Canadian Perspectives on the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices

Edited by
Julian Kitchen & Tom Russell

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Volume 2

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Résumés des chapitres en français

Chapitre 1
Julian Kitchen et Tom Russell: *Introduction : Améliorer la formation des enseignants au Canada par le biais de l’auto-analyse*


Chapitre 2
Tom Russell: *Enseigner aux enseignants : ma façon d’enseigner EST le message*

Ce chapitre relate, sous forme autobiographique, comment s’est développée sur une période de vingt ans ma pédagogie personnelle de la formation des enseignants. Dans mon enseignement auprès des futurs professeurs de physique, mes préoccupations allaient bien au-delà du traitement des faits abordés dans les documents du programme d’études en sciences. Mon objectif était d’aider les nouveaux enseignants à trouver des moyens de favoriser une compréhension ancrée dans une expérimentation concrète des phénomènes à expliquer. Dans ce compte rendu, je m’attache à montrer comment diverses expériences (pour lesquelles je dois remercier bon nombre de personnes) ont donné forme à ma compréhension des processus en œuvre dans la formation des enseignants, tout en soulignant l’importance d’offrir des expériences tout aussi fortes aux personnes qui apprennent à enseigner. Ayant moi-même constaté comment le fait d’écrire au sujet de mes expériences m’a aidé de manière importante à mieux comprendre ce que j’ai appris, j’encourage les futurs enseignants à documenter leur propre apprentissage à partir de l’expérience.

Chapitre 3
Anthony Clarke et Gaalen Erickson: *L’auto-analyse, cinquième incontournable*

Dans cet article, les auteurs soutiennent que le milieu universitaire a connu une amnésie dans le domaine de l’auto-analyse à l’égard de l’héritage intellectuel qui sous-tend l’auto-analyse en tant qu’outil de compréhension des pratiques d’enseignement. D’Aristote à Dewey, la notion d’enquête ou de délibération sur l’expérience pratique a constitué un thème récurrent. C’est cependant l’exploration du rôle de l’« expérience pratique » par Joseph Schwab qui, plus récemment, a le plus contribué à centrer l’attention sur l’« enseignant comme créateur de savoir » et comme interprète du curriculum dans la classe. Ce travail revêt une importance particulière parce qu’il s’est fait à un moment où la recherche en enseignement cherchait sa place dans les milieux savants, et où la « rationalité technique » (Schön, 1983) était l’instrument utilisé pour trouver cette place. C’est dans ce contexte que la caractérisation par Schwab des pratiques...
d’enseignement en fonction de quatre incontournables (l’enseignant, l’étudiant, le milieu et la matière enseignée) a fait ressortir l’importance de l’expérience pratique et ouvert la voie à ce qui constitue selon nous le cinquième incontournable, à savoir l’auto-analyse.

Chapitre 4
J. Gary Knowles et Ardra L. Cole: Faire de la recherche sur la « belle vie » : Réflexions sur la pratique professorale

Dans cet article, nous présentons une analyse raisonnée de l’auto-analyse en tant que pratique professorale. Au moyen d’un bref exemple de nos travaux courants d’auto-analyse, nous illustrons notre processus d’enquête et la façon dont il nous a aidés à mieux saisir le sens de notre vie et notre travail de professeurs en éducation. Nous incluons des extraits d’entrevues sur le passé personnel, de nos écrits réflexifs individuels et collectifs et d’échanges de courriels afin d’examiner de près, par le dialogue, le rôle que joue la remise en question (questioning), ou enquête (inquiry), dans le développement de la pratique réflexive. Nous examinons, dans son sens large, le rôle de l’enquête dans notre propre perfectionnement professionnel en tant que formateurs d’enseignants. Plus précisément, nous explorons la place qu’occupe la remise en question dans nos approches pédagogiques. En mettant en lumière auprès des enseignants et des formateurs d’enseignants les divers moyens par lesquels nous mettons en pratique les théories et croyances auxquelles nous adhérons, nous apportons une contribution à la réflexion et la pratique associées à la formation et au perfectionnement réflexifs des enseignants.

Chapitre 5
Clive Beck et Clare Kosnik: De la cohorte à la communauté, dans un programme de formation préalable des enseignants

On entend souvent dire que les étudiants en enseignement devraient être groupés par cohortes pendant leur programme de formation préalable. Dans cet article, nous décrivons comment nous avons mis en œuvre un modèle de cohortes, et nous en examinons les effets sur nos étudiants en enseignement. Nous avons relevé de nombreux effets positifs, tels qu’un haut niveau de participation aux activités en petits groupes et activités pour l’ensemble de la classe, une meilleure sensibilisation à la valeur de la collaboration, et une plus grande prédisposition à prendre des risques dans les interrelations entre étudiants et au cours des stages. L’approche s’est cependant révélée assez exigeante pour le corps professoral, ce qui donne à penser qu’un solide appui institutionnel sera nécessaire pour permettre une mise en œuvre à grande échelle du modèle.

Chapitre 6
Tim Hopper et Kathy Sanford: Représenter les multiples perspectives de soi en tant qu’enseignant : la formation à l’enseignement en milieu scolaire et l’auto-analyse

Cet article décrit un processus d’auto-analyse qui s’est développé entre deux formateurs d’enseignants, deux étudiants en enseignement et leurs collègues dans les écoles. La recherche trouve son origine dans un projet triennial de recherche-action qui portait sur les méthodes d’enseignement et la mise en place d’un cours intégré de formation des enseignants sur le campus et le terrain appelé School Integrated Teacher Education, ou SITE (formation à l’enseignement en
milieu scolaire). Le cours visait à préparer les étudiants à la carrière d'enseignant. Se fondant sur de multiples sources de données, les chercheurs abordent trois perspectives issues du projet SITE, soit celles des professeurs d'université, des étudiants en enseignement et des professeurs d'école. Fait important, le projet SITE a permis aux enseignants d'avoir des « conversations sur l'enseignement » qui ne leur seraient normalement pas possibles, les étudiants en enseignement ayant créé un espace où les enseignants pouvaient articuler leur savoir. Très puissant, ce savoir aidait à structurer la pensée des personnes qui le présentaient aussi bien qu'il instruisait les personnes qui voulaient l'entendre.

Chapitre 7
Julian Kitchen: *La boucle de la rétroaction dans la pratique réflexive : Un formateur d'enseignants répond aux écrits réflexifs des enseignants en formation*

La pratique réflexive est chose répandue depuis de longues années dans le domaine de la formation des enseignants. Cependant, à mesure qu'elle se répand, elle risque de devenir moins rigoureuse. Une façon d'améliorer la pratique réflexive chez les enseignants en formation préalable consiste à rehausser la qualité de la rétroaction fournie par les formateurs d'enseignants. Dans cette auto-analyse, l'auteur examine ses réponses aux portfolios réflexifs au cours d'une période de cinq ans. Il définit et illustre huit catégories de réponses, pour ensuite réfléchir à la rétroaction qu'il donne aux enseignants en formation préalable et en examiner les conséquences au regard de la formation des enseignants.

Chapitre 8
Tom Russell et Shawn M. Bullock: *De la parole à l'expérience : une transformation du cours de formation préalable à l'enseignement de la physique*

Ce rapport sur une auto-analyse collaborative décrit et interprète l’approche pédagogique que nous avons adoptée au début d’un cours sur les méthodes d’enseignement de la physique à l’intention des enseignants en formation préalable. En outre, il énonce la stratégie que nous avons appliquée pour créer un contexte propice à un apprentissage productif. Nous mettons l’accent sur les efforts déployés pour amener les candidats à l’enseignement à prendre part à un dialogue sur l’apprentissage de la physique et l’apprentissage de l’enseignement de la physique. Pour cela, nous leur avons fait vivre de brèves expériences d’enseignement dans le premier mois d’un programme de formation préalable des enseignants, avant le premier stage pratique. Nous avons recours à des méthodologies d’auto-analyse pour cerner et recadrer nos perceptions à l’égard de l’enseignement et de l’apprentissage dans un contexte où nous avons mis en œuvre une approche pédagogique de la formation des enseignants avec laquelle nous-mêmes aussi bien que les candidats à l’enseignement n’étions pas familiers.
Chapter 1

Introduction:
Improving Canadian Teacher Education through Self-Study

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Understandings of teacher education scholarship and practice have changed dramatically since 1990. Peter Grimmett’s (1998) reconceptualization of teacher education emphasized the importance of building a culture of inquiry in which practitioner research is supported and facilitated. Practitioner researchers combine understanding educational practices with changing their educational practices and their understanding of themselves as teachers. Through this process, they “become producers, as well as mediators and consumers, of knowledge” (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001, p. 306). The knowledge acquired through practitioner research, however, has long been discounted by some academic researchers. As Somekh (1993) writes, “In this way, the operation of power in the social system works to neutralize the voice and influence of practitioners and promote the hegemony of traditional academic researchers” (p. 28). Zeichner (1999) identified the emergence of practitioner inquiry and self-study as one of the promising directions of the new scholarship of teacher education. He praised the “deep and critical look at practices and structures” (p. 11) in much of the practitioner research he reviewed.

Self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP), a methodology characterized by examination of the role of the self in the research project and “the space between self and the practice engaged in” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15), is one way in which teacher educators can research their own practices in order to improve the learning of preservice and practicing teachers. While S-STEP research has “used various qualitative methodologies and has focused on a wide range of substantive issues” (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001, p. 305), the primary emphasis is on analysis of personal practice. As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) state, it is through written reflection and teacher conversations that we negotiate the tensions between ourselves and our contexts, between biography and history.

In the years since Zeichner’s comments in 1999, the self-study of teacher education practices and its methodology have developed a strong foothold among teacher educators. A thriving community of teacher-educator-researchers supports a large Special Interest Group at the American Educational Research Association, a biennial international conference at Herstmonceux Castle in England, and the professional journal Studying Teacher Education (published by Routledge from 2005), and a growing number of books that report and discuss self-studies. Members of this community,

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1 We employ the acronym S-STEP rather than the abbreviation self-study in this introduction. We prefer this form as it better reflects the dynamic process of simultaneously examining self and practice.
Chapter 1

through their active involvement in other practitioner and research communities, have ensured that S-STEP has made a contribution well beyond the internal discourse among its members.

S-STEP Focuses on How Teacher Educators Teach

In Developing a Pedagogy of Teacher Education (2006), John Loughran illustrates how the self-study of teacher education practices can help a teacher educator draw on the authority of experience (Munby & Russell, 1994) to convey complex understanding of effective teacher education practice. In defining pedagogy, he emphasizes the importance of the “relationship between teaching and learning and understanding through meaningful practice” (p. 2). Given the complexities of learning about teaching and teaching about learning, as well as the “competing cognitive and affective tensions that influence learning and growth through experiences in practice settings” (p. 3), teacher education is a highly complex and specialized field of practice. Developing a pedagogy of teacher education entails an examination of this complex interplay in order to effectively prepare beginning teachers.

The complex dynamics of effective teacher education practices are clearly expressed by Loughran (2006):

Teaching about teaching therefore hinges on: supporting students of teaching as they learn to be comfortable about progressively relinquishing control in order to learn to better manage the many competing aspects of teaching through engaging with the problematic; while at the same time responding similarly to the very same situation in one’s own practice. In many ways, seeing anew what one already sees is one way of managing the complexity of teaching about teaching as it requires a familiarity with practice in concert with maintaining a distance from practice in order to see what is happening while it is happening. (p. 35)

The single most comprehensive resource on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices is a two-volume international handbook (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004) to which a number of Canadian teacher educators have contributed.

The Role of Canadian Teacher Educators in S-STEP

Canadian teacher educators have played an active role in the self-study of teacher education practices. For example, nearly half the chapters in Enacting a Pedagogy of Teacher Education (Russell & Loughran, 2007), which is a follow-up volume to Loughran’s (2006) Developing a Pedagogy of Teacher Education, are by Canadian teacher educators. Clare Kosnik (2007) of the University of Toronto discusses ways in which researching her practices has enriched her understanding of teacher education and improved programs for students in her cohorts. Ruth Kane (2007) of the University of Ottawa discusses how she learned to make her teaching explicit and to articulate a conceptual framework for teacher education through research on her practice in New Zealand and Canada. Shawn Bullock (2007), then a doctoral candidate at Queen’s University and now at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, explicates how he learned to value innovative pedagogy in his methods classes. Andrea Martin (2007) of Queen’s University explores from within the challenges of program restructuring. Tom Russell (2007) of Queen’s University explains how studying his own practices has enabled him to enact a pedagogy of teacher education over a period of 30 years.
Amanda Berry (2007) introduced the notion of tensions “as a way of representing and better understanding the ambivalence and contradiction so intrinsic to the complex nature of pedagogy” (p. 139). While S-STEP is highly collaborative, it is also characterized by tensions between different understandings of what it means to engage in S-STEP research. In particular, there are tensions concerning how much to focus on the self or on teacher educators’ practices. Such tensions are both inevitable and productive in a diverse community that brings together practitioners from different epistemological and methodological traditions. Amanda Berry’s work reminds us that it is through dynamic tensions, rather than rigid certainties, that we constantly develop and enhance our practices. Our choice of the acronym S-STEP rather than the abbreviated form self-study reflects our view that both the self and teacher education practices must always be in view, even as individual studies tilt more in one direction or the other.

These tensions also exist within each of us as researchers. Tom Russell has written extensively about reflective practice and teacher educator identity (Munby & Russell, 1995; Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001), yet he has been equally engaged in writing about particular practices (Russell, 2007). His chapter in this collection bridges these polarities. Julian Kitchen’s work in S-STEP has largely focused on teacher educator identity and the development of communities of practice, but other work, including the article in this volume, has focused on specific teacher education practices.

This volume of the Canadian Association for Teacher Education’s Polygraph Book Series serves two purposes. First, in the spirit of the series, it features significant Canadian contributions to teacher education in general and to S-STEP in particular. As Canadian scholars often publish in American and international journals, their work may not be easily identifiable as Canadian or readily accessible to Canadian teacher educators. This volume brings together seven articles that reflect the impact of Canadians in this field. By drawing attention to Canadian contributions to the field of S-STEP over the past 20 years, this introduction guides readers to other contributions to the field by these and other Canadian authors.

Second, readers are introduced to ways of engaging in the self-study of teacher education practices. The seven contributions to this volume offer a range of approaches to S-STEP as a way of understanding and engaging in the world of teacher education. In the introduction, we situate these works in the broader context of S-STEP and also draw attention to other works by these and other Canadian authors. In doing so, we highlight important questions in the field as well as a range of methodological approaches to S-STEP. We hope that this collection provides an engaging introduction for readers new to S-STEP and interesting perspectives for those who are already familiar with this discourse community.

Historical Overview of S-STEP

The inspiration for self-study of teacher education practices occurred in a symposium at the 1992 meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Four new assistant professors of education—Karen Guilfoyle, Mary Lynn Hamilton, Stefinee Pinnegar and Peggy Placier—joined Tom Russell to present papers about their own teaching practices and Fred Korthagen provided the discussant’s comments. A member of the audience suggested the need for a special interest group to do more of the type of work described in the papers, and at the 1993 meeting of AERA the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices special interest group was formed with a large initial membership.

Tom Russell (2004), in recalling the formation of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group of the American Education Research Association in 1993, writes:
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Those who formed [it] recognized the need for *studies of their own practice settings*. At the same time, they recognized the importance of *self* in such research as well as the possibility that teaching others may require different skills and perspectives than teaching subjects. (p. 1200)

S-STEP emerged in an environment in which teacher education specialists were advocating for more authentic approaches to teacher education. Grimmett (1995) promoted the “craft knowledge” of teachers, while Munby and Russell (1994) stressed the “authority of experience.” Russell, McPherson and Martin (2001) articulate one of the central understandings that emerged from teacher education reform efforts during this era:

> The inability of traditional programs to prepare beginning teachers with more than an imitative understanding of their role emerges, in large part, from the lack of explicit connections between the actions of teachers and the pedagogical theories that inform practice. (p. 42)

In tracing the development of S-STEP, Russell argues that “our growing awareness of the importance of *self* in teacher education” was “not only necessary but also inevitable” (p. 1192) given the failure of the technical rational model to serve the needs of practitioners. Prior to their work in S-STEP, Munby and Russell (1990) puzzled over ways in which reflective practice could help teacher candidates better know themselves and their practices. Russell’s later focus on making explicit what teachers actually do and think (Russell, McPherson & Martin, 2001) is a natural extension of this work. In “Teaching Teachers: How I Teach IS the Message”—included in this collection—Russell (1997) observes that, as there is a vast difference between telling and teaching, teacher educators need to devote as much attention to *how* they teach as to *what* they teach in order to adapt practice to better serve the needs of the teacher candidates they prepare. Developing a pedagogy of teacher education entails an examination of the complex interplay among teacher educators, teacher education practices, teacher candidates and the educational context.

> “Self-Study: The Fifth Commonplace” (2004) by Anthony Clarke and Gaalen Erickson, which is included in this volume, offers readers an overview of the intellectual heritage of S-STEP. While Clarke and Erickson celebrate the growth of S-STEP in recent years, they remind us that puzzling over questions of professional practice has long been a hallmark of effective teacher education practice. They demonstrate this by making connections to the work of Dewey, Schwab, Connelly and Clandinin, and Schön, all of whom had a profound impact on the development of S-STEP.

The S-STEP special interest group continues to be one of the largest within AERA. Since 2005, *Studying Teacher Education: A Journal of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices* has been the best single source of S-STEP research; Canadian teacher educators are frequent contributors to this journal. In the same year, a Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices special interest group was formed within the Canadian Association for Teacher Education and now contributes sessions to the annual CATE/CSSE conference programme.

A major activity of the S-STEP community is an international conference held biennially since 1996 at Herstmonceux Castle in East Sussex, UK. In the early 1990s, Herstmonceux Castle was purchased for Queen’s University by its most important benefactors, Alfred and Isabel Bader. Now the Bader International Science Centre of Queen’s University, the castle provides a conference venue in a truly unique setting. Links to the proceedings of the first eight international conferences on self-study of teacher education practices are available within the site at [http://ssstep.blogs.uoit.ca/](http://ssstep.blogs.uoit.ca/)

Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole were among the first to articulate the importance of personal reflection in S-STEP research. “Researching the Good Life: Reflections on Professional Practice”
(1994a) is included in this volume because they were among the first to articulate a strong rationale for attempting to understand our lives and work as teacher educators. Building on their earlier work on life history (Knowles, 1993), personal theories of teaching (Cole, 1990), and collaborative reflection (Knowles & Cole, 1994b), they analyze critical incidents in their work to make explicit the ways in which beliefs, values and personal experiences inform their practice. At the same time, they are conscious of the impact of their reflexive process on their practice and their relationship with their classes. Another example of this approach is Kitchen’s (2005a; 2005b; 2009) work on relational teacher development. He, like Knowles and Cole, is mindful that his personal journey of discovery is significant primarily because it has the potential to improve teacher education practices and teacher candidate learning.

More common in S-STEP are studies that foreground specific teacher education practices. One example in this volume is Julian Kitchen’s (2008) article, “Using Written Feedback to Promote Critical Reflection: A Teacher Educator Responds to Reflective Writing by Preservice Teachers.” In this article, the author retrospectively examines a particular practice in order to identify characteristics that proved helpful in providing meaningful feedback. Throughout, he suggests that who he is and how he responds to teacher candidates are as important as pedagogy of reflective writing. Another example in this volume is Tom Russell and Shawn Bullock’s (2010) “From Talk to Experience: Transforming the Preservice Physics Methods Course.” The authors of this collaborative self-study identified that teacher candidates had difficulty framing pedagogy as a relationship between teaching strategies and learning effects. This report describes and interprets their efforts to engage teacher candidates in dialogue about learning physics and how to teach physics. In doing so, they employed self-study methodologies to frame and reframe their perceptions of teaching and learning.

While teacher educators engaged in S-STEP often begin by studying themselves and their classroom practices, the questions raised often prompt efforts to improve the programs in which they work. For example, Clarke and Erickson’s inquiries prompted them to develop an experimental teacher education program centred on practitioner inquiry. Clive Beck and Clare Kosnik studied specific classroom practices (Kosnik & Beek, 2008), but this eventually led them to puzzle over the nature of the cohort they directed and, later, teacher education more broadly (Kosnik & Beek, 2009; 2011). In “From Cohort to Community in a Preservice Teacher Education Program,” contained in this volume, Beck and Kosnik (2001) draw on their years of experience working in a teacher education cohort to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of the cohort model. The richness of the article derives from both quality data obtained from teacher candidates and the authors’ voices as teacher educators intimately engaged in the development of community in their cohort. They demonstrate that teacher education is most effective when academic and professional learning take place in a community of learners, and that this requires teacher educators to take an active part in community building.

Experimentation with new and varied representational forms has been welcomed in the S-STEP community. Cole and Knowles (1995) and Kitchen (2009) write about ways in which life history and narrative inquiry can represent experience through stories. Weber and Mitchell (2004) present a strong case for alternative and artistic modes as means of conveying the essence of S-STEP. In this volume, the example of artistic experimentation is “Using Poetic Representation to Support the Development of Teachers’ Knowledge” (2008) by Tim Hopper and Kathy Sanford. The authors use poetic form to distil and intensify the power of the comments made by teacher candidates about their program. The artistic rendering is combined with rigorous research into the nature of teachers’ knowledge and development.

Many S-STEP papers, including half the articles in this volume, are collaborative in nature. Kitchen and Ciuffetelli-Parker (2009) write:
Collaboration among teacher educators has been part of self-study from its inception and is viewed as one of the defining characteristics of self-study (Lighthall, 2004). Insights from a collaborator can help individual practitioners notice patterns in their practices and directions for professional growth. As collaborative self-study becomes increasingly accepted, an emerging area of practice and inquiry is self-study communities of practice. (p. 101)

Teacher educators in S-STEP have long recognized that community makes for more effective teacher candidates learning, as evidenced in the articles by Beck and Kosnik and by Hopper and Sanford. The contributions by Knowles and Cole and by Russell and Bullock illustrate that dialogue between two engaged and reflective teacher educators can prompt insights and refinement of practice. An extension of this work is the development of larger communities of teacher education practice, such as those described by Kitchen and Giuffetelli-Parker.

As can be seen from this historical overview, S-STEP has made a substantive contribution to teacher education since its formal inception almost 20 years ago. While it is a natural extension of earlier practitioner inquiry, S-STEP has developed a rich literature base of its own. In writing S-STEP papers, it is important to read and cite works in this tradition. The Canadian work highlighted in this volume is part of a rich international dialogue among teacher educators. While a particular S-STEP paper may foreground the self, the practice or the context, it is vital that all three be kept in view by authors and that the work contribute in some way to the improvement of teacher education.

Questions for the Future of S-STEP

In 2012, the field of self-study of teacher education practices is well established. In less than 20 years, the field has been marked not only by countless conference papers at many different conferences and its own international conferences but also by an international handbook and a journal. S-STEP research is active in a range of countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. Like so many special interest groups, members of S-STEP are scattered, often with only one or two active individuals at a given university.

The challenges that confronted those who would improve teacher education programs in 1990 are still with us today. S-STEP has proven particularly attractive to new teacher educators, and a number of articles about their earliest experiences and their transitions from doctoral study to the early years of teaching teachers provide valuable insights. While studying the self remains important, much recent work in the field has been collaborative in nature: critical friends, collaboration among colleagues, and collaborative research across institutions.

There are important areas of teacher education that have received little attention within the S-STEP genre, and these areas include assessment practices, field supervision of teacher candidates, the perennial gap between practicum schools and teacher education departments, and the challenges of connecting what teacher candidates learn in their education courses to their rich and powerful experiences as student teachers in practicum schools. The S-STEP community is also interested in the experiences of teacher educators from diverse communities, as they experience unique challenges as they navigate the tensions between self, practice and context.

Like many other domains of education, the S-STEP community needs to continue to ask probing questions about our identities as teacher educator, our practices in our teacher education classrooms, the contexts in which we work, and the links between research and broader issues of teacher education. The articles in this volume are intended to give readers an understanding of the nature and range of S-STEP research as well as an overview of this active and evolving field of
teacher education inquiry. It is our hope that this will inspire readers to both explore and contribute to the S-STEP discourse, particularly in areas that need more attention.

References


Chapter 2

Teaching Teachers: How I Teach IS the Message

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Canada

Introduction

I am a teacher who teaches teachers. When I use that description to introduce myself, it always seems awkward, highlighting the complexity, the ambiguity, and the apparent contradictions of the enterprise of teacher education. This chapter is an account of how I teach teachers, why I teach them that way, and how I came to hold the views and display the practices I do. To start at the beginning makes as little sense as starting at the end. And so I begin somewhere in the middle, work my way back to the beginning to indicate the origins of some of my beliefs and practices, and then return to the present, acknowledging debts and treasured connections made along the way.

I write to the people I teach, about their work and my own work. One significant piece of writing more than four years ago was rediscovered recently by virtue of the fact that a beginning physics teacher, Paul Tarc, from my 1991-92 class, returned to Queen’s in 1995-96 as a full-time M.Ed. student after three years of teaching. In 1991-92 I taught a physics class in a local high school (Frontenac Secondary College). Paul had watched me teaching in the school and had offered some thoughtful critiques of that teaching. In so doing, Paul also made it clear to me that he attended carefully to his own learning experiences. My final assignment each year in my science methods course is to write a personal ‘story of learning to teach.’ It seems to be an unusual assignment, and I tell those in my class that I want them to have it so that in two or three years’ time they can look back and see how far they have progressed since their pre-service courses and teaching experiences.

Here is what I wrote to Paul in 1992, in response to elements of his ‘story of learning to teach’ assignment:

The obvious point, then, as I look at it, is that save for exceptional people like you (and we should learn from the exceptions!), people come [to teacher education programs] to be told how to teach X so that they can go forth and teach X for the next 35 years and collect their pensions and retire from teaching X. The TELLING cycle can't be broken, for most people. I like to think I've broken it myself, but I don't think I did when I was teaching at Frontenac! I've figured out how to break it in the McArthur [McArthur Hall,

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I began my work in preservice education with the challenge of doing less ‘telling’ how and what to teach than most teacher educators seem to do in their teaching. A group of experienced teachers sensitized me to this issue just before I moved into preservice work.

I returned to the secondary school classroom in a significant way (one-third time, for two half-years) in 1991-93 (after 24 years away from it!). I fell far short of my own ‘ideals’ for science teaching, and I learned a great deal about what I am trying to help new teachers to learn.

Understanding how we learn from experience continues to be a fundamental theme in my approach to teaching people how to teach.

My view of the importance of ‘understanding where our knowledge comes from’ is one that I try to practice myself, as this excerpt illustrates. Four years ago, I had no way of knowing that, at the 1993 AERA conference, the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group would be formed, and that I would see the pre-service program at Queen’s University transformed, profoundly, to a design with ‘early extended teaching practice’ that promises to remedy the ‘making something of the experiences’ shortcomings that I mention in my letter to Paul.

I try to be a teacher educator who walks his own talk. Only recently have I begun to recast this to see that, in the special context of learning to teach, the most powerful initial influence on each new teacher’s classroom practices may be the millions of images of teaching that go with them into the practice teaching setting. Against these images, there is little hope for significant influence from any generalizations about learning they may have drawn from their own student experiences. Cultural maxims (such as ‘Don’t smile until Christmas’ or ‘Keep it simple’) may be remembered, but I see little hope for influence from what I say in class or what teacher candidates read in books and
research about good teaching. Recently I have found it useful to think in terms of getting our practices to catch up to what we say and write, and to catch up to what we say we believe about teaching and learning. It is also a matter of learning how to make our beliefs influence our practices, recognizing all the while that the central matter is ‘listening to our practices’ - learning what words mean when we express them in our actions, and learning what ideas do to the people we are teaching. These are major challenges for experienced teachers and teacher educators. Those who are new to teaching may not even see the issue, because they have not had access to the experiences of teaching that are essential to understanding just how easy it is to separate actions from beliefs and goals at the front of a classroom.

Collecting ‘Backtalk’ by Early Necessity: Why Do Teachers So Rarely Ask Directly for Students’ Comments about the Learning Experience?

When I started at Queen’s in 1977-78, I had two classes of 25-30 people in secondary science methods. The room was a ‘pedagogical nightmare,’ with eight huge lab benches firmly fastened to the floor, and a central corridor leading to the front, where a ninth ‘demonstration’ bench blocked the route to the chalkboard. Simply to get closer to the people I was teaching, I moved to the back of the room where there was a smaller but closer chalkboard. After only a few weeks, I sensed that my students were having reactions I needed to know about that were not being vocalized to me. In fact, this was one of my earliest reactions to preservice teaching: it was so lacking in any kind of evidence of how my teaching would ultimately affect their teaching. I began to invite groups of five or six people for pizza at my home, where I could hear about and we could discuss the confusions I was creating by deliberately reducing the amount of talking I did.

Later, I found ways to collect ‘backtalk’ on paper and share it with my students, and I invented (for myself) a ‘mid-course evaluation’ in which people supplied Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggestions. These were compiled, printed, and returned at the next class for all to read and discuss. It became a powerful way of showing them how many features of teaching are appreciated by some but not by others. I also found that the data were vital to establishing an ‘agenda’ that I very much wanted to introduce, but which seems rare in most teaching: ‘Why does the teacher teach in particular ways?’ The mid-course evaluation became an important opportunity for me to raise a new set of issues for the remainder of the course. Students did not always accept my explanations, but they respected them and could learn more from my classes once they had started to think about why I was doing (and not doing) things in particular ways. The classic comment came in December, 1978, during the discussion of the mid-course evaluation, when one particularly frustrated individual demanded, in a tone verging to frantic, ‘Why didn't you tell us you weren't going to tell us?’ The irony was obvious, both in the question itself and in the fact that I had told them but they had not known what my words meant. I continue to emphasize small-group discussion and leadership from within the group, but that comment convinced me, forever, just how powerful and important it can be to resist the basic teacher tendency to fill classroom silence with talk. Of course all teachers do this because they have seen all their own teachers do it.
Master of Rote Learning:
Do Most People Never Realize that Alternatives Exist?

How much of what we do as teacher educators is in reaction to our own experiences of schooling? Don’t most of us enter the profession to make teaching even better than the teaching at which we were so successful? Don’t teachers who move into teacher education do so to improve the process of learning to teach? As I look back, it is fairly obvious that I was good at mastering ‘school knowledge.’ I completed secondary school in New York State, where the long-standing system of ‘Regents exams’ continues almost 40 years later. In each course, the mark on the New York State Board of Regents examination in a subject was my final mark for the course. For some reason I have never parted with the copy of the April 1959 issue of American Heritage magazine, given to me by the man who taught me American History in Grade 12. A small card inside states, ‘To the highest Senior in American History Regents in June, 1959. Tom Russell, 98%.’ Although I did not see it that way at the time, having the highest average in my graduating class meant that I had fairly good skills of ‘rote learning.’ Science and mathematics were my most obvious strengths, so how do I explain the success in history? I can still remember my history teacher explaining that if we memorized his 34 outlines for common topics on the Regents examination, then we would be well prepared for any essay question that might be presented to us. I must have taken him at his word. In 1993, when I returned to Cornell University for a conference 30 years after completing my first degree, I sat in the quadrangle where statues of Ezra Cornell and Andrew Dickson White face each other, and made notes to myself about how little I had understood the learning process itself and about how dependent I had been on recall rather than conceptualization of what I was trying to learn. A course in American History at Cornell had quickly ‘brought me up short’ as I discovered that I was expected to know several different interpretations of a set of events, along with the names of the individuals who developed them. Memory was no longer the key; understanding mattered. It was little wonder, then, that my early years of teaching (1963-67) saw me fascinated by the 1960s critiques of learning in schools. Today, in my science methods classes, I am far more likely to be asking questions such as ‘What is the point of teaching density?’ and ‘Now that we have demonstrated what happens, what’s the point?’

