher education practices. In so doing, I hoped that the manner in which we approached teaching in the program might therefore be opened up to critique and development in positive ways by explicitly working from ‘the ground up’. The major organisational feature adopted was through initiating a residential teacher education retreat largely concentrating on our pedagogy of teacher education (Korthagen, 2001; Loughran, 2006; Northfield & Gunstone, 1997) and the types of issues and concerns that might influence those practices.

Method

An institutional self-study could be described in a number of ways. However, the prime objective could best be described as attempting to gain insights into the policies, structures, beliefs, values, systems, etc. and/or their impact on participants’ practices. As already alluded to above, engaging in a self-study of this nature proved to be most challenging for me further and highlighted the level of planning and forethought evident in Hamilton’s (2002) study. I was conscious of the possible conflict of interest between researching and managing the process of program rejuvenation and so I paid careful attention to the need to concentrate on the program rather than my work/role as the Director per se. I therefore set out to map how the processes worked (or not) and what was learnt and to do so by selecting data sets based on the products derived of attempts to focus attention on the processes and practices related to program critique - as opposed to those experiences that were about me in directing those processes. The data sources therefore were crucial in maintaining this distinction.

Data sources. The first major source of data that I thought would be helpful was that associated with the initial secondary teacher education retreat which was designed to accomplish four objectives:

- Bring the notion of a pedagogy of teacher education to the forefront of participants’ thinking about their role as teacher educators. This was based on a session in which teaching and learning about teaching was unpacked publicly and discussed and critiqued in table groups.
• Canvas issues and concerns from a teacher educator’s and a student teacher’s perspective on the program. This involved brief input from: a sessional/casual staff member offering views on the program from an ‘interested non-tenured staff member’s perspective’; a student teacher who volunteered to offer honest feedback on her experience in the program; and, selected unit leaders’ input on aspects of the program. This was followed by a table group process that was designed as a form of needs analysis about the program.
• Explore the nature of the principles underpinning the program working from those suggested by Korthagen et al. (2006).
• Develop suggestions for action resulting from the workshops at the retreat.

The second data source was derived of new directions for research and action about the program that emerged from the retreat. Specifically, a commissioned paper by Whelan and Mitchell (2009) offered an informed meta-analysis of assessment approaches used in units in the first three years of the program. That paper was a catalyst for reflection about processes and practices involved in attempting to focus attention on program review and rejuvenation.

The third data source involved the assistance of a critical friend (involved in a similar process on a different continent). This was designed to create possibilities for alternative perspectives to be sought on the ideas and actions being introduced over time. This data source was designed to draw attention to the necessary questioning and critique of processes and practices from a trusted colleague (via e-mail) that might help to minimize the inevitable sense of ‘the personal’ that accompanies such work.

Results

The retreat appeared to be successful in terms of the good will created and the sense of open and honest debate:

I think the retreat was the most productive time I have spent in the secondary realm. It was very positive and I think the lead up - promoting the moving forward aspect was instrumental in setting the tone. This has been tried before but has not been successful ...

Generally [there is a sense of] relief associated with [a senior staff member] being involved in the leadership - [that] is quite amazing. Unfortunately this is not a common occurrence and the powerlessness that is often felt by the least senior members carrying out important leadership roles is not always recognised ... just as academics need to dip their toes much more in the real world through on the ground school involvement, it is also important to get some of the expertise of the professors at the ground level.

However, as a data source, the retreat was problematic for a number of reasons. Despite my initial understanding, I quickly came to see that I had not fully thought through what it might mean to both run the retreat and use the outcomes from sessions as data sources for a paper (i.e., I had not really recognized the ethical considerations and issues of possible sensitivity that could emerge). Hence, when it came to analysing the worksheets and working with the table group leaders to develop an overall set of responses and advice for future action, although the processes worked well and led to a plan from which to advance the outcomes of the retreat, I felt uneasy using that data for a paper as I had not sought participants’ consent to do so. The issue of consent had crossed my mind a number of times but I had probably subconsciously avoided it in the busyness of preparing for the retreat (or at least that is how I can rationalize it now) – that oversight created a number of problems.

The first problem was in not wanting to do anything that could be interpreted as stifling participant involvement or debate by introducing the idea that the retreat organiser would be researching the process as it was unfolding. To do so could create an impression that the retreat was “just a data source for a paper”.

The second problem was partly methodological. As the process unfolded, the richness of the discussions and the honesty of the debate made me feel as though I should have thought about having an ‘uninvolved observer’. This is perhaps an extension of the first problem whereby the self-study aspect as both the leader/facilitator and researcher created, for me, a real sense of conflict of interest.

As a consequence of these two problems, in writing this paper I could see my data sources slipping away, I was also confronted by the fact that not using the data in its raw form undermined the perceived rigour of the study. Through that realization another issue arose - the danger of simply telling my story and not really offering data in ways that would normally be deemed necessary for ‘good self-study research’. Hence, Jack Whitehead’s (1993) notion of being a living contradiction was strongly felt with each excuse for not developing the study in the way I had intended when I wrote the abstract! Perhaps it is fair to recast the situation as one in which my time, energy and effort in developing the retreat and attempting to create an impetus for program renewal was more important than the self-study. As a consequence, that which was a research possibility did not receive the level of thought, planning and careful consideration that was necessary. In reality, the research was an after-thought that was bound to become complicated by the very issues I experienced in attempting to portray the situation through this paper. My inexperience in this form of self-study led to a naive self-confidence. Despite the apparent failure of the self-study, the retreat did lead to real gains – as illustrated below:

Following on from the secondary education retreat, here are the big-ticket items we will be paying careful attention to:

1. Student associated issues - I have met with the student association leader ... We have agreed that there should be an official meeting between students and the Director on a regular basis and the Director will attend an open forum with students once a semester (perhaps mid-semester) in order to stay in touch with students’ views on the program.

2. Big picture review of assessment ... the Retreat had a strong message about the need for purpose and coherence so that assessment practices and tasks are appropriate and built up in a progressive manner throughout the program ... Ian Mitchell will work with unit co-ordinators to discuss and develop a more holistic understanding of the program, how it links to the practicum and to consider possible changes.

3. Focus on teacher education - the retreat illustrated how important it is for us to consider our work in relation to big picture issues of teacher education
... we are looking at ways of having one major opportunity per year to meet and pursue issues of teaching and research that matter to us ... Mandi Berry [will] negotiate with Paulien Meijer (Utrecht university) about the possibility of getting her to come to Monash ... to share her research with us on Students’ crises in learning to teach ... we will try to build a start of year retreat around her work that should give us all a lot to think about in the way we conduct our units and organise the program ... [and] build these types of possibilities into the program on a regular basis.

4. Research possibilities - the PaPL [Pedagogy and Professional Learning] Research Group is running a grant writing day ... designed to support and encourage members to develop research projects ... [like that of] the recent visit of Jason Ritter [that] has been a catalyst for possibilities around “becoming a teacher educator” ...

5. An expression of interest has been circulated for an Academic Director of Professional Placements. This role will hopefully be filled quickly so that the person who takes it up is able to go out to schools and begin to rebuild our relationships with them and start thinking about how we might do practicum differently ...

The e-mail above demonstrates that progress was being made and that action had been forthcoming (and based on data) from the retreat. However, the work on assessment led to a very interesting outcome.

Unit co-ordinators were invited to submit a brief overview of their assessment tasks to complement that which was available through the handbooks from which Whelan and Mitchell mapped the assessment tasks against a set of dimensions developed by Mitchell and Carbone (2007). Those dimensions were: Routine–Novel; Artificial–Authentic; Closed –Open; Degree of Ownership/shared control; Degree of Linkage; Degree of Reflection; Individual v. Collaborative. These were analysed along a continuum from low (1) to high (4).

Importantly though, as Mitchell & Carbone noted:

A typology like this can look like a rubric where, ideally, any task should be at the ‘better’ end along all dimensions. This is not the case. It is true that we argue that the first six of these dimensions have a positive end, however ... there [is] no need for any one task to be high along all, or even most of them in order to generate this ... there are multiple routes to quality learning and engagement and it is rare for any one task to straddle all or even most of them. However, when looking at the totality of tasks that students will do, it is worth thinking about all of the dimensions ... (pp. 5 – 6)

Interestingly, when the discussion paper was introduced to unit co-ordinators, the results (which were positive and insightful) drew much less attention than the use and insights) drew much less attention than the use and meaningfulness of the typology. The ensuing discussion highlighted the diversity of perspectives about which teacher educators do and why, as opposed to how their pedagogical actions are interpreted by their students, thus it offered another reminder about why it is so difficult to develop a common vision for teacher education programs and practices.

Finally, working with a critical friend suffered in ways similar to the data from the retreat. Despite the best intentions, our communication was sporadic and work in our programs overshadowed our hopes for support and guidance. What you are seeking to do resonates somewhat with what I have been struggling with. The problem is that I do tend to get caught up in the nitty gritty ... e.g., for the past 3 weeks I have been without ANY practicum placement staff ... so it was a case of “the job had to be done and done fast!” ... Harnessing goodwill is a challenge. I find colleagues are very agreeable when attending the retreat ... they think progressively, offer wonderful suggestions and are quite inventive and aspirational ... Challenging the program is important ... it is tied intimately to people’s practice. However, if we do not respond to shifts in expectations and student needs we are not doing what we continually tell our students to do - meet the needs of the young people we are charged to teach ... I do apologize for taking so long to respond - it has been a very difficult few weeks one way or another ...

The (edited) message above was the second and last of our well-intentioned critical friend e-mails. Neither of us purposely chose not to interact, we were simply consumed by other aspects of our work. Again, attempting to research our institutional practices was much easier in theory than in practice.

**Conclusion**

In many ways this paper is a disappointment. That which was initially planned fell far short of expectations. However, what it does highlight is the need for more serious thinking about institutional self-studies. This project has reminded me that the personal journey in developing knowledge and skills as a self-study researcher is embedded in personal experience. The CASTLE session that will accompany this paper will create an opportunity for me to develop my planning and thinking in ways that will make a difference for my future ventures in this field. There is a strong need in the literature for institutional self-studies that can better inform us about knowledge development in teacher education program renewal and development. However, conducting such projects successfully requires careful attention to how to move beyond the personal in order to ensure that stories alone do not, by default, become the dominant outcome. What we as teacher educators do to develop coherent, responsive and meaningful programs in teaching is something that must extend beyond our individual and collaborative studies of teaching and fully embrace institutional level studies in meaningful ways.

Hamilton’s (2002) study set the scene, it is more than time for more of us to accept the challenge and build on her great start.

**References**


Learning and Working in a Research Community: A Multi-layered Self-Study

Introduction

Both in the academic year 2007-2008 and in 2008-2009, we have carried out the project “Teacher educators study their own practice” (see Zwart, Geursen, De Heer, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008; Lunenberg, Korthagen, Zwart, 2010). The main purpose of the project was to support teacher educators in performing self-studies.

To us, as teachers of teacher educators, the challenge was to facilitate the participants’ journeys of becoming a scholarly teacher educator. Hence, we refer to ourselves as facilitators of self-study research. Honouring the principle of “teach as you preach,” we decided to make this challenge the focus of our own self-study. Since we, as facilitators, used data from the participating teacher educators, who in turn used data of their students to study their learning, we choose a multi-layered self-study approach. Our leading research question was, what are, for us as facilitators, critical issues in supporting self-study research from the perspective of becoming part of a research community?

Previous studies in the domains of student and teacher learning (Ponte, 2002; Lunenberg, Loughran, Schildkamp, Beishuizen, Meirink, & Zwart, 2007) show that performing practitioner research within a research community promotes the development of a scholarly identity. The idea of a research community is based on the concept of a community of learners (Brown & Campione, 1996; Beishuizen, 2004). Community presumes collaboration and involvement in “a social structure that can assume responsibility for developing and sharing knowledge” (Wenger, 1998, p. 29). An important feature of the communities created in research projects can be that novices and experienced researchers work together within one community (Zeichner, 2003), which can lead to stimulating forms of exchange, in which novices expand their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the case of teachers, Putnam and Borko (2000) state that discourse communities promote teacher development, because the members can incorporate each other’s expertise for creating new insights. Hoban (2007) also points to social aspects of supporting self-study research, such as organizing meetings.

Taking this into consideration, the main aim of our self-study is to get more insight into how we, as facilitators of the teacher educators, supported the self-studying teacher educators to become part of a research community. We used critical issues as a lens through which we studied our support.

Being part of a research community was materialized in monthly group meetings containing three main elements:

1. Guided reflection (The reflection focused on the transition from daily teacher education practices to research and also offered emotional support;)
2. Information about research phases, including methodology;
3. Discussions and work on the individual self-studies.

Moreover, the participants got individual support through bilateral meetings and e-mail feedback. In order to emphasize that the participants were part of an international community of self-study researchers, self-study experts from abroad were our guests and commented on the participants’ self-study drafts.

Participants

The teacher educators. Participants were teacher educators from institutions preparing candidates for primary as well as secondary school teaching in various subject areas: five participants in the 2007 cohort (three females, two males) and five participants in the 2008 cohort (three females, two males). Important criteria for participation were their willingness to study their own teacher education practices, and the availability of at least four hours a week for participation in the one-year project. Seven participants had worked with one of us before, as colleagues or as students. The other three teacher educators participating in the 2008 cohort were colleagues of the participants in the 2007 cohort.

Voluntary participation in the project was embedded in the teacher educators’ professional development plans, which showed they had a specific interest in learning about research. In most Dutch teacher education institutes, teacher educators are required to make such plans. In this context, it is important to mention that the majority of teacher educators in the Netherlands have teaching positions without a research component. As a result, nine of the participants in our project were unfamiliar with conducting educational research. One teacher educator had a PhD in social sciences. None of the teacher educators had any experience with self-study research. Consequently, their knowledge and experience of research was quite limited, necessitating the need for us to include instruction about conducting research, and structural support.

The facilitators. In the project, the three authors of this article functioned both as teachers of teacher educators conducting self-study research and as self-study researchers. Mieke has a background in pedagogy and adult learning/adult education. Twenty years ago she moved to the teacher education institute at VU University. At the end of the 1990’s she took the initiative for starting research on the professional development of teacher educators at this institution.

Fred has a background in mathematics. He ‘translated’ the idea of ‘realistic mathematics education’ (Freudenthal, 1991) to teacher education and focused on the importance of reflection in teachers’ professional development, and on the development of teacher educators. He received several international awards for his research work. Ten years ago he decided to accept a part-time job at VU University to support Mieke in the development of the new research program. At that time he was already involved in the self-
study movement and brought his international contacts into the research program.

Rosanne joined the team two years ago. She studied communication sciences and, in 2007, received her Ph. D. degree on a study into teacher learning in a context of reciprocal peer coaching. Her expertise and communicative skills, combined with her recent experience as a beginning researcher, proved to be an important contribution to the success of our project.

**Method**

To answer our own research question, we used digital logbooks that the participants wrote every three weeks, intake and exit interviews, and follow-up questionnaires in which we kept track of the influence of the project on the participants’ learning.

We analyzed the data in two ways. First, we used the six guidelines Hoban (2007) formulated for supporting self-study research as *a priori* criteria for a deductive analysis of critical issues in the process (Patton, 2002), to find out whether or not these guidelines were also valid for our project. The digital logbooks, exit-interviews and follow-up questionnaires were analyzed with a focus on sentences that told something about these six critical issues, e.g. sentences including phrased such as: “What helped …”; “It is stimulating …”; “I worked with …”; “The group made …”; “Then I found out …”; “Through …. I discovered …”; (Merriam, 1998; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Second, we followed a grounded theory approach (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), adapting an inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) to find out if our data would provide additional critical issues that were important for supporting the participants. Building on individual coding of the texts, categories were developed in relation to the research question. To strengthen the internal validity of the analysis we used triangulation of our data-sources and data-analyses (Yin, 1994; Patton, 2002). Two researchers conducted each analysis independently. The results obtained were then compared and differences were discussed and decided upon.

Additionally, we used notes of meetings in which the three of us discussed and reflected on the process of the project, and e-mails on the project we sent to each other.

**Outcomes**

Our findings were similar to Hoban’s study in that all the (six) guidelines mentioned by him to be critical to supporting teacher educators’ self-studies also appeared to be critical for the participants in our study:

1. Guard the connection between the self-studies and the individual practices and concerns of the teacher educators;
2. Formulate an external goal, stimulate the researchers to go public (e.g., give a presentation or write a conference paper);
3. Realize the availability of external sources (literature, experts in the field and experienced researchers);
4. Consider the social aspects (create a sense of belonging to a group because of its support function, but also because of the ‘voyeurism’ aspect);
5. Create a sense of being next door; and
6. Take the wrapping up of the self-study studies seriously (e.g., discuss possible follow-ups to prevent the results from waning).

Our second analysis focused on data that could not be accounted for in our initial application of the *a priori* codes. In this analysis, we utilized a grounded theory approach. The second analysis yielded two additional critical issues:

1. Support the participants in finding fitting research methods and instruments (an extension of guideline 3).
2. Regularly check, from the beginning and during the process, whether self-study research is an appropriate way of learning for the participant.

These findings have already been described and documented in Lunenberg, Zwart, & Korthagen (2010), so we will not dive more deeply into these general outcomes here. In this paper, we will zoom in on those critical issues that are connected with becoming part of a research community, i.e. the critical issues 1, 3, 4, and 7.

**Guard the connection between the self-studies and the individual practices and concerns of the teacher educators (critical issue 1).** Self-study research begins with a question from the teacher educators’ own practice. Translating this question into a research question and research format, caused some frictions. The participants experienced some difficulties in going beyond the story and taking their own research seriously. Obviously, their doubt was that a small aspect from one’s own practice may not be interesting enough or others. However, as mentioned in several logbooks of the participants in the first group, the message of an international expert for the second meeting was helpful. He wrote: “It doesn’t necessarily have to feel like a substantial breakthrough for yourself in order for your research to shed new light on the theoretical underpinnings of your (or others’) teaching”.

There is also another side. Moving from practice to a research question includes the danger of drifting away from the problem, challenge or fascination that triggered the study in the first place. Moreover, studying a sometimes very personal question about one’s own functioning requires vulnerability and courage. One activity that proved to be helpful in this respect was the guided reflection during the group meetings, experienced by the teacher educators as ‘extraordinary’. The group meetings with experts from abroad were also important with regard to this issue. The teacher educators experienced that their small studies were taken very seriously by these experts.

As our notes and emails showed, supporting the teacher educators to stay in touch with themselves and their own practices proved to be an important issue for us as teachers of teacher educators. Here we were confronted by a friction between self and study.

Was our ultimate goal that the participants would learn about themselves or did we want them to stay on course and deliver a public report? This caused some struggles within ourselves, as we wanted to achieve both goals at the same time. An example of our struggle from an email that Micke wrote to Rosanne and Fred:

[...] I have some doubts regarding her question about appropriate literature. I’m worried that she is loosing the focus of her study. She didn’t collect data that can answer the question she is posing now. I’m afraid that just answering her question will not help her any further.
I think it would be wise to talk to her about this issue. What do you think?

The combination of practical relevance and the development of public knowledge is, according to Zeichner (2007), the central goal of the new scholarship in teacher education as it has taken form in self-study research (Zeichner, 1999). Working together with the participating teacher educators in a research community helped to name this tension and work on it together.

Additionally, we also learned that self-study research was probably not the only way for participants to find answers to their questions. One could argue that in some cases systematic coaching or supervision could have been a promising alternative. Critical issue 8 (see above) mirrors the outcome of our learning process with regard to this aspect.

Realize the availability of external sources (literature, experts in the field and experienced researchers and support the participants in finding fitting research methods and instruments (critical issue 3 and 7). The participating teacher educators were very experienced in teacher education and maintained high professional standards. Hence, they also wanted their self-study to be perfect. Their research background, however, was limited. Moreover, the friction between personal involvement in the research theme on the one hand and the need to study this theme objectively on the other was a complex one for the teacher educators. It was our task as teachers to inform them about ways to overcome this issue. In this respect, the second part of the meetings (giving information about research phases) proved to be relevant.

The availability of relevant sources and information were appreciated by the teacher educators participating in the project. As the participants’ logbooks and the exit interviews show, this included giving practical tips, for example with regard to literature.

The participants often associated research with large scale studies and very time-consuming instruments, which were not always suitable for self-study research. Offering alternatives and supporting the teacher educators in their thinking about data already available (for example student portfolios) also proved to be helpful. The introduction, in the group meetings, of notions such as trustworthiness (as an alternative to reliability) and triangulation also proved to be helpful. Finally, the teacher educators were helped in developing fitting methods of data analysis.

We learned to combine two roles. Each of us is an experienced researcher, with a lot of knowledge about what constitutes rigorous research. Two of us also had many years of experience in the role of teacher educator or facilitator of projects and learning processes. However, we had never before combined the two roles of researcher and teacher of teacher educators (with exception of supervising PhD students, which we feel is completely different). During the project, the two became more and more interconnected. The three of us developed what we now consider a very specific integrative identity, namely the professional identity of being a teacher of self-studies by teacher educators.

Consider the social aspects: create a sense of belonging to a group because of its support function, but also because of the ‘voyeurism’ aspect (critical issue 4). The sense of belonging to a group was crucial. The group indeed functioned as support. Working together in a group also stimulated the participants to stick to the time schedule and become conscious of the importance of taking time for one’s own professional development:

The group made the meetings more important. The chemistry between us was very pleasant. The openness, everyone struggling, and the fact that you all experience the trajectory in a comparable way.” [Willem, exit-interview]

“The joint reflections at the beginning and end of the meetings were extraordinary. At those moments, I really felt one with the others. Joint reflection on one’s practice is very helpful. Everyone should have time for this.” [Joke, exit-interviews]

We were impressed by the power of the guided reflection activity at the beginning of the group meetings. Not only did they create an important moment of stop-and-think amidst the hectic lives of the teacher educators, but most of all the sharing of struggles and successes created an intense atmosphere of mutual trust. Hence, we recommend to facilitators of self-study research to include this type of joint guided reflection into the process, because it both helps the transition from the daily hassles to a focus on research, and supports the feeling of belonging to a research community.

We also learnt from our interventions. In the second group one of the participants had personally problems and did not fit in the group, missed meetings and in the end quitted. In a reflective note, Mieke wrote:

We could also have paid more attention to what it meant to the group’s internal communication when one member does not feel part of it. Our pitfall seems to have been that we continued to comfort her. We chose a ‘mode of compassion’, instead of a ‘mode of inquiry’ (Farr Darling, 2001), or at least we did not combine these two modes. We could also have paid more attention to what it meant to the group that, between she did not participate in all group meetings. As this excerpt shows, in this case we struggled with the responsibility for on the hand, the person involved and on the other hand community building. As a consequence, we took the responsibility in our own hands, instead of sharing this dilemma with the group. This is something we would do different in the future.

Conclusion and Reflection

Teacher educators starting a self-study are often experienced professionals. At the same time, they are novices in research. Hence, experienced teacher educators starting a self-study need the courage to expose themselves and become vulnerable. Finding a balance between practice and research, possibilities and perfection proved to be challenging for each individual participant, and consequently for us, their teachers. Pivotal themes were the focus on the self and the high professional standards the teacher educators tend to set for themselves. In this context, working together in a research community is crucial, as echoed in several studies on stimulating scholarship in students and teachers. The project group helped the participants to stay on track and to become conscious of the importance of taking time for one’s own professional development. This is illustrated by the fact that the participants of both cohorts still meet as a group, e.g. to support each other in writing papers for the 2010 Castle Conference.
Our Own Learning

The tensions that we described made it important that the three of us supported each other when faced with these tensions and concerns. Each teacher has personal strengths, which often appeared to make a difference in the process. Hence, based on our self-study, we recommend working with at least two teachers to create a balanced research community.

Team teaching also offered us productive opportunities to collaboratively study and reflect on the rationales behind our choices and thus to learn more about being a teacher of teacher educator conducting self-study research.

Regarding our own processes as teachers, it is finally important to note that the whole project was very rewarding to each of us. We experienced a process of integrating our identities of researcher and teacher of teacher educators. We feel privileged to have had the opportunity to share years of research experience with teacher educators entering a territory completely new to them, and to observe their rapid professional development.

References


The Bridge, the Hybrid, and the Kaleidoscope: Metaphorical Representations in a Third Space

As a new teacher educator, I am in the midst of understanding my new role in secondary education. Part of my developmental process involves a transition between what I once was, a secondary school science teacher, and what I am now, an assistant professor in a small liberal arts college. My professional development involves not only learning a new pedagogy of teaching (Swennen, Shagrir, & Cooper, 2009), but also requires a shift in my identity (Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006). This shift in perspective provided an opportunity to re-examine a previous self-study completed when I was a high school science teacher. Four different metaphors emerged from my analysis, illustrating what I believed was important in my teaching practice. In this paper, I will explore those metaphors describing the tensions (Berry, 2008) found within my understanding of my classroom practices and the living contradictions (Whitehead, 2000) that occurred between my actions in the classroom and my philosophical beliefs on teaching and learning.

Metaphors
Metaphors illustrate the complexity of our thinking and become a device used to understand what occurs within a classroom. Gillis and Johnson (2002) wrote, “thinking metaphorically, we articulate assumptions we bring to the classroom: assumptions about teaching, learning, and literacy, and assumptions about power, authority, and community…” (p. 38). In the past, I have used metaphors to examine the assumptions made and living contradictions found between my beliefs about teaching and learning and how I expressed those thoughts on paper (Magee, 2008), but for this self-study I am using metaphors to examine my interactions between my students and myself within an English Language Learner’s biology classroom. I am using metaphors to reinterpret my past findings in order to illustrate the complexity of a science classroom (Aubosson, 2006).

Tidwell and Manke (2009) view the use of metaphors as a “tool for understanding the meaning of a particular moment in our practice…” (p. 138). In this self-study, I examined four moments, or metaphors, that describe aspects of my secondary science classroom. The third space, the bridge, the hybrid, and the kaleidoscope reflect the types of interactions and complexities found within my teaching and provide a deeper understanding of the connections between theory and practice.

Context
This self-study involved a re-examination of the data collected during the 2007-2009 academic year. During this time, I was a teacher-researcher investigating my practice in an English Language Learners biology classroom at a public high school in the mid-western section of the United States. The purpose of my previous examination was to understand how my actions within a science classroom were connected to my philosophical beliefs of teaching and learning. The data included videotapes of my teaching, field notes, journal entries, critical friend discussions, and also include a focus group interview with my former students. This work lead to a development of a theory, entitled The Third Space (Bhabha 1990/1994; Soja, 1996), which became the conceptual framework that described the dynamic relationships found within my science classroom, illustrating the interactions and the complexities that occurred between a science teacher, her students, and that of science (Magee, 2009).

Methodology
My methodology began by first re-examining specific moments in the collected data, I had previously highlighted as significant. In this re-examination period, metaphors emerged from the analysis. The bridge, the hybrid, and the kaleidoscope reflect the tensions found within the third space and also represent the living contradictions that occurred between my pedagogical philosophy and my actions within the classroom. After I had described the metaphors, I then developed a series of questions to reveal different aspects of the metaphors found within the third space.

The answers to these questions provided new sources of data to draw from and develop my understanding of what occurred within my classroom. Thus the bridge, the hybrid, and the kaleidoscope provided a new perspective to draw from.

The bridge. Educators can make science more accessible through building connections between students and science (Aikenhead, 1996; Fradd et al., 2001; Lee & Fradd, 1998). Lee and Fradd (1998) identify the instructional congruence theory as one way to create these bridges. This theory is defined as “the process of mediating the nature of academic content with students’ language and cultural experiences to make such content accessible, meaningful, and relevant” (Lee & Fradd, 1998, p. 12). Thus, the teacher is responsible for connecting, through academic content the culture of science and the culture of one’s students. Specifically, in my teaching experience, students’ understanding of science was connected with an educator’s ability to understand students’ respective beliefs about the natural world and then use this information to help students understand and develop an appreciation for how science fits within a society. And my ability to make these connections, or build these bridges, was an important aspect of my identity as a successful science teacher. But when I began teaching in my ELL classroom, I found I had a myriad of languages and cultures that created a singularly unique environment that I had never experienced in my teaching career. Thus, initially I had difficulty understanding my ELL students’ culture because I did not speak their language. I did not know how to share my world of science or connect their world with mine because we did not share a common language. Because of language, I felt that I could...
not begin the process of building those bridges, creating that third space. I had to find a new way to create the connections, and this was accomplished through using my life as a personal backdrop for their understanding of science.

My purpose was to create a bridge that no longer viewed science as a series of abstract theories, but rather comprehend how science was at work in the context of our own lives. For instance, when I discussed how humans stop growing, I provided the following narrative to illustrate my point:

We do stop growing. Okay. Like I, personally, I’ve been the same height since I was in fifth grade. So in fifth grade, I was really tall. Boys were like this. [Gesture: Puts hand up to shoulder to indicate a height.] Then what happened? In high school I stopped growing, but what happened to boys? They kept growing [Gesture: Raises hand over head to show growth.] and so I become short. Just like that. Nothing happened to me, but the people around me grew. (5/16/2008)

The use of my own personal stories happened again and again in my teaching. I often would ground the explanation of a scientific phenomenon within the context of daily living, especially daily living that would mean something to my students. I modeled for my students how to cross the bridge between the personal and science. I tried to illustrate how one's own life was embedded in science and integral to who they are and what they do.

When I began this self-study, I believed that the bridge was a one-way street, where I, as their teacher, needed to help students connect to science. Students needed to be pushed, pulled, and even dragged into the world of science. I became the person who did the pushing, pulling, and dragging in the science classroom. I created the bridge, and once students crossed over, we together would learn science. But from my classroom observations, I found students had their own connections with science that did not include me. For example, two students began class by sharing a story of how their little brother had a book about it and they were curious to try it. These two students offered this story without any connections, and this was accomplished through using my own personal stories happened again and again in my teaching. I often would ground the explanation of a scientific phenomenon within the context of daily living, especially daily living that would mean something to my students. I modeled for my students how to cross the bridge between the personal and science. I tried to illustrate how one's own life was embedded in science and integral to who they are and what they do.

The hybrid. The hybrid metaphor illustrates the new linguistic environment that was created in the third space. The use of language, particularly in an ELL classroom, became a place where the meaning of an utterance was a bridge between the personal and science. I tried to illustrate how one's own life was embedded in science and integral to who they are and what they do. We do stop growing. Okay. Like I, personally, I’ve been the same height since I was in fifth grade. So in fifth grade, I was really tall. Boys were like this. [Gesture: Puts hand up to shoulder to indicate a height.] Then what happened? In high school I stopped growing, but what happened to boys? They kept growing [Gesture: Raises hand over head to show growth.] and so I become short. Just like that. Nothing happened to me, but the people around me grew. (5/16/2008)

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The hybrid. The hybrid metaphor illustrates the new linguistic environment that was created in the third space. The use of language, particularly in an ELL classroom, became a place where the meaning of an utterance was a co-construction or a new hybrid of meaning (Wallace, 2004). Wallace wrote:

Thus, we may interpret the Third Space as an area in which one or two different languages are dominant, but the meaning of both may be transformed according to new experiences… In the Third Space, multiple discourses may be woven together without sacrificing or dismissing the importance of their speakers’ experiences and ways of knowing the world. (p. 908).

In my ELL classroom, my expectations of how students used the discourse of science evolved over time to incorporate their learning of English in the classroom. When students discussed science, I had to take into consideration how they used the scientific concepts during our discussions, and I found myself loosening the rules of our scientific discourse, because I could not tell if my students did not understand the concept or they might not have the English vocabulary to express their understanding. For instance, when we were discussing mitosis, the process of cell division, a student confused the term cell growth for cell multiplication. I did not correct his mistake, but rather repeated his statement and then stated: “They do stop reproducing” as a way to imply that growing and reproducing did not have the same meaning. I addressed the specific differences found between growth and multiplication, at the same time accepting the student’s hybrid meaning in the classroom discussion.

Besides accepting students’ language used within our discussions, I also noticed within the classroom observation my recurring use of gestures while I was lecturing in class. I observed that gesturing with my hands was part of my instructional style. These gestures were found throughout the classroom observations. I documented each occurrence in my research notebook and decided to include them in the transcription, in as much detail as possible:

Teacher: They are dividing. They are separating. [Gesture: Splitting the air with her hands.] Okay. Now you notice in your book and also yesterday I talked about how we call the original cells the parent cell and then once they split they become the daughter cells. The parent cells is the original and the daughter cells is what? Students (All): Babies. Copies

Teacher: The copy. I am not going to say babies. I am not going to say babies because you know [Gesturing: rocking a baby.] Okay. These are just cells. These are before they turn into babies. (5/16/2008)

The gesture of rocking a baby was a to distinguish between the meaning of babies and copies, so students could understand the difference between the two. Gesturing provided a way for my ELL students, who were in the process of learning English, another access into the scientific world. Thus gesturing was another aspect of the hybrid nature of my classroom.

The third space as a hybrid became a negotiation of meaning among the three areas. Like the bridge metaphor, the hybrid is unidirectional, where the teacher, student, and the meaning of science all come together. Yet, the negotiation of scientific concepts was not a fluid symbiotic relationship. Students could not make up their own definitions, but we could co-construct their understanding of science. This negotiation focuses on what is known and what is misunderstood. The reframing in this process helps confirm the known and unknown, and helped in making decisions for instruction.

The kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscope, a toy used to create different images through the combination of different shapes of various sizes and colors, became the next metaphor that illustrated my science classroom. The third space as a kaleidoscope became the interactions between a teacher, her students, and science. These relationships were dynamic, and just like in a kaleidoscope, every time the toy moved a new image appear, which illustrated the complexities found within a science classroom.

The discussions in class, illustrated the kaleidoscopic nature of my science classroom. My students discussed their experience with science using terms from their own everyday language. They described these events not as an outsider, but as people actively engaged in science outside of the classroom. Through my data, I found the flow of a discussion would...
begin when I provided an example and they would respond with their own, creating rich discussions of how science was connected to their everyday life. At times, our class would move away from being teacher-centered, to being a group of equals sharing their knowledge of science through storytelling. We became a community of learners, sharing and expressing our ideas. These discussions were not planned aspects of the curriculum, but occurred spontaneously illustrating the dynamic nature of the third space and the ever-changing kaleidoscope of a science classroom.

Students would use their scientific knowledge to make connection between their understanding of science and the examples found within their own lives. When we were discussing heredity, particularly fertilization, one of my students described what he saw on a televised science program in relation to what we were discussing in class:

Teacher: It is all based on chemicals...Sperm, if it is an “x” sperm [Gesturing: Air quotes around the “x”]. It will have estrogen and if it’s a “y” sperm [Gesturing: Air quotes around “y”]. It will have testosterone and once the egg and sperm unite a set off reactions will tell the zygote to produce estrogen or to produce testosterone...

Student: Yea, Cause I heard/like/from/like/a TV program, that I mean it’s the father and [and not the mother].

Teacher: Yea, it is the sperm. (5/23/2008)

Students would also provide examples of what occurred in their own lives. For instance, when we were discussing how obstetricians make mistakes when identifying the sex of a child in the womb, one student commented that this had occurred in her family:

Student 8: Same with my mom. All nine months, it’s [a] boy, but when I came out it’s like a girl. (5/23/2008)

Since students brought their everyday world into the classroom, there were times when we would discuss more than just science. Issues found within the community made its way into the classroom, changing the tone of the overall teaching and learning experience for that day. In the classroom observations, I found that I would take time from the planned curriculum to discuss problems that occurred outside of the classroom.

Our conversations about the community played an important part in creating a positive relationship between the students and their teacher. These moments in class, when we brought in events from outside the curriculum, also created a context for students to speak about what they knew and what they experienced. Such conversations helped establish an environment for sharing that often led to students discussing ideas, expressing their humor, and talking with each other and with the teacher in a more familial manner. In examining these interactions across my teaching sessions, this speaking to each other is with warmth and with a sense of being connected together through this class and through their experiences in the class. It is this familial way of speaking, this comfort level of the students, that seems to enable them to feel comfortable with expressing their ideas. But our conversations also meant, that I had to be prepared to discuss many different topics, all the while weaving our conversations back into a discussion of science.

Conclusion

The bridge, the hybrid, and the kaleidoscope metaphors provided a connection between my philosophy of teaching and learning and what occurred within my classroom. There were times within the third space that all three metaphors occurred at once, creating a dizzying array of complexity. But that is the nature of a classroom and thus the metaphors highlighted what I believed was important in my teaching, and also helped to solidify my understanding of what it means to be a good science teacher.

This self-study crystallized my understanding of my teaching practices in that setting, which has helped to discuss what I did in my classroom. And as an assistant professor, I can consciously and deliberately discuss my teaching practices with my pre-service students. In conclusion, metaphors are a tool used to illustrate the complexities of a classroom, specifically a science classroom populated with English Language Learners. I use them to understand my own teaching practice and they reflect the tensions found between one’s pedagogy and what actually occurs within a classroom.

References


I have been using the phrase "teacher privilege" for twenty years in the context of teaching teachers how to carry out action research. It is also part of the vocabulary of self-study, and I have used it in this context many times as well. As we often do with phrases that are part of our teaching repertoire, I had never asked myself whether this phrase had meanings other than those I routinely use, or whether its meaning is clear to those who hear it. In 2009, a presentation at AERA in San Diego and an e-mail question from Cindy Lassonde raised questions and connections for the phrase that continue to occupy my thoughts. In this paper and presentation, I explore the diverse meanings and implications of the concept of "teacher privilege." My purpose is to sharpen my own understanding of the term and how it is used in various contexts, and also to alert others to the diverse and controversial meanings that seem to be attached to it.

Over several months I have been discussing, researching, and reflecting on the possible meanings and referents of "teacher privilege," expanding my sense of my own and others' use of the term, and adding that information to the journal entries I have already devoted to exploring its varied uses, including those suggested by Dr. Lassonde and by the AERA presentation mentioned above. I used the Internet, listserves and direct e-mail to gather data beyond my own thoughts, and talked with selected faculty at my own university to learn how they respond to the term. I plan to continue to pursue further understanding of this term in the months to come.

The method I have used to analyze the data I have collected is a linguistic and cultural analysis of the meanings of the words "teacher" and "privilege" when used together in diverse contexts. Part of my own graduate study was in the area of linguistics and sociolinguistics, and this field has been a continuing interest of mine. This analysis is based on sociolinguistic tools, primarily from the work of George Lakoff with varied collaborators. Lakoff explores the frames in which meanings occur as words are used in varied contexts (Lakoff, 2005). He uncovers the metaphors embodied in the varied ways in which terms are used (Lakoff & Johnson, 1990; Cohen, 2008). He classifies the groups of concepts to which a term belongs in its varied uses (Lakoff, 1987). These analyses are presented through discussion here and also will be presented through visual tools including Wordle (http://www.wordle.net/) and Visual Thesaurus (http://www.visualthesaurus.com/) at the Castle Conference.

Frames

Lakoff, for many years a professor of linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, has been a well-known academic figure for decades, and his 1990 book on the functions of metaphor, written with Mark Johnson of the University of Chicago, had some influence outside the strictly academic realm. But it was his work on the idea of "frames" or "framing" that brought him to a prominence in the first decade of the 21st century. He surfaced as a linguistic advisor to liberal politicians on ways to counter conservative rhetoric by understanding how conservatives "frame" their speech in the realms of family and safety, and by ensuring that their own speech is framed in ways that have similar attraction to the electorate. (Lakoff, G., 2005)

I have thus far uncovered four primary meanings for the concept of "teacher privilege," each of which may belong to a different "frame" within the context of schools and classrooms. The meaning of my own long-time use of the term is that teachers have the privilege of knowing what is happening in their classrooms, of knowing their students. It follows, I believe and tell the teachers I work with, that they have a superior ability to conduct research in their classrooms, compared to the ability of an outsider researcher to come in and understand the meaning of classroom events. This, I have argued to them, is their advantage as classroom researchers.

I urge them not to use "second hand" research methods like questionnaires and tests developed by others, but rather to engage primarily in observation, conversation, and analysis of actual classroom events and products. "Anyone," I say, "could come into your classroom and administer a test or questionnaire, but only you can see what is happening during every day and read every paper and hear every comment that your students make." When I've said to a group of teachers, "You are the ones who have teacher privilege," I have meant to say that you (my audience of teachers) have the ability to know what is happening in your classroom, more intimately and in more detail than any outside researcher could know. "Your students trust you," I would add, "and will behave and speak in ways that can reveal the effects of your teaching. You know your students well enough to interpret the meaning of their actions, to ask them questions and get an honest answer.

I demonstrate convenient, easy methods for data collection, so that the close-up look I want them to take at their classrooms will seem possible as an addition to their daily work. The frame in which I place my own use of the term "teacher privilege" is that of utility – the teacher has a useful capacity to study events in her/his own classroom. Others may place the same words in the frame of oppression.

During the same span of years in which I have been using this term, the concept of "white privilege" (possibly originating with P. McIntosh, 1989) has become common in studies of how teachers prevent the success of diverse students in their classrooms. McIntosh defines white privilege as all the ways that society accommodates the needs of white people, and does not accommodate those of people of color. It encompasses the often-unrecognized belief of privileged people (not only teachers, of course) that everyone else, regardless of race, gender, class, ability or gender identity, has had the same experiences they themselves have had, and
has been accepted in the same ways. Thus, white people are unlikely to think or act in terms of how the lives of “others” are different from their own lives.

In the case of teachers, this means that privileged (i.e., white, middle class, and female, physically and mentally able, heterosexual) teachers oppress students who are not like them by ignoring these and other differences in acceptance and experience. There is an interesting assumption when “white privilege” is equated with “teacher privilege:” that all teachers are members of the categories listed above (obviously untrue, although today the majority of teachers do fit the race and gender categories of this stereotype). I believe that it is this assumption that shapes some concerns I encountered about the term “teacher privilege.” If teachers are (more or less correctly) assumed to be white, then “teacher privilege” and “white privilege” must be closely linked. The term “teacher privilege” is thus sometimes located in the frame of unequal power/oppression. Another interesting interpretation is that “privilege” can be defined as the opposite of “oppression.”

My own “white privilege” (though my ethnic heritage is uncertain, though I have lived in relative poverty in earlier years, and though I am queer – thus not clearly meeting all the categories subsumed under “white” in this term) at first inclines me to reject the idea that when I say “teacher privilege” I mean “white privilege.” But a lesson learned from Lakoff, as well as from other linguists, is that it is the recipient of one’s speech or writing who defines its meaning. In future use of the term “teacher privilege” I will be much more careful to define the frame, category and metaphorical nature of my usage.

Categories
The title of Lakoff’s book, “Women, Fire and Dangerous Things” (1987), mentioned in a graduate class but not as an assigned reading, sent me straight to the university bookstore. It has two key points: that the human mind is constructed so as to place concepts in categories, and that the categories selected by different groups of language users differ in ways that are unpredictable to members of other language-using groups.

This is a key difficulty in acquiring deep knowledge of languages one learns in a classroom. In the “real world,” word sounds, grammatical forms, words and their categories are learned “naturally,” through interaction with native speakers in one’s own group or family circle. Outsiders will have great difficulty in learning these categories (especially when they are embedded in grammatical structures of the language), and are likely, as you have perhaps already done, to invent their own reasons for the categorizations. I can not read the title of Lakoff’s book without thinking, “Well, women and fire are both dangerous things, at least to men,” or “Well, this category (which is a grammatical category affecting word forms) must reflect the New Guineans’ fear – imagine, having a grammatical marker for fear.” But according to Lakoff, the marker is only a marker, and any semantic meaning it may once have had has been lost for centuries and is outside the awareness of language users.

My own use of “teacher privilege” falls in the category of “insider knowledge.” This is a semantic, rather than a grammatical category, and has a rather large number of member words and phrases, including many related to language usage, such as “cant, argot, jargon.” Some parallel examples could include the knowledge the owners and employees of the relatively small grocery chain where I shop have of the needs and wants of the cooks and eaters who frequent their stores (as opposed to the much more formalized and less accurate knowledge held in the big chain store at which I occasionally drop in); the knowledge my daughter has of the personalities, interests and preferences of the customers in her coffee shop (as opposed to the overall beliefs of the chain that owns it about what coffee-drinkers want); the knowledge a librarian who became my friend had of my reading tastes (as opposed to the knowledge held by the public library in Saint Paul, where I now live, of what books to buy and shelve).

Metaphors
I have uncovered two other phrases related to the idea of “teacher privilege.” One is the idea of the “teacher’s privilege” of exercising power in the classroom. The other is “the privilege of being the work a teacher.”

In some instances, the teacher’s privilege as the power-wielder in the classroom is the referent of the term. In the US, at least, the word “privilege” is quite common in talking about the management of students/children. Teachers grant children the “privilege” of reading a book when an assignment is complete, of leading a line of their peers down a school hallway, of getting a drink of water or using the toilet, of feeding the class pet or watering the class plant. Teachers suggest that parents “take away privileges” from their children if homework is not completed or if “poor behavior” in school is reported at home. Teachers themselves take away privileges in the classroom for similar reasons.

What privileges does the teacher have, and who gives them to her/him? In ordinary circumstances, teachers’ privilege of exercising classroom power is not given or taken away (see below for a different interpretation) – an event that I would consider essential to the meaning of the word “privilege” in these contexts. My sense is that this use of “teacher’s privilege” is a metaphor arising from the frequency with which the word is used concerning children. Anything a child is allowed to do in a classroom is classified as a privilege: metaphorically, what a teacher is allowed to do in a classroom is classified as a privilege. My own use of the term “teacher privilege,” as described above, is a metaphor connected to an older use of the word privilege, meaning “what one is privy to” – what one is allowed to or able to know that is not known by others. It is not unrelated to the root meaning of “privilege” – a private law, granting some permission or exemption to an individual or family.

“The privilege of being a teacher” is another quite common usage of the term, often found in valedictory remarks by retiring academics. I have found references to the privilege of being a French teacher, an English teacher, a math teacher, a physics teacher. Most often, the reference is to the joys of working in the specific realm of content the teacher once chose. The ideas, the concepts, the methods, the written works are perceived by the speaker/writer as uniquely marvelous, and the career connection with them is recalled as joyful.

However, I found one reference related to this usage but quite different in tone. This teacher had been removed from his New York City classroom because, he said, a student had misunderstood his questions. In New York City, such teachers are assigned to spend their days in a room in a school administration building with all the other teachers
who may have committed some offense that does not require immediate dismissal, and in some cases remain there for years, waiting for an investigation or hearing, and doing nothing. The term Kafkaesque certainly comes to mind whenever I read a mention of this purgatorial place.

This teacher’s complaint was that he no longer had “the privilege of being a teacher.” From the context, there was no evidence that he coveted the privilege of knowing the ins and outs of his classroom, the ability to oppress his students, the right to exercise power over them, or the joy of his particular science content area. He wanted the right to do what he knew how to do. He wanted the life from which he had been abruptly removed and to which he might never be able to return. For him, the privilege of being a teacher represented a metaphor for his freedom. He wrote, “Being denied the privilege to teach is almost as terrible as not being able to breathe.”

Ted Cohen, a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, has written an intriguing exploration of metaphor titled *Thinking of Others: On the Talent for Metaphor*. In it he describes the ability to exhibit empathy, to think of oneself as another person, as “an indispensable human capacity, essential to moral awareness.” And he equates this capacity with the construction of metaphors. As I pursue this topic, I want to explore the relationship of this concept to my own use of “teacher privilege” to mean the insider knowledge that teachers have, and to see how it relates to the other usages that I have uncovered thus far.

References
A Retrospective Analysis of Transformation: Effecting Change

Context
Ten years ago, I began a process that introduced me to the methodology of action research and self-study, and since then I have investigated my practice in each of my leadership roles. Today, I would like to take the opportunity, in the context of a self-study conference, to respond to Loughran’s imperative (2008) and articulate what was learnt through researching my practice, beyond my individual knowledge, and to seek the general from the particular.

With the dawning of the new millennium, I decided to take a break from my crazy rat race in various managerial roles and rethink my professional trajectory in order to better understand where the race was leading me. Thus, I began to broaden my knowledge of qualitative research since it seemed to be a field that would help me better understand my practice. In the years before, I had been committed exclusively to the positivist, behaviorist approach, and was not receptive to any other theories. During the break I was exposed to different theories and approaches such as the socio-cultural approach, as well as to various qualitative methodologies. This eye-opening exposure shook the very foundations of my beliefs and triggered the beginning of a transformational experience.

The process began while serving as the head of the elementary school department at my college and gained strength subsequently when I served as the leader of a multi-disciplinary experimental project whose aim was to create a new program for teacher education. During the process, I wrote about the reformulation of my professional identity while building a new concept of leadership through action research (Margolin, 2007a), and examined the improvement of the faculty’s practice. One of the major changes implemented in the department was that the faculty and the students learned and implemented the methodology of action research and self-study together: faculty members enquired into their work and wrote self-studies; the students learned to document their observations and reflect on their practical experience. We began to appreciate the importance of action research and self-study together: faculty members and the students learned and implemented the methodology changes implemented in the department was that the faculty improvement of the faculty’s practice. One of the major methodologies. This eye-opening exposure shook the very foundations of my beliefs and triggered the beginning of a transformational experience.

The knowledge and experience my colleagues and I gained through our learning resulted in the conclusion that the radical changes we had established such as partnerships with schools, conducting research as an integral part of the program and integrating between the various study areas, should not be limited to one department. Since we were operating within an ecological system, in which change in one element affects all other elements, we believed we had to instigate reform in the entire college, bringing about a program that would be integrative, coherent, and responsive to the changing needs of our context. Accordingly, a year later, we began implementation of an experimental four-year program proposed as an alternative to the traditional program (Margolin, 2007b).

By the end of the experiment, research had become an integral part of the students’ curriculum and of me and my colleagues’ professional way of life. In an additional self-study, I investigated the professional development of the teacher educators, including myself, who were involved in the experimental program. As data for this study was collected from various sources (such as transcripts of community meetings and seminars; logs of online discussions and interviews with the participants) it was possible to investigate the teacher educators’ professional development. Moreover, the participants validated the findings and their comments were used to refine the final version. The accumulated knowledge, the broader horizons, the new and vast repertoire of capabilities and the deeper understanding were all products of the project that enabled the college to respond to future changes in its context and work proactively toward them (Margolin, forthcoming).

Now, in retrospect, I have become curious about the various components embedded in the lengthy processes I have undergone, and I have begun to ask myself numerous significant questions: How have I applied the knowledge I gained from each period to the following one? How did my navigation of these processes contribute to significant changes in the landscape of teacher education?

Aims
1. To reframe the insights of my new perspective on effecting change in teacher education programs.
2. To derive some fundamental principles for the wider context of teacher education beyond my own experience.

Method
The methodological stance of self study is a powerful tool for revealing basic assumptions, beliefs, and educational world-views drawing on data sources that are appropriate for examining issues of practice, and responding to the demands of the practice context (Berry, 2007). Moreover, through self-study it is possible to reframe critical issues, arrive at new insights and construct new knowledge (Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Schuck & Russell, 2005). This study adopts Cliff’s (2008) notion of reviewing previous data, re-reading my former self studies and reflecting on them. Thus, re-examining my former studies and relating to them as a longitudinal holistic study, I tried to reinterpret them and derive public knowledge from them. This is commensurate with LaBoskey’s argument (2004) that sustainable improvement of practice as well as changing the institutional context are always goals, but not less important is the production of public knowledge of practice that can contribute to the improvement of the practice of others.

Data sources. The data for this study draws on various sources: (a) my reflective journal; (b) transcripts of recorded group discussions in various frameworks: our community

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of practice, the inquiry team and the leadership team; (c) regular electronic correspondence with three colleagues; (d) regular conversations with two colleagues who are critical friends; (e) and my previous published self-studies.

**Data analysis.** The data were analyzed by means of a series of dialectic moves between the data and the theoretical foundation of 'transitional approach to change' that focuses simultaneously on the psychological processes of the participants in an organization and on the social processes of the context. These two levels of external organizational change and internal transitions within participants are intertwined and interdependent (Amado & Amato, 2001).

The data were analyzed in 5 phases:

1. The extensive number of transcripts and correspondence led me to first conduct a full 'holistic' re-reading in order to classify the major areas of discourse that included amongst others:
   a. Epistemological conceptions relating knowledge, teaching and learning
   b. Integration, connections and operations concerning curriculum and field experience
   c. Various tensions, such as between individual needs and the communal agenda: between leading the community according to initial principles and responding to the participants' emerging agendas etc.
   d. Partnerships between the college and the field.

2. The second phase was re-reading my self-studies in order to validate the topics identified and selecting the main topics that reoccur in all the data sources.

3. The topics that emerged from the analyzed data were re-analyzed through the lens of transition theories and subsequently three central themes were selected in which a change was identified during the last ten years:
   a. change in conceptions and approach
   b. change in relationships
   c. change in leadership style and strategies.

4. My critical friends and correspondents read the findings and commented upon them. Their comments were used to refine and improve the articulation of the three central themes and verify their salience.

5. The final phase was to establish, through dialogue with my colleagues, a list of insights and recommendations concerning each of the three themes that have the possibility of effecting change and improvement in teacher educators’ practice.

The discourse dealt specifically with the question of the meaning of sustainable improvement in teacher education programs. In other words, we asked ourselves, how did our experiences inform the practice and theory of teacher education concerning effecting change?

**Findings: Insights and Their Implications for Effecting Change**

This section presents some of our main insights about the needs and conditions that can afford external change as well as internal transformation in teacher education.

**Recruiting colleagues.** A main conclusion of my self-studies that in order to change teacher education I first had to transform myself, resonates Amado and Ambrose’s (2001) notion that an organizational change cannot take place unless personal transformation occurs in large numbers of individuals. This means that as a leader I had to alter myself, recruit many colleagues to participate in the change process and effect change in our program – all this concurrently. However, as I agree fully with the contention that “You cannot alter people's deep-seated habits by directive, only they can do it themselves, when they really want to, when they themselves experience a strong need to do so” (Amado & Ambrose, 2001: xviii), I understood that I had to excite my colleagues and convince them to feel the need for change and to create the desire to take part in the change process. Indeed, I invested an enormous amount of time and energy gathering a group of colleagues willing to join my dream of transforming teacher education, and in fact, after a while they became committed partners, as one of the veteran lecturers said:

In my experience, the most important thing is the learning community...here the principle of the learning community worked the best, better than any other place where I have had experienced (2.2.2002).

**Setting conditions for creating and sustaining a community of practice.** While recruiting a group of people and convincing others to join this journey, it is necessary to set appropriate conditions for regular meetings of the participants. From the outset I intended to create a community of practice in which all the participants would become learners and learn, beyond their formal expertise in teaching, many new competencies in order to fulfill new demands. The transformation could only take place via learning of new theories as well as exposure to the various voices, expertise and ideas of the participants. However, as I took seriously Wenger’s contention (1998) that “maintenance of the community” was not a visible assignment, and was often undervalued and unfamiliar, I worked hard to make it an inseparable and essential part of our practice. The participants gradually learned to appreciate this, as the psychology lecturer said:

...The weekly meeting became an effective mechanism for mutual designing and a platform for the clarification of stances and for the mutual enrichment of the faculty. We experienced good examples that had the potential for development. From my point of view, this experience was particularly advantageous for the faculty because we proved that we could design successful shared plans through the theoretical analysis of students’ texts in order to bring dilemmas, conflicts and discussions on the surface. Each of us will now be a better integrator than he was prior to this experience (2.6.2003).

In the process of creating the community of practice, my concept of leadership was reshaped and from a ‘top down’ hierarchical manager, I became a partner in a collaborative distributed leadership team.

**Distributed leadership.** As the establishment and nurturing of such communities is an in-depth complex process, there is a need to develop a distributed leadership that takes upon itself the commitment and responsibility for the community’s development and sustainability. The community stimulated many of the participants to become change agents and take leadership roles upon themselves. One of the participants, who had declared a year before the ending of the experiment that she would never assume a leadership role, became the head of the early childhood
department and is one of the leaders of the new college curriculum currently being designed. She said that, “my participation in the community of the experiment enabled me to take this role.” The core leadership of the new program is comprised of many of the teacher educators who participated in the project. Moreover, the head of the School of Education who is now leading the new curriculum of the college was one of the clinical supervisors participating in the experimental project.

**Deep learning:** Deep learning was a means and an end of the experiment and the only product that was in consensus among the teacher educators. At the end of the project, the clinical supervisor, before being nominated to her new role, emphasized the importance of sustaining the deep learning process:

> On the side of the core curriculum of the students’ preparation we develop now the core curriculum of the faculty. Many sections require instructional and social capabilities and skills that we have to develop, to elaborate, to deepen and to experience. Everything sounds simple, for instance accompanying students in their integrative writing, development of inquiry stance, tightening the connections between practice and theory, integrating among the various components of the training, building collaborative models of practice, learning in virtual environment...but the implementation of all this is hard and complicated though the sentences sound simple... (6.2006).

A year later, after experiencing deep learning during the four years in the experimental project, this supervisor continued the accomplishment of her statements by building communities of practice in the school of education which she heads.

**Practice is the center of the process.** In accordance with the last quote, the gap between telling and acting is huge. Thus, a main insight we gained is that even the most creative and significant principles or the most validated theory remain empty headings without activation. Therefore, a main mission for teacher educators is to derive operational procedures from the fundamental principles and theories that underpin their programs. Teacher educators also have to convince students to implement these procedures and principles by demonstrating that they are workable and by modeling them, otherwise they will vanish. Derived from this assumption, another fundamental principle is placing practice at the center of the change process. Thus, the continuous discourse of the community accompanies the practice but does not replace it. Moreover, modeling teaching and learning in the college is a fundamental principle. Only when the members of the community visited schools and took part in students’ observation and feedback did they learn to appreciate the unique contribution of their colleagues working in the field. As the lecturer of sociology told the clinical supervisors:

> I didn’t know what you did. I take my hat off … Until I joined this community I thought my discipline was at the center. And now, coming to the field, I understood that the clinical supervisors are at the center and we are around them... After I attended the practicum, I reduced my self-importance and increased their importance. They actually do the integration and the synthesis and everything…. (23.1.04).

Modeling and involving the whole faculty in accompanying the student teachers at their practice in schools was more effective than thousand words.

**Collegial relationships.** Collegial and respectful relationships amongst the participants are a critical element without which the individuals are not able to undergo a deep transformational process. Moreover, our collaborative self-studies were the mediating tool of our transformation as they stimulated us to reflect together on our work and co-construct the meaning of our agenda and mission as well as our roles as change agents.

However, the relationships also have to include the cooperating schools with which teacher educators establish partnerships. This partnership demands not only a shift in the teacher educators’ concept of their role, but also appropriate conditions to implement it. The change must begin by relating to fieldwork of the teacher educators as academic work and continue by giving them appropriate reward, and by organizing the curriculum in a way that some of the courses could be taught in school.

One of the novice supervisors described her difficulties in the new program and her veteran colleague’s help:

> I experienced here peer learning from the beginning till the end with disciplinary as well as with pedagogical experts. I had to learn that I can consult with people around me. I felt often bewildered and that created tensions amongst my students, as I created emptiness because I did not understand… but Edith [a veteran supervisor] illuminated my way, without her I was in sightlessness, and many of the things she explained to me I could understand only afterwards. Without her I could not be able to cope… (22.6.04).

The mentoring framework serves as a safe space for student teachers and teacher educators. In this space, risk-taking and experimentation are supported and encouraged, allowing for meeting the challenges of the new program.

**Constructing knowledge through inquiring practice.** Instead of being consumers or deliverers of knowledge, all the participants became producers of knowledge that was a paradigmatic change in our conceptions. In order to support this transformation, we created a framework that afforded the participants opportunities to experience research collaboratively, to read others’ studies, to learn the methodology, to receive and give feedback, to think of practice reflectively and from various perspectives, to present our studies in conferences and to publish them. These processes of collegial inquiry enhanced our ability to reflect, to listen actively to others, to reframe our professional identities and conceptions and to create deeper meaning for our teaching and learning. This group became a framework in which we established the collaborative nature of our self-studies: We became critical friends, committed to and taking active roles in our colleagues’ studies. Moreover, the book we recently published together, comprising all our self-studies, now serves as a source of innovative and up-to-date knowledge of teacher education for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and teacher educators as well as for policy makers.

