

CRITICAL ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Critical Issues in Teacher Education (CITE) is a blind reviewed refereed scholarly journal of the Illinois Association of Teacher Educators. CITE will publish empirically based or original research articles, synthesis papers, book reviews, and special reports on topics of interest to teacher educators.

The purposes of the publication of CITE are to:

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2. Inform teacher educators about current research, promising practices, and significant issues concerning teacher education; and
3. Provide a forum for discussion of significant issues and problems in teacher education.

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Submit manuscripts to:

Ed Pultorak, Ph.D., Co-Editor
Critical Issues in Teacher Education
SIUC Suburban Chicago Center
911 Donnie Court
Joliet, IL 60435-4443
email: pultorak@siu.edu

DEVELOPING TEACHER EFFICACY THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: A VYGOTSKIAN PERSPECTIVE

by
LeAnn G. Putney and Suzanne H. Broughton

LEANN G. PUTNEY AND SUZANNE H. BROUGHTON are on faculty at University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Abstract

Traditionally teacher efficacy has been studied through Bandura's social cognitive perspective. This study explored a developmental approach to preservice teacher efficacy through a Vygotskian lens, which serves to extend the current approach to teacher efficacy research. The researchers further explored the notion that reflection and interpersonal communication between a preservice teacher and a more experienced mentor teacher may have contributed to the efficacy development. Data examined were primarily based on preservice teacher reflections and her mentor teachers' responses. Results demonstrated the onset of efficacy development toward a maturing level of efficacy based on the preservice teacher's experience.

I was assigned as Ms. Falls' intern after having been placed for periods of time in a 1st, 3rd, and 4th grade classroom. I had anticipated that what I would see would be different from the rest of my placements simply because I had noticed the way Ms. Falls' class behaved during Morning Ceremony...It was these observations that caused me to request to be placed in Ms. Falls' class. I had to see what she was doing in her classroom to create such a sense of self-responsibility and community.... As a preservice teacher I have learned volumes from Ms. F and the students in this "community" in the several weeks that I have spent with them. (Shasta's reflections on her preservice experience)

From this excerpt of a preservice teacher's reflection we recognized that her understanding about constructing a classroom community had developed through her experience with a mentor teacher and students. This understanding had not occurred earlier in her preservice teaching experience. However, her initial observations of teachers with high efficacy led her to awareness of what a positive classroom environment could be. In addition she began to inquire as to how she could be successful in confidently constructing such an environment when she would eventually become a classroom teacher. Her reflection led us as researchers to explore the development of her efficacy in her role as classroom teacher during her preservice experience, and to question what role her reflections on her practice might have played in that development.

Over the past several decades, researchers have studied the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 1996). Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1997), is a belief in one's capabilities

to organize and accomplish a given task. Students possessing high levels of perceived self-efficacy are more likely to persevere through challenging tasks, have high aspirations, and believe they can accomplish a task (Bandura, 1993). Recently, the construct of self-efficacy has expanded to include teacher efficacy and collective efficacy (Goddard, 2002; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Goddard and Goddard (2001) explain that teacher efficacy relates to their perceptions about their own capabilities in enhancing student learning. These perceptions influence teacher behavior that, in turn, influences student academic achievement.

A primary goal of this study was to examine a teacher candidate's reflections during her classroom practicum experience as a tool for identifying her developing teacher efficacy. In what follows, we first describe our theoretical framework in which we expand on the discussion of a developmental approach through the work of Vygotsky. Next, we briefly review the literature on self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, and self-reflection as it relates to developing teacher efficacy. We then provide excerpts from the teacher candidate's reflection log as a telling case for how self-reflective practices may enhance the development of teacher efficacy. Finally, we present educational implications for teacher educators, mentor teachers, and teacher candidates.

We examined Bandura's construct of self-efficacy (1993) through a Vygotskian lens because Vygotsky's perspective affords the understanding of the constructs of self-efficacy and teacher efficacy as a developmental process. We recognize that particular research perspectives carry with them an expressive potential (Strike, 1974) which brings to the forefront the importance of the language being used within a perspective. The beliefs underlying the particular perspective influence how words can be used to unpack the constructs generated through the perspective.

For example, the social cognitive perspective constitutes a theoretical language that supports and constrains what can be studied, how the study can take place, as well as what can be known, understood and explained through the study (Putney, Green, Dixon, Duran & Yeager 2000). Likewise, the socio-cultural-historical constructionist frame of Vygotsky's work takes up a different language potential. Given a similar study in this perspective, the language used to discuss the results offers a different focus through which a construct may be examined. Given that Vygotsky's work was derived from a particular developmental perspective, what can be argued and understood about the construct of teacher efficacy from a Vygotskian perspective is likely to differ from the traditional social cognitive view that portrays efficacy as an individual perception or belief (Bandura, 1997; Hoy & Spero, 2005).