Teaching Without Formal Preservice Teacher Education:
Only Teaching Experience Can Generate the Essential Learning-to-Teach Questions

From Cornell, I stepped directly into the Peace Corps, five months before JFK was shot. As Africa’s most populous country, Nigeria was a prime destination for volunteers who could teach, and experience or formal training were welcome but not required. Physics was a scarce subject, so off I went to Nigeria, wondering where my first meal would come from. My two-month training program was held in New York City, and preparation for teaching was only a modest part of the overall ‘orientation’ to a new set of cultures. Two weeks of each of three different languages was more than my rote learning skills could master. The training program did provide me with two opportunities to stand before children taking summer school courses in science, but I seem to remember more about the elevators to get us out of the subway station than I do about those first moments of teaching. In Nigeria, my students and I survived my ‘teaching myself how to teach’ - an experience that confirmed that virtually anyone with more than 15 years of experience as a student has seen enough of teaching to be able to make ‘teaching-like moves’ at the front of the classroom. Some of my earliest teaching moves were horrendous, yet I doubt that prior training would have made a big
difference. I remember starting with science and math to the younger students, and one day in a
day I said something that caught their attention but not mine. When algebra teachers need
equipped science lab to teach physics, I had no hesitation about making good use of the
equipment, but I did not understand the importance of helping students make sense of their lab data.

Today, Peter Chin and I speak of the difference between ‘What?’ and ‘So what?’ but then I think I
worked with a sense that the phenomena somehow ‘spoke for themselves’ and made a case on their
own for the law or theory being illustrated. Some physics teachers may recall a refraction experiment
(in the unit on light) in which pairs of straight pins are used on both sides of a rectangular glass block
to infer the path of the light ray through the block. It was one thing to show students how to line up
the pins, and it was quite another to know how to unpack the assumption that light travels in straight
lines. In hindsight, I was fortunate to begin my science teaching with students who had, I eventually
learned, an innate scepticism about western science. In a non-western culture, there are many non-
scientific explanations for natural phenomena, and these can predispose students to doubt the truth
of what the science teacher sees so clearly. My own career as a student had never suggested the
possibility that learning could involve multiple sets of explanations for the same events; small
wonder that the external examinations tended to yield high failure rates. In western culture, students
learn ‘H2O’ as a substitute for ‘water’ long before they could possibly know its chemical meaning. In
Nigeria, they had every reason to ask what such a term could possibly mean, yet they had no
guarantee that their teacher would reward their scepticism.

When I returned from Nigeria to do my teacher education in an M.A.T. program at Harvard, I
had two important reactions. I realized that I had many more questions than my colleagues who had
no prior teaching experience, and I realized that it would have been wonderful to experience that
program of preservice education after just one year of teaching. I kept thinking how differently I
would have taught in my second year, just completed in Nigeria. In the summer of 1966, after
Magazine on a Sunday when I happened to buy the newspaper. Holt was teaching in a private school
on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, and I managed to make telephone contact with him and then
meet him at the school. I still have my $1.85 paperback copy of How Children Fail (Holt, 1964), the
book that had a profound influence on my next year of teaching, in 1966-67. In hindsight, Holt’s
ideas on ‘Fear and Failure’ and ‘Real Learning’ became the first ‘theory’ that I tried to express in my
Teaching ‘practice.’ This was not theory in a formal research sense, but ‘theory’ in the form of
conclusions about learning drawn from personal teaching experience. Here is a paragraph marked as
one that I noticed 30 years ago, before starting my third year of teaching:

The invention of the wheel was as big a step forward as the invention of the airplane--
bigger, in fact. We teachers will have to learn to recognize when our students are,
mathematically speaking, inventing wheels and when they are inventing airplanes; and we
will have to learn to be as genuinely excited and pleased by wheel-inventors as by
airplane-inventors. Above all, we will have to avoid the difficult temptation of showing
slow students the wheel so that they may more quickly get to work on the airplanes. In
mathematics certainly, and very probably in all subjects, knowledge which is not
genuinely discovered by children will very likely prove useless and will be soon forgotten.
(Holt, 1964, p. 125)
It was the era of discovery learning, and I was teaching from the second edition of the PSSC Physics course. Holt speaks about mathematics teaching, but the wheel-and-airplane example transfers readily to the physics context. Holt’s issues and examples were powerful ones for a new teacher, simply because I had never thought about ‘slow students’ and how teaching them might mean more than ‘slowing down the pace of my teaching.’ I recall clearly saying over and over again to my students that year: ‘What matters most to me is what you are going to remember about these ideas five years from now.’ That was my personal translation of Holt’s message, intended to signal that I really did want to focus on ‘real learning.’ I still do. Perhaps that indicates one of the reasons why some teacher candidates find my approach ‘less than comfortable.’ If a teacher educator aims for the long haul while a new teacher seeks only the basics needed for the next teaching assignment, missed messages become more and more likely in both directions.

Inservice Teacher Education before Preservice Work: A Captive Audience Working for High Grades Cannot ‘Talk Back’

My career in teacher education began with three years (1974-1977) at the Ottawa Valley Field Centre of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, where I worked closely with David Ireland and others on short-term and long-term activities for teachers and principals. Three years with an inservice focus before any preservice experience convinced me of a powerfully important difference between the two: when teachers can vote with their feet, they will! Ongoing inservice work is only ongoing as long as the teachers feel that their time invested is justified in the value of the activities. Preservice teacher education is fundamentally different because those learning to teach are enrolled in university programs and cannot ‘vote with their feet.’ I was astonished when I learned that some of my colleagues made attendance compulsory or included attendance as an element of their marking schemes. Yes, I believe each and every one of my classes is important, and I try to make each one as valuable and productive as possible. Yet it is important to me that teacher candidates be able to ‘vote with their feet’ in the ways that university students usually assume that they can. Increasing numbers of absences can be the clearest indication that something is not right and there are issues to be addressed sooner rather than later. In such situations, teacher educators have an invaluable opportunity to model how a teacher can deal with such a situation, and a range of issues come to mind:

- How can a teacher respond most constructively when ‘problems’ become apparent?
- What prevents students from speaking directly about their concerns?
- What are the risks to students and teacher, and when do the risks outweigh the potential benefits?

I have dim memories, as well as vivid ones, of times when I explored these issues in front of my classes, with no idea whether the result would be positive or negative. In 1995-96, the mid-course evaluation in my M.Ed. course on action research seemed to provide a way to move forward, but something went wrong as I tried to unpack the issues the class had expressed as strengths and weaknesses in our first six weeks. Although we all felt set back by that discussion, the positive and constructive responses from the class members in the following weeks led, quite unpredictably from my perspective, to an intense and successful conclusion for many in the group. Our journey into assumptions about teaching and learning had moved many people forward in their personal understandings of the complexities of teaching.
Research on Reflective Practice (Schön) and the Authority of Experience: Learning is in the Experience, and Reflection Can Link Learning Back to Action

I began teaching preservice courses (in secondary science methods) in 1977, and by my fourth or fifth year at Queen’s I had a basic pattern established that got me from one end of the academic year to the other without major protests to the Dean’s office or major shortcomings on my course evaluations. My attention continued to focus on the theory-practice interface in teacher education: Does what we do in ‘the crystal palace’ (where it all sounds so easy) have any impact on what they do in classrooms? I developed ways of encouraging the people in my science methods course to tell me about their experiences in practice teaching placements, and their honest replies were clear: practice teaching is what matters, and so does the style of the associates or cooperating teachers who receive them into classrooms, share resources, and offer their voices of experience.

In 1983, I read Schön’s (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner* just before my first sabbatical leave; I treasured the opportunity to work with those ideas in another setting, with ‘space’ away from the intense experiences of my first six years of preservice teaching. My first research grant followed soon after, and since 1985 Hugh Munby and I have pursued a series of research grants related to the development of teachers’ professional knowledge. Funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada continues to be a treasured resource that facilitates progress with new ideas, perspectives, and practices. By 1988, Hugh and I were using the phrase, ‘the reflection is in the action,’ to express our sense of Schön’s much-debated ‘reflection-in-action,’ which we interpret as indicating that coming to see events of practice in new ways is a first step which must be followed by expression of that new perspective in changed practices. More recently, we have begun saying ‘the learning is in the experience,’ rather than ‘from’ the experience. If we think of learning as something that ‘happens later,’ then we shortchange ourselves and those we teach. The ‘here and now’ is what we share and what we have to work with. What we learn can always be reinterpreted later, but it is important that people leave any and every class with a sense that they have learned something.

One of the great flaws in my own interpretation of the history of teacher education relates to this issue. We speak to teacher candidates as though they can understand our words as we do, yet they have little experience of teaching to guide their understanding of, or to promote their challenging of, what we say. Then we wonder later why they have ‘difficulties’ with their earliest teaching experiences. When this happens, I tell myself that what they learned was not what I intended them to learn, and I reassess my own teaching with a view to designing in-class events and experiences that will generate more of the learning I intend. Of course, critiques of teaching in schools seem to deal with similar issues.

**Action Research – From the Ford Teaching Project and Douglas Barnes to Jack Whitehead, Jean McNiff, and the Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation:**
Teacher Research by and for Teachers Is Coming of Age

My earliest introduction to Action Research came from the work of John Elliott and Clem Adelman on the Ford Teaching Project in England in the mid-1970s. That work is still classic in its respect for teachers’ thinking about their work and in its efforts to show what is possible in thinking about teaching. (Elliott, 1976-77). I encountered this work as I was engaging in ‘in-service work before preservice teaching,’ in which we were showing several groups of teachers how to study their own teaching (Ireland and Russell, 1978). As they came to understand their teaching, they became eager...
for ‘respectable alternatives’ to ‘traditional’ teaching in which curriculum content is presented, practiced, reviewed and tested. Douglas Barnes (1976) had just published *From Communication to Curriculum*, and his accounts of the potential benefits of students working in small groups appealed to many of the teachers. Barnes’ contrast between ‘transmission’ and ‘interpretation’ still influences the thinking of many who work in teacher education. The work of Barnes and of Elliott and Adelman supported my growing interest in teachers’ abilities to understand their own practices, and paved the way for my eager response to Schön’s (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner* six years into my work in preservice programs.

For reasons that remain unclear, I did not follow closely the literature of action research in education and teacher education during the 1980s. I knew it was there, but no individual contributions or personal contacts drew me in. In 1992, I ‘reconnected’ with Action Research by meeting Jack Whitehead (University of Bath, UK) in Stanford at a Teacher Research conference related to the imminent publication of *Teacher Research and Educational Reform* (Hollingsworth and Sackett, 1994). A conference on ‘teacher research’ seemed unusual and promising. While that conference and the associated book are, in my view, early ‘landmarks’ in the field of teacher research, it was Jack Whitehead who provided me with a personal re-introduction to action research. His frequent asking of the question, ‘How can I improve the quality of my students’ learning?’ always strikes me as going to the heart of what every teacher and teacher educator should be asking. Jack has introduced me to a range of people in England, including Pam Lomax and Jean McNiff, who with Jack are co-authors of *You and Your Action Research Project* (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 1996). Jack has been able to join me in supporting exciting developments in action research in my own province of Ontario, where the Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation has just completed a stimulating and promising one-year project encouraging teachers to explore the potential of action research in their classrooms (Halsall and Hossack, 1996).

**Returning to the Physics Classroom, Twice: Why Didn’t I Think of It Sooner?**

What is teaching? Only in recent years have I paid particular attention to the way beginning teachers seem predisposed, by most of their experiences as students, to assume that a teacher’s greatest challenge is to be able to answer every question students may ask. Perhaps many teacher educators make that assumption, just as many teachers do. Six history teachers in Ottawa in 1976 taught me otherwise, and the lesson fits with my interpretation of my own past as student and teacher. Most teachers quickly become very good at answering all the questions, far better than they were when writing examinations themselves. How do you keep the challenge in teaching once you can answer all the questions? For me, the essential challenge of teaching follows from realizing that teaching’s greatest mystery is the fact that we have no control over what our students make of what we say and do as we teach, and this is as true for learning to teach as it is for learning subjects. In teacher education, it may be far more important to be able to ‘tune in’ to, and work with, each individual. After at least 15 years at school and university, and perhaps years of experience in other work settings, the intending teacher is a unique ‘bundle’ of experiences, images, and beliefs about teaching. While coming to understand one or more disciplines accumulates over most of two decades, the transition to teaching is usually limited to a year or two. I incline increasingly to the view that I need to know as much as possible about each individual with whom I work.

A sabbatical leave at the University of York (UK) provided access to practices and experiences of preservice teacher education in a different social and political context, stimulating extensive
questioning of a program structure that had become quite familiar. Re-entering the physics classroom personally appeared to be an appropriate and promising professional move, and I was fortunate to be able to make the administrative arrangements quite easily. When I returned to the physics classroom, 75 minutes every day from September 1991 through January 1992, and again in 1992-93, I discovered that I first had to prove to myself, my students, and the other science teachers in the school that I could cover the curriculum and achieve the same class averages that they could. Beyond that, and much more fully in the second year, I was able to focus on what the physics students were making of the curriculum and what the beginning teachers in my physics methods class were constructing from my teaching - in a school and at the university. Interestingly, that group of new physics teachers in 1992-93 gave me some very frustrating messages about what they were making of my teaching in two contexts, one of which was intended to help them bridge the gap between theory and practice. To make sense of their backtalk, I began to think of ‘barriers to learning to teach’ which, in varying degrees, exist between the students themselves and their preservice teacher education program experiences. In summary form, those barriers are as follows:

1. Teaching can be told.
2. Learning to teach is passive.
3. Discussion and opinion are irrelevant.
4. Personal reactions to teaching are irrelevant.
5. Goals for future students do not apply personally during teacher education.
6. ‘Theory’ is largely irrelevant to learning to teach.
7. Experience cannot be analyzed or understood.

While the majority of teacher candidates disagree with most of these statements if asked directly for reactions, their own actions in my classes appear to contain at least some elements of these statements, and those who are least happy with my teaching tend to be those who enact those ‘barriers,’ even as they may disown them in what they say and write. These barriers to understanding what is required in the actions of learning to teach tend to be consistent with society’s views of teaching (as an ‘easy’ profession) and with the images of the relationship between words and actions conveyed in school and university classrooms. Returning to the classroom to teach the same course twice had a profound impact on how I understand my own work with new teachers (Russell, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). I realized that the teaching role I enacted was very different from the one to which I aspire and hope that new science teachers will eventually enact. I lived and breathed the countless constraints on teaching options that fade when one’s teaching experience is limited to teaching within ‘the crystal palace,’ as one teacher fondly described the Queen’s University Faculty of Education. That ‘crystal palace’ reality is changing as this book goes to press, as we pilot a new preservice program design with 62 individuals prior to expanding it to all 700 teacher candidates in 1997-98. On September 3, 1996, at a 7:30 a.m. staff meeting prior to students arriving for the first day of school, six new teachers and I were introduced to a school staff of 70, and the new teachers began the first day of 14 weeks of teaching that will precede most of their course work in education. I am truly fortunate to work in an organization that is enacting many of the principles that I have discovered for myself over two decades.


Backtalk, P.O.E. and PEEL:
Teaching is Long Overdue for Shock Treatment

I know of only one sustained ‘assault’ on the general assumptions about teaching and learning that I have been trying to question and challenge in my own teaching practices over the years, and that is the Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (Baird and Mitchell, 1987; Baird and Northfield, 1992) centred in the state of Victoria in Australia. This project seeks to unite teachers and students in having students take more responsibility for, and assuming a more active role in, their own learning. The project appears to be a forerunner of the growing interest in teacher research and action research in education. When a group of teachers in one school joined together to encourage ‘good learning behaviours’ as antidotes to students’ ‘poor learning tendencies,’ their professional lives were touched forever, and not always positively. Changing the patterns of teacher-student and student-student interaction is no easier in Grade 3 or in Grade 10 than it is in a teacher education classroom. Yet the initial ideas of the project have stood the test of time and spread to a network of schools that take turns producing issues of a newsletter, PEEL SEEDS, now in its thirty-fourth issue of alternative teaching strategies and associated student work.

‘Backtalk’ is a strategy quite consistent with encouraging more personal responsibility for learning, and providing backtalk to teachers certainly would count in my book of good learning behaviours. The single most powerful strategy that I have taken from PEEL that I can use readily in my teaching is the ‘P.O.E.,’ short for Predict-Observe-Explain. While it may be most easily described in the context of science teaching, it can be applied across the school curriculum. Science classes often involve demonstrations in which students are given opportunities to observe phenomena as an explanation is given. Observations are selected for the students by the teacher, and so the students’ sense of involvement and engagement is often quite limited. The P.O.E. strategy involves having the students make predictions before they are permitted to observe the phenomenon, and the effect of this apparently modest change can be very dramatic, even shocking! However, in addition to this, the explanation part of this strategy is also very important. No matter whether the prediction is correct or incorrect, the participants need to explain their prediction in light of the observation. Hence, the total P.O.E. strategy causes an engagement in understanding the phenomenon beyond that which is ‘normal’ for a classroom demonstration. In fact, some of my fondest memories of my classes relate to times when those I am teaching generate a P.O.E. experience for the class and my own personal prediction is shown to be incorrect. For example, in last year’s class, two people prepared identical balloons inflated to different levels and then clamped off, but the balloons were connected by a piece of tubing. They asked for predictions of what would happen when the clamps were released so that air could move freely between the balloons. I was very sure that the air would move so that the balloons would both become the same size, and so I was speechless when they released the clamps and the small balloon shrank, increasing the size of the larger one.

Do backtalk and P.O.E. merit the term ‘shock treatment’? Is that what teaching and teacher education require? In teacher education, as in teaching at any level, our responsibilities as teachers include understanding how people learn and change, treating learners with respect, and accepting responsibility for helping individuals and groups to learn more about their own learning. Is it unkind to suggest that the teaching strategies most of us remember focused on (1) getting us to think we understood, and (2) getting us to think that learning is easy? I see backtalk and P.O.E. as samples of simple, elegant, cross-curricular teaching strategies that can bring refreshing winds of change to any teaching-learning context. They appeal because they focus on the unexpected, which is often the trigger for new understandings. Backtalk, P.O.E., and similar ‘shocking’ strategies have much to contribute to teacher education.
The Content Turn and then the Pedagogical Turn:
Learning to Teach is a Two-Step Process

While John Loughran was visiting Queen’s University for the Fall Term of 1995, he paid me the professional compliment of sitting in on every class I taught that term. Our discussions afterwards were among the most exciting of my career because they were about my personal practices as well as the general issue of how we help teachers learn to teach. One day’s discussion led to the idea that becoming a teacher educator (or teacher of teachers) has the potential (not always realized) to generate a second level of thought about teaching, one that focuses not on content but on how we teach. Most people who begin a teaching career seem to focus, naturally and understandably, on what they teach. Most seem to report that the earliest years of teaching a subject (or age group, if elementary) generate significant rethinking of subject matter (or how children of a particular age think about their world, across the curriculum). I began to refer to this, in the secondary context, as the ‘content turn,’ following Schön’s (1991) ‘reflective turn.’ People who move on to work in a teacher education context must continue to think about how teaching affects one’s understanding of what one teaches, but a new dimension also appears. When individuals find themselves recommending particular teaching strategies for particular purposes, they start to realize that their own teaching must be judged similarly. This new perspective constitutes making the ‘pedagogical turn,’ thinking long and hard about how we teach and the messages conveyed by how we teach. This began to happen to me in 1977 when I wanted to model ‘less teacher talk’ to new teachers, who were accustomed to being taught by teachers who did most of the teaching.

I have come to believe that learning to teach is far more complex than we have ever acknowledged within teacher education or within society generally. The content turn seems to come naturally, because preparing and presenting familiar material to those who find it unfamiliar seems to lead most people to ‘fill in the gaps’ in their own understanding of a topic. The conditions for entering into and surviving the pedagogical turn are far less clear. Little is written about it, few people seem to talk about it, and many teacher educators seem not to recognize its significance. Perhaps these three conditions are inter-related. There is and always will be a ‘content’ of teacher education, and teacher educators will make a content turn as they come to terms with presenting that content. For some, and perhaps for many, that may be enough. Others go further, moving beyond the various content pieces of the formal teacher education curriculum to begin to make the pedagogical turn, realizing that how we teach teachers may send much more influential messages than what we teach them.

As the letter early in this chapter and the letter that follows indicate, some teacher candidates do find themselves drawn, early on, into the pedagogical turn. Others seem to see no need at all for attention to the effects of how we teach, and so they may leave my course feeling frustrated by how I taught it. They may wonder why I went to the effort of teaching in unexpected ways. They may wonder why I did not include some of the topics they expected me to ‘cover.’ Speaking of a content turn followed by a pedagogical turn that may or may not occur helps me to understand my enterprise and my reasons for persisting to call attention to how I teach. I believe that schools already offer extensive resources for developing the content of teaching and surviving the content turn. I believe that teacher education has a responsibility for indicating the possibility of moving into the pedagogical turn as one’s career unfolds. This is, of course, a message more easily conveyed when people have significant teaching experience before their courses in a preservice teacher education program, and it is very encouraging that the program within which I teach will provide extensive early teaching experience for all teacher candidates from the 1997-98 academic year.
How I Teach Is the Message:  
Is Anybody Watching? Listening? Hearing?

Everything comes together for me, as a teacher educator, when my efforts to challenge people’s premises and assumptions about learning come full circle and appear later in their subsequent teaching. Schools and universities have similar ‘cultures’ which tend, quite unwittingly, to suppress discussion of the learning process. P.O.E, backtalk, and the idea of barriers to learning to teach share the property of calling attention to the learning process itself. While I believe that it is essential for teacher education to place each teacher candidate’s own learning in bold relief, if there is to be any hope that they will make similar moves as teachers, there are always some who resist my efforts to bring the individual learning process into the mental spotlight. Some class groups resist these efforts more than others, and the 1994-95 group is one I remember in that way. Thus it was very special to receive, as I was preparing this chapter, the following thoughts from one member of that class as he completed his first year of teaching at an international school in Europe:

Date: 20 Jun 96 09:42:13 EDT  
To: Tom Russell <RUSSELLT@QUCDN.QueensU.CA>  
Subject: End of Year

Hi Tom,  
Well I’ve made it. I am tired and feel as though I deserve a vacation. I am looking forward to next year, when I know that I will change many things. Today was the last day with students, and tomorrow we have to hand in our report cards, so I have to get working. I was thinking of you today as I received an email from a student of mine. I have attached it at the end. I think that I took many things away last year from your teaching style [emphasis added]. I was very open with many of my students, very flexible, trying to let them learn what they wanted to learn. I know that this did not work with all students, and I will modify my approach next year to try to take into account a greater variety of learning styles (some kids definitely need more direction with step-by-step instruction). However, I know that for some students, this year was a very successful one. Anyway, I just wanted to share this with you. I will be in Canada for 2 days in July, and a week in August. I hope to stop by and say hello. Have a great summer, and I hope that you find yourself well prepared for the major changes taking place in the teacher education program in Ontario.

From a student in my grade 8 class:  
Well, here we are, at the end of the year. You know, this year I have learned many things, and I want to thank you for giving me the liberties and privileges that you have. I have really enjoyed the course, and I wish I could stay another year.  

Learning the HTML language was one of my primary goals, and what I've learned gave me hours of enjoyment at home making my own pages at my house. Giving me the N:\ drive access was really cool, and it gave me a feeling of authority.  

I was just writing this note since I wanted to thank you for teaching the course. I'll try to keep up my work with the crusader when I'm in Japan. When you do send me the files in Japan through Compuserve, they'll need to be text files, since I don't have Pagemaker. Thanx for the cool year! (JH, personal communication, June 20, 1996)

When JH and I parted company at the end of his preservice teacher education program, I had little evidence that he had attended to how I taught the class. There had been some ‘rocky moments’ with his class, and I was not feeling I had done my best when we finished the year. After only a few exchanges by electronic mail over the year, it was an ‘unexpected treasure’ to learn that he attributed
some of his first year successes to the manner in which I taught his class. I am pleased that he himself received encouraging backtalk from a student and will always be grateful that he then made the effort to share that with me. Comments such as this make the risks and the uphill efforts worthwhile. Learning from time to time, usually in unexpected ways at unexpected moments, that some new teachers did ‘catch the message in my teaching’ and express it in their own teaching sustains my conviction that how I teach should be the message that teacher candidates take from my classroom. If they also remember how much teacher education consumes me as it also fascinates and puzzles me, then I have successfully shared my professional passion for teacher education.

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This paper argues that there has been an academic amnesia in the field of self-study with respect to the intellectual heritage underlying self-study as a way of understanding teaching practice. From Aristotle to Dewey the concept of practical inquiry or deliberation has been a recurrent theme. However, Joseph Schwab's exploration of the role of the "practical" is the most significant in recent times in focusing attention on "the teacher as knowledge creator" and interpreter of curriculum in classroom settings. This work is particularly important as it came at a time when educational research sought a place in the academy and "technical rationality" (Schön, 1983) was the vehicle for establishing that position. It was at this point that Schwab's characterisation of classroom practice, in terms of four commonplaces (the teacher, the student, the milieu, and the subject matter), highlighted the significance of the practical and paved the way for what we argue is a fifth commonplace: self-study.

The emergence of self-study—sometimes referred to as teacher research or teacher inquiry—as a legitimate form of inquiry and valued source of knowledge about teaching is a relatively new phenomenon in educational research. This form of inquiry has made significant inroads in recent years at local, national, and international levels. Forums such as the Castle Conference (http://www.ku.edu/~sstep/castle.html), the American Educational Research Association “Self Study of Teacher Education” special interest group (http://www.ku.edu/~sstep/) and the International Conference on Teacher Research (http://www.uwsp.edu/education/tr/) bear witness to this development. However, self-study as a practice is not a new endeavour and a number of leading theoreticians from earlier times attempted to capture its nature and substance. Although their terminology was often different to that used today, we believe their contribution to understanding teaching practice is an important part of the intellectual heritage of self-study practitioners. In particular, we concur with Eliot Eisner (1984) in believing that many of the foundations for the current discussions of self-study can be attributed to the work of Joseph Schwab:

[Schwab] helped initiate a trend that has grown in each subsequent year. That trend has been the humanization of educational inquiry; the exploration, development, and refinement of humanistic modes of inquiry for studying classrooms and conducting educational planning. His articles provide a sophisticated theoretical justification of the virtue and complexity of practical inquiry. … They explained why eclecticism was not a practical liability but a necessary feature of the deliberative process.

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Chapter 3

and why deliberations—the exercise of the human's highest intellectual powers—was necessary in making decisions that always must suit changing contexts riddled with idiosyncrasies. (p. 204)

The significance of Schwab's contribution lies in our contention that self-study is a defining feature of professional practice, and therefore, is necessarily a commonplace of that practice. To establish this claim, it is important to first appreciate how we view professional practice and self-study, and then how we relate these concepts to the context of teaching. This discussion lays the groundwork for a consideration of Schwab's contribution to the current zeitgeist in the study of teacher practice and our argument that self-study constitutes the fifth commonplace.

What Is Professional Practice?

There are many definitions of professional practice and only in more recent time has teaching been considered a profession (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Gordon, 1994; Meek, 1998). Key dimensions common to all definitions include: specialized knowledge, intensive preparation, a code of conduct, an emphasis on continued learning, and the rendering of a public service (Brown 2001; Sachs, 1997; Sykes 1990). Important to our discussion here is the concept of 'continued learning' and its emergence in the teaching and teacher education literature.

Hargreaves (2000) charts four distinct phases over the past 100 years that illuminate the development of teaching as a profession: pre-professional, autonomous professional, collaborative professional, and the post-modern professional. In the first two phases, teachers are regarded primarily as technicians in the classroom. In the first of the two phases teachers follow system-wide directives about particular teaching practices, and in second phase, although given greater authority to select from among particular pedagogical strategies or approaches, teacher practices are carefully prescribed by those in positions of authority (superintendents of instruction, etc.). In both phases the curriculum is 'a given' with little discretionary license on the part of the teacher to negotiate or modify it.

In the phases three and four we witness the emergence of inquiry as an element of teaching practice where the legitimacy of personal practical knowledge (Connelly, & Clandinin 1985) signals a shift in our appreciation of how teachers continue to learn about their profession and the role that self-study plays in informing their work as educators: "teachers often learn best in their own professional communities . . . on-site, built into ongoing relationships" (Hargreaves 2000: 165). In the third phase, collaboration among teachers enables authentic professional communities to develop in schools that investigate and respond to local problems and issues. In the fourth phase, the post-modern phase characterized by a recognition of complexity and uncertainty, Hargreaves argues that now more than ever, it is imperative for teachers themselves to engage in systematic and sustained inquiry that "lifts teachers out of the pre-professional prejudice that only practice make perfect" (p. 167). Failure to do this, Hargreaves cautions, will result in deprofessionalization forces wresting control of curricula and pedagogical practices from teachers (witness recent calls for "centralized curricula, and testing regimes", Hargreaves 2000, p. 168).

Although Hargreaves warns of the political agenda that underlies any call for professional standards there is, nonetheless, almost universal agreement that self-study is an essential element of professional practice. For example, in the United States, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards 2002) defines a teacher as one who is able to "analyze classroom interactions, student work products, their own actions and plans in order to reflect on their practice and continually renew and reconstruct their goals and strategies.". In England, the General Teaching Council (2002) regards professional teachers as those who "continually reflect on their own practice,
improve their skills, and deepen their knowledge." The Australian College of Educators, argues that it is incumbent upon members of the teaching profession to be "reflective practitioners. . . committed to their own professional development: seeking to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment, expand their teaching repertoire, and to adapt their teaching to educationally sound developments arising from authentic research and scholarship" (Brock 2000, p.11). In short, for teaching to assume the mantle of a 'profession' there must be evidence that its members inquire into their own practice, into ways of improving and developing their teaching consistent with the unique contexts in which they work and the current research that pertains to their work as educators.

What Is Self-Study?

[Self-study is] a generally agreed upon set of insider research practices that promote teachers taking a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students. . . [it] involves classroom teachers in a cycle of inquiry, reflection, and action. In this cycle, teachers question common practice, approach problems from new perspectives, consider research and evidence to propose new solutions, implement these solutions, and evaluate the results, starting the cycle anew. (Lewison, 2003, p. 100)

As Lewison (2003) indicates, self-study is research. We emphasize the word 'research' to deliberately signal that self-study is a systematic and rigorous process designed to explore and inform teacher knowledge and practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) and to make aspects of this process public in some manner (Loughran, 2003). The word 'research' here is consistent with the type of activities that Hargreaves uses to delineate the pre-professional and professional phases in the history of teaching.

Self-study takes on many forms and includes practitioners at all levels of the educational enterprise. Underlying all forms, is the analysis of one's own practice with all the attendant challenges and celebrations associated with such scrutiny. It is encouraging to see these issues prominent in the current teaching and teacher education literature, for example, Pritchard's (2002) and Zeni's (2001) analyses of the ethical issues in self-study. Self-study is also an active enterprise with outcomes more often represented as teacher knowing (where one's practice is always in a state of evolution) rather than teacher knowledge (where one's practice is viewed as relatively fixed and static). This shift is consistent with Hargreaves' rendering of the post-modern professional in teaching. It is no coincidence that paralleling the emergence of self-study as a legitimate form of research into teaching practice, is the development of richer and more varied representational forms to capture the essence of self-study; forms that were unheard of in the educational literature 25 years ago. In fact, some of these forms are extremely difficult to represent in traditional text formats (Cole & McIntyre, 2001; Leggo, 2001; Weber & Mitchell, in press).