**Closing Comments**

In accordance with the ecological perspective that underpins the notion of sustainable improvement in complex educational systems (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009), it is essential to remember that links and interconnections...
of the myriad elements of the profession are of utmost importance. The general lesson from our particular experience is the necessity to use a multidimensional lens in order to see a holistic, as well as a detailed picture of the profession. The three interrelated and interwoven areas in which we experienced significant change and transformation - epistemology, relationships and leadership - are a web that affords a profound and sustainable change in teacher education.

References
The Rhetoric and the Reality: Facing the Truth in Teaching Disability Studies

Context of the Study
As Loughran (2007) contends, “it is important that teacher educators develop, and are able to enact, serious ways of challenging the many hidden assumptions about teaching that students of teaching have inevitably developed over time (but may not consciously recognize)” (p.8). Without such a critical eye, the rhetoric of social justice and empowerment (with all its almost inevitable hidden assumptions) will go unchallenged and unchecked. And without such critical checks and balances, there lies the potential for such an agenda to be hijacked at worst, and waylaid at best. Rather than plant the seeds of change, we may simply cultivate and reproduce that which already exists, for better or for worse.

This self-study project is set in the context of an undergraduate program to prepare elementary school teachers, within the School of Education at the University of Ballarat, in Australia. As part of the third year of a four-year program, students are required to complete a course entitled Students with Special Needs, which focuses on addressing issues in relation to disabilities in the neighbourhood school. The course aims to have students challenge the hidden assumptions and received wisdom of traditional special education, and to develop a critical understanding of disability, ableism (Kumari Campbell, 2009), and their relevance to the classroom teacher. They are encouraged to frame their understanding and practice within a social justice perspective.

As part of a national project, I had the opportunity to be interviewed by researchers (Dr Andrea Reupert, from Monash University, and Dr Brian Hemmings, from Charles Sturt University) about the nature, principles and content of the disability studies course. When I was sent the transcript of the interview, I was perplexed. What had seemed like sound answers then appeared now as simply rhetoric. Rather than address what really happened in my course, I felt that I had merely reproduced the dominant discourses of my particular perspective in my field. I felt I needed to ask myself what discourses were truly evident in my transcripts, whether how I had represented the course was rhetoric or reality, and how my students viewed the same questions. This paper then, is the story of that self-reflective journey.

Aim and Objectives
The aim of this self-study is to model the sort of pedagogy and philosophies that I hope my students will adopt when they are responsible for students of their own. In this project, I seek reflective practice, from both myself and my students, for as Korthagen (2001) observes: “Reflection is the instrument by which experiences are translated into dynamic knowledge; both these paradigms aim at an ongoing process consisting of experience, looking back on experience, analysis and reorganization” (p.53). As a group we seek to highlight the disparities and similarities between rhetoric and practice, both in schools, and in how this subject has run within the university.

Method
This self-study had several components. Firstly, I extracted from the interview transcript key points and quotes that I had made about the content and pedagogy of particular disability studies course. Secondly, while teaching this course, I also kept a self-reflective journal critically evaluating the rhetoric and practice of my teaching in this curriculum area. As Korthagen and Verkuyl (2007) point out, keeping track of one’s own journey enables educators to better know themselves, and thus “there is more likelihood that taken-for-granted aspects of practice and hidden assumptions that shape one’s practice might be challenged by both teacher educators and students of teaching” (p.9). Finally, late in the semester, I presented these extracts to the students undertaking the course, and invited them to reflect on the course, using my observations as a starting point if they found them useful.

Students had a choice (without negative repercussions) as to whether they wanted their reflections included in the project, as well as having the choice of anonymity, which most of them took. The reflection for this project was presented as the final reflective task of a series for the semester (with the marks allocated for submission, not content), and was expected to challenge the tensions “between making
explicit the complexities and messiness of teaching” (Berry, 2007, p.32).

Findings

The reflections of both the students and myself were drawn together, in combination with the notes from the initial interview, to provide a complex picture of my teaching in this particular area of the teacher education landscape. While the initial interview, and subsequent teacher educator diary, covered myriad aspects of my work in the areas of special needs and disabilities, students did not address all of these in student reflections. Accordingly, the discussion for this paper has been defined by the three areas in which the education students chose to comment:

• philosophical and social justice underpinnings of the course, especially notions of inclusion;
• issues relating to course structure and the presentation of substantive content; and
• assessment within the course, and its relevance to considerations of diversity.

While it would have been helpful to have broader student feedback covering a wider diversity of issues, it is duly noted that the feedback given provides a clear picture of the concerns of undergraduate student teachers: do I understand what this course is about; does the course structure help me understand; and what is the nature of assessment of this understanding?

The rhetoric of inclusion. The rhetoric of inclusion received considerable emphasis throughout the original transcript. I contended that the whole course was based around principles of inclusion, and that I used this approach to cater for the education students’ needs, interests and learning styles. I argued that the assessment tasks support the education students’ needs, interests and learning styles. I argued that the assessment tasks support a considerable flexibility, but that the use of lectures hampered learning styles. I contended that assessment tasks support a considerable flexibility, but that the use of lectures hampered learning styles.

While I talk to my students about inclusive education I use ‘good teaching is good teaching for all children’ and inclusive education is in a context where ‘all children can learn and be taught’.

In the interview, I detailed various ways this was modelled through the curriculum and through pedagogical strategies, but I also observed that “when I’m teaching it disclosed my own hidden disabilities”, and that this has encouraged a number of students to approach me privately, or in front of their peers, and disclose their own hidden disabilities. I contended that this has enabled me to consider diversity within the class:

I always have students say oh I don’t want to do group work and I’ve encouraged them to come up and say if you feel uncomfortable working in a group come and talk to me about the issue and I’ve had people disclose their own Aspergers’ and all sorts of issues like that and we’ve been able to work around that so it’s looking at the needs they have and how we can make the course accessible and approachable.

I noted that lectures in the program are very interactive, and may include poetry, multimedia, music, popular culture, and so forth:

*There’s a Simpsons episode where Bart is put into special school and you see the classroom teacher not coping and then Bart’s response to special education and so we go through that and get people to reflect and in the following workshops I then get people to write an individual education plan for Bart in one of those contexts so either the regular school setting he was in or the withdrawal class so I use a lot of multi media like that.*

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It is my stated intention then, to provide ways to stimulate inclusion, awareness of diversity and immersion in the principles that the course espouses. But how then were these views reflected in the observations that I made in my diary during the semester? Was the rhetoric of inclusion evident in the practice of my teaching? Did I foster social inclusion? Did I model an appropriate approach to inclusion and diversity, or did I fall back on habits that are old and familiar in the context of tertiary teaching? Were my efforts to make lectures more enticing and enriching in vain? And indeed, what did my students think and feel about these issues?

The first lecture was disrupted by various students wandering in late, and although I knew that this was to be expected at the start of semester, I felt irritated. This was not helped by a number of students talking loudly:

Instead of feeling inclusive and encouraging, I just wanted to pull the old-fashioned approach, tell them all to shut up and listen, demand that they come to lectures on time… Bit my tongue, and talked about guidelines for the semester- respect, inclusivity etc. Mentioned that students talking over me made me very stressed and cranky, and asked them to keep that in mind. Interestingly, in their responses, several students commented that “the students enrolled are not necessarily very diverse” and claimed it was difficult to tell if the course catered for diversity. It seemed that despite my efforts, they had not realised the diversity that existed within the group. (In my journal, I had reflected on this during workshop discussions, and had wondered if the students failed to see hidden disabilities as an aspect of diversity. I noted that this was an area in need of greater development.) Others, however, showed greater insight:

I also liked the way the staff valued the diversity of the students, always helping them and changing and adapting to suit our needs.

With I, myself, having a physical disability I have learned so much more on how I can help children in the same boat not to feel the same way I have been made to feel at times and this has been a really positive thing! A number of students commented that, in one form or other, the course “addresses diversity quite well. It allows an opportunity to understand diversity and by this understanding it helps us to accept it more.” Yet I was concerned to have one student comment: “Students were made aware of alternative needs but not asked if they have alternative needs that need to be catered for.”

Course structure and the presentation of content.

Course structure received little overt attention in the original interview, as this was not an area of focus selected by the outside researchers, but I did mention that as part of an interdisciplinary staff research project, I was focussing on affective learning. I reported that this involves, looking at ways of stimulating the feeling aspect of what [the students are] learning so I actually have a lot of activities that match into that and then follow up in various ways and they have free reign on how they follow up on it to express their response to those sort of processes.
To a minor extent, I included thoughts on structure in my reflections, but these related more to bemoaning the existence of lectures, or the inflexible arrangement of lecture theatres, which I observed “were something out the sixties, with fixed desks and stark lighting, and inaccessible to anyone with even the most minor physical disability.” Generally, I felt the students responded well to my approach that considered affective learning and presented information through children’s literature, media and popular culture, and that this made enough variation to the usual course to which these students were exposed, and demonstrated other ways of teaching.

The students, however, raised several key points that generally related to the need to increase focus on substantive content (ie types of disabilities, interventions etc) and sought a more practical component to the course. This is in conflict with the rhetoric of disability studies with a focus on inclusion and social justice (Kumari Campbell, 2009), and moves towards a more traditional view of special education, focused on deficit perspectives. As well, some of the suggestions would not be seen to be inclusive, such as, “perhaps try to incorporate experience with special needs individuals, like bringing some in”, which is reminiscent of the problematic discourse of disability as freak show. More practically however, quite a few students suggested that a “professional placement as an assessment or as part of the course offerings” would be useful, and would help them develop greater confidence in providing an inclusive environment built on principles of social justice.

Assessment. Assessment is always a topic of considerable interest to our students, and this course was no exception. Little emphasis was placed on assessment in the initial interview, but I did reflect on assessment in my journal. I felt the written task did not tackle the issue of inclusion in any innovative manner, but hoped the rest of the tasks, including the ongoing weekly reflections, and the “Pub Quiz” were more interesting. In my diary, I noted in relation to assessment:

I think I’ll hold off giving them the details of the written task for now. They are having trouble understanding Individual Education Plans, and they really need to get their heads around this before they tackle the task. Really need to reconsider the oral presentations. They are not very stimulating this year, and there have been myriad complaints about team members. I wonder how much they really learn from this task. I’m glad I’ve allowed some of the students to work alone, as they actually seem to be doing better presentations. Perhaps we over-emphasise teamwork in this School.

Students had similar thoughts about assessment, but there were grumbles about the delays in providing details of the written task, even though this had been explained in class, and a blanket extension granted! Generally, however, the assessment was viewed favourably, with comments including: “the case studies in particular are a handy future reference tool”; “assessment is relevant yet provides variety from the normal”; and “I really like the assessment tasks as they are I think they cater for everyone’s learning styles and are beneficial in the long-term.” One student related her comments to the principles of inclusion and diversity espoused in the course:

I really like the way the course offers students to tackle the assessment tasks in a way that they are comfortable in. Some students struggle working in groups, and this course offers them flexibility in this. The course also looks at teaching through a number of different means (visual audio etc) which is showing a number of ways to teach whilst catering for the needs of all the students in the course.

Conclusions
My primary purpose in this self-study was to align rhetoric and practice, but considering the student focus on structure and content, especially in preparation for actually teaching students with disabilities, it may well be that while the rhetoric and then its practice are the key areas of concern for myself as teacher educator, for the students, the emphasis is largely on the practice, and then, if at all, how it may be informed by the rhetoric. The issue for the students seems to be not so much whether my teaching practice is aligned with the rhetoric, but rather, what they can take from the course to inform their teaching. For many of the students the ability to integrate the rhetoric and the practice into some sort of critically informed praxis is an inconceivable challenge. Rather than interrogate the dominant discourse, they are eager for teacher educators to spell out the links so that they, in the long term, feel more comfortable as teachers of students with disabilities. It seems that my rhetoric, and their practice may be at odds, unless I find a way to make the links crystal clear and practical. To this end, some restructure of the course appears to be in order.

Possible changes in course design and implementation may include a professional experience component, or at the very least field trips with practical tasks, to enable pre-service education students to trouble the rhetoric in context. The enthusiasm of the students for the lecture timeslot will mean this is continued, with the popular reflective assessment tasks as an ongoing feature for 2010. The case study assessment task will be provided earlier in the semester, as requested by the students, but this will necessitate some reorganisation of the course content, to ensure education students are better prepared for the task, which requires some perception of the links between theory and practice.

This self-study project was self-initiated and focussed (LaBoskey, 2004). In its reframing of the situation and the transformation of my practice, it has increasingly involved education students in similar reflection on their own practice. They too became self-reflective researchers, and the project became increasingly interactive. In 2010, greater liaison will increase the degree of interaction, in order to gain increased insight into not only the overt and covert disparities and similarities between my teaching rhetoric, and the practice as perceived by my students, but also the way these students perceive controversial content and rhetoric will prepare them to be practicing, critically thinking, teachers of students with disabilities.

References


Introduction
As two literacy teacher educators, we strive to model practices for teachers and teacher candidates. We have no hesitation in modeling instructional practices across various courses, yet we struggle in our writing methods courses when modeling focuses on processes of writing, rather than those of instruction. Despite evidence supporting the value of teachers’ modeling specific to writing (Graves, 1983; Kaufman, 2009), we found ourselves shying away from sharing our own writing as a means for modeling. Although we literally implored our teachers and teacher candidates to write with their students, we did not “walk our talk” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000). Recognizing contradiction between beliefs and practices, we challenged ourselves to do more sharing of our writing. The discomfort and vulnerability we felt as we did so ultimately forced us to move beyond reflection and casual conversation. In this paper, we share what we have learned from systematic scrutiny of our reactions, motives for sharing, and assumptions about its impact upon our students.

Theoretical Perspectives
The perspectives we bring to both our teaching and this inquiry are situated in understandings of the social nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978, 1999) and the important role teachers play in learning contexts. In particular, we draw upon Bandura’s social cognitive theories (1986) in which modeling plays a critical role in learning wherein observers “can acquire cognitive skills and new patterns of behavior by observing the performance of others” (p. 49). Bandura points out that modeling is not mimicry, but a powerful instructional tool from which “the learning may take varied forms, including new behavior patterns, judgmental standards, cognitive competencies, and generative rules for creating behaviors” (p. 49). As teacher educators, modeling of teacher practices is based on our desires to influence students’ learning (Loughran, 2007a). Therefore, for this investigation, we define modeling as demonstrating, by example, a variety of processes and procedures relative to both writing and the teaching of writing so that our students may see, learn from, critique, and discuss those processes and procedures and look for ways they might adapt and employ them in their own writing and teaching practices.

We recognize, however, that modeling can be problematic in teacher education (Loughran, 2007a). Although we choose to define modeling in terms of adaptation, students may view modeling as the “right way” to do things. In a self-study of her practices around students’ construction of reflective portfolios, LaBoskey (1997) discussed concerns about the potential for students to misinterpret her modeling of a central assignment. So that students would not focus on her product as a “prototype,” she explicitly discusses the challenges of her reflective processes as she developed the product. She emphasizes that myriad product possibilities may arise from these individual processes. Certainly, given the complexity of modeling writing processes and teaching practices in a writing methods course, the potential for students’ misinterpretations will challenge literacy teacher educators.

Modeling and Writing. Conceptions of what teachers should model in order to provide learning opportunities for students are inextricably linked to understandings of writing. We view writing as a complex cognitive, social, physical, and volitional endeavor (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999) accomplished within particular contexts. Written composition is thus not simply employment of certain cognitive skills, but additionally involves social purposes and forms, as well personal purposes, attitudes, and motivation. Given the complexity of writing, modeling must include attention to personal as well as cognitive processes.

Murray (1985) was one of the first to recognize the link between teacher participation in writing processes and opportunities for student learning. He urged teachers to “write so they understand the process of writing from within” (p. 73). He argued that experiencing the power and complexities of composing experiences personally would enable teachers to understand students and their learning-to-write processes. Furthermore, as Kaufman (2009) suggests, teacher modeling should address conceptions of writing as social/cultural practices that determine the purposes and motivations for writing. In sum, effective modeling of writing processes is complex, multifaceted, and personally revealing.

Modeling and Writing Teacher Education. Unfortunately, few inquiries have focused on the pedagogical practices of literacy teacher educators (Clift & Brady, 2005). Kaufman’s (2009) self-study, one of the few inquiries regarding writing teacher education, investigates students’ perceptions of his modeling personal writing processes, as evidenced by analysis of their written evaluations of his writing course. Kaufman chose to model, and make visible, his own processes to demonstrate how teachers and their students “might write and share in a variety of educational contexts” (p. 341). Findings suggested that modeling of his personal writing affected students’ understandings of instructional practices that they could transfer to their own practices. Furthermore, modeling impacted students’ affective stances by influencing their attitudes, motivations, and willingness to take risks.

Kaufman’s (2009) work clearly suggests the value of teacher educators sharing personal writing processes with students. Since his inquiry focused on student development, however, we gain little insight into his sharing experiences. Understanding such experiences is vital because sharing of one’s personal writing in teacher education coursework invariably places instructors in dual roles as teacher and writer. In the writer’s role, teacher educators engage in novel
practices that place them in vulnerable and risky situations. Like Kaufman, we recognize that although sharing of one’s own writing can be a powerful pedagogical practice, teacher educators may be “reluctant to write and share their writing, especially if that writing focuses on nonacademic topics” (p. 347). Thus, the purpose of this inquiry was to shed light on the tensions and risks involved in sharing one’s writing in writing methods courses.

**Methodology**

To understand our experiences, we employed self-study, a reflective mode of inquiry focused on critical examination of the space between self and practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). A collaborative investigation allowed us opportunities to explore across cases and to go beyond individual understandings of practice (LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2007b). Additionally, analysis of students’ feedback allowed multiple voices to shape our findings (Kaplan, 2004; Loughran, 2007a).

Intentional, systematic inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) focused on changes to practice and tensions associated with sharing our writing with students. To gain understanding of the tensions faced, we moved cyclically (Griffiths, Poursandiou, Simms, & Windle, 2006) between individual and collaborative examination of practices. In this way, production and analyses of data intertwined through iterative processes of writing and discussion. We began by generating questions for individual reflection. Then we met to discuss our reflective responses and look for common themes. Next, we used processes of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to code all data for these themes. Discussion of our coding led to refinement of our interpretations and subsequent descriptive and analytic memoing (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The focus for each subsequent level of investigation grew out of previous work as we continued to deepen awareness of the tensions surrounding sharing of our writing through both verbal and written analyses.

Two to three times in three writing instruction courses (one at the undergraduate and two at the graduate level) we collected students’ written feedback regarding our sharing. We have one complete set of feedback from students. These data were analyzed with processes of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and frequency counts. This data contributed not only to the conclusions we drew, but to continuing changes in practice as well.

**Findings**

*Each Sees Herself as a Writer.* Writing is a component of our professional lives and we publish. Nevertheless, sharing writing with adult students in genres other than academic writing was problematic and wrought with tension. The personal nature of our work left us feeling exposed and vulnerable. We grappled with emotions stemming from doubts about ourselves as writers to those of our purposes for sharing our writing with students. Furthermore, as successful teacher educators who lead classes with reasonable senses of self-confidence, deliberately placing ourselves in such vulnerable positions was, to say the least, uncomfortable. Analyses revealed that fears we harbored could be traced to the complexity of course contexts and the nature of what it was we shared.

**Course contexts and roles.** We work diligently to create learning communities in all our courses. The writing instruction courses are unique, however, in that we work to set the foundations for collaborative interactions around writing. We ask students to share and discuss their writing with each other across a variety of genres. In order for successful modeling of these collaborative interactions to occur, we consider it imperative that we establish a community of writers within the broader learning context. Student comments such as, “She has established a comfortable environment to write and share,” confirm that this goal was met in the courses.

Surprisingly, despite efforts to establish writing communities in our classes, analysis revealed that we did not think of ourselves as members. Our membership in the community is peripheral and delineated by our role as instructor. Instead, we saw ourselves as “facilitators serving to foster productive interactions between others.” Additionally, in order to alleviate student discomfort at sharing their writing, most of the sharing of writing occurred in group rather than whole class settings. Therefore, as Maggie stated, “As the instructor, I must oversee the whole class, so I migrate from one writing group to the next.”

The constraints of our roles as instructors kept us from being part of the writing communities we facilitated. Significantly then, sharing our work occurs in a context quite different from that which we are working to establish for our students. Our sharing places us in the roles of instructors, at the same time we are assuming the role of writer—a writer who is not truly a member of that particular writing community. Not feeling part of a writing community increases our senses of vulnerability and diminishes trust in our students as fellow writers. The tensions of this context were evident as each of us expressed a yearning to be closer to our students and their writing experiences. As Maggie reflected, “I want to share a piece of myself….I want to feel closer to a group of people.”

Ironically, students’ feedback revealed that by sharing our work and making ourselves vulnerable, they saw us as becoming one of them, automatically gaining membership in the writing communities we sought to create. One student commented: “It brings you to the human level.” Another stated: “It fosters a strong connection and community of writers – all struggle, rejoice, sometimes laugh and cry.” Understanding students’ perspectives helped us to build trust in members of our learning community, as we continued to weave in and out of our roles as “boundaries become blurred in this setting.”

**Written products.** Despite the fact that each of us introduced ourselves as writers at the beginning of our courses, neither of us attributed authorship when we used our pieces for instructional purposes. We did, of course, identify other authors when using their work as mentor texts. Our discussion surfaced two reasons that we deliberately chose to omit authorship. Not surprisingly, the first reason was situated in our role as writers and the vulnerability we felt while sharing pieces in which we were invested, either concerning personal content or ourselves as writers. With continued practice this concern has diminished. Furthermore, we have learned to use our pieces or parts of our pieces more judiciously by setting specific purposes for sharing, such as aspects of writing process.
Secondly, our role as teacher educators created tensions. We worried that identification of authorship might obfuscate the learning purposes for using the text. We were unclear as to how students might interpret presentation of our pieces, and we did not want our author roles interfering with our instructional purposes. Susan stated, “In sharing my work and drawing attention to it, I become the focus in ways that are uncomfortable…my role shifts. I do not want to detract from my students developing and emerging voices.” Maggie became alarmed when, after sharing a piece, one student raised a question focused on issues of intimidation: what happens when students share their writing and one piece is perceived as much better than others? Instances of written feedback also revealed this concern, “I felt inadequate as a writer a little – she used such great description, and I didn’t think mine was that descriptive.” While these responses were few in number, we have become cognizant of issues of comparison that are bound to happen, not just when we model, but in any community of writers. Listening to our students has again helped us work more proactively to deal with issues of sharing. For example, in the course she is currently teaching, Susan explicitly dealt with issues of comparison when students presented their first pieces by posting them on the wall for all members of the class.

Sharing writing processes. We purposefully share our work to model demonstrations of complex writing processes. Modeling of prewriting processes presented few tensions, perhaps because we were clearly in a teacher educator role, modeling specific strategies that we wanted our students to use in their classrooms. Setting the stage for productive interactions around revision processes was challenging, however. Students were invited to provide feedback to us, as they took on roles of writing colleague and/or teacher. We found ourselves in reversed roles. Additionally, since we used our own pieces, our roles as writers conflicted with our perceptions of the roles of teacher educators.

Obviously, we worried about students’ negative perceptions and feedback. Analysis of our data brought us to a deeper understanding that the processes that are critical to the kind of modeling were engaged in were similar in nature to the social interactions we believe are necessary in the writing and learning-to-write processes. We needed to “make ourselves vulnerable, just as we expect them to do.” Written feedback from students revealed that they recognized our willingness to expose ourselves as vulnerable writers, enabling them to “feel connected,” “relate to [us],” and “feel safe.”

Receiving positive feedback from students was just as problematic. We were, as Maggie stated, “in constant doubt as to the sincerity and veracity of the comments because of my role as teacher.” Student anonymous reflections revealed this as well, “It made me nervous to give feedback because Susan is a much more experienced writer;” and, “It is harder to give the ‘instructor’ feedback – she still holds that esteemed spot of teacher.”

Although this conundrum related to modeling continues to be an issue for us, we have been trying out new ways to create more authentic interchanges around feedback and revision. We have, for instance, experimented with invited feedback in which we ask for specific responses linked to traits of written pieces or key elements of a particular genre. Preliminarily, at least one experience with invited feedback seemed to us to provide a more authentic and comfortable interchange of ideas.

Discussion and Conclusion

Collaborative inquiry about the challenges of sharing writing, as well as our analysis of written feedback from students, deepened our understandings about this important pedagogical tool. Tensions and vulnerabilities appear to be an inevitable by-product of straddling roles as writer and teacher educator. We acknowledge that sharing our writing presents dilemmas that are continually problematic—dilemmas for which we must continue to learn and develop, rather than engage in a search for a correct response. We have discovered, however, that teacher educators can work toward alleviating a sense of vulnerability in two critical ways.

First, we recognize that boundaries of these roles may blur, but one needs to maintain a clear focus on purposes for sharing. Clearly, the work of Kaufman (2009) and others underscores the value of teachers sharing their writing as a way of modeling fundamental aspects of writing and learning-to-write processes. Even comments from our students suggest that sharing with them is helpful, “inspirational,” and an effective model of both writing and instructional processes. Through sharing of ourselves and our work as writers, we hope to demonstrate our integrity as teacher educators by “bringing together our beliefs and our actions” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000, p. 239) for the benefit of our students.

Second, involving students in reflective processes through solicitation of feedback is vital to understanding the ways in which sharing and products are perceived. It was not enough for us to read what Kaufman’s (2009) students reported about his sharing; we needed to hear the voices of our students. Because of this inquiry, we gathered more feedback about specific practices than usual. Like Schulte (2001, cited in Loughran, 2007), we found that our students’ feedback gave us courage. Through dialogic processes with students, we better understand what our students experience and how we need to work even more purposefully to create learning opportunities in an environment that lessens fears and promotes the joys of writing, teaching, and learning.

References


From Library Bun to Dreadlocks: The Emergence of an African-Canadian Teacher-Educator in Western Canada

My entrance onto the landscape of teacher education started in the relatively conservative, almost all white world of librarianship in Canada, where I initially acquiesced to racial and cultural domination. By the time I entered teacher education, I had begun to mount resistance to the historical discourses “which have constructed Black people as psychologically, culturally, intellectually and morally inferior” (Wright, Thompson & Channer, 2007, p. 149). It did not take me long to recognize my naïveté to see that I was up against a powerful system and its discourses. I was up against Whiteness. Dei (2007) states that race is a “powerful divide in contemporary society” and defines “Whiteness as a form of racialized identity [that] helps frame much of the social discourse” (p. viii). As a dread-locked, black female teacher-educator, I experience challenges I believe are connected to the complex negotiations involved in working against the racial divide.

This paper grows out of a self-study that explores my public and private worlds as a racialized Other. It traverses my lived experience as an African-Canadian teacher-educator and how I represent myself in a faculty of education in Western Canada where the space is mapped and produced as white (Razack, 2002; Schick, 2002).

Context

The students I teach appear to construct the Canadian university as a purely white space and appear to “require the university to uphold the racial configuration of a white teaching profession” (Schick, 2002, p. 104). It seems the students’ upbringing is such that they have come to expect that knowledge can only flow from white teachers, parents, and other authority figures. Thus, a black instructor is an anomaly. Seeing themselves as the upholders of the white Canadian university, these students believe it is their responsibility to safeguard it from spoilage and contagion (Schick, 2002). Granting themselves this kind of authority, some students are hostile, and set out to discipline the misplaced professor.

In discussions about my teaching experiences with anti-oppressive education scholar Dr. Schick (January, 2010), I told her some of my students seem to be disturbed by my presence and that a few days earlier, a white male student had come to me on behalf of some students who told him “they don’t feel comfortable with me and want to know why they can’t just e-mail me rather than coming to talk to me in person about their assignments” (January, 2010). Schick replied by saying, “No, your presence does not disturb them; it is an affront to them.” Schick’s (2010) confirmation of my lived experiences underscores the view that the students I teach, are socio-historical actors who have knowledge, and/or vision of only one script for their universities and their professors—an elite white space.

In spite of my best efforts to sensitively enact pedagogies geared at “challenging oppressive systems and promoting social justice through education” (Bell, 2007, p. 1), I encountered tremendous resistance in the form of “anger”, “invalidation of the instructor”, “invalidation of the class”, “hostile silence”, and “invalidation of targeted group members experiences” (Griffin & Ouellett, 2007, p. 106-111). These experiences were recurrent. After two years of teaching such predominantly white teacher-education students, I wanted to better understand what I perceive as the shock on their faces when they first enter the classroom and realize I will be their instructor.

Objectives

Myers (2002) suggests that self-study may be used “as both a means of investigation and analysis that starts with one’s self and as a tool for professional improvement” (p. 130). I wanted to understand what was happening to me to improve my teaching through engendering greater receptivity, and to narrow the discomfort I felt and that some students exhibited in class. I reached out for the method of self-study.

Method

This qualitative self-study draws on Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009) and critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2003) as analytical frameworks. CRT points out that “regardless of one’s stature and/or accomplishments, race is required to remind one that he or she still remains locked in the racial construction” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 279) created by Whiteness. Therefore, one is rarely “permitted to break out of the prism … of race that has been imposed by a racially coded and constraining society” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 279).

Critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2003) is a dialectical theory which asserts that the problems of society “are more than simply isolated events of individuals or deficiencies in the social structure. Rather, these problems form part of the interactive context between individual and society” (p. 69). My data analysis considers the role of individuals as well as institutions in the production of the issues in this self-study.

Data collection. I gathered data by journaling and audio taping anecdotes from my university classroom experiences, my reflections and feelings after each class, as well as a written journal of conversations about racism I had with faculty colleagues based on classroom interactions, and e-mails I received from students. For example, after a conversation with a white male student after a class that discussed multicultural literature, I journaled the following: “Jay (* denotes pseudonym) told me he sometimes has a “hard time with some of his classmates because of differences in views about the racism that goes on here (in the province) and what I saw in my internship.” And then he said, “I have seen what you have gone through too Barbara. I have seen students yell at you and roll their eyes when you say certain things. There is a lot of racism in this province.” (Barbara
Data analysis. I repeatedly listened to my audio-tapes, read my journals, notes I had written in my agenda and on slips of paper, and e-mails I had received from students. I analyzed the data with the complementary interpretive frameworks of CRT and critical pedagogy, looked at the interplay between systems (e.g., Whiteness) and individuals (instructor and students), critically examined how Whiteness is played out in university classrooms, and my reaction, interrogation, and responses to such experiences.

Discussion

You don’t belong here. An example of a “call” (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005) which reminded me of my racial identity and that of the majority of my students occurred when I heard these words, “You don’t belong here!” from a white male student. This student was dissatisfied with being asked to write and perform a Reader’s theatre script based on a novel about issues of social justice and to do a literature circle based on a picture book with a similar theme. He characterized these activities as “silly.” His words are part of the discursive practices I have witnessed, and intended to show me that I am an outsider to the university. On several occasions, I felt attacked. This feeling was corroborated by a student who wrote the following after an outburst about class assignments.

To Barbara:

I would like to apologise not for the emotional, panic attack I had but leaving you to try to deal with my emotional explosion… I am not usually very great with group work and it is also stressing me out. Second, I would like to apologise for the way we sort of attacked you on Tuesday. Like I said, I let things build up and I also try to avoid conflict as much as possible… I hope you can forgive me for what we, collectively, put you through on Tuesday; I can completely understand why you were hurt (Kira Francis, personal communication, September 24, 2009).

The students referred to in the e-mail, rejected the assignment I had asked them to do. “Who do you think you are anyways?” said the student as others looked on. Like Donnor (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005), I believe this incident showed that “despite my academic credentials and experience, [my] racial identity always serves as a mitigating factor in determining [my] authority and legitimacy. In the above correspondence I see signs of a student attempting to understand and adapt to a university experience that is different from what she had imagined.

Reflection on my own practices through the lenses of critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2003) suggests the reactions I encountered may be due in part to my approaches and assumptions. Given my knowledge of students as socio-historical actors, how they are produced, and my unfamiliarity to them, I needed to act more cautiously and strategically. Thus, the problem cannot be located in the individual students alone. The students’ negative reactions however, cannot be solely attributed to the actions of an overzealous professor who insufficiently understands her audience; also implicated is the system of Whiteness and how it operates in institutions set up by and dominated by Europeans. The North American, Euro-centric university is one of the constructs of Whiteness that confers privilege, respectability, legitimacy, and rationality (Schick, 2002).

In Saskatchewan, the majority of the students I teach in the university come from an all white world where “[a]ssumptions that white is right are packaged covertly in several locations of education” (Berry, 2007, p. 21).

An incident that revealed that my identity attracted student attention, occurred when a white female student told me there were students who made fun of the way I speak and my idiolect by “counting and writing down each time I said the words, “Do you understand students?” It is true, I often use such phrases, but learning it was the subject of laughter and documentation made me uncomfortable and caused me to feel out of place.

Tone it down. The tensions that exist within my practice were revealed to me one day when a student said, “Professor Barbara, please tone it down, tone it down about social justice.” Belinda’s use of the word “tone” was interesting to me as it harkens to an unpleasant trope that have been used to chastise and minimize black people when we did not act sufficiently acquiescent. What was I meant to “tone down”? My voice, my look, my blackness, my words? However, equipped with a growing criticality about racially coded systems of power and privilege (hooks, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Razack, 2008) I came to see Belinda’s plea for me to “tone it down” as indication that I, through my sheer presence and pedagogy, was disturbing Whiteness.

Looking through my journal that evening, I found an entry I had written earlier. During a discussion about a selection I had read from A broken flute: The native experience in books for children (Scale & Slapin, 2005), a white female student exclaimed, “No one stands up for white people anymore.” I had a similar reaction from another female white student after reading aloud Encounter (Yolen, 1992), a children’s picture book about Christopher Columbus’ arrival on a Caribbean Island. The student reacted defensively and said, “It’s not just Aboriginal people who have suffered, my Irish grand-parents who moved here also suffered.” I began to see there was some legitimacy to Belinda’s concern about toning it down. Therefore, I was surprised to receive the following e-mail from Belinda at the end of the semester. She wrote:

Anyways professor.

Thank you kindly for being an inspiration in my life. I admire you very much. Seeing you go through all that ordeal with our class made me fight with much eagerness to become more studious. I appreciate your strength and I will always treasure and remember you (your courage and fearlessness) in my moments of struggles (Belinda Griffin, personal communication, December 7, 2009).

The ordeal comes from trying to do pedagogical work aimed at reducing injustice through education. I face considerable more “risk and consequences” than white faculty for challenging Whiteness and the lack of social justice. I believe it is vital for non-white teacher-educators to take part in critical discourses that invite and challenge white students to place themselves in the shoes of the Other. Doing so is a way for white pre-service teachers to begin to have empathy and act as advocates for disadvantaged non-white students they will have in their classes.

Charting a Way Forward

The dialectical nature of the interpretive frames used in my self-study suggests that charting an anti-oppressive course forward implicates individuals (professor and students) and
the institution. As I examine the experiences I shared earlier, I see that I did not take the time to sufficiently understand my teaching context and map a course of how to operate strategically and effectively within it. I did not see that unlike my white colleagues who generally fit the students’ image of who can be a professor, I would need to act with more caution in introducing and undertaking issues related to race, social justice, and equity.

I made assumptions about the students’ readiness for critically examining books; I surfaced topics that were best introduced later rather than sooner and may have hindered the development of trusting relationships with students who were being taught by a black professor for the first time in their lives.

Writing about Black academics in British universities, Wright, Thompson and Channer (2007) point out that: Black bodies entering spaces not traditionally reserved for them are in a tenuous position. They are space invaders. Black bodies that have gone through ‘white civilizing spaces’, such as education, can, according to Fanon, don a white mask on their Black skins. This mask, it is argued, is acquired slowly through white civilizing spaces and processes. Thus, Black people can only be equal if they attempt to act as if, or be the same as, white people. It would follow that institutional barriers would exist for Black individuals attempting to be rid of those masks, or for whom those masks have slipped (p. 149).

This analysis mirrors my experience. Having succumbed to ‘white civilizing spaces and processes’ in library school and later rejecting it, I found myself in a teacher-education site that asked for the wearing of a white mask in order to improve my acceptability. I theorize that my appearance, my dreadlocks was/is an obvious outward sign of the dropping of the white mask. I was attempting to teach white students with the confidence of white professors while it was outwardly clear that my mask had slipped.

From an institutional perspective, my experience in the university suggests that, once hired, a faculty member of a racial minority group is on her own despite the goodwill of the employer. In the case of my university, the institution operates as if a non-white (black) female professor will be received and accepted as easily as my white counterparts. Such assumptions turn a blind eye to how racial power works and operates. As Schick (2002) explains, “[t]here is no awareness of the university as a site where power relations exist” (p. 111). Similar observations are made by Wright, Thompson and Channer (2007) who expose the impact of institutional racism on black women academics in British universities. They assert that one way in which it is manifested is “through the provision (or lack of provision) of services provided for members of minority ethnic groups... and a lack of training” (p. 147). I contend it is important for the university to provide training and support services to foster positive collaboration and engagement between staff and students, especially in contexts filled with racial tensions and anxiety.

Other key players who are implicated in the interactive context of my teaching are the faculty alongside whom I teach. Faculty colleagues are individuals as well as social actors in the institution and can play an important role in facilitating contact and breaking down institutional barriers between students and minoritized faculty. Some of my colleagues have encouraged and supported me. An instance of such support came from one who knew I would be teaching some of her students in future semesters. To help the students become comfortable with me she encouraged them to attend conference presentations I made. This strategy appears to be working because I now teach the students and there is greater familiarity, engagement, and collaboration between us.

Another enabling action that faculty members can take to assist minoritized faculty is depicted in the following e-mail from ‘Pat, a white colleague:

Hi Barbara,

In my classes I make a point of bringing students’ attention to how life, work, relationships are experienced differently as a result of our identities. It’s an idea we work on through readings and discussions. It’s not brought up once or twice but is a common theme. I have made a conscious effort to link these ideas to the experiences of faculty of colour because I know that higher education isn’t necessarily an easy place for these colleagues of mine. Now, to be fair, I am not some enlightened white kid who figured this all out on my own. Four of my closest friends in the world are black and, over the years, I probably have been privy to their stories, experiences, and realities in ways that some whites might not (or at least those who don’t have close relationships with people of colour). These relationships have helped me to see that we don’t all experience the world in the same way. That’s what I try to help my students understand and I do hope that that understanding might also positively impact the experiences of my colleagues of colour (queer colleagues, colleagues who are not able-bodied...).

(*Pat Wriley, personal communication, March, 2010). Pat’s e-mail articulated actions taken to engage her students in critical reflection to generate relational practices that would help professors and students negotiate collaborative relationships. The ability to share my observations with white and non-white colleagues has been beneficial. I am able to speak openly about difficulties I encounter by being who I am, and resistance I face when I try to engage students in critical and anti-oppressive dialogues about White privilege and the need to be aware of oppression and suffering in order to change it. Empathy, validation and acceptance from colleagues have buoyed my confidence as I search for ways to narrow the racial divide to build collaborative relationships with students.

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“Oh, I Say….!” Reflecting Upon My Role as a Preservice Teacher Supervisor

As a teacher educator, reflecting on my practice is critical to my own and preservice teacher (PST) learning. LaBoskey (2004) states that the aim of self-study is to improve one’s practice, adding to knowledge about the transformation of one’s own practice, but also to add to public knowledge that prompts improvement of others’ practices. Necessary to self-study is critical reflection. Schön (1987) speaks of different kinds of reflection and makes a distinction between reflecting in action – or responding in time to a situation, and reflecting on action, which occurs after the event and leads to changing behavior. This study involved my supervising PSTs in reflecting during a clinical experience and my reflection upon that experience to increase effectiveness of my supervision.

Context of EEC 323 (Block 2 Clinical)

I teach at a state university where the mission for our college of education is for teacher candidates to view “their own learning and the learning of others as occurring in a cycle of experience, reflection, and re-conceptualization -- a process of seeking new knowledge that both fits into and changes existing understanding” (http://ed.mnsu.edu/about/framework.html). Additionally, the state requires reflection as a standard for graduates of the elementary education program, and student teachers are evaluated on accuracy and use of their reflection in teaching according to Danielson’s (2007) domains.

The PSTs participate all day, Monday through Friday, for three weeks in public school classrooms in the latter half of the semester for the clinical. All PSTs participate in either a primary or middle school building in a nearby community. Throughout the three weeks, the classroom teachers and university supervisor observe and provide feedback to the PST on their performance in the classroom based on state teacher education standards. PSTs also teach a minimum of six lessons across varying subjects in the elementary classroom and complete additional assignments for a reflective portfolio due upon the return to the university campus.

Three hours from a concurrently running course were devoted to preparing the PSTs for the clinical experience: one hour was devoted to having the school liaison speak to the class, one was dedicated to explaining portfolio requirements, and the other was parceled among various class periods to prompt reflection, set goals, and explain the feedback/ reflection process.

Why This Study?

In the spring of 2009, I acted as the university supervisor for EEC 323 and conducted at least one formal observation of each of the 25 PSTs in the clinical experience. I wrote a script of the PSTs’ verbal and physical behavior and provided feedback based on the state’s new teacher standards. Beyond asking the PST how she or he felt the lesson had gone, I typically reported strengths or positive behaviors I had observed and then suggested areas for improvement. Although I intended to engage the PST in critical thinking about the lesson, I dominated the post-observation conference of the lesson. Even though the PST appeared comfortable with this given their evaluation of my supervision, I wanted to prompt deeper reflection of their clinical lesson. In fall of 2009, I decided to apply frameworks from the Cognitive Coaching Foundation Seminar that I attended in the summer of 2009. The purpose of this study was to examine and improve my supervision. Additionally, I wanted to add to the self-study literature in teacher educator/ supervisor effectiveness.

Cognitive Coaching

The mission of Cognitive Coaching is “to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for high performance both independently and as members of a community” (Costa & Garmston, 2007, p. 9, emphasis in the original). Ultimately, Cognitive Coaching supports teacher autonomy and one’s ability to self-monitor, self-analyze and self-evaluate (Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993) and to increase states of mind in efficacy, craftsmanship, consciousness, flexibility, and interdependence. Cognitive Coaching has supported thinking in student teachers (Parkison, 2005; Strong & Baron, 2004), beginning teachers (Brooks, 2000; Garmston, et al., 1993; Strong & Baron, 2004) and veteran teachers (Clinard et. al. 1997; Moche, 2003). Parkison (2005) explains the use of Cognitive Coaching of pairs of clinical students matched with a cooperating teacher in which the process continues into student teaching.

The processes from Cognitive Coaching that I applied with the PSTs were modified planning and reflecting conversations. In the planning conversation, the coach engages the practitioner in clarifying goals, generating criteria for success, stating approaches and strategies, developing a personal learning focus, and reflecting on the coaching process. The main parts of the reflecting conversation involve the teacher in analyzing causal factors and constructing new learning. Because of time constraints, I chose to focus on clarifying goals and stating approaches and strategies from the planning map while emphasizing analyzing causal factors and reflect on learning from the reflecting map.

Another aspect of Cognitive Coaching that is relevant to this study is the type of feedback that one can provide to teachers. Costa and Garmston (2007) describe five types of feedback: judgment (e.g. “The students were attentive.”), observer perspective (“I liked the way she had a long-range plan.”), inference by the observer (“You redirected the students when off-task.”), data (“You said, ‘hi’ to each child.”), and meditational questions (“How do you think the lesson went?” or “What was your awareness of the learning styles of your
students?) (Cognitive Coaching Foundational Seminar, 2009). Each type of feedback has its purpose; however, the mediational questions more effectively engage the teacher in the reflection to increase cognitive capacity to self-evaluate, self-monitor, and self-analyze.

**Methods**

In this self-study, I employed qualitative methods. Multiple viewpoints, which are characteristic of self-study (Loughran & Northfield, 1998), were supplied by the 17 PSTs in the course and by two colleagues who coached me in planning and reflecting conversations. The qualitative data sources included written notes in three areas: (a) those made prior to and after I engaged in a planning conversation with a colleague regarding how to introduce the idea of goal setting and reflecting to PSTs, (b) those made after I observed PSTs, and (c) those written after a colleague and I engaged in a reflecting conversation after clinical ended. An additional piece of data was the post-clinical evaluation that the PSTs completed.

The data analysis occurred in two phases. The first analysis occurred after the initial two days of observing the PSTs. This is explained below in the Findings – Getting the Process Right. The second phase occurred throughout the remainder of clinical and the third after clinical was completed. I read all reflections from the coaching conversations, post-observation conferences, and post-clinical evaluations. These provided the basis for two recurring themes of refining the process and my adjusting to preservice teacher needs.

I engaged the PST in two types of preparation for clinical. The first was related to requirements by the university (as presented earlier), while the second was what I provided to prepare the PSTs in reflecting on their previous clinical experience and setting goals prior to beginning clinical. This had not previously been a part of the clinical experience.

In preparation to study my supervising skills, I invited two colleagues and the PSTs to participate. I engaged in a planning conversation with a colleague to refine the goal and process of engaging the PSTs in thinking about prior experiences. To prompt reflection on the previous clinical experience, I shared a nodal moment (Tidwell & Tincu, 2004) from my elementary teaching career and then had the PSTs recollect, draw and write about an experience that had reinforced their decision to become an educator. In the last class period, I again explained a situation from my teaching experience in which I was provided feedback when an observer tallied my use of a certain phrase. With limited discussion, I gave other examples of possible goals and ways that those may be measured. The PSTs then wrote their goal based on past clinical experience and noted how they wanted me to collect data related to their goals during my observation of them. These activities totaled about an hour over three class periods. The PSTs then started their three-week experience.

I observed each PST at least once during the three week clinical. In that observation, I wrote what I saw and heard, and explicitly noted evidence toward what the PST had selected as a goal. This information was the basis of the post-observation conference.

Upon completion of clinical, two weeks of class remained in the semester. Part of one class period of EEC 424 was used to reflect on clinical. Nine of seventeen PSTs completed an online survey anonymously during finals week regarding my supervision.

**Findings**

**Getting the Process “Right.”** After reflecting on the first two days of observations, I found I needed to adjust how I interacted with the PSTs. Loughran and Northfield (1998) suggest that the context of the study and immediate action that may be required may potentially change the proposed focus and data collection. Even in the first conferences, which occurred in the first week of clinical, the PSTs reported to me that their goals changed as the participated in classrooms. What had seemed appropriate as they started the clinical soon was discarded. According to feedback from PSTs, just setting the goal had raised awareness of their own behaviors significantly to help them achieve it and move on to another. For instance, Linea (all PST names are pseudonyms) who had asked me to tally her use of the phrase “you guys” told me in the conference, “I knew it as soon as I said it.” I tallied only one utterance of the phrase during her observation. Indeed, as I observed and collected data regarding goals, I found PSTs were demonstrating competency in their selected goals, and focused more on how to move reflection beyond those preselected goals.

Conferences early in the clinical cycle focused on the selected goal before I moved to broader issues of the observation; in the second week of supervision, I broadened the focus of the observation. When I met with the PST, I asked something similar to “How do you think the lesson went?” After the PST reflected, I asked questions to help expand awareness of states of mind (“What did you see that makes you say…? What did you do to make it go well?). I called this Reflection I. Then I supplied the PST with the script of the lesson that I had just observed. After the PST read the script, I asked for additional impressions of the lesson and their actions in this Reflection II. Finally, I asked what they were learning and how they could apply it to some aspect of clinical. This process, although modified, closely followed the Cognitive Coaching reflecting map. Throughout the clinical cycle, I found that although I had been hesitant of my questioning in the first conference, my ease and expertise with the process improved. Many PSTs were able to pinpoint areas of strengths and those for improvement or further focus without my input.

**Adjusting to Preservice Teacher Needs.** I focus now on what I learned in interaction with the PSTs. While common in teaching, I found the PST had varying levels of readiness and tolerance for the process I used for reflection. As I started the study, the outcome I had hoped was for that ah-ha realization – to have the PST generate understanding (self-evaluate without me having to directly tell). Predictably, the PSTs responded differently when presented with lesson observations and questions during the post-observation conferences, thus challenging my ability to question in ways to expand their self-analysis and evaluation.

The majority of PSTs appeared comfortable with the process and a few were very expressive in their realization of their teaching based on the script that I provided. For instance, preservice teacher Arianna (all names are pseudonyms) wanted me to gather information on the type of verbal feedback she provided to her sixth grade students, and the data she requested were her actual words. Examples
of her feedback to the sixth graders were “Very good” and “Very nice.” When she read the script, she exclaimed, “Oh, my! I say very a lot! Make a note to myself to not say very.” She literally wrote a note to herself to vary her wording, and we continued discussing specificity in feedback. In continuing the post-observation conversation, Arianna noted that the same students seemed to be answering the questions, and she asked for suggestions on how to expand student engagement. When presented with the script and the feedback on which she had based her goal, she targeted areas to improve that I also felt appropriate for her. I did not need to point out these areas to her. This made my work easier and made me feel that she was on her way to being a reflective practitioner.

Different responses typified those of others with the post-observation conference. These PSTs appeared impatient or uncomfortable with the process of reading the script, looking for patterns in what they had asked me to note or looking at the whole script in general. Maleah for instance, appeared to give a cursory read to satisfy my request, and ideas she generated about her feedback were generally non-specific. “It went pretty well.” When I asked, “What went well?” and “What did you see…?” she answered with something that I perceived as perfunctory. She emphatically asked what I thought and “How do you think it went?” I told her I would share my thoughts soon and continued to ask her what she had done to influence a certain aspect of the lesson. Another PST Brianne also asked twice what I thought but sustained her attention to the process and generated comments depicting deeper reflection before I provided my feedback.

With Maleah and Brianne, I became more aware of the inner conflicts of my supervisory role. By nature, I do not like to evaluate or explicitly advise, so when PST’s perceptions generated during the post-observation conference matched mine, I felt relieved in not having to suggest the focus for change. With PSTs who were unable to generate similar perceptions, I knew it was my responsibility to help illuminate areas for improvement. In Cognitive Coaching, the effectiveness rests with the skill of the coach. Improving my questioning and not being afraid of talking about areas I perceived as difficult are two areas I continue to improve. Additionally, coaching requires the coach to set aside her agenda and support that of the coachee. As a clinical supervisor, I do have an agenda. While most PSTs supposedly would have a similar agenda of improvement, I do have to be more explicit in providing my inferences and judgments, backed by data, to support the PST’s growth.

On the online survey, the three of eight PSTs explained that the scripting of the lesson was “over the top” and “not very helpful.” These three students requested that I provide positives, negatives and things to work on instead of spending the time analyzing the script. I must consider this information as I continue in trying to meet PSTs’ needs.

Additionally, I realized I needed to be more cognizant of how I prepare the PST for reflection but also need to honor their experiences and readiness for this process of reflecting. Essentially, I need to meet them where they are, as I encourage them to do with their future students, but also expand their capabilities for reflecting.

A colleague who had supervised these PSTs previously had insight helpful to me. Generally, PSTs who had had negative experiences in their previous clinical desired the immediate supervisor feedback from me – they wanted the supervisor to tell them how they had done. They needed positive comments and encouragement to help them know they were on the right track to move forward. My job is to find the balance between this and helping them realize their own resources in improving their teaching.

Looking Forward

In conducting this study, I reflected on action (Schön, 1987) in order to improve my supervising of PSTs; improvement of practice is also one aim of self-study (Laboskey, 2004). Implications for me fall into two categories: PST preparation for the next clinical experience and further personal reflection on my interaction or role switching (consulting, evaluating, collaborating) with PSTs in the conference. As I supervise in spring of 2010, I have decided to explicitly expose the PSTs to the feedback process before clinical. My goal is to show a video clip of teaching, with my scripted notes and a preselected goal, and then lead PST in looking for patterns within the notes and talking about the clip. As a class, we will spend more time processing how to select goals, using supervisor feedback from the PSTs’ previous clinical as a catalyst, and how to measure them. This process involves the PSTs in reflection on their previous action as they prepare for their new clinical. Additionally, I will periodically ask the PSTs to reflect on their goals to prompt further goal setting. As importantly, I will communicate with the previous clinical supervisor and be aware of the behavior of PSTs indicating they need more encouragement and opportunities to increase skill in reflection.

An additional area to explore is the way I switch roles in order to support the multiple levels of PSTs in their development. For instance, how do I challenge those who demonstrate a higher level of reflection and how do I scaffold understanding for PSTs who need help in recognizing the patterns or interpretation (i.e., give perfunctory responses to mediational questions)? In Cognitive Coaching, my effective utilization and switching into support roles will facilitate this.

In regards to teacher education, the use of Cognitive Coaching with PSTs could be explored. Parkison (2005) explains a program but no firm outcomes for PSTs involved. What might a teacher education program that intentionally infused principles of Cognitive Coaching throughout its clinicals look like? How might this influence development as a teacher and outcomes for future students of PSTs?

References


Bowing to the Absurd: Reflections on Leadership in Higher Education

Context
The journey of becoming a university administrator in a faculty of education with which I was/am intimately involved has been fascinating, exciting, challenging, maddening and saddening—sometimes all in the same day. Nonetheless, it has been a wonderful journey of self-discovery and professional growth. This paper represents the final chapter in my life as a dean, for it is my intention to step down as dean in 2011 and, following a yearlong sabbatical, return to the teaching faculty. I am reminded to “never say never,” but it seems inconceivable that continuing my life as an administrator in higher education should continue beyond a decade, at least at the same institution. After 12 years as a professor in the School of Education at Southern Oregon University, I am now in my tenth year as either Associate Dean or Dean of the School. My involvement with the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices Special Interest Group (S-STEP SIG) for the past 12 years has provided me with the impetus to study my own practices, albeit as an administrator. I have long viewed the role of a dean as a teaching role, so while it is perhaps a stretch to include my work within the S-STEP paradigm, it has been a helpful journey for me and forced me to think critically about the roles I play as dean of a school of education.

Southern Oregon University is a comprehensive liberal arts and sciences college in Ashland, Oregon, with approximately 5,500 students. The School of Education is one of two “professional schools” (Business is the other) on campus and, with the College of Arts and Sciences, makes up the academic affairs structure of the University. The School of Education is seen as a unique unit on campus with its large graduate student population, distance education programs, and accreditation issues. For the past decade I have kept a journal of my reflections in my quest to learn about being a university administrator, a role that I did not necessarily aspire to. Interestingly, an earlier version of this paper was structured around the questions of how exactly did I find my way into higher education administration as a dean, the key themes of my life as a higher education administrator, and my lingering thoughts on the deanship as an office (cf. Wolcott’s [1973] “Man in the Principal’s Office.”)

Methods
The methods used for this self-study are typical of the data collection techniques that are used to varying degrees in all types of qualitative research—enquiring, examining, and experiencing (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Specifically, this study builds on the longitudinal data I have collected for the past decade and uses the following sources:

1. Journals. My journal provides first-hand accounts of what is happening in the dean’s office and captures vignettes, thoughts, and feelings about higher education administrative life. These journal entries also capture my lingering thoughts on the deanship as an office (cf. Wolcott’s [1973] “Man in the Principal’s Office.”)
2. Restorying. Borrowing from the tradition of narrative research, I have used restorying—the process in which I have gathered stories from my journals and analyzed them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene) and then rewritten the story to place it in a chronological sequence (Creswell, 2008). This restorying process results in a narrative that summarizes the key themes of my life as a higher education administrator.

Data analysis of my journals used three iterative steps that included: (1) becoming familiar with my data and identifying potential themes (i.e., reading and memoing), (2) examining the data in depth to provide detailed descriptions of events (i.e., describing), and (3) categorizing and coding pieces of data and grouping them into themes (i.e., classifying).

Discussion
While there are some professional organizations in the USA that focus on higher education administration (for example, the American Association of Colleges of Education [AACTE], and the Association for Higher Education [ASHE]), there is a dearth of literature about the deanship in higher education administration. Perhaps this speaks more to a limited population of education deans (probably less than 1,500 in the USA), and even fewer future deans. The AACTE offers an annual weeklong intensive professional development seminar for future and current deans of education to prepare them for the deanship. I participated in this seminar in 2001 and was pleased with the curriculum of the seminar that covered topics such as collective bargaining, budget, recruitment and retention of faculty, and trends in higher education (specifically the growing demand for online programs). In hindsight, there was little discussion about personnel issues—something that now appears to me as a glaring omission!

There are many jokes in the K-12 world about school principals and the divide between teachers and administrators (or, as Wolcott distinguishes them, “teachers versus
technocrats”) and how “those who can, teach, and those who can't [teach] become administrators!” Nevertheless, deans of education schools, colleges and departments fill important roles in the university structure and invariably are the future leaders of universities as provosts and presidents. After all, you can't get to the penultimate leadership in the university system without working your way through the dean's office. In spite of this important role and the professional organizations that provide a forum for higher education administration, there is little discussion about the proficiencies necessary to be a successful dean, given the lack of management preparation in the professional journey of university professors. Therefore, this paper is an invitation for current deans, or future deans, to reflect on the academic journey of the deanship and the roles and responsibilities inherent in this role.

Historically, I believe that I am the only person at the Castle Conference who has focused on the self-study of higher education administration, and in the past I have presented papers with titles such as, “Herding cats and nailing Jell-o: Reflections on becoming a dean” (I and II) and “Sustaining self in self-less environment: Reflections of a dean.” The outcome of this self-study has been the final entry in my reflections on life as a dean—“Bowing to the absurd: Reflections on leadership in higher education.” On the surface, this may appear to be a harsh title. After all, the New Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines absurd as follows:

1. Ridiculously unreasonable, unsound, or incongruous
2. Having no rational or orderly relationship to man's life, and
3. State or condition in which man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and in which man's life has no meaning outside his own existence.

It is this third definition that most closely defines my experiences as the dean of a school of education and that will become evident in the exploration of the themes that have emerged from my study of the deanship. Perhaps a decade of deaning has resulted in a somewhat jaded view of the role, but I am reminded on a daily basis of the irrational nature of the work and the proclivity for university administrators to not allow data to get in the way of making bad decisions.

An Examination of Propositions about Higher Education Administration. For the past decade I have conducted my work as dean based on a few simple propositions about how to interact effectively with professional and support staff, students, and parents. These propositions include:

- Do unto others as you would do to yourself
- Treat all people with dignity and respect
- Listen a lot and talk a little
- Be fair and equitable in terms of distribution of resources and faculty loading
- Do not take myself too seriously
- Commit to learning what I don't know about administration
- Be honest and open about all matters that affect faculty and students
- Nurture the growth and development of faculty and support staff so that we can provide the best possible education for our students

My journals are full of examples where, for the most part, these propositions have served me well in my day-to-day interactions with faculty, support staff, students, and parents. However, they have not always helped me navigate the complicated web of the university’s organizational structure, specifically, the power and politics of working with other school deans, vice presidents, and the president of the university. This, indeed, is where the absurd nature of the work starts to emerge.

An Examination of Higher Education Administration Principles of Practice. In the past decade I have learned that principles of practice about what it takes to be a good, successful university administrator are challenged on a daily basis and as a result of what I have described as deanly roles including:

- Dean as Caregiver
- Dean as Cheerleader
- Dean as Policeman
- Dean as Darth Vader

These roles are often in conflict with my propositions about higher education administration and contribute to the absurd nature of the work. For example, holding a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction did little to prepare me for assuming a leadership role in which some professors view me as Darth Vader, someone who has gone over to the dark side of university life. Clearly, there is a propensity in university life to draw a clear distinction between those who teach students (and hence are the real life blood of the university) and those who administer university programs and auxiliary divisions (and hence are blood suckers feeding on the revenues of teachers' toils at the chalk face).

An Examination of the Challenges of Higher Education Administration: Illustrations of Absurdity in the Deanship. During my first full year as dean, I realized that there was absolutely nothing in my academic or personal background to prepare me to be a dean of education. While I knew something about teaching and learning and working with children, I knew nothing about leading an academic unit of diverse, intensely individualistic personalities. I had my own propositions about what it took to be a successful university administrator and found that those theories were tested on a daily basis.

Picture this: A bounded unit (tribe) whose members exhibit many, if not all of the following characteristics (cultural traits):

- Life-long learner who has never worked outside an educational environment
- Academic degrees/pedigree in a content area taught in a university setting. This pedigree is almost entirely content based.
- Sheltered workplace experience in a public/private institution.

Add to this the total lack of training and experience of most academic administrators:

- No formal human resource training (including personnel management, conflict resolution, etc.)
- No formal budget training
- No formal curriculum, instruction, and assessment preparation (of course, as a dean of education I will claim to be an exception to this)

Now, picture all of the academic administrators in the university's organizational structure with a similar educational background and lack of administrative training and experience. This context leads to an absurd administrative culture of individuals working in isolation
with a goal of promoting a collective vision of a university. What follows is an analytic frame for viewing higher education administration and an example of the absurd environment administrators find themselves in as participants and organizers of meetings. My son asked me one day, “Dad, what is it that you do at the university?” The best summary I could come up with was “I go to meetings all day.”