We examined classroom instructional practices as a pathway for developing teacher efficacy of preservice teachers. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which the development of preservice teacher efficacy could be fostered during the preservice experience by examining the experiences of a preservice teacher in reflective correspondence with her mentor teacher. From a Vygotskian perspective, teacher efficacy could

be socially constructed in the interpersonal spaces between mentor teacher and preservice teacher created through reflective interpersonal communications related to their own teaching practices. The overall guiding questions for this study include: 1) How does the reflective interpersonal communication between mentor teacher and preservice teacher promote the developmental process of teacher efficacy? 2) How is teacher efficacy development supported or constrained through reflective interpersonal communication for a preservice teacher during her classroom experience?

Background

Interest in this research topic is based on our personal experiences as classroom teachers as well as the representation of teacher efficacy in the literature. In our respective teaching experiences working with preservice teachers, we each noticed that while preservice teachers may not feel confident in their approach to certain activities, they did approach other activities with an air of authority. We also noticed, as Bandura suggested, that in some cases their confidence appeared to be domain specific (related to the content area) or task specific (related to the type of classroom activity). However, in some cases we wondered in what ways might the sociocultural context of the classroom support or constrain the development of teacher efficacy. To understand this additional aspect of efficacy as a developmental process we turned to Vygotsky's work as an additional explanatory theory. This was a question that started us working toward this particular study using a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) from one preservice teacher's experience. A telling case is one that can serve as a theoretical exploration of issues not previously made visible. Our telling case, *the case of Shasta, a preservice teacher* provides a way of exploring the notion of efficacy as a developmental construct in the Vygotskian sense. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) viewed development as a revolutionary relationship between individual and collective development across time and events. This relationship is often overlooked when research focuses solely on individual learning.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective informing this project is a multifaceted outlook involving an orienting approach of Interactional Ethnography with Vygotskian explanatory theory. Interactional Ethnography combines an ethnographic perspective with a sociolinguistic and critical discourse analytic approach. The ethnographic perspective allows researchers to view a classroom acting as a culture over time while also examining the language of the classroom at a micro level to understand what is being accomplished in the moment (Putney et al., 2000). The primary researcher in this study conducted ethnographic work with the mentor teacher in her classroom over a five-year period, which provided evidence of the ways in which she continually worked toward constructing the classroom community. The data for this study is a subset of the larger five-year data set that focuses primarily on the development of preservice teacher efficacy.

Given the ethnographic base supporting the construction of community, this telling case study gives us opportunity to explore a key event, the mentoring of a preservice teacher early in her apprenticeship. A limitation to this study is that it represents only one preservice teacher's experience, and over a limited time. However a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) serves as a theoretical exploration of issues not previously made visible. The fifth grade classroom was the single setting and participants included students, mentor teacher, and preservice teacher. The key event examined as a telling case was the preservice teachers' initial development of teacher efficacy through her experience with both students and a mentor teacher.

The work of Vygotsky as an explanatory theory affords a different lens through which to theorize the construct of efficacy. Vygotsky theorized that the nature of learning and development is first interpersonal and then moves to an intrapersonal plane as individuals actively make sense of the meanings that were negotiated through our interactions with others. "The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events" (Vygotsky 1978, p. 57). From this perspective, learning and development are viewed as a reciprocal process in which learners are active participants in the developmental process. Learning and development are interrelated processes, in which learning leads development, a distinct departure from Piaget and other developmental theorists. Vygotsky theorized development not as in stages or steps, but as in a period of revolution during which the individual draws on past experiences and knowledge to make sense of what is being understood in the moment that development happens. The zone of proximal development is defined as the distance between the actual developmental level and the potential level actuated through interactive problem solving activity.

Vygotsky theorized that participants working together to solve a problem can realize collaboratively what they would not yet be able to do independently (Rieber & Carton, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1986). Through their collaboration they come to reformulate a problem and to formulate a possible solution. From this perspective, classroom members working collaboratively to problem-solve co-construct knowledge potential that may become both collective and individual knowledge (Putney et al., 2000). Through a process of continuous and dynamic learning, classroom members have opportunities to develop self-efficacy in relation to the work they are accomplishing. This not only includes opportunities for students in the classroom, but also opportunities for the teacher and preservice teacher, as they are continuously learning about their practice through their practice with students and each other.