Mindful of Cochran-Smyth and Lytle's (1993) caution about the potential insularity of self-study practitioners, it is important that the knowledge and practices generated within these communities is shared across the broader educational community. Public dissemination is particularly important as self-study—largely a case-based literature—is enriched by peer commentary and critique. Although the issues surrounding public credibility and the dissemination of this work remain problematic, a crucial aspect of this dimension of self-study is negotiating the tension between one’s own practice and the more public understandings of that practice (Loughran, 2003). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), in their article on criteria for self-study research, highlight this juncture and the tension that it raises for self-study researchers:
Quality self-study research requires that the researcher negotiate a particularly sensitive balance between biography and history ... such study does not focus on the self per se but on the space between self and the practice engaged in. There is always a tension between those two elements, self and the arena of practice, between self in relation to practice and the others who share the practice setting (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001, p.15).

**Self-Study Is a Defining Feature of Professional Practice**

Sachs (1997) argues that inquiry is a hallmark of professional practice but, following Fullan (1993), worries that at times teachers become so preoccupied with pupil learning that they often neglect their own learning:

One of the hallmarks of being identified externally as a professional is to continue learning throughout a career, deepening knowledge, skill judgment, staying abreast of important developments in the field and experimenting with innovations that promise improvements in practice (Sykes, 1990). Here lies one of the paradoxes for teacher professionalism for as Fullan (1993) notes, as a profession, we are not a learning profession. While student learning is a goal, often the continuing learning of teachers is overlooked. While continuous learning and the improvement of our practice should be at the core of teacher professionalism in many instances this is not so. (Sachs 1997, p. 7)

We share this concern but believe there is an important distinction between a preoccupation on student learning (e.g., planning, teaching, and evaluation) and a focus on how students learn. Schön (1988), among others, argues that the latter is the cornerstone of professional practice. He calls this process "giving kids reason" (p. 19). It is a process whereby teachers are continuously alert to the ways in which students' actions and words provide glimpses in to how they construct and make sense of the world. We argue that a focus on 'how students learn' is a necessary precursor to teachers being curious about their own practice. Indeed, Schön's conceptualization of 'reflective transformation' is strongly evocative of current self-study practices:

We can encourage one another to tell stories about experiences that hold elements of surprise, positive or negative. Stories are products of reflection, but we do not usually hold onto them long enough to make them into objects of reflection in their own right. When we get into the habit of recording out stories, we can look at them again, attending to the meanings we have built into them and attending, as well, to our strategies for narrative description. When can pay attention to the assumptions and ways of framing experience . . . [we] can see ourselves as builders of repertoires rather than accumulators of procedures and methods. (p. 26)

Thus, when inquiry is reframed in terms of how students learn, it then becomes embedded in practice and teacher learning is a natural, even unavoidable, outcome. We are not claiming that student learning is the only object appropriate for teacher inquiry, as there are many other aspects of teaching practice that warrant inquiry such as the structural and political contexts of teaching. Rather, we are simply claiming that student learning is a critical aspect of all teachers’ practice and as such represents an important focus of their work as educators. However, without inquiry, one's teaching practice becomes perfunctory and routinized. We contend that when teachers cease to be inquisitive about their practice then their practice ceases to be professional. This is an important distinction for
Many recent authors (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hamilton, 1998; Loughran & Russell, 2002) illustrate this point. Their accounts demonstrate how self-studies are enacted and generate propositions that enhance, enrich, and transform teaching practice. These studies are carried out in the "indeterminate, swampy zones of practice" (Schön 1987, p. 3) and the support of colleagues engaged in similar enterprises sustain on-going and critical engagement with the issues and challenges that such investigations present (Loughran, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2002). Self-study authors’ accounts confirm Hamilton and Pinnegar’s (1998) observation that "the multilayered, critically imbued, reality-laden world is the text of the self-study scholars" (p. 235)—an observation no doubt familiar to the community of self-study scholars but for a long time rarely valued or recognized beyond the members of the self-study community itself. For a better understanding of how the community of self-study educators arrived at this focus on teaching as inquiry we turn to the influence of Joseph Schwab's pioneering work on moving the focus of educational research from the technical to the practical.

**Schwab’s Perspective on Teacher Inquiry**

As we suggested in the introduction to this article we think that there has been something of a collective amnesia in the self-study literature with respect to the foundational role played by Schwab. We think that he was responsible for drawing our attention to the importance of the processes of practical inquiry and deliberation with regards to a variety of educational issues. Although his later work tended to focus more on curriculum design and deliberation, there are many implications in his writings for carefully considering the nature of teaching and learning practices. In fact, in many ways he foreshadowed Donald Schön’s influential work on reflective practice, as both drew extensively from Dewey’s pragmatic epistemological stance as well as his theory of inquiry. Why did Schwab’s perspective and conceptual frame seem to disappear over the past 25 years from the self-study and teacher research community? We suspect it was no doubt a combination of factors and we will simply speculate about some of these factors. First, the time was not quite right for the type of open-ended and situational inquiry that Schwab was proposing. Quantitative traditions in educational research, as well as the broader social science community, were still dominant and Schwab’s focus on “the practical” was out of step with this view of knowledge and inquiry. Second, he tended to focus much of his later writing on issues and problems of curriculum design and development and many educators did not see immediately the implications of this work for other areas of educational inquiry. Finally, he used a very opaque form of language, one that was not very accessible nor communicative to teachers or to many educational researchers. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, we think that some of Schwab’s central commitments and concepts such as: the importance of the ongoing, multi-faceted process of deliberation; the nature of practical inquiry into the problems of practice; and the consideration of the commonplaces in educational practice; are central to an analysis of current issues of self-study and teacher inquiry. We briefly outline below our interpretation of his influence on the field and conclude by arguing for the additional ‘commonplace.’

Schwab’s enduring focus on the importance of dialogue and deliberation stems from his strong commitment to action accompanied by reflection on those actions – a disposition that can be traced back to his avid reading of Aristotle and Dewey. Whilst he claimed that the reflective process could be accomplished at the individual level, he argued that the deliberation within a “learning community” (Schwab, 1975, 1976) was a more powerful means for generating the necessary insights
to address many educational problems. Shulman (1984) expresses Schwab’s argument in this regard very succinctly: “The virtues of heterogeneity of group membership, of the diverse contributions and perspectives uniquely brought to bear by members of a collaborating group, are forcefully drawn” (p. 185). Thus we see the precursor to much of the contemporary work in “learning communities” (cf. Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Brown & Campione, 1992)—a concept that has become so popular in the educational, social science, and popular literature that a Google search reveals over 550,000 documents or websites which employ that term.

It is the latter two of these commitments – practical inquiry and the notion of commonplaces – that we think are most germane to the community of self-study educators. Schwab’s perspective of “the practical” was the subject of a series of four papers written over a period of 14 years from 1969 to 1983 and it is at the centre of his work on the nature of inquiry into problems of the human condition, particularly those focused on the design of curriculum and the associated pedagogical practices. Much sooner than most curriculum theorists Schwab recognized that the field of curriculum inquiry was more complex and contested than simply designing new curriculum materials and accompanying instructional resources. He wrote about the ‘situated nature of curriculum knowledge’ and the crucial role of teacher as an active creator of knowledge as opposed to a passive transmitter of predetermined curriculum outcomes. The complexity of translating curricular intents into classroom actions and practices led him to propose the four “commonplaces” of pedagogical practice – the learner, the teacher, the educational milieu, and the subject matter.

### A Focus on the Practical: Schwab’s Four Commonplaces

In the introduction to a book of collected essays by Schwab, Westbury and Wilkof (1978) suggest that he may have borrowed the notion of a commonplace from “the classical rhetorical tradition of *inventio*. In its original context, this method consisted of a comprehensive mapping of a territory of a given subject matter by means of a set of *topics or commonplaces* [italics in original] which ordered the possibilities that an orator might need to consider as he sought to develop his arguments” (emphasis in the original, p. 9).

Substituting teacher for orator, we can see the parallels in terms of a teachers’ practice as they invent, or improvise (Yinger, 1990) actions during their numerous engagements with their students and their colleagues in a given milieu or setting. Clearly teachers, and researchers inquiring into teaching, need to consider these commonplaces for the similar purpose of “ordering the possibilities” of their own actions and inquiry. So for Schwab (1973):

The curriculum constructed of these particulars will be brought to bear, not in some archtypical classroom, but in a particular locus in time and space with smells, shadows, seats, and conditions outside its walls which may have much to do with what is achieved inside. Above all, the supposed beneficiary is not the generic child, not even a class or kind of child out of the psychological or sociological literature pertaining to the child. The beneficiary will consist of very local kinds of children and, within the local kinds, individual children. (p. 502)

The first commonplace identified by Schwab is the ‘learner’; teachers must be familiar with the learners who are to be the “beneficiaries of the curricular operation. … It must include general knowledge of the age group under consideration: what it already knows, what it is ready to learn, what will come easy, what will be difficult” (p. 502). Therefore good teaching requires educators to actively seek out the aspirations and anxieties that may affect student learning: “This is required in
order to know the ways in which this unique group of children depart from generalities about similar children of the same age” (p. 502). Therefore knowledge of ‘the particular’ in combination with ‘the general,’ underpins Schwab’s first commonplace. The second commonplace is the ‘teacher.’ For Schwab, good teaching practice is embedded in a deep and conscious knowledge of the value positions that shape and give meaning to one’s pedagogical practice coupled with a repertoire of and curiosity for different approaches and strategies that enhance learning in one’s classroom. This commonplace emphasizes that teachers are active constructors of curriculum and not merely automatons who ‘implement’ curriculum. And further, that they critically reflect upon their beliefs and actions as educators. Shulman succinctly summarises Schwab’s image of the teacher whose “responsible practice of the art of teaching requires that teachers reserve to themselves the obligation to make decisions and choices regarding ‘what to do, how to do it, with whom and at what pace’ (Shulman, 1983) because these options arise hundreds of times a school day and arise differently every day and with every group of students” (emphasis added), (Shulman, 1984, p. 190). We will return to this description of teachers’ practical judgements as entailing the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘with whom’ and ‘at what pace’ later in the article as we contemplate a fifth commonplace.

The ‘educational milieu’ constitutes the third commonplace. This commonplace is multi-dimensional and includes “the school and the classroom . . . the family, the community, the particular groups of religious, class, or ethic genus” (Schwab, 1973, p. 502). Schwab argues that understanding the various influences on a child is essential to the act of teaching. When teachers ignore the contexts which comprise a learner’s world (“a dominant anti-intellectualism, a focus on material acquisition, a high value on conformity to a nationwide pattern”) (p. 504), not only do they do a disservice to the learner but they find themselves in the untenable position of attempting to mediate a learner’s existing conceptions with the curriculum imperatives of the particular subject they are teaching. This leads us to the fourth commonplace: ‘subject matter,’ “There must be someone familiar with the scholarly materials under treatment and with the discipline from which they come” (p. 502). This commonplace reminds us that there are bodies of knowledge that teachers must be aware of and conversant with if they are to fulfil their mandate as educators. For example, is it sufficient for an educator who is responsible for teaching Reading to draw only on their experiences as a child when they were ‘learning to read’? While this experience may be useful, these educators must continually update their understanding of Reading Education by being familiar with new research and practices in this area.

Therefore, for Schwab, defensible educational thought must take account all four commonplaces—the learner, the teacher, the milieu, and the subject matter. “None of these can be omitted without omitting a vital factor in educational thought and practice. No one of them may be allowed to dominate the deliberation unless that domination is conscious and capable of defense in terms of circumstances” (p. 509). He points to the perils associated with allowing one commonplace to dominate the other by using the example of curriculum ‘bandwagons’: “Indeed, the short merry life of many bandwagon curriculums has often arisen from just such overemphases: the child-centre curriculums of Progressivism, the social-change centred curriculums of the 1930s; the subject-matter centred curriculums of recent reforms, and the teacher-centre curriculums that arise from unionism (p. 509).

Therefore, all four commonplaces underpin the decision-making processes of teaching and learning in classrooms. Each is of equal importance for the way in which educators make sense of and enact their practice. Indeed, Schwab uses the notion of commonplaces to highlight those elements essential for reasoned and reasonable judgements about teaching. However, we argue that Schwab was only partly correct when he characterized teaching as having four commonplaces: for teaching to occur, someone (a teacher) must be teaching someone (a student) about something (a curriculum) at some place and some time (a milieu). There is, and always has been, a fifth
commonplace. For teaching to occur, there must be a ‘somehow,’ a way for an educator to know, recognize, explore, and act upon his or her practice. For us that somehow is self-study.

**Self-Study – The Fifth Commonplace**

The recent ascent of self-study as a legitimate form of inquiry in education research is not due to its sudden adoption by practitioners in the field; self-study has always been an important element of their practice. Theoricians who have recognized the significance of self-study have drawn upon a series of related concepts to articulate this dimension of professional practice. The early works of Dewey (1916) focusing on 'deliberation,' and more recently Schön (1983) on 'reflection' are two such examples. Other examples include Connelly and Clandinin's (1986) focus on 'personal practical knowledge', Fenstermacher's (1994) development of the notion of 'practical arguments', and Grimmett and MacKinnon's (1992) work on 'craft knowledge.' For each of these writers inquiring into and acting upon curiosities, challenges, and surprises that arise from one's teaching constitute the hallmark of professional practice.

Self-study, the fifth commonplace, is a cornerstone to professional practice; it is the life-blood of the teaching and learning dynamic. It constitutes in part the continuing quest to seek viable responses and appropriate actions to the questions of: what to do?, how to do it?, with whom? and at what pace? Without this commonplace teaching becomes repetitive not reflective—merely the duplication of models and strategies learned elsewhere and brought unproblematically in one's classroom. Although self-study may not have been recognized as a commonplace, and indeed as late as the 1980's many educational researchers still cast teachers as merely technicians (Erickson, 1986; Nolan & Huber, 1989; Selman, 1988), we contend that largely through self-study have teachers come to know, problematise, and improve their work as professionals. The change that occurred in the academy in the 1970's and 1980's was the recognition that practitioners indeed possessed a legitimate form of knowledge, constructed while making the judgements to address the above questions hundreds of times in a school day. However, the academy's early efforts to capture and represent these forms of teacher knowledge proved to be extremely difficult, if not impossible (personal communication, Chris Clark, 1990).

An alternative, ‘grass roots’, approach to the problem of making explicit the nature of teachers’ judgements and knowledge was to involve the teachers directly in their own inquiries into their practice. These efforts were typically collaborative projects with teachers and academics and were described as ‘action research’ or ‘teacher research’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1982, Cochrane–Smith and Lytle, 1993; Stenhouse, 1975). This form of inquiry into one’s own practice subsequently was extended from classrooms in the schools to classrooms and contexts in the academy and the field, and came to be described as self-study (Hamilton, 1998; Loughran, Hamilton, La Boskey, & Russell, 2004).

Therefore, the emergence of self-study on the landscape of teaching and teacher education has more to do with the politics of knowledge as it is played out within the academy rather than its practice by teachers in their daily engagement with learners in classrooms. This is not a trivial point and, as we have discussed elsewhere (Clarke, 2001), bears further scrutiny to fully understand why self-study is suddenly receiving so much attention at this point in time.

The significance of self-study in our own work as teacher educators prompted us seven years ago to develop an experimental teacher education program at the University of British Columbia with professional inquiry as one of its central constructs—a construct that features in the name given to this experimental program: Community and Inquiry for Teacher Education’ (CITE). Each year the CITE program is comprised of a cohort of 36 students undertaking their 12-month B.Ed. elementary
A review of teacher education programs around the world reveals that there are many criteria upon which student-teachers are judged to have reached a level of competence in teaching; for example, independence, confidence, self-assuredness, etc. While these are important attributes, in keeping with our belief that self-study is a defining feature of professional practice, there is one attribute that often seems the antithesis of these but one that we value just as highly: the ability of our students to entertain uncertainty. Therefore, across the CITE program—in all coursework and practica experiences—our students are divided into inquiry groups to promote and support self-study of their emerging practices as beginning teachers. Following Lave and Wegner (1991), we believe that beginners must be engaged in the mature practices of the profession at the outset of their career if they are to become fully participating members of that profession. Self-study is a defining feature, a commonplace, of the mature practices of the teaching profession, and therefore a necessary component of the CITE program. If in the minds and practices of our beginning teachers, self-study is viewed as a commonplace of their profession then they become critical consumers of educational innovations introduced by others and also active constructors of teaching and curricular practices within their own classrooms, schools, and communities. The combination of these two, critical consumer and active constructor, signals an epistemological and ontological shift in our understanding of teacher education that, foreshadowed for sometime by the various authors cited earlier, only now is beginning to reshape how teachers’ knowledge is defined and enacted within the educational community.

To conclude, we have argued that self-study is, and always has been, a defining feature of professional practice. That is, self-study is not a new phenomenon in the field of education. However, some conceptualizations of teaching, particularly those held by people who have been regarded as authorities on education, have not recognized, valued, or appreciated the central role that self-study plays within the profession. These authorities have either unwittingly or deliberately discouraged such activities. Even today, efforts to control classroom practices and to have teachers conform to a set of prescribed behaviours, ignores the importance of the unique contexts that define and shape their work as educators. We are indebted to those who have sought to characterize the importance of self-study within the profession. In particular, we believe that Schwab’s (1978a, 1978b, 1978c) seminal papers on ‘The Practical’ left an indelible mark on the profession. His contribution can be found in the works by Clandinin, Connelly, Elbaz, Eisner, Fenstermacher, and Shulman, to name a few, all of whom research and write about the importance the somehow in teaching. It is for this reason that we believe Schwab’s four commonplaces fall short of capturing the complete essence of professional practice even though his rendering of the practical suggests otherwise. We, therefore, submit, that there is a fifth commonplace—the somehow of teaching—and that commonplace is self-study.
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Chapter 4

Researching the “Good Life”: Reflections on Professorial Practice 1,2

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In this article, we articulate a rationale for the self-study of professorial practice and, using a brief example from our ongoing self-study work, illustrate our inquiry process and how it has helped us make sense of our lives and work as professors of education. We include excerpts from life history interviews, our individual and collective reflective writing, and electronic mail exchanges to explore, through dialogue, the role of questioning (or inquiry) in developing reflective practice. In a broad sense, we examine the role of inquiry in our own professional development as teacher educators and, more specifically, we explore the role of questioning in our pedagogies. By making known the various ways in which we put into practice the theories and beliefs we espouse to teachers and teacher educators, we make a contribution to the thinking and practice associated with reflective teacher education and development.

Time spent in the preservice program making explicit and examining ... preconceptions, and developing skills in, habits of, and appropriate attitudes toward reflective practice will facilitate the development of self-aware and inquiring professionals who will then continue to examine and reflect on their teaching. (Cole, 1990, p. 205)

We ... invite preservice teachers to make explicit and external those ideas, theories, and beliefs they have developed and internalized ... as ways of thinking about teaching... We ... encourage preservice teachers to take external experiences and reflect on them, reinterpret them, and reorganize them as an internalized vision of self. (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991, pp. 102–103)

The above excerpts from some of our earlier writings reflect our fundamental beliefs about how teachers come to understand teaching and develop as teachers. The statements derive from our research in the area of teacher development, our observations of developing teachers, and our own developmental experiences as teachers. We now apply the same tenets to our own practices as university teachers and teacher educators, that is, we advocate self-inquiry. In this article, we articulate a rationale for the self-

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1 First published 1994 in The Professional Educator, 17(1), 49-60. Reprinted with permission by the authors, The Professional Educator, and Auburn University’s Truman Pierce Institute and the College of Education.

2 We borrow from Clark (1985) who described the “good life” conditions of the professoriate as: a life centered upon research, low teaching loads, stimulating colleagues, cosmopolitan lifestyle, and national and international travel.
study of professorial practice and, using a brief example from our ongoing self-study work, illustrate our inquiry process and explain how it has helped us make sense of our lives and work as professors of education.

Our self-study work is a form of reflective practice similar to that widely advocated for classroom teachers. For us, reflection refers to “the ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into careful consideration the personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, societal (including social, political, historical, and economic), and ethical contexts associated with [professional work]” (Knowles & Cole, 1994, p. 11). When we situate this inquiry in the context of personal histories (in this case, ours) in order to make connections between personal lives and professional careers, and to understand personal and early influences on professional practice, the inquiry becomes reflexive. Observed and articulated elements of professional practice which are “bent back” on themselves illuminate these connections and influences. Thus, we refer to our self-study work as “reflexive inquiry.”

To illustrate our process of reflexive inquiry, we focus on one characteristic element of our teaching: the use of questioning. We include excerpts from life history interviews, our individual and collective reflective writing, and electronic mail exchanges to explore, through dialogue, the role of questioning (or inquiry) in developing reflexive practice. In a broad sense, we examine the role of inquiry in our own professional development as teacher educators and, more specifically, we explore the role of questioning in our pedagogies. Interpreting the theme of questioning within the context of our individual personal histories illuminates the roots of our use of questioning as a pedagogical tool. And, it also brings to light the related issues with which we grapple, issues that rest in the intersection of our personal histories and our teaching responsibilities and not forgetting, the intersection of our personal histories with the personal histories of those we teach.

Background to Our Self-Study Work

We work at research institutions: Ardra in a graduate school of education where she teaches courses in educational psychology, teacher development, and qualitative research methods to experienced practitioners pursuing master’s and doctoral degrees; Gary in a school of education that sponsors both undergraduate and graduate programs in education, where he teaches doctoral courses in qualitative research methods and teacher development, and is a cohort leader in an alternative, intensive master’s degree (with teacher certification) program. We think that our engaging in reflexive inquiry is important both as a pedagogical practice and because we believe that, if we are to continue to develop professionally, ongoing exploration of our individual and collective practices must be central in what we do.

For many years, as classroom and school practitioners, we engaged in various activities to help us think about and make sense of our developing practice. When we moved from the field to the academy, we naturally continued to think about and question what we were doing and encouraged preservice and inservice teachers with whom we worked to do likewise. We began to write about the importance of developing reflective and reflexive practice and the use of various ways of encouraging that practice (e.g., Cole, 1989a, 1989b, 1990; Cole & Knowles, 1993a; Knowles, 1991, 1993; Knowles et al., 1994; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Olson & Knowles, 1992).

As part of our ongoing quest for professional self-development, and to keep up with the research and publishing demands of the academy, we also developed a program of reflection on our own practices which included analyzing and representing, in various forms, elements of those practices. Outcomes of this work have been presented in publications, paper presentations, formal and informal seminars, discussions, and collaborative research group meetings. For example, we explored, through the medium of our personal correspondence, elements of our early experiences in the professoriate, raising questions and issues to inform our future practice and the institutions with which we are affiliated (Knowles &
Cole, 1994). We also examined aspects of our research and teaching practices (Cole & Knowles, 1993b; Knowles & Cole, 1993). More recently, we have each worked with other researchers who, through life history research approaches, have further facilitated examination of our professional selves (Cole, 1994; Finley & Knowles, 1994). We also continue to independently explore elements of our experiences and continually emerging practices as teacher educators. Our reflexive research program has proven to be personally and professionally rewarding and continues to challenge us and extend the boundaries of our thinking about our individual practices and the contexts in which we work, and about teaching, research, and teacher education more generally.

Our Self-Study Framework

The framework we use in our own reflexive inquiry is similar to that which we advocate for preservice teachers and experienced practitioners. It is based on certain assumptions about professional practice and development. First, we believe that becoming a teacher, and/or teacher educator, is a lifelong process of continuing growth rooted in the “personal.” Who we are and come to be as teachers and teacher educators is a reflection of a complex, ongoing process of interaction and interpretation of elements, conditions, opportunities, and events that take place throughout our lives in all realms of our existence—the intellectual, physical, psychological, spiritual, political, and social. For us, making sense of prior and current life experiences in the context of the personal as it influences “the professional” is the essence of professional development. Thus, we situate professional inquiry in the context of personal histories. As Ardra said in a life history interview:

"Teaching is part of who I am. Understanding teaching is my work.... Knowing myself as person is very much part of knowing myself as professional. The better I understand myself as teacher and teacher educator, the better I understand myself as person, and vice versa.... My whole practice as teacher, professor, and teacher educator is integrally connected with who I am as a person." (Interview with Ardra, July 6, 1993)

Second, we believe that professional development is facilitated by opportunities for ongoing critical reflection on and inquiry into the broad spectrum of experiences that influence professional lives and careers. We, therefore, place emphasis on the importance of being teachers and teacher educators who engage in critical analysis of practice with attention to the multiple roles and contexts which comprise it. We hold a dialogic view of human nature in which “the other” plays a central role in constituting the self (Bakhtin, 1981; Mead, 1934; Sampson, 1993). Following Sampson, we believe that we, as persons, “are fundamentally and irretrievably dialogic, conversational creatures, whose lives are created ... and sustained or transformed through conversations” and, further, that, “how we think, how we reason, how we know, how we solve problems, and so forth—are best grasped by examining the conversations in the social worlds we inhabit” (1993, p. 109). Thus, our studies of ourselves take place through dialogue, in different forms of conversation.

To explore aspects of our practice, we keep professional journals, audiotape some of our conversations and class sessions, keep field notes on visits to each other's classrooms and work settings, audiotape discussions on collaborative teaching ventures, engage in dialogue via electronic mail, follow student evaluations of our teaching and coursework, and even record commentaries on our practices by support staff with whom we work. More recently, we have each worked with other life history researchers who facilitated our self-study through life history interviews, classroom observations and discussions of our practice. Ardra worked with one doctoral candidate researcher who explored the research process by researching Ardra’s practice and experience from a life history perspective. Gary
worked with two doctoral candidate researchers who explored life history elements of professional practice—one focused on pedagogy and the other on research practice and epistemology. In some respects our work looks like elements of a theoretical autobiography (Middleton, 1993) or an autoethnography (Diamond, 1992). It is also informed by Butt, Raymond, McCue, and Yamagashi’s (1992) notions of collaborative autobiography, and Clandinin and Connelly’s (1994) work in the area of narrative inquiry. We also align ourselves with Ayers (1986), Denzin (1989), and Smith (1994), among others, who place biographical inquiry at the centre of personal and professional understanding.

In our “program” of reflexive inquiry we seek to understand the multiple roles, contexts, and relationships which comprise our practices. For example, in an attempt to understand the many facets of our work and how they relate to one another, we focus on our professional roles as learners, teachers, researchers, writers, supervisors, colleagues, and faculty members. We reflect on teacher education in general, and what it means to be a teacher educator within the respective institutions with which we are affiliated, and in the broader teacher education and education communities.

In this article, we focus on one element of our practice—teaching—and illustrate some of what we have learned about ourselves as teachers and teacher educators. The use of questioning is central in our respective pedagogies and, because it illustrates our ongoing authentic engagement with problematic elements of our teaching work, it also serves as a useful tool for illustrating the reflexive inquiry process.

**Questioning in Our Pedagogical Practice**

Although we both use questioning as a primary pedagogical tool, our focus on questioning in our pedagogical practice began as a concern for Gary. In trying to facilitate preservice teachers in their development of critical, reflexive pedagogies Gary, like many teacher educators, consistently challenges individuals to substantiate their thinking and practice. He embeds his practice within a pedagogy which expressly makes opportunities for preservice teachers to explore their prior experiences, and he is particularly concerned about facilitating internal consistency between the assumptions and arguments that new teachers make (see, Knowles, 1992; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). Questioning is central to this pedagogical stance. As the following excerpts from Gary’s journal indicate, such questioning presents problems for some preservice teachers.

> In the context of the [alternative graduate teacher preparation] program we rely on the holistic, integrative nature of subject matter and acknowledge the “personal” as being central in becoming a teacher. Each prospective teacher in the program brings a lot to the table. Because I am not “presenting material” I use questioning more frequently in class than others might do. My questions are intended to encourage clarification and inquiry into the underlying frameworks of preservice teachers’ thinking, but they initially see little connection between their values and beliefs, their arguments or discussions about practice, their experiences, and their actual practice. They complain about being questioned, usually quietly, but sometimes vocally. They appear uncomfortable even with peers asking questions. (Gary’s journal, March 2, 1993)

They often interpret my questions as being “intimidating.” Sometimes I ask, “Why do you believe that?” and “What are the assumptions behind your thinking?” Many of these highly able preservice teachers deem such questions as almost impertinent. As [one preservice teacher] stated:

> Why do you have to ask questions all the time? I know what I think. I know what I want to do as a teacher. Why do I need to make public my private thinking about practice? I may not
have all the answers but your questions are not useful. We want to be given insights into practice not asked questions about our thinking. (Gary’s journal, December 12, 1992)

The above excerpts from Gary’s journal reveal a level of dissonance between the intentions and pedagogical beliefs underlying Gary’s questioning practice and the preservice teachers’ perceptions (and perhaps prior experiences) of such questioning practice. Considered at another level, such dissonance is indicative of the existing tension between traditional and progressive orientations to teacher education. Preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with preconceptions and expectations of how they will learn to be teachers. For the most part they expect, as the preservice teacher in Gary’s class said, “to be given insights into practice not asked questions about [their] thinking”—a view in fundamental opposition to the inquiry-oriented perspective on which Gary’s (and other educators’) practice is based. Leaving incongruencies unexamined does little to ameliorate such dissonance. Hence the importance of exploring assumptions underlying one’s pedagogical practices.

The preservice teachers in Gary’s cohort responded negatively to his questioning stance and had difficulty broadening their perspective to incorporate an alternative view of pedagogy. They continued to feel frustrated and intimidated by his persistent practice of asking questions until they had an opportunity to observe Gary adopt his familiar questioning practice in an interaction with a high school student. That event, described in Gary’s journal, helped some of them to understand, and even appreciate, his pedagogy:

I saw a breakthrough. On visiting [an alternative school], a mature, articulate, knowledgeable, and self-confident Grade 10 student lead us in a discussion about the school’s curriculum. I asked him a number of searching, clarification questions, and he ably responded. Afterwards, [one of the preservice teachers] commented: “[The Grade 10 student] handled you far better than we ever have. He easily answered your questions. Being able to sit back and watch you work—ask questions of someone else gave me a different view on your practice. Your questions really pushed the student to make clear his thinking. I guess that’s what [your questions] have done for us.” Another said: “I’m finally beginning to appreciate your pedagogy. I always thought your questions were so intimidating.” (Gary’s journal, March 2, 1993)

In spite of the “breakthrough,” Gary continued to be troubled by the preservice teachers’ perceptions of his practice as “intimidating.” He struggled for an explanation. “What does it mean to be intimidating? Does the ‘intimidation’ come from the question or the questioner? What do preservice teachers expect of university professors? What are their conceptions about the process of becoming a teacher? What place do they see for discussions about fundamental and personal ‘whys’ and ‘wherefores’ of teaching?” These were some of the many questions Gary asked himself during private reflections and posed to others in conversation. In one electronic mail exchange with Ardra, he explored the role of context in his teaching practice.

Gary: Why do you think that some preservice teachers see my questions as intimidating?.... Is it something that has to do with the classroom climate—I think you would call it “the setting”—that I create? Do I not pay enough attention to that?