**Teachers versus Technocrats.** In my daily work as a dean of education, it has become helpful for me to remember that the academic affairs divisions of universities are made up of two distinct groups: those who are perceived to have power that they can exert over others (provost and vice president over deans, and deans over faculty and staff), and those in the larger, but less powerful group of teachers/professors. Given this cultural context, I have found Wolcott’s (1977, reissued in 2003) analogy of moiety as a helpful analytical frame. Wolcott (1977) suggests the use of a moiety model as a helpful tool for “understanding and explaining educator subculture” (p. 117). Further, Wolcott assigns the terms teachers and technocrats to the two halves of the educator subculture. Similarly, for the purposes of discussing the absurdity of higher education administration, I have found that the terms teachers and technocrats work well to delineate the roles and responsibilities of the two major classifications of employees in the university’s academic affairs organizational chart. Simply put, “an individual whose principal assignment is to teach is probably a member of the teacher moiety,” and an individual “whose principal assignment is not in teaching is probably a technocrat” (Wolcott, 1977, p. 118-119).

My experiences of the past decade have provided me with considerable evidence that this analytical frame is a good fit with the roles and responsibilities of university academic affairs employees and is particularly helpful in contributing to my understanding of the life of a dean of education. While the terms teachers and technocrats seem to provide an either-or view of academic life, I have found that they accurately capture the often adversarial relationship that exists between us and them. For example, I have been accused on more than one occasion of “going over to the dark side” (the administrative/technocratic side) and ignoring my teacher roots. After all, is it really possible to be both a teacher and a technocrat?

I am not surprised by this dichotomy: it is difficult to have an equal relationship when, by its nature; the deanship places the dean in a power relationship with faculty in matters of promotion, tenure, and the all-important funding for professional development. The issue then becomes, how can this perception of being a member of the dark side be leveraged in order to deepen the relationship between teachers and technocrats? I believe the answer lies in the administrator’s ability to build a personal, trust-based relationship with each faculty member.

**“Dancing” at a Meeting.** “A committee is a cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled…” A committee is a group of people who individually can do nothing, but together can decide that nothing can be done” (Sir Barnett Cocks, Clerk of the House of Commons, 1962).

My daily life is full of meetings of other technocrats who appear to be removed and sheltered from the real work of teaching in a university. A summary of deans’ council meetings is illustrative of the kinds of issues university technocrats frequently address:

- Enrollment management issues
- Budget issues
- Course management systems for the future of online education
- Collective bargaining agreement issues
- Promotion and tenure issues
- University branding and marketing issues

I do not want to suggest that these are not important issues for universities to confront. However, my assertion is that there is nothing in my academic background to prepare me to work effectively as a technocrat in a university setting. The endless meetings of technocrats provide evidence of what can be described as dancing at a meeting. In our frequent academic affairs’ meetings, there is a complicated process in place as we go about negotiating issues related to academic affairs (assuming you consider all of the issues outlined above as important to academic affairs). Schwartzman (1981) has presented a fascinating ethnographic analysis of dancing and its significance in meetings:

Dancing was said to occur in meetings because people have hidden agendas and the dance was sometimes a way to get someone to reveal their agenda . . . . In a meeting where dancing took place, specific problems, crises, or solutions were quickly incorporated into the dance routines of specific individuals or into a collective group dance. In this way, the reality or seriousness of the problem was transformed into the unreality of the dance. Individuals who were obviously competent, concerned, intelligent, and rational when acting as individuals were somehow caught up in a process that made them seem incompetent, irrational, and sometimes led to their acting against their own best interests, either as individuals or as a group. (p. 84)

This characterization of meetings accurately captures the absurd reality of meetings in higher education. I have alluded to this elsewhere (cf. “Herding cats and nailing Jell-o”) when describing faculty meetings focused on the school’s mission and how it will be operationalized, only to have faculty leave the meeting and wander off on their own self-important academic pursuits. Higher education, it seems, is full of competent, irrational individuals!

**Conclusion**

These brief examples of the absurdity of higher education administration provide insights into the higher education administrative world. Given this cultural context and the themes that have emerged from this self-study, it is my hope that individuals entering or currently working in the deanship might gain insights into the unique constraints of being an administrator in an institution of higher education. Specifically, I hope that the analytical frame of teachers versus technocrats will help other administrators to think critically about their leadership roles and the inherent difficulties of advancing a school mission in a setting that is inherently divisive. Furthermore, given the penchant for participating in and conducting meetings, I hope that the image of dancing at a meeting speaks to the challenges facing the absurdity of the deanship for individuals whose discipline-based training inadequately prepares them for higher education administration.
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For the past 20 years, I have been slowly, inexorably walking toward Summerhill. Inspired by the work of A.S. Neill and other progressive educators, my metaphorical journey has involved a great deal of reflection about my role as a teacher, my relationship to students, and the nature of the work in which my students and I engage. As a result, my approach to teaching has radically evolved from being a highly formal, tightly controlled, teacher-directed style—similar to what Friere (1970) has called the *banking model of education*—to one that is now much more open, inventive, and joyful. This paper explores my evolution as a teacher educator, paying particular attention to the personal and pedagogical changes that I have experienced.

**Methods**

My self-study involves the examination of a wide range of artifacts produced over many years by both me and my students. These artifacts include course syllabi, journal writing, lesson plans, scholarly writing, student work samples, student course evaluations, informal notes written by students, student self-reflections, etc. Reading these artifacts has served as a powerful catalyst for my own self-reflection; they have stimulated many memories, both good and bad, from my life as a teacher educator.

To analyze the data, I first wrote brief narrative vignettes of my memories, using multiple artifacts to verify facts, to place the memories in chronological order, and to establish context. I then studied these vignettes and looked for key themes that characterized or connected various memories. I also identified critical moments or “epiphanies” (Denzin, 1989). Finally, using all of this information, I crafted a narrative account of my evolution as a teacher educator. The use of this genre, instead of a more traditional form of academic writing, has the advantage of evoking greater overall response (Cole & Knowles, 2001). As a point-by-point guide for reshaping my classroom.

**Evolution as a Teacher Educator**

**The path from Clonlara.** I first heard of Summerhill School in 1990 when I was a first-year doctoral student enrolled in a philosophy of education course at the University of Michigan. The class was discussing Rousseau’s (1762/1979) *Emile* when the professor happened to mention a local private school named Clonlara that was founded on principles similar to Rousseau’s. Captivated by Rousseau’s romantic notion of education, I decided to visit this school and soon became a regular volunteer. I went to Clonlara School almost every day that spring and was amazed by what I saw: a group of happy, playful children who were living and learning in a free and democratic environment. It was nothing at all like my own experience as a student, and I wanted to learn all that I could about this unique school.

The founder of Clonlara, Patricia Montgomery, is the person from whom I first learned about A.S. Neill. She told me that she had gone to England and visited Summerhill School in the 1960s, and that she had based her own school in part on Neill’s ideas. She said that she had also been influenced by John Holt, Edgar Friedenberg, Carl Rodgers, George Dennison, Paul Goodman, and others. Despite having been in the field of education for nearly a decade, I had never heard of any of these names, so I spent the entire summer reading their books. I immediately felt a close affinity to A. S. Neill’s experiences as related in his book, *Summerhill* (1960/1996), and I also grew very fond of John Holt’s writing (e.g., 1964, 1967, 1970, 1972, 1978, etc.).

It is important to note that I never explicitly attempted to mimic Neill in my teaching, nor did I ever use *Summerhill* as a point-by-point guide for reshaping my classroom. Rather, I drew upon the broad idea of Summerhill School, as well as my first-hand experiences at Clonlara, to develop an overarching vision for change, building what Maxine Greene (1988) calls “the capacity to surpass the given and to look at things as if they could be otherwise” (p. 3). Over time, this vision for change coalesced with several other important influences—including those of J. Gary Knowles (my university mentor) and a Detroit high school teacher named “Anna” (Muchmore, 2004)—to gradually transform my life as a teacher.

**Ripe for Change.** Born in Scotland in 1883, A. S. Neill was educated in schools that valued rote learning, moral certitude, and authoritarian structures maintained through corporal punishment. Even though I was born in the United States nearly 80 years later, my own school experience was remarkably similar. For nine years—from kindergarten through the eighth grade—I attended a small, private school in Kentucky, which had a total enrollment of less than 150 students. Serving as a rigorous, old-fashioned, “back-to-the-basics” alternative to the public schools, it emphasized intensive phonics instruction, proper penmanship, good citizenship, and corporal punishment. For the most part, the teachers were extremely conservative in their thinking about education, and they did not hesitate to hit children who broke their rules.

Like Neill, I strongly resented the rigid authoritarianism, rote learning, and corporal punishment that I encountered in school. Later, as a classroom teacher, I tried to be sympathetic toward my students and responsive to their needs. Yet, ironically, I often found myself reproducing the same kinds of authoritarian structures that I had found so unappealing as a child. Sadly, the “ghost teachers” (Chryst, Lassonde, & McKay, 2008) who haunt my thinking about education prevented me from envisioning any other possibility.

Also similar to Neill, I was never comfortable in the traditional role of a teacher. I did not like being the center of attention, with dozens of eyes focused on me—the students quietly, and often begrudgingly, waiting for me to begin my daily lesson. It would undoubtedly involve
a lot of talking by me and listening by the students, with little or no opportunity for them to help shape the kind of work that we did. All authority in the classroom officially emanated from me, which left the students with no means of self-determination except through subversive attacks on my authority. These attacks took the form of whispering, secretive note-passing, “mock participation” and “procedural display” (Bloome, 1983, pp. 277-278), and general intellectual disengagement from school. I, in turn, “fought back” with detentions, demerits, and letter grades. Teaching, it seemed, was always a hard-fought battle that I seldom enjoyed.

When I first started teaching preservice teachers as a doctoral student in 1989, my pedagogy was still very traditional. I delivered lectures, led discussions, gave assignments, issued grades, and did all of the other things that college instructors typically do. I worked hard at being a “good” teacher following this approach, and my students were generally appreciative. Nevertheless, I did not feel comfortable in the role that I had created for myself. I did not like being the center of attention all of the time. I did not like being the “knowledge-giver” and the sole judge of student success. I especially did not like assigning letter grades, which always seemed to undermine students’ intrinsic motivation and was usually an unspoken source of tension within my classroom. “Jim was good,” wrote a student on an end-of-course evaluation form, “but I wish he had more social skills.” Clearly, this student had sensed my discomfort as a teacher.

Challenging the authority of grades. After reading Summerhill, I longed for a teaching experience that was more free, more open, more purposeful, and more joyful for me and my students. Yet, I did not initially know how to attain this kind of experience. First as a student, then as a classroom teacher, and later as a doctoral student, I had been systematically inculcated into a technocratic view of education in which compliance to authority was the primary foundation of teaching. A couple of years passed after I first read Summerhill before I finally felt confident enough to disturb this status quo.

My first step toward Summerhill occurred in 1992 when I decided to use a democratic process to eliminate the negative impact of letter grades in my classroom. In the past, I had felt that my relationships with students had been largely shaped through the act of grading. The power to assign grades seemed to create a subtle tension in the classroom that then undergirded everything else that I did. I had not been able to see the “knowledge-giver” and the sole judge of student success. I especially did not like assigning letter grades, which always seemed to undermine students’ intrinsic motivation and was usually an unspoken source of tension within my classroom. “Jim was good,” wrote a student on an end-of-course evaluation form, “but I wish he had more social skills.” Clearly, this student had sensed my discomfort as a teacher.

Over the years, I have gradually given my students more freedom and more freedom over how they approach this and other assignments in my courses. This shift can be traced directly to an incident that occurred in 2000 when I was teaching at Western Michigan University. A week after I announced the assignment, a student came to me with a rough draft and asked if she was headed in the right direction. She explained that she had already spent 40 hours working on it, and she wanted my approval before continuing. There was a combined look of joy and trepidation in her eyes. She was immensely proud of what she had done—hence the joy. Yet, she also felt that she had to please me, and that was the source of her trepidation. She instinctively knew that I, as the teacher, had the power to undo all of her work simply by saying, “No, that’s not what I want.” Realizing that she had deviated significantly from the assignment, she anxiously awaited my reaction.

Instead of writing a standard paper, this student had created a graphic representation of her education history that was exceedingly personal and reflexive. It consisted of 10 two-dimensional works of art—ranging from pencil sketches, to tempera paintings, to collages—each representing a distinct moment of her education. Within these works of art, she had embedded strands of text that complemented the
visual images, and she was also working on an audiocassette tape to provide a musical accompaniment to her story. I was absolutely amazed by what she had done. With multiple layers of meaning and no real beginning or end to her story, she had transformed my simple autobiographical writing assignment into a postmodern exploration of self. She smiled when she saw the look on my face, and I told her that I could not wait to see the final version.

Before discovering Summerhill School, I doubt that I would have permitted a student to deviate so far from one of my assignments—or to deviate at all. At the same time, none of my students would probably have felt comfortable enough to assert themselves in this way, so it was never an issue that I had to face. However, my experience with this student’s project showed me the tremendous amount of work that someone would put into a project if they were given the freedom of creation. As a result, I began to share the story of this student’s project with future classes and told them that I was much more interested in what they made of the assignment than in their ability to follow a rigid set of instructions. Since that time, dozens of students have responded by creating autobiographies in the form of songs, oil paintings, video essays, mock newspapers, poetry, graphic narratives, plays, artifact boxes, photographic essays, mock diaries, scrap books, unsent letters, handmade books, and the list goes on. Currently, approximately half of the students in my classes choose to embark on these kinds of creative projects, while the other half still write papers. They all have the freedom to choose how they wish to approach the assignment, and like Neill, I do not stand in their way.

**Student responses.** The feedback that I now receive from students is vastly different from the feedback that I received in the past. No longer do students comment on my nervousness or say that my class is boring. Instead, they perceive as my lack of leadership, and they end up criticizing me for not asserting myself and forcing them to learn. However, these kinds of students are very rare.

**Conclusion**

This study is an example of self-reflection leading to a personal transformation. Early in my career, I did not find teaching particularly enjoyable. My relationships with students were formal, businesslike, and superficial. Students commented that I seemed tense, that I seldom smiled, and some even said that my class was boring. Now, I eagerly anticipate my class meetings and consider them the highlight of my day. Echoing this feeling, one student wrote in her end-of-course evaluation, “I actually looked forward to coming to this class. There were so many times when I would be having a not so great day, and then I would come to this class where it was almost a relief.”

For me, Summerhill represents a vision, an ideal, a sense of possibility in my classroom. Yet, I am always fearful of losing it amidst ever-increasing calls for more standards, tighter control, and technocratic structures in education. Sometimes, I feel very much alone. It would be nice to have some company on my walk toward Summerhill; I invite others to join me.

**References**

Living with Ghosts: A Teacher-educator Goes Back to School

Context of the Study

In the fall of 2008, I spent a research term in a rural community high school with the intention of understanding the experiences of teachers and students living in that context. In Saskatchewan, Canada the term community school refers to schools with a significant proportion (30-40% minimum) of at risk students whom it is believed will benefit from culturally affirming, academically challenging and explicitly inclusive educational practices. Community schools also provide a standard of care that includes food, counselling and other social services to all who attend. Ministry of Education documents stress that all children, in all schools, thrive within this approach to schooling (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004). After receiving permission from a school division, I approached a small rural community high school with a principal who had received national recognition for leadership in community development for the site of the study.

Why a small rural high school? The majority of students in my methods and curriculum courses at the university are graduates of schools with fewer than 200 students, situated in towns of fewer than 1000 citizens. Although I had lived in a small white-settler town in childhood, in contrast to many of my students, I graduated from and had taught senior English in an urban high school. Furthermore, after ten years of teaching at a university, with regular but brief involvement in public schools as a faculty advisor, I thought it was time to recalibrate my teacher self. Many teacher-educators have undertaken similar self-studies for a variety of purposes and with a variety of outcomes (Christenbury, 2007; Shrofel & Cherland, 1998; Tompkins, 1996; Winograd, 2006). As well, I was particularly interested in a community high school because of my involvement in anti-oppressive pedagogy first as a teacher and more recently as a teacher-educator. The stated purpose of community schools is to make life better for students and teachers, and ultimately to improve the society in which we all live. Community schools are the sites of social change. As a child in the 1960s, relations between the white-settler townspeople and the nearby First Nations reserve where I lived were strained and silent. I was curious to see whether conditions had changed. In this study, I learned that racial tensions remained part of the lived experience of teachers, students and hence researchers in the school (Brown, 2002), and while not silent, were rarely named.

Aims

Originally, my research question guiding the self-study was, How does the experience of teaching and learning in a rural, community high school contribute to my understanding of pre-service teacher education? My intention to learn about others, whose experience appeared to be different than mine, did not adequately address the complexity of the data that emerged from the study. Vinz (2000) writes about examining "the uneasy relationship between past ways of understanding what it has meant to teach and learn … and the present winds of change that provoke us to imagine what is possible in the future" (p. 73). I was far less different from my students, and from the teachers I met, than I had imagined. Within weeks, I revised the research question substantially to, How is my history in a white-settle, rural community enacted in my current teaching practice in pre-service teacher education? The question informs a much larger study, a part of which is represented in this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Leggo (2008) writes: "All my autobiographical research is about the construction identity, especially in the spaces between self and subjectivity" (p. 91-92). Autobiography is implicated in this study. Griffiths' (1995) account of self as a web of identity is a useful metaphor to untangle my research experiences in the field and to explicate the theoretical framework of this self-study. Despite having no living relatives in the town, the atmosphere at the research site seemed drenched in memory. During my first week in school an educational-assistant asked me, "Who were you before?" I did not wish to respond with an ambiguous, academic answer. She was satisfied with my former name, but I was not. I found myself living in what Bhabha (1993) has described as the 'in-between space' that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" (p. 10) and that creates a past-present tension that is a necessary part of living in a postcolonial society. The paper developed in the space between the original and revised research questions. In this instance, the space between can be described as the process of realizing, again, that to change practice, one must change the self.

As a theoretical framework, I rely on poststructuralist theories of subjectivity to understand and define the self. Poststructuralist theories see self "in relation among a multiplicity of forces, both linguistic and material, as we struggle with desire, politics, and the plethora of codes produced by regulating discourse and practice" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 504). My subjectivity as a teacher-educator is produced and regulated by a variety of discourses. Beavis (2001) writes: "Discourses organize meaning and experience, each differently, serving different interests, promoting particular power relationships, and constructing a range of subject positions that individuals within the field are required or invited to take up. … Dominant discourses work to maintain the status quo …" (p. 40). My teaching self, then, is always being constituted and reconstituted in language through dominant discourses. Poststructuralist theory provides access to understanding the regulating effects of discourses but does not require action. Informed by Critical Theory, postcolonial perspectives advocate for emancipation and answer the need in me to find justification for doing more than understanding.
Postcolonial theory is crucial to understanding contemporary Saskatchewan which is fraught with racial tensions created by the white-settler invasion of the previous century. In this study, I sought understanding with the intention to improve my teaching practice so that we, the white-settler education students that I teach and myself, could teach and learn in more equitable ways in the postcolonial context in which we live.

Self-study Methodology and Methods

My decision to do research in a rural community school began with a desire to understand my rural pre-service students’ experiences prior to entering university. Also, I wanted to reacquaint myself with the rhythms of the teaching life in public school. As a teacher-educator committed to anti-oppressive pedagogy, it was important to find a school dedicated to equity and improvement of relations between white-settlers and First Nations and which adhered to the Community School Policy and Framework (Sask. Learning, 2004). The methodology and methods of the research align with established self-study practice (LaBoskey, 2004).

Building on the idea that experience may be a warrant for knowing, I sought documentation of normal practice within a community (Griffiths, 1995) by continually comparing my reflective journal with concrete examples from other sources of data. Throughout, I worked alongside students, teachers, administrators and other professionals in the school, and had myriad opportunities to collect data. To summarize, I collected data using the following methods: hand-written field notes in an observation journal; a reflective journal of my interpretations and accounts of my ideas, feelings and reactions to events at school as they emerged; a binder of official print documents and class handouts shared with me by the principal, teachers whose classes I observed, and other in-school professionals; photographic documentation of events and artefacts pertinent to my research; and structured interviews with participants (recorded digitally and transcribed).

From the reams of data collected during the study, I have used excerpts from two of the sources in this paper, the observation and reflective journals. The observation journal included a descriptive record of events at school, including staff meetings, observations of classes, extra-curricular events, and records of my involvement in professional development activities with teachers. As much as possible, my field notes were restricted to description, without interpretation or commentary. In the observation journal I kept a separate section entitled Language Use where I recorded examples of penmanship exercises, which we practiced dutifully while college. Being younger than me, we had never been in the same class. We exchanged our memories. Both of us recalled

Hillary and Deirdre, which evolved in ways similar to what Kitchen (2009) describes as relational teacher development. In the following section I illustrate the theme of establishing research relationships with two teachers using direct quotes, excerpts and description from data collected in the journals.

Living with Ghosts

At the beginning of the term, teachers were informed by the principal that I was interested in attending classes. By invitation, I observed classes in all grades and subject areas. Generally, observations followed a typical professional development cycle; teachers asked me to provide descriptive feedback on aspects of their practice or to observe particular students in action. In this section I focus on research relationships with two classroom teachers, Hillary and Deirdre, which evolved in ways similar to what Kitchen (2009) describes as relational teacher development.

Although we are all of white-settler stock, born and raised in Saskatchewan, when we met, we were not aware that we had known each other as children.

Hillary was the first to take up my offer. “Could you observe Ken to see what he is actually doing during class?” Between my efforts to follow the math lesson and to fulfill her request, I amassed several pages of field notes. After class we conferred, and Hillary appeared delighted with the field-note observations. We engaged in casual conversation, too. In her earlier handwritten notes to me and her writing on the board, I had noticed script eerily similar to my own. Naturally, I inquired, “Who taught you penmanship?” She replied, “Mrs. Reid.” I had not realized she had grown up in and returned to the community after attending teacher’s college. Being younger than me, we had never been in the same class. We exchanged our memories. Both of us recalled penmanship exercises, which we practiced dutifully while the beloved Mrs. Reid played music on the record player. We discussed how in elementary school handwriting is one effective way in which the body is disciplined (Mulholland & Longman, 2009). Hillary said, “It’s like there is a ghost in the room.” We laughed about being good girls who strived to write neatly, who never indulged in splashing ink on others. Our clear, conventional script could accurately be described as “lady-like” and also describes our efforts to perform good teacher. Our handwriting can be seen as a marker of our subjectivity. In my reflective journal that night, I described a walk I took after school to clear my head:

The air felt thicker than unusual, not just hot and humid, but redolent with memory. Is it possible that memory is a physical feeling? This is one of the haunting pleasures of being in [town], living among ghosts. Who knows what about whom? What am I really interested
in knowing? Certainly I am learning a great deal about school, being in school, being a teacher, and so on, but the personal mystery is compelling, too.

I had walked from the school through my old neighbourhood. Was I being honest with myself? I tried to interrogate the community school structure and the physical experience of being in school, summoning my academic skills and the theoretical framework I purported to trust and value. But I found myself musing what my own life might have been had my parents not relocated the family to a far away city so many years ago. My conversation with Hillary began an unravelling of memory and imagination.

After this exchange, Hillary and I reached a different level of familiarity. She invited me to tag along on her visits to students assigned to work experience in the community. I got to visit the nearby First Nations reservation where I was given a guided tour of the educational facilities on the Reserve. Through Hillary I met with a former principal, an encounter which in turn drew me to interview an elderly retired teacher interested in my research and who wanted to tell me about the school's history. The web of identity at work (Griffiths, 1995). Shortly afterward, my research question was revised.

Next, the history teacher whom I call Deirdre was eager to have me come to class. Deirdre had not grown up in the community so she was not interested in following up on my connections to the town. I didn't make an effort to reveal “who I was before” or hide who I was now. Primarily, Deirdre was interested in talking to me about her philosophy of teaching and learning. In the first of her classes that I observed, she taught a lesson on Canadian history focussed on the Iroquois Confederacy, followed by a very broadly-based discussion of World View. Teachers were not permitted to discuss Christianity in school but were given free rein on Native Spirituality. The restriction resulted from the influence of a local conservative church whose pastor opposed religion being taught at school. Dierdre obliged, acknowledging that thirty percent of the students attended the church. Provocatively, she ended the class with, “Originally, we were all First Nations.” The comment was Deirdre's effort to redress the illogical restrictions on the discussion.

My involvement in history class led to an invitation to visit a class field trip. We attended an event celebrating the signing of a numbered treaty between the Dominion of Canada and the local First Nations people who lived in or were moved to the territory now known as Saskatchewan. We spent the day engaged in cultural activities ranging from building a tepee, to round dancing and to eating bannock and Indian tacos. Over the course of the day, I encountered four former teacher colleagues whom I had known since childhood. Deirdre noticed and asked, “How do you know Pat?” I told her that Pat and I had attended church camp together in the 1960s. So, it seems had Deirdre. We had even shared the same cabin. In my reflective journal that evening I wrote about the encounter:

Was there a connection between church camp and our all being together in the valley today attempting to teach white-settler students about treaties, and teaching the First Nations students the same story?

Each time I returned to the university after a few days away I was filled with stories about school. I talked to a colleague, a critical race theorist, about the Treaty Day, especially about the experience of encountering so many former church camp colleagues. In my reflective journal I wrote:

When I discussed this with C., she commented that there must be some collective guilt associated with our motivation to be in teaching, and being at that particular event. Surely, in those days, girls' options were limited to teaching, nursing and secretarial work. No news there. Is the United church implicated? Is it simply a function of social conditioning?

I observed the influence of a dominant discourse, the local church, at work and repeatedly I saw the influence of shared childhood experiences at work in Deirdre, Hillary and me.

The Reflective Turn

The generosity of Deirdre and Hillary provided the richest learning in school. They were eager to reflect and discuss ideas when presented with the opportunity to interact with a researcher (Bullough, 2008) who turned out to be very much one of them. Unlike me, they were not entitled to a research term to devote their considerable intellectual energy to understanding our shared lived experience, but through our relationship, showed me how we were all caught in the tension of the 'past-present'. I observed the ghosts of our pasts in practices as simple as handwriting, and in more complex practices of teaching fragments of our shared history to students, but understood both as discursive production of our subjectivities. The knowledge was empowering, not discouraging. If one knows, change is possible.

The study revealed the necessity of addressing our collective past together before expecting pre-service teachers to effect change in themselves, much less in schools. I work continually to change myself. Currently, in my pre-service classes, I name my provenance, show students how white-settler discourses are enacted in the ways I speak, teach and perform good teacher. Previously, I assigned literacy autobiographies (Graham, 1991; Agee, 2006). Now literacy autobiographies extend to the discourses that produce our subjectivities, privilege white-settlers and disadvantage others. We name the discursive production of our subjectivities. As Miller (2000) writes: "If we write multiple and situated stories of ourselves as educators, rather than try to create one summarizing "true" autobiographical rendering, we then might wrestle with normative meanings and identities that society, history and cultural conditioning have constructed for us and that we often unconsciously assume." (p. 37)

Fully one-third of my literature methods course is devoted to studying the effect of Treaty on teaching English in this province and the remainder to un-doing its ghastly effects.

References


Do Narratives Do More Than Tell a Story?

The other day I talked about the opportunity to watch preservice teachers in mathematics classes. In many cases, well in most, I see them teach out of textbooks with little adaptation for diverse children. I recalled one experience where the bell rang to end recess and the students came in, opened their math books, and went to work. The class was stunningly silent, which surprised me, but I guess it shouldn’t have because the co-operative teacher, the preservice teacher, and I were there. However, when the co-op or the intern were involved with someone else the students quietly talked with each other or kidded around, but carefully, so they would not get caught. They were, on the most part, successful. (field text from blog, January 1, 2010)

We begin with an excerpt from a longer field text that captures a narrative Shaun told his math methods class about an experience he had as a student teacher supervisor. Shaun is a teacher educator in a province in Western Canada. Shaun teaches mathematics methods courses in an elementary education program. Stefinee is a teacher educator at a large faith-based private institution in the Western United States where she teaches methods for content-based instruction in the teaching of English learners to both elementary and secondary pre-service teachers. As part of our professional lives we both maintain connections with the field. These connections allow us to continue to work alongside children/youth and teachers and consider what we are teaching preservice teachers to think about in their future practice. Over time we have come to see narratives as a constant in our teaching practice and how they are a responsive and shaping element in the curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al., 2006) in our teacher education classes. Broadly conceived, this work takes up the question of how do we understand and enact a practice that supports a curriculum of lives for preservice teachers with a focus on the narratives we utilize and tell to sustain this work. In this paper, we examine our narrative understanding of these stories and how examining the narratives reveals the tensions we experience as teacher educators opening space for identity making (Huber, Keats Whelan, & Clandinin, 2003) and curriculum making (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) as teacher educators.

We turn next to an explanation of our understanding of narrative in our teaching. We tell narratives at particular places and particular times and listen to the narratives our students shared with us as well. These narratives are experientially based and arise in our teaching as a response to students or as a way of providing an illustration of a concept being considered in class. Often these narratives arose in relation to a tension in our teaching practice.

We see narratives as a way to explore a deeper expression of identity and subsequent curriculum making. We see narratives as the way we represent part of our knowing and experience and invite students into considerations of teaching and learning. Our interest resides in ways the narratives we use and tell support our curriculum making with preservice teachers. Analysis of the narratives we tell to pre-service teachers reveals to us our assumptions about teaching, learning, and learning to teach. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) understood teachers as curriculum planners and the relational implications of this in the lives of learners and teachers. As teacher educators, we too are curriculum planners charged with the responsibility of supporting preservice teachers in taking up responsibility as curriculum planners. The relational aspect of curriculum making in teacher education seeks to bring forward the experience of preservice teachers and instructors and how this shared experience shapes the curriculum of the teacher education space. By considering the life experiences of preservice teachers and us, the teacher educators, we might attend more closely to the way lives impact future teaching. In this paper we observe one side of that relationship, the experience of teacher educators through their use of narratives—both in the telling and in developing narrative understandings of them.

Methods

During the 2009/2010 academic year we began to blog about our use of narratives in our methods classes in an attempt to understand how we used them, how they were generated or initiated, and what place we thought they had in our teacher education curriculum making. Our research methods consisted of writing the narratives we used in our teaching and posting them electronically to each other on a private blog site. After each class period, we created a dated abbreviated list of narratives we told in class and then later created blog entries for those narratives listed or, whenever possible, we went to our office and immediately blogged about the class experience and the stories told; this resulted in 31 entries. Using a blog provided us with the opportunity to read and then comment on each other’s writing. Sometimes we would also comment on the comment, and a kind of conversation ensued. The blog provided not only a site for storing data, but a place for analyzing them as well.

One of the ways that narratives gain power is when we lay them alongside other narratives that enrich and open their meaning. The private research blog provided a record of our narratives of deliberation as we lived alongside preservice teachers capturing our process of living, telling, retelling, and reliving narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) responsive to the curriculum making in which we were engaged. Our blog writing and research conversations provided the structure by which we were able to layer the various narratives and our responses. The narrative cycle of living, telling, retelling, and reliving came about through the living of our experience, telling it, and in this research retelling with possibilities for reliving in our teacher education practice.

In this process, we read each blog entries identifying the narratives that most fundamentally captured our
understandings of pre-service teachers and teacher educators experience in the process of educating teachers. We were most interested in identifying narratives that focused on what Putnam (2004) has labeled “intractable problems” those that though we respond to them, continue to recur. He argues that research attending to the particular provides the most productive information for advancement.

We engaged in layering as a strategy in field text creation. The initial narratives were a level of field text that generated field text in response, an interim text of sorts; these initial responses began the process of analysis. We then used two tools from Bal (1989): the fragmentation and integration of the roles of character, actor, narrator, and the examination of levels of narrative to uncover meaning and tensions in the narration.

This further analysis was accomplished by email and telephone conversations. Self-study structured this work as we developed an understanding of our work in relation with each other within our own institutional and classroom practices. It supported us to “be researchers of our own professional practice” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 4) and in our use of dialogue to establish and support the work (Arizona Group, 2004). In engaging dialogue as a process of coming to know, we support our analysis and develop the trustworthiness of findings. In dialogue we assert our knowing, interrogate it through questioning our accuracy and by submitting it to the scrutiny of each other’s analysis, and in relationship to other experiences with research and scholarship on teaching and teacher education.

For the purpose of this paper we take up one narrative from the many we posted. We then provide the reader with our analysis of the narrative to reveal the ways in which this analysis exposes the themes of ethics, identity, and curriculum making. In this way, we make visible our exploration of the narratives and how it exposes our knowing and being as teacher educators. The narrative we chose is representative of the themes central in the larger collection of stories. In particular, it highlighted tension, decision making on the part of preservice teachers and Shaun, and the ways relationships need to be carefully sustained in teaching in order to support identity making in positive ways.

**Considering the narratives.** The narratives we told and posted served as an anchor in our understanding of our practice in relationship to identity making in the lives of preservice teachers and teacher educators. We saw that these narratives arose spontaneously and were never planned as part of a lesson. As we considered the body of narratives and responses and selected from among them, we brought an understanding of story (Bal, 2009) that refers to the levels of narratives to uncover meaning and tensions in the narration.

In this narrative fragment, Shaun talked about observing preservice teachers. The narrative is situated in classrooms and typical things occurred within this space: bells rang, children filed in, they took up textbooks, and they sat in desks. In this part of the narrative Shaun is in the place of the classroom. In this piece he presented himself as an actor, part of the landscape in this classroom space. Immediately however, he stepped out of the role of character (teacher educator observing in a classroom) into the role of narrator directing our attention to what he is seeing and guiding his class to see what he saw.

I have watched preservice teachers move around the classroom purposefully teaching different children. I have wondered often why preservice teachers do not stop a lesson, once they realize they are teaching the same concept again and again to different learners. When I ask why they don’t stop and teach the whole group they often have no response. When I have talked with preservice and co-operating teachers after a lesson they often justify math textbook teaching as important to get learners ready for the next grade. (continued field text from blog, January 1, 2010)

In this fragment Shaun’s wondering connects back to the story he told. He positions himself as student teacher supervisor by his references to observation and subsequent conversations with preservice and co-operating teachers.

In these first two parts of the narrative Shaun is positioned simultaneously on the professional knowledge landscape of the grade school (one level of the narrative) and the professional knowledge landscape of the preservice teacher classroom where he is providing a report of what he saw (another level of the narrative). The details—students coming in from recess and the whispered explanations and his wondering about past observation experience—give an authentic quality to his narration and lead us to accept him as a competent narrator in both frames. Thus in one frame he is caught up in the social context of the grade school classroom, the milieu of diverse mathematics classrooms, and in the milieu of the university classroom. The switch between milieus occurs as the role of actor, narrator, and character fragment and Shaun takes up the role of narrator—with the student teachers and the students becoming actors and characters.

The details Shaun provided allowed his preservice teachers to see him sitting there displaced (for while he narrates it, he no longer seems part of the classroom scenes but outside, watching what is happening from a distanced space which has no active role for him within it because the children in the classroom have become the actors in the narrative and the student teacher is merely a character so there is nothing for the teacher educator observer to see). Shaun then steps away from supervisor and back into his role as teacher of teachers in conversation with a fellow teacher educator and he completes the narrative.

I am kind of shocked to see this kind of math teaching especially when I have been their math methods instructor and I am there to watch them as their college...
supervisor for internship. It made me wonder about all the teaching I do in class about how the subject matter of mathematics gets privileged over the relationship of the learners and it is elevated above the other curriculum commonplaces of learner, teacher, and milieu. I wanted the preservice teachers to understand and consider what is lost when they let the math textbook teach children rather than themselves or each other. It made me wonder, how do I help the preservice teachers I work with feel they do not have to teach from the text book to teach math so that children are ready for mathematics work? (continued field text from blog, January 1, 2010)

This closing fragment brings us back to the professional knowledge landscape of the preservice teacher classroom and Shaun’s use of the narrative as a moment of curriculum making with the preservice teachers. In this narrative the complexity of a curriculum of lives for preservice teachers is brought forward. The student teachers are caught between plotlines of grade school assessment and their own teaching assessments, between the relationships with the children and youth, the co-operating teacher and the college supervisor, between possibilities for mathematical teaching and a prescribed textbook.

Shaun and the preservice teachers whom he supervises meet on the narrow ridge “between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge” (Buber, 2002, p. 218) but, in the telling of that narrative, Shaun also stands on the narrow ridge with his preservice teachers as he confronts the tensions between what he hopes to achieve in his teacher education work and what he saw in the student teachers mathematics teaching. In this moment, in the telling of this story, and in our retelling here, Shaun exposes a secret story, a story he feels safe enough to tell in the in-classroom place (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) at the university that exposes his tension in the moments of observation and the larger tension of what preservice teachers might take forward in their own work.

Shaun makes public to his preservice teachers a secret story of teacher education, that teacher education made no impact on their teaching. The behavior of some pre-service teachers in the narrative is an embodied rejection of Shaun’s hope for the future practice of his pre-service teachers. We can wonder at the possibilities for reliving that may occur, but at this point those possibilities are only speculation in the curriculum of lives that the preservice teachers and Shaun bring to the space of the classroom and their teaching. He simultaneously holds open two discordant frames: his tension in the moments of observation and the larger tension of what preservice teachers might take forward in their own work.

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This study provides new insights about teacher/teacher educator identity making particularly in terms of using narratives as teacher educators. In our practice of teacher education both of us situate ourselves in a sociocultural understanding of children’s lives in school in relation to subject matter and at the heart of our teaching and hope for the future teaching of our students is a careful attention to a curriculum of lives, a relational way of teaching. The narrative shared here highlighted for us the tensions not only preservice teachers feel, but the ones we feel as we imagine their work as teachers. These tensions, the narratives we tell, and our experiences in the field shape curriculum making in our classrooms and our identity as teacher educators. Further work on the role of preservice teacher narratives, and the ways in which they take up, don’t hear, forget, or ignore the stories teacher educators tell, is required in future work.

References


Braiding Teacher Lives into Relation: The Steps and Dilemmas of Culturally Responsive Teacher Education in Canada

We are two Euro-Canadian teacher educators working in different university contexts, separated by more than 3000 km of geography and 50 Indigenous languages and tribes, collaborating on a project that explores the knotty complexities of culturally responsive pedagogy. Dialogically and reflexively, we are documenting, analyzing and probing our experiences as teacher-researchers in Aboriginal education, exploring the capacity of non-Aboriginal teachers to incorporate multiple cultural epistemologies in teaching. Our universities, like others around the world, are placing increased attention on graduating more Aboriginal students from degree programs. Such a worthy goal presents challenges to the orientation and methodology of university curriculum and pedagogy that, for the most part, were developed without consideration of Indigenous epistemologies or cultural worldviews. In this paper, we report on the journey and conditions needed for our own critical self-study through duo-ethnography (Norris, 2008) as well as explore how non-Aboriginal educators need to shift their pedagogy towards respectful and welcoming responses of cultural differences. In this paper, we reveal our ongoing efforts to prepare in-service teachers and ourselves to become more critically reflexive, culturally responsive educators.

Theoretical Stance
As teacher educators, we have more than 15 years experience between us and found each other as research colleagues when we discovered that we were both deeply involved in culturally responsive teacher education (CRTE) projects with non-Aboriginal teachers. Currently in Canada, Aboriginal students are considered the most at-risk population in the education system with a high school graduation rate hovering near 33%, in comparison with 66% for the non-Aboriginal population (Canada Census, 2001). Shortly after the Australians did, Canada’s Prime Minister formally apologized for the abuse and irreparable damage to Aboriginal peoples through the residential school system (1890–1980s). As the Aboriginal population increases and moves into urban centres, we have witnessed an increase in the number of non-Aboriginal teachers who declare themselves insufficiently trained, unequipped, and desperate to engage their Aboriginal students. Concomitantly, we observed these same teachers not recognizing or employing the terms colonization or decolonization (Denzin et al, 2009, p. 38), nor comprehending how these socio-historical forces still exert upon them, their cultural identities and their work as non-Aboriginal teachers in urban classrooms with Aboriginal students. We posit that the worldview of non-Aboriginal teachers, ourselves included, has been colonized through mainstream schooling. We have also come to realize that in culturally responsive teaching, we need to confront our own colonial legacies, to interrupt and disrupt the ongoing processes of internalizing and normalizing a Eurocentric worldview (Bishop, 2005; Smith, 1999; Battiste, 2005; Tompkins, 2002; Dion, 2007, 2009; Saul, 2008).

Culturally responsive scholars state that to teach an emancipatory culturally centred or culturally responsive pedagogy, teachers need to first understand the cultural frames of reference for the students they teach (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2000) and to engage students in meaningful learning to change their educational situations. Culturally responsive scholars emphasize that without some basic understanding of the students’ cultures and histories, it is difficult for teachers to help students develop a socio-cultural consciousness toward educational transformation (Phuntsog, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). With Aboriginal students, the mission of culturally responsive teachers becomes more complex: non-Aboriginal teachers have to grapple with the colonial legacies of Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal contact and interactions: the political-cultural climate of the new Truth & Reconciliation commission; and teachers’ work in schools, the same institutions that were used to assimilate and negate Aboriginal cultures and languages. We have come to the conclusion that it is close to impossible for non-Aboriginal teachers to recognize, address and amplify the cultural resilience and transformation of Aboriginal students until they first critically examine their own historical and cultural positions, including their encounters or relations with Aboriginal peoples (Dion, 2007; Battiste, 2000; Tompkins, 2002; Kanu, 2005).

Context and Methods
Our collaborative research began with a co-analysis of each other’s CRTE projects, which then lead to our own ongoing self-studies through duo-ethnography (Norris, 2008, p. 234), a dialogic, critically reflexive investigation where each author is both the researcher and the participant (Berry & Crowe, 2007; Bodone, Gudónsdóttir & Dalmau, 2004). We both began an active inquiry into our roles and capacity as culturally responsive teacher-educators with our two teacher groups. Lisa designed a one-year professional development program for 15 in-service teachers, both elementary and secondary, which was an extended version of a provincially standardized course for teacher additional qualifications. Cynthia worked with five teachers of a small urban elementary school in a large city to collectively explore the nature of culturally responsive mathematics curriculum and pedagogy in this school. In both CRTE sites, we included and worked with community Elders and knowledge holders to explore Aboriginal understandings of education, subject matter, culture, and the intersection of these. The two teacher education sites provided spaces for us as both researchers and teacher educators to question, alongside our students, how we might model the challenges, dilemmas and possibilities of responding to cultural differences and
addressing colonial legacies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Our central questions focus on exploring how non-Aboriginal teachers can work against a colonial deficit approach to teaching Aboriginal students, an accumulative legacy of ignorance, stereotypes, media misrepresentations and negative assumptions about the cultures of Indigenous peoples that most Euro-Canadians have internalized. We examine the possibilities for teachers to co-create collaborative generative stories of practice and images of themselves as culturally responsive teachers. In each of the projects, we began with deconstructing colonial teacher practices from not being able to pronounce a student’s Indigenous name to the implicit and nuanced ways educators ignore and erase Aboriginal cultural identities through curriculum. We, as teacher-educators, asked the in-service teachers to engage in teacher inquiry or teacher action research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) of themselves as culturally responsive teachers to Aboriginal students when we had not yet explicitly addressed or actively decolonized our own pedagogy in our own university classrooms. Through our regular critical dialogue, we realized that we would have to study ourselves as we work the cultural interface or divided spaces between Aboriginal community and mainstream Eurocentric schooling: how we as both teachers and teacher-educators must shift, challenging our cultural assumptions, retracing our colonial “touchstones” (Strong-Wilson, 2007) (those pivotal encounters with Aboriginal representations and peoples that shape our assumptions), and decolonizing ourselves into more culturally responsive educators.

Data collected focused on the experiences of participating teachers as well as our own experiences as co-researchers within each research site. These data included photographs, teacher reflections in daily feedback logs, discussion boards and conversations, participant-observations by a research assistant, interviews with teachers, video data of teacher project meetings, audio data of project debriefing meetings, and our own researcher field-notes and researcher journals.

Analyzing data from each site included an audit trail of transcripts and researcher field notes, particularly our own journals and then our critical conversations into what we had learned about our awareness into our colonized educations and the intense complexities of culturally responsive roles by non-Aboriginals in Aboriginal education. Our analysis was reflexive and dynamic, moving between a focus on understanding participating teacher’s experiences and our own reactions, assumptions, and actions. The process emphasized for us the importance of studying our own changing and self-reflexive views of culturally responsive education with Aboriginal students if we wanted to model to teachers how to decolonize their teaching. Our duo-ethnography selves-study is aligned with Pillow’s (2003) calls for researchers to share our critically reflexive stories, not as heroic narratives to escape cultural divides or power imbalances, but as educative steps that are not regularly easy, successful, or comfortable. We believe that effective teacher education is not achieved when teacher-participants rely on an outside “expert” (ourselves) to come into their teaching situations and tell them what is and is not culturally responsive teaching with their local Aboriginal students/communities. Instead, we have analyzed the data as co-articulations by ourselves and with our teacher-participants around major themes focusing on (colonial) mistakes, cross-cultural perceptions and experiences, engagement and attempts to decolonize teaching practices. We draw upon participating teachers’ comments and experiences as a way of learning from them in order to deepen our own understanding and modeling of culturally responsive teacher education.

**Results**

Our results focus on two levels or two strands: what we learned about our teacher-participants and how these observations mirror our own steps and steer our non-Aboriginal teacher education projects. The second level or strand of analysis pushed us as teacher-educators to re-examine ourselves as culturally responsive non-Aboriginal teacher educators and the necessary decolonizing journey that we have now undertaken to braid ourselves back into responsive relationality (relations) with our Aboriginal students and communities. Results included willingness to engage in culturally responsive teacher education, the question of “who are you to be doing this?”, and the role of non-Aboriginal teacher-researchers in decolonizing culturally responsive approaches.

**Willingness to engage in culturally responsive teacher education.** Within both research contexts we found Canadian non-Aboriginal in-service teachers willing to engage in culturally responsive teacher education. Teachers in each project site expressed their professional commitment and responsibility to bringing about change in the education for Aboriginal students. These written comments from teachers provide examples of this commitment and are representative of others.

*This course has really opened my eyes and opened doors for me. . . . I was learning so much. And I saw the impact on my two [Aboriginal] students. They were willing and proud to share, along with all the students in the class, something about their culture. (Katy, mid-career elementary teacher, research site 1)*

*I’ve learned so much about my students. I’ve learned to listen to them. Culturally responsive education is really about listening to students. I didn’t always give them a place in the classroom to express their connections, their experiences especially in math class. I didn’t always give their experiences equal weight to what I’m trying to accomplish. (Linda, early-career elementary teacher, research site 2)*

Results indicate that teachers can shift their understanding of themselves as teachers to include their role as colonized teachers and the need to decolonize teaching practices. Teachers’ language, discourse, and practices provide evidence for a more open recognition of their Aboriginal students as culturally located members of traditional, rich inheritance communities.

*This course . . . gave me the conviction to tell the principal that I don’t need anymore culturally responsive in-service . . . it’s all my non-Aboriginal colleagues . . . who need this course and this culturally responsive in-service. I already live and teach it. I need other teachers to do their job with their Aboriginal students. (Denise, secondary alternative education teacher, self-identified Métis, research site 1)*

These teachers’ individual reflections demonstrate that teachers gained, in their own words, some relational
understandings of the lived realities, history, and cultural heritage of the Aboriginal children in their classrooms. We found, however, that not all teachers embraced or welcomed these new insights. The following quote from a teacher in research site 2 articulates the overwhelming challenge the project had to her personal and professional identity.

At this point, I’ve decided that I can’t continue to be part of the project. I’ve enjoyed and appreciated the math content of our meetings, but the relationship stuff is too far away from who I am as a person and as a teacher.

(Yola, experienced elementary teacher, research site 2)

Building or forming relationships in multiple ways and levels is a key aspect of culturally responsive education. It is significant not only for teachers to learn with and from their students but also for us, as teacher educators, to learn from the teachers with whom we work. The examination of our own research journals reveals some parallels of experience with teachers participating in each project. Cynthia, for example, noted in her analysis of Yola's comments that although the project meetings were a place for teachers to consider their ideas of cultural difference between themselves and their students, Cynthia had not considered that such differences might also exist between herself and the project teachers like Yola. How do we sustain participation for all teachers, even those whose ideas, values and assumptions are different? How might we build relationships with teachers that can sustain and even embrace the uncomfortable examination of our teacher identities? We find there are no set answers to these questions, then and even now, as we continue to analyze our experiences. Instead, it is experiences such as these that provide possibilities for engagement that might lead to deeper insights into our own assumptions and biases.

**Who are you to be doing this?** As with our participating teachers we find the process of addressing our cultural identities as non-Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal education and decolonizing our teaching practices challenging, uncomfortable, and daunting. In each research site, teachers withdrew from the project claiming that the process of decolonizing or making one’s pedagogy more culturally responsive was too daunting in terms of time, commitment and personal investment. A total of six teachers withdrew from the projects in research site 1 and one teacher withdrew from research site 2. For some teachers, the commitment of exploring culturally responsive practices was overwhelming. These teachers cited being overwhelmed with the responsibilities of trying to encourage their Aboriginal students to attend school, to participate and be engaged in classroom activities, while also trying to meet students’ basic needs of food and clothing (e.g., Aboriginal people live below the poverty line in Canada more than any other cultural group). These teachers stated that they could not imagine how continued participation in the CRTE project could be advantageous or possible with their already overtaxing commitment.

Other teachers described being overwhelmed or paralyzed by a deep fear of their classroom actions and professionalism being questioned by Aboriginal parents and community members.

I was a very successful children's librarian before I decided to become a teacher and I’m a very good librarian. . . . I attended an Aboriginal literature session at a librarians conference and the Aboriginal presenter . . . went on and on about our [White] inability to determine what is or isn't authentic Aboriginal literature, what is appropriate or inappropriate. I couldn't believe it. My confidence was shaken and now I have to rethink all of this! I don't think I can choose these [Aboriginal] books anymore. (Christy, new elementary teacher and teacher librarian, research site 1)

Christy voices the fear of making mistakes in cultural knowledge and protocols and being confronted by Aboriginal community members. For many teachers, decolonizing their pedagogy and transforming their relationships with students challenged their very identities as teachers. Teachers questioned whether or not as non-Aboriginal teachers they could select content for Aboriginal learners and discuss cultural issues. Although their experience in the project had provided deeper insights into their relationships of difference, how to work within and across such differences remained elusive and deeply troubling to some teachers. It was only after interviewing Christy that Lisa became more aware of Euro-Canadian teachers’ deep fears of making mistakes and then being held accountable. We hypothesize that many Euro-Canadian teachers would rather opt to not teach Aboriginal issues, content, and cultures because they know how deep their ignorance is and how exposed they could become if challenged as incorrect or ignorant non-Aboriginals. Whose responsibility is it to choose curricular representations of Indigenous peoples or teach cultural content? What role do non-Aboriginal teachers have in discussing and educating Aboriginal culture or cultural representations?

As academics and educators working to understand cultural difference, its implications and responsibilities, we too are often asked what role (or right, or place) we have as non-Aboriginal researchers working in this field of Aboriginal education. Following Dion (2009) and Saul (2008), we need to remind ourselves of the legacy of braided histories and relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. All Canadians live on traditional Aboriginal territory that is governed by treaties, those historical deals and contracts signed into law by the government of Canada and chiefs of the First Nations. In Canada, we are all treaty partners with rights and responsibilities that need to be acknowledged, taught and learned in schools and universities.

**Role of non-aboriginal teacher-researchers in decolonizing culturally responsive approaches.** As researchers and educators we noticed how the projects provided opportunities for us to explicitly decolonize our own work as teachers and researchers. Field notes and reflections indicate our efforts to analyze the research at multiple levels and layers—including not only the teachers we worked with but also our efforts of decolonizing our own teaching and research practices.

I now feel I need to reveal to non-Aboriginal (and Aboriginal) teachers how decolonizing is an ongoing deep process for me, how many molded images and colonizing moments I can identify from my childhood, from my own K–12 education and from my own teaching experiences. I feel I have to be explicit and confess my racist assumptions through classroom stories, how I romanticized Aboriginal people as mythic environmental others, my public faux pas as I worked through my ignorance of treaties, ceremonies, regalia, sacred knowledge, and to acknowledge my incredible
gratitude to the generosity and effort of Aboriginal friends, colleagues and community members who have offered to teach me. I need to role model to my teacher-participants that the paralysis of fear (fear of making a mistake) as well as an avoidance of these issues/content are two colonial responses to culturally responsive teaching. At the same time that I am consciously charting my colonizing education, my colonizing, I am also identifying those pivotal decolonizing moments . . . when I went “aha, this isn’t right, this isn’t respectful, I need to change . . . ” (Lisa).

I am continually learning and surprised at my own colonized views and how they frame my discourse and practices. Decolonizing is a work in process. It means continually deconstructing, questioning, challenging conventional ways of understanding responsibility, respect, reverence, reciprocity, rights, and openness toward others. How do I share this continued process of working at my own decolonizing for it is always changing? How do I model this developing awareness? I sometimes struggle to share my own moments or critical incidents of decolonizing—trying to find the respectful language, to model this more explicit sharing with teachers so that they can be included in the process. (Cynthia)

Dion (2007) argues that teacher-researchers must demonstrate and role-model how to disrupt “molded images,” those misrepresentative images received through media and books that colonize our thinking of who Aboriginal people are (“others”) and how non-Aboriginal is reinforced as the normative dominant.

Significance

The one-sidedness of teacher decolonization and the consequence of perpetuating the dominance of non-Aboriginal teachers to Aboriginal students is an ongoing dilemma. Aboriginal community members, instructors and knowledge holders in both research sites were giving of their generous time and energy to a predominantly White teacher education group (there was only one self-identified Métis in one of the two teacher groups). This raises complex questions for ourselves as teacher-educators as to who needs to exert the energy and take responsibility for the task of decolonizing non-Aboriginal (White) teachers. We cannot undermine how important it is to spend energy on recruiting and preparing Aboriginal teachers for the mainstream classroom in urban centres. This complex dilemma remained for us: Aboriginal teachers and knowledge holders are core to sharing experiences and perspectives, yet they should not be responsible for the demanding work needed to move non-Aboriginal (White) teachers into decolonizing themselves. When we review the two CRTE projects, the cross-cultural partnership seemed particularly one-sided in the benefits. We also contemplated whose teaching and role-model spaces we were either taking away or occupying when non-Aboriginal teachers continue to be the dominant number (95%+ in most urban schools and school boards) in classrooms that have close to majority numbers of Aboriginal students. What are our responsibilities as culturally responsive educators, treaty partners and allies?

We, as teacher-educators and teacher-researchers, must take seriously the critical need for the development of courses and professional development that integrate respectfully Indigenous epistemologies as well as develop activities/assignments that prompt decolonizing reflexivity by the teachers. It is a difficult task for which many of us as teacher-educators are not manifestly ready. Yet our results indicate that teacher professional development programs can open up participation by non-Aboriginal teachers in cultural experiences so that participation might strive to be more culturally responsive. We present these research projects and our own critically reflexive dialogues in the hopes of offering some sort of educational direction and teacher education responsibility, one that could contribute to the larger and deeper project of humanizing curriculum across cultural differences. Our journey taken is not a linear path of steps. It instead provides a set of dilemmas, insights and possibilities for both living with and teaching culturally responsive pedagogy.

References


Breaking the Walls: Supporting Reflective Practice in Engineering Education through the Use of a Critical Friend

Knowing about the Self through Collaboration with Others

Research on teaching and learning in higher education has, during the last decade, emphasized the need to move beyond the traditional skill-focused approach to the development of a scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990; Shulman, 1999). As Loughran (2006) asserted, developing a scholarship of teaching entails becoming much wiser about how to deal with the uncertainty of practice and the need to develop and share such wisdom in professionally meaningful ways with others. Boyer (1990) provided a framework for broadening conceptions of what it means to be scholarly. Palmer (1998) stressed that in order to develop teachers’ scholarship of teaching, a professional developer should make connections among him/her self, the learners, the knowledge to be learned and the teaching context. Learning in community requires setting expectations for learning and facilitating reflection, discussion, and action necessary for learning. Clearly, at the heart of such an endeavour is a regard for reflection—which is also central to Boyer’s original contentions about the importance of a scholarship of teaching. In the context of teacher education, self-study research (see e.g., Berry, 2008; Loughran, 2004, 2005; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) has become a way of helping teachers to share their experience and research on their own practice.

Like others in the self-study community, Loughran (2004) affirmed the view that “working together and sharing ideas, issues and concerns with critical friends [can] help practitioners see beyond their own ‘world views’ and broaden their perspective on situations in meaningful ways” (p. 158). Schuck and Russell (2005) argued that in examining teaching and learning practices teachers may benefit from an educational ‘critical friend’. Hence, the notion of a ‘critical friend’ can then be a catalyst for meaningful change through a focus on reflective practice as a crucial component of self-study. According to Schuck and Russell (2005) a critical friend acts as a sounding board, asks challenging questions and joins in (or catalyses) professional learning experiences, thus supporting a learning about practice process. Understanding how critical friends work in order to support teacher colleagues in their endeavour in developing their scholarship of teaching emerges then as an important avenue for inquiry and development of knowledge of teaching.

This paper is based on a project in which I, as a critical friend, worked with six engineering teachers in a Masters program of machine engineering in order to stimulate their reflection on their own teaching and learning as a way of developing their scholarship of teaching. My role as a critical friend in the project was to provide the engineers with tools for reflection in order to help them begin to articulate their scholarship of teaching through their collaborative learning experiences. Hence, through studying my experiences, relationships, and interactions with the engineering teachers to whom I was a critical friend, my endeavour (as a teacher educator) was to see beyond my own professional practice in order to articulate and refine my scholarship of teaching. The research question that frames this self-study is therefore focused on my professional learning as an educator and can be stated as: “What do I, as a teacher educator, learn from working and collaborating with teachers of engineering as I support their inquiries into their teaching?”

Contex

In 2007 I received a grant from the Swedish Council of Higher Education to start a two-year pedagogical development project in a Masters program of machine engineering. As the program was a co-operative venture between three different universities, much of the teaching built on lecturing with the use of web-collaboration. Six engineering teachers participated in the project—two teachers from each university. They were all male, with academic levels ranging from assistant to full professor in machine engineering and their main research interests mostly centred on the subject itself (e.g., machine technology) and not the actual teaching of the subject. The project emphasized teaching as being shared among the different teachers and, in such a way, the teachers could then add to others’ expertise during teaching. Hence, the project was in some sense grounded in the ideas of co-teaching (Nilsson, 2010). As the teaching was mostly built on web platforms, the lectures could be conducted with teachers from three different universities at the same time. The project was built on two main ideas. The first concerned teaching strategies and the second concerned the engineering teachers’ structured reflection. In essence the intentions were that:

1. Teachers in the program could be supported in rethinking their teaching methods by using a case-methodology and problem-solving skills teaching together with colleagues.
2. Teachers could work with different kinds of stimulated reflection e.g., reflective portfolios and collegial conversations in order to learn with from their students about their own teaching and learning.

In working collaboratively with the engineering teachers as a group, my role was to be their “critical friend” in supporting them in their endeavour towards the development of a scholarship of teaching.

Methodological Frame and Collection of Data

LaBoskey (2004) asserted that self-study as a methodology for studying professional practice settings should be reliant on multiple, primarily qualitative data sources but also be interactive. I wanted to provide ways
for the engineering teachers to articulate their personal experiences and further investigate what I learnt through working with them. Therefore, in order to unpack the engineering teachers’ and consequently my own practice, I utilized multiple data sources:

1. Transcripts from collegial conversations during meetings in which the participants discussed problems of practice, students’ learning and their own teaching experiences.
2. Regular e-mail correspondence between the engineering teacher participants and myself.
4. Reflective journals that I personally maintained.

Data were collected in order to create opportunities for me to see into my practice as a “critical friend” in this project. Hence, the teachers’ activities and reflections and my understandings and interpretations of them, became a catalyst for actions and understandings of my own practice.