By defining teaching and learning in this way, we see learning and development, and development of teacher efficacy as ongoing, and any given point in time as having a history that informs activity and actions of classroom members. Thus life in classrooms may be viewed as a progression that has consequences for what teachers and students come to see as appropriate ways of knowing, being and doing in that class for that year. Viewed in this

way, past knowledge and practices become resources for present action, and present activity implicates future actions and knowledge (Putney et al., 2000).

Teaching, therefore, can be viewed as a dynamic process through which the teacher learns from observing what students take up, and in turn, uses this knowledge to formulate and reformulate classroom activity. Likewise, a preservice teacher makes use of observing students as well as the mentor teacher to make sense of her own practice when she takes up the role of classroom teacher. This dynamic interactive and responsive process has potential to support preservice teachers as they interpret new tasks and draw on past learning to construct knowledge of how to teach under new circumstances. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) note that reflection on practice, in dialog with others can increase the impact of preservice teachers as they draw on the knowledge shared with mentors to shape subsequent classroom activity.

In his work on the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky (1978) theorized the role of matured functions as opposed to budding functions in terms of assessing learners' actual versus potential development. In the same vein, we theorized that preservice teacher efficacy and efficacy beliefs could be examined on a sliding scale of onset at one end and maturing at the other end in relation to the context in which the preservice teacher finds herself participating (Figure 1). Our purpose is to show how the expressive potential of a Vygotskian view of preservice teacher efficacy beliefs extends beyond the situational and domain specific construct as postulated by Bandura (1993). Through the use of preservice and mentor teacher written reflections, we demonstrate how efficacy may come to be considered as a developmental process. At the same time we illustrate how engaging in reflection may result in a progression of constructs that are consequential for a preservice teacher in coming to understand her practice. This progressive learning occurs within the preservice teaching situation and over time, made visible through the preservice teacher reflective dialog with her mentor teacher.

Figure 1. Preservice Teacher Efficacy Development Scale

<p>Development Of Preservice Teacher Efficacy</p> <p>In relation to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development</p>	<p><i>Efficacy Onset</i></p> <p>Actual Development</p>	<p><i>Efficacy Developing</i></p> <p>Proximal Development</p>	<p><i>Efficacy Maturing</i></p> <p>Potential Development</p>
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This perspective then presumes that efficacy can be developed and shaped by the context and the interactions with a more experienced other, much as Vygotsky (1978; 1986) theorized the actions and interactions through

the zone of proximal development. The role of language becomes central to this discussion since the preservice teacher interacted through written reflective dialog with her mentor teacher as well as with students as she assumed the role of teacher.

The route we chose to make visible, the potential developmental path of preservice teacher efficacy, was through the reflective written dialog the preservice teacher held with her mentor teacher. This form of reflection relates to the construct of knowledge *in* practice, which is practical knowledge “embedded in practice and in teachers’ reflections on practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 251). While knowledge in practice promotes reflective practice, this reflection may be limited to being informed only by the individual’s own perceptions and interpretations of classroom events. However, when these reflections are shared with a mentor teacher, they have the potential of opening a dialog of reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983; 1987), which could lead to stronger interpretations as the novice is engaged in dialog with a more experienced other. These reflective practices of journaling about one’s practice and then using that written reflection as a basis for written and spoken dialog about one’s practice with a more experienced other may be a starting point toward the construct of knowledge *of* practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), in which the preservice teacher views her own practice in light of the knowledge and theory of others.

Literature Review

Initial research regarding the construct of efficacy focused on the individual. Using the social cognitivist lens as a theoretical underpinning, Bandura (1993) described the role of self-efficacy stating, “Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave” (p. 118). Moreover, the beliefs an individual holds about their capabilities to perform a specific task exert their influence through cognitive, affective, motivational, and selection processes. The characteristic of task specificity of efficacy means that a group or individual may have high efficacy relating to one task while having low efficacy or beliefs in their abilities to accomplish a different task. Thus self-efficacy is situationally dependent and the same person may perform differently depending on situational fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004). Furthermore, individuals’ self-efficacy determines their level of motivation, goals, and academic achievements (Bandura, 1993). The goal setting done by individuals is influenced by self-appraisal such that they set higher goal challenges and are more deeply committed to them when they hold stronger perceived self-efficacy.