Ardra: Making underlying assumptions explicit is, at one level, always threatening to people, no matter how hard you work at creating an appropriate setting. Sometimes group dynamics make it difficult for everyone to feel sufficiently at ease to engage in the kind of discussion you like to engender. One of the more readily identifiable sources of discomfort is the teacher, whether the teacher is or is not directly responsible.... Your directness and openness may be difficult for some
as well. Perhaps you don’t pay enough attention to preparing the context for your students, taking
too much for granted in believing that they can be open.

Gary: Perhaps I’m less concerned now than in the past with developing the context for my questioning.
Perhaps I have come to expect everyone to be as direct as I am. (Electronic mail messages, March 3-5, 1993)

In a subsequent discussion with Stella, a faculty colleague with whom Gary team teaches, he
further explored the preservice teachers’ responses to his questioning. Stella had only recently come to
the United States of America.

Stella shed some light on my concern about the preservice teachers’ aversion to being asked
questions. She, too, was struck by it. She said something like, “This is a graduate course . . .
after all. What do they expect? Graduate school is a place where ideas are thrashed out
intellectually—supposedly. Why is it that students do not want to be asked to back up their
positions? Is there a cultural basis for these very prevalent attitudes? Asking questions is the
hallmark of professorial work. Why is it that ‘caring’ teachers are placed ahead of intellectually
rigorous ones? To what extent is this matter a cultural artifact of ‘being American’? In South
Africa the academic climate is much more confrontive. Students expect to be challenged!”
(Gary’s journal, March 22, 1993)

Because Gary and Stella had very similar perspectives on and responses to the preservice teachers’
resistance, the conversation with Stella provided Gary much needed affirmation of his pedagogical stance
but not an adequate explanation for the dissonance.

To better understand both the students’ responses and his questioning practice, Gary explored the
roots of his use of questioning in his own experience of school as a student. A journal entry in which he
wrote about the origins of his questioning practice illuminate the link between his experiences of school
as a learner and his teaching practice. His tendency to ask searching questions is a pedagogical practice
embedded in his personal history and life-long approach to learning.

As a child growing up in a small rural community I wasn’t a verbally inquisitive child. I was
observant and intrigued by things mechanical, but I didn’t ask questions in class. A shy,
reserved, awkward youngster, I came out of my shell when placed in a classroom in which the
teacher, Mr. Gee, gave me permission to ask difficult questions. I was about 11 years old at
the time. Then, in high school, the Geography classes in which I did well academically were
taught by teachers who encouraged my questioning. I asked questions, it seems, to clarify my
thinking, check my understandings, and to find out more. I was genuinely interested, my curi-
osity was sparked, and my attention riveted by these teachers. They were patient with me and
willing to be interrupted. A high school Physics teacher, recognizing my struggle with the
subject matter, actively encouraged me to ask questions when I did not understand. And ask I
did. For the first time I recognized the power of questions as a learning technique. I passed
College Physics simply because I asked questions. (Gary’s journal, March 8, 1993)

By tracing the roots of his questioning practice to his experiences of school as a student, Gary
 gained a clearer understanding of the basis on which his questioning practice was founded. What he did
not have, however, was similar insights into the preservice teachers’ responses. What experiences with
questioning did they bring to the preservice program? What links could be made between their
experiences as school learners and their responses to certain pedagogical practices? While Gary’s practice
encouraged them to explore their prior experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences, they
did not focus on articulating their understandings about the use of questioning in the classroom.
An exploration of the use of questioning as a pedagogical tool in Ardra’s teaching shed additional light on the issue with which Gary was grappling. It also illuminated the broader issue of the role of personal histories in teaching practices. The use of questioning arose in a post-observation discussion with Madeleine, a doctoral candidate-coresearcher, who had spent considerable time observing Ardra’s teaching; however, the context in which it was identified as a significant part of her pedagogy was quite different from the context in which the issue arose for Gary. For instance, Ardra’s use of questioning, also central in her pedagogy, was not presented as problematic. In contrast to Gary’s situation, the students in Ardra’s class responded favorably to her use of questioning. A summary comment from Madeleine illustrates:

I am beginning to see a pattern in the way you teach. I don’t think you are conscious of the techniques you use. They are part of who you are. . . . You do not answer questions.... You throw [a question that was asked] back out to the group and allow them to talk about things. You draw threads from the various conversations and pull them together, and then provide an answer that is better than any one person could have done, and that provides time for people to be creative and to have input. Then you make connections or you ask the class to make them. “What connections do you see?” is an example from today’s class. (Interview with Ardra, November 2, 1993)

In an attempt to determine why students in Ardra’s class responded differently than those in Gary’s class to what we understood to be a very similar pedagogical practice, we looked again to prior experiences. Like Gary, Ardra explored the roots of her questioning practice in her experiences as a learner; however, unlike Gary, Ardra was not encouraged to ask questions and did not experience success doing so. The following excerpt from a life history interview illuminates the personal history-professional practice link.

I have a very high regard for questioning and a high regard for curiosity. Perhaps I am not as spontaneous in my expression of curiosity and question asking as I would like to be because it does not come naturally.... I feel differently about question asking when I am the teacher and when I am the learner. I think questioning is really important and, as a teacher, I have developed an ability to encourage people to ask questions and to value different perspectives. I try to encourage learners to find and want to find answers to questions.

In the role of learner I don’t ask questions. I have great difficulty asking questions [outside of my role as teacher or researcher]. If I have a question I think it is unimportant, so I stop myself. When questions come to mind, I feel I should not ask if I don’t already know the answer. I can encourage others to ask questions but I cannot ask questions in a way that I would like to be able to....

At home [growing up] we were never encouraged to ask questions. Curiosity was not a value that was instilled in us, which is really unfortunate. I also had a very bad experience at school where I was blatantly discouraged from asking questions, and that had a major impact on me. I had an English literature teacher who was a very humiliating, intimidating, sarcastic person. I remember one incident where I happened to be in class and to be actually enjoying what was going on [both of which were unusual occurrences at that point in my adolescent life]. I asked a question and he ridiculed me saying, in effect, “Unless you know the answer, don’t ask the question.” I remember his response so vividly. I think that has had a very, very significant impact on me. (Interview with Ardra, May 27, 1993)
Given the strong similarities in our pedagogical beliefs and practices we were (and continue to be) interested in how differently our beliefs are played out and practices interpreted. There are myriad reasons why we and our students respond differently at different times, and we continue to try to uncover and make sense of these reasons. We sense that these differences are explained in large part by the kinds of personal history-based experiences upon which our professional practices are based. As a learner, Gary was encouraged to ask questions and he experienced repeated success by doing so. For him, questioning clarified understanding, promoted curiosity, and opened his mind to new ways of thinking and viewing the world. Thus, he developed a firm belief in the value of questioning as a learning tool. And he carried this belief with him to his teaching practice, expecting that students would value questioning as he had as a learner. Ardra, on the other hand, was discouraged from asking questions both at home and in school, and she had some very deflating experiences with question asking. She came to teaching with little confidence in her own ability to ask questions but with a sense of the value of questioning in teaching and learning. As a result of her own experiences as a learner, she did not have the same high expectations as Gary that students would favourably respond to question asking. Because of her own experiences of being ridiculed, she perhaps focuses more than Gary on preparing the context in which questions are asked and on students’ level of comfort with her questioning practice.

The following electronic mail message to Gary following a visit to Ardra’s advanced qualitative research methods class, when he asked the doctoral students questions about their research, is illustrative of some of these differences.

Your visit to my class last week created more disequilibrium than we had initially thought. The exchange between you and Kate caught most people off guard. I understand that you were simply looking for clarification of Kate’s ideas but I guess [the students] were not used to your manner of questioning.

I knew Kate was upset so I made a point of seeking her out before the next class. We had a long talk. She felt both intimidated by your questioning and surprised at her response. She is probably one of the most reflexive, self-aware, and articulate students with whom I have worked. She knows her passions and is not afraid to tackle critical issues head on; yet, after your interaction with her she began to question herself and her abilities. She apparently spent considerable time reliving your conversation both on her own and with her peers. You sure threw her for a loop.

In class today we spent time talking about what had happened last week. Interestingly enough the conversation was not directly focused on your interaction with Kate. It was more about what the class has come to mean to them and how, in some way, they felt that their privacy had been violated by your presence. Both overtly and covertly we have worked to create what one student called “a safe place where we feel supported in our thinking in whatever state it’s in.” I had no idea until today just how insular and insulated they had become... You were an outsider and I did not see the “No Trespassing” sign.

Most of what we do in class challenges our own and each other’s assumptions as well as the various assumptions underlying what we read. It’s not as if the substance of your questions was unfamiliar. I guess it had more to do with the context in which they were asked and by whom. It looks like “trespassers” have to earn certain privileges. (Electronic mail message from Ardra, March 25, 1993)

The complexity of teaching and learning, and the need for a holistic analysis of practice is repeatedly evidenced in our reflections. We could not (and cannot) make sense of our pedagogical use of
questioning in isolation. For example, the issue of questioning is integrally connected to another important theme characterizing our practice, the learning context. Our ongoing reflexive inquiry and reflective conversations help us to identify and make sense of these and other patterns in our teaching, and to become aware of incongruencies between what we think we do and what students perceive us to be doing, so that we might better understand who we are and what we do as teachers and teacher educators.

Clearly, we cannot make sense of our teaching by merely analyzing its constituent elements or by considering instances out of the contexts in which they take place; teaching is far too complex and contextual for such an activity to be of much use. The examples we cite are but snapshots of teaching experiences bounded by time and context. The meanings we derive from the examples are but part of our ongoing sense-making. With different students under different circumstances, the same pedagogical approaches might be differently interpreted and have different meanings for us and them. But, since much of teaching work is context specific, so too is this work. Having said this, we are all products of the personal experiences that influence the ways we each conceptualize and carry out our roles as teachers and teacher educators and, while the complex and context-specific nature of teaching defies generalization, we believe that exploring teaching practices within the context of personal histories articulates foundational understandings.

Questioning Our Practice

In this brief analysis of instances and issues related to our teaching we have made explicit some of our beliefs, values, and pedagogical principles and we have found some explanation by placing them in the context of our own personal histories. In so doing, we have attempted to illustrate part of our ongoing reflexive inquiry, how we endeavor to “practice what we preach.” While reflective practice has become widely advocated for teachers, only recently has the development of reflexive practices among teacher educators become a topic of interest. Cole and Knowles (1993b), Diamond (1988), Feiman-Nemser and Featherstone (1992), Gore (1991), Guilfoyle (1992, 1993), Hamilton (1992, 1993), Knowles and Cole (1993, 1994), Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), McRobbie (1993), Middleton (1993), Moore and Lalik (1993), Oberg and Arzt (1992), Oberg and Underwood (1993), Pinnegar (1992, 1993), Placier (1992, 1993), Russell (1992, 1993), Sichel (1993), Trumbull (1990), and Yonemura (1991), for example, have recently published or presented reflective accounts on aspects of their practices as teacher educators. Our present work contributes to that growing knowledge base.

Writing publicly about our professional work has multiple roles and purposes. First, it illustrates a process that is part of our ongoing professional development. At a technical level, we demonstrate strategies we have used to explore elements of our own practice. At another level of significance we raise awareness of some critical issues with which we, as teacher educators, currently are grappling.

Second, and at another level, writing like this serves as a record of some of the elements of our professional thinking and development, a kind of paper chase, important for us over the long term for making sense of the larger schemes of our careers, our contributions to the institutions with which we are affiliated, and to the field of teacher education in general. We say this in the sense that, over the long haul, our thinking and inquiry about our own practice may be more important in our professional development as teacher educators than any of the more traditional kinds of research reports or theoretical positions that we publish.

Third, through ongoing reflexive analysis of our practice we extend the boundaries of our thinking about teaching and teacher education. We become very conscious of the decisions we make regarding our roles in the teaching-learning process and in the curricula we espouse. Further, exploring and writing collaboratively in tandem, where each of us acts as a lens and a filter for the other, provides the context
for us to engage in dialogical, relational learning about our professional experiences and research work. Thus, collaborative inquiry and writing serve as a catalyst for our ongoing professional development.

Fourth, examples from our own professional inquiry serve as vehicles for discussing the links between initial and formal teacher education, and the career-long development of school teachers and university teacher educators. Discussions of this kind are central to the ongoing improvement of teacher education.

Fifth, by committing the reflexive process to paper, by making our experiences public, we also provide for those with whom we work a very brief glimpse of the ongoing process of professional inquiry that we urge them to consider and engage. And, we provide a point for our students (graduate preservice teachers and those in doctoral programs) to know us at another level, important in the curricular contexts in which we ask them to share elements of their lives through personal history accounts and the like (see, Knowles, 1993).

We present our work in dialogic format that allows us to express ourselves as individuals in a collaborative work while making clear our collective positions. This format, we think, holds promise for making accessible work of this kind. In “going public” with the dilemmas we face in endeavoring to practice what we preach, we forthrightly address issues of professional practice which are commonly experienced, yet infrequently discussed in public forums. Finally, by making known the various ways in which we put into practice the theories and beliefs we espouse to teachers and teacher educators, we make a contribution to the thinking and practice associated with reflective teacher education and development.

References


Chapter 5

*From Cohort to Community in a Preservice Teacher Education Program* ¹

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It is often suggested that student teachers be placed in cohorts during their preservice program. In this paper we describe how we implemented a cohort model and examine the effects on our student teachers. We found there were many positive effects, such as a high level of participation in whole class and small group activities, greater awareness of the value of collaboration, and greater willingness to take risks in collegial relationships and in the practicum. However, the approach proved to be quite demanding for the faculty; strong institutional support will be needed if the model is to be widely implemented.

Some of my very best efforts in teacher education have involved cohorts, as have some of my very worst encounters. Cohorts seem to intensify and crystallize programmatic experiences. At their best, cohorts provide mutual support for prospective teachers and foster socialization into desirable professional norms and practices. But I have also witnessed cohorts in which group members reinforce one another's doubts and points of confusion, thereby impeding professional socialization. Cohorts can provide a platform for strong personalities to challenge program goals and even to organize group resistance to those goals. (Tom, 1997, p. 153)

There has been considerable discussion in recent years of the value of grouping student teachers into cohorts during their preservice program. Often what is envisaged is clustering students in small groups (of perhaps half a dozen) for specific purposes, such as practice teaching or course projects (Howey, 1996; Zeichner, 1990). In other instances, it is proposed that all the students in a program do most of their course and practicum work together for the duration of the program, under the guidance of a small faculty team (Arends & Winitzky, 1996; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Goodlad, 1990a; Howey, 1996; Peterson, Benson, Driscoll, Narode, Sherman, & Tama, 1995; Thanos, 1990; Tom, 1997; Winitzky & Stoddart, 1992). In either case, the objectives of the cohort arrangement include: creating a more coherent program and a stronger link between theory and practice; achieving a closer relationship between faculty and student teachers; establishing conditions conducive to mutual support among student teachers; and modelling a

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communal, collaborative approach to teaching and learning that student teachers can apply in their practicum settings and in their school and classroom after graduation.

In our elementary teacher education program, the Mid-Town Option at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT), we follow a cohort model of the latter kind noted above; that is, our student teachers are grouped together not only for their practicum experiences and particular assignments but for virtually the whole program. Further, we have extended this model, emphasizing community experience to a higher degree than is typically found in the research literature. On the whole, we have been pleased with the results of this approach to teacher education. However, we have found that a considerable amount of attention has to be paid to transforming the cohort into a genuine community, so that problems of the kind noted by Tom, above, are minimized. The transition from cohort to community is by no means automatic. In this paper we review some of the literature on cohorts and community in teacher education; describe our model of a cohort-based, community oriented teacher education program; and present the results of research we have conducted on the effects on the student teachers, the program, and the faculty of applying this model.

1. Cohorts and Community in Teacher Education:
   Theory, Research, and some Cases

Much has been written in recent decades about the importance of community, relationships, and group membership. Sociologists and philosophers have stressed the shortcomings of the pervasive individualism of modern Western societies and the need for dialogue and shared traditions (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Benhabib, 1990; MacIntyre, 1981; Walzer, 1997; Wolff, 1968). Postmodernists and poststructuralists have argued that knowledge and values are inherently communal (Allen, 1989; Foucault, 1976; Lyotard, 1979; Rorty, 1998, 1989; Weedon, 1987). And feminist scholars and others have shown that relationships are fundamental to human life: they affect our well-being, our life decisions, the way we perceive ourselves, and our ability to function (Bergman, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Kymlicka, 1989; Miller, 1986; Surrey, 1984; Taylor, 1994).

In the field of education, the need for genuine community in schools and classrooms is now widely stressed. According to Peterson (1992), bringing community into existence in the classroom is an essential aspect of the role of the teacher: "When community exists, learning is strengthened - everyone is smarter, more ambitious, and productive" (p. 2). Paley (1992) stresses the public nature of the school classroom and the need for structures and practices which make a class an inclusive, supportive community for all. In The Schoolhome (1992), Martin talks of the need for the school to be like a home, where children feel secure and can learn and express a range of human emotions. Meier (1995), Wasley (1994), and Wasley, Hampel, & Clark (1997), in line with Coalition of Essential Schools principles, stress the need to create smaller schools (or schools-within-a-school) so teachers can work together and teachers and students can get to know each other and share a common school culture. Meier claims that fostering both intellectual and social values "requires joint membership in an attractive community" (p. 113). Wasley et al. (1997) found that in small schools, where classes were organized to ensure smaller groupings of students and an integrated curriculum, students and teachers felt "less rushed" and "able to work in greater depth" (p. 147), "developed the skills needed for civil discourse," and "learned how to take feedback from critical friends and analyze it thoughtfully" (p. 178). Wood (1998, 1992) has also written at length on the power of community in schools.
It is not just students who are seen as needing community. Much is said about the isolation of teachers, and the problems this creates; or, more positively, emphasis is placed on the power of collegiality and collaboration to transform teachers' professional lives. Elliott speaks of the importance of community and collaboration in teacher research and school renewal:

I well remember the lay-out in the staffroom of my school: a large oval arrangement of easy chairs around the gas-fire. There over coffee we sat during breaks discussing and debating our attempts to bring about change with colleagues who regarded our ideas with some scepticism. The quality of this curriculum discourse was an experience which has influenced all my subsequent thinking and action as an educationalist. (Elliott, 1991, p. 5)

Barth (1990) talks of the need for both "congeniality" and "collegiality" among teachers. Congeniality involves "people enjoying each other's company and getting along." Schools need congeniality, he says; indeed, "every organization needs it" (p. 30). Collegiality is concerned more with talk about practice, observing each other at work, planning and researching curriculum together, teaching each other what we know. According to Barth, collegiality has many positive outcomes: better decisions, more effective implementation, a higher level of morale and trust, and energetic and sustained professional learning (pp. 30-31). Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz, & Maeeers (1997) explore how collaboration among teacher researchers changes "relationships which, in turn, affect teaching practice and educational change"; they describe the process of creating "collaborative learning communities that build knowledge from within and through interaction with others" (pp. xvi-xviii).

Despite these community oriented views with respect to culture, schooling, and teaching, however, teacher education often remains rather individualistic. In this regard, Lortie (1975) contrasts teacher education programs with other professional preparation programs; he concludes, from empirical research in the 1970s, that beginning student teachers typically "perceive teaching as a highly individualistic affair," and "no special effort is made to offset that conception upon entry to teacher training" (p. 236). Goodlad, writing on the basis of an extensive survey conducted in the late 1980s, observes: "One does not generally find...on college and university campuses a process through which students planning to teach are socialized together into the teaching profession. Where one finds anything resembling a cohort group...it almost always is in a small program or in a segment such as early childhood education, physical education, special education, music education, or the like - a segment barely or not at all connected with any other segment" (Goodlad, 1990b, p. 28). In the 29 universities of varying types and sizes studied, the norm was that "students scarcely knew each other when they came together for the first time in a foundations course... The group assembled was not homogeneous with respect to the goal of teaching, and in no way was it a cohort group, aware of being together in the class of 1992" (Goodlad, 1990a, p. 207). Surprisingly, this was typically the case even in small liberal arts colleges, and even in programs spread over two to four years (p. 209).

More recent commentators do not see the situation as having changed significantly since Lortie's and Goodlad's studies were conducted. If anything, the increased pressure on teacher educators today to conform to general university norms of research and publishing leaves even less time for "soft" activities such as community building (Whitford & Metcalf-Turner, 1999). Howey claims that accepted notions about the value of learning communities are still "widely ignored in the design and conduct of teacher preparation" (Howey, 1996, p. 166). And Tom states that we largely disregard "the social dimension of teaching, in which candidates have relationships with one another and, ultimately, develop collective obligations to the overall profession" (Tom, 1997, p. 149). Admittedly, the movement of the past fifteen years toward linking teacher education to professional development schools is encouraging from the point of view of fostering community. Darling-Hammond comments that "in the most highly developed (PDS) sites, programs are jointly planned
and taught by university-based and school-based faculty. Cohorts of beginning teachers get a richer, more coherent learning experience when they are organized in teams to study and practice with these faculty and with one another" (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 232). However, only a minority of student teachers as yet are placed in PDSs of this highly developed type (Wasley, 1994, p. xii); and the communication and collaboration that occur are often just among the participants in each PDS rather than among everyone in the teacher education program. To a significant degree the scenario of limited community experience in teacher education depicted by Lortie and Goodlad still holds true.

What are the alternatives to this scenario? Some writers focus mainly on the practicum, stressing the need for communication and mutual support in the field (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). Edith Cowan University has a "school-based semester" (SBS) optional program in which a cohort of 16 student teachers and a team of four faculty work intensively together both in the field and on campus. However, although this arrangement is exemplary in many ways, it is only for one semester (20 weeks) (Campbell-Evans & Maloney, 1997; Chadbourne, 1995). Howey (1996), while speaking of creating community in the program as a whole, looks mainly to short-term cohorts formed for particular purposes (p. 164). He talks of "small structured groups of six to eight preservice students working closely together for varying periods of time." He maintains that short-term cohort activities, by contrast with textbooks and lectures, "are powerful catalysts for both the reform of how one learns to teach and, in turn, how one teaches" (pp. 165-66).

Lortie and Goodlad think more is needed; they envisage activities and experiences involving the whole program cohort, for the duration of the program, resulting in strong identification with the group. This they feel is necessary if the program is to be integrated, and constitute a social and socializing experience, on a par with that offered by other professional programs. Goodlad (1990a) stresses the need for "careful selection of a group admitted together at the time of the program's beginning... This cohort group must then go through a process designed to aid in the transition from being a student to being a teacher" (p. 289). Goodlad's proposal embraces the whole program, with all courses "tied to a conception of teaching... [E]very curriculum component must be developed for its contribution to a professional curriculum, not selected merely to meet a specified content requirement. The socialization process needs to become a highly intellectual one through which students transcend their previous experience as relatively passive course-takers and become active agents in the learning of others" (p. 290).

Similarly, Tom (1997) speaks of larger cohorts which stay together for an entire program, including student teaching (as far as possible). Such a cohort offers mutual support for teachers-in-training in the face of frustrations related to the program. It encourages them to speak out and challenge aspects of both the methods courses and the practicum (p. 152); it provides students with support to face the difficult task of becoming a teacher (p. 153). As noted earlier, Tom believes that such program-long, program-wide cohorts "intensify and crystallize programmatic experiences" and can "foster socialization into desirable professional norms and practices" (p. 153). He recognizes that problems sometimes arise with pervasive cohort structures, but believes that on balance they are worthwhile. Such cohorts "emphasize peer culture in teacher education so that the group can be seen as a source of personal support and the teaching profession as a collegial endeavor" (p. 154).

A number of programs fitting this broader conception of cohort and community in teacher education have been established in the past two decades; we will review some of the main ones, noting their salient features and the results of implementing them. Perhaps the most extensive foray into this approach has taken place at the University of Utah, where a cohort program was begun in the early 1980s (initially at the secondary level, later at the elementary level as well). The Utah program "grew out of a perception of the disconnectedness of individual courses and the feeling that there was really no 'program' in any sense of the word" (Arends & Winitzky, 1996, p. 546). Under the
arrangement, teacher candidates are organized into cohorts for their final year of pedagogical studies; for three quarters of that year, "candidates take the same classes together, pursue field experiences together in the two or three PDS sites assigned to each cohort, and lend each other professional and moral support" (Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992, pp. 11-12). Each cohort has a "cohort leader," who is a tenure-track or clinical faculty member; methods faculty rotate in and out of the cohort, but the cohort leader stays with them for the whole year, taking "responsibility for helping students integrate information across methods classes, facilitating clinical assignments, supervising candidates, and helping methods faculty coordinate their courses with each other and with cooperating teachers" (Arends and Winitzky, 1996, pp. 546-47). As a result of adopting the cohort approach it has become possible to experiment with different approaches; in particular, faculty are able to explore the same concepts in both the classroom and the field and keep revisiting these concepts throughout the year (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, pp. 5-6). Another consequence is that faculty are more aware of the challenges student teachers face in the field and more respectful of what they are doing there (pp. 7-9). According to Arends & Winitzky, the cohorts "have become one of the most positively regarded aspects of the Utah program, highly rated on in-house surveys by teacher candidates and cooperating teachers alike. Candidates report that they appreciate the support system and collegiality that come from the cohort organization" (p. 547).

Thanos (1990) describes a community-oriented cohort program at Edith Cowan University (previously the Western Australian College of Advanced Education), initiated in 1984 and still operating (according to personal communication) along much the same lines today. It is a one-year Post-Graduate Diploma program with originally 60 and now around 100 candidates preparing to be elementary teachers. The program has about five partner schools (each student has a practicum in three of them over the year), and university faculty teaching in the program spend time each week in these schools working with the associate teachers and doing practicum supervision. "Collegiality is fostered as teachers, supervisors, and student teachers consult, organize for, and problem solve about real issues in classrooms and staffrooms at the level of both the social purposes of schooling and the technical skill of teaching" (p. 32). At the beginning of the year there is an extensive orientation program for the cohort, including

a three day camp on Rottnest Island (some 20 kilometres west of Fremantle). In this informal setting, the social dynamics of the course are set in place. In sharing bungalow accommodation, contributing to communal meal preparation, and participating in the activities planned, the students begin to develop friendships and an appreciation of the diversity of ages and of academic and experiential backgrounds that are represented in the group. In addition, foundations are laid for "networks" of support between students and between staff and students. (p. 32)

This community emphasis is maintained throughout the year, with constant interaction and communication between faculty, teachers, and student teachers "in a range of contexts." As a result, when faculty go to the schools they already know well the students they supervise. The model on which the program is based "makes educational sense. It recognizes that there is a direct relationship between the nature and consistency of interaction and support that is available and the level of trust achieved" (p. 33).

At the University of Wyoming in the fall of 1987 an experimental cohort program was established for 42 students who were to be together for the last two years of a four year teacher education program (Tom, 1997). Within the cohort, mentoring groups of 10-12 were formed and assigned to individual cohort faculty; also, as far as possible, cohort members were placed together
for practice teaching. Working in teams, the faculty made major revisions to the content of both the campus courses and the practicum (p. 152). According to Tom, this cohort arrangement had a number of advantages. Students were able to support each other both with institutional difficulties on campus and in their practice teaching; and the faculty advising process was considerably enhanced. "Cohort-based advising can go far beyond identifying required courses or tracking the programmatic progress of students" (p. 153). The faculty team conferred with each other over particular student problems; students had the opportunity to develop a close relationship with a faculty member; and it was easier for students to obtain letters of reference. Thus, "the administrative advantages of cohort organization (were) blended with programmatic uses of cohort grouping" (p. 154).

At Portland State University by 1990, teacher education had evolved "from a four-year undergraduate program to a fifth-year, graduate teacher preparation program that features thematic cohorts of students" (Peterson et al., 1995, p. 29). The cohorts are made up of 15 to 30 students who are together for the year-long program. They "take classes together, are grouped in field placements, experience retreats and team building activities, share a faculty team, and engage in reflection about their work. Each cohort has an identified faculty leader and staff of instructors and supervisors" (p. 30). While each cohort has a distinctive thematic focus, there is a common program framework that insures competence in "planning, curriculum, instruction, pupil assessment, classroom management, teacher reflection, and professional development" (p. 30). As a result of the cohort structure, students have access to the same faculty throughout the year; key topics can be revisited again and again in different contexts; there is integration of course theory and classroom practice; there is considerable flexibility with respect to content, methods, materials, and field placements; and there is closer collaboration between the program and the partner schools (pp. 30-33). While there was some opposition initially to adopting the cohort approach, it is now (1995) viewed very positively by both faculty and school personnel (p. 36).

The cohort approach to teacher education is not without its problems. As noted earlier, Tom (1997) speaks of the power of the peer group to lead in unfortunate directions, "to reinforce one another's doubts and points of confusion," to "provide a platform for strong personalities to challenge program goals" (p. 153). This phenomenon is mentioned also by Arends and Winitzky (1996): "[T]he higher levels of agreement can be for desired or undesired attitudes. Sometimes teacher candidates come to value the place of reflection, lifelong learning, and the importance of research as a source of knowledge; sometimes they become socialized earlier and more thoroughly to norms in opposition to intellectual rigor and reflection" (pp. 547-48). Another problem mentioned by Arends & Winitzky is loss of faculty autonomy: "Professors had been accustomed to teaching their courses in the way they thought best without consultation with anyone. To make scheduling, curriculum, or instructional concessions to colleagues was troubling for some" (p. 547). They also point to a key dilemma in moving to a cohort model: when the field placements are concentrated in just a few sites one loses "the use of several exemplary practitioners in particular subject areas." At the University of Utah, initially, disagreements over this issue were so strong they had to be resolved by allowing some professors to opt out of the cohort structure (p. 547).

Another difficulty of a cohort-based, integrated approach has to do with the lack of rewards in universities for building and maintaining this kind of program: promotion, tenure, and merit pay usually require publications, grants, and formal conference presentations. Such rewards are only minimally given for the hard and time-consuming work of building school relationships (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998; Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992). Finally, in part because of the foregoing problems, many faculty are unwilling to be involved in reforms of this kind; and so, failing a general institutional mandate, the load on those who are involved is increased. Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe comment that, in the past, responsibility for such reforms has rested on a small number of
faculty. They speculate that, where such reforms have failed, it may have been because this small band of teacher educators "simply ran out of energy" (p. 16). Despite the obstacles, however, as noted above, there are a number of cases where program-long, program-wide cohorts in teacher education have not only survived over a considerable period of time but have come to be strongly appreciated by faculty, associate teachers, and student teachers alike.

2. The Context of the Present Research Study:
   Cohort and Community in the Mid-Town Program

At OISE/UT there have been cohort preservice programs at the elementary level since the mid 1980s. These have developed largely in accordance with the "academy" model proposed by Michael Fullan, who is Dean at OISE/UT: for example, there is a strong emphasis on close school-university partnerships and utilization of school board sites and staff for teacher education. The 450 student teachers in the one year post-baccalaureate elementary program are placed in seven cohort programs or "options," so called because successful applicants choose their program based on information provided prior to registration.

The various cohort programs work within general school of education guidelines, which lay down what is in some ways a rather traditional curriculum. Courses include curriculum and instruction (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, etc.); social and psychological foundations; and the "teacher education seminar" (unit and lesson planning, assessment and evaluation, classroom management, school law, etc.). As the Vision Statement of our option emphasizes, we are concerned that students acquire "the skills and practical knowledge needed for everyday teaching." However, within this broad structure there is considerable freedom for each cohort program to develop a distinctive approach. For example, in our option there is extensive joint planning of the program by faculty; assignments often interconnect across courses; and courses build on one another and achieve an integrated and cumulative effect to a degree not usually found in traditional programs.