**Collegial conversations during meetings.** During the first year of the project, I met with the six teachers two to three times during each semester. During these seminars we discussed problems and dilemmas connected to engineering teaching and ways in which collaboration and their use of case-methodology could be implemented to develop their teaching. All seminars were well documented and provided an important data set for capturing the essence of these teachers’ experiences.

**Regular e-mail correspondence between me and the teachers.** During the two years of the project I had regular e-mail contact with the teachers. All of the e-mails were downloaded and saved in a separate file. As such, in reflecting on the way we communicated in the e-mails, the issues, dilemmas, and tensions that were raised either by me (as a critical friend) or by the engineering teachers was used as a data set to investigate practice.

**Engineering teachers’ reflective portfolios.** During this project, the engineering teachers regularly wrote reflective portfolios in order to capture the complexities of their teaching and learning experiences. As the teachers were not familiar with stimulated reflections on their own teaching, I, as a critical friend, designed two questions to guide their reflections on their scholarship of teaching:

1. Describe if, and then in what way, the pedagogical development project influences your beliefs, your pedagogical practice and your personal professional development as a teacher.
2. Describe in what way the collaboration with the other teachers as well as the teaching through case-methodology influences your professional development as a teacher.

**Reflective journals kept by me.** During the whole project I wrote reflective journals to identify and describe my beliefs, experiences and practices about working as a critical friend with these engineering teachers. The purpose of keeping a reflective journal during the entire project was to try to uncover assumptions about my practice and the pedagogical principles that guided my work with the teachers.

**Analysis**

Data analysis involved a number of important steps. I first began by reading through all the e-mail conversations and the documentation from the collegial conversations during the meetings in an initial attempt to search for indicative examples of dilemmas and assertions that uncovered the nature of our collective as well as individual experiences. Then I read carefully the engineering teachers’ portfolios in order to search for patterns and illustrative examples of their concerns and professional learning experiences. Finally, I read through my reflective journals in order to look for patterns and common themes in my beliefs, feelings, and experiences. Through content analysis, applied in the way described by Miles and Huberman (1994), data from all four data sources were read repeatedly in order to identify recurring themes of the issues that were raised by the engineering teachers as well as by me.

**Results**

**My learning about my “self” through self-study.** In first three data sources (i.e., collegial discussions, e-mails and the engineering teachers’ portfolios) two different key themes of the teachers’ experiences emerged. The first theme, “exploring new ways of teaching to promote students’ learning”, highlighted that which Schuck and Russell (2005) suggested, that the critical friend catalyses professional learning experiences. The second theme concerned the importance of “collegial support, trust, and sincerity”. As teaching is a complex dynamic relationship in which pedagogy is shaped by the context and the content, mastery of content is important, but a successful teaching learning relationship requires trust and confidence beyond the teachers’ content knowledge alone.

Then, as I systematically analyzed my own reflective journals three different themes emerged. The first theme, “breaking walls and building them up—a matter of engagement and self-confidence” concerned the way I came to realize how important it was for me as an educator of teachers to explore with the teachers the intrinsic relationship between their personal identities and their professional identities. I now saw the importance of bridging the social and cultural gap before I attempted to challenge and build others’ professional learning. After our first meeting I wrote about this experience in my portfolio:

> When one of the teachers almost yelled at me in the telephone and said that he felt like I interfered in the program and that he did not need someone to “tell him what to do”, I felt very frustrated. He is like dynamite here to support them and not to steer them. I see how important the social activities are for the engineers to feel much better now after this first meeting where I really have tried to work on the social activities and the feeling that we are a team in this project and that I am here to support them and not to steer them. I see how important the social activities are for the engineers to feel more relaxed in the group and also, as a consequence be more open-minded to discuss their personal experiences of the teaching (Reflective journal, AUTHOR).

I recognized the importance of engaging teachers in reflecting on their teaching and further professional development rather than assuming it was an innate goal of teachers. I realized the importance of not telling the teachers what to do but to create conditions for them to come to their own insights about what it means to develop as a scholar. For some of the teachers, being told to reflect on their pedagogy and to focus on their scholarship of teaching was interpreted as demeaning, regardless of my intentions. Good
arguments are needed to motivate teachers to start to think about change and the way I presented these arguments was crucial to their engagement and willingness to work together with me and with each other. I also realised that I needed to “break the walls” before I could build them up. Furthermore, the way I felt frustrated in the beginning made me see how critical friendship can be challenged by the complexity of working across cultural and perceptual differences. I was challenged by the situation which also made me to see beyond the problematic issues and focus on that which the project was built on (e.g., the importance of stimulated reflection and collegial conversations) in order to develop a scholarship of teaching. In terms of being a teacher educator I recognized the importance of not prescribing solutions for others, but instead creating experiences and situations that facilitated generation of ideas and responses together with the group of teachers.

The second theme that emerged when I analyzed my reflective portfolio concerned “building a team on communication.” As our interdisciplinary collaboration presented some cultural dilemmas, my work with the engineering teachers as a group required good communication and team-building. In my struggles with trying to implement the project I ended up feeling like a captain-coach in attempting to help make them see their selves as a group. Throughout the project I learnt to adjust my way of communicating with them to better fit into their communicative patterns and codes of the discourse of engineering. I needed to learn how to cope with the challenges and culturally loaded discourse patterns with which I was confronted.

I have come to see the importance of being able to communicate a reason and a reasonable perspective about what we are doing and why. Just like in my work with pre-service teachers when I want them to reflect on their teaching experiences, I need to do the same with those engineers. However, I also realize that communication and good arguments is not enough. I need to engage them to allow them to really feel as though they own the project. They must be on the boat . . . not swimming next to it. One crucial factor for this process is effective communication and not to go into the project with my own agenda telling them like “this is what we are going to do.” Instead, I need to be open enough to shape and re-shape the activities in the light of the teachers’ perceptions of what the activities are, where the project is heading and what needs to be done. This is something I will bring to my role as teacher educator with pre-service teachers too. It is very much a matter of trust. (Reflective journal, AUTHOR)

I came to see how I, as a teacher educator, also need to communicate with my student teachers in a way that is understandable for them and further stimulates them to develop their own discourse of teaching and learning. Developing shared meaning is crucial to developing genuine understanding of the discourse of practice.

Finally, the third theme concerned the “legitimacy and being trustworthy as a professional developer—identity and trust.” During my work with the engineers I came to see a lot of tensions and dilemmas in terms of legitimacy and power dominance. I realized the importance of being trustworthy in my role as a critical friend in order to be accepted as a professional developer capable of stimulating them to reflect on their pedagogical strategies as a way of promoting their own deeper understandings of teaching and learning. I came to see how my identity as an “expert on teaching” impacted our coproduction of knowledge which, in the end, was built on respect and trust in ways similar to that described by Munby and Russell (1994) as the “authority of experience,” rather than through the “authority of position.” Therefore I came to better understand that it is not only a matter of having academic expertise, such as possessing a body of knowledge that matters for being a critical friend, it is also about understanding the culture and being trustworthy and capable of interacting honestly as a colleague rather than an expert.

### Conclusion: The self and the Others in Developing a Scholarship of Teaching

The “bottom-up-perspective” of pedagogical development (Trowler, 1998) points to the importance of working together with teachers and identifying their needs. During this research, the power of self-study became clearer to me as I saw how critical reflection and systematic analysis of these engineering teachers’ as well as of my own experiences led to new insights about the problematic nature of teaching. I gained insight into how they made sense of their experiences and how their stories became a mirror for me to learn about what I was (or was not) doing and therefore what to highlight and value in my teacher education classes. Kuzmic (2002) argued that self-study of teacher educators cannot simply be about the lives, practices and histories of the teacher educator. Self-study must also understand these in relation to, and through the experiences and perspectives of those with whom we are involved (e.g., other academics). In being a critical friend for these engineers, working together, and sharing ideas, issues, and concerns with them, I moved beyond my own existing understanding of my professional practice to develop new perspectives on teaching and learning. The project also opened my eyes to the complexity of teaching teachers at different levels. In that sense, I learned how to engage people that are not always willing to be engaged (which can also occur in student teaching). I learnt how to communicate in different ways and to make adjustments in relation to those whom I communicated.

As highlighted by Schuck and Russell (2005), critical friendship works in two directions and it is not solely for the person whose teaching is being studied; the critical friend should also benefit. Therefore it might well be argued that critical friendship is not always about having academic expertise, such as possessing a body of knowledge or being constructed as an expert, but it is also about understanding the culture and being trustworthy and capable of interacting honestly as a colleague. During the project I learnt how to communicate in different ways and to make adjustments in relation to those with whom I communicated. In reviewing my own practice and interpreting it as if from a self-study perspective, studying the engineering teachers’ experiences in a variety of ways has been engaging and productive for my own scholarship of teaching.

### References


Introduction
At the 2008 Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Breslin, Mittapalli, Adams-Legge, Infranco, Johri, McIlwain, O’Looney, Pearson, Pratt, Wilcox, and Samaras presented new research examining the use of critical friends among graduate students embarking on the journey of self-study research. In the current paper, three of the authors of the 2008 study have continued this work by establishing a study group to investigate a historical literacy text. During our participation in this group, we challenged ourselves to closely examine how our private thoughts regarding literacy instruction are related to our public practices in our varied roles as teacher educators. We also took the opportunity to continue to study how working with critical friends expands and defines our work as graduate students and early career scholars.

Context of the Study
As co-authors in a previous study (Breslin et. al, 2008), we discussed the wish to sustain our work as critical friends in varied settings in order to continue striving toward more purposeful teaching and learning. Therefore, in response to a challenge issued at the National Reading Conference’s annual meeting (2008), we formed a book discussion group based on Edmund Huey’s The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading (1908) to reflect on the historical text’s impact on our practice as literacy leaders and educators.

The format of the self-study was modeled by the work completed by Breslin et. al (2008) that defined the roles of critical friends in the graduate setting, including critiquing, offering suggestions, and providing support. The discussion of learning communities written by Samaras, Adams-Legge, Breslin, Mittapalli, O’Looney, and Wilcox (2008), as well as LaBoskey, Davis-Samway, and García’s chapter discussing collaborative self-study across institutions (1998) also provided a framework for both developing a self-study and engaging in collaboration as researchers. We applied our use of the critical friend process to theories of situated learning and social cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, the group referenced John-Steiner’s descriptions of complimentary collaboration and the use of collaboration as a means to “overcome one’s socialization into a discipline” (John-Steiner, 2000 p. 119) in order to open ourselves to additional possibilities for understanding our private and public thoughts on literacy.

Furthermore, we chose heuristic inquiry, a type of phenomenological inquiry that looks at understanding the meaning of the experiences of the researchers during the study, as the most appropriate method for examining the data collected during and after the reading group (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, Mandzuk, 1997, Patton, 2002).

Objectives
Using characteristics described by Loughran & Northfield (1998), LaBoskey (2004), and Samaras (2002) needed to develop a self-study, we constructed the three major objectives examined through this study. First, we investigated the process of shifting our critical friend relationships from a structured class setting to a graduate student/practitioner-driven group. Second, we looked at how our understanding of the history of literacy impacted both our private beliefs about our practice and the way we publicly interact with teachers as literacy leaders (i.e. working as a coach or consultant with teachers, working as a pre-service educator, and working with teachers and parents in the contexts of family literacy and special education). Finally, we were interested in how our findings could be beneficially applied to our work with K–12 teachers and to others who work in teacher education settings.

Methods
Our methods were modeled after the six-stage heuristic inquiry process developed in Mandzuk’s (1997) self-study of sociological ambivalence. This organizational framework for data collection, analysis, and synthesis allowed us to both independently and collectively explore how critical friends and self-study work impacted our learning and teaching.

To begin our initial engagement in the process of self-study, we independently immersed ourselves in the work of Huey (1908) by reading his text and keeping a chart of direct quotes, paraphrases and ideas that resonated with our personal thinking regarding literacy practice. This process allowed for self-questioning and individual reflection to frame the problem while also positioning our work in history. We then met three times over a course of six months to participate in discussions of how Huey’s (1908) beliefs on literacy teaching and learning influenced our work with educators. We each added private thoughts to our charts, as well as recorded our group discussions.

Next, we each completed two reflective narratives—one on how self-study influenced our work as graduate students and practitioners in the public schools, and another that focused on how critical friends continue to impact our practice. We then engaged in a three-month “incubation phase” (Mandzuk, 1997, p. 441) where we let our book discussions wane as we independently continued coursework and professional practice. While we communicated as critical friends on other issues, this retreat from the self-study process allowed us to let our initial thoughts subside and simmer so that the data analysis process could be undertaken with fresh yet not forgotten perspectives.

We began the data analysis process by independently open coding our charts and narratives. Open codes allowed
us to stay close to the data by using our actual words as codes. We then exchanged our work in a triad formation with each participant reviewing one other participant’s coding scheme. This form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) helped ensure that our initial codes accurately represented our recorded thoughts, as well as provided an opportunity for a critical friend to comment on how interpretations might be wrong (Maxwell, 2005). This self-disclosure method provided evidence of validity for the using the open codes as the foundation for the next data analysis step, axial coding, where we fully examined (Mandzuk, 1997) our open codes and combined them into substantive themes. As a group, we explored theme similarities and differences to uncover connecting themes situated in the context of teaching and learning. Finally, we entered the resolution phase (Mandzuk, 1997) where we discussed and sketched interpretations of those connecting themes. This allowed us to narrow the focus of our critical friend and self-study work by critically examining our processes, creatively synthesizing our themes, and asking so-what questions of the emerging conclusions we were co-constructing.

Findings

Participation in the reading group made a significant impact in allowing the researchers to better understand their public and private views of the field of literacy and the importance of their continued roles as critical friends to their fellow doctoral students/practitioners. Each participant found the following individual themes:

1. Mary Jane found that working with critical friends helped her move from a conflictive to a creative stance as a literacy leader and researcher.
2. Jennifer discovered that self-study and critical friend work helped her reconcile the differences between education theory and practice and has validated her literacy work with families.
3. Tamie found that she and her students are “striving educators” trying to make connections between the known, presumed known, and unknown.

The individual summary statements below further explain these findings and are based on the open and substantive coding conducted by each participant using their respective data sets.

Mary Jane’s Summary. Mary Jane, a Reading Recovery teacher and literacy leader in a public elementary school, found that her growth while reading this book privately as a self-study scholar aligns with Peter Senge’s idea of personal mastery (Senge, 1990). Noting the current relevance of a one-hundred-year-old document clarified her personal vision and initiated recognition of the structural conflict that continually blurred this vision. The vision (described below) was blunted due to teacher resistance and her perception of inadequacy in practice. Taking these ideas to critical friends began to define her current reality by broadening her perspective to include teachers, how knowledge is created and shared “in service of education” (Huey, p. 181), and how the need to know more about how neuroscience influences literacy and policy (areas in which her critical friends have expertise). She gained a new perspective on literacy skills as a whole:

We are asking children to learn to do something in five to seven years that took civilization hundreds of years to develop. Zooming in on this realization fine-tuned my perspective and understanding of the emergent reading stage (birth to seven or so). Particularly, it focused my attention more on primary aged students including those emerging as readers in a second language rather than their first. Finally, I really believe this group helped me crystallize my purpose as a teacher and researcher: To serve in closing the achievement gap in literacy during the preschool and primary years by generating and sharing knowledge alongside practicing teachers. Reading and discussing the book with my critical friends helped me articulate what is important to my stance in literacy development and empowered me to be willing to let go of other issues.

Further, the inter-subjective approach used in this practice-based critical friends group led Mary Jane to a deeper understanding of her vision in relation to the history of the literacy research field. She sees reading as Huey did one hundred years ago, as an interactive and strategic schema-based process that combines experience, language, and perception. Many of the reading models promoted since Huey’s work neglect his ideas and this has heightened her sensitivity to the kind of research needed to increase teacher knowledge and close the achievement gap—research focused on teachers generating and sharing knowledge situated in practice. Self-study and critical friend work is moving her away from structural conflict and closer to a state of creative tension (the gap between her vision and her current reality), enabling her to interact publicly in practice “from a creative as opposed to a reactive viewpoint.” (Senge, p. 141)

Jennifer’s Summary. Jennifer, a school psychologist, found:

Participation in this group has recharged my interest in self-study and in areas of reading research that I have recently ignored. While seeing that some aspects of the field of literacy have not grown as much as I hoped since 1908, for example, the lack of emphasis given to reading as a social learning activity, I feel as though my work in the schools will help move us forward.

She also noted that the discovery of Huey’s belief that a child’s family is an important factor in reading instruction as validation for her work with family literacy and with striving to incorporate the premise of using a child’s background, or funds of knowledge, to help them better access literacy curriculum.

In the area of critical friends, Jennifer felt that “working with my critical friends has helped me to better understand my own biases and has allowed me to be more open to ideas that may not mirror my own.” This is especially true in work in the public schools where she feels she is often asked to resolve differences between what she knows theoretically is best practice in teaching literacy with teaching policy and requirements that may not allow for the best use of this in the classroom setting at this time. Finally, Jennifer noted that self-study has helped her to overcome some of the insecurity she felt as a critical friend and a practitioner by providing her with a “safe” place to begin to move her theories from the private to the public realm.

Tamie’s Summary. Tamie, a university literacy teacher educator, discovered that the process of engaging in self-study is truly impacting the way she designs her coursework, engages graduate students, and solicits feedback. She states:

In my literacy classes, I stress critical thinking about self and practice. I facilitate peer interaction, group work,
evaluation, and feedback on authentic assignments. Although I haven't actually made the leap into teaching about critical friends, I believe I'm laying the foundation for pre-service literacy teachers to understand the value of making connections with trusting colleagues in and out of their immediate work environments. I firmly believe that positive relationships at all levels of instruction make learning possible. I want students to feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback to make their literacy instruction better, just as my critical friends have done for me.

As a new higher educator, the feedback she receives from her critical friends has given her confidence to receive it from her students as well. She states:

Before my critical friend relationships, I was very nervous about receiving feedback from teachers when I was a literacy coach in the public schools. Looking back on my practice, I feel I actively avoided it. Now, I explicitly encourage my graduate students to challenge me, make suggestions for readings and modify assignments to meet their practice needs. I realize now that my learning about self-study through my critical friends is impacting the way I am modeling good teaching to my students.

Additionally, Tamie's research interests in the history of reading as well as literacy policy were positively influenced throughout the study. She states:

The process of reading and studying the book independently and then coming together to clarify our interpretations of Huey's thoughts on literacy helped me better understand the historical significance of research. Old doesn't necessarily mean outdated as we were able to frequently connect Huey's perspectives with our own literacy research, interests and experiences in light of varying contexts. The process of working through the text and choosing elements that were of particular significance to our own fields, solidified to me the overall importance of advocating for literacy in all education settings and helped define my dissertation questions. This has influenced my practice in that I'm sharing Huey's insights with my graduate students with hopes that our conversations shed further light on how past and present are often more intricately woven than one might presume.

The themes articulated by each participant intersect to form a heuristic synthesizing how self-study and critical friends synergize conflicting forces to develop and sustain creative energy in each individual. As a result, this system that combines critical friends and self-study has the potential to positively impact collective practice in their respective fields of practice. This heuristic is detailed in the discussion that follows this section.

Conclusion

Social ambivalence (contradictory stances, purposes, etc.) is part of the experience of many in education as evidenced by Mandzuck (1997). As learning communities continue to develop across the variety of education settings, these contradictions continue to hinder the creative problem solving needed to meet the educational needs of students and society. Involving critical friends in the self-study endeavors of the participants of this study continues to reconcile their social ambivalence (i.e. idealized versus actual practice in schools). Shared experiences and overlapping views help to build and sustain this critical friend network as they work to “overcome” public “socialization” (John-Steiner, 2000) into their fields. However, developing such shared experiences and overlapping views is not easily accomplished in many contexts.

Private self and public awareness is the sort of work teacher education programs and professional learning platforms need to foster so that the power of complementary collaboration, situated learning, and social cognition can align and help move individuals, programs and schools from frustration to active, collective engagement. The heuristic combining self-study and critical friends in order to understand, negotiate, and navigate the private and public practices of educators may help in creating a more systemic force of learning in our communities. More research focused on how to sustain critical friend networks and how these networks work to influence practice is needed to build on the heuristic developed in this study. Additionally, research combining self-study and critical friends in professional learning communities of practicing teachers would help in developing the teacher education and professional learning programs aimed at promoting such dispositions.
References


Reflective practice has become a key component in the professional learning of teachers (Loughran, 2002) based on the understanding that this method can further and improve professional development (Joyce et al., 1999; Robinson and Lai, 2006). Through reflection involving the critical examination of personal practice, mentors of novice teachers may come to develop new perspectives regarding their professional practice, renew their own commitment to teaching, and feel revitalized (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2000). Mentees too can experience positive benefits as they grow personally and professionally and become empowered to think through their own problems (Khamis, 2000). Evertson and Smithey (2001) posit that the role of mentors should be to assist novice teachers in the process of reflection by creating a dialogue with them, using questions. “The process of questioning may open new windows through creating opportunities for viewing thoughts and experiences from new perspectives” (Cooper and London McNab, 2009).

After observing novices teach, mentors generally discuss the pedagogical decisions of the novice. In my case however, I created a guided question-asking dialogue with a novice teacher, using questions that promote reflection, unrelated to observed lessons. Very little research has dealt with the use of the strategy of guided question-asking to promote reflection in mentoring novice teachers.

This self-study aims to explore the instruction of a novice teacher by an expert mentor teacher while applying the strategy of asking questions instead of the more common pattern of offering advice and guidance in the form of statements of what ‘should’ be done, as well as to consider the positive effects of this question-asking method for both mentee and mentor teacher.

**Context**

Danny (pseudonym) is a graduate of the science instruction program at a national teacher training college, where I am an experienced teacher educator. I taught in Danny's program and he knew me as head of the science department, but I wasn’t his direct teacher educator. An informal connection developed between us. In his third year of studies, he asked me if I was ready to share by email in printouts and notes written in a journal kept by the novice.

This study started at the beginning of the academic year, Danny's first year teaching sciences at junior high school. Danny documented his experiences in a journal that became the basis of our discussions. Most of our meetings were face to face (n = 12) and some were conducted via email. Personal meetings were held weekly at the college, each lasting approximately two hours. All data were collected with the analysis would take. As time progressed, the research data were based on the documentation of the personal meetings between the mentor and novice teacher as well as the email printouts and notes written in a journal kept by the novice.

At a fairly early stage of my work with Danny, I decided to employ the question-asking strategy in informal mentoring Danny since I had accumulated considerable knowledge during my PhD studies about asking questions as a tool for developing thinking in junior high school students. The strategy of asking questions is part of an approach that views the asking of questions as essential for learning. Many researchers and educators agree that learning strategies, including the question-asking strategy, improve understanding and lead to high-quality learning (Dillon, 1988). This strategy fosters independent learners who take responsibility for their learning. Other studies note that reflective work necessitates “constantly asking questions, ceaseless reflection and constant change in teaching” (Hopkins and Sterne, in Nuthall, 2007). So instead of counseling him, I raised questions to encourage him to learn how to study his practice independently in order to better understand and to cope with his difficulties.

At a fairly early stage of my work with Danny, I chose to engage in a self-study so I could reflect on the way I mentored him and pay attention to the dialogue that developed between us so I might develop a better understanding of the process of mentoring through this experience. This understanding might be applied later to other mentoring work that I do as a teacher educator.

**Method**

This self-study examines the educational potential embedded in the use of the question-asking strategy as a key mentoring resource between an experienced teacher educator and a novice teacher for the professional development of both. Since the nature of the dialogue between mentor and novice using this strategy was unpredictable, it was unclear at the outset what type of data would be collected or what form the analysis would take. As time progressed, the research data were based on the documentation of the personal meetings between the mentor and novice teacher as well as the email printouts and notes written in a journal kept by the novice.

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**Findings**

It was apparent from the data and more from our experiences together that the question-asking strategy used throughout Danny's mentoring served as a catalyst for his professional development and for mine as the researching tutor. The almost exclusive use of this strategy in my discourse with Danny led us both to re-examine our work—he at a more preliminary stage, and I with many years of experience.

The common process yielded developments in the professional realm for both of us. These developments included classifying questions as a way of examining positioning in professional development, a renewed
relationships more generally and to explore anew my teaching asking strategy encouraged me to review my mentoring. While mentoring Danny I felt that the use of the questioning dialogues became “opportunities to reflect on . . . teaching practices and to consider alternative approaches to achieving objectives” (Beutel, Spooner-Lane, 2009). The insights we reached through our mutual questioning helped Danny resolve his dilemma.

A rise in the quality of professional thought. A progression in Danny’s professional thought was felt over time and expressed in the kinds of questions he asked. At the early stage, Danny’s questions seemed like fairly simple requests for help with the subject matter. He focused on concrete aspects of teaching and learning, such as “Today I started teaching a new topic that stimulated and motivated the pupils to learn and know more about it” (Danny’s journal, October 2008). After a while his questions became less technical and more complex, showing deeper thought. He began to focus instead on the principles guiding his work and on the underlying values: “How do I bring the pupils to a high level of thought?” or, “As I see it, a good teacher is one who sees teaching as a mission” (Danny’s journal, January 2009).

The advanced ability to raise and solve problems, to use information effectively, and to function automatically where needed (Sternberg, 1997), as well as to think deeply, are some of the indicators for the successful transition from a novice teacher to an expert teacher.

Changes in the researcher-mentor’s professional thought. Raising questions stopped being a way only to awaken Danny’s thought as the novice and also became a trigger for change in my thought as the mentor about my teaching.

Through our dialogue I discovered that I, the experienced teacher, employed the strategy of asking questions in order to provoke thought and to analyze a situation, but at the same time I wondered whether the questions I asked Danny following the reflection furthered or inhibited Danny’s thought.

I sometimes felt that the back and forth of asking questions led to frustration, as there were times when Danny
was left without answers, for example, when asking, “What is a good teacher? How can I be a better teacher?” This caused me, the mentor, to wonder whether there was a value to the strategy of asking questions in every situation. Is this the only correct way? Is this suitable for every teacher? For every novice teacher? Is the frustration perhaps greater than the benefit? Perhaps I should stop asking so many questions?

Despite my reservations about using this strategy, I found a great advantage in mentoring this way. My instinctive tendency as an experienced mentor teacher to guide, to help, and to care for the novice teacher by offering answers was curbed. This strategy made place for original thought and allowed a “questioning dialogue” to develop between two learners.

Conclusion

The process of a reflective dialogue through asking questions led to critical reflection and a change in the paradigm of the novice and expert teacher relationship.

The dialogue between Danny and me developed over time and involved an effort on Danny’s part. “Reflection after teaching a lesson is not simple and demands self-discipline, the ability to ‘exit’ the situation, and an attempt to observe yourself objectively as much as possible” (Danny’s journal, March, 2009). As he later wrote, the reflective dialogue afforded him a deep, incisive, critical view of himself.

Our dialogue followed an unpredictable course, determined by the input of both Danny and myself. We discussed which of the many aspects he was facing we wanted to focus on: his relationship with the staff, asking questions in class, coping with the material, handling the class, etc.

Some of our ongoing questions also concerned dilemmas, such as Danny’s uncertainty about showing off his updated knowledge to the more experienced staff at school. It seems to me that the process of trial and error generated by this question-asking strategy allowed Danny to gradually discover and develop his own teaching style. While looking for his own answers to questions, Danny continued to receive my support throughout our dialogue. “Mentors must resist the temptation to create clones of themselves and instead should support mentees to develop their own teaching styles” (Pitton, 2006).

I must mention two caveats in this strategy. Our one-to-one mentoring relationship gave me the privilege of choosing which of Danny’s questions to relate to and which not, including both relevant and irrelevant ones. This is the advantage of the question-asking strategy—asking questions is like opening windows. If you want to, you open one, and if you do not want to, you do not open it. “It has become clear that using questioning as a research and pedagogical tool requires considerable patience and vulnerability on the part of teacher/researcher” (Cooper and London McNab, 2009).

The decision whether or not to answer the question rests with the mentor. In addition, since the process of question-asking can be quite demanding for both novice and mentor, I think the technique should not be overused. From my experience, I realized that some of my questions supported Danny, some hinted at a direction, and others stimulated new thought and exploration, according to the context or his needs. I found out that question asking is a strategy that I will use carefully, taking into consideration the differences in novices’ learning styles, personalities and needs, as well as the timing of questions.

The experience of mentoring a novice in-service teacher was important for my professional growth as a teacher educator and presented me with a new challenge. As a mentor, I began by giving Danny advice and tips on teaching science but soon realized that this method was making Danny overly dependent on me and not allowing him to feel part of the staff. It was important for me to help Danny become an independent learner, one who asks himself questions, constructs knowledge by himself and integrates it into his previous knowledge.

The value of question-asking has even filtered into my teaching. In my class of pre-service science teachers, I have started to end class with a question for them to take home and think about. The question may be one that is raised by either the students or me. I make a point of using this question to begin the next class. I realize that I have had some success in modeling for them the strategy of asking questions, as they are beginning to adopt it. I have also found that by the end of the question-asking process, I am quite able to trust my students to look for their own answers to questions they raise. Teachers should consider the potential inherent in a question-asking strategy for developing independent thinking in their students.

In conclusion, the relationship between novice and mentor need not be based on the traditional pattern of providing solutions to novice teachers’ dilemmas. Instead, the non-judgmental questioning dialogue between two “learners” can strengthen the novice teachers’ self-confidence and professional identity and contribute to the professional growth of both novice and mentor teacher.

References


Lesson Study as Preservice Teaching Strategy

Introduction

This self-study focuses on the use of lesson study as a pedagogical strategy for teacher education. Lesson study has the potential to develop student teachers' pedagogical knowledge for teaching. It builds on my general aim of wanting students to learn about pedagogy through placing them in a teaching context and enabling them to work collaboratively to understand all aspects of the teaching role. This aim leads me to question how I support students to learn from this participatory style of learning. In this paper I explore the subtleties of implementing lesson study with physical education students in their final year of a four-year teacher education programme. A preliminary analysis of how students made sense of the lesson study process has led to a better understanding of, and ability to, facilitate student learning through an inquiry-oriented approach.

The undergraduate course in which I conducted the study, Physical Education Pedagogy (PEP), is one of several core courses required of all fourth-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Physical Education programme at the University of Auckland. The degree is designed to provide theoretical knowledge and a broad range of experiences in order to graduate beginning teachers competent to teach physical education in secondary schools. Students begin practicum placements in their first year and have four-week placements in schools each semester of their programme. Coupled with this, the students take a variety of courses in the core foundation areas of biophysical knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, physical knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. As a consequence, the students enter the PEP course with a broad range of experiences and knowledge in addition to their own personal sets of beliefs and to the experiences they have had prior to the course.

The pedagogy of the PEP course was designed to provide a space where students could reflect on their teaching, with an emphasis on encouraging students to make connections between their studies and their own practices as teachers. I share the responsibility for coordinating and teaching the course with one of my colleagues. In an attempt to move away from a transmission style of teaching, my initial efforts focussed on using peer teaching see (Ovens & Garbett, 2008). This approach also confronted the dualism that teaching knowledge and teaching practice were separate (Britzman, 1991). In this approach, knowledge for teaching is not represented as certain or generic, but viewed as something that is enacted as a way of solving the specific pedagogical problems embedded in a teaching situation. By having opportunities to be in the teaching role, student teachers experienced the relational complexities and dilemmas of teaching. The need for constant discernment and decision making formed the basis for reflection and learning (Macintyre Latta & Field, 2005; Wilson & I’Anson, 2006).

In 2009 the degree programme was significantly restructured to meet new University regulations. The effect of the restructuring on the PEP course was to conflate it with another in the fourth year, incorporate an outdoor education camp, and to significantly reduce the amount of face-to-face contact time to 36 hours. My colleague and I had to not only cope with a severe reduction in course time and an increase in course content, but also accommodate the seemingly incompatible requirement of having an outdoor education camp as part of the course.

Outdoor education was a strong theme in the degree programme. Across their four year programme, the students took several outdoor education courses and attended a camp each year. The culmination of this was the fourth-year camp, which provided the opportunity for the fourth-year students to lead a camp for first-year students. In the ethos of the programme, the camp had a variety of purposes. By holding the camp in the third week of the academic year, the camp helped first-year students orientate themselves to the BPE programme, meet their fellow first-year students, and experience a range of outdoor activities. For the fourth-year students the camp provided the opportunity to organise and lead a camp.

My observations of the way the fourth-year students taught the activities in camp in previous years underpinned my concerns about the students’ understanding of teaching more generally. Despite having been in the programme for three years and doing many pedagogy-related courses, I thought that the students employed a simplistic pedagogical approach when asked to teach something novel, such as a camp activity. Their multiple practicum experiences meant that they had become very confident in the teaching role and had good relationship skills. However, they struggled to apply educational principles learnt through the university courses to their lesson design. They tended to organise a lot of practice or time in the activity with little thought to instruction, progressions, or sequencing. In this sense, I thought the students had become very adept at “doing” lessons, but displayed limited ability to “think” lessons. Similarly, placing the fourth-year students in leadership positions on camp to accrue more time in the teaching role displayed the same approach with respect to our teacher education pedagogy.

Method

Lesson study (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006; Lewis, 2002) was introduced as a way of structuring how the fourth-year students taught their individual camp activity. For the 35 fourth-year students involved, this meant self-selecting into one of eight groups to research, design, prepare and teach one of the camp activities. The camp activities included mountain biking, surfing, kayaking, snorkelling, problem solving, raft building, surf life saving, and orienteering. The 60 first-year students attending the camp were then rotated around the activities so that at each activity they were with
a different group of 6–8 first-year students. Following the principles of lesson study, each fourth-year student took turns at teaching his or her collaboratively planned lesson while the other members of the group observed and collected evidence. Typically, students made minor, intuitive changes to lessons during breaks between consecutive sessions. When they had more time (in the evenings or during the lunch break) groups reflected on the material generated from the observations and might make more significant changes. Therefore, each group taught their lesson eight times and most groups completed three cycles of the lesson study process. Student inquiry was guided by two focussing questions: “How and what do students learn from this activity?” and “What modifications need to be made to improve the learning?”

I collected data on the implementation of the lesson study process in two specific ways. Firstly, I kept a journal recording my observations and reflections on how the fourth-year students implemented process. I began by making weekly journal entries prior to camp and then daily entries once on camp. I used the journal to document my thoughts and observations of the process. Following camp, I used writing in the journal to document further reflections and ongoing discussions. Throughout this period I shared my journal comments with a colleague outside of the department who acted as a critical friend. Secondly, I gathered a range of artefacts that were generated through the process, such as copies of student reflections, assignment work, and emails. Collectively, the artefacts provided an alternative perspective on the students’ experiences of lesson study. Analysis involved considering all the material generated from the study. In this I was guided by discussion with my critical friend in order to draw the research narrative together with ideas presented in the wider theoretical literature. I also considered what this meant for me and the other lecturers who had attended the camp.

Outcomes

The camp went out in week three of the academic year. The initial stress for the fourth-year students was to collectively and individually conceptualise what they needed to do, then quickly mobilise to get everything done in time. My initial concerns were expressed in an early journal entry:

I have a sense that many of the students don’t have much of a clue of what’s going on. They are just swept along with the main group, relying on their peers to feed them the key information. They are very passive in this process—and at times quite resistant. (Journal, 11th March)

The requirement to organise camp disrupted the students’ normal mode in that it called on them to be actively engaged, responsible, and accountable for specific tasks. I had many concerns at this early stage: foremost was the ability of the students to plan their camp activity lesson. My colleague and I asked for the students to email their developing plans to us so that we could give them feedback. I recorded in my journal some of the issues that emerged in these early plans:

Plans are safe broad outlines which students are going to refine once at camp. No explicit use of diagnostic assessment. Broad designs are very standard behaviourist/cognitivist approach. Do not articulate learning intentions very clearly. Poor language choice along with poor choice of concepts. ie, they can't write aims, goals or objectives properly. Some evidence that the students have poor understanding of instructional strategies they are using. For example, use of ABL shows activities out of sequence. Plans show little research or depth of subject matter knowledge. (Journal, 12th March)

Over the weekend prior to camp, each camp group continued to revise their plan in response to comments my colleague and I gave them. This feedback was not always well received by the students. In fact, on the first day of camp the students were quite negative about the feedback they had received. However, my observations of their teaching on the first afternoon of camp reinforced my early concerns:

General observations were that the first sessions were “overtaught”—too much instruction and not enough activity from the students. There was also not a lot of awareness of the entry level of the students or their prior skills. There is a lot to work on here—the students can make many modifications to these lessons. (Journal, 15th March)

During the first day I observed that many of the groups were not collecting evidence, or were doing this through photographs. While they defended this by pointing out the difficulties of paper-based methods on a surf beach, it was also apparent that the groups had not discussed what information to collect or organised to collect it in a systematic way. I spent time with some of the groups reminding them to collect evidence, helping them to think about their lesson and encouraging them to reflect on their decision making.

Overall, the fourth-years did structure their lessons to allow for good levels of active involvement and over the following two days the groups did modify their lessons. One example of this was the group which focussed on teaching problem solving. Their aim was to encourage first-year students to think more broadly about working as a group to solve problems. As a camp activity, the lesson provided a contrast to the other more physically oriented activities. As a lesson study, the students initially focussed on the sequence of learning activities. However, after observing how the first-years engaged with the lesson, subsequent lessons focused more on how the teacher enabled learning through the types of question the teacher was asking and how all students could be fully included and listened to. Through reflecting on the information gathered from the observations, the group was able to make significant modifications to the lesson.

However, not all groups were able to make such significant changes through the process. The group involved in raft building was an example. From observing their initial lesson I felt that they had adopted the “experience-is-good” approach in the hope that the first-years would enjoy the chance to build and sail a raft. Through questioning the group, it became apparent that they did not have a clear understanding of what their learning goals were for this particular activity. They later modified the learning intentions to be knot tying and lashing. Despite intervening to guide their observation and reflections, the group was unable to significantly change the lesson design. This was partly due to the limited resources and equipment they had at their disposal but also their inability to conceptualise a learning process led by inquiry and reflection. As I noted in my journal:

During the camp I pushed the students to reflect on the lesson—was raft building the best means for teaching
knot tying, what was special about raft building? Could building a bamboo hut be a better applied task. I could see that the students were getting a little frustrated, but in their attempt to make the learning explicit they had missed what was special within the activity of raft building. (Journal, 17th March)

Another issue that emerged on camp was the expectations for the quality of the lessons from some of my fellow colleagues. An example of how this manifested was provided by the kayaking group. At the end of the first day one of the supervising staff told the group that their lessons had some of the worst teaching he had seen. The lesson was based on one fourth-year teaching the first-year group. They had spent almost an hour on the beach practicing how to exit from the kayak while being held upside down by other group members. That evening the staff member directed the fourth-years to change their lesson so that they would all be involved and be able to work with small groups of first-year students. He also wanted the first-years into the water faster so they could learn more during the session. The staff member also justified the changes by noting that the surf conditions had changed and that the bigger waves necessitated better supervision of the first-year students. The result was that the first-years did get into the water faster and some got to the point of surfing the waves. Others benefitted from the one-on-one attention given by the fourth-years.

The tension I noted here was between the standard expected for teaching the first-year students and supporting the fourth-years to learn about teaching. By making the key decisions, the staff member denied the fourth-year students the opportunity to consider evidence and make their decisions based on this. The students also complained that it denied them the ability to do their lesson study assignment because they did not have anyone collecting data.

**Conclusion**

As a self-study, this research focuses on the subtleties and tensions of lesson study as pedagogy. In exploring the production and learning of pedagogical knowledge, attitudes, and skills, the study shows that the process can position students in an authentic teaching situation that is contextually rich for an inquiry-oriented approach to learning about teaching. This notion of authenticity is important in participatory learning (Barab, Squire, & Dueber, 2000) and had been a limiting factor in our earlier peer-teaching work (Ovens and Garbett, 2008). The supervising staff’s impression on the camp was that the quality of the lessons was much improved over the previous years. The fourth-year students were exemplary at taking on their teaching roles and, overall, produced very sound lessons for the first-year students. However, as the outcomes demonstrate, it may be that this context is insufficient for supporting students to learn through the inquiry process. After my first iteration of this project it is clear that the fourth-year students need more support and guidance to undertake lesson study.

In understanding how students make sense of lesson study, it is clear that the task is both shaped by its requirement as a course assignment and its location in an authentic teaching context. This dual construction can lead students to over-emphasise the teaching aspect of the task and to undervalue the study aspect of the task. That is, the students enjoyed the authentic nature of the task and demonstrated their ability to “do teaching”; however, they did struggle to “think” their lessons and learn through a lesson study process. The self-study reveals the importance of focussing on how students perceive the task and guiding them to find the value in an inquiry-oriented approach.

In terms of better understanding and facilitating student teacher learning in teacher education settings, the self-study shows the need for us to better support how students investigate their teaching. As experienced teachers, it is not sufficient that we model good teaching or supply advice on how the lesson should be organised. This does not lead students to understand the principles of good design or how to base teaching on inquiry and reflection. However, we do not necessarily have adequate skills to facilitate and guide the lesson study process. More importantly, this study highlighted that the approach of enabling students to accrue more time in the teaching role is inadequate and simplistic teacher education pedagogy. We, too, have a lot to learn through basing our own teaching on inquiry and reflection.

**References**


**Guidance in Being and Becoming Self-Study of Practice Researchers**

**Context**
As teacher educators, whenever we choose to study some aspect of our practice and thereby determine to develop a deeper understanding of it, we are in essence engaging in self-study of practice research. However, whether or not the study both as designed and as ultimately written and produced is identified and published as self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP), Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) argue that there are three traits of a research design that mark the work as emerging from the methodological genre of self-study of practice research. These are that its claims for trustworthiness are based in ontology rather than epistemology, that its pattern or process for coming to know is empirically grounded in dialogue rather than the scientific method, and that it is grounded in a study of personal practice in the space between self and others in the practice. One critical determinant of these features is the grounding of claims by the author in the authority given by the experience of the self conducting the research (Munby & Russell, 1994). LaBoskey (2004) identified five characteristic that mark research as S-STEP research. S-STEP research is self-initiated and focused, interactive (or collaborative) and uses qualitative methodology and exemplar validation. Engaging in self-study of practice in order to develop deeper understanding, to work to make certain that what one believes is evident in practice, or to improve practice sounds deceptively easy and while some believe that research directed toward studying one's own practice is easier than studying the practice and life experience of others, our experience has been that the integrity, attention to risks to trustworthiness in design, data collection, data analysis, and data representation are neither straightforward nor simple.

**Purpose**
This purpose of this paper is to provide readers with guidance as they design, engage in, and produce S-STEP research. In the rest of this paper we will utilize as an organizing framework the guidelines which reviewers used in evaluating proposals and papers for Herstmonceux VIII: context (practice and research), aims and objectives of the study, methods, characteristics that make a study a self-study of practice research study, outcomes or findings, and quality writing (generally and for self-study of practices research specifically).

**Guides for Design, Implementation, and Production in Self-Study of Practices Research**
In beginning self-study of practices research projects, there are several sources one can go to for ideas and guidance. One of these is Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2009) book, which develops the theoretical basis for self-study of practice research and guides researchers through both the technical and pragmatic aspects of this work. In addition, Pinnegar and Hamilton provide two important tools to guide the work of researchers. They label both tools as frameworks: one guides the planning of such inquiry and the other guides researchers in analyzing self-studies of practice research (both work done by one’s own and work done by others). Another book that can guide researchers is a primer from Samaras and Frees.

Depending on where the researcher is in the process (design, implementation, or analysis), other sources may also be helpful. If the researcher has already decided to use as data autobiographical data, correspondence, or e-mail (interactive digital dual-voiced materials), then Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2001) article outlines guidelines for consideration. Researchers who are already consistently committed to use of a particular method or research strategy should consider two edited volumes in which individual S-STEP researchers unpack how they utilize a particular tool or strategy in conducting research from the perspective of that method or strategy (LaSonde, Galman, & Kosnik, 2009; Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009).

However, for this article we will focus on the aspects targeted for evaluation at Herstmonceux VIII. These guidelines for review are not a recent invention, but have been used for past conferences as well. For this paper we will discuss only four of these: context (both practice and research), aims and objectives of the study, methods, characteristics that make a study a self-study of practice research study.

**Context.** S-STEP research exists in and is interpreted through contextually based lenses. The first is the lens and perspective provided by the practice context or cultural milieu where the study is being designed and conducted. The second is the lens provided by the context of the research conversation in the field of teacher education or educational or social science research that informs and frames the study.

**Practice as context.** As we argued earlier, fundamental to self-study of practice research is the fact that researchers using this methodology are centrally focused on what is happening in their practice and they are seeking to understand themselves and their practice better in relationship to each other. We argue that such work attends therefore more centrally to accuracy in accounting for ontology in order to articulate what is known by the author(s) who speak from the authority of their own experience (Munby & Russell, 1994) rather than on the politics of knowledge which is grounded in epistemology (see Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009 for a discussion of this distinction). It is this ontological grounding that makes context and the discussion of features of the practice context a critical element in self-study of practice research. In *Studying Teacher Education*, which was created and is edited by John Loughran and Tom Russell, context often is the introductory or framing feature of articles describing S-STEP research. In other publications, this element may show up in the methods section.
Wherever it occurs, setting the context appropriately requires that the researcher consider the features and elements of the situation in which this research is being conducted that are vital in shaping the study or will be vital for those wishing to apply its assertions for action or understanding in their own practice. If a researcher works in a faith-based institution then findings that include language about blessings, love, testimony or other elements of religious commitment and spiritual growth may abound in the data and the representation of it. In contrast, a researcher may work in a large, research one, state university with a very small teacher education program where much of the teacher education work is conducted by doctoral students and adjuncts. S-STEP work from such a context may provide clearer insight about what teacher education looks like when it is a neglected step-child or a research laboratory (depending on the university). The feel or ethos of the study, the data collected, and the relationships involved will vary. When considering articulation of context, self-study of practice researchers must consider and articulate carefully, not every feature, but those characteristics that supported interpretation, shaped the contour of the experience, impacted the data itself, or will help the reader understand what the author asserts or understands.

Research conversations as context. S-STEP researchers may be studying their team-teaching experience by focusing carefully on their interaction with a team member and the contribution of that interaction to the learning of their students but fail to connect to both the rich research conversation about team teaching generally and within S-STEP specifically. Zeichner (1999, 2007) has on two separate occasions both lauded and critiqued S-STEP research. The critique on both occasions focused on the need for such research to utilize educational and social science research to provide context for S-STEP research and for self-study researchers to re-contextualize their assertions for action and understanding within the larger research conversations in teacher education.

Since, as LaBoskey (2004) has argued, most self-study of practice researchers use qualitative methodologies, then contextualization within the research discourse of the field is vital. One of the ways that researchers demonstrate virtuosity and scholarly rigor is through their review of literature that intellectually frames their work. The studies selected for inclusion in the review and the ways in which the author discusses, responds to, and integrates the research provide publicly visible and auditable evidence of their prowess as a reader and interpreter. Through the presentation of the review of research and articulation of it, the author develops his or her credibility as a trustworthy interpreter of the research and provides a basis for whether or not the reader can trust the analysis of the data presented. When conducting a review of the literature, developing a framework for introducing the study or determining when and where to interweave research results into the analysis, discussion, and conclusion sections of a study, the research needs to determine what research is germane to this study, where the spaces between research discourses that this study both informs and resolves are, and how this study contributes to the larger research conversation.

Aims of the study. Because teacher education and being and becoming a teacher educator is a holistic process, then often when we are asked what it is we are studying our general internal answer is “my practice.” Ironically, then focusing on “my practice” makes our attention both more particular (our own individual practice) and more general (the whole of the elements of practice interacting). However, research conversations in teacher education generally have emerged from a modernist epistemological research tradition which often requires that researchers focus on fragments or pieces rather than the whole. Thus, S-STEP researchers as they develop representations of their research use statements about the purpose of their studies to focus their research. Attending carefully to the objectives or aims of a study works like motivation does in our personal lives: it gives strength and direction to our work. When we are clear about the purpose of our study, it provides guidance in what research literature is needed, what data to collect, what analytic processes will be most helpful, and what of all we come to understand is most essentially presented here. When we are clear about our purpose it gives us strength in attending to matters of trustworthiness and merit in conducting the research and writing it up for publication.

Methods. One of the complications of conducting research within S-STEP methodology is that this methodology does not stipulate research strategies or more general methods that will be used in the study. Naming a project S-STEP indicates clearly to the reader two things: the researcher conducting the research is also a participant in the research itself and the focus of the research will be on practice as it is occurring. Both of these aspects immediately introduce features of what has traditionally been considered almost overwhelming potential “bias” by other social scientists and educational researchers. For these reasons, as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) indicate, authors of this work have increased obligations to document their research processes and demonstrate they have attended to potential concerns. Two of the five characteristics of S-STEP research articulated by LaBoskey deserve careful consideration as a researcher conducts such research and provides accounts of it. These characteristics are the interactive and exemplar validation. Collaboration supports researchers in attending to places where others might claim misinterpretation or bias, but only when research partners and collaborators are honest in their responses. Consideration of what are exemplars and how validation of exemplars proceeds is imperative as authors articulate what data they chose to collect, how they analyzed it and constructed interpretations, and how they attended to representing the assertions for action and understanding that emerged.

Authors of S-STEP articles must also attend carefully, through references and articulation of details of the process, to the traditions of research methods, strategies, or even methodologies that they are marrying with S-STEP methodology in conducting the research. Evident attention should be paid to prescriptions for research practice from the method or methodological tradition used and the ways in which combining S-STEP methodology with that tradition has guided and shaped your research design, implementation, and analysis of data. When a researcher acts with integrity in conducting research within an S-STEP methodological framework, the demands on the researcher are complex and weighty. For example, it is difficult to mark an “endpoint” to the project since the study is of you and your practice and both continue after any artificial endpoint is reached. The embeddedness of a project in practice means the
researcher may take steps that ensure trustworthiness but not specify them. More than authors using other research traditions, S-STEP researchers must articulate their research and demonstrate themselves as trustworthy. Nowhere is this demand more vital than in the methods section of a particular study. When authors are clear about data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes and both reveal and anchor the decisions made in the literature that guides research practice in qualitative as well as S-STEP research, then assertions for action and understanding are more likely to be valued and found trustworthy.

**Characteristics of Self-Study.** There are three phrases, often used by experienced self-study of practice researchers when they judge whether or not a particular piece is a self-study, that can be irritating to more novice S-STEP researchers. These are “authority of experience,” “the so-what question,” and “the study turns back on itself.” The first comes from work by Munby and Russell (1994), but Tom Russell continues to develop and articulate it in his work. The idea is that S-STEP research is grounded in our experience and that our understandings of our experience developed through self-study of practice projects deepen and develop that grounding. Self-study of practice research that is well designed emerges from this authority and develops in the reader a sense that the author speaks from that place of authority—which means that in the design and articulation of a study, the researcher demonstrates that they own the practice from which they speak, even if they are attempting to change it.

The conception for the so-what question as a test of whether or not the study is a quality S-STEP project emerged early in this research literature and is based in work from Loughran and Northfield (1998). The so-what question is a general test of research (scientific, educational, or from the human sciences), but it has particular import for S-STEP researchers and is clearly linked to the critiques of this research from Zeichner. S-STEP researchers must ask themselves, “What have I learned that is significant and valuable not just for me and those engaged in my practice but that can deepen and extend the research conversation in teacher education specifically or educational research more generally?” Often when we review articles, we find that S-STEP researchers are either completely ignorant of or ignore research already conducted and published concerning the aspect of practice they are at this moment pursuing. We also find that phrases like “this research was valuable because it deepened my understanding of my life” are not usually helpful in answering the so-what question.

The third phrase, “the study turns back on itself,” is more puzzling. When a novice colleague first drew my attention to the phrase, I didn’t even realize I said it. But it is connected to both of the earlier phrases examined here. What it means is that self-study of practice always exists in a space between: between the self and the others engaged in our practice, between history and autobiography, between teaching and research. The purpose of the study is to develop understanding of practice that then turns back on itself to be useful to both the self engaged in the practice and others who are practitioners. It is one of the most powerful and yet most subtle indicators of what makes self-study of practice research unique. We may study what we learn about the development of reflective capacities in our teacher education students as they engage with us in practices designed to promote this development. The study turns back on itself when the teacher educator reveals and supports with empirical evidence the new understandings of and assertions for practice that emerged as the teacher educator questioned again the practices being used and what they revealed about what the teacher educator now knew about reflective practice and the teaching of it. In order to reach this stage, the researcher must collected data that has the ability to provide an evidentiary trace of their own learning across the project.

When researchers demonstrate that a research article is indeed a self-study of practice, the reader can clearly identify the five characteristics articulated by LaBoskey (2004), but just as importantly the project is couched in the authority of experience of the practitioner/researcher, has provided a clear answer to the so-what question, and finally the study turns back on itself providing a deeper more nuanced answer to the so-what question by implicating the practitioner/researcher in the assertions for action and understanding presented.

**Conclusion**

Quality S-STEP research requires that researchers attend carefully to design, implementation, and reporting. While we have not discussed the articulation of findings or quality of writing, these features can also become problematic for the quality of S-STEP research. Simply put, the assertions for action and understanding that emerge from S-STEP projects should respond to the purpose of the project and be clearly based on the data collected and analyzed. When studies do not appear to be connected to the purpose or based on the evidence then their quality is questioned. S-STEP requires artful and sophisticated write-ups. When authors attend to the demands of writing conventions and can articulate the ideas of a study carefully and cogently, good S-STEP studies are produced. Since self-study of practice research emerges out of experience and our understanding of it, creating self-studies is a rigorous process which not only requires careful attention at each phase, but also integrity and commitment on the part of the researcher.

**References**


Of all my classroom practices, the use of participatory music is my favorite way to get students to associate joy with teaching. It is a tiny cloud of pedagogical hope—a prayer if you will—that as they enter a profession that will put their souls at risk, I may help them remember they became teachers because they once wanted to change the world.

Henry Giroux (1988) states that “teachers as intellectuals will need to . . . transform the fundamental nature of the conditions under which they work. That is, teachers must be able to shape the ways in which time, space, activity, and knowledge organize everyday life in schools” (p. xxxiv). For me, making music while teaching is a transformational practice. However, many teachers I work with feel smothered, disappointed and betrayed that their life “calling” has turned out to be so different than they’d imagined. They have not been able to “shape . . . everyday life in schools”; it has shaped them instead. In my teaching I make an effort to prepare my students for this inevitable shock, not by teaching them how to manage the details of a broken system, but by challenging them to develop teacher identities with a transformative character. Whether this be through the use of music in the classroom, field trips to refugee resettlement centers, or other classroom practices, I hope to awaken teachers to themselves and the world. To paraphrase from a speech I make to my foundations of education students at the beginning of the semester, I’m delighted that students are considering teaching as a profession. Most people still enter the world of teaching because they want to make a difference in the lives of children. I love teaching, but I always tell them that it occupies a landscape full of peril. If they want to thrive as teachers they must:

- Seek to cooperate with colleagues and administration, but view what they do with a critical eye.
- Build their students into a community of learners.
- Create their own ways to meet standards, never merely relying on canned curricula.
- Not get fired.
- Make sure that they teach things that they love so that their imaginations don’t go dormant.

Is transformative a hopelessly idealistic expectation for teachers hobbled by a culture of “accountability”? It is not a lack of accountability that has weakened our schools but rather the neglect of the affect in teaching, the neglect of what Carol Rodgers calls “the turning of one’s soul” (2006, p. 1). In my own history as a special education teacher, I have learned that, in part, transformative teaching means helping students learn what interests them.

The scene is sylvan. A small group of boys is seated on logs formed into a circle. Around them is their tent village consisting of half a dozen structures made of pine poles covered with earth-yellow plastic tarps.

“OK guys, we’ve had a great six weeks studying aviation. What do you want to learn about next session?” Several hands shoot up with accompanying “Ooh, ooh, chief, me, me!” “Simon, what’s on your mind?” “There’s an old Cherokee village on camp property, right?” “Yep, right down toward the creek from the cemetery. Why?” “Well, what if we would use the village site to learn all about the Cherokees? We could do an archeology dig and even look for other sites in the area.”

Another boy interrupts, “Yeah, we could even drive over to Georgia to the old Cherokee capital and maybe see if we could get some Cherokees to come and talk to us.”

Another interruption, “Chief, we could learn how to cook Cherokee food. We could even learn how to play Cherokee ball.”

“All the other boys seem to agree with this.”

“Trailblazers, this sounds like a great idea. Let me do a little research and I’ll get back with you in a couple of days with a preliminary education plan, ok?”

“Thanks Chief Pat. We’ll be putting some ideas together as well,” says Chief Mike.

This vignette is not fantastic. The setting is Fair Play Wilderness Camp School (FPWCS), the site of my first teaching job (1984), in the mountainous Upstate of South Carolina. FPWCS is a residential therapeutic facility for emotionally disturbed boys. The curriculum is thematic and largely democratic, allowing students the boys to actually have a say in what they learn. I, as educational coordinator, turned their requests into coherent lessons that also addressed state learning goals in the content areas. Campbell Loughmiller (1979, 1988), an early pioneer of therapeutic camping, coined the term “life-wide education” to describe schooling at Camp. The process alluded to in the vignette includes the following:

- Toward the end of a six-week Camp session I would visit each of the four campsites and learn what the boys and their counselors (called “chiefs”) wanted to study during the following session.
- When a consensus was reached I would begin developing the boys’ ideas into lessons that included hands-on activities and book work.
- I would return to the group with my plans for a final discussion and editing.
- The boys would use the plans to write their own education goals for next session.
- When they returned from their four-day home visit, the groups would, with my assistance, start working
on their lessons.

• Schoolwork was done in a variety of settings, including the schoolhouse.

• At the end of the session their “assessment” was a public presentation of their learning projects to the entire Camp, including staff, and invited guests at “Birthday Party,” a celebration of not only birthdays that occurred during the session but of all that was learned during the session.

FPWCS was started by Mennonites as an outreach keeping with their emphasis on taking the “spirit of Christ” to the world. A culture of care celebrating the virtues of community is an integral part of the therapeutic milieu. Cultural practices include a love of all things outdoors, democratic decision making, simple living, and participatory singing. I was a Mennonite while I worked at Camp. I wore suspenders.

As a teacher, I became and stayed a Mennonite for over a decade because

• I believed in peacemaking as a way of life.

• I believed that community was a worthy educational goal.

• I felt “called” to the “vocation” (in the older sense of the word) of teaching.

• I believed that transformative teaching could awaken the image of God in students and holistically “save” their souls.

So now I’m out of the closet: My desire to be transformative is rooted in my desire to save souls. Now a hopeful agnostic, I still want to “save” souls and change the world. I no longer believe that what Soleau calls “questions . . . of ultimate significance” (1988, p. 811) are about eternity. They are rather about the life we are given on earth and the humanistic possibilities of the classroom.

I decided that during my sabbatical of summer and fall 2009 I would explore the roots of my own teaching, while working on my main sabbatical project (identifying the ways in which Nature positively affects learning and therapy at Camp). I would return to the place of my birth as a teacher to help me understand my current beliefs and practices as a teacher educator. I believe “the value of autobiography in researching our own practice lies in our ability to understand how our past impacts our present” (Coia & Taylor, 2009, p.5).

In July 2009, I met with the Camp director to gain permission for my projects. Happily, he asked if I would help develop an educational theme for August since, in his words, “the spark had gone out of Camp education” (Sabbatical Journal, July 21, 2009). We decided I would spend most of the month of August leading a rediscovery of the “treasures” right in Camp’s back yard. I would also try to find out how my college teaching was connected to this amazing place.

I looked for connections between Camp and my current understanding of transformative teaching in three places:

1. My own and others’ memories of what I brought to the Camp culture.

2. The cultural structures at Camp that provided scaffolding for my own professional development. These included thematic education, the natural environment as a classroom, the democratic nature of group life, and the “life-wide” emphasis placed on most activities.

3. The twofold therapeutic core of the Camp program that stresses that you treat others as if they were already the best versions of themselves, and the best learning always takes place in the context of meaningful relationships.

Memories

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2. The cultural structures at Camp that provided scaffolding for my own professional development. These included thematic education, the natural environment as a classroom, the democratic nature of group life, and the “life-wide” emphasis placed on most activities.