More recently, the construct of efficacy has been expanded to include teacher efficacy, or the perceived beliefs teachers have of their abilities to motivate and foster learning among their students (Goddard, 2001). Teachers’ efficacy is related to their attitudes about classroom management as well as their behavior in the classroom (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Teachers with high perceived efficacy provide more time for academic learning in the classroom and individual help for struggling students (Bandura, 1993). Teachers with high

efficacy may rely on students' intrinsic motivation and self-direction resulting in greater levels of independent problem solving among students (Ashton & Webb, 1986). In contrast, teachers with low efficacy spend classroom time on nonacademic activities and are more likely to give up quickly on students who do not learn quickly (Bandura, 1993). Indeed, teachers with low instructional efficacy are more likely to rely on extrinsic motivation and negative consequences as a way of involving students in classroom learning (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Preservice teachers' efficacy beliefs can be shaped by their interactions with mentor teachers and students. Researchers have shown that positive feedback from mentor teachers and students fosters positive efficacy (Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). However, Hoy and Spero (2005) provide a cautionary note concerning preservice teachers' efficacy beliefs in that they can be somewhat resistant to change once they are established. Literature concerning efficacy has emphasized identifying beliefs and resulting effects of teachers and students with high levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

In a review of literature on efficacy, Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) found that studies of efficacy primarily focused on the knowledge and beliefs of teachers rather than the cultural meaning of teacher efficacy that would consist of expectations, roles, and interpersonal relations that relate to the construction of efficacy beliefs. The recognition of the need for a cultural perspective prompted this examination of teacher efficacy and efficacy beliefs as a developmental process rather than merely the beliefs of individuals involved. Further research is needed to explore what it might mean to examine the genesis and consequential progressive development of teacher efficacy at the classroom level. The purpose of our study is to examine the mentor-to- novice teacher interactions as a way to determine whether teacher efficacy can be examined as a developmental and consequential process, fostered at the classroom level, and if so, how that occurs.

Method

The research site was an inner-city elementary school located in the Western United States. The school was chosen because of its established relationship with a university for conducting on-site research. Access to this classroom was gained through the teacher who was recommended to the researchers by the elementary school principal. The mentor teacher, in her 12th year of teaching, had been identified as an exemplary teacher by her principal and colleagues due to her success with students both academically and socially. In addition she frequently led the staff through inservice related to developing a successful classroom culture. She also presented as a collaborative teacher researcher with the classroom ethnographer at national conferences.

The number of pupils in her fifth-grade classroom ranged from 22 to 28 at any one time, with a 22 percent transient rate. Student demographics were comprised of 45 percent Latino, 15 percent African American, 35 percent

Caucasian, and 5 percent other. Ninety percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced-lunch, and these classroom demographics mirrored the overall school demographics.

The preservice teacher in this study had participated in a unique cohort setting in this professional development school in which the interns were placed as observers in classrooms from the beginning of their study as preservice teachers. Typically in this program preservice interns were placed in both a primary and an upper level elementary classroom, and this was the second placement opportunity for this preservice teacher. In addition, throughout their preservice program, they participated each semester in a seminar course in which they debriefed their classroom experiences with a university professor. In this course they used journaling and in-class discussion relating their issues and successes with their respective placements to current educational theory.

As an ethnographic case study, participant observations were the primary source of data collection (Creswell, 1998). The classroom ethnographer collected field notes and video taped data daily for the first three weeks of the school year, then weekly for the academic year. Observations lasted one to two hours, depending upon the time negotiated with the mentor teacher. We also conducted informal interviews with the mentor teacher and preservice teacher. For the telling case study, we selected data from the 6 weeks toward the end of the academic year when the preservice teacher was involved with this classroom community. These data, primarily consisting of her personal reflections with the mentor teacher, were analyzed through a domain and taxonomic analysis to find evidence of developing teacher efficacy. The data excerpts displayed in the data analysis section are ones that are representative of the themes developed through the domain analysis.

While efficacy has generally been established in the past through objective measures such as surveys, we are taking the stance from Gumperz (1986; 1992) that survey research of individuals may not allow for understanding the dynamic and interactive classroom context surrounding individuals. In examining the narrative reflections between mentor and preservice teacher we make visible what participants place through their talk and actions that exemplify their perceptions and belief systems. When examined through focused ethnographic inquiry, across events and over time, we begin to build information that makes visible relevant beliefs and values (Gumperz, 1986; 1992).

Data Analysis

The analysis represented by Figure 2 illustrates the developing efficacy as evidenced through the reflection segments between the preservice and mentor teacher. At the position of *Efficacy Onset* the focus of the preservice teacher's reflections was on the mentor teacher in terms of *her* efficacy and actions as an accomplished teacher. For example, in her initial reflection, Shasta wrote:

Reflection #1

Shasta: The class is so respectful of one another, I'm impressed.