Our cohort program is called the "Mid-Town" Option because of the location of our practicum schools in the highly multiracial, multicultural urban core of Toronto. Of the Mid-Town Option's several distinctive features, the most relevant for present purposes is our emphasis on community building within the cohort; in this respect our program is similar to the Edith Cowan Post-Graduate Diploma program (Thanos, 1990). In many ways our program also resembles the Utah, Portland State, and Wyoming programs described earlier, although we have a larger cohort (about 65) which enables us to have a larger faculty team: two full-time and five part-time staff. As with the four cohort programs described above, we cluster our student teachers in a small number of practice teaching schools and work closely with these schools; however, unlike some of the programs, we involve the whole faculty team, including subject specialists, in practicum supervision.

As we said at the outset, a strong community does not form automatically, even within a cohort program. Each year we have to work very deliberately to build community in our program. The following are some of the processes and structures involved and the resulting communal arrangements and relationships. We describe them in some detail both to give better understanding of the context of our research study and in case others wish to try out aspects of the approach in their own teacher education setting.
2.1. Establishing the Cohort

The first step is to set up the cohort; as noted, we are fortunate to have this structure as a given for elementary programs in our school of education. In establishing such a program we have found that the size of the cohort is important. A cohort of roughly 60 is ideal because it is small enough to allow everyone to get to know each other, yet large enough to ensure diversity in the group so students can find "kindred spirits" and learn from each other's varied talents. Howey maintains that the more variety in a teacher education group the more we learn from each other (Howey, 1996). In our experience, a smaller group may by the end of the year become somewhat tired of each other; and furthermore a smaller group, especially at the primary/junior level (K-Grade 6), can more easily be taken over by one or two outspoken students. Having a larger cohort (but not too large) has the added advantage that we can afford a sizeable faculty team.

2.2. Building Community in the Faculty Team

We have found that if the team involved in the program is itself a community, this facilitates program integration and serves as a support for faculty and a model and support for the cohort community as a whole. Part of the secret here is to select compatible team members; but there are limits to how selective one can be, and even with the most favourable combination there is still much team building to be done. It is necessary to develop a conceptual framework for the program, a vision of how the cohort will work, and a commitment to a collaborative and communal approach. The timetable has to be flexible, with team teaching, some classes involving all faculty, and switching of teaching days so all team members have an opportunity to teach opposite each other. We have frequent team meetings, constant formal and informal e-mailing among the whole team, and many occasions for socializing. Faculty are encouraged to let down their defences, be open to one another, and take risks.

2.3. Initial Steps toward Cohort Community

The name of the program is highlighted to help build a sense of belonging, and its philosophy is made explicit to provide a basis for thinking about the program. To a large extent students do not appreciate the philosophy at the beginning, but providing the articulation helps them grow to understand it. A general tone is established through the introductory material and the "Options Night" prior to registration. Some students say they chose our option because we provided cookies on options night; they mean it as a joke, but we see bringing "domesticity" into educational settings as an important aspect of a community approach (Roland Martin, 1992; Thanos, 1990). After they have made their choice we send them a welcoming letter, emphasizing again the community dimension of the option.

2.4. Community Building Activities throughout the Year

From the beginning of classes, high priority is given to community building; we explain and model our belief that learning takes place more effectively if all community members - students and teachers alike - know each other and have a genuine relationship with each other. At the first meeting of the whole group there are a variety of getting-acquainted activities. We introduce the image of our group as a river in which each droplet contributes to the whole as it passes through both difficult and pleasant terrain; we keep returning to this image throughout the year. We establish traditions, such as having a particular faculty member do an inspirational reading at the start of key option events. In
April on the last day of class, the students are invited to write a personal letter to a student in the following year about the program and how to make the most of it; these letters are greatly appreciated by the new students, and heighten their sense of the history of the program. As individual students begin to help out we acknowledge and celebrate this in class or on e-mail, thus making a "statement" that helping out is a cherished value in the option. Early in the term we have a two-day retreat away from the campus, with a combination of thematic sessions and leisure activities. At the retreat students share their All About Me books which they have made as their first language arts assignment. As they return to the university, a friendly and humorous atmosphere is maintained in regular classes, with celebrations and student announcements. There are parties in local pubs and in the homes of faculty and students. A couple of faculty members serve as "official photographers" at option events and share photographs with the students and post them in the department; once again this encourages a sense of history with respect to the program.

2.5. Program Structures that Support Community

Apart from the social activities, we also mix the student teachers as much as possible during the formal program. Although they are registered in primary/junior and junior/intermediate streams, we place them in mixed classes of 30 most of the time and sometimes have classes or special seminars with the entire group. In this way all the students are able to get to know each other and share different perspectives. To further strengthen the community we make extensive use of small groups, often selected randomly by numbering off. Some of the small groups are formed simply for one-time class activities, others have a longer life connected with projects such as MAD (Math Adventure Day), the Healthy Schools poster day and, especially, the action research projects. Another key means of building community is through the practice teaching, where we cluster at least five or six students (preferably more) in the same school; in this way, because the students have two different placements in the course of the year, they gain a special relationship with about a dozen members of the cohort. Further, since a faculty member is responsible for each partner school and visits often, the clustering results in strong connections between the students and individual faculty members. Finally, the links between students and faculty are strengthened as we involve them in our research work on the program, telling them about the research and interviewing them.

2.6. Communication

Apart from communication between faculty, we have found it important to have a communication system throughout the community, with faculty part of the student loop. All of us - faculty and students - have each other's home phone numbers and use them as often as necessary. E-mail is used for individual and group messages about program changes, strikes, assignment reminders, upcoming events, and more personal matters. We even have a Mid-Town icon on the OISE/UT e-mail system to facilitate this form of exchange. A system of designated contact people is used to reach students who are not on e-mail. In class, as much time as necessary is devoted to formal and informal student announcements, thus encouraging student ownership of the community.

2.7. Explicit discussion of community

Some students initially see a community emphasis as "hokey" and worry that it may undermine rather than enhance the academic program. (A few may retain this outlook throughout the program.) This is understandable given their many years of apprenticeship in an individualistic, competitive school and university culture (Lortie, 1975) in which they have done well. We have found it helps to discuss
the topic of community explicitly, both in general and in relation to specific subjects such as language arts ("building a literate community") and science ("collaborative inquiry"). The importance of inclusion in classrooms is addressed, with reference to respected theorists such as Ellsworth (1997) and Paley (1992). We have a running dialogue with students about why and how to build community in the program, and seek their formal feed-back through interviews and questionnaires. We encourage them, as individuals and in small groups, to reflect on how the option community has or has not supported their learning and development. They also report on the type of community that exists in their practicum class and how they might like to modify it. We consult with them about specific decisions, for example, whether and when to mix the P/J and J/I streams, whether we should have a second option retreat, and whether we should attend the OISE/UT graduation formal or have one of our own. We bring back graduates from previous years to talk about their experience of a community-oriented program.

2.8. Modelling

As noted earlier, it is important for the faculty team to model a community approach. We do this by planning together, team teaching, integrating our courses, dropping into each other's classes, practising inclusiveness, socializing together, and having an open, friendly manner. We model a realistic approach to community, taking up thorny issues with the students such as what percentage of time they should be required to teach during their practice teaching block and what form their teaching evaluation should take. A caring community is modelled as we give students support. For example, we coordinate assignments to avoid excessive bunching and to ensure the students' overall assignment load is not too heavy; we spend a great deal of time finding appropriate practicum placements for the students and relocating them if serious conflicts arise; we visit them often in their practicum settings; we help them with job hunting; and we are flexible and supportive when they have special personal problems. Finally, we model commitment to community by participating with the students in activities, not allowing status, age, or other preoccupations to get in the way.

3. Methodology of the Present Study

For many years members of the Mid-Town faculty team have been doing research on the program, with the permission and cooperation of our student teachers. We believe this kind of research gives us the opportunity to monitor the effects of our innovations and continuously improve the program; it also models thoughtful practice for our students. In this paper we report specifically on the effects of implementing a program-long, program-wide cohort approach with a strong community emphasis. Such an approach is very demanding on faculty, must be "sold" anew each year to student teachers accustomed to a different pedagogy, and is sometimes viewed as "soft" by others in the school of education and the wider university. It is often difficult to persuade colleagues to adopt such an approach, both within our cohort program and beyond; yet without full commitment among the faculty team and broad institutional support, the challenges become even greater (as we saw earlier in the literature review). We thought the present research would help in gaining greater commitment from student teachers, faculty, the school of education, and the wider university.

In particular, in this study we wanted to: (1) identify the effects of the approach; (2) assess whether they were, on balance, sufficiently positive to justify the effort involved; and, if they were, (3) look for ways to fine-tune the approach. Among the effects we wished to study were: (a) effects on the program itself; (b) effects on the well-being of our students and faculty; and (c) effects on the professional development of our students. Enjoyment of the program, while very important for
learning, was not in our view sufficient to justify it; we wished to find out, to the extent possible, whether experience of the approach was making our students better teachers.

The present study was conducted over four years (1995-96 to 1998-99), intensifying in the final two years. Our research approach was qualitative, as defined by Punch (1998): for example, we were participant observers; we had a relatively small sample (the four successive cohorts) which we studied in depth; we did not test a pre-established hypothesis; our data were not usually expressed in numbers; and our interview and observation sessions were largely open-ended. Following Hammersley (1992) and Merriam (1998), our qualitative approach often included a quantitative component. For example, we often noted the number or percentage of responses of a particular type and whether all, most, or merely a few held a particular view or exhibited a particular behaviour. Despite this, however, we acknowledge that our inquiry was heavily dependent on interpretive and constructivist processes typical of qualitative research.

This was in a sense a case study. Although there were four successive cohorts we were studying a single, emerging program, attempting "to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). However, the study focused on a particular aspect of the program and explored theoretical issues, very much along the lines of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As in grounded theory, our conceptualization of the cohort community and our understanding of its "properties and dimensions" and the connections between them developed gradually over the period of the study. For example, while we saw early that the community experience had an impact on the students, it was only gradually that we realized the extent to which it enhanced their action research, group work, class discussions, practice teaching, and so on. It is only in the past year that we have come to the view, articulated by one of our number, that the community emphasis is "perhaps the single most important feature of our program, giving the students a sense of self-worth which enables them to modify the curriculum, take risks, and become reflective practitioners."

Beyond pursuing understanding, we also had practical interests; we were concerned not only to understand the role of community in the program but also to find out how to enhance it. In this respect the study was a form of action research (Elliott, 1991; Noffke, 1997). For example, as we recognized more fully the importance of community, we discussed this aspect of the program explicitly with the students and increased yet further the time and attention devoted to community building. Discovering the optimal form of cohort community is, of course, an ongoing quest; in line with action research methodology, our present practice of community is the starting point for our next cycle of inquiry into this topic.

Turning to specific data sources, over the four years the successive cohorts of student teachers completed four questionnaires on their experience of the program, several of the questions providing opportunity for comment on the cohort structure and community emphasis. The first questionnaire was administered by mail in August prior to the commencement of the program, and those who responded to it (the number ranged from 29 to 38) subsequently completed a questionnaire in October, January, and April (numbers declined somewhat toward the end of the year, but never below 21). The questions varied to a degree from one questionnaire to the next. The first focused on the student teachers' background and their expectations for the program. The second asked what had surprised them about the program, how the present program compared with their previous university experiences, what their initial practicum experiences were like, and what were their early impressions of the program. The third involved a more detailed evaluation of the program, its strengths and weaknesses, and what should be changed, and asked what had surprised them about teaching and how they had changed so far as teachers. The fourth questionnaire was similar to the third but asked in addition about the final practicum block, how they had been able to apply what they had learned on campus in the block, and how prepared they now felt to be a teacher.
In each of the last two years (1997-98 and 1998-99) we (the present authors) interviewed individually six randomly selected student teachers, four times each, on their views of the program. These interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed. They took place in October, January, April, and the fall after completion of the program. The first three interviews used the same questions as in the questionnaires for the corresponding months (see above), but with considerable probing. The final interview involved "looking back" on the program from the vantage point of their current situation as a regular classroom teacher.

Also in 1997-98 and 1998-99, on the final day of classes, the student teachers were invited to write a letter to an incoming student describing the year's experience and giving advice; 39 and 51 respectively wrote letters. Before they began writing we requested permission to copy and analyze the letters for research purposes, but assured them we would not read them until after they had graduated. Given this assurance, and the fact that they were in "exit mode" from the program and thinking primarily of the incoming students, we believe these letters yielded honest opinions about the program. While this task was quite open-ended, our later analysis of the letters revealed many commonalities in themes.

Beyond the questionnaires, interviews, and letters, in the last two years of the study copies were made (with permission) of the students' assignments and reflection papers, and notes were taken on class discussions conducted specifically on the role of collaboration and community in schooling and teacher education. Finally, the student teachers were observed on campus, in the practicum, and in extracurricular activities, the present authors keeping detailed journals on their observations, reactions, and reflections.

While data were gathered over the four years of the study, we did not find a clear increase in intensity and impact of the community experience over these years. The data indicated progress in this respect from 1997-98 to 1998-99; for example, the amount of favourable comment on the cohort community and its effects increased in both the questionnaires and the interviews (although not in the letters). But 1995-96 was also a very solid year from a community point of view, especially in the primary/junior group (prior to 1997-98 we were not very successful in integrating the primary/junior and junior/intermediate students). It appeared we became more adept over the years at helping our students acquire the concepts of community (for example, in the October questionnaires the frequency of references to community and its positive effects increased each year). However, the reality of community life was often influenced by factors over which we had limited or no control and which fluctuated, such as the make-up of the student body, the faculty involved in the program, the general course requirements in our school of education, and the climate in the school system (affected by teacher strikes, government mandates, and so on). For example, one year a particularly domineering student undermined community in the primary/junior group. To some extent they were influenced by his criticisms of our "soft" approach to teaching and learning (he was especially opposed to action research); but more importantly, his strong personality and intimidating manner made them afraid to express their true thoughts and feelings within the cohort. Another year, two faculty members virtually refused to do practicum supervision, leaving many students feeling we had abandoned them in this very important domain. We believe we did become better at community building over the four years, but the fluctuations were very apparent; a longer-term study with closer analysis of the various factors would be needed to establish improvement over time. In the present paper our claim is simply that, during the four years of the study, the community was a strong and positive force in the program.
4. Effects of Implementing a Community Approach in Our Teacher Education Program

The following are our findings on the impact of a cohort teacher education program with a strong community emphasis, as elaborated earlier. In documenting the effects of this approach we will describe both the effects and, as space permits, the various data that led us to the conclusions presented.

It should be noted that, given our program has a number of distinctive features - an action research focus, a close partnership with schools, involvement of all faculty in practicum supervision, and so on - it was not always possible to determine precisely the extent to which a particular feature was responsible for a given outcome. However, we believe the effects described below were in large measure due to the community aspect of the program.

4.1. General Response

On the whole, the student teachers in the Mid-Town program over the four years of the study responded positively to the community approach. Each new group, after some initial tentativeness, were for the most part willing to join in, support the community, take risks, and be open with one another and the faculty. Most students at the end of their year talked about their time in the Mid-Town community in very favourable terms; some described it as "the best year of my life," attributing this largely to the community experience and to the vision of teaching and learning it gave them. They often commented that the sense of inclusion, belonging, and meaningful involvement was "so different from undergrad."

All our data sources showed this positive general response. In completing the questionnaire over the four years, 89% of students said the relationship with professors was "very different" from their previous university experiences and supported their learning; 83% felt the sense of community was highly effective in encouraging them to share ideas and resources; and 93% of students rated the retreat as extremely helpful in easing them into the teacher education program. In the in-depth interviews in the final two years, ten of the twelve randomly selected interviewees spoke in detail about the importance to them of the program's community emphasis. In the letters written in the last two years to incoming students, the community aspect of the program was by far the most common theme. In December 1997 and 1998, in social foundations classes specifically on the topic of community, there was strong endorsement of the approach both for campus and school settings. The behaviour of the students also indicated that they were receptive to the community approach. Each year virtually all students went to the two-day retreat in early October, despite having to bear the cost themselves (in the final year of the study every student attended). Attendance was also high at social gatherings in first term, especially the December end-of-term party. As the year progressed and fatigue set in, some social events were less successful and even quite disappointing. On campus however and in the practicum schools the sense of community continued to grow; and there was always a large Mid-Town contingent at the graduation formal in the spring. In the final year of the study almost one sixth of those who went to the formal were Mid-Town students and faculty or their guests, which was remarkable given that our students represented only one fifteenth of those in the program as a whole.

Not all students fully accepted the class community model. A few each year expressed reservations about this approach to teaching and learning; they would have preferred a more impersonal or "academic" style. Some enjoyed the social dimension of the program for themselves but worried that in a school classroom such an approach might undermine classroom management
and teaching "the basics." A few, while participating in the group events, tended to use them as a platform for disrupting the community and criticizing aspects of the program. We will now look at some of the specific ways in which having a strong community affected the students and the program.

4.2. Participation

Having a strong community implies of course that students take part in most of the social activities of the group. What was surprising, however, was the impact on more formal aspects of the program. There was a high level of participation in whole-class and small-group discussions and activities, which we interpreted as being largely due to the community experience: liking each other and knowing each other well, they were glad to talk and brainstorm together. Of course, because of their closeness there was always the danger they would stray from the topic and just "chat." We found we had to use all the usual techniques of setting the stage clearly, devising interesting group activities, and circulating among the groups to make sure they were on task. But in part because of the community spirit they responded well to our suggestions (they saw us as part of the community rather than an external authority); and because they were basically enjoying themselves they were willing to keep at their tasks. In general, there were seldom cases of apathetic groups or careless work in in-class assignment.

Belonging to a close community also increased the students' participation in group assignment work beyond the classroom. One such assignment in the late fall of 1998 was the Healthy Schools Poster Project. This required students to work in groups to generate extensive displays on various aspects of school health (broadly conceived), with a final Saturday presentation in an open area at the school of education. The students worked hard, all participated, all faculty attended, the students enjoyed doing the presentation, and the displays were in general very interesting and of high quality. Another "assignment" done in 1997-98 and 1998-99 was putting on MAD - Math Adventure Day - at one of our partner schools. The student teachers in groups, under the guidance of the math education professor, prepared a range of math activities to be done with the school students in the gym on MAD day. The idea was to offer exciting activities that would help the school students learn to enjoy math and understand it better. Once again the preparation was very thorough, the day was a considerable success, and there was a spirit of working and contributing together.

Data on student participation came largely from faculty observation, mainly that of the present authors; the examples given above were taken from our journals. One key record in our journals had to do with the "charts activity," which was done in class three times a year as part of the social foundations course. Working in groups based on their first term practicum placements, they wrote on chart paper their views on the goals of schooling and the role of the teacher. Their work in these sessions was of such a calibre that we are able to use it to track the development of their ideas on these matters over the course of the year. Another set of cases in our journals were concerned with the students' willingness to share their experiences with each other. For example, there was the "debriefing" session after each practice teaching block. While it was necessary to orchestrate this session with questions and guidelines, the discussion that ensued was usually very animated and worthwhile. Another example was the session, twice a year, when students in groups shared their growing curriculum resource kits. They showed considerable pleasure in finding out about each other's kits; and again it was a very fruitful learning experience.

Beyond our own observations, we also kept a record of the impressions of other part-time faculty on the team. For example, we noted that the faculty leading the Healthy Schools Project and Math Adventure Day said they saw a distinct difference between the approach of the Mid-Town students to such projects and that of students in other options; involvement and collaboration were
greater and the work produced was of a higher calibre. In general, our part-time faculty often remarked that they liked teaching in our cohort program because the students were friendly, interested, and willing to participate.

4.3. Risk-Taking

Genuine community is characterized not just by socializing, sharing, and working together but by willingness to take risks in interactions because of a basic sense of security in the group. Each year we observed in our students from a fairly early stage risk-taking of a social and emotional nature within the community. After their beginning hesitation, born of many years of academic detachment and "rugged individualism" at school and university, they were willing to be open to one another and relate on a human level. They were also willing to express their point of view, criticize each other's opinions, and work through conflict in the community.

Apart from personal relationships, we observed that the students took risks in experimenting with different approaches to teaching. This was seen especially in their action research projects, where program modification was a central component. Initially they were concerned that their associate teacher might be upset by the implied criticism inherent in such modifications. We tried to reassure them by noting that there had rarely been cases in the past of associate teachers taking offence in this way. However, in the end it was largely their sense of security in the option community, notably with the faculty, that enabled them to proceed with their modifications, many of which involved basic changes in approach to teaching and learning.

Another form of risk-taking was seen in the students' frank comments about various aspects of the Mid-Town program. They frequently gave us feedback and suggestions, whether about class meeting times, the content and methodology of our courses, our views on particular topics, the timing of assignments, or evaluation methods for practice teaching. There was a paradox here in that they had typically been less critical over the years of their undergraduate program, which in retrospect they often saw as having serious defects compared with the Mid-Town approach. But it was precisely the community atmosphere of our program that enabled them to be frank with us. This open criticism was sometimes a problem in cases where a faculty member or associate teacher was in general not doing a good job and was unwilling to change. We had to find ways to contain the situation while still endorsing risk-taking. But we saw this as a "positive problem," a sign that they were learning to discriminate and take initiative - to be thoughtful practitioners - and that they felt supported in this.

One major data source with respect to the students' risk-taking was our daily observations, recorded in our journals. In addition to the examples cited above, we reported finding several of the students remarkably willing to share with us their doubts about being a teacher, doubts which often arose early in their first teaching block as they encountered a heavy workload, constant interruptions, and less than enthusiastic pupils. Although revealing such doubts might have seemed to call into question their commitment to the profession and strike at the heart of our identity as teacher educators, they nevertheless frankly discussed them with us and sought our advice and support.

Another example of risk-taking which we noted was their willingness to talk quite naturally about difficulties they were experiencing in their practice teaching. A case in point was Phil (pseudonyms are used throughout this paper) who, due to special circumstances, was having some difficulties with classroom management in his first STEP (the weekly Student Teacher Experience Program). After visiting the school his faculty supervisor suggested in a telephone conversation that Phil talk about the problem with some of the other student teachers from the option who were at his school. By the time the faculty member visited the school again two weeks later, Phil had discussed it with all eight fellow student teachers at the school and three of the associate teachers as well! As a
result, he became aware of several new strategies and his classroom management difficulties decreased.

Beyond our own observations, the letters to incoming students addressed risk-taking, especially in relation to the faculty. About a third talked of the importance of speaking up in the program, saying what you think, asking lots of questions; and they stressed that the faculty would allow this. Many also said that perfection is impossible in the assignments, that the students should just do the best they can in the time available, that they would be okay. Further, they spoke often of the need to discuss issues with other students, which we interpret as risk-taking in relation to peers.

Finally, many of the in-depth interviews in 1997-98 and 1998-99 showed that the students felt they could take risks within the community. The opportunity to "be oneself," ask questions, and develop in one's own way were constant themes. Rebecca said: "You can be who you are and people will accept you for who you are"; "If we have any questions we can always come to you"; "I feel comfortable talking to my peers." Anna observed: "It is so easy to approach the professors. I can just come up and ask for help." And Heather commented: "I like what we're doing because it allows us to be the type of teachers we are each most adept to become. I feel we are really being encouraged to experiment as teachers, explore methods, explore possibilities and just develop into individual teachers."

4.4. Group Orientation

Another outcome of a community approach was a shift in focus and identity toward the group; students developed positive attitudes and behaviours toward their cohort. This went beyond the tendency to participate, noted earlier, which might often be for personal ends. The group orientation we are referring to here involved a concern for the well-being of other group members and the cohort community as a whole.

One manifestation of this orientation was a lessening of competitiveness. On campus and in their practicum placements students shared resources with each other rather than hoarding them for themselves. During job searches they reported the questions posed at their interviews and gave advice in class and on the internet rather than just trying to maximize their own chances. They showed interest in each other's achievements; for example, during the resource kit sessions they were very attentive and expressed appreciation of materials and units the others had gathered or created. In the action research groups the present authors noted that a large amount of time was spent helping the students who were having trouble with their projects, rather than discussing the more successful efforts. There were problems here from a fairness point of view: we sometimes intervened to shift attention to the students who had made more progress. But in general the reduced sense of competition benefited everyone, and the experience of such a community was important preparation for teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Another expression of the group orientation was increased supportiveness and patience with one another and the faculty. Although as noted earlier the students were often critical of us and each other, they usually criticized in a good humoured and constructive manner; and on the whole they were willing to accept a compromise with good grace when not everyone could get their first preference, for example with respect to practicum placements and action research supervisors. And they often put up with the faults of members of the group to a surprising degree, for example when students talked too much in discussion groups or did not carry their weight in group projects. There was a limit to this, of course, as there should be; sometimes they became quite angry at individual student or faculty behaviour. But we regarded it as positive that their first inclination was to be tolerant of the behaviour of other community members.
Once again, a major source of data here was our own observations. We observed – and recorded in our journals – many cases of students being relatively caring toward other community members. For example, Angela was not really a great favourite of the group or very conscientious in group work but when she became pregnant and "had to get married" earlier than planned, the students rallied around her. When it became known that Anna had serious food allergies, the students were keen to get information on what measures were in place to keep her safe. When Cheryl's partner became so seriously ill she did not want to talk about it, the few who were aware of the situation often sat with her and talked about everyday matters, trying to make her feel better. When Amy failed her practice teaching because of a difficult placement, the other students were supportive and comforting. Of course, in any community there will be some acts of kindness, but we felt these went beyond the norm.

The students not only helped individuals; we also observed them being relatively "caring" toward the group as a whole. Andrew, for example, could be counted on to organize parties, field trips, and other option events, obtain university or faculty-wide information relevant to the option, and so on. Jane worked hard to organize an alternative to the grad formal when it seemed there would not be enough tickets for our option; when there proved to be enough tickets and her plan had to be abandoned she put the episode behind her and looked forward to the formal. Tony became a computer resource for the group, spending a great deal of time helping students get on e-mail, assisting faculty in sending general messages to the group, and solving people's individual computer problems. Once again, our interpretation was that these actions went beyond what one would expect in an ordinary university class and can be attributed in large measure to the community structure.

The in-depth interviews did not provide quantitative data on the extent of this group orientation, but they gave insight into how it worked. Several of the students explained how the community atmosphere in the Mid-Town option made it more collegial and less competitive than in their undergraduate programs. Erika commented: "Everybody (in the Mid-Town program) helped each other so you weren't solo... There was always somebody you could call on to talk to about anything and everything was open. It wasn't like, Oh well I'm not going to help you because I want to get an A and I don't want you to do that well. It was just sort of let's all get the best out of it, which I've never seen in any university program." Rebecca said: "In the B.Sc. program people don't want to share with you if you're not going to add to their grade point average... Because a lot of people use science as a springboard to medicine, it's very cut-throat." Whereas in the Mid-Town Option people were "willing to give you a hand or talk about assignments or share." Thus, the difference was partly inherent in the purposes of the programs; however, our interpretation is that much of the difference was because people in the our program came to know each other as individuals and fellow community members and so had added incentive to help each other.

4.5. Inclusiveness

In a sense, inclusiveness in attitudes and behaviour is an aspect of the group orientation described above. But inclusiveness adds a further dimension of equity, fairness, and lack of prejudice. Our conclusion that the community emphasis in the Mid-Town Option resulted in increased inclusiveness is based almost entirely on faculty observation, especially that of the present authors. There were not questions specifically on equity and prejudice in our questionnaires and interviews, nor did this topic emerge as such (except in terms of a general sense of acceptance in the cohort community) in the responses to questions or in the letters to incoming students. Further, we would admit that a degree of interpretation was involved in our judgment that the inclusiveness we observed was due to the community emphasis rather than other factors.
We observed, and recorded in our journals, positive attitudes and caring toward all members of the cohort community, including those of a different gender, race, ethnicity, sexual persuasion, and physical ability. Much of this was due to our modelling and expectations. We made it clear that the Mid-Town Option was to be inclusive in the fullest sense of the word. We introduced the students to Vivian Paley's philosophy and practice of inclusion as presented in her book *You Can't Say You Can't Play*, and we had many readings, classes, and visiting speakers on gender equity, anti-racism, and multiculturalism. However, the degree of commitment to inclusiveness in the cohort led us to believe that it was due in part to the sense of community in the option.

Over the years we had many racial minority students in the program, and they were always accepted and included without any suggestion of bias. Andrew became the leader of the group in his year. Marilyn and Althea were strong and popular members of the cohort. Marie, Catherine, and Michael were rather shy but had several close friends and were fully accepted in the group. Paul, a recent immigrant, was older and of a very different culture and style from the majority; but he blossomed in the group as a result of the acceptance and affection. Jason, a doctoral student on the faculty team, had an accent that was sometimes difficult to understand and an unusual personal demeanour by North American standards. One could imagine him in another setting not being taken as seriously as he deserved; indeed, when we were considering adding him to our team a faculty member in another program raised questions about his ability. But our students quickly saw his warmth, experience, and ability, appreciated his classes, and gladly accepted him as a practicum and action research supervisor; and he proved to be one of the best graduate assistants we had known.

We also had a number of gay students in the cohort over the years and detected no homophobia toward them; they were often among the more popular students in the class. Bruno was somewhat shy and defensive at first, but the students went out of their way to include him and won him over; his self-esteem personally and professionally rose considerably during the year. One year a very difficult student in the class also happened to be gay. Many students had a strongly negative reaction to him, and at crucial points we had to intervene to make it clear he was part of the group and there were limits to how far anyone should go in leaving him out or being rude to him. But it was apparent the students' unfavourable reaction was not because of his sexual persuasion and their hostility was never expressed in those terms.

Lucy, a paraplegic, was very popular in the group. She received enormous support from the students both on campus and in her practice teaching schools: they helped her with her crutches, took lecture notes for her, sought her out for participation in groups, and sat and talked with her at parties. She felt fully included. Lucy may not stay in an elementary teaching position; she expressed surprise at the amount of work involved and the sheer physical demands of the job. But the help and acceptance from the group enabled her to get through the year, become a very good teacher and have, as she said, one of the best years of her life.

Not all students were fully accepted. We had students, not members of a minority group, who were obviously sexist and not trying to deal with it; or controlling to an extreme; or strongly insensitive in other ways. Such students were frequently given short shrift by their fellow students, and if they did badly in their practice teaching (which was often the case) they did not receive much sympathy. Other students, again not members of a minority group, were demanding or "high maintenance" beyond what most people could endure. Students of these kinds had difficulty finding someone to be with in discussion groups and on projects, and we sometimes had to insist that they be included (the creation of random groups by numbering off was one way we dealt with this situation). We made it clear that involving such students was also part of community life; and the other students usually complied, partly for our sake but partly because they were beginning to understand the complexity of community. Such lessons in inclusion were of course important for them as they prepared to have their own school class.
4.6. Personal Growth

Many of the students had not belonged to a community of this nature before; they had not experienced this level of openness, support, and acknowledgement of their abilities. The cohort community often had a strong impact on them at a personal level, bringing out aspects of their personality that had been dormant. It enabled them to experiment with new ways of relating, feeling, and behaving. Some experienced emotional growth; they became more open, learning to trust others. Others developed socially, becoming more interested in building relationships and more willing to take initiative in social situations. Many gained greater self-confidence and a more positive self-concept.