3. The twofold therapeutic core of the Camp program that stresses that you treat others as if they were already the best versions of themselves, and the best learning always takes place in the context of meaningful relationships.
So it appears that from the memories of former colleagues and my own memories, especially as they were piqued by activities I engaged in during my recent time at Camp, that it is likely that my current teaching practices are connected to a past teaching environment that nurtured and encouraged practices laden with affective emphases. I can certainly confirm that prior to working at Camp, when I was completing my initial teacher preparation program, I did not have a clear understanding of the role of the affect in classroom instruction. Camp, especially the boys themselves, taught me that role. This analysis is simple: the voices of others, my own impressions (both drawn from my sabbatical journal and field notes) and the ongoing dynamic possibilities of Camp all point to the Camp environment as the genesis of my own ideas of transformative teaching.

Cultural Structures

The current educational framework is thematic, as I have already described. With just a few adjustments, this structure has existed at Camp for almost 25 years. Given the conversations with the current Director concerning the “spark” going out of the education program, I must assume that at least part of this disappointing situation can be attributed to the ways in which the thematic structures are not being utilized. I did not extensively interview the current Educational Coordinator regarding this apparent deficit. He was somewhat defensive about me returning to Camp and playing an inspirational role, though I went out of my way to include him in the activities I facilitated. He appears to be more of a recipe-follower, and the thematic structure does not work without on-your-feet thinking and a certain comfort level with ambiguity. So transformational teaching is not guaranteed by progressive structures. The structures must be exploited for their dynamic potential. As recorded in the previous section, the boys’ own comments about the work I did with them show that an imaginative and hands-on approach to uncovering some of the stories of former inhabitants of the Camp property show a deep level of cognition and a synthesis of self-understanding and imagining the past lives of others.

Love and Relationships in Teaching

Love and relationships are the heart of Camp. Despite my lack of belief in supernatural Christianity, if a counselor loves his boys and treats them with respect, and all for “following Jesus,” what objection could I have? The Chiefs have times of real challenge and frustration, but they hang in there with their boys.

I must say that I am not sure I have the same level of commitment to teaching through relationship that I used to have. I don’t always make the extra effort to see my teacher education students as the best versions of themselves, I have the standard excuses: I’m so busy with administrative work; I have a life at home and can’t live at my college; these non-traditional students can be such a bother! Fact is, this personal deficit probably accounts for some negative student evaluations I’ve gotten in recent years.

“IInteraction was there but not great” (Student evaluation, Spring 2009).

“There was minimal, usually strained interaction outside of class” (Student evaluation, Spring 2006).

I want to practice the kind of classroom love Noddings and Shore advocate when they state that “love in education, or educational caritas, is something very real. It is a force that can be the most powerful agent in the classroom, leave the most lasting impressions, and touch lives most deeply” (1998, p. 157). Student evaluations and my self-understanding reveal that although I still want to teach to transform, I may have to work smarter and harder to make this happen in my college setting. I have the freedom to do so, though the structures at Wesleyan College do not afford the same level of encouragement as the ones at Camp.

Conclusions

I still want to change the world through my teaching. I still believe that something like Imagio Dei exists in every person, especially in children. What I learned about teaching at Camp has helped me value my own perspective on transformative teaching. I still teach to save souls, including my own. I refuse to practice a pedagogy laden with what Graham calls “gimmicks,” (1991, p. 107) disconnected bits of teaching tinsel that make up many of our “methods” courses. I want the education I facilitate to be “a process that awakens individuals to a kind of thought that enables them to imagine conditions other than those that exist” (Egan 1992, p. 47).

The therapeutic and curricular framework at Camp continues to inform my work as a teacher educator. While I brought a personal dynamic to Camp that, I hope, aided the therapeutic/educational process, it was the Christian–humanistic–child-valuing “spirit” of Camp that taught me, as well as the boys, to look at education as a life-wide, life-long project of positive change. I will continue to let these early influences inform my teaching at the college level in the following ways:

- I will view teaching as a calling—an archetypal human identity, if you will—on par with parenting, governing, ministering, and art-making.
- I will use music and participatory singing in my classes where appropriate, and do the hard work of making connections to traditional curricula as part of my pedagogical presentation.
- I will work for change within existing, atrophied educational structures, especially at the P-12 level.
- I will work harder to build meaningful relationships with my students as both a humanistic and pedagogical commitment.

The “so what?” question has been hovering over me throughout this project. It is a quietly intimidating little bugger constantly wagging his (or her) piece of dry chalk at me in the most accusing manner. As a final word, I provide my answer:

When we tell our stories as honestly and artfully as we can, we make it possible for others to gain access to their own stories (Common 1991). When told well, stories communicate forms of truth more poignant and ultimately more useful than the brittle structures of many traditional stories.
research methods (Dyson & Genishi, 1994).
I hope I have told my story well.

References


Note: Student evaluations were completed at Wesleyan College, Macon, GA.
A Self Study of Teacher Education Practices in Terms of an Activity System

Context
This paper explores my learning as a more experienced peer to three ESL teachers in an informal Teacher Development Group (TDG). The context of our mutual engagement emerged out of our felt need to address the long-standing problems of dealing with the abysmally low ESL competence and academic achievement among culturally diverse students we teach at the Pre University level in Karnataka, India.

Theoretical Orientation
Using self-study of practice allows us to explore the dialectical relationship between teachers and teacher educator focusing not on ‘technical rationality’ (Schön, 1983) or on what teachers should ideally do to become good teachers, but instead on our ongoing learning and development as teacher educators exploring, understanding, and improving our practice (e.g., Berry, 2004; Korthagen & Luneberg, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004; Russell & Korthagen, 1995). Engaging in a collaborative reflective process of learning with teachers helps break down hierarchies of knowledge and power in that relationship. This dialogic view of knowledge construction forms the epistemological basis of self-study, which is grounded in a transformative ontology of historical becoming (Stetsenko, 2010). Dialogue does not take place in a vacuum, unconnected to the historically and culturally developing milieu (Bakhtin, 1981). In the social sciences, Vygotsky’s Cultural Historical Psychology and its offshoot, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), amplify this cultural aspect of human development by linking individuals and groups to the larger institutional and ideological practices. A self-study project utilizing this theoretical perspective gives teacher educators a strategy for intervention that is responsive to the sociocultural context in which teachers develop.

Three interrelated principles of CHAT (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström, 1987, 1993) provide a conceptual framework for my work with teachers and tools for analyzing my data.
- Holistic unit of analysis
- Historical understanding
- Inner contradiction as the source of change and development

Holistic Unit of Analysis
By focusing on the sociocultural activity system, CHAT offers a way to think about teachers’ meaning-making and discourse as situated. Vygotsky argues that development proceeds from the social plane to individual plane (1978). Thus social interaction in relation to practical activity is at the source of both human and cultural development. The relationship between the external plane of social activity and the internal plane of consciousness is established by culturally evolved artifacts and symbolic tools. Vygotsky’s idea of tool and sign mediation in human development is represented by a triangular structure consisting of subject, object, and the mediating artifacts. This basic model of mediated action has been expanded by Engeström (1987, 1993) to include subject(s) engaged in an activity; their objectives that motivate activity; the mediating tools that help to achieve the outcome of the activity; the community of people involved in the activity; division of labor indicating role relationship within the community of practice; and rules that regulate actions and interactions within the activity system. All these features provide a holistic unit of analysis and make it possible to capture “the full context in which teachers’ practice is negotiated” (Goodson, 1994:29).

Historical Understanding
Vygotsky (1981) points out that instrumental form of behavior is the product of historical development. Cultural tools are created and transformed in ongoing activity. Therefore, both the activities that people engage in and the tools of mediation carry history and culture. By this token, we can think of a teacher culture taking shape over time socially in practice as teachers respond to their cultural role expectations and institutional demands. In turn, teacher culture, in its ‘sedimented’ form provides tools that mediate teachers’ thinking and action, both facilitating and constraining it. There is thus a dialectic relationship between history and emerging actions of teachers. The cultural historical context in which teachers’ practice takes shape provides a link between old and new ways of conceptualizing teaching. The new emerges from the old, co-existing with it, not replacing it.

Inner Contradiction as the Source of Change and Development
The historically developing activity in which individuals participate has several elements in it. These elements do not stand in isolation or hold a singular point of view. They encounter one another actively and coexist in people. This coexistence of diverse elements with their diverse points of view has been characterized by Bakhtin (1981) as heteroglossia. These elements or voices of heteroglossia inhere in the consciousness of people dialogically as contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of opposing forces. Development is an intense struggle within an individual for hegemony among these voices. Applying this notion of heteroglossia to teachers, we can see that the contradictions by which teachers involved in practice are defined and the tension created by these oppositional elements form the impetus to change.

Questions
As Bakhtin(1981) points out, there is no self without the other. In this self study of teacher education practices,
a teacher educator’s learning is intertwined with teachers’ learning. The two go together and self-study approach recommends a balance between the two (e.g., Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). My self-study includes my understanding of the learning trajectories of the teachers I teach as well as my own learning that emerges from my interaction with them. In this study, I consider how these teachers orchestrate the convergent and divergent pulls evident when new meditational means, rules and role expectations enter into the flow of their thinking; I examine the self understanding and reformulations in practice emerging from this process; and I unpack my learning gained from my observation of this process.

Method

The TDG provided an alternative cultural space where teachers and a teacher educator engaged in collaborative problem-posing and problem-solving activities that included discussion, peer activities, planning and team teaching. After their engagement they reflected on these experiences. Data from these activities include video recording of classes, audio recording of discussions, teacher questionnaires and in-depth interviews. In addition, the ecology of teachers’ work context has been captured through other sources—documents, interviews of teachers, students and administrators, and class observers during field visits to teachers’ workplaces. All the video and audio records have been transcribed.

I have used conception of teachers’ developmental processes to categorize the data by identifying emergent themes. It was difficult to identify neat individual categories. The change in teachers could only be presented as “patchy” (Lemke, 1991) and recursive responding to the pulls exerted by the voices of heteroglossia, i.e. members’ histories, the institutional context in which they worked and the alternative cultural practices of TDG. Through an iterative process of data analysis that held the data in relationship to the conceptions of teacher development and involved examining the data, then reconsidered the conceptions of teaching, and finally returned to the data, I uncovered a set of tensions teachers experienced as they negotiated different and often conflicting conceptions of teaching. These tensions captured the multiple and conflicting realities of teachers’ dialogic existence (Bakhtin, 1981) and are presented as sets of tensions that teachers experienced (Berger et al 2005; Little, 2003).

Using Engeström’s Structure of human activity to juxtapose the elements of the two interrelated activity contexts that teachers inhabit simultaneously—TDG and the wider community of practice of Pre University educational set up—can provide a representation of the material conditions of these two interacting environments and the dilemmas they create for teachers to negotiate on the way to gaining new understanding. It also makes visual the emerging challenges for the teacher educator in facilitating teachers’ meaning making process.

The same teachers are subjects of both activity systems. However, the way their objective is framed in the two contexts is different. While the workplace emphasizes the objective of promoting students by teaching to the test, TDG is focused on promoting learning in the students by finding ways to enable them to use language as a pliable tool for self expression. In the workplace, teachers’ autonomy is circumscribed by the normative procedures set by the institution in the form of a fixed timetable, prescribed syllabus and materials, and an examination which tests how well the given has been learned. In contrast, the TDG schedules are negotiated and though not bound by curricular mandates, its activities support formal curriculum by attempting to adapt and supplement it. This is done in order to draw the prescribed curriculum closer to the subjective states of the learners. In the work context, the examination and its wash back effect on the meditational means employed in the classroom can be seen in the product-oriented approach to teaching, whereas evaluation forms part of the process of teaching in TDG. Ongoing assessment is used to tune into learners’ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) and their intrinsic orientations and needs and to “expand” opportunities (Engeström, 1987) for meaningful learning. In terms of outcome, the workplace constraints make teachers stay within the box, whereas TDG enables them to go beyond the bounds of established practices. The TDG community consists of ESL teachers and me in the role of a more experienced peer creating an environment for dialogic engagement through inquiry learning. The TDG can be seen as a “bounded” (Cole, 1995) cultural community within the workplace community of stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, and administrators. In terms of power and status, the workplace has an authoritarian structure as opposed to the more democratic space of TDG. The prevailing vertical social set up of teachers’ workplace positions them as implementers of policy from above. The structure of teaching experience provided in the teachers’ workplace is characterized by isolation, making teachers’ individual efforts seem like the sole determiner of educational outcome. In contrast, TDG takes its stand with CHAT and acknowledges the social and situated nature of learning and it supports a horizontal, reciprocal meaning-making plane that is in consonance with notions such as “intermental developmental zone” (Mercer, 2002) and “collective ZPD” (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002), where different developmental zones interweave.

Findings

This study provided new understanding concerning the effect of teachers’ simultaneous membership in these two cultural contexts for their thinking and practice.

Donald Freeman (1991a) speaks of teachers’ thought and action as two kinds of action. This distinction between sign-mediated interaction (or thought, as Freeman calls it) and artifact-mediated action (or doing) is crucial to my study, because my data analysis shows that the development of teachers’ thought and actual practice are not “parallel” (Freeman, 1991a), though dialectically merged. Critical incidents that teachers experienced in TDG and their participation in semiotically mediated interaction had an impact on them. It enabled them to revisit their assumptions. However, a change in teachers’ thinking was not directly reflected in their practice. Achieving unity of thought and action took place over time. Teachers’ developmental trajectories followed a “twisting path” (Vygotsky, 1978) marked by stages of inconsistencies as they negotiated the tensions created by their own implicit beliefs and the lack of correspondence between the goals, means, rules and social relationships upheld in teachers’ workplace and TDG. I will illustrate this with examples from one of the sets of tensions experienced by teachers.
In the beginning, teachers’ practice was guided by a focus solely on product. Tensions experienced by teachers became apparent as this clashed with the more process-oriented approach to teaching that TDG settings afforded. For instance, the idea of using open-ended questions to explore multiple points of view seemed to have a destabilizing effect on them, who, up until then had treated these questions as well-structured problems with a single right answer:

Teacher1: [reads] Question number seven. The poet compares dental repair to road repair in order to . . . [reads the given options, a, b, c and d of the question]. Now tell me, which one is the right answer?
Student1: b
Teacher1: Anyone else?
Some Students: a
Student2: c
Teacher1: [to the student who said ‘c’] Yes?
Student2: c
Teacher1: Yes, c is the right answer. (7/16/01)

The excerpt above shows that the teacher did not extend the dialogue to either find out the basis of the choice made by different students or to justify why c was right as opposed to the other options. There were grounds to consider all four options as valid interpretations. In the discussion I had with this teacher after this class, he said, “I thought always in Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), one point is right.” This implicit belief seemed to have overpowered his ability to wonder at other alternatives that seemed equally right. The following week, he approached me to seek clarification regarding the difference between “teaching MCQs” with several possibilities provided in the support material to the lessons, and the “testing” questions with “one right answer”. However, the assistance he sought was still product oriented. He wanted me to tell him whether the answers he had chosen for the next lesson were right. Although I led him instead to articulate the basis on which the alternative choices could be seen as acceptable or not, he did not seem to see it as a process that he could use with his students to promote thinking and language learning. What happened in his class two months later supports this. When a student chose one option in an MCQ, the teacher said, “No, no, all four are right. You see this is a teaching question and so, both are correct.” He then explained the meaning of all the alternatives. About his understanding of the purpose of teaching questions, he said, “To raise awareness about all meanings. . . It makes them think.” However, he didn’t seem to see that his practice of giving the meaning hijacked the process of thinking. This example shows the discrepancy between his developing theoretical understanding of the purpose of teaching questions and its implementation, which was facile, bypassing the process of meaning exploration. However, his continued participation in TDG activities and reflective dialogue helped him to reach new understanding by juxtaposing old and new ways of conceptualizing practice:

Teacher1: After our conversation, I introspected about the difference between my teaching and the Saturday class [in TDG]. . . . But, it does not happen like that in my class. I have to apply this new method. I am not able to. It takes time. (10/12/01)

Dilemmas created by the cultural expectations of the workplace such as the central curriculum, class strength, and time also constrain teachers from growing toward their preferred goal of teaching as the following excerpt shows:
Teacher1: Students make so many mistakes while taking down. So, when they are at that level, how to help them? At the same time, we have to prepare them for the public exam. (To Teacher3) What do you do?
Teacher3: Same problem.
Teacher1: Do you give notes?
Teacher3: I break it up into questions.
Teacher1: But my question is whether they write or what do they do?
Teacher3: For first years, I write on the board.
Researcher: Answers?
Teacher3: Answers. But I extract it from them, then I put those points on the board, so that they know what they are taking down.
Teacher1: In my experience, it consumes a lot of time, if we keep on asking questions, discuss, and write on the board. If I don’t finish, they’ll be other problems with the management. Principal will ask. . . . These are all the problems. I respect this method. I’m trying. But there is so much, portion is too vast for them. (2-11-02)

Discussion

Through analysis of my own reflections and observations, I gained three insights into teachers’ developmental trajectories.

Insight 1. Teacher learning is situated in the histories and contexts of their work. Teachers’ beliefs, acquired from their prior learning experience and cultural context, exert a powerful influence on how they think and act. More importantly, these beliefs operate at the tacit level and form the basis for new learning. I learned that I had to meet teachers on their own terms by enabling them to articulate their held conceptions of teaching. In this process, teachers’ implicit beliefs surfaced, as they formed the lens with which teachers tried to interpret their new experience. The new culture, viewed by and built on teachers’ own conceptions of teaching, enabled them to expand their thinking, working in dialectic with it. For instance, in one of the initial sessions, I modeled two classes representing two orientations to teaching, one that mirrored their traditional transmissive practice thrown into relief by another that was more learner-centered. These contrasting experiences became a tool to probe teachers’ implicit understanding of teaching and learning, helping them to gain a perspective on what seemed spontaneously more acceptable.

Insight 2. My study showed me that teachers’ understanding evolves over time moving between conceptual and experiential realms, between “phronesis” and “episteme” (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Therefore, as Korthagen, et al, (2001) point out, there’s nothing to transmit, but a great deal to explore. My task involved helping teachers explore and refine their preconceptions about practice through an inquiry approach (Bullough, 2005; Wells, 2002). I set up inquiry activities to facilitate the reflective interplay between teachers’ lived experience and the new discourse of TDG. This increased teachers’ agentive role and helped me recognize their diverse orientations and work with them in their ZPD.

Insight 3. As the findings show, the decentering experience that teachers had in TDG when their taken-for-granted beliefs were challenged, gave rise to tensions. Fostering a community of practice, where teachers developed collegial relationship and felt that they belonged together,
helped them face the dilemmas collectively. The TDG community provided a safe place in which teachers could take risks, and make and receive comments. It also became a resource for the multiple points of view it afforded. It helped teachers develop other positive dispositions such as mutual trust, emotional and intellectual support, professional commitment, crisis management, humor, empathy and the strength to struggle and persevere in the face of emerging challenges.

Conclusion

Careful study of teachers’ experiences and the changes that emerged as they interacted with me (a teacher educator) in a shared learning space led me to identify salient features in promoting teacher learning.

1. Acknowledge teachers’ tacit and spontaneous conceptions of teaching.
2. Create opportunities for inquiry learning
3. Build a community of practice.

References


Since 2002, several different pilot projects on teacher education inside the school have been initiated and subsidized by the Dutch government. These pilot projects involve large-scale collaborative projects. Longitudinal research studies have been carried out in order to determine the value of these projects (see e.g. Vandyck et al., 2009). In my research, however, I decided to explore a small-scale collaborative education project conceived and carried out in the workplace by both teachers and student teachers.

**Personal Motives and Expectations**

In August 2007 I had been working as an educator and a methodologist at Utrecht University for six years. I felt that I was beginning to lose touch with the practical knowledge as a teacher of French I had acquired earlier. Moreover, I wanted to try out the methodological knowledge that I had obtained at the university on the spot.

As a methodologist, I aimed at achieving a better connection between the methodological theory and the practice of the student teacher. In addition I felt that I knew too little about the teachers' expertise. Moreover, I felt I had too few contact hours to share the love and enthusiasm for the subject with the teachers and the student teachers.

As a result, I decided to start a project at a secondary school aimed at the professional development of language teachers and their student teachers. This project was called Language methodology on the spot. At first I took on a double role. I replaced a secondary teacher for one year at my former school, where I had worked for ten years. In 2007 I was both a teacher at the school and a methodologist from Utrecht University. My hypothesis was that if student teachers received extra support on methodology, it would give them more insight into what it is like to be a communicative language teacher within the context of their own school. The goal of second language education within the communicative approach is that learners become fluent second language users (Moonen, 2008). Consequently, the student teachers would acquire their methodological skills on the spot in order to integrate theory and practice.

I decided to cover the same subjects at the school as were treated at the institute during the same period. I expected that this integration was leading to more meaningful learning than in the regular situation, when students receive theories, develop lessons and try to carry them out in their particular school's day-to-day practice.

I had no such clear expectations regarding the value for the experienced teachers. At first I thought that their reasons for participation stemmed from the collaborative contacts we had had in the past. I was not sure what I could offer them as a language methodologist. I felt especially uncertain about my expertise as a teacher educator on the spot. I needed to examine the questions articulated by Whitehead (1998): How do I improve my practice (in a new context)? How do I help my students to improve the quality of their learning? Moreover how do I transform a group of individuals into a learning community (Dooner, et al, 2007)?

**Practice**

In practice, the project Language methodology on the spot turned out to be slightly different than expected. The group consisted of two experienced foreign-language teachers; four student teachers of German, English and French; an academic researcher; and me. At the university I was tutor of two of the student teachers and methodologist of all four. The language teachers were my colleagues of French and English. Together we convened to design a number of foreign language lessons, taught those lessons, and evaluated them in the following meetings.

From the summer holiday until the Christmas break, the student teachers, the academic researcher, and I met every week for one hour. The academic researcher was present at the meetings to collect data for her own research project about the development of social competences in such a community. She didn't participate in the self-study. The two teachers attended seven of these meetings. I was in charge of the meetings in the weeks before the autumn break and decided to cover the same subjects as were discussed at the teacher training institute during the same weeks. After the autumn break, I decided to follow the academic researcher's advice and I asked the student teachers to take turns chairing a session. We hoped that in this way the students became more responsible for their own learning process. Now it was the students who chose which subjects to discuss. The teachers gave advice. After Christmas, the project was evaluated by means of a questionnaire. Subsequently the group continued to meet once a month. We prepared a language day in May for all the foreign language student teachers of the University of Utrecht, university language methodologists, and the other participants of the project.

**Self-Study Research**

When these half term evaluations showed all participants were very enthusiastic about the project, I became curious to find out what was behind this success. This curiosity made me decide to enter into the invitation of one of the coaches of the self-study to do an intake for teacher educators. The offer to participate in the self-study came just in time. I decided to make this project the focus of a self-study research in which I concentrated on my own role as facilitator.

As a researcher I aimed at learning how to conduct a self-study myself and in interaction with three participants, teacher educators as well, and the three coaches at the Free
University of Amsterdam (VU). I wished to know if/why my actions were important. Self-study relies on interaction with close colleagues who can listen actively and constructively (Russell, 2006, p.5).

Theoretical Framework
This project can be seen as an example of a community in the definition of Wenger (2002): “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” Grossman and her colleagues (2001) state that in such communities people get together to improve their practice and to enhance their intellectual development.

I found little research that examines the concrete behavior of a facilitator in a professional learning community. My coach of the self-study helped me find recent literature based on the results of the research by Platteel on how a collaborative action-research partnership developed. In her paper she described actions unravelled with the help of metaphors.

In a learning community a facilitator often has multiple roles; for example, the roles of colleague, tutor, and language methodologist. In their research, Platteel, et al, looked into this combination of roles. They described a collaborative action research project in which teachers, facilitators and academic researchers form a partnership and together design mother-tongue education.

Platteel, et al, coined four metaphors, which were used before by Wadsworth (2001): the Compass, the Mirror, the Map, and the Magnifying Glass. The facilitator as a Compass leads the process and helps participants find what they are aiming for. As a Mirror, the facilitator motivates learning community members to reflect on their own practice and on other people’s practice. In the role of Map, the facilitator suggests the routes participants may follow and the obstacles they may encounter en route, while the Magnifying Glass helps participants focus on specific elements of their learning. Table 1 presents the actions based on the theory of Platteel.

Table 1: The Actions of the Facilitator in the Context of the Four Metaphors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Actions of the Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compass</td>
<td>• Ask what the group’s goal is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help the group find its way; the group members make their own decisions about where to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Give group members the opportunity to discuss things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help group members formulate questions or summarise ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror</td>
<td>• Use learning methods focused on reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask questions to understand the group members’ practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask how this practice can be improved and why it needs to be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage the exchange of classroom activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offer the group members the opportunity to say how they see themselves or each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>• Initiate the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pay attention to obstacles and possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask the group members how the collaboration is going,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe how they develop their lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help them to define steps aimed at improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnifying Glass</td>
<td>• Focus on a specific aspect of the project or of the teaching practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
been developed during the project. Here I was again the leading lady. I wished to share the results with other (student) teachers of schools and university. In the last video (April 2008), I was also the chair. I prepared a one-day meeting with all language student teachers, university language methodologists, and the other participants of the project. This video is an example of how I prepared a university activity. It was the idea of my colleagues of the university. The aim of this day was to design and give a 'good practice' lesson.

Data Analysis

Both questionnaire and videotapes were first analyzed with Platteel et al's metaphors as criteria. I analyzed the questionnaire focusing on my roles and actions in order to find what the other participants thought about the sessions with regard to (a) the learning method used; (b) the role of the educator (Joke Rentrop); (c) the difference between when the educator prepared the sessions and when the student-teachers prepared the sessions; (d) the structure of sessions; and (e) the products.

The answers participants provided to question b gave data for my first research question. The answers to the other points and the analysis of the videotapes provided me with data for the second research question. I started by examining the tapes myself. I made a diagram consisting of two columns. In the first column I wrote down the actions I carried out. In the second column I coded these using the four metaphors as described by Platteel. Then I twice repeated this analysis. One repetition took place with the self-study group: I gave the group a diagram with the two columns and I showed them the tapes. They coded my actions and then we discussed if these actions were covered by the metaphors. They didn't mark any tensions. Dooner (2007) stated that educational leaders are often unable to help teachers navigate effectively through the inevitable tensions that surface in group work. The self-study group and I discovered that we couldn't code my affective and inspiring actions. We found out that these were crucial for the creation of a group that offers security and enthusiasm. Therefore, a fifth metaphor was needed and I coined the metaphor Flame.

The second time I repeated the coding it was done with Platteel, the author of the thesis that outlined the metaphors I used. Moreover I asked her how she coded the affective actions in her research. She had collected data with the help of audiotapes. She coded these under the metaphor Mirror, i.e. when the facilitator says, "Good luck!" he means: "I wish you good luck." The facilitator shows his emotions. The self-study group and I used videos. We analyzed the non-verbal and verbal actions and coded them under the Flame.

A facilitator can be seen as an explorer. Explorers need certain instruments to find their way, such as a map, a magnifying glass, a mirror and a compass. A flame is also a necessary instrument for a facilitator. The facilitator lights the flame, keeps the fire going, and passes it on to others. The flame emits two types of fire: holy fire, which represents inspiration, and hearth fire, which represents affection and warmth.

Results

In this part I answer my research questions, based on the results of the analyses of the questionnaire and the videotapes.

Roles I adopt in a successful language community.

Analysis of the questionnaire made clear that the participants regarded me first and foremost as a methodologist. Analysis of the videotapes showed that I fulfilled several roles in the language community: I function as a methodologist, tutor, and colleague. However, the role that was fulfilled most was the role of methodologist.

Actions I undertake as a facilitator. Figure 2 and 3 present the concrete actions of me as the facilitator, based on the analyses. Based on our analysis of the data, we have added a fifth metaphor: the Flame. All of these actions were executed in the role of methodologist, except where the other roles have been indicated in brackets (i.e. tutor and colleague).

Conclusions and Discussion

In this self-study research I examined which actions the facilitator undertakes to enable learning within a language group. I focused on the different roles I adopted in the successful language community that was part of the experimental project Language methodology on the spot. Based on this self-study, I conclude that my role was mostly that
of methodologist. However, in learning on the spot it is not sufficient for the facilitator to be only a methodologist: the facilitator also needs to be able to adopt the roles of tutor and colleague.

The use of Platteel et al’s four metaphors (Mirror, Magnifying Glass, Compass, Map) helped to clarify the roles and the actions of the facilitator. The actions mentioned in Figure 2 were the same actions that I fulfilled in the language group. However, the analysis of the data made clear that I needed a fifth metaphor to cover the affective and inspirational interventions that turned out to be crucial. In the Flame metaphor I adopted the roles of tutor and colleague, for example, by showing an interest in personal or school affairs. These interpersonal actions helped build a secure and warm learning environment.

I found that few of my actions were related to the Mirror metaphor. Mirror actions enable the student teachers to transfer the insights gained here to other contexts after their study. This means that in future I need to pay more attention to these important actions. By contrast, many of my actions were related to the Map metaphor. Such actions are necessary to map out a route. It is likely that there will be fewer of such actions in a follow-up project, which would give greater scope for Mirror, Compass and Magnifying Glass actions.

The initiator and the subjects of the meetings were a decisive factor in labelling the different roles. As a methodologist, I directed the development of a reading lesson. Moreover, as a methodologist, I gave additional information about language acquisition theories after a student teacher had presented her writing project. In my role as a tutor, I could make student teachers more enthusiastic about their next lesson.

The table in Figure 3 cannot be simply transferred as a list of activities to be used if colleagues want to carry out this project at their own school. It describes facilitating actions that are carried out in more than one role.

### A Learning Community within the School

At the start of the experiment I thought that the project would help the student teachers: they would follow the programme of the teacher training institute and could immediately apply this knowledge in school practice. However, the academic researcher’s feedback as well as the theoretical insights have made me change my mind. After fine-tuning the goals and expectations, a facilitator in a project similar to this should abandon the methodological programme of the teacher training institute. The participants can determine themselves which subjects are meaningful and useful to them at a certain moment. At first I focused on the content and only after the autumn break did I change my focus to the process. This change proved to be crucial for the construction and continuation of the teacher’s learning community.

### Results for the Educational Institute

As a methodologist at a teacher training institute I have become more aware of the need for fine-tuning with the student teacher’s school. This has led to a renewal of the programme by me and my fellow methodologists. There are still regular methodology meetings in the new programme. However, in addition, student teachers develop lessons together with their methodology teacher in small groups. This intensive cooperation gives the methodology teacher greater insight into the teacher’s and the student teacher’s contexts.

### Personal Development and Benefit

Theory has become more important for me because it gave me the answers that I needed regarding the way the facilitator functions in the workplace. Data analysis made the facilitating actions more explicit. I realised that I was accepted and greatly valued in my role as a methodologist in the workplace, and this has increased my confidence to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Actions of the facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compass</td>
<td>• Ask the school management what the school’s goals are for this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror</td>
<td>• Ask the school management about these issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>• Involve the school management in the organisation of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide a clearly structured programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use different teaching methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide structure during the sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Give participants the opportunity to make their own contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnifying glass</td>
<td>• Provide theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stimulate the exchange of lesson ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Give tips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a reader with the lessons produced during the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flame</td>
<td>• Give the group members time at the beginning of the sessions to acclimatise: coffee and small talk (colleague).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Show an interest in business outside the project (colleague).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss effective teacher behaviour regarding difficult pupils with the student teachers (tutor).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Answer questions about university assignments (tutor).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Give the student teachers positive encouragement before their lessons (tutor).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thank the participants for their contributions (colleague).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. The actions of the facilitator in the context of the five metaphors*
share my knowledge with student teachers and experienced teachers alike. I have become exceedingly enthusiastic about doing research. As a result, I have been actively trying to organise a follow-up to this project.

As a researcher in a self-study group I discovered that my actions were indeed important. The coaches and the participants made me aware of my strength in forming a learning community.

As a facilitator I played the roles of methodologist, colleague and tutor. I performed a great variety of actions and continued to learn in my diverse roles. In particular, I derived great satisfaction from the Flame actions, which represent both inspirational fervour and affective attention for the members of the learning community.

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Wadsworth, Y. (2001). The mirror, the magnifying glass, the compass and the map: Facilitating participatory action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), Handbook of action research: Participatory inquiry and practice (pp. 420-432). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
Exploring the Landscape of Advocacy in a Junior High Setting

Describing Our Landscapes as a Context for this Inquiry

We, Brian and Mary, have been married for eight years. After we met and married, we both entered teacher certification programs and were hired by the same school district. Brian’s initial teaching position was in the special education department, working in a self-contained unit for elementary students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Due to district space constraints, this unit was headquartered at a local junior high. It was at this same junior high that Mary was offered a position teaching English learners and general education language arts. After one year, the unit Brian was working in was dissolved and the principal of our junior high offered him a position teaching resource language arts to students with mild to moderate specific learning disabilities.

In the years since arriving first unofficially and then officially at the same school, our responsibilities have increased. Brian has accepted the duty of coaching boys and girls tennis after school, where he interacts with students from multiple age and school achievement ranges. Mary is the alternative languages specialist, where she teaches the English as a second language class, oversees placement of English learners, and structures learning plans for these students. She also teaches language arts classes for underachieving reading, general education, and honors students. Both of us have mentoring responsibilities at our school and Brian has mentoring responsibilities with the district.

In addition to our work at the junior high, both of us also have roles in teacher preparation at the local university in the endorsement program for certifying teacher candidates to work with English learners. Brian’s work at the university focuses on meeting the needs of students who are both English learners and have various disabilities as well as assessment for English learners in general. Mary’s work focuses on aspects of language acquisition, constructing curriculum for content, language, and literacy development, and family involvement policies and practices in schools.

Coming Together Around a Research Puzzle

We became interested in conducting a study about advocacy as we started to have conversations about the meaning of advocacy for teachers as a result of our work with teacher candidates and novice teacher mentees in trying to encourage and prepare them to advocate. The purpose of this self-study was to explore what advocacy looks like for us in our junior high setting in the context of ethical relationships with both young people and teachers. Our ultimate goal for this study was to sharpen our focus in encouraging and preparing teacher candidates at the university and novice teacher mentees to assume identities as advocates. Instead of merely asserting advocacy is important, we explored our own efforts to be advocates.

Reviewing the Literature on Advocacy

According to Howe (1986), advocacy occurs when adults in schools fulfill their responsibility to ensure that the needs of all children as well as individual children are met, independent of social attitudes or current political factions. From our perspective, this definition assumes that school officials have a responsibility to advocate through well-executed advocacy the needs of all students can be met successfully and that those needs could be stripped of context. We selected this definition initially because of its broad orientation and because we support the perspective that what school officials do can, in fact, affect students in positive ways.

Our work is also informed by the assertions of Buendia (2000), who argued specifically for practical knowledge of advocacy for diverse children. According to Buendia, it is problematic to instill advocacy in teacher preparation programs in general because it is difficult for universities to gain access to the landscape of school at the level necessary, as well as garner the time commitment in teacher preparation sufficient that will lead to growth.

In addition to the lack of access to the school landscape and the time commitment sufficient to see growth, many new teachers feel vulnerable in their jobs, according to Athanases and Oliveira (2007). The new teachers in their study found themselves complying with the dominant values of the school, rather than their own. The researchers attributed this submission to the “fear of getting in trouble” (129) and the “risk of job loss as [being] too great” (130). These new teachers reported feeling ill prepared to “manage confrontation with other educators when conflicts [arose] regarding issues of equity” (133). Issues of job risk compete with what Athanases and Martin (2006) claim is important to learning to advocate for the educational equity of students, that is, “to advocate for educational equity begins with a focus on student learning” (628). Thus, the new teachers felt forced to decide between advocating for students and continuing to be employed and achieving tenure.

While we were able to find a handful of studies that focused on helping teacher candidates develop advocacy dispositions and skills, a search of the professional research literature uncovered no studies of advocacy among tenured practicing teachers, so it is unknown whether tenured teachers have the same fears as new teachers do pertaining to job security. We jokingly speculated that the dearth of research in this area may be based on either the assumption that practicing teachers do not engage in advocacy or that they enact advocacy perfectly. Our more serious rationale is that all of the problems Buendia (2000) described for studying advocacy among teacher candidates may be in force to a greater degree for practicing teachers since they have not
been traditionally accountable to universities or other entities that insist on advocacy. Another concern for practicing teachers in terms of enacting advocacy may be that doing so positions them in opposition to the accountability systems that are gaining increasing momentum with their districts.

Our review of the professional literature also revealed that discussions about advocacy are absent from the legislative and school governance landscapes, and do not appear in state or district level curriculum documents or directives that teachers have access to. Since these entities seem not to have space for advocacy, it makes sense that practicing teachers and researchers may not intentionally direct efforts towards examining it in such settings.

Uncovering Methods for Examining Advocacy

We determined that stories would serve as acceptable artifacts for coming to understandings about our research puzzle because we realized that stories were the typical mode for communicating our lived experiences with advocacy to the teacher candidates and novice teachers with whom we have worked. Support for the use of stories also comes from Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray-Orr (2007). These researchers articulated a three-dimensional narrative space as an analytic tool for unpacking meaning in stories. Placing the story in the three-dimensional space forces interactions with temporality, examines the inward (personal) and the outward (social) nature of the narrative, and allows the narrative to shift meaning across various dimensions of time within a particular place or context. We also refer to our school context as a landscape, which is a concept from the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995).

The following section reveals the methods we employed in order to conduct a study on our work together as advocates for junior high students. Specifically, we will discuss the ways in which we gathered the stories of advocacy. After revealing how we gathered the data, we will explain how we placed stories in the three-dimensional space for analysis.

Gathering Stories

We collected the stories over the course of a year. In order to do this, we each kept separate lists of stories that we thought demonstrated advocacy according to Howe’s (1986) definition. At two points, mid-year and at the end of the year, we sat down together to reread and retell the stories we had gathered. At the end of the first conversation, we compiled a long joint list of stories. From these lists of our acts of advocacy, we analyzed shared and unique features, from which we developed themes. Then, we met again to examine our list to verify that we agreed on our categorization of our stories. After our categories were developed during our first meeting for reliving and retelling, patterns emerged. To us, these patterns conceptually resembled VENN diagrams. The most significant pattern was the VENN of shared advocacy. Stories of shared advocacy occurred when both of us played a role in causing the advocacy to unfold. In the conceptual pattern common to a VENN, however, we also had instances of advocacy that were not shared. In these instances, it became evident that we each had a different plotline for enacting advocacy. Brian’s plotline was built around a concern for what would be best for the entire school. Mary, however, had a plotline built around ethical obligations to individual students. Using Clandinin and Connelly’s (1990) language, sometimes these plotlines competed; other times they conflicted, and still other times they were synchronous, thus a conceptual VENN resulted.

The most significant story about the conflicting plotlines revolved around an English learner who was disruptive in the majority of his classes, making it difficult for others to learn. Since Brian is bilingual and has a history of advocating for English learners, the administrator assigned to work with this student solicited Brian’s input. Brian recommended that the student be removed from the school since this student was on a visitor’s contract because he did not live within our school boundaries. The contract, which the student and his parents signed, indicated that visiting status put him in a more precarious position when it came to behavior and discipline. I agreed with the legality of the contract but thought it was unfair to expel the student so easily just because he was visiting. I worried about the long-term consequences for this student, who would now have to bear the weight of being dismissed from an institution, especially as he tried to enter a new one. As our conflicting plotlines collided around this student unfolded, those plotlines entangled several more times until the student was eventually removed from our school. During this incident we were irritated with one another on several occasions. Our marriage made it necessary to make efforts to repair our working relationship. We have wondered if we would have reconciled so quickly if we had been merely colleagues and how disagreements involving advocacy might have resonated in our professional landscapes across time.

Another VENN that Brian and I constructed revealed a mutual plotline for instantiating efficacy in ourselves, each other, our new teacher mentees and, most of all, our students. These overlapping targets for efficacy produced the VENN. The most important story from this plotline dealt with a student teacher that Mary had taught at the university. This student teacher came into Brian’s class to help during the time when he ran a study skills class for Special Education students. This class is designed to help students with their homework and as well as provide assistance in keeping track of their work and being accountable for their performance. Brian was not in charge of this student teacher, but she asked to spend time in his class having previously been in a group that Brian had conducted based on a curriculum project at the university. After several days, Brian realized that when he was there with the student teacher during class, the students preferred to come to him for assistance. In the interest of building the student teacher’s efficacy for helping and the...
children’s efficacy for receiving assistance from a wide variety of people, he opted to leave the student teacher in charge and do his record keeping at another location.

Unaware of these circumstances, Mary entered Brian’s classroom to return some books she had borrowed. When Brian’s students saw her, several left their desks and came to ask her for help with their assignments. When she suggested to the children that they should ask their teacher, meaning the student teacher, one expressed concern that she would not know how to help them. Mary explained that she knew this woman well and in fact, she had been her teacher and Brian had worked with her. Mary assured the students that the student teacher was perfectly competent. The children reasoned that if Mary had taught the student teacher, then she must know everything that Mary knows, and they began to engage with her. We wanted the children to work with the student teacher and we both understood why they might be reluctant to do so. We also understood why the student teacher might be reluctant to engage with the students when they seem to be sending her signals that she was incompetent. We learned from this story that instead of asking teachers who are early in their careers to be advocates, that instead, they often need advocates. We also learned that for beginning teachers, advocates are more efficacious if they know those burgeoning teachers well.

The final plotline that emerged from our VENNs was one of shared social capital (Putnam, 2001). We have the impression that when young people work with one of us, they believe they are working with both of us. In the previous example with the student teacher, this plotline is revealed, as the students were more interested in soliciting assistance from Mary than the student teacher. The children’s actions suggested to them that Mary’s help would be the same as Brian’s. The students in our school sometimes employ strategic interactions to exploit this potential plotline. One time in particular, one of Mary’s students brought a relative to play indoor soccer after school where Brian was the supervisor. Although Brian did not typically allow students who did not attend our school to play, he relied on the student’s reputation as a responsible person and allowed the relative to stay. When the relative tried to hurt another student, however, Brian growled at him and both boys left. Later that evening, Brian explained to Mary that he was upset with his own judgment to let the boy stay and with his loss of temper, but he was not angry with her student. Later on, the student approached Mary to explain that he was embarrassed that his relative had caused a problem and he understood why Brian had been upset. Mary reported that Brian did not blame him for the incident and the student resumed playing soccer after school. He no longer brought guests. Both Brian and the student came to Mary to apologize to each other, instead of directly interacting. They also both granted Mary agency to speak in their behalf to repair what both perceived to be damage to their relationship.

Turning Wonderings into Action

We were able to use our stories to illustrate shared and individual efficacy, which for us is about sharing the responsibility for advocacy. As a married couple, it was easy for us to see that the nature of our personal relationship allowed us to share advocacy, even when we disagreed. However, we were not aware that we may be communicating to our teacher candidates and novice teacher mentees that they should also engage in a similar meta-narrative of sharing advocacy responsibilities with colleagues with whom they have only professional relationships. Due to their novice status, not only is it improbable that they have existing relationships from which they can immediately share responsibility, but they may not possess the skills for building such relationships while they are trying to attend to the procedural demands of lesson planning and classroom management. Although we see the classroom curriculum and management as ground zero for advocacy (Anthanases & Martin, 2006), a novice teacher might not be able to intentionally use these for advocacy without careful mentoring, causing advocacy to collapse under the weight of the school landscape (Anthanases & Oliveira, 2007).

If we continue to tell stories of advocacy, we determined that we must also unpack the story to help the teacher candidates and novice teacher mentees see the ways in which we use concepts like curriculum and classroom management as instruments of advocacy. We also wondered if we could use the unpacking of stories to demonstrate how relationships might be built on a school landscape so that a meta-narrative of shared responsibility for advocacy can emerge for them. Collaborative self-study, then, potentially becomes a strategy for apprenticing new teachers into navigating advocacy on the school landscape.

Part of the work of advocacy for classroom teachers is deciding what type of advocacy will improve the educational experiences of students. The story of the visiting student who was expelled illustrates the complexity of meeting the needs of the school as well as individual students. Multiple levels of intervention that constitute advocacy exist. Sometimes, advocacy might mean not intervening at all, or intervening minimally as Mary tried to do with the student teacher working in Brian’s classroom. Other times, it might mean heavily intervening, as when both Brian and a student granted Mary the agency to help repair a relationship after a negative incident during after school soccer. Our collaborative self-study prevented us from having to navigate the complexity of advocacy alone, which we believe prevented us from becoming martyrs to advocacy (Rice, 2010). Since we did not have to be martyrs, we were free to focus on how shared and separate advocacy, efficacy, and social capital can be mobilized to build community in a school while still honoring the multiplicity of perspectives on a school landscape.

References


Open the Spaces for Narratives about Entering Teaching

I live on two professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The first landscape is the public school one. For the past seven years I have taught at a junior high school. My responsibilities at the junior high include working with English learners, struggling readers, general education students, and honors students in seventh through ninth grades. I am the alternative languages specialist at my school, which means that in addition to teaching the English learners, I have official responsibilities for helping them navigate the school landscape. At my other landscape, the university, I teach in the endorsement program that prepares teacher candidates to work with English learners in their future classrooms. I also assist in curriculum development for this program.

It is potentially due to my multiple roles on these two professional knowledge landscapes that a number of people ask me how I came in to the teaching profession. The junior high landscape brings opportunities to tell the story of how I came to be a teacher since adolescents are curious, and also since I have positioned myself to be visible within my community in order to meet the needs of the young people I teach. The university landscape brings questions about my entrance into the teaching profession, specifically from teacher candidates whom are often assigned to interview classroom teachers on this topic and find me a convenient interview subject. I also speak on behalf of the university about teaching English learners periodically at local and national conferences. After speaking, I am often approached and asked to narrate how I came to teach. The purpose of this study was to explore the range of stories I tell about coming to teach, the impact of audience on the telling, and the competing and conflicting plotlines entailed in the set of stories. Engaging in this study has caused me to consider the importance of my own stories of entering teaching on my work with students as well as teacher candidates.

Reviewing the Professional Literature on Entering Teaching

Learning to teach is an exercise in constructing and reconstructing stories that are both personal and public (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Teacher educators often act on the premise that teacher education should explore and unpack teacher candidates’ stories of coming to teaching (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, Carter & Doyle, 1996). In particular, Britzman (1992) suggests that a teacher must learn to sift through multiple interpretations of events in order to build an identity as a teacher. Research on teacher education focusing on stories of how teachers came into the profession seem to rest on an underlying premise that there is only one story per teacher, even though it acknowledges that the one story potentially has many facets (Olsen, 2008). The question of how teachers came in to the profession also seems to emerge with the postulation that there is a narrow canon of acceptable plotlines for coming to teaching (Lay, Pinnegr, Reed, Wheeler, & Wilkes, 2005).

Autobiography and reflection. This study is built on several of the suppositions of Bullough and Gitlin (1995). One of these suppositions is that, if teacher education is going to make a difference, it must be grounded biographically. Another supposition is that reflection, coupled with systematic inquiry, are key components of teacher education programs. Taken together, autobiography and reflection help teachers to perform what Dewey has termed “reconstructing experience,” according to Bullough and Gitlin. Additionally, since teaching is also grounded heavily in ethical relationships that are constantly being renegotiated (Colnerud, 2006), reflecting on biography is a logical means for self-regulated, self-initiated understanding that potentially leads to improvement in instruction. Thus, reflecting on my own stories of entering teaching should improve my instruction if for no other reason than because it will develop my identity as a teacher, which may provide motivation to embrace new practices.

Positioning theory. Harré and Van Langenhove (1998) contribute to the methodology of this study by offering a way to interpret the interactions of speakers and audiences. Speaking to other people is rich in both obligations and responsibilities for all parties involved. Assuming and delegating those rights while enacting different identities has contributed to the methodology of this study by offering a way to interpret the interactions of speakers and audiences. Speaking to other people is rich in both obligations and responsibilities for all parties involved. Assuming and delegating those rights while enacting different identities has contributed to the methodology of this study by offering a way to interpret the interactions of speakers and audiences.
Collecting the narratives. I collected a set of stories I have told about how I became a teacher. I constructed the majority of these texts originally in the context of being interviewed by teacher candidates. Another category of data came from articles produced by the students attending the junior high school for a teacher spotlight section of the local newspaper. A final data source came from stories I have written to and for the children I actually teach within the junior high setting. I composed these either in front of the children or ahead of time as an illustration for writing instruction purposes.

Besides being useful as a personal tool for teachers, Bullough and Gitlin (1995) suggested autobiography and reflection also could serve as data collection tools. With this in mind, I gathered my stories by searching through interview transcripts, emails, and newspaper articles I had access to where I describe how I came into the teaching profession. Then I made associations between these stories, in the manner suggested by Grumet (1975, 1978) and Pinar (1975). These researchers advocated the use of freely associating stories initially, and then using the understandings from these associations to eventually construct linkages allowing themes to emerge. When I arrived at two anti-parallel plotlines, I then applied Positioning Theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1998) expecting to uncover some additional understandings about the anti-parallel phenomena. By examining position in these stories, I also determined that audience was a major factor in determining which of my major themes emerged in the narrative. I began to reflect autobiographically about the themes, the plotlines, and now the positioning involved in the narratives themselves. This round of reflection led me to understandings, as well as implications for their significance.

Unveiling Two Competing Plotlines

For the purposes of this paper, I have selected two stories from my data collection to illustrate my potentially conflicting plotlines. I will unpack each story in the three-dimensional narrative space that pushes on elements of temporality of the narrative, examines the inward (personal) and the outward (social) nature of the narrative, and also allows the narrative to shift across various dimensions of time within a particular place or context (Clandinin, Pushor, & van Langenhove, 1998). Later in my implications section, I will explain why I believe these plotlines are competing, or in healthy tension with one another, instead of conflicting, or in unhealthy tension (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

Unpacking the “Of course I became a teacher” plotline. The following narrative is an excerpt from a piece of writing that I composed for my ninth grade students so they could give me advice about how to improve it. Since I was born at the end of August, my zodiac sign is Virgo. In this excerpt, I depict myself reading from an astrology book about the traits of Virgo at the behest of my friend.

“Virgos are highly intelligent. They are good managers because they understand their own feelings and the feelings of others, but they are not ruled by their emotions.”

I was impressed with what I was reading, so I kept going.

“Virgo takes in substance and discriminates between what is useful and what isn’t, and works with it so that it may be more useful still. The traits of a Virgo are: analytical, learns to mastery, fair judgment, practicality, and friendliness. They make some of the best teachers and are also good writers.”

When I finished reading, my friend proclaimed that the book had spoken. I should be a teacher. “And an English teacher,” she added. “That way you can write, too.”

(Excerpted from a writing demonstration, September 2008).

This narrative asserts that my being a teacher is somehow my cosmic destiny and instantiates the myth that teachers are born and not made (Lay, Pinnegar, Reed, Wheeler, & Wilkes, 2005). I do not tell destiny stories of coming to be a teacher to adults. I only tell those types of stories to young people. I do this because I want the students I work with to believe that I am capable of teaching them. So capable, in fact, that my ability to work with them is fundamental to my personality. Telling that kind of a story to adults may sound boastful, especially since the teaching profession does not always bring high social status.

Positioning myself as a person destined to teach since I have a Virgo zodiac sign would not be an effective story to share with teacher candidates, some of whom may not be Virgos. The illocutionary force behind this self-positioning for an audience of teacher candidates may sound like I only think that Virgos should teach. Even so, the plotline behind my story of coming to teach when working with teacher candidates is always an “of course I became a teacher” story even if is not this exact story about my astrological destiny.

Although this incident actually occurred, I had forgotten it until after I had taught for two years and student happened to enter my class with an astrology book and asked me my sign. It was a junior high student who brought this narrative back into the zone of maximal contact (Bahktin, 1981). Therefore, I only feel comfortable telling it to them since I have developed a plotline that only adolescence would truly appreciate the idea of destiny since they are in the throes of deciding what their own lives will be like. In fact, all of my “of course I am a teacher” stories were told to young people. Sometimes these students film or record my responses to report them to wider audiences, but if the initial inquirer is a young person, then I always narrate that teaching was something that I was destined to do.

Unpacking the “I did not become a teacher” plotline. This narrative comes from an explanation I gave to members of my teacher education master’s degree cohort when asked about entering teaching during a class.

When I went to get my undergraduate degree, I was not an English teaching major—just an English major with minors in linguistics and geography. My father wanted to be a teacher. He completed a teaching certification program, yet he was always discouraged when we were young because he was unable to find a job where we lived. Therefore, I never felt like teaching was something I should consider. In college, I worked for magazines, newspapers, and online publishing companies doing
every thing from public relations to photography to reporting. I always thought I would be an editor of some type.

As I was finishing up my degree I was in a linguistics class that was visited by a person soliciting us to work with ESL students at a local high school. I answered the call because I wanted to practice my linguistic analysis skills. After a month working there, the teacher in charge of the ESL students at that school stopped letting me work with the kids and asked me instead to put contact paper on book covers and do other types of light office work. That type of work was not linguistic to me, and so I was lining up other work when I was referred by a colleague to another school to work with ESL students at a different school. I applied for this job because I wanted to continue my linguistic work. In addition, I had been asked to consider heading a computer design team for a company that made English teaching computer resources. At the end of the school year, I had a waiting list of students who were not English learners, but who wanted to be in my class. I also had a former professor who had negotiated for me to finish my linguistic coursework and take pedagogy classes so that the state could ratify my major coursework and certify me as an English teacher. At the same time, my husband was going back to school and the company I was going to work for cancelled the project and so I accepted the assistance in certifying to be a teacher (Reconstructed from an in-class conversation, August 2008).

While this story may sound like a destiny story to some, the illocutionary force is different from the first narrative where I assert an “of course I am a teacher” plotline. In fact, up until the end of the story, I make it very clear that I undertook a significant number of actions to avoid being a teacher and my initial interest in young people was more about understanding their language use and not about bonding with them. Nowhere do I even mention coming to love the children, although that did occur. The detail about my father’s unsuccessful efforts to enter the teaching profession actually asserts my belief that teaching was not the destiny of people in my family. I tell this story to other teachers, but not to teacher educators since I think they would be troubled that I did not complete a traditional certification program. I do not tell this story in the community often either, unless I gloss over the detail about how I came to certify, because I value teacher education and I think people who want to be teachers should enter a formal program under almost all circumstances. I would never tell this story to young people because it reveals that I did not initially love being with them as I do now.

Exploring Implications for My Own Practice

These two plotlines of “of course I became a teacher” and “I didn’t become a teacher” seem contradictory and therefore problematic to maintain initially. Indeed, I have often been embarrassed of one or the other of these plotlines on multiple occasions. The two narratives could potentially be read as “despite my best efforts to not teach, I was dragged in to it,” thus uniting the narratives. Not only does that sound harsh, it does not resonate with me since across both of these plotlines, but especially in my “I didn’t become a teacher” stories, I was willing to enter a school. I did not resist becoming a teacher; I chose other avenues for learning about working with language. I was not coming to the school because secretly I wanted to be a teacher, either. I was coming because I was interested in working to help the people in school (the students) to produce language. My willingness to enter a school, even though I did not plan to teach was the catalyst for my becoming one. This realization has had major implications for me in working with community volunteers and substitutes, who do not have to be certified in my state. I also wonder about several of my former students who come to visit me at the school building. If these people are willing to come to school regularly, would they be committed to educating young people? If so, are they also willing to attain teaching certification? What resources would it take to support them in doing so?

Questions like, “How did you come to be a teacher?” or “Why did you enter teaching?” are complex and personal, just as a holistic view of teacher identity posits (Olsen, 2008). One movement in teacher education argues that teacher educators should help teacher candidates come into the teaching profession by attending to their beliefs (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). My study both agrees with and conflicts with research suggesting that people self-select into teaching by matching the dispositional criteria they feel a teacher should have with their own personality traits (Fuller & Brown, 1975, Lortie, 1975). This study has caused me to wonder if a single narrative may not fully unpack the beliefs that candidates bring to teaching. Although many researchers can accept the post-modern ideas such as multiple literacies, there still seems to be a bias against the proposition of one person having multiple narratives for describing a particular event. Embracing multiple narratives of teaching may hold potential for efforts to attend to the range of beliefs and plotlines teacher candidates bring to teaching as well as lead to more complex understandings about pedagogy.

References


What’s My Line? Considering the Teacher Educator's Role when Action Research is Added to Student Teaching

Although self-study is now well established in teacher research (Loughran, 2007), I have only recently discovered its potential for enlightenment. This self-study has illuminated for me some heretofore invisible role assumptions and dynamics in a teacher education program in which I participate. Normally we focus on the teaching and learning of our interns and mentor teachers, but this self-study has fostered reflection about our own roles in the program as teacher educators.

Method

As LaBoskey (2007) points out, self-study creates self-initiated and focused research that is still interactive with others, makes self-reflection visible and systematic, aims at improvement, and typically draws from qualitative research methods. According to Ham and Kane (2007), “no self-study of teacher or teacher education practice can be entirely and exclusively a study of ‘self’” (p. 127) because data comes from interactions and relationships between a teacher or teacher educator and others, particularly students. In this study, data consists of:

1. Initial ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979) of all participants conducted in September, 2009, asking open-ended questions about the status and focus of the classroom work, relationships between interns and mentors, how the research projects were going, and concluding with the question, “What would you like from Jim, Jeff, or me?”

2. A second set of ethnographic interviews in December, 2009, following brief ethnographic studies but just prior to beginning the teacher research projects. I presented for participants’ reactions several hypothetical scenarios sketching a variety of possible roles of involvement for the upcoming action research projects. Scenarios A and B proposed that either intern or mentor should do most of the work on the research projects. The rest of the scenarios concerned the teacher educators’ possible roles. Scenario C suggested we teacher educators share samples from our own research as models; D that we give deadlines and judge which projects are best; E that we use workshop time to “roll up our sleeves” and assist participants to find topics, code data, etc.; F that we “become a third working member of your project team” and collaborate equally on the project. These interviews provided the primary data for this study.

3. Ethnographic interviews and member checks with the other two English teacher educators (Jeff and Jim) to document their self-reflections about the program and reactions to my findings, and my field notes/ self-reflective journal.

I transcribed audio recordings of the interviews, then coded and categorized them using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as applied to naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to identify salient patterns during data analysis, documented in an audit trail.

Context: Professional Development Project

Our English teacher education program is in the second half of a two-year project built upon Professional Development School principles (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Levine & Trachtman, 1997) to innovate its year-long pre-service teaching internship. Unlike most PDS sites located in a school building, this secondary school level project uses a network of National Writing Project fellows as mentor teachers from diverse schools paired with selected pre-service English teaching interns. This year's cohort includes seven interns and ten mentor teachers, facilitated by three English education faculty members: Jeff Wilhelm primarily leads the professional development workshops; Jim Fredricksen supervises classroom work; and I teach the concurrent English methods course. We each happen to be male and white, and we all taught secondary school English for at least 12 years.

The program adds collaborative action research projects to the usual year-long internship requirements of 100+ classroom hours with their mentor teacher during fall semester prior to full-time student teaching in spring. We take action research to mean, broadly, “a form of research that is practitioner based . . . done by teachers in their own classrooms with the goal of improving simultaneously pedagogy and student learning” (Phillips & Carr, 2006, p.10) characterized by deliberate, systematic investigation of a classroom-based problem resulting in action and/or useful insight according to established teacher research procedures (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1993). We believe such inquiry is central to successful teacher thinking and therefore valuable for teaching career entry (Mitchell, et. al., 2009; Price, 2001), of teacher or teacher education practice can be entirely and exclusively a study of ‘self’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to identify salient patterns during data analysis, documented in an audit trail.
Results

Collaboration between Interns and Mentor Teachers.

“Collaboration,” one of the most frequent content words used in the interviews, lies at the heart of our project goals. In his reflective interview, Jeff explained that in contrast to traditional student teaching we wanted interns and mentors “collaborating on a unit, collaborating on a project, collaborating on some kind of teacher research . . . that would benefit the cooperating teacher as well as the intern, where they would be working on projects together at the same time that the mentor was being reinvigorated and the intern was really being inducted into the profession through joint collaborative activity, through collaboration.”

Scenarios A and B proposed that either the intern or mentor does most of the research work. All the participants declared that the work should be shared equally, as seen in statements such as Jill’s (Intern): “I think that the teacher research project really is a collaboration between the two, and that it should be pretty equal.” Nicole (Mentor) noted that both must participate in order to be vested in the project. Karen (M) stated, “We’re teaching together and we’re learning together,” and many equated sharing the research work with sharing the expected learning. Lillian (M) opined that if the intern were not sharing the research, “that means the intern wouldn’t be doing the most fundamental aspect of teaching, which is researching the impact of one’s teaching in the classroom.”