Our conclusion that the cohort community assisted significantly in personal growth was based in part on our own observations. We believed we saw more development of this kind than in other university programs, including teacher education programs, with which we had been involved. We will give a few examples here of the kinds of cases we encountered and recorded in our journals. Paul, the recent immigrant mentioned earlier who appeared to be shy and reserved when the year began, grew more outgoing, speaking at length in class about his views on education, and taking greater initiative in social situations. He became less formal, adjusting to the North American rough and tumble; and he became quite a dynamic teacher. Joe, a large and powerful young man, confided to one of us early in the year that he had been abused at home as a child and had difficulty staying calm in social and institutional situations; however, as the year progressed he became emotionally stronger and took on a leadership role in the program. Janet, by nature a rather reserved person, became a leader on the professional side of the option, confident in discussing approaches to teaching and teacher education; she was a star on Options Night describing the program to incoming students, and on a panel the following year talking about what she had learned from action research. Phil, initially socially awkward and trying too hard, came to love the community. He went out of his way to mingle with people and learned to take risks socially. He became more sensitive in social situations, toning down his sarcasm and argumentativeness. Without extensive follow up it is difficult to assess how lasting these personal changes were; but we believe an intensive, year-long experience of this kind is likely to have long-term effects.

Turning to other data sources, the questionnaires and letters to incoming students did not yield much comment on personal growth; the questionnaires had no items specifically on this issue and the letters were open-ended. However, one aspect of the letters we felt significant was their strong emphasis on the need for the incoming students to "be themselves" and "look after themselves" during the program year. We regard this outlook as an outcome of belonging to a community which stressed personal acceptance and well-being.

The in-depth interviews conducted in 1997-98 and 1998-99 were a major source of insight into the impact of the class community on personal development. Ten of the twelve interviewees spoke at length about their personal growth during the year. A main theme, as in the letters, was self-acceptance and taking care of oneself. In her October interview, Rebecca said: "I feel it's a very nurturing environment. It's very comfortable. You can be who you are and people will accept you for who you are. It's very different (from undergrad)." In her end of year interview she remarked:

I've noticed I'm less of a perfectionist and I'm happy about that. I'm happy that I'm able to take standards and say, Okay, some of these are reasonable and some of them aren't.
Melissa in her October interview commented:

I'm having a lot of fun and I feel a little bit guilty about that...some of my peers have mentioned the same thing, that we enjoy being in the classes more than in our practical placements. I see myself in an environment that is academic to a certain degree but isn't painfully academic. Like I'm learning a lot and I'm learning a lot about myself. And it's more relevant to my life experience because, you know, in our lives things aren't separated.

In her end of year interview she said:

The program has been much more emotional than I thought it would be. It's been much more personal and personally challenging in some ways and not just academically... It was emotionally exhausting in many ways. I feel like I'm a very different person than I was before and a very different teacher.

And Heather in her October interview commented:

Inside of me there are two little battles going on. There's the one that says just grow up and be tough and do the work and don't have needs. And then there's the other part of me that knows I have needs and is drawn towards this kind of warm, welcoming atmosphere... I think it's good to have standards and to really command excellence but to know that within that we can be nurtured as humans.

4.7. Professional Growth

In a sense, everything we have reported so far was a form of professional growth: greater participation, risk-taking, a group orientation, inclusiveness, emotional and social development, increased confidence and self-esteem. It is commonly recognized today that "teaching is a relational act" and "we teach who we are." Teachers do not just transmit curriculum; they work with students in a teaching-learning process in which the personal and social qualities of the teacher are a key factor. We believe the community experience in the Mid-Town program helped the students become the sort of people who could teach well.

In addition, however, there were a number of specific professional learnings. For example, the student teachers learned the importance of establishing a community in their own classroom. They saw how much students can learn from each other, how enjoyable collaborative learning can be, that enjoyment and social interaction are not incompatible with learning, how important community is as a context for learning. They also learned through experience the importance of being flexible, not being too hard on students, allowing for student well-being. And they learned how to live and work in a real community, one in which there is difference and commonality, conflict and harmony.

Many of these learnings we observed and noted in our journals. Especially with the 1995-96 primary/junior group, for example, we saw the student teachers become more committed to collaboration in teaching and learning. Initially, they were suspicious of the group discussion and assignments and the final requirement of presenting as a group at the action research conference. Maria, for example, confided that she had never enjoyed group work at the undergraduate level and was not looking forward to it in our program; she had always worked better on her own. Over the year, however, she and many others came to enjoy group work and see each other as important
resources. Lorraine wrote in a reflection paper: "So, if one day I have a question about spelling I can go and ask one of several people for advice based on personal research or referrals to literature."

We also witnessed the student teachers learning the complexities of living in a real community. The WASPs were exposed to the close, family-oriented way of life of students of Southern European background, and the latter came to see firsthand the way of life of the more worldly WASPs. Blacks and non-Blacks, Asians and non-Asians came into close contact and were able to form friendships and push beyond the stereotypes. The students learned how to interact with a colleague such as Andy, who did no-holds-barred kick boxing to help pay his fees and came in limping (but swaggering) on Monday morning. The primary/junior students became familiar with the outlook of junior/intermediates and vice versa. All this was valuable preparation for life in today's diverse school classrooms and staffrooms.

Beyond our own observations, we drew on the questionnaires and the letters to incoming students. These provided more information on the professional development of our students than they had on their personal development. In responding to the questionnaires, 73% of students felt the program experience had given them the skills to develop a community in their own classes; and many reported having made progress in building community in their practicum classes. Many other effects of the community experience on their approach to teaching were mentioned, although in smaller frequencies. In the letters, 69% of those writing them spoke of the importance of sharing resources, most stressing that they would receive many valuable resources in return. A large proportion spoke in general of the success of their year, a success described primarily in professional terms.

The in-depth interviews from 1997-98 and 1998-99 were again key sources on the impact of the community on professional growth. To illustrate the methodology we employed, we will describe here in some detail how the interview transcripts were used in arriving at our conclusions. In analyzing the transcripts we first read them quickly, identifying the sections in which there was substantial reference to class community. We then divided these references into categories: How the community experience compared with that in their previous university program(s); how it compared with their expectations; what were their attitudes toward the cohort community experience; what was the personal impact of the community experience; and what was its professional impact. Continuing to review the transcripts, we then began to identify sub-elements within these categories. Within the professional impact category, which is of immediate interest here, we identified the following sub-categories (how many of the 12 interviewees mentioned each sub-category is noted in parentheses): explicit statement of a professional connection (10); personal growth affecting professional growth (7); learning to take care of oneself while teaching (8); learning to share and collaborate (9); learning to be easy on one's students and look after their personal needs (7); learning the importance of establishing/expressed intention to establish community in their classroom (9). We realize the sample of interviewees was small and so do not set great store by the numbers. Further, it must be acknowledged that systematic study is needed of the extent to which graduates of the program in fact created community in their own classrooms. However, we believe the interview responses were quite significant. For one thing, they helped us better understand the cohort community experience and see why it had an impact on professional development. Further, it added substantially to the data base because it showed the student teachers themselves – those experiencing the program – articulating and arguing the link between community experience and professional growth, often in ways that had not occurred to us: we were no longer alone in seeing this connection. It should be noted also that many of the interviewees were not just talking about their own experience, they were giving their perception of the impact the program was having on others as well.

Apart from the above overview, it is impossible to provide here more than a brief impression of the substance of the interview responses. However, we hope the following excerpts will give some
sense of how the interviews helped lead to our conclusions about the impact of community on professional growth. Rebecca in her April interview commented:

The program has helped me because the individual encouragement has been very, very positive; just the support, knowing the support is there... That has been encouraging and has brought out my best results... I'm going to make sure I'm networking when I get out there (as a teacher). I want to meet up with other teachers and say, How can we meet the expectations together?

A little later in her interview Rebecca, a science graduate planning to teach at the primary level, said:

Teaching science is very tricky... Which is where this networking thing is going to come in. I just see some amazing stuff come out of people in our option. It's just brilliant stuff, and if they can do it and I can get to know them then I can do it.

Heather, in her February interview, commented:

I'd say the faculty (in the option) are genuinely interested in us and in our growth personally and professionally... It's an excellent model for education...which I hope I'll be able to carry on as an educator... I like the friendliness, I like the non-judgment. I'd say the faculty have been relatively flexible about due dates and requirements. Not that I think we should procrastinate forever but it feels to me like our growth is the important thing... I know my nature tends to be more judgmental, and that's an area where I really hope I will grow in being able to be an encouragement and a support, a forgiving force... And I see that with my associate teacher. There are a lot of details he just lets slip by because he's there for the kids. They like coming to school, they have fun in his room. There's a really pleasant, relaxed atmosphere and they are learning... We have a really good personal atmosphere in our option and I think even with that we need to keep reminding ourselves and each other that what we are able to give in the classroom is so keenly influenced by what's going on inside us. That's the bottom line. It doesn't matter how good a lesson we planned or what glitzy presentation we give, if we're feeling like we're falling apart inside.

And Erika said in her April interview:

As a teacher, I definitely want to build community. I hope I'm in a situation where the principal and the teachers around me are supportive of that kind of environment. If not then at least in my classroom I will build a community, you know, a respect for being able to share ideas; they feel comfortable, I feel comfortable too because they know I'm a human being, that things happen. I've already found this out. A student in my practice teaching class said to me, Well, don't you know that? And I said, You know what, I don't but I can find out. And she said, Well why don't you, you're a teacher? And I said, I'm a teacher but I'm still a human being, and I'll make mistakes and sometimes you'll catch me on something, and that's okay so long as we go and find the right answer. So I guess I want to create that kind of understanding... I have learned to be easy on myself. Like I'm not perfect and I learned in the program that everything will get done and it will probably get done in a timely manner, but you cannot break your back and go nuts and just let everything else fall by the wayside. You have to give yourself the time, your family the time, and you have to be fresh because if not you're not going to be good to these kids.
5. Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that placing student teachers in a program-long, program-wide cohort with a strong community emphasis will, given a number of other conditions, result in an effective form of teacher education. The same conclusion is suggested by studies of other programs implemented along similar lines, as described earlier in our review of the research literature. Because the approach has not been widely attempted in this form, more research is needed; but initial indications are promising. By contrast, teacher education programs with minimal course integration, and with students coming together in large classes with others they barely know, are too impersonal and fragmented to achieve the kind of "socialization" into teaching advocated by Lortie and Goodlad. Such programs are not powerful enough to counterbalance the long apprenticeship student teachers have had in transmission pedagogy and the pressures they experience to conform to established practices in their practicum placements and their school settings after graduation.

Several of the effects of applying the cohort and community approach in our program were perhaps to be expected: the group loyalty, the willingness to pitch in, the caring for one another, the inclusiveness, even the personal and social growth; while important, these were advantages one might reasonably hope for in a community-oriented program. What surprised us was the extent of the effects on the more academic and technical aspects of the program. These included:

- high level of the participation in whole class and small group discussions and activities
- high quality of the discussion and group work, notably in connection with the action research projects
- growth in awareness of the value of collaboration and ability and willingness to engage in it; willingness to seek help and resources from fellow student teachers
- willingness to take risks in practicum settings and implement basic changes in approach to teaching
- willingness to express their point of view and question each other’s and the faculty’s opinions, while maintaining positive relationships
- inclination and ability to foster community and collaboration in their own classrooms

These findings show that the effects of a cohort and community approach are not just in "soft" areas, but occur even in academic and technical aspects of teacher education. As noted earlier, Peterson (1992) has said: "When community exists, learning is strengthened - everyone is smarter, more ambitious, and productive." It is the interplay between community experience and academic and professional learning that so urgently needs to be recognized in teacher education and education generally.

We believe the size of the cohort was an important factor in the success of the program over the four years of the study. Most of the programs described in the research literature have involved a fairly small student body (25-40). While cohorts should not be too large, we favour a group of about 60 student teachers (covering the full spectrum of elementary teaching levels), so students are exposed to a range of issues and a diversity of colleagues. A cohort of this size also means the faculty team can be larger and more diverse and the work can be spread around more. However, cohort size is an issue for ongoing research. In pursuing this question, it would be useful to consider parallel experiments in high school education using cohorts of about 65 or 70 (Wasley, 1994; Wood, 1998).

An aspect of the Mid-Town program we regard as particularly important was involving the whole faculty team in practicum supervision, team teaching, student counselling, marking reflection
papers, writing reference letters, and so on. We think this is crucial to the long term feasibility of the cohort approach, given its heavy workload; and others have made similar observations (Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992). We need to go further in this direction; the work must not fall on the shoulders of just a few people. We might note also that broad participation by the whole team provides a strong model of collaboration for the student teachers; and it is an excellent way to train junior members of the team so they can establish cohort programs themselves when they move on to other teacher education settings. However, constant mentoring, coordination, and mutual support are required so the quality of supervision, teaching, and counselling across the program is fairly even; otherwise students will become resentful and the community will be undermined. We have recognized the need for more development along these lines in our own program.

The cohort and community model of teacher education affords many benefits to faculty: students tend to be more appreciative and more willing to participate in class; faculty colleagues offer advice, support, and friendship to each other; the integrated, cumulative program results in more powerful and satisfying teaching; and collaborative research and publishing are facilitated. Despite these advantages, however, we sense that the model will not become widespread without increased institutional support. Much of the funding allocated to teacher education in universities today is siphoned off to other programs and functions, whether within the school of education or beyond, leaving inadequate resources for such time-consuming activities as cohort coordination, program integration, community building, school liaison, and practicum supervision. Further, this type of work usually has low status and is rewarded poorly in terms of tenure, promotion, and merit pay. Administrators in the school of education and the wider university need to recognize the crucial importance of the cohort and community approach to teaching and learning, at both university and school levels, and introduce policy statements, structures, and support systems that make it more feasible.

Meanwhile, however, we continue to see this approach as very worthwhile and would recommend it to others for consideration, at least in a modified form. The problem of the heavy workload and lack of rewards can be overcome to some extent by doing research on one's own teacher education practice, as we have done in this and other studies (Kosnik & Beck, 2000; Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Such research has the added advantages of helping us improve the program and making our work more satisfying. It also enables us to make a stronger case at an institutional level for support for this kind of program, something we plan to do in a more systematic way in the future. Most school of education and central university administrators would acknowledge the importance of solid professional preparation for teachers in today's complex and changing world. We need to be able to show more clearly, and with more compelling evidence and arguments, that future teachers must experience community in their teacher education program so their personal and professional growth may be enhanced.
References


Chapter 6

Representing Multiple Perspectives of Self-as-Teacher: School Integrated Teacher Education and Self-Study

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Introduction

This paper describes a process of self-study that has developed between two teacher educators, their student teachers and their school-based colleagues. The impetus for the research comes from a three-year action research project investigating the organization of and the instruction in a school integrated teacher education course aimed at preparing student teachers to become teachers (Sanford & Hopper, 2002). We see teacher education as a process that is generated through relationships with students and teachers who engage in self-reflection on knowledge acquired over time from multiple contexts and roles and from readings of professional texts on teaching. This paper represents a “reflective turn” (Schön, 1991) on the research project, offered through three accounts: that of the university instructors, the student teachers and the schoolteachers involved in the project (Hopper & Sanford, 2000; Sanford & Hopper, 2000; Sanford & Hopper, 2001).

To understand this notion of teacher education we have found Cochran-Smith’s (1999) review helpful. She suggests that the paradigmatic debate in education has influenced research in teacher education over the last two decades. From a positivist perspective, much of the current understanding of teacher education has been built on the conception that knowing more leads to more effective practice. This type of knowledge-for-practice conception of teaching has contributed to the professional status of teacher education. The problem is that this formalized knowledge is distant from the practical knowledge of learning to teach, and as such feeds the teaching-as-telling default style of higher education (Finkel, 2000).

In the last decade a second body of literature has built on the first by offering new insights into teaching knowledge with the conception of teaching as what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) have termed "knowledge-in-practice". This body of knowledge has developed largely from a naturalistic mode of inquiry. Developing from the work of Schön (1983; 1987; 1991), research in this area has focused upon teacher knowledge in action, "as it is expressed or embedded in the artistry of practice, in teachers' reflections on practice, in teachers' practical inquiries, and/or in teachers' narrative accounts of practice" (Cochran-Smith, p. 202). The term knowledge-in-practice has been used to conceptualize a variety of research perspectives in this area, such as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), practical knowledge (Russell, 1987; Russell & Munby, 1991) and personal practical

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knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). These studies have focused upon exploring how teachers invent knowledge-in-action and how they learn to make knowledge explicit through deliberation and reflection. This body of knowledge recognizes the complexity of being a teacher, but how does such a body of knowledge get taught to student teachers?

A third body of knowledge on teacher learning is based on a collective, action research model for teacher learning (Altrichter, Psch, & Somekh, 1993; Carr & Kemis, 1986; Elliott, 1991; Hopper, 1997). This body of knowledge focuses upon teacher learning as knowledge-of-practice Cochran-Smith (1999). As such, the knowledge-of-practice conception does not separate formal and practical knowledge. In knowledge-of-practice, the assumption is that through inquiry, teachers across their professional careers make problematic their own knowledge and practice as well as the knowledge and practice of others. Practice is more than practical. The knowledge that teachers need to teach well is more than what emanates from systematic inquiries. Knowledge-of-practice is constructed collectively within local and broader communities. In this view of teacher learning, teacher knowledge is not separate from the knower, but is constructed within his or her intellectual, social and cultural contexts of teaching. Such a body of knowledge relies on a context of teaching, where the problems of under-resourced situations, diverse student populations and lives beyond the classroom are interwoven within the demands for student learning.

In this paper we present three accounts that offer a collective, action research knowledge-of-teaching that have generated a form of professional development evolving from a post-modern perspective on pedagogy. As Lather (1991) defines, post-modern pedagogy focuses upon a "transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies - the teacher, the student and the knowledge they together produce" (p. 15). For teaching this consciousness can best be realized within a relational place where these three agencies come together, namely the school. A post-modern perspective critiques the certainty that is promised by the grand narratives of modernist perspectives; instead it offers what Gergen (1991) has described as a "sense of validity from a particular community of interpretation" (p. 104). Such a community in a school is constructed and reconstructed by the teachers’ biographies and intents within the constraints of the surrounding culture and socio-economic milieu.

Finally, this research paper draws on the concept of self-study (Bulough & Pinnegar, 2001; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000; Pinnegar, 1993). We are concerned with the interaction of the self-as-teacher, in a context, over time, with others who also have an expressed commitment to the education of students. Self-study, informed and influenced by voices and experiences of others in the context of a community, has the potential for powerful and ultimately far-reaching effect. As noted by Samaras (2002), within a school context a community can be created where university instructor and student teachers as novices in that context take up a peripheral stance in relation to the teacher’s responsibility for the students’ learning. In such a stance student teachers must negotiate and renegotiate their entrance into the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such a process of negotiation creates a space for self-study in relation to an ever-changing context and creates a stimulus for construction and reconstruction of knowledge for teaching. This understanding of learning creates a different sense of knowledge-of-teaching that has led to the development of this integrated campus/field-based course. As Lave (1993) suggests, the understanding of practice, in this case teaching practice, becomes socially situated in the activity of the school.

The integrated course design was influenced by the findings of the action research project and subsequent self-study for university instructors within the educational community created by student teachers and schoolteachers. From the stimulus of an integrated campus/field-based course this paper presents the researchers’ perspectives informed by insights from their role as university instructors, from student teachers at the beginning of their pre-service program and from experienced schoolteachers.
Research Project

The three-year project adopted a practical action research process that followed Kemm and McTaggart's (1982) criteria with a focus upon “(1) the improvement of practice; (2) the improvement...of the understanding of the practice by its practitioners; and (3) the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place” (p. 84). One researcher acted as a critical friend and co-instructor to the other researcher, who was the designated course instructor. Data was collected from participant observations in classes and in schools, selective interviews with the student teachers, teachers and the instructor over the three years of the study. In addition, student teacher journals and electronic discussion forums, as well as digital images and video clips of experiences in schools, were collected, coded and analyzed using the NUD*IST NVivo software program. Data was collected from an inner-city elementary school in a middle-to-low economic area with approximately 300 students.

Using an inductive approach to data analysis as described by Miles and Huberman (1984) and Spradley (1980), data was coded during each of several readings using nodes and tree structures as generated by the Nvivo software program (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). Nodes represented meaningful memos identifying significant passages in the data, and trees created semantic relationships between nodes. This data was further refined using graphic organizers such as matrices and models. A key feature of the NVivo program is that it allows images to be coded with text, creating visual representations of insights being generated by the text. The focus of the research was to create case studies on the integrated teacher education course as it was repeated over a three-year period (Merriam, 1991).

Three Accounts within a Study of Self-as-Teacher

The first account represents the story leading up to the action research project and the subsequent development of the integrated course. The project attempted to develop what Cochran-Smith (1999) has termed knowledge-of-teaching by relocating teacher education courses in the space between the school culture and the university culture, a space that shifted from one place to other. This shifting created multiple perspectives for student teachers, principals, teacher and university instructors as they experienced the roles of student, teacher, teacher-assistant, mentor, observer and teacher educator within the boundaries of a teacher education course. The second account offers data from the study that shows a shift from student teacher mindset to a sense of self-as-teacher. The final account captures the shift in schoolteachers’ perspectives as the integrated course caused them to re-evaluate their understanding of self-as-teacher. These accounts connect to Clandinin's (1995) intent to create a sense of teacher educator as living reflectively outside the story of expert, to live within a collaborative story for teacher education.

Teacher Educator's Account of Self-as-Teacher Evolving the Key Components of the Course

In 1994, I began coordinating a course that included the education students’ first practicum experience. In my previous two years’ experience in teaching the course, I had had many concerns regarding the separation between the campus experience and the school-based practicum experience. Over the next several years, I made attempts to integrate the two experiences in a meaningful way for the students. More consistent efforts were made to develop connections with the school personnel who were hosting these fledgling student teachers, through phone calls and personal visits. Partly as a
result of these connections and partly because of my continuing belief in the need for integrated experiences, the course content evolved. The curriculum of the course began to develop in response to the students’ own needs and interests, incorporating assignments that required the students to research, collaboratively plan and teach, explicitly recognize their learning through observing and acting, and share their knowledge in public forums.

As I continually examined the course experiences and possibilities, I also incorporated more opportunities for active reflection on the part of the students themselves, through dialogue journals, class listservs, and self-evaluation, and attempted to connect the reflective element of activities with the participatory element. I often found it difficult to sell the idea of reflection to the students, in the face of dismissal from teachers in schools who did not reflect or see value in reflection. I found this dismissal troubling, but wanted to encourage reflection that students engaged in willingly, rather than impose reflective assignments.

Another critical development of this course was the move from a graded course to a pass/fail course. This direction enabled students to consider reflection as a meaningful aspect of learning rather than one intended to help improve their grade. It enabled me to gain ongoing feedback from the students about all aspects of the course and to incorporate that feedback into my own understandings of their development as teachers and into ongoing changes to the course structure and content.

As the course evolved, I came to recognize the need for the students to see themselves as change agents, as teacher researchers, and as learners if there was going to be any chance of their seeing teaching as an intellectual pursuit rather than a training ground. The evolution of this course and field experience continued as I collaborated with other university instructors, but it was two critical incidents that enabled the further growth of this course and of my development as a teacher educator. The first was an invitation from a teacher acting as a school liaison between his staff and the university personnel. He suggested that I bring my class of university students to his school and teach the course at the school site. This move to a school-learning site was viewed positively by the student teachers, and it facilitated guest speakers from the school to address them throughout the term. It also enabled the university students to develop a sense of comfort in a school setting, and to feel as if they were moving toward their goal of becoming a teacher. This change of learning sites worked very well, and I wanted to involve more schools in these experiences.

When I approached another school liaison to visit his school, he was very welcoming but wanted to know why we would want to change locations. He asked, “Why would it make a difference if you were conducting your class in a room at the university or at my school?” This question challenged me to consider my purposes in teaching this class and to consider how to best use a school site for teaching about teaching. This reflection was the impetus for the evolution of this course development to a formalized research project that has engaged us for the past four years that has focused on the following questions: 1) How does an integrated field/campus-based course develop?, and 2) How does an integrated field/campus-based course affect student teachers’ learning?

**Integrated Teacher Education Course: Key Components**

We developed the integrated course around Vygotskian social constructivist tenets (Richardson, 1997; Samaras & Shelly, 1998; Samaras, 2002). Briefly, these tenets focus upon situated learning, socially shared cognition, mediated joint activity, and the study of culture and the influence of social context on learning. These tenets were addressed at the school site and through the activities and assignments completed by the student teachers (see Sanford & Hopper, 2000).
The following are key components and data sources within this teacher education course: 1) reflective journals; 2) student and instructor conversations with school teachers and administrators; 3) electronic e-mail listserv; 4) peer and school teacher involvement in course planning, re-planning, teaching and evaluation; 5) use of digital video and digital images to capture situations and experiences for future reflection and conversation.

A key characteristic of the integrated course was the credit/non-credit assignments. These assignments, set at a high professional standard, had to be completed at a satisfactory level for the student teacher to progress. It is our experience that such assignments, based on inquiry, and tailored to the needs of the student teachers, create an incredibly rich learning situation. A quote from a student teacher in Sanford and Hopper (2002) highlights this point:

When I found out this course was pass/fail, I thought, “I work hard I want a reward,” but then it kind of makes you think about who you are. I went, “Wait a minute, I don’t need extrinsic motivation to do this, I am really enjoying this class.” I really learnt a lot. I self-reflected on things that I might not have thought about before, the other side of issues. To me that is the reason why you are here and that is why you should be learning, not for a mark…I never fathomed a world without grading…I then thought, “Yeah this is possible.”

This quote suggests how the pass/fail nature of the course created a space for the type of critically reflective approach to learning that we wished to examine and nurture in the course.

A major focus of the course was to enable the student teachers to create a sense of teacher for themselves, to envision themselves in the role and to develop an understanding of how it felt to be a teacher. Over the three-years, four phases of development were recognized as critical to the success of the integrated course:

1. The first phase was to create a comfortable, social environment where the student teachers felt safe to share ideas, concerns and fears. The course enabled student teachers to feel like teachers by teaching content they knew well. And observations in the school helped them see, without stress, classroom environments as prospective teachers.
2. The second phase was to get them focused on growing from a student mindset where they did courses for grades, to a teacher mindset where they took responsibility for their own and others’ learning. As the course was shifted to school sites, knowledge-of-teaching developed related to experiences with children.
3. The third phase was to enable the student teachers to operate within the complex system of a classroom, within a school, within a socio-economic area. A key characteristic of this phase was that they questioned their middle-class, “successful student” assumptions. The interview extract below highlights the complexity that caused student teachers to realize what teaching, in some school contexts, had to include.

Teacher: In this school we sometimes join the principal in picking up condoms and needles from the playground before school starts.

Teacher: Student teachers meet kids that don’t get up every morning having had a breakfast, put on clean socks and clean underwear. They come to school with a tremendous amount of baggage…family violence and drug abuse, kids that do not come from the same world as they did.
4. The final phase represented a celebration of the learning. For the student teachers learning developed through experiences with practicing teachers, in school locations and through their personal reflections. Student teachers recognized what they had learned and publicly represented their knowledge in final projects shared at school sites. In the final year of the project, supported by thoughtful analysis of data from the previous years of the project, the university instructor was able to share responsibility of teacher education with school-based colleagues, allowing the voices of experienced teachers to be heard as they led the teacher education class. Effectively celebrating the teachers’ learning with the student teachers.

**Student Teachers’ Voices Forming an Evolving Account of Self-as-Teacher within the Course**

Learning as a recursive process: The inclusion of the school experiences within the university course created a recursive process for the students whereby the school context caused a “make you think” or cognizant effect that inspired and stimulated the student teachers into a sense of dissonance with their previous assumptions. The school experiences inspired student teachers to recognize their desire to be a teacher; as one student said, “I love going to the schools and being there with the kids…These events are what drives me to be a teacher.” The cognizant effect also caused a confused state, which was then shared and mediated by peers, course instructor and teachers situated within the school culture. Through reflective tasks (including journal and listserv) student teachers recognized how they were becoming teachers and looked for more experiences within the school to support their learning. This process cycled throughout the course with visits to classrooms followed by a course meeting, then reflection by the student teachers. A key focus of the course was to enable the student teachers to create a foundational sense of themselves as teachers.

In the first year of the project the focus was to develop theoretical support for how a field-based teacher education course would improve learning to teach. Social interaction was used to develop pre-service learning in group assignments, listserv discussion and class discussions. The school culture was used as a way of stimulating inquiry into the practices of teachers. Building on social constructivist tenets, the course developed a supportive, comfortable and reflective environment. It became obvious that the school context had a cognizant effect on student teachers, causing them to think differently. Some student teachers were quick to make judgments and close down reflection, blaming bad teachers for situations they found uncomfortable. However, many of them were able to mediate their own experiences and the shared experiences of their peers, creating a growing sense of becoming teachers. The activities in the course enabled the creation of a situated-integrated learning environment where student teachers learned to broaden their views of the teaching profession. Course discussions provided them with understanding of the vast contextual/local knowledge held by their peers. Teachers in the school saw the course as worthwhile because student teachers experienced the reality of teaching, though some teachers were more welcoming of student teachers in their classrooms than were others.

The social nature of the course with the stimulus of the school environment encouraged student teachers to question long-held assumptions and fears about teaching. The Vygotskian framework gave theoretical support to an alternative form of teacher education. This alternative asked student teachers to learn from the experience to be found in schools, course readings and each other as they developed a collectively informed understanding of teaching. This understanding moved them away from simplistic notions of how to be a teacher, causing them to question unchallenged assumptions they held about teaching classes of children with similar education experiences and socio-economic backgrounds to themselves. The reality of managing a class of...
children produced a fear in many student teachers. In the second year of the study a more explicit focus was given to classroom management as a phenomenon intertwined with the whole classroom context.

The following extracts from student teachers’ journals in the second year of the study inform us of the accounts of self-as-teacher that developed from the first year of the study. As one student teacher said about the course, “You further your own understanding of yourself and what you are going to end up like,” which all the student teachers in different ways came to recognize and articulate in their reflective writings and discussions. They were able to make connections in their learning; as another student teacher commented, “I see a lot more how the pieces (classroom management, and evaluation, etc.) play together and that the whole course brought that in with all the types of assignments that we are doing with everything we did ... it just jump-started my brain into thinking. It was really exciting.” Another student teacher said about the course, “This is linking ideas and you remember it.” A third student teacher reported, “I have never before had a class where I felt that I would keep what I had learned ... even when I was just lying in bed and thinking, I was learning more even though the class was over.”

However, some student teachers did not share this understanding, as the following extracts highlight. One student teacher’s comment, “I didn’t really understand why we were at the school that much,” suggested that connections and possibilities were not as readily recognized by her; and the comment, “I put in a lot of work and I like to be rewarded with a grade,” suggests that this student teacher still held a stronger connection to “student” thinking than “teacher” thinking. These disconfirming threads encouraged further developments to try to include all prospective teachers into the sense of knowledge-of-teaching being generated by many others in the course. Agreeing with Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 115), we believed that “learning and a sense of identity are inseparable”; so to help more student teachers learn about teacher identity, a plan was made to include more of the teacher voices in year three of the course.