I pushed people a little further. Could their contributions really be equal, I asked? As participants imagined an imbalance, they turned to the idea of experience and the expertise that arises from it. Brittany (I) insisted, “It says ‘teacher research project’ and I imagine that we’re both ‘the teacher.’ And there’s always more that two people can put in than one person can,” but she added that her mentors “know more about everything so they can add experience to my ideas.” Lena (M) thought that “we should share it equally and I should give the framework for that so that they’re not kind of floundering around.” Jean (M) also voted for equality, but then noted that

This is my room, and . . . at the end of the day I’m responsible for what happened or didn’t happen.

So I’m not going to say it’s a learning experience completely together because I’m always going to have more experience and more legal responsibility for the classroom. I’m going to be here when she leaves.

David (M) surmised that interns’ inexperience is like “one of those Maslow’s hierarchies where they can’t focus on something bigger when they’re still focusing on . . . ‘How do I arrange the desks today?’” While there lurked in the background the shadow of the scaffold upon which the experienced expert stands higher than the learner, reaching down, everyone voiced a preference for collaboration between interns and mentors as relatively equally shared work, experience, and learning.

Professors as Teachers. Interns and mentors preferred relatively equal collaboration between themselves. Their responses to the last four scenarios, however, suggest they envisioned a different role for the professors. Most viewed the research project as challenging and largely unfamiliar, and what they wanted from professors was help. Nicole (M) said, “It would be good to have a little more help. I don’t know about finding the topic, but the organizing and coding, I would like some one-on-one help with that.” Caroline (M) wanted “a balance of positive feedback and suggestions of what we might do better” during the process of the project. Lena (M) said, “I like scenario E with the workshop time and the mentor—or, you guys—there to help. Because I think that would be helpful, just to have someone checking in with you or looking at it, since you guys have done it before; you kind of know, you know, you could warn of pitfalls or you might say you might want to look at this, that might make it stronger.” But they did not want too much help. Brittany (I) said, “I think we should do a lot on our own and if we need help we come to you.” Guy (M) noted it’s “not really a college level way of doing things” to have very much help. Julia (M) liked “that whole idea of being apprenticed, where we do the work but it’s set up for us. . . . I don’t think the leaders are going to do the work for us. Rather they would be there to help out.”

What sort of help did the participants want from us? They were accustomed workshops that Jeff described as “familiarizing them with some of the tools of ethnographers, of teacher researchers and reflective practitioners, and then encouraging them to try those things and report back what they found out.” In addition, scenario C offered that we model the action research tasks using our own sample data. Four participants doubted that our modeling would help because it seemed not directly linked to their own work. As Jean (M) said, “Tell us what we need to do.” Nine participants favored modeling. Caroline (M) said, “We’ll still need to consult on our data and things, but seeing what you guys do would be the most valuable thing. . . . So this is what we’ve gathered; this is how we think about it; when we present it this is what we might do.” I think that would help us in the process.” Karen (M) said, “I like C because I learn best by modeling.” Jill (I) pointed out that “it does the modeling that is really stressed in a lot of our classes. So it would be nice to see that teacher research happens all the time and [professors] do it, too.” Kelsey (I) noted that “it’s only fair if you’re asking us to do something that you’re willing to do it, too.” Modeling connotes expertise. Nicole (M) noted, “To see people who are experts at it or people who have done it more than we have, I think, would be helpful, to see that we’re on the right track or that what we’re doing isn’t—that it really means something.” Four others preferred instead to see models of previously completed projects.

Collaboration with Professors. The final scenario asked interns and mentors to imagine collaborating equally with one of us university teacher educators. This scenario was easy for Jeff, Jim, and me to imagine. All three of us began our teaching careers as secondary school teachers and are still quite comfortable in the classroom. We have all done shared inquiry as well as co-teaching and could easily imagine working with a team on an equal footing. But this hypothetical arrangement was widely rejected—politely, diplomatically—by interns and mentors. Several participants wondered how we would find the time. Brittany (I) remarked that “you guys would be stretched really thin if you tried to be a third team member on everyone’s team.” Most noted that the time problem didn’t just “make it difficult to orchestrate,” as Gus (M) put it, but also that they did not see how we could be in the classroom for enough time to capture its serendipity or really know the students.

Kelsey (I) rejected teacher educators’ equal participation because “it’s not your time to learn.” Julia (M) stated “I
don’t think the experts need to go through it again at the same time we’re going through it. Because you already have the material and examples.” Both comments seem to assume that professors would not learn from the projects. Tonya (I) supposed that although “you guys know better what you’re looking for,” pleasing the professors could warp authentic inquiry and threaten ownership of the project. Kelsey commented, “The project is still for the mentor and intern to decide.” Julia commented, “I don’t see you standing up there with the intern and the teacher and saying ‘Here’s the work we’ve done.’ . . . That’s our work.” The professors’ role, she asserted, was that of the expert. “I’ve never done teacher research and all of you are experienced with it. So you are the experts. You know it kind of goes back to that Vygotsky model . . . you will be there to guide us from our limited knowledge to gaining this new knowledge.” Lillian (M) observed, “I like the fact that it is the mentoring model. . . . One of you would actually join the team, and you, having more experience with this, would be able to challenge our thinking and our assumptions and ask us provocative questions that might be blind to us.” Lillian is not suggesting that everyone will challenge each other equally, rather that the professor plays the role of consultant or sage to the team.

Collaborating with professors suggested to participants not only unequal expertise but also unequal power susceptible to abuse. Monica (I) confessed, “Well, I would feel like you know way more than I do and what am I doing here? That might make me a little more nervous to contribute.” Nicole (M) observed, “Where on one hand they’ve had you as a professor [of a class]—it’s a different relationship than in a project; if it’s true collaboration . . . some of the interns . . . may feel uncomfortable about saying ‘No, I really think it’s this way.’” I asked Nicole if mentors might have such an unequal relationship with an intern. She responded, “Granted, it can’t be completely equal because it’s still my classroom and they’re not a hired teacher and all, there’s just certain things, but as far as the way the kids see us—and I know again you can’t completely make it that way—but I think with decision making, it’s got to be as legitimate as it can be . . . to make us equals as far as possible.” Interns and mentors adhered strongly to the view of themselves as equal partners or teammates but consistently resisted images of teacher educators as potentially equal members in these collaborations. As Caroline (M) summed it up: “You guys are more like coaches than you are like team members.”

Implications

This self-study articulated the role that participants assumed for the teacher educators in the project, as well as resistance to an alternative role. While all the roles involve collaboration, the data imply three versions of professor-participant collaboration.

Figure 1 (below) represents traditional roles and conventional scaffolding where teacher educators supervise mentor teachers who supervise student teacher interns in a hierarchy of expertise. Traditionally, this arrangement attends more to meeting behavioral standards than to posing questions, may focus more on teachers than on students, and frames work as individual.

Figure 2 represents the participants’ preferences and the project’s status quo. Professors provide instruction, models, consultation, and program facilitation, still hierarchically on top. But non-traditionally, mentors and interns share the action research project as equals. Both are relatively inexperienced researchers, but they also share relatively equally in project goals, setting (time and place), work load, and anticipated learning value. Shared inquiry shifts their focus from teaching behaviors to students and encourages reflective conversation and cooperative planning.

Even less traditional or hierarchical, Figure 3 posits relatively equal research collaboration among a professor, mentor, and intern. Unequal expertise is rendered valuable variety among mutually respected perspectives contributed to the whole, not a status marker. Professors must also be invested in project goals, setting, work load, and anticipated learning value. That is, professors must be as committed to project goals as the mentors and interns. They would spend considerable time in the classroom setting, drawing on university research time allocations to do so. In our project a professor might collaborate with one or two groups. The professor would share the work load rather than advise or supervise. Mitchell et al. (2009) note that teachers’ practical inquiry goals may differ from more theoretical interests of university researchers. To share learning value the professor might consider the project either as potentially publishable or an enhancement of their knowledge or materials for teaching teachers. This model makes available to project a broader palette of researcher perspectives and enfolds all three in joint problem-solving, ownership, and communal reflection.
To work, Figure 3’s unequal expertise and power relationships must be addressed. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) warn of contradictions when “students are invited to ‘collaborate’ with faculty who also grade them,” (639). Mitchell et al. (2009) advise: “Paying attention to power differences, and leveling them when they appear, occurs through the empowerment of the teacher” (p. 347) to create “safe spaces for real dialogue” (Waff, 2009, p. 70). Because expertise under-girds hierarchical scaffolding, interns and mentors might be expected to contrast their research collaborations with their teaching, where their expertise and responsibilities differ more. Nevertheless, even concerning teaching the interns and mentors mainly resisted applying the hierarchical model to themselves. That they do apply the scaffolding model to us is not a grave problem; it’s our status quo, too. However, we teacher educators might benefit from the rich mutual reflection that could come from more egalitarian roles that would make us players more than coaches. Yet such an arrangement seems surprisingly difficult for mentors and interns to imagine or accept. To make such a change, we must be mindful not only of misuses of expertise as power, but also of the established mindset that our interns and mentors have of us as firmly confined within the bars of the scaffold.

References

(Endnotes)
1 Names of interns and mentor teachers are pseudonyms.
Making Deliberate Moves: A Collaborative Self-Study of Teaching Practices Early in a Pre-Service Teacher Education Program

This collaborative self-study by two teacher educators, one experienced and one in his first year, emerged from our shared desire to understand the potential of early and deliberate teaching moves in our pre-service methods courses. We anticipated that the initial classes of our pre-service programs, before the first practicum placement, provided us with a unique opportunity to challenge candidates’ assumptions about teaching and learning. This paper reports the deliberate teaching moves we enacted during the first month of the course and how our students responded to those practices. In particular, this study documents and interprets our teaching practices and our evidence-based conclusions about the importance of how we teach in pre-practicum classes.

Context of the Study

It is natural and comfortable for teacher educators to conceptualize the initial period of pre-practicum classes as preparing teacher candidates for their first practicum by exploring teaching strategies, curriculum expectations, lesson planning templates, and classroom management techniques. The traditional theory-into-practice structure of most teacher education programs tends to reinforce the idea that teaching is something that only happens in the “real world” of a practicum experience. We sense that teacher educators can disrupt this assumption by finding ways to call attention to the specific teaching strategies used in their own education classrooms and, more importantly, the effects that these teaching strategies have on candidates’ learning.

Lortie (1975, p. 62) coined the phrase the “apprenticeship of observation” to call attention to the fact that students spend thousands of hours watching teachers teach, but do so with little or no access to teachers’ professional decision-making processes. Without knowing the depth or scope of the decisions teachers make every day, teaching quickly becomes “an enormously difficult job that looks easy” (Labaree, 2000, p. 228). Since the advent of mass schooling, the apprenticeship of observation has affected every adult, so that “schoolteachers are seen as masters of what adults already know” (Labaree, p. 232). Teacher candidates begin a teacher preparation program with the ability to mimic teachers’ behaviours, but without the ability to link particular teaching strategies to the quality of students’ learning. We believe that teacher educators face a significant challenge of finding ways to help candidates make these links, and that a powerful pedagogy of teacher education includes making deliberate moves early in a pre-service course to challenge directly and explicitly the effects of the apprenticeship of observation.

Method

We recorded and shared electronically the deliberate moves we made in our teacher education courses. Each of us committed to writing a post shortly after a class, and the other would often ask questions or call attention to a specific issue raised in a post. The data selected for this paper were gathered at the beginning of our pre-service programs in the first 4 weeks of our physics methods courses. LaBoskey’s (2004, p. 859) assertion that self-study research “looks for and requires evidence of the reframed thinking and transformed practice” provided a framework for us to consider the data during analysis. In particular, we focused on data that signalled a deliberate attempt to use pedagogical approaches designed to challenge candidates’ prior conceptions about teaching and learning. The data were analyzed with a view to authentically representing our practices and their effects.

Our self-study was guided by perspectives articulated by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), particularly with respect to exploring the tensions that we encountered as we documented and interpreted our pedagogies of teacher education. We focus on tensions between our epistemological knowledge about teaching and learning and our enacted practices. Although we now teach at different universities, we are in a unique position to act as critical friends (Costa & Kallick, 1993) to one another because much of our knowledge about teaching future physics teachers was co-constructed from shared experiences teaching a physics methods course at Queen’s.

Tom’s Early Changes to his Teaching

After 4 years (2005–2009) of sharing the physics methods class with Shawn, either as a teaching assistant or as a participant observer collecting data for his thesis, I was back to teaching on my own, knowing that I had 14 classes (each 2.5 hours) in the Fall Term before my sabbatical leave began and the second half of the course would be taught by a former student who is now Head of Science at a Kingston secondary school. My plans for the first class and the term were influenced by Shawn’s thesis (Bullock, 2009), which suggested, among other things, that what teacher candidates already know (subconsciously) about teaching is both unique and important and that, as a result, each teacher candidate will take from my class a different set of messages. Over many years teaching this course, I have gradually come to realize that what I do in my first and second class meetings is critically important for setting patterns of communication and for establishing a foundation for the major messages I want to develop. This year I wanted to try several new practices and study their impact on the students’ learning.

Meeting each person individually for 30 minutes. During my first full class (after a 60-minute get-acquainted meeting the day before), I set out a sheet of paper with possible meeting times on the 2 days before our next class and asked candidates to sign up for a 20-minute conversation.
to help us get to know each other. They asked no questions and everyone quickly signed up. I had never made such a request before, but was confident that almost anything would seem reasonable in the early classes. The 8 hours required to meet with 16 people (the times were at 30-minute intervals and all the conversations went that long) took significant time but were both enjoyable and informative. Despite my being more than 40 years older than most of them, they seemed pleased to learn something about me as well.

One major effect that I failed to anticipate struck me as I walked into our second class. I was stunned by the fact that I knew each person’s name and something significant about her or his background. I knew what university each attended, I knew something about interests in teaching, and I knew which person has been deaf in one ear since birth. I had never begun a second class knowing so many details about each individual. While the 8 hours was a significant cost, I would recommend the strategy to anyone and I certainly plan to repeat it in future years, even if I have many more than 16 students. Another clear payoff of this strategy came when the class returned from 4 weeks of practice teaching. I put out another sign-up sheet and they all quickly selected a time and signed up to meet to discuss their practicum experiences. They knew the routine and seemed to look forward to the opportunity to discuss their experiences individually rather than in groups. I would recommend that every teacher candidate in a pre-service program be given an early opportunity to meet with an interested faculty member to discuss issues associated with practicum experiences.

Continuing the one-on-one relationship in a blog. Shawn had told me about setting up private blogs with each of the individuals in his practicum supervision groups but I had never managed to try the strategy myself. Nudged along by the evidence that each individual left the physics course with a unique set of messages (Bullock, 2009), I made a weekly blog entry one of the course assignments. Each blog could be read by only three people: the blog author, me, and Eric Finn (as the teacher of the second half of the course). The blogs proved to be a productive strategy for maintaining the one-on-one relationship set up in the first face-to-face meeting. Some people struggled at first to know what to write; others wrote more than once a week and wrote at length. Predictably, and consistent with the idea of each person’s unique perspective, the topics and stances varied considerably. I responded to each post quickly to show that I had indeed read and appreciated the views expressed. As the term unfolded, one person made it clear that the blog was a good place to record any and all thoughts about the pre-service year. Most seemed to feel that it was important to have evidence that someone else was reading their comments and they looked forward to what I would say in reply. With one individual, my probing of blog comments generated engaging discussions that influenced both his teaching and my own.

Education classes as the best venue for understanding teaching and learning. My third change from previous years involved a perspective on the relationship between learning in education classes and learning while teaching in a practicum placement. Teacher candidates and many teacher educators seem to see the practicum as the ideal setting for learning about the relationship between teaching and learning. Yet many candidates report that practicum placements are inherently conservative, requiring conformity to the host teacher’s established practices as a courtesy to the students and as a strategy for improving one’s assessment. My own posting to Shawn after the first full class includes the following statement: “I also suggested today, not sure how clearly, that I hoped to make this course very different, that I’ve been studying how people learn to teach for many years, and that on-campus, not in the practicum, is the place to experiment and pay close attention to how teaching influences learning.” It was important to declare this perspective early but much more important to follow through by providing stimulating and engaging in-class activities and then asking them to describe the effects of those activities on their learning.

Summary. Each of these three new perspectives has added excitement and energy to my teaching. Comments on tickets out of class have been positive and I expect that course evaluations will support those positive impressions. Each perspective is one that I will develop further next year. This self-study of my practices has confirmed my belief that the earliest moves a teacher educator makes are crucial to developing significant new perspectives for those learning to teach.

Shawn’s Early Changes to his Teaching

Although I officially became a Faculty member at UOIT on July 1, 2009, I remarked in my first post that the opening day of classes in late August was “the day that I had been waiting for all summer. . . . After 4 years of productive team teaching with Tom, I was eager to see what I could do in a new environment.” My head was swimming with the lessons that Tom and I had learned from experiences working together for many years, lessons such as the importance of calling attention to candidates’ prior assumptions about teaching and learning and the value of fostering a meaningful relationship with candidates early in a course. I was also thinking about the perspectives developed from my thesis data, particularly the idea that methods courses have the power to challenge explicitly the dominant culture of schools, a culture that candidates know well from their long apprenticeships of observation.

I knew that I could articulate what I wanted to do with my teacher candidates, as Tom suggested when he wrote “I wish I had known one-tenth of what Shawn knows when I taught my first classes 32 years ago,” but I was less confident in my ability to enact these practices on my own. I knew that the ability to talk about teaching in the moment with Tom over the last 4 years had contributed greatly to my willingness to try pedagogical approaches that felt risky. I knew that, in the past, if things went really poorly in a methods course, Tom was there to help get the class back on track. I was quite aware that, for the first time in my career as a teacher educator, the responsibility for a methods course ended with me. The realization was both exhilarating and terrifying. I knew that Tom’s pedagogy was developed over a long period of time, so I reminded myself that it would take time before I would be able to make as many deliberate moves early in my course. To that end, I decided that it would be more productive for me to focus on the power of just one early teaching move: the same Predict-Observe-Explain (Baird & Northfield, 1992) pedagogy that had engaged me as a teacher candidate in Tom’s class 12 years ago.

The power of predict-observe-explain for a new teacher educator. In hindsight, it is not surprising that I
chose Predict-Observe-Explain (POE) as the deliberate move in my physics methods course. It is a pedagogy that was an important part of my repertoire as a high school physics teacher and, more importantly, it is the pedagogy that I have spent the most time studying during my development as a teacher educator. Tom and I have had many conversations about the value of POEs beyond clarifying misconceptions in physics. POEs have been an important part of the first class in all of the physics methods courses that Tom and I have co-taught over the past 4 years. In this way, my deliberate move was somewhat familiar and hence comfortable.

I spent three-quarters of the first class on a POE that investigates the effects of viscosity on rotational energy using different soup cans racing down an incline. Later I wrote to Tom:

I was really impressed with how quickly candidates took to the idea of POE as a way to make students feel more comfortable about offering ideas. There were lots of comments about the power of anonymous voting. One thing that I hadn't really thought of before, but that came up in our discussion, was the power of using simple equipment to get at complicated ideas in physics.

Initially, I was happy to have engaged candidates in a discussion that mirrored some of my prior experiences working with Tom's physics classes. I remembered that candidates are often enthusiastic about voting anonymously on different predictions because it removes the pressure to know that right answer. I was also pleased that the candidates had called attention to the simplicity of using two soup cans and a desk as lab equipment. I sensed that their observation could be explained, at least in part, by the abundance of technology at our so-called laptop university.

Tom reminded me of the importance of digging deeper into my pedagogical move by commenting that everyone, including me, “seemed to be riding the wave of the early days.” I was so excited to have taught the first lesson of my teacher education career that I forgot that POEs might be somewhat familiar and hence comfortable.

During the second class, I opted to use a conceptually simpler POE to call more attention to the learning environment in the class. During the second class, I decided to make a consistent effort to unpack the effects that POEs were having on the learning environment in the class.

So What?

Although the nature of the deliberate moves we made in our early days of teaching differed somewhat, we shared a commitment to challenging the prior assumptions about teaching and learning that our candidates had developed over many years in schools. By focusing on deliberate pedagogical approaches for the first 4 weeks of our courses, we challenged ourselves to provide a degree of coherence to our classroom environment that is often lacking in the early days of a preservice program. For Tom, meeting with students individually before his second class was a way to begin a one-to-one conversation about teaching and learning that continued online with a collaborative blog. These conversations demonstrated to candidates that a professor respected and valued the unique perspectives that each person brought to the methods course. For Shawn, Predict-Observe-Explain allowed him to call attention to the nature of the learning environment in his course while simultaneously encouraging a rich discussion of physics. We hoped to model the kind of commitment to forming a productive relationship with students that teacher educators hope candidates develop with their own students on practicum.

Making explicit the purposes and pedagogy of these initial and deliberate practices represented important first steps in demonstrating the meaning of thinking pedagogically about teaching and learning, rather than allowing familiar and everyday perspectives to persist. We began this shared self-study with a sense that a teacher education course must challenge and engage students at the outset by signalling in significant ways that it will not match students’ expectations. The pedagogical moves that we describe here have encouraged us and we urge other teacher educators to explore this perspective in their own courses.

References


**Passionate Voices: The Public and Private Discourse of Self-Study in 2010 and the Future**

This longitudinal, large-scale, multiple-data–based, and collective self-study investigates how *The Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP)* SIG is developing and working as a professional organization with the goal achieving systemic change in education. Critical pedagogy, social justice (Kincheloe, 1991), and the sociocultural (Vygotsky 1981) underpinnings of the Self-Study School (Samaras & Freese, 2006) were explored with the objective of better understanding how a professional SIG community articulates its mission and its current and future work in transforming the discourse of teacher education (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2008). Using self-study research methodology, a genre of qualitative research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), we—as four international, female, self-study researchers—invited all members of S-STEP to dialogue and document their perspectives through four diverse venues over a period of two years.

The invitational and inclusive model, unique in the history of S-STEP, opened the opportunity for members—including the research team—to engage in a series of forums to collect and interpret data and actively extend their personal and collegial understanding and practice through a transparent, systematic, and documented research process. Soliciting, collecting, and contributing to the data was not a simple transference of information but a mutually transformative discourse that raised significant questions for S-STEP within an international frame. We, the research team, developed a dual role as organizers of an important conversation for the SIG and participated in the process as S-STEP members. Parallel to that conversation, we conducted a self-study of our work through a series of documented meta-conversations across a two-year period. In a “double helix” fashion (Samaras, 2009), we stepped outside our work while working within it, modeling the practice of self-study while offering a large-scale self-study to the SIG.

When an organization documents, interprets, and assesses its development over time, it enables members to make sense of their past, confront challenging questions, discuss areas for improvement and collaboratively discern new pathways. The research process engaged the Self-Study community in a reflective dialogue that both clarified and questioned the work of the SIG. While this has, and will be, reported variously (Samaras, Guðjónsdóttir, Dalmau, & McMurrer, 2009, 2010), the purpose of this paper is to make use of the collegial opportunity provided by the 2010 Castle Conference to report elements of the data and invite members to continue their engagement in a structured process interpretation, discernment and action.

**Theoretical Framework and Self-Study**

Our research—questions, data collection, participants, multiple interactive forums, diverse and international contributions, analysis and interpretations—did not, as Glesne (2006) argues, “occur in a theoretical vacuum” (p. 28). The inquiry was situated in individual and collective critical cognition in professional development within a learning community of engaged scholarship (Guðjónsdóttir et al. 2007; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Samaras, Freese, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). We assert that “collaborative, questioning, dialogic, and action-oriented processes” are essential to the dissemination of authentic educational knowledge (Dobson, Guðjónsdóttir, Dalmau, 2004, p. 746) and that collaboration “is essential for checking that focus, data collection, and interpretations do not become self-justifications and rationalizations of experience” (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 16). In addition, Vygotsky’s articulation of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), opened pathways for SIG members to work within learning zones (LZ) as they created “organic and diverse communities of expertise where learners co-mediated, negotiated, and socially constructed an understanding of the shared task” (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 53). The research methodology necessitated the participation of the community members as opposed to relying on the researchers to examine information from the outside (Samaras, Freese, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). Furthermore, this study examines collectively how the SIG is being changed by the world and in turn contributes to changing the world of teacher education (Stetsenko, 2008).

We do not propose any final truth, proof, or generalization. Critical pedagogy and an embedded commitment to social justice influenced the postmodern orientation of the research design. We were thus able to collaboratively study our practice while ensuring the democratic and inclusive invitation to all members to share perspectives and action and contribute to the knowledge base of critical pedagogy and social justice (Kincheloe, 1991). We were not assessing the effectiveness of S-STEP, but rather were engaged responsively in an ongoing collective discourse that raised important questions and supported individual and collegial development. SIG members observed that the questions and directions that emerged through this process became a significant articulation of elements of S-STEP’s journey to date. Invitational models lead to partnerships in praxis that enable critical inquiry, reframing, continuous improvement of practice, and articulation the epistemological, ontological and technical dimensions of teacher education. This critical orientation, as Kincheloe (2005) explains, is the work of teachers “grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality.”
The Self-Study School “is designed to lead to the reconceptualization of the role of the teacher” and teacher educators (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 29) despite, and within, the constraints of the politics and practices of schooling. We want to make a difference in teacher education and to “walk the talk” by looking at our own practices as a SIG (and as members of a SIG) in order to communicate our results internationally.

Method

The research entailed four phases involving a questioning of, and about, the practice and historical impact of S-STEP through the perspectives of its members.

We are four self-study teacher educators working across three continents. Our work began at The Boat House restaurant on Moonee Pond in Melbourne, Australia, during the faculty study leaves of Anastasia and Hafdis. Anastasia and Mary began the discussion in Australia during Anastasia’s study leave there, which continued when Hafdis arrived during her study leave in Australia and after Anastasia had returned home. In order to continue an interactive collective discussion, we used Skype, an international calling tool for conference calls and sending files during the conversation. Our interactive three-way conversation continued after Hafdis returned to Iceland. Jennifer, who is working with Anastasia as a graduate research assistant in the United States, joined us in the research in 2009. Because Jennifer is relatively new to self-study research, her participation and insights offered alternative perspectives to the interpretations by three long-time self-study scholars who carried historical knowledge and yet individually unique epistemological journeys in S-STEP. We constantly and openly challenged each other’s assumptions and welcomed and demanded a high level of critique or “critical friend work” (Breslin et al., 2008) from each other. Our research has entailed four phases employing various forms of data collection and method.

- Phase I: The lead researchers seeded the research meeting in person over a month period of time in Australia during two of the researchers’ faculty study leaves.
- Phase II: Members were asked to take responsibility for developing PODS (Perspectives—Outgrowth—Development—Self-Study) by inviting a diversity of other scholars from around the world to join with them and write a position paper on one of the five POD topics. Each group received a question that was designed to be general enough to invite open-ended discussion but specific enough to frame one general area of inquiry or perspective which titled each PODS’ work in their discussion about S-STEP’s (a) history, (b) scholarship, (c) emerging scholars, (d) practice, and (e) community. The PODs included long-time and new members, participants from different countries and continents, males and females, leaders and newcomers.
- Phase III: An electronic survey was designed to provide a broader SIG conversation and participation and was sent to the S-STEP listserv. We first developed a very long list of questions. After much discussion and deliberation, Jennifer and Anastasia discovered that the questions individually connected to the global frames of the PODS. Searching for a narrative-based entry electronic survey and with the assistance of Rick Reo, a web survey specialist at George Mason University, they designed a forum that enabled each participant to enter as much text for each survey question as they wanted. These open-ended questions and answers could be imported into a word processing or spreadsheet document for easier analysis. Additionally, the survey tool had the feature of summarizing general descriptive statistics such as years of membership, gender, position, profession, professional activities (e.g., visits to other institutions, attendance at Castle and other conferences, number of publications in self-study research), and the number of participants who responded to each of the six questions. This rich database supplemented and informed our overall analysis.
- Phase IV: Position papers were made public for critique and discussion in five respective focus groups at an interactive symposium at the 2009 AERA meeting with recorders for each group to document members’ perspectives. Co-coordinators conducted focus groups on their respective topic, providing an opportunity for participants to contemplate, collectively discuss, and document their discussion on the underpinnings of S-STEP and propose actions and possible directions to maximize contributions of self-study research to teacher education. Again, here in an invitational model, any, and all members and those interested in the SIG, could participate in a POD of their choice.

Data Sources

In summary, the research generated a large set of data from multiple and independent sources from the voices of S-STEP members including (a) four co-researchers; (b) five groups of co-coordinators and their invitees, totaling 25 people (12 co-coordinators and their invitees); (c) five focus group participants totaling approximately 50 participants with 10 people in each focus group; and (d) 45 respondents on an electronic survey. Data included (a) five position papers; (b) five written reports from focus groups; (c) an anonymous electronic survey sent to the entire S-STEP listserv resulting in 45 responses or approximately 16% of member participation, which also included the researchers’ participation; and (d) researchers’ log generated from a series of 50 internet-based meetings using Skype that took place over a two-year period and lasted approximately 2 hours each in addition to weekly email communication. Using the Skype technology allowed the researchers to work across three continents and universities with deep dialogue complimented by files researchers sent instantly through the Skype calling tool.

Through individual and then collective analysis, data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which meant the data were continuously analyzed using grounded theory as new data came forth and as researchers read the other researchers’ analyses and developed preliminary themes supported with documentation generated from the categories across the full data set.
Outcomes

Five themes were generated through the collective analysis of the data.

Learning community. Members reported S-STEP as a welcoming, open, supportive and encouraging community; "an inclusive network for dialogue," particularly in supporting emerging scholars. The invitation and support to use self-study is what prompted many to decide to practice self-study. Newcomers frequently noted that members generously invited them to join, to attend the SIG social, and to publish their work; "I was encouraged to continue my pursuit;" "saw the benefits in terms of improving my own teaching." The affective appears to play a key role in membership appeal and members’ professional development. Creating and sustaining a powerful social network that is invitations and supports members' own publication and development as professionals was strongly supported across the data set. Related to the supportive, invitational nature of the SIG, members report that they quickly became participants in the work of doing self-study and then invited others to also join.

Nexus of personal and professional. Self-study is perceived as "the perfect vehicle" to explore the intersections of one's personal and professional roles to improve practice. It works to help authenticate one's practice, "walk the walk," and has both individual and collective value to oneself, colleagues, and students; "I was deeply attracted to understanding my own teaching and its relationship to students... and that's the reason that brought me to the self-study special-interest group;" "a fascinating line of research that is both theoretical and practical." Many noted that self-study requires an emersion to understand this connection between research and real practice. Although difficult, and not easily understood by the larger educational community, self-study was noted as a "best fit" with "obvious, natural, at times unconscious gravitational pull" towards belonging to and practicing self-study.

Problematic nature of con-conventionalism. Although "highly innovative," "exploratory," and "intellectually stimulating," self-study as a non-conventional and non-mainstream methodology was frequently cited as problematic by members who felt they were "taking a risk" to publish self-study. Some newcomers found the alternative methods "intimidating." Others reported that S-STEP "is a forum for like-minded educators and researchers" and that there is "a need to better reach newcomers." Frequently noted was the problematic nature, "As a form of research, a process aimed at the production and advancement of knowledge, self-study meets with opposition and teacher educators who engage in self-study all too readily are made aware of their vulnerable and marginal status with the academy." Notations of promotion and tenure and the understanding of self-study by their institutions was mentioned. For its legitimization to be more fully realized, members noted in focus group work and position papers a need for more structure, rigor, and demonstration of the impact of the reported research.

Shaping from the inside out. Data supported that SIG members are working to refine, reform, and re-articulate teacher education; develop a pedagogy for teacher education; and support the learning of becoming a self-study teacher educator. Self-study scholars shape self-study individually and collectively and situate and construct a new paradigm of research and practice that becomes visible through interactive and reflective presentations at professional forums (especially at AERA S-STEP sessions and "The Castle Conference"). Another reported major influence on the growth and sustainability of S-STEP was the plethora of publications, which has been an invaluable resource for members and has influenced the work and researching of practice by its members; "I realized this was a group of people with deep interest in understanding our work as teacher educators; I sought out new colleagues who shared my values and goals and started using self-study methods." An interesting tendency emerged in the data from the focus groups whose reporting focused more on self-study research methods than on the contribution of self-study to teacher education, even when the "topic" was identified as teacher education. This finding was consistent over time (each year of the project), forums and participants—we continue to seek understanding of these data.

Sustainability of culture and practice. Suggestions for the future practice of S-STEP included a need to both maintain its unique and non-homogenous community while working to become increasingly recognized in the larger mainstream. Also expressed was the need to promote more diverse, international, and school-based membership; a more diverse community could provide greater opportunity for critique and membership." A need was expressed to take a more activist stance as a community rather than as individuals. At the same time we collected participants' perspectives about the SIG, we found that this meta-self-study enabled us to interrogate our own practices in the SIG. We too asked what have been the contributions of S-STEP to teacher education and propose that our community join us in articulating the value and tensions of our collective work.

Critical Questions for Discussion

This study uniquely solicited and documented members' perspectives on the work of the SIG in research, activism and teacher education. Critical pedagogical analysis emphasized the work of teachers "grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 6), as did the recognition of the importance to the Self-Study School of the reconceptualization of the role of teachers and teacher educators (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 29). Through this process, new questions arose that warrant our collective attention.

What is the nature of the Self-Study School of Thought and Action?
• Who is a "member" of the S-STEP community? What does membership entail?
• Is there an associated scholarly identity for S-STEP members?
• What is the creative tension between recognition by the establishment and an activist stance that may destabilize current securities in teacher education? How are these dilemmas understood, articulated and managed as self-study establishes a place in the academy?
• How is S-STEP international and diverse—what is the dominant discourse?
• What are the knowledge and understandings created and disseminated by the self-study community?
• How are individual/collective understandings of teacher education authentically acted on, represented, explained and communicated?
Taking a fresh look at education:


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Dialoguing About Our Teaching of Self-Study: A Cross-Atlantic collaborative study

Context
Independent and an ocean away from each other, a few years ago, both of us asked ourselves individually and without knowing of each other’s work, if we could advance the methodology of self-study by actually teaching it to others. Given that a deep personal need to study one’s own practice and one’s own role in it is generally seen as the starting point for a self-study (Coia & Taylor, 2009; Lunenberg & Hamilton, 2008; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009), one could argue that teaching self-study research could be complicated and might result in an approach that is too technical and in which the “self” is lost. Moreover, questions regarding sustainability of results reached could be raised. Nevertheless, we both decided to take the risk; Anastasia started self-study research classes in the USA in 2006 and Mieke and her colleagues in The Netherlands in 2007. Each of us not only taught, but also studied our teaching of it (Lunenberg, Korthagen & Zwart, 2010; Samaras et al., 2007, 2008; Zwart, Geurzen, De Heer, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008). Learning about each other’s work, we decided to exchange experiences and findings.

Aim and Objectives
Our goal in this research was to move self-study beyond our own work first by dialoguing about our practice of teaching self-study with each other to initiate a broader discussion with self-study colleagues about the pedagogy of teaching self-study research. In this paper, we present what we have learned about the possibilities and problems of teaching self-study research, which resulted in our collective guidelines for teaching self-study research. These are not ultimate or definitive guidelines. We fully agree with Loughran (2006) who wrote: “I do not suggest these principles as the only or right principles... They encourage me to genuinely critique the degree of alignment of my teaching intent and teaching behaviours and have become increasingly valuable in the development of my own learning about teaching through self-study” (p. 85).

Method
A starting point for the research was discussing the findings of the separately studied Dutch and USA projects. The Dutch project was carried out twice (2007, 2008). In both years, intake and exit interviews, logbooks, and follow-up questionnaires were used as data sources. Data was analyzed deductively as well as inductively. First, the data was analyzed with a focus on sentences that told something about guidelines previously developed by Hoban (2007). Secondly, a grounded theory approach was adapted to find out if the data would provide additional guidelines. Building on a coding of the texts, categories were developed. To strengthen the internal validity of the analysis, each analysis was conducted independently by two researchers. The results obtained were then compared and differences were discussed and decided upon. To sustain validity, we used triangulation of data sources, methods, and researchers (Yin, 1994; Patton, 2002). The data from the two cohorts were analysed within and across the two studies.

The USA project was also carried out two times (2006, 2007). In 2006 the participants were co-researchers studying the impact of the course on their learning. Data sources included individual assessments of nine class projects, participant feedback and evaluations during and after the course, and Anastasia’s log including self-assessment of pedagogies, feedback to participants, teaching videotape, feedback from her critical friend, and Blackboard postings. The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with codes identified and categories and connections made by each research team member and then collectively. In a second study, the research team studied the impact of their work as a graduate learning community and its implications for other classrooms (Samaras et al., 2008). Afterwards, students from the first and second taught classes took the lead and analyzed their work as critical friends (Breslin et al., 2008). In turn, these three studies in and of practice helped to articulate a working methodological framework for conducting self-study research (Samaras, 2010).

Our main methodology was combining these studies through dialogue. As Vygotsky (1978) notes, new understandings can emerge through joint activity with cognition socially mediated, and especially through language. We dialogued through e-mail from the autumn of 2008 on, in one-to-one sessions at the AERA 2009 conference, and during a visit from Anastasia to Mieke in summer 2009. Freire (1990), Loughran and Northfield (1996), and Berry and Loughran (2002) pointed to several elements of dialogue as a methodology, which was further developed by Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegr, and Placier (2004). For us, this methodology proved to be productive because of its characteristics, such as being caring and respectful, and accepting inconclusivity. In our e-mail writing, we took time to understand each others’ lives and concerns and to build a relationship. According to Peterson (1992), caring helps set the context of dialogue and can repair impasses in it, and it certainly worked out this way in our case. We also respectfully recognized each other’s voice though careful listening, asking for further clarification, and acknowledging our openness to our different viewpoints to improve our collective work. Guilfoyle and her colleagues explain that after the dialogue has started, it can take different forms such as analysis, critique, and reflection. This way the method of dialogue establishes its power as a basis for making meaning.

We have worked through several stages. First, we dialogued about our mutual work by e-mail and analyzed...
similarities and differences between the Dutch project and the USA project. The next, second phase took place in the summer of 2009 in Amsterdam. We worked together in person for several weeks. We dialogued about our findings from our studies with a focus on the guidelines developed in the Dutch project and methodological components developed by Samaras (2010). Third, we began to articulate our joint pedagogy for teaching self-study research and deciphered the guidelines we held in common.

Following self-study researchers such as Loughran and Northfield (1998), Loughran (2002), and La Boskey (2004), we also thought it important to include an alternative perspective and interpretation in the process. According to these authors, including alternative perspectives and interpretations can lead to genuine reframing, to “seeing a situation through others’ eyes” (La Boskey, 2004, p. 847) and thus add to the trustworthiness of the analysis. Therefore, we invited Fred Korthagen to be our critical friend. Being critical, as well as friendly, he declared the format was “still a bit fuzzy” and was a great help in clarifying the structure for this article. Moreover, his questions and comments encouraged us to reflect more deeply on our studies. We then wrote a first draft and, again, sent it to Fred, who wrote an extensive review. We finalized our joint study by email dialogue. We sent drafts forwards and back to each other, bombing each other with requests to clarify paragraphs and to hone the text. Finally, we carefully edited the paper.

Outcomes

The analysis of our combined studies led to six guidelines.

Assure that participants initiate and study their own inquiry in their practice. Self-study is a self-initiated inquiry of practice and draws from a practitioner’s experience with research grounded in the living issues of practice and incorporating the researcher in his/her context. The literature shows that both beginning and experienced professionals often feel uncertain and vulnerable when taking the first steps in this research route (Loughran, Hamilton, La Boskey, & Russell, 2004). This concurs with Beijaards findings (2009) that professional development includes not only knowledge and skills, but emotions too.

In both our studies we found that being given the opportunity to study one’s own practice is very motivating for the participants. We also found that it is important to encourage participants to choose a research question that intrigues them and is worthwhile to study. Self-study “demands a deep moral commitment to inquiry that connects the past in the present to imagine a new future in the concrete reality . . . as well as new possibilities” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004, p. 325). That commitment to inquiry can entail a positive issue that needs a fuller understanding; therefore, we also stressed that the question does not necessarily have to be about a problem. For example, Ron, one of the Dutch participants told about the background of his leading question:

I often get rather good evaluations on my course, but to be honest I have no idea why. Therefore it is hard to work on further improvement.

Moreover, we discussed with the participants the widespread notion that ‘real’ research is large scale and involves using time-consuming instruments, which in fact are not always suitable for self-study research. Finally, the teacher’s role proved to be important in finding a balance between demanding a standardized structure with regard to the research question as opposed to a hermeneutic process which is germane to self-study research.

Guard the cognitive and emotional learning side of conducting self-study research towards improving learning. As self-study researchers work to improve their professional development, they also impact participants’ learning and their well-being, they inform programs, influence policy decisions, and reform their fields of work. An important quality for teachers, and especially those teaching research that involves the self, is the capability to listen appreciatively, to summarize systematically what they hear and mirror it in a way that will enable the participants to engage with it creatively and productively. Fletcher (2007) warns that it is tempting to provide solutions, but that the focus should be on enabling the participants to become more expert researchers.

We also want to point to another pitfall. Due to the notion that self-study requires one to look inside one self and one’s practice, participants have to be willing to accept a feeling of occasional discomfort. Participants have to trust the process and take the time to figure things out or to try another path or as Deanna from the USA reported,

The most valuable lesson I learned… is that it’s okay to admit that don’t know something.

Improved learning implies continuing learning. Therefore, in both projects, we supported the participants to carry on by helping them to finalize their papers, by encouraging them to give presentations (see also guideline 3), and by inviting them into the international self-study community.

Stress the necessity of sharing research by making it public through presentation and publication. Self-study acknowledges the value of practitioner scholarship and the contributions they add to the knowledge base of educational practice. Self-study scholars create new knowledge as they reframe their practice through a questioning of the assumptions of their practices set within the context of their field (Berry, 2007). Making self-study public through publication and presentation allows it to be available for review and critique (La Boskey, 2004). Audience is critical in both shaping and refining one’s work and making it useful to others (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Participants in both projects were provided with multiple opportunities to share their work through dialogue and drafts. Feedback was provided through various formats, such as digital notebooks, researcher logs, and letter writing. The effects are mentioned in the following citation from the USA project:

The process of letter writing, helped clarify our thoughts. . . . The exchange of letters was an interesting process which helped [her] to revisit [her] narrative with a fresh perspective.

In both projects this resulted in presentations at conferences and publications.

Create dialogic participant structures for supportive and productive engagement, with participants’ contributions enriching each other as well as the learning community. Self-study requires that personal insights must be documented, shared, and critiqued to validate the researcher’s interpretations (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Here, critical means receiving and offering honest, yet
constructive, feedback that pushes the researcher to question how his or her research efforts might be interpreted by those involved in the study and by the research community. One of the major and first goals for a successful learning community for us, as teachers of self-study, was to create an intellectually safe and supportive community and to guard the boundaries on what issues can/should be shared in a self-study forum. One of the Dutch participants, Arthur, reported:

The group made the meetings more important. The openness, everyone struggling, and the fact that you all experience the trajectory in a comparable way.

Both communities consisted of novices and experienced participants. In both projects, leaders in self-study research as well as previous participants were invited as guest speakers.

Provide fitting methods and promote supportive critique throughout the process to validate and assess the transparency and overall quality of research. Self-study requires a transparent research process that clearly and accurately documents the research process. Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) state, “The value of self-study depends on the researcher/teacher providing convincing evidence that they know what they claim to know” (p. 243). Self-study scholars must have a deep commitment to checking data and interpretations with colleagues to broaden possibilities and challenge perspectives to increase the credibility and validity of their work (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Arthur, participant in the Dutch project, acknowledges this:

The presentation of my study to the group helped me to control my meandering thinking.

Being systematic commits the researcher to having a plan and schedule to show the work to others, keeping an audit trail of the data collection, and sharing data analysis with evidence of claims. In terms of process, self-study is not a step-like or linear research methodology. Self-study includes a hermeneutic spiral of questioning, discovering, framing, reframing, and revisiting. As teachers, we learned not to assume that participants knew how to conduct research. Participants often did not understand that data was abundantly available in their work or that data could take the form of art, drama, or memory work as in some self-study methods. Learning to trust the process of the discovery of research was a key goal in both the Dutch and USA studies. Giving participants opportunities to work both on their own and together helped to encourage both personal and collective professional accountability. Finally, we learned to take time as a group to celebrate the difficult and important work and the possibilities for continued work.

Authenticate and live the research by practicing it yourself. The five guidelines for teaching self-study research presented above are based on what we have learned from the reflections, feedback and evaluations of our participants on our teaching of self-study research. This sixth guideline, however, comes from another source, i.e. from our joint reflections of our learning to teach self-study research. So, there is no validation of this sixth guideline from our participants, but this guideline represents “a window into [our] own pedagogical thoughts and actions . . . [an encouragement] to genuinely critique the degree of alignment of [our] teaching intent and teaching behaviours [that has become] increasingly valuable in the development of [our] own learning about teaching through self-study” (Loughran, 2006, p. 85).

Like our participants, we had studied our practice and had made ourselves vulnerable in a “double helix” fashion (Samaras, 2009). We had experienced a process congruent to that of our participants. We had participated—together with our participants—in a learning community, presented our work to get feedback and worked towards a publication. So, we had modeled self-study research.

The concept of modelling is developed in teacher education practices. Modelling carries the connotation that it is a “demonstration of exemplary practice,” but according to Loughran (2006, p. 39) it implies more. It means that the teaching is being questioned, and that its subtleties and complexities are viewed and reviewed in order to shed light on pedagogical reasoning, thoughts and actions. Bullough (1997) takes this articulation a step further by also emphasizing the role of theory. He states that theory can be helpful to further nurture, refine, and, conversely, undermine the findings of experiences. In both projects, participants presented their work in progress, asking their colleagues as fellow self-study researchers for feedback. In this way, they made themselves vulnerable. The congruence between teachers and participants, however, proved to have its boundaries. An interesting example of a boundary concerned the presentation of work in progress in the Dutch study. As teachers, they honestly explained what they could not share with participants, such as preliminary findings because it would influence the research process and cause bias.

Conclusion and Discussion
In an attempt to move self-study beyond our own work by encouraging others to apply it in their practice and to contribute to the knowledge base of their educational field, we both started self-study research classes and at the same time studied our teaching of self-study research. In this paper, dialoguing cross-culturally and with an honest and open stance, we let go of assuming we had a final truth or one truth about teaching self-study. Instead, we learned from each other and grew professionally as we reframed our individual understandings through our collaboration. We now offer our fuller understanding and present a set of six guidelines for a pedagogy for teaching self-study research.

We found remarkable similarities between the Dutch and the USA projects as well as differences which warrant further discussion. We also found two differences.

The first difference concerns the balance between teaching self-study research with a focus on supporting participants’ further development of an academic professional identity and teaching self-study research with a focus on supporting participants’ learning a self-study methodology. We feel that both are equally important. Nevertheless, looking back after having analyzed the outcomes of the studies of the two projects together, we can see that the context of the two projects emphasized reflection in different ways.

The second difference concerns the way we both worked in a community. Mieke was part of a team of three facilitators, who together also carried out the study of the Dutch project. Together with the participating teacher educators they formed a community. Anastasia was the sole facilitator of the USA project, although she worked with Anne Freese as her critical friend during her teaching of self-study. Anastasia researched the pedagogy with her students with whom she formed a learning and research community.
We invite a discussion with our self-study colleagues on their experiences in teaching self-study research to students and other educators.

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We would like to thank Fred Korthagen for serving as our critical friend.

References

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Navigating Belief Systems of Mathematics Teacher Educators: Making the Private Public to Inform Practice

Beginning in 2007, six mathematics teacher educators (MTEs) collaborated in self-study research to reflect upon and explicate their beliefs about mathematics teacher education. The researchers completed their doctoral work at the University of Georgia (USA) between 2000 and 2004 and developed relationships during their time there. Those relationships continued as they reconnected at conferences and shared their experiences as faculty at various institutions. These conversations led them to reflect on their graduate preparation and experiences, and ultimately to systematically examine their beliefs about mathematics teacher education. As LaBoskey (2004) observed, self-study researchers “collaborate with colleagues near and far who are working on different professional practice agendas” (p. 848). Thus, in order to provide a sense of context, we begin this paper with a brief description of the similarities and differences among the professional contexts of the researchers.

Four of the researchers work at research universities while two work at teaching institutions which also value and support scholarship. Five of the researchers advise doctoral students in mathematics education. All of the researchers have taught mathematics content courses as well as mathematics methods courses at some point in their respective positions. Three of the researchers reside in colleges of education while the other three are in mathematics departments. In terms of prospective teachers, two of the researchers work primarily with elementary, one works with elementary and secondary, and the other three work primarily with secondary prospective teachers. Four of the six researchers completed dissertations and subsequent research pertaining to the beliefs of teachers of mathematics.

As the six of us engaged in discussions at conferences, we realized that although we taught in different contexts and to different students at a variety of levels and experience, we were struggling with many similar issues regarding best practices as teachers of teachers. Several of us had previously investigated mathematics teacher beliefs and were keenly aware that our beliefs informed our instructional decisions. We began to question if there was a common core of beliefs shared by MTEs across a variety of contexts. Thus, our research was self-initiated (LaBoskey, 2004) as we engaged in a study whose purpose was to attempt to explicate our beliefs and belief structures, to identify commonalities and differences, and to develop a “collective wisdom” of beliefs of novice MTEs.

Relevant Literature and Significance of the Study

There is a large body of mathematics education literature concerning teachers’ beliefs and the impact of those beliefs on practice (see Thompson, 1992, and Philipp, 2007 for syntheses). Many of these studies tell stories of teachers’ professed beliefs that do not match their teaching practices (e.g., Raymond, 1997; Thompson, 1984). Other studies seek to explain this phenomenon by investigating teachers’ systems of beliefs and the ways certain beliefs influence practice under particular circumstances (Leatham, 2006; Skott, 2001). Research on mathematics teachers’ beliefs has led to greater understanding of the complexities of teaching mathematics and of preparing mathematics teachers.

While research in the area of mathematics teachers’ beliefs and development is rich, the literature related to MTEs’ development is in its infancy (Chauvot, 2008) and thus far has not specifically addressed links between beliefs and practice, a natural extension of the research on mathematics teachers’ beliefs. In fact, in a review of research on teaching beliefs and practices of university academics, Kane, Sandretto, & Heath (2002) were “unconvinced . . . that the relationship between tertiary teachers’ espoused beliefs and their teaching practice has been investigated sufficiently” (p. 204).

However few, there have been studies regarding MTEs’ development. We now review those that influenced the current study. Zaslavski & Leikin (2004) posited a model in which MTEs were members of a community of practice at three levels, namely as mathematics teachers (MTs—layer 1), MTEs (layer 2), and MTE educator (MTEE—layer 3). They used their model to look at interactions between members of the community within and between the levels (e.g., MT–MT interactions, MTE–MTEE interactions) and found the model had significant explanatory power with respect to MTE development. Similarly, Tzur’s (2001) self-study provided a reflective analysis of what he termed “experience fragments” from various stages of his development from a learner of mathematics to a teacher of mathematics, then as graduate student, and ultimately as an assistant professor. He posited a framework for conceptualizing MTE development in terms of four interconnected foci of reflection: (a) learning mathematics as a student, (b) learning to teach mathematics as a teacher, (c) learning to teach mathematics teachers as a teacher educator, and (d) learning to teach MTEs as a mentor. He noted the recursive, nonlinear nature of MTEs’ development wherein advancement to a higher-level focus proceeded.
through reflection on activity–effect relationships at the lower level(s). These studies demonstrated to us the power of acknowledging the different contexts of each of our stages of professional development as teachers—first as mathematics teachers, then as teachers of mathematics teachers, and for some of us, teachers of MTEs.

Van Zoest, Moore, & Stockero (2006) also provide insights into MTE development. They reported the collaborative experiences of three veteran mathematics teachers and a MTE researcher as the teachers transitioned to MTEs. The researchers emphasized the importance of providing and reflecting upon doctoral program experiences that are different from primary and secondary classroom experiences, collaborations with experienced MTEs, and explicit conversations about what it means to be a teacher educator.

Chauvot’s (2009) self-study drew from multiple frameworks of teacher knowledge to investigate knowledge content, structure, and growth through her first two and a half years at her second faculty position. As a result of her struggle to make sense of her position, she reported that the notion of layers was helpful in describing the students she served (K–12 children—layer 1, PSTs and ISTs—layer 2, doctoral students—layer 3), which helped her to explicitly identify and compare the primary roles she served and the kinds of knowledge she needed for those roles. She found that the multiple roles of MTEs elicit different kinds of knowledge and frameworks for studying teachers and can be utilized for studying teacher educator-researchers. These ideas were illustrated further in Chauvot (2008) where Shulman’s (1986) construct of curricular knowledge, one of three categories of teacher content knowledge, was examined and discussed across multiple hypothetical cases where the teacher was an MTE.

Although these studies differ in contexts, each one emphasized collaboration and reflective analysis as key components in the professional growth of MTEs. Foci of reflection vary: one may focus on kinds of knowledge (Chauvot, 2009), significant experiences (Tzur, 2001), or interactions among members of a community of practice (Van Zoest et al., 2006; Zaslavsky et al., 2004). However, a focus on beliefs of MTEs is notably lacking. Given the research about teacher beliefs in general (see Kagan, 1992; Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006), and mathematics teacher beliefs specifically, another layer that entails a focus on the beliefs of MTEs should be conceptualized. The study reported herein sought to address that need. The more we understand how beliefs are connected to practice in university settings, the better we will understand the complexities of preparing MTEs and will be able to provide needed support to MTEs as they develop their expertise as university academics.

Methodology

Each of the researchers developed a belief map of his or her beliefs about mathematics teacher education by reflecting on the ideas that they saw as guiding their practice. Once the map was constructed, artifacts including past syllabi, lessons, course assignments, our scholarly work, and materials that had been generated for the promotion and tenure process were examined by each researcher. Through this examination, we searched for illustrative examples of the beliefs identified in the map and wrote an accompanying narrative that described the evidence and included reflections on the beliefs and evidence. The belief maps and narratives served as a medium for making our implicit beliefs more explicit to ourselves and to each other (Philipp, 2007; Thompson, 1992). Furthermore, prior research has indicated that attention to professional dilemmas and solutions facilitates connections of beliefs to practice (Lunenberg & Willermse, 2006; Tillema & Kremer-Hayon, 2005), and this practice is a characteristic of self-study (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Consequently, we also reflected on our struggles and how we worked to resolve them. In pairs, we exchanged belief maps and narratives and dialogued to understand the perspective of the other, documenting conversations and generating written summaries of discussions. We participated in a series of conference calls and email conversations wherein we discussed and identified commonalities and differences in our belief systems and experiences. These discussions revealed themes that were consistent across the six maps and the paired discussions in which we had engaged. In this phase, there were several “aha moments” in that individual researchers were able to identify implicit struggles that previously the researcher had been unable to articulate. This phase also brought forward identification of inconsistencies between professed beliefs and instructional practices. Our analysis resulted in a map of four core beliefs (see Figure 1) that we agreed captured the essence of what we believed about mathematics teacher education in all of our contexts. The resulting map illustrates the four core beliefs and the meaning we attribute to them. Conle (2001) identified four criteria intended to prevent narrative inquiry from sliding into fiction: truthfulness about feelings and intentions; the story is socially acceptable; the narrative is truthful; and the language is comprehensible. Our long-time association as graduate students and then as disciplinary colleagues has created an atmosphere of mutual respect and the expectation that we can be completely honest despite knowing that others might disagree. We also remained conscious that we each embraced different definitions of “belief” and were cautious to interpret each other’s words and ideas within the context of a given individual’s belief structure. The language became comprehensible because we viewed it as a problematic issue throughout the collaboration and were deliberate in our efforts to understand each other’s language. Because none of our findings have contradicted previous studies regarding MTE development, and in fact add to the robustness of that research, we view the story presented herein as socially (and more importantly academically) acceptable.

In their review of the literature, Kane et al. (2002) criticized many studies as only considering university academics’ espoused or self-reported theories about teaching and ignoring university academics’ theories in practice (Argyris & Schon, 1974). They strongly urged researchers to take the next steps in examining the relationships between university academics’ espoused theories and their theories in practice. We sought to address this concern in this study by looking for evidence of our core beliefs in a variety of artifacts of practice and then engaging with trusted colleagues to systematically review our claims. We acknowledge that future steps will involve systematic searching for evidence of our core beliefs in observations of our teaching.
Findings

Our analysis resulted in four beliefs about mathematics teacher education that we consider to be essential in both enacting “best practices” for MTEs and in considering their professional development: (1) Mathematics is generated through sense-making, (2) a community of learners enhances learning, (3) MTEs need to be explicitly aware of the learner, and (4) teaching, at all levels, is problematic. We all believed that mathematics can and should make sense, and that this sense is best made through interactions with a community of learners. PSTs and ISTs need opportunities to make sense of mathematics in safe environments and should experience the kinds of mathematics teaching we expect them to use in their own practice. PSTs and ISTs also need safe environments to reexamine their beliefs about mathematics, teaching, and learning as they develop pedagogical understandings. Embedded in all these beliefs is the assumption that teaching is problematic. We want PSTs and ISTs to recognize the problematic nature of teaching and we saw evidence of this view of teaching as we discussed our own difficulties of enacting our beliefs within our practices.

Discussion and Implications

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) explained, “Through cycles of critical reflection on practice and the interaction and relationships with others in that practice, the researcher will uncover and produce knowledge of that practice” (p. 99). Our findings support their statement; the process of making our beliefs explicit to ourselves and to others enabled us to modify our pedagogy to make it more consistent with the beliefs we wanted to be central in our belief systems. In other words, as we articulated what we thought were our core beliefs, we realized that some beliefs were not as core
as we wanted them to be because they were not evident in our practice to the extent we thought they should be. As we sought to understand others’ belief systems, we became conscious of some of the strength, structure, and connections within our own belief systems. As synthesized by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), one of LaBoskey’s (2004) assumptions about defining self-study, was that
Two kinds of knowledge will be produced in a self-study. One is embodied knowledge that resides in the practice of the researcher doing the study—that is in the understanding, transformation and reformation of the practices of the researcher. But in addition, a self-study should also produce public knowledge of practice that can contribute to the improvement of the practice of others. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 99)

Several of us found our practices transformed by participation in the research, but our findings have implications beyond our practice. Although the research on MTE beliefs is largely undeveloped, the studies that have been done (e.g., Chauvot, 2009; Tzur, 2001; Zaslavsky et al., 2004) have emphasized the layers inherent in being a MTE. Just as being an accomplished mathematics student does not ensure that an individual would be an excellent mathematics teacher, it does not immediately follow that an excellent mathematics teacher would become an excellent MTE. The development from teacher to teacher educator is underemphasized both in the research literature and in doctoral programs that prepare MTEs. The core belief that MTEs need to be explicitly aware of their learners (PSTs and ISTs rather than K–12 learners), for example, needs to be a topic of conversation in doctoral programs, in literature, and in communities of practice that support MTE development. We believe that models such as in Figure 1 could be useful in supporting such conversations.

Although we think examining beliefs about mathematics teacher education in doctoral programs would be productive, we note that many of our own beliefs about MTE were formed after working as a MTE. We therefore strongly recommend that throughout their careers MTEs continually reflect upon their beliefs and practice within a community of trusted peers. Participating in this collaborative study enabled us to refine our practice in ways that increased our professional efficacy. Just as mathematics teachers need safe environments in which to reflect on beliefs and practices, so too do MTEs.

References
Re-Imagining the Wheel: Becoming More of Who We Are by Becoming Something Different

Background

Many prospective teachers do not dwell much on their psychological transition from student to teacher because their immediate surroundings will not change: whether as a student or as a teacher, the individual is still in school, a familiar place to be. By the time they enter a classroom as teachers, most have been students for the majority of their lives. The fact that they figuratively traverse from one side of the desk to the other indistinctly enters their frame of reference because the place has a comfortable intimacy to it. But a change must occur in order to “enable teacher candidates to make a shift from thinking like students to thinking like teachers” (Donnell & Harper, 2005, p. 154).

Although the context of school may be familiar, learning to “think like a teacher” is a daunting task for many teaching candidates (Crowe & Berry, 2007) and a necessary transition to re-imagining themselves as teachers. This re-imagining of oneself as a teacher develops a professional identity congruent with a personal identity and “developing an identity of one’s own with respect to the profession one has chosen is a process that has only just begun for the majority of student teachers and beginning teachers. That is why it is so important to promote core reflection, which implies reflection on identity and mission, and to provide the space student teachers need to explore their experiences in more depth” (Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2007, p. 118).

Do current practices in schools of education set up prospective teachers for disappointment simply by not providing them with enough time to practice their practice, enough time to unmask and/or develop a belief system about teaching and learning, or enough time to reflect on (alone and with others) the daily challenges of a demanding profession? Because these questions linger, “we are now witnessing a surge of interest in the question of how student teachers make to re-imagine themselves as teachers developed a commonality of experience may emerge from sharing their experiences in more depth” (Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2007, p. 118).

Aim

These meditations about the psychological transition students make to re-imagining themselves as teachers developed out of a related but different personal challenge I had to face when I retired after 34 years of private and public elementary and high school teaching and administration. In my third year of retirement from that part of my identity, I am now coming to realize that the challenge to re-imagine myself at this stage of my life may be akin to what schools of education ask prospective teachers to do. The role that we (prospective teachers and I) have successfully performed for years (being students and being part of a teaching organization) shifts suddenly and decisively. Therefore, charting my own journey to re-imagining myself as a teacher might inform my current situation as a retiree as well as my current teaching practice as a teacher educator in a master’s program at Northwestern University.

I wanted to know what I might do better to prepare students for the challenges of becoming teachers. Being a teacher embraces all aspects of a person, a concept that new teachers may not grasp, assuming instead that the curriculum alone is what they teach; “however, little is explicitly taught about forming a teacher identity that will help the new teacher successfully navigate through the beginning years of teaching in the public schools” (Allen, 2005).

The process of how teachers re-imagine themselves has import and relevance to all teacher educators, and the description and documentation of that process may be of use to anyone who teaches prospective teachers who must grapple with the process of re-imagining themselves (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2008). After all, learning to be a teacher is complex and, many believe, “involves a process of cognitive and affective development and change as prospective teachers learn to negotiate their developing identities as teachers. As teacher educators who embrace such a view of teacher education, we must do more than provide recipes for prospective teachers’ classroom success; we must actively facilitate their becoming a teacher” (Crowe & Berry, 2007, p. 31).

Teacher educators who develop an awareness of their own journeys to teacher identities may more successfully help teaching candidates discover their own journey because “one cannot help others look more closely at their own inner selves if one has not done this oneself and become acquainted with the fears, obstacles and joys inherent to such a quest” (Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2007, p. 107). Although each person may take a unique path to becoming a teacher, a commonality of experience may emerge from sharing experiences.

This study became my first step in trying to better facilitate that process for myself and consequently for my university students. My assumption is that dedicating time and energy to help prospective teachers learn more about who they think they are and what they believe to be true about teaching and learning is a worthwhile endeavor on the journey to becoming a teacher.

Methods

This self-study relied on autobiographical narrative (Ham & Kane, 2004; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004) and dialogue/reflection (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 2004) as methods of research. Recalling and relating my own experience of re-imagining myself as a teacher provided data to describe my path as a teacher. A continuous process of remembrance, revision, and distillation offered some highlights on which to base my findings. A survey of graduates of the master’s program in teacher education at Northwestern University.
My Passage

Although “learning about teaching is a very personal experience” (Loughran, 2006, p. 118), there are aspects of the gradual re-imagining of myself as a teacher that may resonate with others. My personal re-imagining from student to teacher began 37 years ago. The circumstances of my student teaching were unusual: I student taught in a Chicago public high school during a summer session, not a usual placement time. I was assigned a mentor teacher who left the room after sending half of the students to another room where he taught them. The 12 students who remained in my class needed one credit in any subject in order to graduate at the end of the summer. My mentor, as he exited the room (never to return!), told me to teach “Oh, let’s say, creative writing and . . . poetry.” My only guidance that summer came from the university supervisor who visited once (maybe twice) during the ten weeks and told me that my handwriting on the chalkboard was neat and clear. That was it.

With this kind of initiation, no wonder I wrote in my daily journal that these students did not appreciate my prowess at being a student. In one entry, I even recalled the kinds of test scores I received on the Graduate Record Exam and the Miller Analogies Test. To me these scores were the only testimony I had that I was qualified to be a teacher, and so those numbers, ultimately meaningless, assumed added importance in my mind. I reasoned that if I was the teacher, I had to be smarter than the students. It took me years to overcome a need to be the authority on everything. My personal success at playing school had made me a “good student,” but did nothing to guarantee my ability as a good teacher.

I also vividly recall my discomfort at being called Mr. Senese. The person with that name seemed much older than my 23-year-old self. Although I knew I was the adult in the room, the teacher, the person in charge, I certainly did not feel like that person. Being relatively close to the students’ age made relating to them easy at first, but I realized that I would need to be more like an older brother than a peer. I could more clearly feel like that person. Being relatively close to the students’ age made relating to them easy at first, but I realized that I would not be able to (nor would I want to) rely on proximity for our success.

Needless to say, no course goals, curriculum, or materials were provided. Relying on my own experiences as a student helped me to create and execute lessons during this three-hour class in which these less than stellar students willingly participated. We all survived, everyone graduated, and I gained some valuable experiences, which served me in my first full-time teaching job, but I was far from imagining myself as a teacher.

I do, however, recognize that I came into student teaching with some advantages: the class began and ended with me as the teacher of this course. Unlike other student teaching placements, I was not walking into an existing class. Students knew no other adult as their teacher. I also had a very small class, so I could attempt many things that other student teachers would not have had the opportunity to try. I was left alone to devise, construct, and test out my teaching without having to answer to a supervising teacher. Lastly, the summer session was relatively short.

Unpacking this experience led me to several understandings of myself as a new teacher:

- I sought outside guidance (but received little to none).
- I relied heavily on my own experiences in school (but these experiences were as a good student who liked school and therefore of limited use in teaching those whose experiences of school differed from my own).
- I wanted to be successful (and liked by the students).
- I had a deep reserve of imagination and inventiveness to draw on; my sense of playfulness could be triggered when needed.
- I was comfortable (and craved being) in front of a class; having been a debater and extemporaneous speaker in high school provided me with a strong background in public speaking and I was relaxed in front of an audience.
- I enjoyed the challenges of teaching and met them head-on by reflecting on them and adjusting accordingly.
- I had to make many on-the-spot decisions in order to respond quickly to the needs of the students; I had some ability to diagnose situations.

Shortly after student teaching concluded, I began my career by teaching grades 7 and 8 at a Catholic elementary school; this environment mirrored my own eight years in a comparable middle-class Catholic school, so the experience was not foreign to me. Every day I saw 250 students cycle through for language arts.

In many ways, I found myself in a position similar to my student teaching. There was no prescribed curriculum. The class cupboard contained one class set of tattered grammar books and each student was required to purchase a consumable speller. I was informed that I did not teach reading or literature because the teacher across the hall did that. I pretty much spent the day isolated inside my classroom, usually with the door closed.

There were some distinctions, though. This time I was part of a junior high team of six core teachers who all taught the same students. I had colleagues to talk with and learn from. The classroom was my own, and I recognized that I would be spending a year with these students. In fact, any student in grade 7 would be in my class again in grade 8 the next year. This indeed was a long-term commitment. The students were younger than during student teaching, so I was more like an older brother than a peer. I could more clearly sense that I was a teacher.

To “act like a teacher” (i.e., discipline), I mimicked other teachers on the second floor. After a few months of being hard-nosed, I decided that posturing was unnecessary (and a roadblock) to student learning. I knew that if I wasn’t having fun in the classroom, chances are neither were the students. I stopped treating the students like convicts lining up for inspection before they entered my room. Surprisingly (to me), I did not have any serious behavior problems even though each of my six classes averaged 40 students.

After a year of being a full-time teacher, I think I was better able to see myself as a teacher, but I also recognized that I was a different kind of teacher from many of those with whom I worked. Part of that impression of singularity may have developed because I chose to survey my 250 students about my teaching practice and the class at the end of the school year. I somehow knew from the start that the
students were the only ones who could tell me what and how they had learned that year. (Among other things they informed me that I had “coffee-breath.” Never again did I doubt that students would be forthcoming if asked!) These initial experiences in gathering data about my teaching laid the foundation for my teaching career and shaped my future as a resourceful creator of curriculum, a diagnostician, and a reflective practitioner, but something was still missing.

In this re-imagining process I relied heavily on preconceptions and personal experience to guide my actions. “That beliefs and images about what constitutes ‘good’ teaching emerge in childhood and are seldom changed by pre-service experiences is well documented (e.g., Cole & Knowles, 1993; Kagan and Hawkey; Kagan, 1992; Knowles, 1994)” (Goddard & Foster, 2001), and I was no exception to that rule.

All that said, something was still missing. I realize after this self-study that I would not admit to envisioning myself as a full-fledged teacher until I began conducting systematic action research on my practice. I could easily point to fledgling efforts at researching and studying my own practice throughout my early career, but until I discovered action research at about the halfway point of my teaching, I could not confidently pronounce that I had re-imagined myself as a teacher. The structure of an organized action research study allowed me to base my actions and beliefs on evidence and analysis and not just gut feelings about my performance; the passage to research-based decision-making was a turning point in my career but it came many years after my first few years of teaching. Action research brought together all the components of what I saw as being a teacher.

Outcomes

My hope was that this self-study would help me to understand and guide an identity process with the teaching candidates that I teach at the university. The courses I teach, not ironically, are about using research to improve practice. I suppose in a way I have instinctively chosen to capitalize on the thing that led me most powerfully to develop my teacher identity: action research. In a way I have continued this path by specializing in action research in Northwestern University’s teacher preparation program. Therefore I concluded that perhaps I am already doing what I can to assist new teachers to re-imagine themselves as teachers.

But because my own identity was in flux at this time (retirement), I dug a bit deeper in this self-study. I knew that I felt a profound connection to improving my own (and others’) practice through action research, so I surveyed students who had recently graduated from the master’s program at Northwestern to evaluate the effects of my efforts. Of the 28 who responded, when asked if they continue conducting action research, the support and encouragement these fledgling teachers need after they have begun teaching full time is critical to contributing to a congruent image of themselves as teachers, true professionals. Therefore, in the fall, I plan to pilot a voluntary program with graduates of the master’s program in order to develop a support system that will encourage and enable them to continue conducting action research and support their developing teacher identities.

Conclusion

I believe that “we encourage others to change only if we honor who they are now” (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p. 50). In the preparation of teachers, that means that simply providing the information and practices of action research is not enough. While I currently honor my students for who they are when they leave the university, I now need to consider the ways in which I can continue to support their developing identities as teachers. Once again I am confronted by the truth that “we ourselves engage in change only as we discover that we might be more of who we are by becoming something different” (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p. 50). For me that means that while the teacher candidates need to develop teacher identities, I, too, need to discover my teaching self by envisioning a larger, more expansive role in this process. I may be better able to help them become teachers if I can re-imagine my own role in their journey.

References


Beyond Classroom Walls: Using Self-Study to Understand Our Roles as Educational Researchers in Schools

A Self-Study Emerges

In this self-study we utilize key principles of self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) to understand our role as educational researchers in alternative schools committed to social justice. We are two teacher educators at a liberal arts college in Georgia and a public university in New Jersey who have been working together for eleven years. In the past eight years, we have conducted several co/autoethnographic self-studies (Coia & Taylor, 2009; Taylor & Coia, 2009; Coia & Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Coia, 2006; Coia & Taylor, 2003). These self-studies emerge organically from our daily work as teacher educators and span anywhere from a semester to two years. In between specific self-studies, we continue to communicate by telephone and e-mail as a means of supporting one another as educators. Our collaborative practices have developed out of a deep-felt need for what Lesley has called “a friend, professional collaborator, and a fellow researcher” to process and understand our teaching and research endeavors.

Eighteen months ago we began to examine our work as researchers with two schools. We were each beginning research in small, progressive, non-profit, alternative schools that share a commitment to social justice. The schools were started and are run by women outside the public educational system. The Global Village School (GVS) in Atlanta, Georgia (www.theglobalvillageschool.org) is a small school dedicated to the education of young refugee women. Playhouse (www.playhouseonline.org) in West Orange, New Jersey is a cooperative pre-school founded by Jeanne Ginsburg in 1951 with a group of parents who hoped to create a unique educational experience for their children.

The similarities between the two schools meant that we learned from each other as we spoke about our work, but the conversations about our research in schools was initially not our main focus. In other words, talk about our work with GVS and Playhouse featured as part of our on-going relationship. It was a topic of conversation along with talk about family, life, and gardens, not an object for self-study. This changed as Lesley began to experience serious concerns about her role as researcher. She needed Monica’s perspective as friend, professional collaborator and fellow researcher to help her talk through her concerns. During that first six months our self-study continued to focus on our teaching, but we spent more and more time pondering our role as researchers in schools. The epiphany came in November when we jointly realized that in trying to understand what was happening to Lesley, we were using our self-study methods. It was with some trepidation and excitement that we decided to attempt to understand our roles as researchers through a collaborative self-study using the co/autoethnographic methods we have used to understand our teaching.

Insights sometimes come when one sees one’s self in another. At the height of Lesley’s confusion over her researcher role, she saw one of her student teachers doing what we know often happens: unconsciously shrugging off her new constructivist clothes as she settled into the more familiar if a little cartoonish garb of an aged tired English teacher sighing over her student’s poor penmanship. Just like teachers who revert to their old ideas of teaching, we found ourselves falling down a rabbit hole into the fabled white coat of a researcher. The cloth itched and chaffed and we joked about how it didn’t fit while we wondered who had bought the coat and how our arms had managed to slip into the sleeves.

Researchers in Relation with Schools

At the beginning of this study, the Global Village School was merely an idea, albeit a funded one. The community, which included members of the teacher education department at Lesley’s college, was a loose confederation of activists and people who wished to address the urgent need within the refugee community for an education that can start from where the children are and help them meet their often heart-felt determination to get an education. The educational biography of each student is different, but her education, where it existed, has often been interrupted and many of the students are dealing with difficult personal, social, and psychological issues. The school was developed to meet these needs.

The story of the school’s genesis is long and complicated but at the start of the self-study Lesley was the primary educational researcher from her college working on developing the school. While her role seemed clear at the outset, even well documented, as communication between the community organizers and the college broke down, her role and task became increasingly opaque. In retrospect these conversations were essentially about the role and authority of the educational researcher. Her weekly conversations with Monica and her field journal speak of confusion, of being continually at odds with herself, and, to be frank, of a fairly miserable existence notwithstanding her deep personal and professional commitment to the education of refugees, the community, and the idea of the school. Through her journal, but mainly through her work with Monica, she came to see the problem as defining herself as researcher consistent with her view of herself as an educator and a person committed...
to and experienced in working on social justice issues in a community.

Monica was researching Playhouse, a progressive cooperative pre-school where both of her children attended for six years. She was working closely with Jeannie Ginsburg, its original educational director. Playhouse embraces the ideals of cooperative schools, child-centered classrooms, hands-on learning and ethics of caring, compassion and social justice. One of Playhouse’s unique characteristics is its commitment to diversity and social justice. The founding parents actively recruited families of color in 1951 and established a tuition sliding scale so that families of various economic levels could have access to the school. These commitments continue to be the principles and practices of the school. For the past two years, Monica has conducted qualitative research, interviewing former parents, teachers, and students and examining old documents and photographs, with the hopes of creating a portrait of a successful progressive school which has been able to be true to its original ideals for the past fifty-nine years in a changing world.

Monica’s entry into the role of researcher at Playhouse began when she wrote the Pillars of Playhouse, a philosophical statement, with Jeannie as co-president. This happened organically and had nothing to do with her research agenda. It just made sense. She was in a leadership position in the school and had the knowledge necessary to write the mission statement. It was really easy for her, and made her feel good to contribute to something outside of the university, to do something real that had an impact on her own children and others.

Studying and writing a book about Playhouse was an interesting shift for Monica as an educational researcher. In the past, most of her research in schools with teachers had required a process of becoming a pseudo-insider or gaining access. Her Playhouse work was so different. There she began as an insider, as a parent and a co-president of the board. Her insider status helped her to gain trust quickly and develop a strong, comfortable relationship with Jeannie. From the very start, they had a shared intention: to conduct research together on Playhouse.

Beyond the obvious similarities between the two situations in which we found ourselves, one more needs to be mentioned: We were both deemed acceptable by both communities and accepted our research roles on the basis of our expertise as teacher educators. We came to the situation as credentialed experts.

**Objectives**

Our lives as teacher educators extend beyond our classrooms to schools and other settings where we adopt the role of educational researcher. This is a valuable part of our work. What we found, however, is that the public understanding of what an educational researcher is can limit the conversation between the researcher and the members of the school community in ways antithetical to the aims of educational research. This limitation manifests itself in the roles and expectations often assumed in initial research interactions. After careful analysis of our data we identified a conflict between the public conception of what it means to do research with members of the community and our own complex personal understanding of ourselves as researchers. This resulted in us formulating several questions to guide our work.

What happens when, drawing from our past self-studies of our teaching practices, we construct a self-study using co/autoethnographic methods to examine ourselves as researchers in progressive, alternative schools? What can we learn about ourselves as educational researchers? How do we negotiate our roles in social justice organizations that are not traditional institutions? How can self-study methods help us to further understand the ways in which our research is, as Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) write, “working the dialectic of inquiry and practice” (p. 95) focusing on what exists between local and formal knowledge, and researcher and practitioner? When we work this dialectic, “the borders between inquiry and practice are crossed, and the boundaries between being a researcher and a practitioner are blurred. . . . From this perspective, inquiry and practice are understood to have a reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic relationship, and it is assumed that it is not only possible, but indeed beneficial, to take on simultaneously the roles of both researcher and practitioner” (pp. 94–95).

We hoped our self-study would, as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) point out, be an important way of “capitalizing on, learning from, and mining the dialectic” (p. 96). Our self-study, although nontraditionally situated in other people’s classrooms, exists “at the intersection between theory and practice, research and pedagogy” (LaBoskey, 2007, p. 827).

For us, drawing on principles of S-STEP enabled us to address these questions. We found Russell’s (2004) requirement to recognize “the importance of the self in teacher education” (p. 1192) very useful, and believe this recognition must occur in all aspects of a teacher educator’s work including research conducted in schools. Our school-based research needs to be considered as part of our teacher education practice. We were also motivated by Kitchen’s (2009) statement that teacher educators should “draw on their own experiences as learners in order to adapt their practices to the needs of students and communities” (p. 37). From this we understood that when conducting a self-study, examining our selves as researchers becomes an essential part of serving the community.

For many of us, our teaching and research contexts lie outside the university. For example, Monica spends most of her time in schools teaching courses on-site and conducting research. To do that, she must be in collaborative partnerships with the school staff, sometimes using the school and its resources as a laboratory, providing professional development for the school or at other times conducting research. Whether teacher educators are teaching or conducting research, self-study is an important medium for them to gain “better knowledge of their practitioner practice setting” (Loughran, 2004, p. 9). This is accomplished through “continually adapting, adjusting and altering their practice in response to the needs and concerns of their context” (p. 18). Optimally, teacher educators utilize self-study to examine their teaching and/or research practices in school settings in collaboration with students, teachers, and other colleagues (LaBoskey, 2004).

**Methods**

Consistent with our use of co/autoethnographical methods in previous self-studies (Coia & Taylor, 2009; Taylor
& Coia, 2009), our focus on trying to make sense of our roles as educational researchers emerged holistically as a vital aspect of our aim to advance the work of those with whom we were working. Our first task was to look at how our role as educational researchers was constructed by and for us, by both ourselves and others.

Utilizing our co/autoethnographic method, we wrote autobiographical narratives, sharing and writing into each other’s pieces. We used digital media, including Google docs, which suited our particular collaborative style well. The interplay of sharing writing and dialogue on the telephone became our main source of data (Taylor & Coia, 2009). We also read through relevant literature of others to gain perspective.

Our data were co-analyzed as they were collected, using a reflective, participatory, and collaborative stance. We attempted to examine the data through “a blurred lens of a researcher/participant, a subject/object, or an insider/outside” (Taylor & Coia, 2009, p. 177). The data were analyzed inductively by means of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and we looked for categories and patterns to emerge from the data. Specifically, we continually reviewed our narratives, phone dialogue notes, and reflections to determine the emerging themes. Often we returned to the literature to examine a new theme in the context of other educational research. It was through the interplay of our individual and shared analysis that we were let to understand the conflict we were experiencing as researchers in schools. Rather than approaching this conflict as a problem in the school or a problem with our methods, we shifted our focus to ourselves as researchers. We needed to understand what it meant to conduct research “with” rather than “on” or “for” our respective schools.

We started with McNiff & Whitehead’s (2006) observation that Action researchers always see themselves in relation with others, in terms of their practices and also their ideas, and the rest of their environment. They do not adapt a spectator approach, or conduct experiments on others. They undertake enquiries with others, recognizing that people are always in company. Even when we are alone, we are still in the company of others, who are perhaps absent in time and space, but their influence is evident.

(p. 25)

As we worked, we realized that engaging with others, with its implication of equity, requires that the researchers must be very aware of what they are bringing to the relationship. The onus is on the researcher because they are assumed to bring knowledge. Along with this, as we all know, comes power. We had assumed a stance of public educational researcher, which did not honor our selves in relation and was antithetical to our fundamental beliefs. Our research stance was not aligned with why we had become involved with these particular alternative educational settings, settings where people were putting into action values and beliefs about children, human rights and social justice that we hold dear and teach our own students to value. Nor did it honor what these schools needed. We came to see that the researcher stance we had fallen into and assumed was the one defined by the public sphere, one we had assumed, rather than constructed based on our own understandings of being a researcher.

Outcomes

Our experience of using self-study to analyze our research in schools has resulted in several findings that we hope will be useful to others. The experience of researching is distorted by our own unexamined ideas and others’ preconceptions about what research is. At some points in the study we thought that if we had studied our ideas about ourselves as researchers more closely before beginning the research we could have done better. What we now realize is that this is on-going work that cannot be relegated to the pre-planning phase. We agree with Frankham and Howes (2006) when they write that “scholarly expertise and methodological protocols” are “the least important elements of what the university researchers” bring. It is “in working at and through relationships” (p. 619) that our greatest contribution to schools lies. This type of work is reflective and collaborative; we both needed our journals, and time alone to reflect, but we also needed the perspective of the other and of the literature.

As researchers who are both inside and outside of the educational community being researched, we should have trusted our instincts and focused on building trusting relationships and researching the school from within, organically, letting findings emerge rather than trying to construct them ourselves. As we have learned repeatedly with our experiences with co/autoethnography, our research involves the collaborative discovery of findings. We generate data through discussions and dialogue, not as a sole researcher studying a setting from the outside. Sharing our uncertainties around this new work helped us to remember our intentions.

The use of self-study did more than help us become better researchers because of enhanced self-knowledge. It also supported the idea that educational research is centrally concerned with relationships. We have not made much of the idea that we both intentionally selected to research schools committed to social justice. Both of us have been involved in social justice work since we were classroom teachers and a commitment to feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppressive education grounds us as teacher educators. This is one reason why the conflict was so difficult and apparent to us when we became researchers in these settings. Equally pertinent, as Griffiths (2002) says, describing her own work for social justice in education, this work is difficult because we are “in relationship with everyone in the educational community” (p. 162).

As we write, Lesley is preparing to teach at the Global Village School tomorrow and Monica is preparing to meet with Jeanne to share the latest version of a Playhouse time line. One of the founding mothers and a lifelong friend of Jeanne’s passed over the weekend. Monica knows that more than collecting data and writing research, her role as researcher will involve consoling Jeanne and being her friend. For Lesley it is the first day of the spring semester. She knows it is likely to be more chaotic than many would like. But she is looking forward to welcoming the girls back after the break. There has been sadness and tragedy for one Afghan family; there are some very common teenage girl issues to be addressed, and a whole new science curriculum to start. She will be part of the education of young women whose needs are at the center of the school. She will be taking her flip camera and notebook. She is a teacher/researcher whose
clothing will not include the invisible white coat she had unconsciously donned a year ago.

References


Understanding Agency: A Collaborative Self-Study Exploring Tensions in Teacher Education Practice and Research

Context

A search for a greater understanding of agency as it relates to our practices as teacher educators working in two universities in the same town in Quebec, Canada, was the impetus for this collaborative self-study. Lynn administers and teaches in a programme for preparing teachers of English as an additional language at a large, research-intensive institution. Cathy is Dean of Education at a small liberal arts university. We have collaborated on research projects for several years but are relatively new to self-study, having begun to explore the approach three years ago. We enjoy the collaborative space we have created to carry out our self-study of our teaching practices as each of us has felt isolated as a researcher in our respective institutions and lacked opportunities to examine our practices in a constructive and collaborative way.

As part of a separate research project, we have been exploring the notion of agency—that is, “the quality of an individual that makes doing possible; it means believing that one’s self is capable of action” (Danielewicz, 2001, p.163)—with regard to teachers’ professional identities. As we examine ways that teachers identify their own agency, or lack thereof, we have considered agency in our professional lives and its effect on our work as teacher educators. We are struck by the way agency is connected to capacity, as in the following definition of agency:

...the realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or inter-subjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex relationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view. (Inden, 1990, as quoted in Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998, p. 42).

We were also influenced by another definition of agency, this time suggested by McAlpine and Amundsen (2009), drawing on Edwards, as an “evocation of identity,” and representing “the capacity to perceive personal goals towards which one is directing action” (p. 2).

We believe that it is important for teacher educators to consider agency in relation to their professional lives because of the variety of contexts in which we work (universities, both within and outside of Faculties of Education, and the school milieu), and the multiple relationships within which we interact on a regular basis: undergraduate students, graduate students, Education faculty members, other faculty members, non-faculty supervisors, university administrators, associate teachers, school administrators, Education ministry officials, etc.) Frequently identifying a lack of agency in our professional lives along with a tendency to question our capacity to fulfill our professional roles, we chose to explore this notion of agency and to determine what it is about being a teacher educator that makes us question our capacities to act with agency. We did not expect to be able to make many concrete changes as a result of this study, but we are interested in, to paraphrase Brandenburg (2008), how to see being a teacher educator differently (p. xii).

This collaborative self-study evolved during regular monthly meetings at which we discussed incidents and situations where we have felt a lack of agency in our respective contexts, which we viewed as creating tensions in our professional lives (Barry, 2007) and leading to certain levels of frustrations with our jobs. Initially we tended to vent, to describe the experience to a sympathetic listener, and then move on to other topics. However, we soon realised that in simply describing the incidents we were focussing on the negative, the lack of agency, and not attempting to find ways to more deeply understand what exactly was causing the lack of agency, and possibly transform our perspectives in more positive ways. The work of Coia & Taylor (2009) is helpful in articulating ways in which conversations about professional matters are valuable, and can form the basis of revelatory work in the self study of teacher education. We discovered, in addition, that our conversations about agency in our professional lives influenced our understanding of the findings of our research on teacher identity (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Thus, the self-study research has had a far-reaching impact on our professional lives, influencing not only our respective practices but also our research and our understanding of the participants in our other research projects.

For this self-study we embarked on a systematic examination of experiences in our practices (LaBoskey, 2004; Schulte, 2009) where we had experienced a lack of agency to more fully understand this concept as it applies to teacher educators and to explore ways to extend agency and take a greater control over some situations in our own professional lives.

Some of the situations where we have experienced a lack of agency are related to the following:

• The ways in which teacher education programmes are regarded within institutions
• The tensions between the university and the school milieu
• The assumptions and expectations of student teachers who enter our programmes

We also took stock of the areas of our practice where we do experience agency, and these were similar for both of us:

• Teaching undergraduate and graduate courses
• Working collaboratively and writing about our research
Aims and Objectives

The objectives for this study are to more fully understand the concept of agency as it applies to the roles and professional lives of teacher educators who work in universities where teacher education is only one of many academic programmes offered, and to find ways to reframe our experiences of lack of agency that result in positive ways to view and enact our practice.

Therefore, three main questions guided our study:

How can I better understand professional situations where I experience a lack of agency? In what ways can I transform my interactions with colleagues and students to increase my agency in my work as a teacher educator? Will these efforts to increase my agency help me to improve my practice? Several other more specific questions arose as a result of the study. These are included in the outcomes section of the paper.

Methods

The study combines self and co-reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005), narrative inquiry (Chase, 2004), journaling (Samaras & Freese, 2006; Brandenburg, 2008), and dialogue (East, Fitzgerald & Heston, 2009). In terms of our dialogues or scheduled exchanges, we did not develop the same list of ground rules described by East, Fitzgerald and Heston, but we certainly discovered that preparing for our meetings in advance by identifying a specific focus, such as these authors suggest (p. 58), gave the meetings a structure that allowed us to progress towards a clear understanding of our objectives and eventual outcomes. Co/autoethnography, as described by Coia & Taylor (2009), has also aided our understanding of the connections between the self and agency: “The value of autobiography in researching our own practice lies in our ability to understand how our past impacts our present. This is really a manifestation of agency. . . . Co/autoethnography provides us with a vehicle to make explicit the complexity of self-construction, self-identity and agency” (p. 5).

We chose to describe in writing situations our anecdotes related to our practices involving a lack of/or presence of agency. As opposed to simply talking about these experiences, writing gave us time to reflect both on what we wanted to say and on how we wanted to respond to each other. Specifically, we each wrote about situations or incidents in our practice that we saw as being related to agency and then exchanged them by email. We then each wrote at least one response before our next scheduled meeting, although we exchanged responses several times for some situations. We set aside time during the meetings to discuss the situations as we had presented them, make clarifications, and explore our reactions to each others’ descriptions. As East, Fitzgerald & Heston (2009) note, “. . . an important part of our dialogue method is the creation of space for honouring each person’s story of practice” (p. 61). At each of these discussion sessions we recorded our salient ideas in note form.

We later categorised the elements of our situations in a chart where we noted the context, the participants and the nature of the lack of agency, as well as the nature of the agency when we felt it was present. We also tried to identify the different types of agency represented by the situations as a way of more fully understanding them. A list of different types of agency that we noted in our written exchanges and discussions follows in the next section of the paper. This list came partially from our readings (e.g. Edwards, 2006), and partially as a result of discussion and negotiation as we attempted to organize our findings and come to a consensus on how to work with them. We took note of the comments we had made on each others’ descriptions, discussed the themes that emerged, and looked for ways of reframing situations so as to recognise agency we were previously unaware of, and to come to terms with whatever lack of agency we still felt. Alongside the written descriptions, we each kept journals of our reflections on our learning process.

Our analysis took the form of careful multiple readings of the written descriptions of the anecdotes from our professional lives and the responses we wrote to each other, the categorizations that we were able to make of the different contexts where we felt either a lack or a presence of agency, and the type of agency that was involved. The categorization process evolved in both written and discussion form as we worked towards consensus in creating an organized chart of what was present in the data. From there we were able to talk about the implications of our findings for our practice. For example, in categorizing the data we discovered that both of us feel a lack of agency in the university milieu when dealing with colleagues outside of our Faculties of Education. Excerpts from our written exchanges offer a glimpse into the ways we tried to understand and work through this lack of agency to find positive ways of viewing these relationships:

Cathy’s Comments

As a teacher educator and administrator of a teacher education program, my work frequently forces me to confront the strong beliefs I have developed about teaching and learning in higher education and the ways that the latter might inform the former. . . . At a recent meeting of the administrative staff of the university, where academic officers and directors of other sectors of the university administration were present, a discussion developed over the best ways to retain students. . . . When I suggested the notion that we might address ways to promote effective learning and ensure students gained a strong sense of their learning, the response was that our small classes were sufficient to ensure learning and that our institution has a reputation for good teaching. My concerns about this kind of response are many, but stem partly from what I interpret as an underlying mistrust of teacher education as an academic endeavour equal to that of other academic disciplines; we are, after all, a professional program. At times, this mistrust has the effect of silencing my comments, so that I avoid once again appearing like a school teacher raising insignificant issues among my more academically minded colleagues who have come through a much more traditional path to university professorship.

Lynn’s Response

You write that you feel that the work you do in trying to learn more about teaching and learning and in trying to move your programme forward remains separate from the larger context of the university. Is this because you are part of an education faculty? Or is it more of a difference in beliefs at the philosophical level that anyone else could hold, regardless of which faculty they teach in? Do you know for sure? You also state that “other notions of learning prevail.” What are these and how are they different from yours? If you were able to address these issues with colleagues, would that open
the dialogue for a more balanced exchange? That is, how much are you assuming about your colleagues’ beliefs, simply because the discussion may never have happened? The underlying mistrust of teacher education programmes that you write about is an interesting one.

. . . Could you try to be more specific about what it is about education that leads some university professors to dismiss it as an academic discipline?

**Cathy’s Response**

I’ve read your comments with great interest, partly because you have provided me with some really concrete ideas about how to approach the situation I describe, partly because you’ve questioned the validity of my beliefs about my colleagues in other departments (a very valuable reminder that they might not be valid) and also partly because issues related to agency seem to run through the comments. . . . I’m pondering your comments about the nature of teacher education, in particular the professional bent of such programs.

Why would it be problematic to be in a professional program and take courses in other disciplines? How is it that attitudes seem to be negative about the nature of a program that is focused on preparing students for an important role in society—that of teacher?

As the above excerpt illustrates, the collaborative nature of the study is an essential component, as our understanding evolved through examinations not only of our own practices, but of the responses and questions of our research partner to descriptions of situations we found problematic, and the opportunity these responses gave us to continue to question our assumptions and beliefs.

**Outcomes**

As a result of this study we are able to clarify events in our practices and understand more deeply our own roles within the limits imposed upon us, and those we impose on ourselves, in terms of agency as teacher educators. As we worked through the situations described and related them to the literature on agency, we created a list of different types of agency we saw emerging from our descriptions. What follows is a tentative approach for linking these different types of agency and the situations we wrote about, exchanged, and responded to. Some of these have been noted elsewhere (e.g. relational agency) and others are our attempt to name the types we encountered in our work. We believe that when we can be specific about what type of agency we are not experiencing we will be better equipped to re-vision our professional roles to include an “agency” perspective.

Relational agency: This has been defined as the “capacity to work with others to expand the object that one is working on and trying to transform by recognizing and accessing the resources that others bring to bear as they interpret and respond to the object” (Edwards, 2006, p. 172). We need to learn “how to know who” (p. 178) as a mediational part of our practice within community contexts.

Role agency: Could there be agency related to the multiple roles of a teacher educator? What about the need to have different kinds of agency with respect to different roles?

Representational agency: Is this what we’re experiencing when we talk about being a teacher educator in contexts outside teacher education—expressed through our anecdotes that show frustration with representing an undervalued profession, or representing teacher education in the school board context. For example, could it be that some agency issues are related to the need to do this representing in sometimes adverse situations such as interactions with other disciplines in the academic world?

Organizational agency: Is this about getting the job done, developing a vision, and moving things forward? We’ve talked about the administrative functions associated with our work and the agency required to set goals and move things forward.

Agency related to self-confidence or to self-advocacy: Is this more personal as a kind of agency and perhaps more related to personality than to the role of teacher educator? We’ve explored this notion and definitely see connections.

“Caring” agency: Is there some kind of agency involved in leading others (e.g. students/teachers) into an improved situation? Is that part of teacher educator agency or is that about teachers generally? Is it connected to “caring” and the Nel Noddings’ (1984) notions of teaching and the idea that teaching is a caring profession?

Expressive agency: Is there agency related to language and ability to articulate ideas? One anecdote described working in a second language context and the accompanying frustrations.

Agency related to learning: Is this ultimately what we have derived from all these discussions—that we are always interested in learning more, even about our own agency—and so are driven forward by that? Is there something related to the whole idea of teaching that connects to learning in ways that are “agency,” especially for teacher educators?

Gender and its impact on agency: This topic surfaced often in our writing and discussions. Our gender appears to have an impact on the way we interpret how others perceive us.

The study has helped us reframe our work more positively through exposure to and embracing of multiple viewpoints on ways in which teacher educators can gain agency in their professional lives. We have found the study to be particularly helpful in allowing us to move forward and deal constructively with aspects of our practice where we have experienced a lack of agency leading to an often paralyzing level of frustration. Identifying and exploring the issues related to agency have been empowering ways to re-vision our roles with our institutions and in relation to the various people we work with. The outcomes of this self-study have also helped us to better understand the findings of our research on identity and agency in new teachers, leading us to consider the impact of self-study on our practice as researchers as well as teachers.

**References**


Our objective in carrying out this collective study was to work on being more explicit and structured about reflecting on our teaching and the challenges we face, while modeling reflection to our students. We wanted to provide spaces for our students to reflect on their teaching and learning processes with us where their comments would not be subject to evaluation. We found that place in the open journal, as described in Berry (2007). We also wanted to be able to discuss our reflections, as well as the rather daunting process of reflecting on our practices in an open way with our students, with another teacher educator. This critical professional friendship (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar & Placier, 2004) was instrumental in our learning throughout the study as it was primarily through our discussions that we were able to make sense of our findings. Our leading research questions became, how do we reconcile the various complex roles of the teacher educator? What is the importance of showing “how to teach” while helping students discover and enact their own beliefs about how to be a “good” (language) teacher? Can we be reflective role models for our students in such a way that students will be inspired to reflect and write about their own process of learning to teach? And can we, by studying ourselves as teacher educators, not only become more aware of how our own beliefs and experiences affect our practice, but also create a means for improving it, along the lines of La Boskey (2004) and Zeichner, (2007)? Our self-study evolved from these questions as we began to examine our beliefs and experiences as teacher educators, and the ways we could share these, challenge them publicly, and engage in exchanges that go beyond the surface level with our students (Loughran, 2006; Dinkleman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006). Grimm et al (1997), Lunenber and Hamilton (2008), and Zeichner (2005), among others, have written about the multi-faceted and often conflicting roles of teacher educators, something that makes the clear communication of expectations, based on beliefs that are not always well-articulated, particularly difficult to achieve.

Methods

Data collection. In a series of emails and Skype exchanges, as well as one intensive face-to-face discussion, we discussed the set-up of our collective study. We each sent our own students a written reflection on our teaching after classes we taught. We were careful to focus the reflections on ourselves and not on the students. The public journal was intended to generate a space for private conversations between the teacher educator and students about their own beliefs, expectations, questions and fears about teaching so the contents were not discussed with the class as a whole. Lynn wrote the journal for two second language methodology classes and one introduction to action research class over a two year period, for a total of 40 entries. Janneke also wrote for 3 groups of students, but because her university is structured differently, she sent a total of 16 entries to students in classes in second language teaching and a class in general curriculum design. We then shared our reflective journals and the responses we received through email. We began this self-study as a collective study (Samaras & Freese 2006) because, although we discussed the design of the study before embarking on it and have worked together on the analysis, we each carried out the data collection on our own, based on what was happening in our own classrooms. However, as the study evolved, it is the collaborative nature
of our exchanges that has led to the most interesting and insightful learning about our practices as teacher educators. During individual analyses of our reflections and the ensuing exchanges, we were each able to draw some interesting conclusions about the way our students perceive our teaching. In the subsequent Skype discussions our understandings became even clearer.

**Analysis.** The analysis involved organizing and categorizing the reflections we wrote and the responses we received from our students, along with journal entries we each kept at the same time. During this process we discovered that simply relating the findings to our original questions was not enough as we became more aware of the complexities of both the responses we received and the questions themselves. In order to enable us to compare our experiences and insights, we needed another frame of reference and we found this in Berry's (2007) ‘tensions’. She intended these tensions “to capture the feelings of internal turmoil that many teacher educators experience in their teaching about teaching.” (p.32). We could easily relate to all six of the tensions Berry identified, but we focused primarily on “Telling and Growth,” “Action and Intent” and “Safety and Challenge” for this study. The first relates to the dilemma teacher educators face when deciding whether to tell students something or allow them to discover it for themselves. This discovery may lead to greater growth, but may not. The second tension, “Action and Intent” focuses on the tensions around making our intentions clear through our actions. “Safety and Challenge” relates to the difficulties teacher educators face trying to set up teacher education classes as safe places for students to learn, while still challenging students to take risks. Referring to this publicized framework also helped us to move beyond the personal and link our experiences to a broader knowledge base of teacher educators, and make connections between our respective teacher education practices.

We compiled the two sets of data (Canadian and Dutch) and organized them according to two main themes: (1) The original intentions of the study and (2) What we learned about ourselves when rereading our journals with Berry's (2007) tensions in mind. We then set up a chart with four categories: original questions, tensions that emerged in the study, evidence from journal entries and student responses, and implications for our learning as teacher educators. Janneke also compiled a short online questionnaire for her students, referring to our joint research questions, and the responses became part of the data.

**Outcomes**

**Responding to the Initial Guiding Questions.** With reference to our first question, “How can I help students understand what I am trying to teach them about learning to teach? Does the journal help me achieve this aim?” we discovered that some, though far from all, students not only read the public journal, but reflected in their turn on its contents. Several students were astounded that a teacher educator would question her practice, and many were encouraged to learn that lessons do not always go according to plan, even for experienced educators. “I was not aware that you also have a learning process,” one student wrote. Another stated, “I didn’t realize that so much thought went into designing a lecture.” Other students suddenly became aware of some of the choices that teachers can make, such as the way we strive to create safe positive learning environments for language learning. Lynn learned that her sense that some students do not believe they learn anything from their methods classes and learned mainly from the practicum, was only partly true. Janneke discovered that some students find it hard to apply what they learn in class to themselves, their own teaching, and their own situations. This study allows us to see these similar challenges from different perspectives, and think about the implications for our own teaching: our goals of making our courses more meaningful to students and helping them to see how the course content can be applied to their knowledge and competency in teaching.

In response to the second question “How can I model reflection so that students will learn how to do, think and write about their learning in this way?” students indicated that reading our reflections written about classes they had attended permitted them to experience the learning possibilities of reflection for teaching. In Lynn’s university, students are asked to write reflectively in their L2, but never taught how. We found both Canadian and Dutch students find this kind of writing difficult. The exchanges with the students and the subsequent discussions we held with each other have helped us to think about how we teach students to write reflectively (see Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005), and what kind of opportunities we give them to develop this difficult skill that in ways might be useful to them. However, we did not see a direct connection between the modeling we provided in the journal and the reflective writing that the students did as part of their coursework.

The third question, “Can we create a safe place to communicate with our students about learning and teaching?” was less easy to answer. Our desire to create this space arises from the fact that students are very preoccupied by being evaluated, both by us and by their school mentors. This preoccupation sometimes gets in the way of their taking risks and stretching their learning. Does the fact that we received few responses suggest that the journal was not considered a safe place? We do not think so. However, when asked whether students recognized the journal as a safe place in Janneke’s questionnaire, half of the respondents said “no”. One added, “More so for the teacher than for the students”. At the same time another student said; “I felt free to express my opinion and give honest comments.” Still another student wrote, “I really love your public journal. It makes me want to respond!”

**Learning about Ourselves as Teacher Educators.**

Janneke writes:

Rereading my journal entries with Berry’s research in mind helped me rephrase my concerns into tensions which greatly facilitated our discussion about our practices. I became aware, for example, that the difference between my journals on methodology classes and the classes on curriculum design can be explained by referring to the tension between Telling and Growth. I discovered that my tendency to Tell is far greater when the subject is closer to my original expertise, i.e. in my methods class. In this group I seem to be far more conscious of my role as a Conveyor of Language Methodology Knowledge: I know that it is important to set them at ease this first session. However, I notice that I want to discuss a lot of content as well: what about the language teaching theories? What do we remember about Focus on Form? ……I know
my primary focus should be on the affective goals, but at the same time I set the cognitive goals for a reason. …In order to meet the final requirements they need to know a lot. The past few weeks a number of students handed in tasks that were not up to scratch, this has made me extra aware of the fact that I should warn them….” (26th September 2009). This discovery also made me aware of the fact that even as a teacher educator I have multiple identities (Lunenberg & Hamilton, 2008).

Another discovery was the prevalence of the tension regarding Safety and Challenge in my journals. I seem to find it considerably harder to Challenge students than I thought and, interestingly enough, according to my students I am too concerned about their safety: “Discussing how to encourage our learners to do things independently led to the conclusion that this is a hard subject. They don’t feel up to that yet, but prefer staying in charge themselves. This needn’t surprise us, experienced teachers find this hard, too. Does this mean that I shouldn’t discuss it now, because students feel they “fail” when they can’t achieve this yet? (28th September 2009).

This journal entry led to a discussion in class. Before I could start on October 5th a student said she had not recognized herself in what I had written. “I don’t mind doing something that may be hard.” Another student added, “This is an academic study, I don’t expect things to be easy or simple.” The other students agreed with her.

Reflecting on this discussion I realised that in this instance, the Safety and Challenge tension was closely connected with another tension, that of Action and Intent. My intention is to model encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. At the same time my actions seem to reflect that I do not want to challenge them too much, for fear of “losing them.” This is interesting because I know about the Zone of Proximal Development, the importance of Cognitive Struggle/stress in the learning process, and even told them about this. Apparently my need to be involved, for whatever reason, seems to be stronger than my desire to have them do their own learning. Knowing this helps me be more aware of this tendency and be explicit about it in class (see Loughran, 2007).

Lynn writes:

It was really interesting to take the time to write about my teaching. I learned that it is challenging to write reflectively after each class, particularly when I knew that people would be reading what I wrote. In reframing my original questions to connect with Berry’s tensions, I have found that my Actions and Intents are not always clear, but when I describe them in written form, they become clearer for my students and for me. At the same time, a comment from a student helps me to remember to let go of controlling the learning as it is not always necessary for students to learn exactly what I intended for them to learn:

Sometimes it is not only from you that we have to get the answers, we have to figure them out on our own. We have to get our brains working. For sure, not everyone has it working the same way, we all retain what we want, when we want and in our own way.

In terms of the Safety and Challenge tension, I have learned more about my impression that students believe that they only learn from the practice teaching component of the programme, and not from my course. When I wrote that I did not see the need for role playing in a methods course there were several responses: We love expressing ourselves but we do not do it very often at university. We are going to be teachers and we want to do practical things. I know that the practicum helps but even at the university, should we not do more teaching?” “The thing I find stressful about teaching is that the standards are really high. We want to be good because of the peer pressure and pressure from associate teachers and supervisors. I never felt the right to make mistakes or try stuff in the practicum because we are always evaluated. I want to try things out first. These exchanges have helped me understand that the desire to role play in class stems from a lack of confidence in being able to perform well on practicum, rather than a lack of interest in learning about the theoretical background to being a language teacher.

Conclusion

This study helped us to learn a great deal about our practices as teacher educators, both from keeping an open journal and from discussing it with each other. Our students’ responses suggest that they found some value in reading it as well. “I realise that responding to your journal brings me to think about all kinds of stuff I wouldn’t have. It’s a way for me to get my random thoughts organised.” Our learning helped us improve our practice in terms of clarifying our intentions for our students and coming to a better understanding of what they were actually learning in our classes. An additional improvement was the extension of the interaction time we have with students beyond the weekly class, as one of Janeke’s students noted that the journal helped her to think about her teaching all week, and not just during class. These observations have led us to consider continuing the practice of keeping an open journal although this study is now complete.

References


Past as Prologue: Recursive Reflection Using Professional Histories

Context
For nearly two decades both of us (Deb and Melissa) have been professors in teacher education at the same university in the United States. We have taught undergraduate and graduate courses and served in administrative roles in college. The University of Northern Iowa is a comprehensive university of 12,000 students, graduating approximately 550 beginning teachers each year.

As the director of teacher education, Melissa’s responsibilities center on managing the program and students, although she has no authority over the teacher education curriculum or faculty. She works with three groups across campus on both general and specific issues in the program: professional sequence faculty who teach core foundational courses for licensure and do not work together in any significant way; faculty in the early childhood, elementary, and middle level programs who do work closely together; and secondary methods faculty where intradisciplinary collaboration is often high, but where interdisciplinary collaboration is minimal.

Deb works as the coordinator for the Literacy Education program within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Literacy Education is a service division for the elementary and middle level programs, but also offers its own programs for an undergraduate minor, a graduate master’s, and a post-baccalaureate/graduate endorsement. The division has five graduate faculty and five undergraduate faculty. Historically the division has worked closely together to develop a cohesive program at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The faculty involved with endorsement courses work as a team to coordinate a progressive set of developmentally sequenced field experiences. As the coordinator, Deb’s role is also one of management, rather than a position with authority over curriculum and faculty.

We have worked together in self-studies of our teaching practices for many years. Now that we both have administrative assignments, the focus of our self-study work has shifted to our administrative practices. Our initial research questions address the global issues of working in administrative roles in our college. The University of Northern Iowa is a comprehensive university of 12,000 students, graduating approximately 550 beginning teachers each year.

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We have worked together in self-studies of our teaching practices for many years. Now that we both have administrative assignments, the focus of our self-study work has shifted to our administrative practices. Our initial research questions address the global issues of working in a leadership role within our respective programs: 1) What are aspects of our work most confound us? 2) How do our own approaches to and thinking about leadership enhance and hamper our effectiveness as administrators?

The value of this study lies in our efforts to more closely examine the contradictions and complexities found within our administrative practices (Austin & Senese, 2004; Loughran, 2004; Northfield & Loughran, 1996). The work of Manke (2004), Mills (2002), Tidwell and Manke (in Tidwell, Manke, Allender, Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2006), and Upitis and Russell (1998) have focused on the nature of administrative work and the value of self-study in examining practice. We use what we term professional histories, an adaptation of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990) where personal histories are used to examine one’s own knowledge about practice and to see one’s own “personal philosophy in action” (Chiu-Ching & Chan, 2009, p. 19), and as a way to examine “formative, contextualized experiences that have influenced teachers’ thinking about teaching and their own practice” (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004, p. 909).

While our larger self-study examines our practice over a three-year period of time, this paper focuses on the initial year of our work. During this time, we developed our professional histories through the reconstruction of events perceived as critical in our professional work. These professional histories were used to ground our actions in, interactions within, and reactions to our administrative work.

Methods
There were three data sources for this study: the professional histories developed as narratives of key professional events in our administrative work that occurred during the 2008–2009 academic semesters, the notes we kept during our deconstruction of these histories, and the major categories that emerged from our discussions. The analysis of data involved a content analysis of the professional histories in conjunction with a constant comparative approach to determining common themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Our professional histories focus on the events that occurred in our administrative work from Spring 2008 through Fall 2009. Initially, we talked about documenting our professional histories as they unfolded through written chronologies of events. As we began the process, it became clear that regular ongoing documentation as the history unfolded was an elusive practice at best. Rather than documenting events step-by-step, we found ourselves noting major events (e.g., program reviews) and smaller recurrent events (e.g., scheduling) that consumed significant time and energy. We would return to these key events, individually reflecting upon them and recreating each event in text. We then met and discussed our narratives, adding information to our professional histories as our discussions informed our reflections on the past. We used this process of reflective discussion to examine which each of us perceived as key events over the past year. Then, we separately reviewed our own narratives looking for themes that seemed to encapsulate our experiences. We exchanged narratives and came together to discuss the themes we had generated and to see where similar themes developed. Three key themes have emerged that resonate with both of us: 1) Faculty with a Capital F; 2) Another De%# Pseudo-crisis; and 3) Stalled in Motion. Each theme is discussed below.

Faculty with a Capital F
In principle, we both believe in taking a collaborative approach to working with faculty because we believe (or
think we believe) in the importance and value that faculty played in administrative decision-making, and thus Deb coined the theme Faculty with an F. However, in the course of our work, we came to see a different side of this coin. Faculty members were not always particularly motivated to collaborate on those tasks in which we sought their participation. In the case of some faculty members, their disinclination to be more actively involved in some tasks may have been due to their perceptions of our competence and their trust in our ability to do the work well. We both experienced considerable and regular verbal support and recognition for our efforts, and this was appreciated. In other cases, however, it sometimes felt to us as if some were simply unwilling to do the work for reasons of their own. In other cases, it seemed that while some were willing to do the work, they seemed unable to do so without what seemed to be unusually high levels of scaffolding. We both sometimes wondered whether what we got from these individuals was worth the time and effort of providing that scaffolding. Thus the pleasures and challenges of working with faculty on tasks that were not of the faculty’s own creation became quite evident.

For Deb, the clearest experiences with the Faculty with an F theme occurred in conjunction with the development of a report for an academic program assessment (APA). This task involved pulling together a large amount of data illustrating the viability of the literacy education programs over the past seven years, and required information on enrollments, program completion rates, course offerings, faculty productivity, student and faculty demographics, the value of the programs in relationship to the university strategic plan and their centrality to the mission statement, student learning outcomes and assessments, and the contributions of the program to the state at large. This content-dense, page-limited, time-limited report was a real challenge, in part because there was uncertainty amongst the faculty (including Deb) regarding the “real” reason for completing the report, and skepticism about the value of such an endeavor in any circumstances.

Initially, Deb attempted a collaborative approach, and the faculty met to begin pulling together data for the different sections of the report. However, faculty doubts about the value of the work meant the faculty felt no real sense of urgency about the process, the product, or the impact the product might have on their futures. (In retrospect, these doubts may well have been justified.) After the first session, Deb moved away from a collaborative approach to the work and became a task master. In this approach, she simply requested information from faculty, and then did the work of summarizing the information and writing the report.

In addition to report writing, Deb found scheduling to be a real challenge, especially with changes in the economic health of the state and university system. As the financial crisis deepened, the ability for the university to provide replacements for retired faculty dwindled. Use of adjuncts stopped. This translated into a real crisis for covering classes. As Deb cited in her journal,

... more drastic measures needed to be taken. I proposed that any course in our program that did not have a field experience involved in the course itself (part of the course and not an additional co-registrant course) should offer their courses in large lecture settings for the time being and allow the field based courses to continue in smaller sizes... The faculty for these courses were less than enthusiastic. ... By the end of the Fall 2009 semester, the faculty seemed to be in agreement that this would be our contingency plan for meeting the demands of our schedule of courses. Between September 2008 and December 2009 faculty vacillated from acknowledging the need, to suggesting we only offer what we can deliver in the traditional method, to suggesting this is an artificial crisis that does not need to be addressed.

For Melissa, the report involved an institutional program approval review by the state. Despite being encouraged to form committees to do parts of the report, Melissa chose to work largely alone on preparing the report, and she intentionally planned to have the process intrude as little as possible on faculty. Since teacher education is a university-wide responsibility, data had to be gathered from faculty and department heads outside of the College of Education, as well as a large number of faculty members within the College of Education. To prepare faculty and department heads for the work they would have to do, Melissa began sending regular emails that were related to the report to faculty and administrators about 16 months in advance. The emails identified specific areas in which faculty should have had (or should have begun gathering) particular kinds of data, such as field experience placement data and field experience rubrics. In the fall of 2009, a specific request for that information was sent to all department heads along with a request for information about faculty load and teaching assignments. It quickly became clear that some faculty and administrators had not paid any attention to the previous 16 months of email. Some faculty members were quite outraged at the request for placement and rubric data they had not been gathering. Emails to other faculty and some administrators went entirely ignored until deans were contacted. Information was sent in that needed to be sent back to be revised and corrected because the faculty member or administrator had not followed directions. And claims were made about emails not being received, despite the fact that we have a very robust email system. A key frustration for Melissa arose from repeated requests for input from faculty on the conceptual framework for the program. Faculty members were almost uniformly silent (including Melissa’s closest colleagues [e.g., Deb]).

Thus Faculty with a Capital F represents a two-pronged theme. At one end is our belief that faculty must be an integral part of the decision-making processes and are key in the success of programs. At the other end is our general sense of disillusionment with faculty as a whole. Frustrations we had encountered as faculty when working with a few specific colleagues seemed much more widespread once we became administrators. Moreover, given the importance of the two particular reports we developed, the disengagement among faculty was disheartening at times.

Another D&%# Pseudo-crisis

Externally imposed demands are a much greater and more significant part of our day-in and day-out lives as administrators. As faculty we seemed to have more choice regarding our service activities and meeting attendance. Most demands for immediate assistance came from our own students. As administrators who teach, we have these same
demands from our own students, while also experiencing equally strident demands from superiors, from faculty, and from total strangers. Moreover, since as administrators our actions can have greater impact on how the university itself is perceived, responding well and quickly to these demands becomes paramount.

Both of us have found that we are often asked (required) to solve what we term pseudo-crises. Couched as urgent requests for information, they are usually, but not solely, from upper administration. These demands generally come out of nowhere, can be written in somewhat cryptic language, and we do not necessarily have answers readily available. These demands appear to be crises in large part because there is a very clear expectation that the answers will be returned within minutes. These requests are not couched within a specific context or time frame, nor is there a sense of please or thank you in the process. We consider these demands to be pseudo-crises because they either lose their urgency within a short period of time, or the answers are already easily available through websites (something we often discover in the process of completing the task). These types of requests feel as if they are whims or arbitrary questions, especially when coming from upper administration, and we never know in what way the information was or wasn't helpful. Moreover, sometimes a request has been quickly routed through multiple levels of administration until it reaches our desks, and is then so de-contextualized from our day-to-day lives that it is difficult to understand the intent. What is doubly perplexing is that there are no flags to ascertain whether a request is pseudo or authentic until after the fact. Neither of us ever makes a decision to simply ignore such an email and hope the demand quickly ceases to matter, and we sometimes wonder if anyone would actually notice if we didn’t respond at all.

We have found another kind of pseudo-crisis is generated through the power of the external anecdotes. There appears to be a pattern of almost knee-jerk responses among central administrators to the comments and questions of external constituencies. For example, if a principal should say something about his or her perception that our students don’t know something, the higher administration immediately demands that we fix this problem and make sure our students do indeed know this information. There does not appear to be any reflection about whether or not this request is reasonable or doable within the context of the program, or whether the anecdote is based on an accurate perception. Rather, anecdotes from external constituencies seem to be taken as generalized truths about the program and thus action is demanded.

Stalled in Motion

The amount of time we spend responding to these pseudo-crises is particularly exasperating. Important work related to program improvement is sidetracked over and over as we respond. This creates a sense of being Stalled in Motion. Sometimes it seems whole days are lost in responding to pseudo-crises and issues related to faculty with a capital F. Rather than accomplishing things that will lead to program improvement, we see our time diverted to cleaning up messes and putting out fires. We feel stalled in motion, unproductive and powerless to affect positive change. Affecting positive change is the primary reason why both of us initially went into administrative work. On the other hand, we can see that being stalled in motion actually reflects our strong desire to make a difference, and the very nature of feeling stalled represents our real interest in program and institutional improvement.

The Challenges of a Strong Task-Oriente

Through our self-study of practice, the recursive nature of writing about, discussing, and reviewing our professional histories led us to the realization that our administrative lives had several common threads. In turn, we have realized that we both are quite task-oriented in nature. Things that interfere with our work on tasks, even those we may not especially value, generate considerable frustration for each of us. The “interpersonal” aspects of our work with colleagues can easily get lost as we focus on getting the job done. Thus, a significant challenge for us is to find ways to manage our strong task orientation while facilitating the kind of collaboration with colleagues on these tasks that we also purport to value, collaboration that we purportedly believe contributes significantly to the product. A second challenge may lie in making better decisions about when a given task is best done in collaboration and when it is best done alone. A third challenge lies within those tasks which do require collaboration—more specifically, which aspects of the task most require collaboration and which are best done alone or through a consultative process regarding the development of the final product (e.g., a report) following considerable collaboration.

In closing, we found the process of documenting the history of our professional administrative work enabled us to develop some professional distance from the aspects of our work that have baffled us and generated considerable frustration. Creating some professional distance from our disillusionment with some of our colleagues and from our sense of being stalled in motion gave us the space to rethink our actions and reactions. This reflective rethinking helped us view the events from a more measured perspective. In turn, we saw our practice beyond the embedded events that piqued our interests and frustrations, and we were able to more closely examine how we approached what we did as administrators. It was through our recursive discussions of key events and themes that we came to see the importance of the task for both of us, and that our focus upon completing the task at hand seems to drive our leadership approach. As we continue our self-study research on our administrative work, we plan to delve more deeply into the notion of a task-oriented approach to leadership.

References


Finding Grace

Context
We have worked together for several years now, first as professor and graduate student at Cornell, and now as colleagues at different institutions. Much of our research together has involved analyzing work completed by preservice teachers to track their development as teachers. Our analyses early led us to modify some of the assignments given in the course we taught together, but more importantly, our research has contributed to our deepening understanding of ourselves and our work as teacher educators, a process that should, of course, never cease (e.g. Berry, 2008; Bullough, 2008). In essence, then, what we learned from analysis of student work led us to self-study, as we explored our goals, beliefs, and commitments. Trumbull remains at Cornell. Fluet worked in science education for three years at the Illinois Institute of Technology, teaching in programs for urban teachers. She is now a visiting professor at the University of Rochester, working with preservice science teachers placed in urban schools.