Controlling the class: In the second year of the study the major concern for student teachers was still classroom management, in particular “controlling” the class. As Kagan (1992) states, “student teachers enter the classroom with a critical lack of knowledge about pupils” (p. 42) and are over-concerned with classroom management issues. Initially entries in journals and on the listserv focused on the fear of controlling a class, but as the visits to schools occurred, the student teachers started sharing what they had seen. For example in year 2 of the study Andrea wrote on the listserv:

> I think the most valuable thing I learned in classroom management was learning how and when to vary the class activities. We have all had teachers (especially since we have all attended university) that spent the whole class lecturing and getting students to take notes and we know how boring this is. In the elementary school I was observing, the teacher was continually switching activities (about every fifteen minutes or so) to accommodate the short attention spans of the students and their inability to sit still for long periods of time.

Similarly Cathy commented,

> It may seem overly simple, but one of the best and most effective techniques for classroom management that I found when observing was counting. It gave the students a chance to become quiet...One teacher counted so quietly I could hardly hear him and the students were SO quiet by the time he was finished. Another one is standing beside the student who is off-task. One teacher just put her hand on his shoulder (he was wriggling and talking during her "lecture") and he became very quiet.
Early on in the listserv discussion several student teachers voiced the opinion that disobedient students should be removed from the class; however, as the student teachers visited classrooms, a more connected and complex insight to dealing with management developed, as highlighted in one of Caroline’s entries:

I would only use kicking students out of the room as a last resort…it’s a desperate act that stops the undesirable behavior for only a short period of time. If every teacher reacts the same way, these kids are going to spend a considerable amount of their school career in the hallways, learning nothing and nurturing defiance. Do we really want that? Plus, getting kicked out of class is only a deterrent for those who are normally well behaved and dislike breaking rules. The more rebellious see it as a perverse honour. For example, one Grade 9 student who got kicked out of class yesterday received high-fives from his friends as he left the class. As with many of you, I believe in setting some firm rules of conduct for students…like Andrea I would identify the ringleaders…I would then make an appointment to speak to each one of the initiators individually to see what was going on with them. Work out what kinds of activities they like best in my class and try to incorporate more of that in return for better behaviour.

As Caroline’s quote highlights, the student teachers started to develop a sense of relationship in their constructions of management from their observations in the schools, and as with Caroline, started to think through the role of a teacher.

Identifying with teachers: In the third year of the project the student teachers spent twelve days out of fourteen in classrooms. In these visits, student teachers observed, worked with, and talked to teachers. During year three of the course four teachers came to speak to student teachers about their personal teaching journeys and their understanding of teaching curriculum. The teachers modeled how reflective they were of their practices and how they understood their practice in relation to their own biographies. Teachers and the principal were asked to become actively involved in the course by teaching the student teachers. These professionals described their experiences of becoming a teacher and how they implemented curriculum. In turn, the course instructor taught the teachers’ elementary classes. This partnership relationship generated a sense of collegiality that situated the knowledge of teaching within a culture, and caused the student teachers to identify more with the teachers they observed and to question their own previously untested assumptions. For example, the power of a principal telling student teachers that when he started teaching, “I wouldn't hire me. I was horrible…I was always going ‘to power’ with kids,” allowed the student teachers to admit their own fears of being a bad teacher. As he explained, “You don’t own a problem, especially if you do not build it up. In my second year of teaching I went to a PD session and realized I needed to change. I used to think I needed to be harder and punish more, then I realized I was owning the problem and making it worse.” The student teachers came to see management as an issue of respect with students, not a threat to them. Other teachers also told their stories of becoming teachers, as shared in the next section of this paper.

The common pattern from these experiences, witnessed during teacher presentations, was the passion for teaching. As one student teacher voiced for the group, "During my experience at the school I was inspired by the amount of passion that the teachers had for the children." Or as another student teacher wrote to the teachers at the school, “I have already gained so much experience from these past three days at the school. It is very motivating to see so many wonderful teachers, teachers who are so passionate about their work. I hope one day, I will be like those teachers.” The positive response from the student teachers energized the teachers and administrators in the school. They commented on how preparing and then talking to student teachers about teaching caused them to
clarify their own intents and to reflect on how they had learned, and that it had inspired them to achieve even more. As the principal said, "It is a thrill talking to student teachers because they bring such a new perspective to the school. They admire teachers who just teach as normal…they ask such good questions."

Over the three years of conducting the course within the schools, a sense of trust and open dialogue had developed between the course instructor, researcher and school staff. This relationship encouraged a questioning stance rather than a judgmental stance, which is often formed by outsiders entering a new culture. Within reflective journals, course listserv and class discussions, student teachers were encouraged to examine themselves for reasons why they found fault in what they observed and to notice detail. They learned to ask questions that allowed teachers to explain what was happening. These questions released them from their naïve and unrealistic sense of what teaching was about. For example, one teacher gave a talk on assessment, focusing on the idea that teachers’ decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment are integrally linked. To highlight this he told the class the following story of two students who were best friends, Jake and Steve; both got high marks on social studies tests, except that Jake was often absent from class at certain times of the year to work on his father’s farm. When Jake was absent he got a zero on the test. When Jake was absent Steve only got an average mark on the test. At the end of the year when the totals for tests was added up, Steve was seen as the academic and recommended for the honors program; Jake was not. As the teacher said, “Tests should be used to assess what a student knows about the curriculum, not assess behavior.” This view caused student teachers to question previously unchallenged notions of assessment; as one student teacher said, "It opened my eyes to assessment issues that were so ingrained in my mind that I never would have challenged them if he had not nudged me in the right direction." At the end of the course when the students were asked what influence they thought the course and field experience had on them, a recurring response was to question their assumptions about assessment, highlighting the impact, told within a context, of the teacher’s story.

**Teachers’ Accounts of Evolving Sense of Self-as-Teacher from the Stimulus of the Integrated Course**

Perception of disruption: In the first year of the integrated course one principal had to convince the school staff of the idea of working with the student teachers in the integrated course. As he said, “There was a culture in the building where we didn’t take student teachers.” The principal sold the idea to the teachers, suggesting that the honorarium paid for taking student teachers could be used to fund a conference for the teachers. The teachers agreed to the idea, but as one teacher commented, “a lot of us were worried that the student teachers were going to be obtrusive and disruptive.” However, the reality was that with the care and support from the principal the student teachers were a minimal disruption, and for many teachers they were seen as an asset. In an interview the principal made an interesting observation about his staff. As he explained, “If they are the teachers who are trying to control everything, then having student teachers obviously will be annoying. But a teacher that has a more reaction type of teaching that works with the moods of the class, basically that will work.” More-structured teachers said, “I need to know exactly when they are coming so I am sure that I have the right lesson prepared.” Other teachers just adapted when student teachers were in their classrooms. Teachers were reluctant to not take a student teacher because the principal would ask why. As he said, not having a student teacher was like saying, “I am not very good in the classroom, and I feel uncomfortable with student teachers coming in.” One of the teachers commented that he felt his colleagues blamed management difficulties on “the types of kids that they have, therefore they had a defence mechanism built in.” He felt reluctant teachers had an excuse if
student teachers saw an unruly class. Within this tension, then, the integrated teacher education course was developed.

Re-evaluating teaching: In the second year of the study the majority of the teachers indicated they were comfortable with the visits from the student teachers. However, not all student teachers were sensitive to the classroom. As one teacher commented, reflecting from the first year of the project to the next, “we have had some student teachers in here that sat at the back of the classroom and goofed off and it was terrible, but this group was really good.” As the student teachers were taught to observe and be less judgemental, they thought of themselves more as teachers; with this attitude the teachers were able to open up and share more with the student teachers. As a teacher said, “I said to a number of student teachers, ‘for some of these children the only person in this entire world that will truly care for them is their teacher, and they need that because their parents have too much of their own garbage to worry about’.” These insights allowed student teachers to see students within a frame of their lives, not just objects to be taught. Though a resistance to the student teachers’ presence still existed with some of the staff members, the student teachers were generally seen as a benefit to the overall school culture. One teacher commented,

Student teachers help you be current on things happening at the university. It makes me re-evaluate, constantly re-evaluate my own teaching, because sometimes we get so focused on what we are doing that we forget what we are doing;... so when you have somebody watching you are more focused, what you are doing becomes very important.

In the third year of the research project, staff members were invited to teach the student teachers, and four teachers responded to the offer, telling their stories about becoming a teacher and how that had influenced their styles of teaching. Giving the control of the university class over to the teachers showed a new role being negotiated by the university instructor, as a sense of trust had grown between the university instructor and teachers in the school. The teachers’ voices offered historically situated knowledge about teaching that allowed student teachers to re-evaluate how teaching was a concept with personal, professional and contextual meaning. As a researcher, Tim recalled how the events following a story told by a teacher to the student teachers showed a re-evaluation of teaching knowledge:

This teacher told of his memory of his grade 5 teacher who he, as a failing student, admired and who was his inspiration to be a teacher, a teacher who was able to change plans effortlessly to reflect the mood of the students. I had experienced first-hand the difficulty of teaching his particular class of grade five students, and was able to support his claim that flexibility was important. During the afternoon, the student teachers heard the teacher describe a particular activity that was happening in his class, and share his joy for the amazing expressive work that was being completed. The project involved the grade five students learning about poetic imagery, expression, flow, and narrative through song lyrics of a ballad, which they interpreted through visuals, words, and spoken language. They then used the internet to research the "facts" of the story/ballad presented in the lyrics. Following that, the students listened to the song and used paint, with their fingers, to express visually the emotionality of the song.

The project worked wonderfully in the morning, but when the student teachers visited to observe in the afternoon, the students refused to continue. Disappointed and chagrined, the teacher decided to discontinue the activity and assumed that the student teachers would interpret the interaction as a failure on his part. However, talking to me about the event the student teachers described with pleasure how they were able to see the teacher’s strong,
flexible classroom management skills, dealing effectively with the situation. The teacher, in a later conversation with me, expressed his disappointment; but as I shared the student teacher's excitement his perception changed. He was able to come to see his actions as the best solution to the students' needs; he had unconsciously demonstrated how his inspirational grade five teacher lived on in his own practice.

This example points to some of many instances where teachers, working in the integrated course, came to recognize their own strengths in their classrooms and then were able to refer explicitly to these in future discussions with student teachers. The articulation of teachers’ professional knowledge rooted in their autobiographical experience of being taught, clarified aspects of teaching for the student teachers, but enabled the teachers to develop a much clearer sense of their own professional knowledge. Teachers were able to recognize the sources of their previously unarticulated teaching practices, i.e., previous experience, personal beliefs and values, societal assumptions, intuition. As they articulated their own professional knowledge, they were able to respond to questions that enabled further questions to be asked regarding teaching practices; they re-evaluated their own sense of teaching.

**Concluding Reflections**

This use of multiple voices from teachers in the positions of mentors, teacher educators and future colleagues generated a form of professional development. As a school principal commented, “it caused ‘teacherly conversations’ not normally shared amongst teachers.” These conversations were brought to the surface by the eagerness and interest of student teachers. The student teachers created a space for teachers to articulate and share their knowledge, a form of knowledge so powerful that it educated those who wanted to hear it as it structured the thoughts of those who spoke it.

We noted that as the integrated course developed, student teachers’ journals and listserv entries were far less negative in judgments made of teachers. As noted by Lave and Wenger (1991), student teachers’ legitimate peripheral participation in a school culture enables them to learn to see situations as teachers within a culture, rather than as outsiders. Discipline problems were still a concern but not a problem: they were a part of helping students grow, not indicators of success and failure of the teachers. This course represents a radical move from more traditional, content-based learning that student teachers expressed as their general experience in university education. With a rigorous pass/fail standard in the course, many of the student teachers reported feeling that they worked more, learned more and felt more confident of their learning than with other classes in the university. Some student teachers even said that until this course they had never realized what “real” learning was about; they remarked, “this was learning for life.” Consistent with the finds of Samaras (2002) and Bullough and Gitlin (2001), this situated learning allowed student teachers to develop a personal sense of their teacher identity without the constraints of a traditional university grading system. Student teachers were able to construct their beginning teacher identity with less constraint from external expectations and requirements.

**Connecting to the Scholarly Landscape**

LaBoskey (2001) identifies self-study research as collaborative research that builds a process of accountability in which ideas and theories are continually under review by all participants, where multiple voices share a passion for a more educative environment. This ongoing research clearly demonstrates these aspects of self-study. The research has led us to develop similar models in other
institutions, as we seek to reproduce the relationships of learning highlighted by the integration of schools with university classes. We note that both student teachers and practicing teachers often view with scepticism university courses that attempt to prepare students to become effective teachers. As teacher educators we are aware of the gulf that can exist between the two types of experience and between institutions vying for pre-eminence in offering knowledge to fledgling teachers. Our challenge as teacher educators, course instructors, and researchers has been to examine our own assumptions about the value of the knowledge we offer and the ways in which we offer this knowledge to student teachers. Through this research project and through ongoing teaching and research experiences, we have sought opportunities to re-view our practices, assumptions, and values as teacher educators in an attempt to broaden the pool of resources and understandings from which student teachers might draw, valuing, like Carr (1989) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), the personal, professional, and contextual knowledge of teaching provided by multiple perspectives within a school context.

School integrated teacher education courses contrast with many current teacher education programs based in a positivist tradition, where discrete courses are offered, fragmented between departments, with little or no connection to field-based experiences (Grimmett, 1998; McWilliam, 1994; Zeichner, 1999). As Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998) report, in the mid-1980s a progressivist tradition inserted a wedge of innovative practices into existing positivistic programs, shifting the emphasis away from what beginning teachers should know and how they should best be trained, to a focus on attempting to understand what they actually do know and how that knowledge is acquired. We feel that this project has tried to build from that lead.

The win-win situation that the integrated course creates for student teachers, teachers, administrators and teacher educators makes sense. The teacher education literature is littered with tales of successful partnerships between schools and universities, with university courses sometimes totally relocated within schools; however, these innovations are the exception rather than the norm (Clarke and Hubball, 2001; Grimmett, 1998; Rolheiser, 1999; Rovegno, 1991; Samaras & Shelly, 1998; Wiseman, Cooner, & Knight, 1999). Such innovative programs often become ‘balkanized’ within the traditional structures of teacher education (Wideen et al., 1998). As Clandinin (1995) warns:

University teachers who break from the sacred theory-practice story by relocating themselves outside the story of expert...are taking professional risks...As university teachers begin to live and tell competing stories, founded on different epistemologies, these accounts become threatening to other university teachers, teachers and student teachers (p. 30).

Such a threat can lead to a reaffirming of traditional structures (Russell, 2001). However, we believe that the evolution of teacher education must develop and shift to enable integration and depth of understanding between school and university cultures to inform teacher education.

References


Chapter 7

The Feedback Loop in Reflective Practice:
A Teacher Educator Responds to Reflective Writing by Preservice Teachers

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Reflective practice has been common in teacher education for many years. As it becomes commonplace, however, there is the risk it may become less rigorous. One way to enhance reflective practice among preservice teachers is to improve the quality of feedback provided by teacher educators. In this self-study, the author examines his responses to reflective portfolios over five years. Eight categories of response are identified and illustrated. The author then reflects on his feedback to preservice teachers and considers the implications for teacher education.

Purpose

Reflective practice has become widely recognized as an important component of preservice teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Loughran & Russell, 1997). In addition to enhancing classroom practice, early proponents of reflective teaching sought to increase teacher autonomy and enhance “democratic participation in the system of school governance” (Zeichner & Liston, 1987, p. 23). As reflective practice has become more commonplace, however, reflection has become less rigorous and reflective practice’s challenge to technical rationality is often forgotten.

While many teacher educators identify reflective practice as a priority, they generally have limited time to devote to reflection in tightly packed teacher education programs (Mueller, 2003). Also, since reflective writing is “demanding and time-consuming for both students and educators...it is important to ensure that the outcome of such an expenditure of energy is effective learning” (Thorpe, 2004, p. 339). Therefore, it is critical that teacher educators carve out time in the schedule, provide specific guidelines (Francis, 1995), assign grades in courses, and engage in dialogue with preservice teachers (Mather & Hanley, 1998).

In this self-study of my teacher education practices (Loughran, 2002), I examine my responses to the reflections of preservice teachers over five years to better understand my teacher education practices and to identify characteristics of effective feedback on reflective practice.

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Research on Preservice Teacher Reflections

There are many forms of writing that are identified with reflective practice. These include response journals (Mather & Hanley, 1998), personal narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), critical incidents (Tripp, 1993), and dialogue journals (Mather & Hanley, 1998). Also, the responses of teacher educators are quite varied in both depth and form. Some use rubrics and short responses, while others engage more actively in the reflective process. Some provide written feedback (e.g., Mather & Hanley, 1998), while others conference with preservice teachers (e.g., Weiss & Weiss, 2001).

While conferencing as part of a reflective supervision process is more consistent with Schon’s (1983) conception of reflection-in-action, the structure of many teacher education programs makes this problematic for instructors. In the program in which I worked, scheduling made it very difficult to arrange one-on-one feedback sessions. Thus, for me and other teacher educators, written responses are more feasible than reflective supervision. If written comments are to be substituted for reflective supervision, it is essential that they be both supportive and critical.

While there are numerous studies of reflective practice in education, there are considerably fewer on effective feedback. The response-oriented literature tends to focus on dialogue journals (e.g., Roe & Stallman, 1994), which form only a small portion of all reflective practice in teacher education. How does one respond to other forms of reflective writing? How does one respond to writing that is less immediate and, perhaps, more polished in nature?

Methodology

Over the past eight years, I have engaged preservice teachers in reflective practice. A narrative inquiry portfolio and a critical incident portfolio have been important course components each year. In narrative inquiry portfolios, preservice teachers recall and reflect on formative experiences in their development as learners and teachers. Critical incident portfolios offer them opportunities to reflect on specific events occurring in their teacher education program; while most critical incidents concerned field experiences, some of the incidents involved experiences in university classes. These entries are intended to be polished pieces in which preservice teachers describe events in detail and engage in reflection and analysis on the incidents, as well as their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

I respond in writing because there is little time for supervision conferences and responding in writing helps me to respond more reflectively. My responses are layered and multidimensional as I join with them in the struggle to make meaning from experience.

This is a qualitative study as defined by Punch (1998), in which information serves primarily an interpretive and reflective purpose. Over five years I collected my written responses to 150 preservice teachers to narrative inquiry and critical incident portfolios by preservice teachers. In reviewing over 300 pages of written responses to reflective portfolios, I determined that coding and quantifying my responses would be an effective way of identifying patterns in my feedback. As the assignment and my approach to providing feedback had not changed significantly over the years, I decided to focus on my responses in a single year. While there are advantages in sampling across several years, focusing on my responses to all students in one year seemed a more effective way of examining how I responded to the full range of students in my class.

My responses to the narrative inquiry and critical incident portfolios served as personal artifacts that I could use to study my efforts to promote written reflection through written feedback. By conducting a comprehensive coding of the results from one class, I was endeavoring to compile data in a relatively objective manner, while keeping in mind that my purposes were interpretive and
reflective. The identification of eight types of responses of responses and the compiling examples of each type provided baseline data for studying my teacher education practices.

This data enabled me to engage in a self-study of how my underlying beliefs and principles as a teacher educator were lived out in my practice. Self-study allows teacher educators “to maintain a focus on their teaching and on their students’ learning” (Loughran, 2002, p. 245), while engaging in scholarly practice. It is a methodology characterized by examination of the role of the self in the research project and “the space between self and the practice engaged in” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). According to Bullough & Pinnegar (2001), it is through written reflection and teacher conversations that we negotiate the tensions between ourselves and our contexts, between biography and history. Self-study has been proven highly compatible with other research methods as it has “used various qualitative methodologies and has focused on a wide range of substantive issues” (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001, p. 305).

**Findings**

In reviewing my written feedback to the reflective portfolios of preservice teachers, I identified eight categories of response as significant. In some cases, only three or four emerged in the coding, while up to seven or eight categories were listed in the coding of others. In many cases my responses were multidimensional with the interplay between types of response creating a layered effect. In this section I identify, describe, and illustrate the eight categories of response.

Overall, there was a total of 28 students in the class in this particular year. Validating and analyzing, the two most common categories of response, were present in my feedback to all preservice teachers. I commented on how to improve their reflective practice skills in 26 cases, and echoing was featured in 23 responses. The other categories of response ranked as follows: exploring possibilities (16), sharing (14), questioning (12) and cautioning (12). See Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
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<tr>
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<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoing</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploring Possibilities</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving Reflective Practice</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
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</table>

**Validating**

The most basic level of response, and one that occurred in all cases, was the validating of preservice teacher reflections. Validation involves recognizing their personal practical knowledge (Connelly &
Clandinin, 1988) and their capacity to use reflection to work through situations. For example, in my response to Student #1, I wrote:

Overall, I noticed a recognition that schools are institutions in which the actions of students and teachers take place within a context bounded by rules and procedures. You accept this, as well as the fact that these rules are there to protect everyone. I also noticed that, while committed to standards and discipline, you work with students and colleagues in a very sensitive and respectful manner. In short, you come across as professional AND caring.

Echoing

In each of these portfolios, I read five reflections. This provided me with an opportunity to stand back from the individual incidents and notice broader patterns across accounts. I use the term echoing to refer to comments in which I reflected back the patterns I observed.

Sometimes I echoed back connections between individual stories. For example, I linked together three life experiences in this response to Student #7, “Mr. K is your anti-Mrs. X: He helped you develop your self-discipline without her harshness. Yet he was more traditional than the alternative school teachers in the [second] story.” In other cases, I noted patterns across reflections. For example, in responding to Student #14, I wrote:

One theme that emerged, particularly in [your] “library,” “African literature,” and “living museum” stories, is your commitment to making curriculum engaging and meaningful to students; your enthusiasm for students and curriculum oozes through the page.... Another important theme is your sensitivity to the individual and to the impact a teacher can have (positively or negatively) on identity formation and openness to learning.

Questioning

The purpose of reflective practice is to help preservice teachers to develop the reflective skills of expert practitioners. As Schon (1983) states, reflective practice involves negotiating “complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict” (p. 18). While I did offer my perspective on their accounts, I mainly attempted to help them examine their accounts in more depth. Probing questions designed to elicit deeper consideration of practice were one way in which I sought to help them become more skilled in reflective practice. For example, in responding to a critical incident from Student #24, I wrote:

You have learned a series of important lessons from this richly observed event. You could probe more deeply into the tensions that make schools such difficult places in which to learn and teach. Why is the teacher so frustrated? What must it be like for this student in an assembly-line school? Keep your cool while understanding (not condoning) why others keep losing theirs.

Analyzing

Through the three types of responses listed, I encouraged preservice teachers to value their perspectives and probe more deeply. It also seemed important to model critical analysis of personal
experiences and critical incidents. I attempted to do this by providing my reading of situations outlined in their portfolios, as well as by offering cautions and possibilities. One example of analysis is my response to a narrative written by Student #25:

Your math story is a powerful one, as the incident led to a breakthrough in the subject. This is how I read the story:

Mr. Ford realized that teachers were not getting through to you. He studied your file and considered a couple of possibilities. He tested a hypothesis about your self-efficacy as a learner and, as it happens, he was right. More surprisingly, the simple fact of discovering that you were smart had a profound impact on you.

The good news, if I am not completely off-base, is that Mr. Ford’s success was not miracle-work but good pedagogy: understand how students learn, collect information, try different techniques, and discuss learning with students. You can have the same impact...though not all students will respond as quickly as you did.

While analysis was part of my responses to all students, it was generally couched in language that celebrated their understanding, provided cautions, or explored possibilities.

Cautioning

While it is important to guide preservice teachers towards effective practice, it is also important to warn them of some of the pitfalls that may await them. Thus, in many of my written responses, I cautioned them either about how to proceed in difficult situations. For example, I wrote to Student #13:

You do a good job of writing about the issue of verbal abuse. I think your understanding is right on the mark. Still, I think you need to work more on developing how you would respond; perhaps, you should develop a sequence of procedures under different scenarios. Also, you may want to consider how to do so in a manner that does not escalate issues and can help the transgressor to leave with some dignity (e.g., talk after class but demand a public apology; class discussion of verbal abuse, etc.).

In this case, I sought to support the preservice teacher’s perspective but was also aware of the larger complexity of the issue. I was drawing on my practitioner knowledge to anticipate possible scenarios and cautioning Student #13 from acting too hastily.

Similarly, in other cases, I warned preservice teachers from reacting out of emotion. For example, I urged Student #25 to “sleep on it” before speaking to a teacher about a sensitive issue and, later, urged her to check with the principal before inviting a controversial speaker into her classroom.

Exploring Possibilities

Exploring possibilities is as important as analysis and cautioning in helping preservice teachers consider how they can improve their practice in the future. In the majority of cases, I was able to find ways of encouraging preservice teachers to extend their practice in meaningful ways. For example, I proposed to Student #19, that the best proactive response to the issue of plagiarism is to construct original assignments that diminish the chances of copying other people’s work. In the case of Student #8, a preservice teacher in drama and history, I wrote:
I urge you to read more about participatory democracy in classroom and strategies for gentle discipline so that you can better balance your ideals with the day-to-day wear-and-tear of teaching. The more effective your techniques, the less you have to grapple painfully with each situation.

Sharing

To model reflective practice, I spoke from my experiences as a teacher. Often this is evident in my framing of analysis, cautions, and possibilities. In other cases, I explicitly drew on my experiences to demonstrate empathy, model practice, or guide preservice teachers’ practices.

Sometimes I connected my personal rules of practice to their stories. For example, I responded to a painful account of a classroom management issue by Student #8 by writing, “I make mistakes every day as a teacher, but my commitment and sensitivity to students generally more than offsets those mistakes.” In other cases, I drew on specific experiences introducing new curriculum, responding to tensions with colleagues and grappling with my own biases as a teacher.

Improving Reflective Practice

While the seven types of responses noted are designed to implicitly improve reflective practice, I also made explicit comments about preservice teachers’ reflection on their narratives of experience and critical incidents. For example, in an interim assessment, I indicated to Student #7 that “you did not reflect sufficiently on the implications for your understanding of teaching and/or learning.... I would suggest elaborating on how you would organize your class to promote a lover of learning”. In her final portfolio, she had “elaborated much more” and explained how these understandings would inform her classroom practice. With others, I explicitly identified and celebrated their reflective abilities. For example, I commended Student #15 for providing “rich detail and contextual information” accompanied by “deep level puzzling about the meaning or meanings of the experiences described.”

These categories and examples do not provide evidence to show that my responses generally or any of the eight categories of response were effective in enhancing reflective practice among preservice teachers or preparing them to be effective reflective practitioners as classroom teachers. They do, however, serve as a prompt for reflection and dialogue about how to enhance written responses to reflective writing by preservice teachers.

Discussion

Critical reflection has always been one of my priorities as a teacher, educational researcher, and teacher educator. As a teacher educator, I have worked to develop authentic relationships with my students while celebrating and developing the personal and professional qualities they bring to teaching (Kitchen, 2005a; Kitchen, 2005b). Psychologist Carl Rogers (1961) wrote, “This book is about me, as I sit there with that client, facing him, participating in that struggle as deeply and sensitively as I am able” (p. 4).

In responding to the portfolios of preservice teachers, I sought to respond with similar empathy, respect, and critical insight. My intent is evident in a note I wrote to the entire class as they were working on their portfolios:
I seek to engage with you and your writing in order to help you explore your experiences more fully and find patterns in your experiences. I will also seek to validate your experiences and, at times, draw links with my experiences as a learner and teacher. In my opinion, it is through reflection—real reflection, not just going through the motions—that you learn to put theory into practice and tap into your deep well of experiences... Keep in mind that others learn differently from you. Think about how you use power in your classroom positively (as you cannot relinquish it entirely).  

Over the years, preservice teachers have responded positively to the personal and professional engagement demonstrated in my written feedback. 

My commitment to validating preservice teachers’ experiences is demonstrated by the emphasis on validation in all 28 responses. This is reinforced by my use of echoing in 23 responses. While echoing often validates experiences, it also offers how the scene appears to a different pair of eyes. In this respect, echoing prepares the preservice teacher for questioning and analysis, which are designed to help them probe more deeply into their experiences and to consider different constructions of experience. While questioning was explicitly present as a bridge in only twelve responses, the combination of echoing and analysis were often intended to raise questions. 

In responding as thoughtfully as I was able, my perspectives were informed by my experiences not just my professional knowledge. Also, I intended to model the level and nature of reflection that I was encouraging among them. Engaging authentically from experience, which occurred explicitly in half the responses, also contributed to my growth as a teacher educator. As I approached the reading of portfolios as a shared growth opportunity, I was able to better understand myself as a teacher through my responses. Some entries provoked strong reactions that I had to examine before responding. Such reactions became part of my own rigorous self-study process. 

While personal and professional self-examination and growth were important dimensions of the reflective portfolios, I viewed these as crucial processes rather than the end result of our work together. Since “education is development from within” (Dewey, 1938. p. 17) and teachers play a crucial role in fostering “experiences that lead to growth” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40), critical reflection on experience can have a profound impact on student learning in classrooms. Efforts to improve reflective practice also stem from my commitment to fostering ongoing practitioner reflection. Also, being more familiar with the ethical terrain of teaching, I often cautioned preservice teachers about the potential pitfalls in lines of reasoning or plans for action. 

Studying my feedback on reflective portfolios made explicit the tension I experience as I seek to balance personally validating preservice teachers with criticism of their professional practice. Also, the process of critically and reflectively reviewing my pattern of responses revealed that my responses are not always as systematic as I would like. In particular, I was surprised that I did not make more of these dimensions explicit in my feedback. For example, the questioning process was not always made explicit before turning to analysis. I was also surprised that I shared my experiences only half the time, as making personal connections with preservice teachers is one of my main personal principles of teacher education practice. 

Each category of response seems to merit consideration as a prompt for consistent quality feedback. One of the implications for my practice in the future is that I will now use the eight categories of response as a checklist to review as I prepare feedback. I do not propose this in a prescriptive manner, however, as not all would be appropriate in each case. Nonetheless, in offering either oral or written feedback, it is important to have prompts so that all categories of response are at least considered.
While written feedback lacks the immediacy and interactive quality of reflective supervision, it does offer teacher educators time to respond thoughtfully. They can read their students’ reflections carefully and craft thoughtful, nuanced responses. There is also time to review response characteristics during the editing stage. A further advantage of retaining comments in electronic form, rather than writing on the students’ papers, is the opportunity to periodically review comments as a means of continuously improving one’s teacher education practices.

Conclusion

Reflective practice is important in the development of new teachers who are able to examine and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of students in classrooms. Therefore, it is crucial that teacher educators employ reflective practice in meaningful ways. One way to maximize the impact of reflection is to enhance the quality of feedback provided by teacher educators. This is important whether a teacher educator responds to the reflective writings of preservice teachers through reflective supervision or in written form.

I have focused on providing written feedback in this study, as many teacher educators employ it out of choice or necessity. Written responses to narrative inquiry and critical incident portfolios by 28 students in a single class were coded. Eight categories of response were identified, along with their frequency. I then analyzed and reflected on the data in order to improve my practice as a teacher educator committed to providing written feedback that promotes critical reflection among preservice teachers.

While reflective practice is encouraged among preservice teachers, it is important that teacher educators critically examine how they teach preservice teachers to reflect and how they respond to these reflections. This self-study is one teacher educator’s attempt to make his practices explicit in order to grow professionally.