Aims and Objectives
In this paper we will explore our development as teacher educators, focusing on what van Manen (1992) has called pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact. As van Manen points out, tact develops in reflexive engagement in practical action, guided by principles. We begin our discussion by presenting research analyses of the work of two contrasting students to illustrate some of the catalysts for our own development—challenges that we fully articulated only after our research—and our responses to these challenges in our present work. The two students whom we describe were Cornell students whose work the two of us analyzed in depth.

Methods
Our self-study grew out of our original research project to document how preservice teachers responded to assignments completed during their tenure in a teacher education program and how the preservice teachers developed over the course of the program. For our original research, we analyzed assignments completed at the start of the preservice teacher education program (during the course taught by Trumbull, assisted by Fluet) and the portfolio completed at the end of the semester of full-time student teaching. The early assignments were designed to focus the preservice teachers on key aspects of the classrooms in which they were observing and working. For example, we asked them to observe pupils, pupils’ learning, and how their host teachers managed transitions. At the end of the program, we analyzed a key portfolio section that asked them to report on what they had learned during student teaching about students, their subject matter, schools as systems, and themselves.

We began the research using a grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify areas that were common across all the students and reflected differences among them. We developed our initial coding by looking at the work done by just two cohorts of students in the program, and eventually looked at 6 successive cohorts of students. Our initial research helped us to identify codes we could use reliably and consistently. We developed a coding manual with exemplars of each code. Our initial coding and attempts at categorization took us to the work of others to devise categories that not only deepened our understandings of our particular students but also linked our work to that of other teacher educators and researchers. Our analyses eventually led to a focus on four areas of development apparent in this written work: evidence of reflection (e.g., Rodgers, 2002); stated musings or puzzles (e.g., MacDonald, 1992); explicitly stated principles of practice (e.g., Elbaz, 1981); and use of a teacher or student perspective in completing the assignments (e.g. Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961). Using the coding scheme, we have developed profiles of over 20 preservice science or mathematics teachers (Noethen, Storandt, & Trumbull, 2005; Trumbull & Fluet 2007a; Trumbull & Fluet, 2007b; Trumbull & Fluet, 2008) and presented or published pieces based on our analyses.

Following Up
After we had prepared our analyses of the preservice teachers and compared and contrasted their different patterns of development, Trumbull followed up with several of the teachers during their early years of teaching. She generally did not visit during the stressful first year. However, Grace, a first year mathematics teacher, invited Trumbull into her classroom. Trumbull did not review our analysis of Grace before visiting her. Based on Trumbull’s observations of and interviews with Grace, Grace’s mentor, and Grace’s department chair, it was clear Grace’s first year was exceptionally stressful. We prepared a full case study of Grace that we titled Grace under Fire (after the old television show) that integrated our initial analyses with Trumbull’s
findings from her observations. (Trumbull, Fluet, & Choice, 2009). In preparing the case study, we wondered if there were something that we should have done in the teacher education program to prepare Grace better, or if Trumbull should have been prepared to work on issues apparent in the analysis when she visited Grace.

In her work in the preservice program, Grace had shown less reflection than others; she was less likely to provide evidence to support claims that she made, more likely to simply label students or difficulties in learning or teaching. When Grace did provide evidence to support claims, she did not seem treat these as tentative, subject to further revision. We therefore characterized her as less reflective. Likewise, most of the preservice teachers made note of things that puzzled them or led them to wonder (e.g., about a school practice, a particular student, or a particular assignments). Grace noted fewer puzzling things than nearly all the other preservice teachers, thus seeming to take schooling practices for granted. Grace generally wrote her assignments from a student rather than teacher perspective. For example, in her analysis of pupils’ learning, she failed to probe students’ answers to her questions but accepted these at face value. Intriguingly, in her work, and especially in her final portfolio, Grace made more statements of principles of practice than nearly all the other preservice teachers. Two examples of these principles illustrate their nature: “Studying math is a way to develop analytical and logical reasoning skills;” and “Preparing extra examples [of math problems] is a great way to keep fast-paced students occupied and avoid down time.”

We can now see how this pattern makes sense: students who provide less evidence for claims or who fail to express claims as tentative might be taking many things they were experiencing for granted, leading them to puzzle less about what these experiences in schools meant. These positions might have led Grace to take a student perspective because she was not yet thinking beyond her usual role, not thinking about what she as a teacher might do differently. Viewing the school life as given, writing as a student and not a teacher, could then have contributed to her propensity to state rules to guide practice. She was viewing her work as learning existing rules rather than learning to develop her own rules.

Sam was the second student who puzzled us and led us to question our work. Sam’s work in the program showed a striking lack of development; he showed almost no evidence of reflection at any point in the program, rarely noted puzzlements, wrote consistently from a student perspective and only articulated one principle of practice. Trumbull supervised his student teaching, and also knew of significant family stresses that Sam faced while in the program. Sam’s classroom teaching was passable – he related reasonably well with students, ran an organized class, knew his content, and enacted some creative lessons. However, both master teachers with whom he worked were disappointed in his performance. Despite their support, he failed to take ownership of his work as a teacher, relying on them for suggestions of lesson, managing record keeping, returning student work quickly.

Sam and Grace present us with different challenges. After some consideration, we decided to send our case study of Grace to her. This was a move made with some trepidation, occasioned by a worry that Grace would be hurt or offended, and by a concern that we might loose some researcher objectivity, a concern we failed to examine at the time. After reading the case study, Grace wrote to Trumbull: “I have to say, this is one of the most critical analyses of me that I have ever read, but most of it is true. I remember being a student in your class getting lost in some of the discussion….There’s so much more about my day to day experience I want to share with you, but maybe as a friend and not an object of study.” We love how Grace asserted herself here, and in fact, the subsequent discussion was productive.

We thought very hard about what we should have done with Sam. When should Trumbull have noticed his apparent lack of engagement? Was she too sympathetic to him because of his family difficulties? When does tact require us to simply tell a student they are not performing? When and how do we decide to counsel someone out of teaching?

Outcomes
Grace’s response to the case study caused us both to re-examine many of our assumptions about our roles as teacher educators, leading us to title this paper Finding Grace since we learned about our own need to strive for grace. The case studies thus led to self-study. We are each taking a more proactive stance toward our preservice teachers, striving to become more involved in their development, and consequently, experiencing our own development.

In our presentation we will discuss some of the concrete changes in practice that have resulted from our work together. Both authors have become more conscious of their claim making, both about students and in every day life. Further explication of our role in the development of preservice teachers’ professional identities (e.g. Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) has highlighted our ethical responsibility to engage authentically with our students as they need support or challenge. The changes to our practices, thus, are not technical or didactic changes, but pedagogical and thus moral.

Examples of Some Changes
Trumbull is using a wider range of strategies to respond to student work in her course, to be alert to evidence of a lack of authenticity, hoping that she can counsel students such as Sam either to leave a program or challenge them to engage. She is sharing anonymous segments of students’ work to the whole class to show contrasting levels of engagement with the assignment. Although exemplary assignments from prior years were available to students, sharing work done by current students in class seems to have worked to help more students learn how to approach their work, how to use a teacher perspective.

The case studies have increased Trumbull’s faith that the assignments she is using do, indeed, capture elements essential to good teaching. Thus, she has more faith that she must be direct with students not performing well and that this responsibility is a central part of her role as teacher education. Grace also taught her that she needed to be even more clear about purposes of assignments, more aware of how younger students might interpret and respond, and more careful to ensure students realize the point of class activities devoted to consideration of theoretical frames that can be used to make sense of the assignments. In the past, some students did not make connections between class readings and these class assignments.
Fluet, as a beginning teacher educator, has revised her courses goals and instructional strategies toward the goals developed with Trumbull. For example, she has explicitly attended to cultivating teachers’ use of evidence to justify their claims by actively engaging teachers in efforts to gather evidence when examining others’ actions as well as by asking her teachers to attend to their own claim-making in their assignments and class discussions.

The teachers with whom Fluet worked were primarily veteran teachers returning to school to earn science certification, sometimes after 15 years of teaching. In many ways they viewed themselves as novices and non-science people. After participating in the research with, Fluet found herself using conceptions and terms from our research in discussions with her teachers, such as spontaneous interpretations, multiple sources of evidence to support interpretations, principles of practice. In fact, she shared the research with her teachers as they completed assignments with colleagues to explore puzzling or problematic areas of their practice. The teachers also analyzed their own classroom observations for examples of claim making based on evidence or lacking evidence. The goal was for the teachers to begin to unpack their unsupported assumptions about their students and other teachers in order to determine if their biases were playing a role in their decision-making.

Fluet’s explorations with teachers were not seamless. Efforts were interrupted by events that created moral dilemmas. Several of the teachers were habitually late to class, others (and sometimes the same) habitually failed to turn in their homework. The teachers claimed to want to be in the program, viewing it as one of the only positive parts of their practice. Fluet struggled to justify penalties for lateness and missing homework. If this grant-funded, one-time program was supposed to be transformative for the teachers, how could she develop penalties that could exclude the very audience the program was intended for? One goal of the program was to provide support to teachers who were desperately lacking content and pedagogical knowledge about science. One would think that since these teachers themselves deal with students who are late to class, don’t come to class, and/or don’t complete assignments, they would be model students themselves. But they were not.

Additionally, some of the teachers experienced serious life events. Often, these happened to those who were also habitually late or negligent with homework. With sick children, deaths in the family, cars being stolen, and hospitalizations, Fluet found it hard to penalize teachers for what were clearly solid reasons for less than stellar performance in graduate school. She considered how the lives of the teachers, with all the pressures, and their subsequent approach to schooling seemingly paralleled some of the pressures experienced by their own students. She also struggled with this analysis. Was it an inappropriate generalization? Fluet felt she should impose boundaries with respect to appropriate graduate student behavior: not missing more than one or two classes at most, turning in homework no more than a day or two late, if sometimes necessary. She decided that in working with in-service teachers, the needs of the students of these teachers took priority, so could justify allowing a teacher to complete an assignment late since the lateness related to busy times at their school or issues out of their control in their own classrooms or lives. But she is not completely comfortable with her position.

Whose needs should come first, the programmatic needs, the teachers’ needs, or the K-12 students’ needs? Was it her role merely to provide an opportunity for teachers to take advantage of? What was the effect on the experience for all the teachers involved if not everyone was participating fully? Could she have developed a middle ground?

In essence, we were both working to develop pedagogic tact (e.g., van Manen, 1992) and our abilities to engage in core reflection with ourselves and our students (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). We continue to explore the boundaries of our involvement with teachers’ development.

References

The Birth of a Collaborative Self-Study

Collaboration, a recurrent theme in contemporary socio-cultural theories of learning and instruction, is regarded as essential to creating productive communities of learning and enabling and sustaining creative processes within them (Paavola, Lipponen, & Hakkarainen, 2004; Wenger, 1998). However, the meaning and the role of collaborative research in the life of collaborative community is only starting to be explored. In this work, stemming from our experience of collaborative professional life over eight years, we examine the “birth” of a collaborative self-study that helped a team of teacher educators move out of a period of crisis.

Wenger (1998) expands our understanding in regard to communities of practice as he elaborates on the complementary relations between participation and reification as framing the learning processes within them. The participative process has the potential to create what Paavola, Lipponen, & Hakkarainen (2004) call “innovative knowledge communities”. Knowledge creation, within this framework, is a social, nonlinear process where “new ideas and innovations emerge between rather than within people” (p. 564), thereby emphasizing the importance of the social, communal context. It is widely accepted that some of the most powerful professional learning occurs when there is the opportunity to be part of a learning community, an inquiry community (Brown & DuGuish, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

However, collaborative research is not inherently situated within collaborative communities of practice. We cannot take it for granted that where we find collaborative communities of practice we will find collaborative research. Although its volume in the social studies research is growing constantly, many collaborative studies are ad hoc partnerships aimed at researching specific questions or intra-organizational partnerships between schools and universities (Dooner et al., 2008; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2009; McCotter, 2001). The linkage between collaboration and research appears mainly within the domain of self-study that focuses on the collaborative practice of teachers or teacher educators (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008; Zeichner, 2007). As Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir and Dalmau (2004, p. 745) state, “wherever we found self-study of teacher education practices, collaboration was also present.” Collaboration is actually an integral component in self-study research and it “has the potential to enable researchers and participants to become aware of the limitations of their understandings” (Sanderetto, 2009, p. 97). But collaborative research that stems from within a community of practice and is linked to its daily routines is uncommon.

“Life-long” communities of practice have been attracting more attention during the last few years. The research regarding communities of practice is criticized as not going deep enough to understand how these communities develop and change over time or how their productive potential is sustained (Esipelto and Lahti, 2008; Moran and John-Steiner, 2004). There are few studies on collaborative creativity in communities that share a long history of being together. The belief is that looking at such communities can shed light on the dynamics involved in the community’s development and the ways it becomes creative as well as how it deals with conflicts and tensions (Dooner et al., 2008; Little, 2002). Therefore, understanding the ways research is woven into the professional life of a community can make an important contribution towards understanding how the history of the community and the norms, symbols and relations that structure its day to day life might influence its future trajectory.

This study presents our emerging understanding of the meaning of collaborative self-study as one of the mechanisms that facilitates effective, productive collaboration. Through the study of the “birth”, or preliminary processes that led to our current self study, we explore the function of this kind of research in meeting the groups’ professional needs and its contribution to our team’s work and decision making processes.

Context

ACE (Active Collaborative Education), a post-graduate teacher education program, started in 2001 with the mandate to develop an innovative teacher education program. Over the years, the 10 teacher educators working in the program, have developed our working relationships such that we have moved from operating as “staff” to “group” and finally to “team”.

The team is a heterogeneous group whose diversity finds expression on a variety of dimensions such as marital and family status, country of birth, mother tongue, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, and professional backgrounds.

The rationale of the ACE program sees education as a practical profession, one in which each practitioner must develop his or her wisdom of practice. One process that helps us do this is collaboration, a key word in our way of life. We teach in overlapping co-teaching teams that change from year to year according to the needs of the program and our own preferences, and research and write about our practice in teams that coalesce around topics of interest with many of us working on more than one research team at a time. Program decisions are made jointly, either during scheduled full team meetings, sub-group meetings, or informal consultations around our large round table; the table that has taken on a major symbolic function as an expression of the collaboration (Turniansky & Friling, 2009). In short, collaboration is not something we do, it is who we are.

After six years of working together, there was a sense of general discomfort with some issues connected to the way the team functioned. Team discussions revealed more specific points of discontent and different perceptions about preferred ways to work on changing the situation. That was...
the beginning of a period of “crisis” in our collaborative life. It ended two years later with a group decision to start a narrative collaborative self-study based on the personal professional stories of each group member. In retrospect, it became clear to the group that the crisis was an initial trigger for the process that led to our present study.

Our study seeks to reveal major themes of this crisis and follows the processes that led us out of it.

We have two main questions:
- How was this collaborative research born?
- What are the functions it served within our community?

Methodology

Our collaborative self-study focuses on a specific period in our professional collaboration which we characterize as a period of crisis. The data for this study come from documentation of team processes, which include:
- 12 staff meetings between 2. 2007 and 1. 2009, which were audiotaped and the protocols transcribed.
- E-mail correspondence related to these meetings.

We chose to focus on this time span because it marks a definable period that started with an open discussion of the team discomfort and ended with the “birth” of our current collaborative self-study.

Mixed methods of conversation analysis (CA) and a narrative approach were used to analyze the data. The conversation analysis stems from a discursive approach (Hardy, Lawrence & Grant, 2005; Seedhouse, 2004) which allows us to view communicative practices among us and reveal the nature of our conversations. To understand the processual and textual themes that evolved and the interactions that developed, we read and reread the protocols and analyzed them according to two dimensions—what the group members talked about (belonging, research competency) and the way they talked about it (emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally). This approach helped us highlight the themes of our collaboration and expose the ways our collaboration was negotiated among us. We then used narrative analysis tools to understand the themes that emerged across these conversations (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Polkinghorn, 1995).

Findings

Themes of “Crisis”. In this paper we present part of our wider analysis of the data, focusing on two major themes that the group talked about: preservation vs. change and sub-groups. These themes express the crisis situation within the group. We then analyze the options that were proposed as possible ways to alleviate this situation and show how they led to the birth of a collaborative research project.

Preservation vs. change. The first theme, was a central and quite powerful source of discomfort six years into the program. “Change” was a core issue accompanying the development of our program, a program that started as an innovative approach to teacher education. We regarded ourselves as change agents until that perception was questioned, as the following quotes will show:

On the one hand, there’s a need to preserve the process that became a type of ideal. There was a lot of activity, infatuation … and there’s a longing to remain there.

On the other hand there’s the place where we are as a group today. Time has passed, the group is established, and there is some kind of need for change. We have to look at the process, and maybe throw part of it out and change it. And within the team, maybe there’s tension between the group that wants to keep things [as they were in the beginning] and the group that wants to change them. (Talia, 11/12/07—meeting protocol)

For me, the example of splitting the students into groups for the trip is an example of something that we started doing automatically. We stopped asking questions . . . (Smadar, 11/12/07—meeting protocol)

We want to stay in the design stage forever but there are things we already did and we want to preserve them. What will make us look at where to continue the designing and what to preserve in order to reduce the tension? (Ruth, 17/12/08—meeting protocol)

The tension of preservation vs. change reflects the subjective meaning of these concepts and reveals the difficulty of differentiating between what is regarded as change and what is seen as preservation. It requires dealing with what can be inferred from Ruth’s comments as a contradiction in terms regarding how to introduce stability within a culture that works on a rationale of change. Preservation, in this context, was discussed with a language of change. Analysis of the data revealed that preservation and change were being looked at through three lenses: looking at the first years through rose-colored glasses leading to a nostalgic idealization of the aspects of change and creativity that colored this period; desiring to preserve a culture of questioning accompanied by the fear that we have started “flying on automatic pilot”; wanting to benefit from what we have learned by using it to establish some stable norms and ways of being.

Two distinct groups. The second theme, symbolizes the divide that existed within the group. This is a divide between “veterans” and “newcomers”, founders and joiners, center and periphery, and researchers and non-researchers. This theme represents interactions and relationships among the team members and the different expectations that they had for each other. As the following examples from a team meeting on Feb. 7, 2007, demonstrate, it also revealed that the issue of research competency divided the group both on the basis of self-perception of research and writing ability and on the basis of the effect that perception has on action.

I see two groups of people around the table—the founding generation and the generation of those who came after. (Marga)

And sometimes [you feel] that the veterans don’t have enough patience, they have their own language and don’t understand the language of the newcomers. (Judith)

I lack confidence when it comes to academic writing . . . what I need is someone from the team to help me break through it. Speaking of writing articles, I want to but I run away and need someone who will believe in me so that my belief in myself will return. (Talia)

While the previous group of quotes presents a primarily cognitive voice, the emotional tones can be clearly heard in this set. But the two themes do not stand alone. They cannot always be clearly differentiated. They interact with each other and their cumulative effects on the group are exponential, not additive. The result was the feeling of a group in crisis.

Getting out. Two directions were proposed as ways of getting out of this crisis situation. These options were
discussed in two metaphorical languages reflecting how different members viewed the group culture: a family and the act of construction. The family metaphor involved mainly the emotional aspects and relationship. For example:

As far as I'm concerned, family means to feel at home . . . connected with your feelings . . . it's possible that other people here have different images about family, one loves it, another one does not . . . and maybe I'm a bit afraid to jump into the water . . . with no one to protect us. If we connect to our feelings and emotions we could find ourselves not knowing what to do with it later . . . maybe we need someone else [who does not belong to the group] with us. (Talia, 11/12/07—meeting protocol)

This metaphor was analyzed collaboratively in one of our meetings and we found that it also included meanings such as emotional life, sisters, empathy, feeding, closeness, not watching our words, and allowing ourselves to speak our mind.

The construction metaphor included aspects of building and breaking, reconstruction and renovation:

I had the founding generation in mind too. But even if we sit together, it is another floor. But the base of the second floor is the first floor and you have to take many things into consideration when you build the second floor (Adiba, 11/12/07—meeting protocol).

Continuing with this metaphor, I think that everyone who builds has to take into account the fact that a veranda might collapse . . . one of the things you need is the willingness to fall, to think how willing you are to take the risk of falling and how much you feel that when you fall, someone will be there . . . When you build things together, there is a lot of falling, not only personal. . . . In my view, a vital condition for the continuation of the program is its ability to keep rolling, to be able to take all kind of risks, alone, and together, as a group. (Smadar, 11/12/07—meeting protocol)

Each metaphor emphasized a different path to take towards solving the crisis. The family metaphor led towards a "family therapist", an expert outsider who can provide an objective look, treat our emotional relations and tell us how we can solve the conflict between us. The family narrative, as Illouz argues (2007), is based on therapeutical language, and its aim is to create change within the family. Therefore this metaphor leads towards a family therapist type of solution.

The construction metaphor emphasized more cognitive aspects such as ideas about what needs to be built, what to tear down, which walls we need, and so on. This metaphor led towards an internal solution where the group assumes the responsibility for its future. This proposal led to the idea that we should embark on a collaborative learning journey.

However, neither of these alternatives became the chosen route. An external event intervened and offered us a third option which combined both cognitive and emotional aspects. Towards the end of 2008 a call for papers on the professional development of teacher educators gave us the idea of doing a collaborative self-study on our own professional "life stories". The process we decided on provided us the opportunity for listening and being listened to, for rediscovering the intimacy that was in danger of being lost. On the other hand, the collaborative analysis of the stories led us to reconceptualize our work and our interactions.

It appears that besides the expected impact on teaching and learning, the collaborative self-study also plays a significant role in improving our teamwork. The stories we told became a communal asset of our group. The decision to retell our stories in the context of our shared professional history in ACE functioned, in this sense, as the "group therapist" who forced us to speak out and to listen to each other and renegotiate our relations and understandings.

The tellings required exposing and clarifying our taken-for-granted "reality" (Moscovici, 1984; Tuval & Orr, 2009) in order to allow new spaces of activity and interpretation to open (Barak, Gidron & Turniansky, 2010).

This is how our collaborative research project was born.

Looking Ahead

These glimpses into the obstacles we were facing and the dynamics of the ways they were negotiated open a window to understanding some existential questions of collaboration in a "life-long" community of practice. Our work highlights the function of the collaborative self-study from the social perspective of the team's work. Studying the ways we were negotiating the themes that emerged was eye-opening for us.

What began as a way of extricating ourselves from a situation of "being stuck", continued as an opportunity to generate a shared space for creativity. As a whole, the process contributed to the development of common language and conceptualizations.

Collaborative self-study was, and still is, an opportunity for learning and renewal within the team. But it is not enough to understand the significance of this research for the ability of people to work as a team. The next step should be investigating how this understanding is reflected in our practice, and that we are just beginning to find out.

References


Educational Knowledge and Forms of Accountability within the Complex Ecologies of Self-Study

There has been discussion for years in AERA about the appropriate standards of judgment for evaluating the quality and validity of the educational knowledge generated by practitioner-researchers in different cultural settings. Schön (1995) called for the development of a new epistemology for the scholarship of teaching. Snow (2001) called for the development of methodologies for making public the professional knowledge of teachers. Lee and Rochon (2009) have now called for the integration within educational research of understanding complex ecologies in a changing world. Our aim here is to contribute to the development of the epistemologies and methodologies of self-study educational research and knowledge in the complex, relationally dynamic ecologies of the public, personal, socio-historical, socio-cultural, and environmental terrains in which we live and work. In our understandings of complex ecologies we draw on Guattari’s three ecologies of the environment, the social, and the mental, through which he claims that:

There will have to be a massive reconstruction of social mechanisms (rouages) if we are to confront the damage caused by IWC (Integrated World Capitalism). It will not come about through centralized reform, through laws, decrees and bureaucratic programmes, but rather through the promotion of innovatory practices, the expansion of alternative experiences centred around a respect for singularity, and through the continuous production of an autonomizing subjectivity that can articulate itself appropriately in relation to the rest of society. (Guattari, 2000, p. 59).

One of the contributions offered in this presentation to this reconstruction is a form of educational accountability that emphasizes the importance of the ontological values of the self-study researcher as the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment in the generation of educational knowledge.

The form of accountability we are offering is grounded in educational responsibility (Biesta, 2006, p. ix) and is communicated in the form of multi-media narratives of our living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989). By living educational theory we are meaning the explanation that an individual gives for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. Our evidence-based narratives of our educational influences have emerged from our self-study research into improving our practice as teacher educators generating knowledge.

We are accounting here for our influences in contributing to educational knowledge focused on:

- Developing educational forms of evaluation and accountability in the complex ecologies of living educational theories.
- The generation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge;
- The explication of a living theory methodology for making public the embodied knowledge of professional practitioners; and
- The generation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge.

We have included URLs that, if put in a web browser, enable you to access the multi-media narratives we use below to communicate the meanings of our energy-flowing values in explanatory principles of our educational influences in learning. Reading the words through a text-based medium restricts the meanings of our communications. This is particularly significant in the communication of the meanings of living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996).

The Generation of a New Epistemology for Educational Knowledge

A keynote symposium at the 2009 Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association focused on the explication of a new epistemology for educational knowledge. You can access the successful proposal and presentations at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bera/bera09keyprop.htm.

At least three logics (Whitehead, 2007) are used in the epistemology for educational knowledge, where logic is understood as a mode of thought that is appropriate for comprehending the real as rational (Marcuse, 1964, p. 105). We use a propositional logic in making sense of theories in the traditional disciplines of education that are grounded in Aristotelian logic with its elimination of contradictions in correct thought. We use a dialectical logic, influenced by the insights of Ilyenkov (1977), for comprehending critical social theorists whose ideas are grounded in contradictions. We use living logics of inclusionality (Whitehead and Rayner, 2009) for comprehending the ideas of living theorists that include a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries and the energy-flowing values of explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. The living logics of inclusionality include insights from ideas expressed in ways that conform to both propositional and dialectical logics without relating to these logics as if they are mutually exclusive.

At the heart of the new epistemology are the logics, units of appraisal and standards of judgment that constitute the epistemology. The logics have been described above. The units of appraisal are the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences. The standards of judgment include relationally dynamic, energy-flowing values that are used to evaluate the validity of the contributions to educational knowledge. In generating such contributions to educational knowledge through living educational theories we make this knowledge public with the explication of a living theory methodology.
The Explication of a Living Theory Methodology for Making Public the Embodied Knowledge of Professional Practitioners

The distinguishing characteristics of a living theory methodology include Dadds’ and Hart’s (2001) meanings of methodological inventiveness. That is, individuals are generating their own unique methodological approaches to both improving personal practice and generating knowledge about educational influences in their enquiry.

In employing a living theory methodology we are holding ourselves to account in terms of living our ontological values as fully as we can in contributing to a relationally dynamic epistemology for educational knowledge in:

1. Expressing our embodied ontological values in our practice;
2. Clarifying the meanings of our ontological energy-flowing values in the course of their emergence in our practice;
3. Using these values as explanatory principles in explanations of our educational influences in learning;
4. Using these explanatory principles as living standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of our knowledge-claims.

It is our contention that there is now sufficient evidence in the living educational theories produced by practitioner-researchers for us to justify the claim that we have contributed to the creation of a new relationally dynamic epistemology for educational knowledge. Huxtable (2009a) has provided evidence-based explanations of her educational influence with teacher-researchers who are studying for master’s degrees. Whitehead (2009b) has provided an evidence-based explanation of his educational influence in supporting practitioner-researchers in their use and development of a living theory methodology in the generation of their own living theories in the complex ecologies of the public and private spaces of self-studies. At the heart of this generation of living theories are educational forms of evaluation and accountability.

Developing Educational Forms of Evaluation and Accountability in the Complex Ecologies of Living Educational Theories

We understand evaluation of educational practice to be concerned with judgments related to change and values. Educational narratives offer evidence of changes created and experienced by the individual or group in relation to their values. The forms of evaluation we offer here enable us to hold ourselves accountable as we accept responsibility for what we do and create values based explanations for why we do what we do. Educational forms of evaluation and accountability focus on their contribution to improving, as well as justifying, our practice.

In this section we focus on answering the question, ‘What can our multimedia living theory narratives contribute to the development of educational forms of evaluation and accountability in the diverse landscape of teacher education?’

We are answering this question in response to contributions to the November 2009 issue of Educational Researcher on Discourse on Narrative Research (Educational Researcher, 2009). We are claiming that the focus on Narrative Research omits the educational use of narrative research in the generation of educational knowledge. For example, Coulter & Smith (2009) focus on the literary elements in narrative research. They do this well and persuasively within the limits of ‘literary elements’. Clandinin and Murphy (2009), correctly in our view, criticize these limits because they can be read, ‘as reducing the complexity of narrative research to a literary analysis of the ways that narrative researchers represent their lived experience of the research’ (p. 598). We agree with Clandinin and Murphy that, ‘epistemological and ontological questions need to be situated in a more expansive view of narrative research’ (Ibid). This is why we like Barone’s (2009) focus on narrative researchers as both witnesses of injustice and agents of social change.

Our energy-flowing ontological values include the expressions of social justice in our educational practices. We are suggesting that discourses on narrative research within educational research should explicitly connect narrative to the generation of educational knowledge through the creation of living educational theory (McNiff, 2007). Whitehead (2009) has expressed this relationship between narrative research and the generation of living educational theories in educational research in a response to Cresswell’s ideas on research methodologies by pointing out that ‘not all narratives are living theories, but all living theories are narratives’ (p.2).

Our answer to the above question is focused on the movement between dialectics and natural inclusonality described by Whitehead and Rayner (2009) in developing a naturally inclusive approach to educational accountability where each flows responsively being receptive to the others’ influence. This can be seen in the multimedia living theory narrative at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwdutpaperAopt.pdf

The narrative is part of Jack’s self-study of his educational influence in a workshop in South Africa in 2009. From a perspective of natural inclusonality he is advocating a multimedia approach to making public the embodied knowledge of educators in Durban University of Technology, who are engaged in self-studies of transformative higher education. The diverse landscape of teacher education includes doctoral research into literacy, responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in supervision, recognizing land issues in the sociocultural influences in teacher education, providing appropriate learning resources in rural schools, and making original contributions to educational knowledge in global communities of educational researchers. Jack’s accountability in relation to his influence in making public these self-studies includes the use of digital technologies in the way he outlines in his reflections above.

At the heart of our understanding of educational accountability are the explanations, the living theories, that individuals produce for their educational influences in learning which contribute to generative and transformational theories of learning in a diverse landscape of teacher education.

We tend to focus on our ontological values in the living standards of judgment that are formed and communicated through their emergence in practice because of their
importance in accounting for ourselves in terms of our educational influences. We agree with Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) that ‘the consideration of ontology, of one’s being in and toward the world, should be a central feature of any discussion of the value of self-study research’ (p. 319).

In living theories we make a distinction between what is personal and what is private; the personal is that which says something of the person, such as their ontological values, those values which give meaning and purpose to their life; the private is that which the person does not wish to be made public. For example, Jack has published a narrative of his engagement with power relations within his workplace that could have constrained his academic freedom (Whitehead, 1993). This is personal to Jack but he does not consider it private.

The meanings of the value of academic freedom emerged in the course of his practice and are part of his being in and toward the world. Marie has published an account of her values of ‘emancipating the individual in their learning and life and enhancing the ability of the individual to make their unique, valued and valuable contribution to evolving a humane and sustainable world’ (Huxtable, 2009a, p. 216) as those values emerged in the course of researching her practice.

The expression of ontological values in educational practice and their meanings can be clarified in the course of their emergence through practice, time, and interaction. The meanings of these ontological values form the explanatory principles that individuals use in explaining their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they live and work. The public communication of the values-laden explanatory principles allows them to be used by others as living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) to evaluate the validity of the contributions to educational knowledge. For example, Naidoo (2005) focuses on compassion, Walton (2008) on spiritual resilience and loving dynamic energy, Adler-Collins (2007) on creating a safe space, Lohr (2006) on love’s purpose, and Sullivan (2006) on justice. As far as we know no other educational researchers have articulated this relationship between the expression of ontological, energy-flowing values, explanatory principles, and living standards of judgment. The use of these ideas by other researchers is evidence of our influence. We can further illustrate what we are meaning by reference to the gifts, talents, and education accounts of the self-study researchers that we worked with created as part of their masters programme, accessible at: http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml.

As well as being accountable to ourselves we are also accountable to standards derived from societal values expressed in public spaces, such as those of our employers and professional bodies, which on occasions the individual may experience as a contradiction to their ontological values. In the UK there is a national recognition of the damage that has been done to teacher education by the government’s imposition of a ‘raft of detailed requirements’ (House of Lords, 2009, p.15). We have explored, (for example, Whitehead, 2008; Huxtable, 2008; Hymer, Whitehead and Huxtable, 2009) and continue to explore resolutions to such tensions.

We hold ourselves accountable for our educational influences in bringing an awareness of these sociocultural influences from public spaces into the accounts of the self-study researchers we tutor for their masters units and dissertations. Evaluative evidence of our educational influence can be found in the accounts of educators we work with at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml.

At the heart of our understandings of educational evaluation are shared meanings of the practical principles that can be used to distinguish something as education. We use experiences of empathetic resonance, in responses to visual narratives, for the communication of shared meanings of practical principles in explanations of educational influence. We first encountered the idea of empathetic resonance in the writings of Sardello (2008). For Sardello, empathetic resonance is the resonance of the individual soul coming into resonance with the Soul of the World (p. 13). We are using empathetic resonance to communicate a feeling of the immediate presence of the other in communicating the living values that the other experiences as giving meaning and purpose to their life.

We also use Dadd’s idea of empathetic validity. For Dadd this is the potential of practitioner research in its processes and outcomes to transform the emotional dispositions of people towards each other, such that greater empathy and regard are created. Dadd distinguishes between internal empathetic validity as that which changes the practitioner researcher and research beneficiaries; he defines external empathetic validity as that which influences audiences with whom the practitioner research is shared. (Dadds, 2009, p. 279).


The visual narratives with empathetic resonance have already been used to make public the embodied and evolving knowledge by Jack (for example, Whitehead, 2010), Marie (for example, Huxtable, 2008b), and others, for instance, Hartog, (2004), Riding, K. (2008), and Riding S. (2008).

The characteristics include a decision, grounded as Polanyi’s Personal Knowledge (1959), to understand the world from one’s own point of view as a person claiming originality and exercising judgment and responsibly with universal intent. They include the use of Habermas’ (1976) four criteria of social validity of comprehensibility, truth, rightness, and authenticity in validation groups that meet to help individuals to strengthen the validity of their accounts. Winter’s (1989) six principles of dialectical and reflexive critiques, risk, plural structure, multiple resource, and theory practice transformation are also often used to enhance the rigor of the explanations (Leong, 1991).

In relation to meanings of complex ecologies we use Guattari’s (2005) distinction between three ecologies of mind, society, and environment in the relational dynamic of the creation of our living educational theories.

Jack has provided evidence-based explanations (Whitehead, 2008, 2010) to demonstrate how a living theory methodology, using visual narratives with empathetic resonance and validity, can help to make public the professional knowledge of teachers in different cultural settings. Marie has contributed (Huxtable, 2009b) a response to the challenge of how to create and offer communicable
accounts that can be legitimated by academic researching communities.

**Conclusion**

We have stressed that the contributions of our self-studies are to educational knowledge. We distinguish our explanations as educational explanations from the explanations offered by adherents to disciplines of education in their education research. We have offered our evidence-based explanations of our educational influences in learning to fulfil our responsibility as self-study researchers to account for ourselves in our professional practices. We have done this in terms of the ontological values we use to give our lives their meaning and purpose. These accounts are generated within, and in response to, the influences of complex ecologies that need to be understood by an engagement with the most advanced social theories of the day. This engagement enables insights from these theories to be included in the generation of living educational theories that can explain educational influences in one's own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.

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Private Identities, Public Practices: Examining the Relationship between My Changing Practice as a Teacher Educator and My Evolving Identity as a Teacher Educator

Introduction and AimS
In this self-study, I examine the relationship between changing pedagogical (public) practices and my evolving (private) identity as a teacher educator. Increasing and changing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in teacher education have implications for the changing nature of teacher educators’ work and identity. In this self-study I examine how my understandings and practices of teaching and learning were challenged over the course of one semester, and how these challenges impacted upon my evolving identity as a teacher educator. My research question was, “How did my changing practice as a teacher educator when using technology contribute to the evolution of my identity as a teacher educator?”

Context
While undertaking this self-study I was co-teaching a first year Bachelor of Education unit entitled Learning and Educational Inquiry 1. My colleague, Dr. Susan (Suzy) Edwards, had previously undertaken research on the use of ICTs in teacher education, and was keen to approach the teaching of this unit based on her work (see Edwards, 2005; Edwards, & Hammer, 2006). As I had been feeling increasingly uncomfortable with the transmissive ways in which I had been teaching, especially in lectures, I was eager to try a new approach. Rather than have face to face lectures each week, Suzy and I structured the online learning management system (BlackBoard) into modules that each contained an audio lecture that provided a conceptual framework, readings, videos, and a recorded interview with a teacher, which was uploaded to iTunes and could then be downloaded onto students’ personal MP3 or iPod devices. Working in pairs, students were required to develop a digital resource that could be used to teach the topic of their choice to the students in the same unit the following year. This approach put much more responsibility on students to manage their own time and resources and to access a range of information sources via digital means. They used most of their tutorial time working on their assessment tasks, but also uploaded onto students’ personal MP3 or iPod devices.

Literature Review
A review of the literature has revealed that use of ICTs in teacher education is increasing rapidly. Much research has been undertaken into how this is evolving, but there appears to be less examination of the impact of these changes on the professional identity of teacher educators.

It appears that increased use of a range of technologies, including those referred to as Web 2.0, is a ‘given’ in higher education. Wells (2007) argued that new technologies such as these make demands on teachers’ pedagogical practices and that new ways of structuring courses in teacher education are required. Bigum and Rowan (2008) maintained that the technological landscape in teacher education is changing exponentially, and that mere ‘integration’ of ICTs into existing programs is no longer sufficient, as it “privileges existing ways of doing things” (p. 247). Instead, Bigum and Rowan advocated a ‘socio-technical’ framing of practice, that is, “a hybrid . . . of humans and non-humans that operate together as a whole, and not things that are either social or technical” (p. 250). While the intricacies of such an approach are not the subject of this paper, such reframing of teaching practice in the light of ICTs and their position in the teacher education curriculum raises challenging questions about how teacher educators might respond to such a profound change in their practice. As Dozozy (2007) stated when referring to the ‘digitalisation of pedagogy,’ “this increasingly close connection between pedagogy and technology and its effect on meaning making or learning, needs urgent attention and critical assessment” (p. 3).

While much of the literature on ICTs in teacher education focuses on the benefits and challenges for pre-service teachers and teacher educators’ practice, there appears to be less research into the implications of these changes on the professional identities of teacher educators. In an attempt to understand the relationship between ICTs and teacher educator identity, Henderson and Bradey (2008) examined what teacher educators believe about the use of ICTs in their teaching practice, rather than focussing on what teacher educators do with ICTs. They argued that teacher educators’ beliefs and their various professional identities (as an educator, teacher, academic, professional practitioner) do not determine how they use ICTs, rather than the technologies themselves driving their pedagogical choices. Henderson and Bradey found that academics who used on-line learning management environments and other ICTs were influenced by their beliefs as university educators as well as professionals in their respective fields. In the case of teacher educators, they argued that a ‘teacher identity’ is just as important as a ‘teacher educator identity’ in determining when and how to utilise the range of ICTs available. Henderson and Bradey stated that “lecturer identity refers to the complex personal understanding of the way in which the world works including what it means to teach and learn in a professional degree program. Identity shapes lecturers’ engagement with teaching technologies [and] pedagogical strategies, as well as privileging certain narratives” (p. 85). Likewise, Bain and
McNaught (2006) recognized the importance of beliefs and identity in the uptake of ICTs in higher education by arguing that lecturers need to “strive for internal coherence between their educational beliefs and practices and [to] deploy technology in a way that augments their existing methods” (p. 112). It would therefore appear that the interaction between ICTs and identity/beliefs is a two-way process, in which one impacts upon the other.

As the literature has revealed, beliefs, identity and practice are intricately entwined and an examination of my beliefs, identity and practice in relation to ICTs is essential for me as I continue to develop as a teacher educator. New pedagogical practices driven by the changing use of ICTs in my teaching have challenged me to re-examine my existing beliefs about teacher education and about my role in the learning of my students.

Method

Data collection. Two sources of data were used in this study. During the semester, I documented my thoughts in a personal reflective diary. I made notes after each tutorial and at various times throughout the week as necessary. During the semester, I also made five audio recordings of reflective conversations with my colleague, Dr. Susan Edwards, which occurred most weeks directly after our last tutorial for the day. These recordings were later transcribed.

Data analysis. When analysing these data, I looked for evidence of changes in my beliefs, understandings, and/or practice, and evidence of challenges in my teaching role that arose during or after a tutorial. I examined the transcripts of the audio recordings first, noting down key ideas that were apparent in the text. I then organised these ideas into three overarching themes that emerged (see below). When examining the diary notes I coded these as 1, 2, and/or 3 according to these themes. Connections were also made to the literature, which together with links between the two sources of data, provides for triangulation of data and verification of results.

Findings

When the data were analysed three clear, albeit interconnected, themes emerged.

Teacher as learner. The data clearly showed that Suzy and I were on a steep learning curve in relation to using ICTs in our teaching. Although I had used the basic applications in the university’s online environment (BlackBoard), I found that I needed to learn to use technologies that were much more familiar to most of my students than they were to me. For example, I was introduced to podcasts accessed via iTunes, uploaded via Google and Blogspot. As a lecturer, I had to become familiar with these applications and virtual environments so that I could understand this particular learning context from the students’ perspectives. This opened up new pedagogical territory, and was initially quite daunting. My lack of confidence in some of these technologies was evident when I wrote in my diary after the first tutorial that “I could have used the interactive whiteboard (IWB) in the room but was reluctant to appear foolish in front of students. I want to be able to use it with some degree of confidence before I expose my skills (or lack of them) to students” (02/03/09).

In addition to learning how to use ICTs, Suzy and I were aware that we were also learners in relation to the content of the unit we were teaching. Rather than being the ‘experts’ we sometimes found ourselves in the position of learning from our students. Students often accessed new information electronically, and this became the basis of some tutorial discussions. During our first recorded conversation I stated that

...I was amazed with what some of them are doing. And they’re talking about things that I don’t know about. ... There was one theorist and I said [to the students] “I don’t know . . . tell me about it.” [They said] “Oh, alright.” So they were quite surprised that they’ve come up with something the lecturer didn’t know.

(30/03/09)

I noted in my diary the week before that “several students know more about the topic than I do, can’t provide all the answers. Feel ‘dumb’ – I should know the answer” (23/03/09). It is apparent from these comments that I felt that to be a credible teacher I needed to know the answers, although in reality I was aware that this was not possible. I always tell my students that as teachers they don’t have to ‘know it all’ but it was difficult in the early weeks of the semester to apply this wisdom to myself, as I still had an almost sub-conscious belief that I should be ‘teaching’ these students what they need to know.

Perhaps the most powerful insight that I gained from conversations with Suzy was that we focussed much more on our pedagogy rather than on what activities to do in the following week’s tutorials. In previous semesters when teaching this unit most of my conversations with colleagues were about what we were going to do during lectures and tutorials, rather than about how we were going to teach it. Because the audio lectures were already online and the tutorials were planned ahead for the whole semester, there was little planning to do regarding week to week activities. Our ‘debrief’ conversations were therefore much richer in terms of understanding the teaching/learning relationships that were developing within our respective tutorial groups, and moving from planning ‘activities’ to an examination of our teaching practices and our existing and changing beliefs. In our second recorded conversation, we discussed a dilemma about my wanting to continue my usual approach of having whole group discussions while recognising that this strategy was not working in this ICT-rich environment. After discussing the pros and cons of various approaches I concluded that “If you do a few tutes in any unit the last one’s always the better one because you learn yourself. . . . How is it best to teach these ideas? So that shows that we’re learning as much as [students] about our own teaching” (16/03/09). I noted in my diary that we had “talked about how this new approach challenges how we teach; talking about pedagogy and not activities; discussions are not just about content, but how tutorials are constructed” (09/03/09).

Developing relationships with students in new ways.

In my previous teaching, I had believed that it was my responsibility to plan tutorial activities that built on students’ understanding from the lectures and readings. It was always important to me to engage students in collaborative activities and to monitor (control?) their learning by joining in small group discussions and facilitating whole group discussions, usually on issues that were identified by me as being important. Although I was alert to students’ concerns and the issues raised by them, it was usually me who took
on the responsibility for ‘creating’ the learning. During tutorials in this unit, however, I found that the centrality of ICTs, and the fact that students spent most of their tutorial time working on their digital resources, challenged my usual pedagogical approaches. I found it difficult to create a sense of community and to really get to know students and how they were thinking, rather than just what they were producing. The public face of my teaching had changed in marked ways, and this caused me to reconsider (and reaffirm) some of my beliefs about effective teaching, especially about the importance of social interaction in creating positive learning environments. My dilemma was tangled: How do I foster these social interactions, which were a central tenant in my long-held beliefs about teaching and learning, when the students appeared to be learning largely through the use of ICTs and without much direct input from me? Suzy and I discussed ways of fostering conversations with small groups and individual students rather than always aiming to have whole group discussions, the type of which I was trying to ‘hold onto’ as good pedagogy. Students’ learning appeared to be more fragmented than I had experienced before, so I had to ‘let go’ of my usual way of creating a sharing community and focus more on interacting with small groups of students about their needs at that particular point in time. This drove these conversations, rather than what I had pre-determined their needs to be. In one conversation with Suzy I observed that “instead of a whole group discussion, they just sit near each other . . . so that six or eight of them doing the same topic can troubleshoot each other . . . so that they’re thinking in a more focussed way, rather than just a general [response to] ‘How are you going?’”(16/03/09). My unease at how to establish effective communication with students when they were immersed in computer-based learning was evident in numerous notes I made in my diary. For example, I noted down that “I need to establish personal relationships with students—in tutorials and via discussion forum. How? . . . Importance of small group discussion—I miss this aspect of my role, facilitating discussions” (23/03/09). This changing and uneasy tension in my role in students’ learning was really an indication of my shifting self-perception as a teacher educator and how I felt left out of the learning process much of the time.

Re-examining my role and identity as a teacher educator. Coming to terms with my uncertainties about using ICTs and restructuring the ways in which I taught were essentially about re-examining how I saw myself as a teacher educator. What was my role now and how do I respond to these challenges? The public face of my teaching (the online environment, in-class teaching) was both a liberator and a challenge to my current visions of my role. I felt liberated from the role of ‘expert’ and I began to see myself in a different light—as facilitator of learning rather than source of all knowledge. While teaching this unit, I felt initially confused but increasingly free and empowered to develop my teaching skills in new ways. Rather than being an expert in the content, I was learning to become more expert in the pedagogy of teaching teachers in a technologically rich environment. In effect, I had to reconceptualise what being a teacher educator was all about, and to think about how I could best facilitate my students’ learning in this environment while remaining true to my beliefs about the teaching and learning relationship. Early in the semester I often felt redundant, as students were busy working on their digital responses, and I was relegated to role of ‘trouble-shooter.’ Suzy and I discussed our feelings of redundancy when we observed how well our students appeared to be working without much input from us during tutorials:

I’m seeing things that I just would never have been able to teach them . . . . I was almost redundant, but I had a better chance to actually sit down with each pair or individual and talk to them more than I have done with the larger groups . . . . In the tutes today I felt that I’ve probably at least amount of input [about content] but they’re doing the most amount of work and better learning . . . . the quality of the work they are doing seems to be like in an inverse relationship—the less teaching I do, the more learning they’re doing. So that brings in this whole idea of, what’s my role?

Conclusion

Teacher educators learn and work within a complex set of social and pedagogical practices that impact on their professional identities. While teaching this unit I was introduced to new forms of technology and pedagogy, which challenged me to see my role as a teacher educator in a new light. I had to rethink my role in students’ learning, develop relationships with students in new ways, and modify my existing pedagogies to incorporate new concepts of learning and teaching. I had to be open to the fact that students will access information that I don’t ‘control’ and that their needs drive the learning. While there were changes in my understandings of the teaching/learning relationship, I was also aware that my existing beliefs, such as the importance of social interaction, did not change, but nevertheless had to be ‘lived’ in different ways. The use of ICTs, as with any change in the teaching/learning context, forced me to find ways in which my beliefs could be aligned harmoniously with new practices, so I could achieve the ‘internal coherence’ that Bain & McNaught (2006) recognised as being so important. I believe that this sense of coherence and authenticity is at the heart of the concept of ‘identity.’ My challenge in the future is to explore new ways in which to facilitate student learning, while remaining authentic and relevant to the learning of my students. This study has shown how the use of ICTs in teacher education is intricately bound up with practice and identity, and that (thankfully) our learning journey as teacher educators is never-ending.

Acknowledgement

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Once a Teacher, Always a Teacher: How Professional History Mediates Teacher Educator Identity

We gathered around a large classroom table in a suburban elementary school—four second-grade public school teachers and two university-based teacher educators—to talk about the teachers’ experiences with newly developed curricular materials. Lydia, in her typical brusque manner, spoke out first. “You better hurry, honey,” addressing Lynnette who was conducting the group interview, “because I have to get my kids in 20 minutes.” The conversation turned to the implementation of the instructional materials we had collaboratively developed. Again, it was Lydia who spoke for the group. “Like we told you last month, I don’t get to everything. You can’t fit it in. Like we told you, we’re trying to meet AYP [adequate yearly progress] so we’ve been really plugging hard with AYP and UTips [a test item bank] and all that stuff. So I’ve signed up for extra computer time to take my kids in to practice so they learn the format and all that stuff. And every available moment, we are doing language arts and math.” The teachers nodded in agreement, their eyes fixed on the two of us. Their nonverbal language spoke quite clearly, “You just don’t understand what it’s like to be a teacher!”

The context of our self-study is a professional development project involving primary-grade teachers in one public school and us, two university teacher educators. The attention of teachers and administrators in this school, like that of countless others in the United States, was fixed on student achievement as demonstrated on upcoming standardized tests. We worked together with these teachers in a yearlong project to create curriculum plans and materials for integrated literacy and social studies instruction. Our common goal was to enhance student learning in both curricular areas.

As former public school teachers, we felt that we were very familiar with life in schools and the challenges teachers face. We thought our experiences as teachers grounded and strengthened our work as teacher educators. We therefore entered into the project confident that we would easily establish strong relationships with the teachers.

Early on in the project it became apparent to us that the teachers did not view us as we viewed ourselves. From time to time, teachers seemed compelled to explain to us how school “works” as though we had neither background knowledge nor understanding of the context of schooling. They repeatedly offered explanations of such things as yearlong curriculum planning, the developmental capacities of young children, or the age-appropriateness of particular pieces of literature or other instructional materials, with little apparent confidence that we, too, were familiar with these concepts.

We began to realize that our connections to the classroom were not apparent to them. In their eyes, our “membership” in the culture of public schools had been abandoned when we moved to the university. To them, we were outsiders—citizens of a different community of practice (Wenger, 1998). We used different vocabulary than they did (e.g., remuneration/money; habitat/environment), and we valued explicit, detailed lesson planning when they were more comfortable with brief, sketchy lesson outlines. Our growing awareness of the teachers’ apparent view caused us to wonder about the teacher within us—our professional identities (Bullough, 2005, Pinnegar, 2005)—and how these were shaped by our teaching histories.

The aim of our study was to illuminate our understanding of our own professional identities as teachers.

We looked for insights about how our experiences as teachers may have shaped that identity for each of us. We believed that increased self-understanding would enhance our future relationships with classroom teachers. The question that framed our self-study was, “How is the professional identity of teacher educators mediated by their prior experience as teachers?”

Method

Together, we constructed a list of six guiding questions that we thought would help us investigate our individual teaching histories (see appendix A). Using our questions as a guide, we independently constructed a retrospective narrative of our teaching history. We recorded key events in our development as teachers and teacher educators. We focused on our views of self-as-teacher in each of the events in our teaching narratives. Data collected during the course of the curriculum development project described above (i.e., interviews, field notes), served as a contextualizing frame for our study of our own professional identities.

We used the work of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) to guide us in our analysis. First, each of us read the narrative of the other, seeking for emerging categories or perspectives cutting across that narrative. We then read our own narrative with an eye to identifying any additional categories. We invited a critical friend, a teacher educator who is well versed in self-study and narrative methodology, to read and verify our categories. Next, we coded the data, sorting units of meaning into relevant categories. Data in each category were used to descriptively formulate a picture of our experiences as teachers and teacher educators and the interplay between those. We returned to the data from our curriculum development project to deepen our analysis. We again asked our critical friend to review and verify our themes and findings. In the following account of our research, Lynnette’s narrative will be cited as (LE) and Janet’s as (JY).

Themes

Common Roots. As we analyzed our narratives, we found striking similarities between us. These similarities
were not entirely unexpected, but the degree to which our histories and dispositions aligned was surprising. Our ways of being as teachers (e.g., our ideals, ways of relating to learners, ways of thinking about teaching) were markedly congruent. Commonalities were evident in our pathways to teaching, our course in choosing to be teachers, our teacher preparation, our experiences being teachers, and our lives as teacher educators. Moreover, our analysis revealed shared facets of our professional identities. Most importantly, we saw our identities as teacher educators encompassing our identities as teachers, rather than viewing them as separate and apart from one another.

Pathways to Teaching. Both of us began to imagine ourselves as teachers from a very early age. Lynnette was “a textbook case of an oldest child with younger siblings—bossy, self-confident, a know it all, protective,” who helped her two younger brothers “learn to ride a two-wheeler [and] write their names in chalk on the sidewalk.” She “guided them to school on their first day [and] made sure they were on the bus to get home” (LE). As a child, Janet “rounded up [her] neighborhood peers during summer breaks and played school,” always assigning herself “to be the center figure in that outdoor classroom” (JY). Even as young children, our self-as-teacher was someone in charge. These childhood experiences gave way to our teen years, when each of us sampled not only the sense of responsibility teachers feel toward their students, but also the possibility of a heartwarming connection of teacher to learner. This connection is exemplified by Lynnette’s account of her experience as a seventh grade tutor, her year-long effort to connect with a struggling second grade child who carried scars from a house fire, and the tender gift—a small porcelain figurine—pressed into her hand by this appreciative student on the last day of school.

Choosing to Be Teachers. The formal decision to be a teacher, however, was neither as easy nor natural for us as one might suppose. When it came time to select a career at the university, both of us resisted teaching as a choice. Lynnette initially pursued a “more prestigious career in business” and refused to declare elementary education as her major until she was a senior (LE). Similarly, Janet carefully avoided the same major, selecting speech pathology as her field of study. “That would not be teaching,” she told herself when, “arms were tied securely to [her] sides.” Her perspective had shifted, and she looked for ways to help another learn to teach. The “image still lingers,” reminding her that as teacher educators, we “touch children, both needy children, attending to their physical, emotional, and social development. Lynnette arranged for a “free haircut and makeover” for Brenda as part of a classroom social studies unit, and worked behind the scenes to improve her life outside of school (LE). Janet achieved similar ends, partnering with public agencies to enhance Tommy’s life inside and outside school, “always hop[ping] that his bright mind would prevail, allowing him to triumph over his difficult circumstances” (JY). Our narratives of public school teaching reveal our focus on academic development, but more importantly, on the fundamental personal and social needs of the children we taught.

Living as Teacher Educators. Again, there is remarkable similarity in the pathways that brought us to teacher education. Both of us decided to pursue master’s degrees, Lynnette seeking “explanations for the terrific year [she] had just experienced” as a third grade teacher (LE), and Janet, drawn by a “sort of restlessness” urging her to return to school after eleven years away from teaching (JY).

While in our master’s programs, both of us received assistantships to teach and supervise preschool teachers under the direction of different faculty mentors. In that capacity and independently of one another, each discovered that while it was demanding and challenging, we enjoyed the role of teacher educator. Janet recounts an instance that illustrates her transition into a new role as teacher educator. While supervising a preschool teacher, Janet “could see so clearly what one of the children in [the teacher’s] class needed,” but she felt as though her “arms were tied securely to [her] sides.” Her perspective had shifted, and she looked for ways to help another learn to teach. The “image still lingers,” reminding her that as teacher educators, we “touch children, both present and future, through the hands of the teachers [we] teach” (JY).
Parallels in our lives as teacher educators continue. Both of us served for a time as adjunct faculty members, teacher educators working primarily in field-based assignments; both left the university to pursue terminal degrees, and returned years later as permanent members of the same elementary education faculty. Through countless shared experiences over the course of 14 years since our return, our professional lives have interwoven into the fabric of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) where not only teaching, but also scholarship and citizenship are valued and rewarded.

In her narrative about being a teacher educator, Janet ponders the broadened arena of her work, an arena that has shifted from a single classroom to encompass schools, districts, the “national and even international level” through “professional organizations [that have] allowed [her] to come to know other teacher educators and scholars . . . thereby . . . [shaping her] identity as a teacher educator” (JY). Lynnette, too, reflects on the magnitude of a teacher educator’s sphere. Recognizing the scale of their potential to impact society, she states that there are “lots of people who teach teachers and . . . make an impression on them,” but teacher educators have a greater obligation to the “unseen faces of children who will be taught by those [she has] taught” (LE).

Conclusion

While neither of us claims to be the same individual we have always been, both of our narratives reflect a constancy of our sense of self-as-teacher. Our self-study reaffirms that our current role as teacher educators does not place us in a strange, new category of educator—one separate and apart from teachers or teaching. While we may teach in a different context, a different population, and perhaps to a slightly different end than we did at other times in our lives, at each turn of the road, our evolving identity as a teacher has remained with us.

It is impossible to gauge the mediating influence of our earliest experiences on our professional identities. It is clear, however, that both of us developed dispositions in our youth that are evident in the ways we now view ourselves as teacher educators. In particular, both of us grew comfortable with the idea that one who teaches has an obligation to those she teaches. We discovered the rewarding feelings of being a teacher when learning takes place. Most importantly, both of us felt called to teach (Serow, 1994). These aspects of our identity have not been abandoned. Rather, they remain central to our professional identity.

Our narratives about becoming teachers remind us of the particular obligation we as teacher educators have because of our potential to influence those who will teach others. Likewise, examining our experiences as classroom teachers has deepened our understanding of the relationship between teachers and learners. It is interesting to note that our narratives of self-as-teacher do not center on technical expertise or even mastery of curriculum. Even though we recall different events in our lives as teachers, it is our stories about the children that provide the essence of our identity as teachers.

We do not assert that we are in some way unique in regard to our development as teachers. Our formative experiences are quite likely common to other teachers. Our desire and inclination to teach others from an early age places us in the mainstream with many other teachers. Further, it is not uncommon for teachers to feel as though they were called to teach (Bullough, 2005; Serow, 1994), and many teachers center their teaching on the needs of individual students.

The most critical juncture in our narratives, then, lies in our account of becoming and being teacher educators. It is, after all, the apparent contrast between the lives of teachers and teacher educators that ignited our inquiry about the mediating influence of prior experience on the ongoing development of our professional identities. Analysis of our narratives did not dislodge our belief that we are, indeed, real teachers, even though the context of our teaching has shifted over time. While our students are now generally adults and our institutional ties are with the university rather than a single school, we still feel we are called to teach and we experience a great deal of satisfaction when our students learn. We feel an obligation to those we teach and embrace the importance of individual learners.

Ultimately, the purpose of our self-study was to enhance our future relationships with classroom teachers, allowing us to make deeper connections with them. Our inquiry taught us we ought not look to the context of our teaching to find common ground with classroom teachers. Features such as institution, age of the learner, or even learning objective will change across a teacher’s career. Rather, it is at the heart of teaching—within the self-as-teacher in relationship with a learner—that such common ground is likely to be found.

Our self-study demonstrates that in our future work, we can expect to encounter classroom teachers who are likely to focus on differences in context—to situate us in a place outside of where they are. We are not likely to change their perceptions of us because they have not travelled our road. But we can meet them where they are, because we have been in that place.

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