I invite other teacher educators to employ these categories in their response to preservice teachers’ reflective writings or to develop their own categories of response. Also, as a teacher educator I would like to learn more about how my colleagues in other colleges for teacher education respond to reflective writing by preservice teachers. By sharing and enhancing our strategies for promoting critical reflection, we develop stronger communities of practice in our colleges and in schools.
References


Chapter 8

From Talk to Experience:
Transforming the Preservice Physics Methods Course¹

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This report of a collaborative self-study describes and interprets our pedagogical approach at the beginning of a preservice physics methods course and outlines the strategy that we used to create a context for productive learning. We focus on our attempt to engage teacher candidates in dialogue about learning physics and learning to teach physics by engaging them in brief teaching experiences in the first month of a preservice teacher education program, before the first practicum placement. Self-study methodologies are used to frame and reframe our perceptions of teaching and learning as we enacted a pedagogy of teacher education that was unfamiliar both to us and to our teacher candidates.

Introduction

This study emerged from personal dissatisfaction with the natural tendency to talk over and around the experience gap that exists at the beginning of any preservice methods course. It is natural and comfortable to spend the first month of classes preparing teacher candidates for their first practicum by exploring teaching strategies, lesson planning templates, and classroom management techniques. Indeed, most teacher candidates come to preservice teacher education programs expecting such initial activities. It is also natural and comfortable to direct these explorations of preparatory topics in familiar ways that represent transmission rather than construction of knowledge. One problem with a transmissive approach resides in the fact that teacher educators have significant teaching experiences that teacher candidates do not. Despite our best intentions to prepare teacher candidates for the practicum, teacher educators are often perceived to be transmitting strategies and ideas in ways that are unconnected to candidates’ personal experiences and that contradict the content being taught. The gap between theory and practice can be extended unintentionally by initial classes, generating relationships and expectations that may be difficult to change as candidates gain first-hand practicum experience.

The false dichotomy between theory and practice is unproductive for both teacher educators and teacher candidates (Loughran, 2006). To address this issue, we engaged teacher candidates in teaching experiences during the early weeks of a physics methods course so that we could also engage them in extended dialogue about shared experiences of teaching and learning. This article

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Chapter 8 reports how we enacted our pedagogy of teacher education during the first month of the program, how we framed and reframed the problems that we encountered, and how we came to understand the process of learning to teach in important new ways.

Theoretical Framework

Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 35) identifies three challenges of learning to teach that we find helpful to focus our attention on the quality of teacher candidates’ early learning about teaching:

1. The problem of the Apprenticeship of Observation: “Learning to teach requires new teachers to understand teaching in ways quite different from their own experience as students.”
2. The problem of Enactment: “Learning to teach requires that new teachers not only learn to ‘think like a teacher’ but also to ‘act like a teacher.’”
3. The problem of Complexity: “Learning to teach requires new teachers to understand and respond to the dense and multifaceted nature of the classroom.”

The problem of the apprenticeship of observation names the reality that teacher candidates have spent many years as students without access to the pedagogical thought processes of their teachers (Lortie, 1975). For teacher educators, the challenge is to help teacher candidates enact rather than consume educational experiences. This task is particularly challenging given that the effects of the apprenticeship of observation on learning to teach remain invisible to most teacher candidates, particularly when replicating the cultural routines and practices of education tends to feel like good teaching. In addition, teacher candidates often experience tensions between the tacit knowledge they gained through the apprenticeship of observation and their experiences at faculties of education, particularly during practicum placements. The knowledge and beliefs obtained from the apprenticeship of observation are not “always compatible with the educational hopes of teacher educators . . . [or] with the educational hopes of individual students of teaching” (Loughran, 2006, p. 114). We believe that it is crucial for teacher educators to generate experiences in which teacher candidates can begin to confront the lessons they learned tacitly from their extended apprenticeships of observation while also thinking about how to enact pedagogies consistent with the kind of teacher they want to become.

Teacher candidates often have a vision of pedagogy that is more sophisticated than they are able to enact (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006). This disparity between intended and enacted pedagogy is often the source of considerable stress for teacher candidates and new teachers (Hammerness, 2006). The problem of enactment encompasses the difficulties of both thinking and acting like a teacher, particularly when teacher candidates’ prior assumptions about teaching and learning remain unexamined. In addition to providing opportunities for teacher candidates to confront their prior assumptions, teacher educators need to ensure that they are not indirectly contributing to the problem of enactment by leaving their own pedagogies unexamined. In teacher education, how we teach sends a more powerful message than what we teach. We believe that one way to teach candidates how to think like a teacher is to describe and interpret our thinking as we enact pedagogies in their classroom.

Left unexamined, the prior assumptions that teacher candidates have as a result of their apprenticeships of observation lead to the problem of enactment, as teacher candidates confront the reality that enacting pedagogy as a teacher is not as easy as observing pedagogy as a student. Teacher candidates are also confronted with the problem of complexity as they attend to the multiple
demands, goals and realities of classroom teaching. Although the assertion that both teachers’ professional knowledge and the process of learning to teach are complex is almost unquestioned in the teacher education literature, we join Loughran (2006, p. 31) in wondering how teacher educators can be “sensitive to the problematic” aspects of teaching. One of the major challenges of the problem of complexity is “avoiding the urge to seek a simple solution to a complex problem” (Loughran, p. 31), particularly as teacher educators work to help teacher candidates accept more responsibility for their own professional learning.

Sarason’s (1996) concept of a context of productive learning helped us to address explicitly the problem of complexity in teacher education. A context of productive learning has three major features:

1. The teacher recognizes and respects the individuality of the learner.
2. The teacher knows the subject matter well enough to know when or where the learner may have difficulty.
3. The teacher is always seeking ways to stimulate and reinforce the learner’s wanting to learn and do more. (Sarason, 1999, p. 143)

The third feature is particularly relevant to this study. Teacher candidates arrive at our preservice teacher education program understandably anxious to begin their practicum. Rather than focusing on the practicum as a place where candidates can apply knowledge learned in September, we chose to disturb that familiar theory-into-practice perspective by creating a context of productive learning founded on teaching experiences in the methods course. Through a discourse based on shared experiences of teaching and learning physics, we sought to stimulate and reinforce teacher candidates’ desire to construct professional knowledge from teaching and learning experiences within the methods course.

The multiple interactions among teachers, learners, and experiences in a context of productive learning led us to Segall’s (2002) frame of reading teacher education as text. According to Segall, the process of learning to teach is itself a text with deeply encoded meanings and assumptions. The interpretation of that text depends on the researcher, as the text is constructed by the interaction between researcher and data. As an experienced and a beginning teacher educator, respectively, we reveal our prior assumptions and experiences as “reading positions” (Segall, 2002, p. 8) with which we author and authorize a text of teaching a preservice physics methods course. Our positions are neither neutral nor dispassionate as we address the challenges of learning to teach and of learning to teach teachers through a collaborative self-study of our pedagogy of teacher education.

Modes of Inquiry and Data Sources

The context for this self-study is a preservice physics methods classroom in a 1-year, post-degree B.Ed. program at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. The class met twice a week for 2 ½ hours per class for 7 weeks in the Fall Term and again in the Winter Term. As is typical for 1-year B.Ed. programs, the coursework at the Faculty alternated with extended experiences in host schools for a practicum. During the year this study was conducted, candidates were on campus during the months of September, November, January, and April. The data reported in this study were collected in September of that year.

The authors enacted a new pedagogy at the start of the year by arranging for each teacher candidate to have an experience teaching a physics lesson to the entire class. We organized experiences of teaching physics for the class to examine critically together. We tried to address the
problem of the apprenticeship of observation by helping teacher candidates to identify their default
teaching strategies, most of which come from extended student experiences. Finally, we taught
teacher candidates how to reflect on their practice by enacting pedagogy designed to engage critical
discussion of enacted pedagogy rather than by simply telling students about the importance of
reflective practice. This paper describes and interprets the successes and challenges that we
encountered enacting a new pedagogy of teacher education. We use our critical friendship as a basis
for framing, reframing, and challenging our assumptions and perceptions of how we teach teachers
and of how teacher candidates learn in our classroom.

This self-study is guided by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), particularly with respect to the
tensions that we encountered as we examine our pedagogy of teacher education. We are also mindful
of Berry’s (2007) work on tensions as a conceptual framework because they grow “out of teacher
educators’ attempts to match goals for prospective teachers’ learning with the needs and concerns
expressed by prospective teachers for their own learning” (pp. 119-120). Our discussions focus on
tensions between our epistemological knowledge of teaching and learning and our enacted practices,
between the expectations of our program structure and our expectations of ourselves, and between
the context in which we learn to teach teachers and the context that we work to create with our
candidates. Through rich description of these tensions, we try to offer fresh perspectives on some of
the familiar dilemmas of teacher education.

Data were gathered at the beginning of our preservice program in the first 4 weeks of the
physics methods course. The data include transcriptions of audio-recorded conversations between the
authors, email correspondence, and personal journals. As participant-observer, Shawn kept a
particularly detailed research journal in which he recorded his perceptions of classroom events and
Tom’s comments to the physics methods class. Quotations presented in this paper come from one
of these three sources; quotations are attributed to one of the authors. The data were analyzed
inductively and deductively using standard qualitative analysis techniques (Patton, 2002) with a view
to authentically representing our lived experiences as teacher educators.

Using Lesson Study to Disturb Expectations

Both teacher educators and teacher candidates carry sets of expectations for methods courses in
September. Past experiences have indicated that candidates expect to be told what they need to know
in order to succeed on their practicum. As teacher educators, we expected to meet a group of
candidates who are anxious about their first practicum placement and unsure about the role of
coursework at a Faculty of Education. We expected a significant amount of tension as we try to
avoid simply telling our candidates how to teach. As Tom noted after our first class, “We are
compelled to interact for 4 out of 14 weeks before candidates are allowed to go out [on practicum]
and learn what they need to know.” Segall’s (2002) notion of disturbing practice was one important
catalyst for reconsidering our expectations of ourselves during the month of September. We realized
that we needed to disturb and disrupt our candidates’ expectations of September’s classes while
simultaneously disturbing our own expectations of the role of teacher educators at the beginning of
our program.

The ideas of lesson study (Stepanek, Appel, Leong, Mangan, & Mitchell, 2007) seemed to offer
a promising way to disturb the expectations surrounding our methods course. Lesson study has a
rich history in Japan and there has been increasing interest in the potential power of adapting lesson
study for North American classrooms in the past decade. The process of lesson study challenges
teachers to plan, enact, and reflect upon a jointly planned series of lessons. Typically, the lesson is
taught by one teacher while the other teachers observe. The group of teachers then meets at a later time to analyze the lesson and to identify ways in which the lesson might be improved.

We believed that lesson study could provide a structure for signalling that meaningful learning experiences can be co-created and analyzed within a teacher education course, while minimizing the tension associated with waiting for the teaching experiences to happen during the practicum. We asked teacher candidates to plan lessons in groups of four with each person teaching one lesson planned by the group. Tom taught the course, while Shawn was participant-observer and critical friend. Asking each teacher candidate to present part of a physics lesson required us to devote two-thirds of our class time in September to those lessons. This approach was unfamiliar to us and so we usually spent time after each class sharing our sense of the effects of lesson study on candidates’ learning.

**Learning from Lesson Study**

Predict-Observe-Explain (POE) pedagogy (Baird & Northfield, 1992) is a commonly used in science classrooms and science teacher education classrooms to elicit students’ prior understandings about a particular concept. On one level, it might be thought of as a way to promote more interactions during the demonstrations often found in science classrooms. Students are asked to make (and sometimes justify) predictions about what will happen, record observations about what actually happens, and construct explanations about the observations together with peers and the teacher. Although there are many variations to how a POE might be conducted, Tom tends to use the POE as a way to create a low-risk environment and a commitment to exploring concepts rather than creating a climate where only the correct prediction is valued. Candidates are provided with a situation that is typically more challenging than it appears, with a view to demonstrating that a safe classroom environment is critical to encouraging people to explore potentially incorrect prior assumptions. On the first meeting of the class, Tom used two POE sequences to draw the candidates into dialogue about the effects of the POE strategy on their learning by asking several questions:

1. What did you notice about what it was like to be learning using the POE approach?
2. What features of your learning did you notice by virtue of my using POE to teach you?
3. Can we all agree that teachers who don’t think about how they are teaching simply stand and deliver, transmitting or covering the curriculum?
4. Did anyone feel embarrassed during the POE?
5. What tends to make people feel embarrassed in a classroom setting?

Tom tried to set the stage for the risk-taking and collaboration that would be required by lesson study by establishing an environment where asking questions about pedagogy was encouraged, and not seem as threatening. He called attention to the fact that the POE activities yielded a variety of predictions and explanations, despite the fact that everyone in the class had significant post-secondary study of physics. The critical point of the exercise was to focus candidates’ attention on pedagogy, rather than right answers.

Tom began the second class with a third POE in order to re-emphasize the importance of asking critical questions about pedagogy within a positive classroom environment. After the POE, candidates were organized into groups of four and sign up to teach a series of concepts from the electricity and magnetism units in the Ontario curriculum. Following the model of lesson study
described earlier, each group was asked to collaboratively plan one 20-minute lesson that would be taught by a member of the group to the rest of the physics class. After the first round of lessons, each group would be given the opportunity to meet and analyse their lesson in light of the comments provided by the other members of the class. Then during the second round of lessons, another person from each group would teach the modified lesson to the entire class and highlight the changes that were made.

Tom acknowledged the inherent difficulty associated with teaching a lesson to peers and tried to focus candidates’ attention on the importance of discussing the effects the pedagogical approaches used by their peers had on their learning:

One of the things that is going to be really important is that everyone is going to feel a little uncomfortable when they present 20 minutes at the front... We are going to be good students because we are going to be listening to the learning effects that the teaching has on us. We are never going to criticize one another in terms of “Do x instead of y.” We are going to develop a team atmosphere, saying things like “Maybe if you did it this way, you might have this kind of learning effect.”

In keeping with the theme of establishing an atmosphere of trust early in the year, Tom admitted to the candidates that using lesson study in the physics methods course was a novel approach. He offered the following explanation for devoting so much time to creating in-class teaching experiences:

I am pretty sure that this is a different tack from your other curriculum course. Some of you might feel like you’re missing out. I’ve been in this building too many years to be offended if an associate teacher asks you to forget everything you learned here in September. Everything you are told here is likely to go down the drain on the first day [of practicum] in October. Focusing on how teaching is affecting learning is far more useful than 6000 tips on how to teach physics.

Tom’s explanation indicated his belief that teacher candidates could not be expected to directly enact tips and tricks for physics teaching into the practicum experience. Instead, he believed that the time in the physics methods course would be better spent learning to talk meaningfully about shared teaching and learning experiences. By explicitly describing the reasons for engaging in lesson study, Tom showed how a teacher educator can explicitly model his or her practice and create links between practice and literature. Lunnenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen (2007) highlighted the importance of modelling by teacher educators to assist teacher candidates in reframing their understandings of pedagogy.

As per our usual practice, we met immediately following the class to compare our thoughts about how the course was unfolding. Tom’s first comments about lesson study focused on how he set up the process and his initial reading of the candidates’ reactions:

The issues around how I went into the lesson study were partly due to doing it for the first time. I wasn’t unhappy with the way it came out. I actually felt an enormous amount of relief when I asked what they were making of things... and I got the comment [from a teacher candidate] that something different was going to happen in this class.

Tom also mentioned that he was pleased that he changed the focus of the next class into planning time for lesson study. In his notes, Shawn had also made of note of the importance of giving the candidates additional time for lesson study:
I think that giving more time for lesson study underscored your message of “We’ll figure it out together as we go.” I don’t know what specifically made you make the decision, but there was certainly a palpable sense of relief—not that they didn’t think they could do it, but just to have that time to sit with their group again. It was good that you had the opportunity to show that you are flexible by changing plans on the spot.

Our after-class discussion allowed us to think carefully about how Tom’s introduction to lesson study was in line with his commitment to building trust in his classroom. Given the workload associated with a preservice teacher education program, a simple gesture such as providing in-class time to work on a group assignment could go a long way to developing a supportive classroom environment.

**Beginning Lesson-Study Presentations**

The lesson study presentations began during the fourth class of the semester. Before the first group presented, Tom urged candidates to be mindful of the instinctive tendency we have to tell teachers about better ways to teach, particularly in a teacher education environment. Tom hoped the reminder would encourage candidates to think about pedagogy in terms of teaching strategies and learning effects, rather than in terms of best practices to be implemented. Shawn recorded the following observation during the first presentation:

> The candidates were very polite and paid rapt attention to their peer who was brave enough to go first. One of the interesting things was that I could have predicted how the lesson would proceed. The candidate fell back on all the default practices of what he has seen teachers do time and time again. I could also have predicted the kind of assessment he would receive from an associate or a faculty liaison: voice control, pacing, timing, moving on quickly after the right answer was elicited. There was a demonstration so that it felt like a science class.

At the conclusion of the first lesson, Tom took the opportunity to call candidates’ attention to the influence of the apprenticeship of observation by asking, “Where did he learn to do what he just did? Has he learned to teach that way in 10 days of classes?”

The candidates who did not present were given whiteboards and markers and asked to discuss the lesson in small groups and record their comments. After about 10 minutes of small group discussions, Tom collected the whiteboards and displayed them at the front of the class. Returning to the ideas that he introduced at the beginning of the class, Tom challenged the class by stating, “A lot of this reads like ‘do X instead of Y.’ What I am struggling with is that we haven’t named the learning effects. . . . Can we get better, individually and collectively, at naming the learning effect?”
Difficulty Identifying Learning Effects

The difficulty that teacher candidates had framing pedagogy as a relationship between teaching strategies and learning effects became more pronounced with each post-lesson class discussion. After the second presentation, for example, the candidates continued to make the kinds of comments they did after the first presentation, using the language of best practices. When Tom challenged the class to acknowledge that their comments still were not focused on learning effects, several teacher candidates argued that there was merely a semantic difference between making a statement such as “do X instead of Y” and making a statement such as “the teaching strategy affected my learning in X ways.” Tom took a step back from the discussion and encouraged the candidates to talk more about the differences between teaching strategies and learning effects. From his position at the back of the classroom, Shawn was also challenged to think about learning effects, noting:

The semantic differences matter because [phrasing things in terms of learning effects] might serve as a reminder that people are affected by things in different ways. If pedagogy is a unified whole, is it a fair question to ask for the learning effects to be teased out from the teaching strategies, or is it more appropriate to ask for phrases with conjunctions? Saying “The learning effect was A because the teacher did B,” is different from saying “The teacher should do X because Y.” Is the suggestion being made to conform to a perceived best practice, or is the suggestion being made to address a particular feature of the learning?

Shawn continued to think about the differences during the third candidate’s lesson. Tom ended the class by asking candidates to anonymously record something that they learned about teaching and learning on an index card on their way out, a strategy he called a “ticket out of class.”

The difficulties that candidates were having with the post-lesson discussions dominated our post-class meetings. After a number of lessons and gentle reminders for Tom, we both felt that there was a qualitative difference in the kinds of comments the candidates made when they focused on the effects that particular teaching strategies had on the quality of their learning experience. The anonymous “tickets out of class” that candidates wrote revealed that many resisted the concept of a learning effect and felt that making suggestions pertaining to trying specific teaching strategies were more valuable. We agreed that it was important to be patient with the candidates’ focus on trying to tell each other how to teach, rather than talking about how they were learning. We also agreed that candidates’ preference to talk about teaching rather than learning seemed to us to be one important effect of the apprenticeship of observation. The culture of school emphasizes the overarching importance of the correct answer (Holt, 1964). Given that teacher candidates are usually students who were successful in the K-12 school system, it was somewhat unrealistic for us to expect candidates to embrace quickly discussions that were not focused on obtaining answers about the right ways to teach.

Our second problem of practice was brought to Tom’s attention by a small group of teacher candidates just before the sixth class. This small group of candidates were upset with a perceived lack of participation from their peers during the lesson study process. Often, the candidate teaching the lesson would ask for some sort of input from the audience and no one would offer a response. Tom’s response was to thank the candidates for bringing their concerns to him and to engage them in a bit more of a discussion about what they hoped for from the lesson study process. His other response was to ask the class to change their seating arrangement at the beginning of sixth class, in the hope that sitting with different people would encourage more discussion and participation. By the end of the sixth class, each group had presented its lessons once and thus it was time to give the
groups a chance to modify their lesson for the second round of presentations. At the end of class, Tom made the problem raised earlier in the day explicit (without mentioning that a small group had spoken to him) by stating “it can feel like pulling teeth up here [in the role of teacher]” and encouraged candidates to pay attention to those situations.

During the post-observation discussion, Tom and Shawn spent a considerable amount of time discussing the difficulties some candidates were having with the process of lesson study. Shawn felt that the silent majority in the class were slipping into a default student mode and that perhaps candidates were discouraged by some of the reactions from their peers, given the amount of time that they put into planning their lessons. Shawn also noted that candidates, like many teachers, might have a tendency to say that there is a problem with the students, rather than with the lesson itself. In other words, it was possible that some of the lessons were not receiving much input from the class simply because they were not engaging. Tom had a different explanation for the difficulties experienced during the first round of lesson study. He brought the focus of the discussion back to the level of risk required by these short lesson-study presentations:

They are revealing a lot about themselves in this class that they are not revealing in other classes. There may be some reaction here that it is too much, too quickly. I realize that I am getting to see sides of them that I never would have otherwise, but I think that in the long run, there is a pay off.

Making Suggestions after Some Initial Teaching Experiences

Partly in recognition of the fact that it was the halfway point in the lesson study process, and partly as a result of the conversation that we shared after the sixth class, Tom sent an email to the class later that evening. He included the following suggestions for candidates to consider when revising their lessons:

- We are not looking for perfection, just an improved approach that has reasons!
- Work whenever possible to move beyond traditional approaches (whatever that means—familiar, comfortable) to a plan that helps students be more active, more challenged, and more engaged in the lesson.
- Focus on a concept, and name your concept somewhere in your plan.
- Don’t be afraid to stop at any point in the lesson, step out of your teacher role, and ask the class how they feel about particular aspects of what you are doing.
- Don't be afraid to call on people by name if you don't get responses; very few people have tried that so far, but that's always an option so it might be good to explore now.

Tom hoped to encourage candidates to think about the concerns we articulated during our post-observation discussions by framing the email as a series of suggestions rather than demands. The email was particularly powerful because Tom had made few comments about the candidates' lessons up until that point. It was particularly important that the email’s comments focused on suggestions for improving the process, rather than on specific teaching strategies. We wanted to encourage candidates to think about how to improve the quality of their interactions with the class, and we agreed that the ways in which the lessons changed would be an important marker for thinking about what candidates learned from the experience.
The lessons that were taught during the first round were fairly traditional, teacher-centred, and tended to follow the familiar pattern of introducing content before answering questions. During the second round of lessons, however, it quickly became apparent that candidates were trying to enact slightly riskier pedagogy, including a few demonstrations and POEs. There was more of an effort to engage the class in discussion, and Tom was more vocal about drawing candidates’ attention to details such as font size on the overhead and the importance of admitting when one is lost in the middle of solving a problem. Tom also commented that everyone will initially teach as they were taught, not as they were told to teach. At the end of the seventh class, Tom reiterated that he was using lesson study in the hope “that there will be connections between experiences and preconceptions in this class and what happens when you come back.”

One of the most significant challenges of enacting lesson study pedagogy was working out how to conclude the experience in a meaningful way that flowed naturally into the first practicum. The challenge was compounded by the enormous amount of time that was spent on the lesson study presentations and the fact that Tom worked hard to avoid making comments during the first round of lessons. After the final two lessons during the ninth and final class before practicum, Tom distributed a sheet of paper entitled “The Big Picture after 4 Weeks in Physics class” that contained four boxes in which candidates were invited to record new perspectives on teaching and learning: (a) from planning lessons in a group, (b) from watching others teach, (c) from presenting their own lesson, and (d) from working with equipment for teaching electromagnetism.

After 15 minutes of independent writing, Tom encouraged the members of the class to share the thoughts they had recorded. One of the major themes in the discussion was the shared realization that, although the lessons were planned in groups, the way in which a particular lesson was enacted ultimately depended on the person at the front of the room. Candidates also felt that planning a lesson as a group was more time consuming than it would have been if they had planned lessons independently, particularly as they frequently had to negotiate several different approaches to teaching within the group. Tom said that he was particularly impressed that the groups got together on their own time to plan, without any prompting to do so. The members of the class felt that watching one another teach was a good way to learn different ways to think about physics content and how to present that content. A few candidates stated that they watched their peers with an interest in finding ideas for teaching particularly challenging topics, particularly those topics that they felt intimidated to teach during practicum. The class seemed to agree unanimously that there was no reason for concepts in electromagnetism to be presented as dryly as they often are at the high school and university levels.

One of the biggest insights raised during the discussion was the candidates’ general consensus that knowing physics is not the same as knowing how to teach physics. We suspect that this insight was particularly strongly felt by the few candidates who seemed to rely on their ability to improvise during the first round of lessons. Tom took the opportunity at the end of class to explicitly develop the link between providing experiences in teaching via lesson study and providing experiences in physics via POEs:

I have always been fond of the idea of letting students have some experience with the stuff before you teach them the theory, and then let them go back and ask them how things are different now. We don’t give them much of a sense of the before-and-after; perhaps that is part of the reason kids walk away without a good conceptual understanding of physics. There is an incredible sense in science teaching of tell first, explore later.
Ending the semester with a reminder that teaching tends to be built on a culture of telling was an important way to link the lesson study experiences to the experiences on the first day of the semester. First days of school at all levels are typically characterized by mundane exercises such as taking attendance, distributing textbooks, and discussing course outlines. The POE experience and its emphasis on creating a classroom culture filled with exploratory, hypothetical talk was unlike what students typically encounter on the first day of class. The lesson study experiences built upon the culture of taking risks by providing an opportunity for the class to co-create and co-analyse a set of shared teaching experiences to discuss. Tom ended the semester by stating that lesson study pedagogy was a way of providing experiences that enacted his belief in an Explore First, Explain Later approach to science teaching and science teacher education.

Conclusions

This self-study arose from a shared desire to disturb the theory-into-practice assumptions underlying our preservice teacher education program. Lesson study served as a structure for generating shared teaching and learning experiences for candidates to discuss with their teacher educator, experiences that contrasted with the more familiar pattern of talking over and around the huge gap in teaching experience between teacher candidates and teacher educators. Enacting the lesson study experiences suggested two important considerations for teacher educators:

1. Teacher educators who share a problem in their practice with teacher candidates can create a unique opportunity to address the problem of enactment by explicitly modelling how an experienced teacher educator implements and critiques an unfamiliar pedagogical approach.

2. Methods courses are often characterized as the place where theory is learned so that it can be put into practice in the practicum. We believe that methods courses need not be artificially isolated from the crucible of practice in host schools. Although it is important to provide opportunities for candidates to make sense of their practicum experiences, it is equally important to provide meaningful opportunities for candidates to critically analyse the teaching and learning experiences that occur in their preservice courses.

Tom was explicit about both the purpose and pedagogy of lesson study during the month of September. He was open with candidates about his lack of experience with lesson study and regularly sought feedback about the process. He shared an authentic problem of practice with the candidates by framing lesson study as a way for him to avoid the culture of telling in teacher education. Most importantly, he tacitly introduced a disciplined approach to thinking about teaching by focusing on developing a vocabulary of teaching strategies and learning effects in place of the familiar rhetoric of best practices.

Initially, candidates found it difficult to articulate the effects that particular teaching strategies had on their learning. A part of this difficulty was probably due to a lifetime of learning how to behave like students and, by extension, act like teachers. Students in schools rarely, if ever, have opportunities to articulate the effects of particular pedagogies on their learning and thus it is not surprising that candidates struggled to identify direct relationships between teaching and learning. Throughout the lesson study experience, Tom provided at least one opportunity per class for
candidates to confront and develop their understanding of teaching and learning by returning to the idea of learning effects.

The nature of teachers’ professional knowledge is also relevant to this study. Our teacher candidates come from the disciplines of physics, engineering, and mathematics. An undergraduate education in these disciplines requires considerable attention to propositional knowledge. The discipline of teaching, as articulated by Loughran and Russell (2007), requires that teacher candidates attend closely to the problems of practice they encounter in their experiences. Attending to experience in a disciplined way is not natural and needs to be learned, yet teacher education programs seem to assume that it will happen spontaneously during practicum placements. Lesson study served as a way to bring experiences into a methods classroom in order to explicitly confront problems of practice.

Although many problems in physics are governed by overarching laws, solutions in teaching are messy and context-dependent. Tom concluded the pre-practicum classes by returning to his reasons for enacting the lesson-study pedagogy, but did not present lesson study as a solution to his problem of practice. Instead, he developed the idea of continuing to listen to candidates throughout the year in order to determine the potential long-term benefits of lesson study.

**Did We Transform the Physics Methods Course?**

Some might argue that *transform* is too strong a word. Certainly, we cannot claim that the teacher candidates were transformed quickly into teachers, nor can we claim that they felt better prepared to begin to teach in a practicum school. We did transform our own thinking about what is possible and productive in the early weeks of a preservice methods course and the consequences of that transformation will become more apparent in subsequent physics methods courses that we will teach at our respective institutions. Meeting regularly after class helped us to clarify and challenge our reading positions, particularly with respect to the differences in our levels of experience in teacher education. For example, as a new teacher educator and participant observer, Shawn tended to focus on the details associated with the lesson study process, whereas Tom’s experience in teacher education allowed him to make explicit connections from the lesson study pedagogy to his overall goals for the course. Our post-class conversations allowed us to explore the richness of both perspectives.

We both experienced significant tensions in enacting unfamiliar pedagogy and in responding productively to the reactions of teacher candidates to the idea of teaching a physics lesson to a group of peers. We believe that these tensions were essential for coming to appreciate the power of the experience, as the tensions ensured that teacher candidates confronted some of their prior assumptions about the concepts of physics and how physics might be taught. It was essential for us to attend to the developing relationships both with and among the teacher candidates as they were placed in the challenging situation of enacting their default pedagogies for an audience of peers. The process of lesson study gave meaning to enacting a pedagogy of teacher education that focuses on the relationship between teaching and learning and makes explicit the challenges of learning from experience.

We now see the early weeks of the methods course in new ways. We both believe that the apprenticeship of observation drives preservice candidates’ expectations and initial teaching behaviours far more deeply and profoundly than most teacher education programs acknowledge. We believe that the assumptions, expectations and behaviours embedded in the experience of observing teachers for 16 or more years before attempting to teach can and should be challenged from the outset of a teacher education program. These challenges need to be more implicit than
explicit, for there is little to be gained by telling candidates that they have already been shaped in ways that they do not understand.

We see these points as important elements of our own transformation that we will continue to explore in future physics methods courses that we teach:

1. An Explore First, Explain Later approach can be used productively in the earliest weeks of the course, so that candidates experience the approach before they try to understand its potential value as an approach to science teaching.
2. It is possible to begin to challenge implicitly the views of teaching and learning that have been taught unintentionally but thoroughly by the apprenticeship of observation.
3. Teacher educators have also been influenced profoundly by how they were taught in school and by how they learned to teach, and thus they too must explore and come to terms with their own apprenticeships of observation.

To summarize, this collaborative self-study reminds us that the work of a teacher educator is more complex than naïve images of transmitting a knowledge base for teaching to beginners might suggest. The complexities and frustrations of enacting new practices can force us to confront the inevitable insight that beginning teachers face challenges (apprenticeship, enactment, complexity) far greater than traditional teacher education practices would suggest. As we work to help teacher candidates learn to direct their own development as teachers, examining and improving our own practices has become an increasingly important part of moving beyond teacher-centred talk toward learner-centred experience and creating experiential meaning for the knowledge base for teaching.

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References

Chapter 8


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