I suspect the beginning of the year is a lot of repetition of expectations. How did you implement such a class of respectful community members? I noticed the class is self-governing...it allows for learning rather than disciplining. You treat the students as equals and as capable learners. Your expectations of the students are high. They seem to rise to your expectations. They seem to have confidence in self and others. Thanks for a great first day!

Figure 2. Preservice Teacher Developing Efficacy Results

Reflections Of Preservice Teacher Focus	Efficacy Onset		Efficacy Developing		Efficacy Maturing
	Mentor Teacher	Mentor Teacher's Relationship with Students	Curriculum	Self as Teacher	Self as within Community with Heightened Student Focus
Actions	Observing mentor teacher	Observing mentor teacher	Preparing to teach math, reading, and social studies lessons	Taught lessons and in her reflections efficacy surfaces	Final reflection shows evidence of continuing development of efficacy as Teacher in relation to classroom community

Shasta's first day reflections tended to be more globally related to what must have been accomplished by the mentor teacher from the first day of school. We found useful the differentiation by Ashton and Webb (1986) of custodial vs. humanistic approach of teachers that relate to their levels of efficacy. Shasta noticed the humanistic approach taken by the mentor teacher (*I noticed the class is self-governing...it allows for learning rather than disciplining*) as compared to the more custodial approach she had seen in her prior observations of other teachers.

At the next point on the continuum (Figure 2), *Developing Efficacy*, Shasta began to shift her focus in her reflections from the accomplishments of the mentor teacher to the specifics of the relationship between the mentor teacher and students to attempt an understanding of *how* such a community was created. She was negotiating meaning about community relationships through her reflections with the mentor teacher as evidenced by the following notation:

Reflection #2

Shasta: I was not glad that there were altercations to handle today; however, I was glad to have the opportunity to see how it was handled. I saw that you dealt with the situation swiftly and seriously. Now I see why you don't have behavior problems!

Mentor: I firmly believe that attending to matters of this nature is beneficial for all concerned. I am consistent in supporting my students in a fair and appropriate manner. This builds and strengthens the trust factor between us.

Shasta: Your reaction to the PE issue showed the students that you are their advocate. You act like a family in this room.

As she began to look beyond the actions of the mentor teacher, Shasta began to realize how the community works through the relationships the teacher has built with and among the classroom members. Shasta's focus began to move from her appreciation of the mentor teacher's management style and shifted toward curricular aspects at the same time that she was preparing to teach part-time in the classroom as part of her apprenticeship. This was to be expected as her focus became related to what she must convey to the students when she was in the role of teacher. At this point, her reflections illustrated a range of development from initial hesitance in facilitating a literature group to her relative confidence related to curricular activity.

Reflection #2

Shasta: You mentioned me being the "devil's advocate" in a Lit group. I think this is a great idea!! Would it be best for me to read the text ahead of time so my questions can be in context?

Mentor: DEFINITELY!

Reflection #3

Shasta: During Promising Stars Lit group you had the students play tic-tac-toe and then discussed connection with the text. Did you plan on this activity ahead of time or did it just come to you so you went with it?

Mentor: Planned to do so but a day later! Ha! Ha! Now, isn't that the life of a teacher!

Reflection #7

Shasta: We had an angle lesson and then I gave the Quick Assessment. I found that the students don't understand that they can cross over a ray to form another angle. I found that 9 students fully understand, 6 students partially understand, and 7 students have major difficulties. As with everything, I feel that the students would benefit from more practice. Maybe I could go over the assessment with them as a class or groups could work together on correcting what they need to. I'm willing to work more on this if you feel it beneficial.

Mentor: The outcome of the lesson was as I expected. Perhaps more practice on seeing angles across rays is needed and can be approached in Math Lab II which is a shorter period - about 20 minutes as opposed to 50-60 minutes.

As Shasta's budding teacher efficacy continued to develop (Figure 2), her focus in the reflections became more centered to self-as-teacher. This was in relationship to a shift in her activities in terms of constructing lessons and

beginning to teach in small increments as her classroom work began to increase. In addition, the mentor teacher shifted focus from details of how to accomplish the activities to her own appreciation of building a teaching partnership with Shasta as demonstrated in the following:

Reflection #4

Shasta: It was great teaching your class today. I paced the lesson slower than I planned because the understanding didn't seem to manifest itself in the students' faces. When it seemed to have sunk in, I moved on. Thank you for allowing me to continue the lesson tomorrow. I will be sure to give you a follow-up.

Reflection #9

Mentor: I observed several things that really impressed me, i.e., questioning approach, pacing, using students to provide direction.

Reflection #10

Shasta: I worked on the Conestoga Wagon bulletin board today. My original plans for creating it didn't look as I planned so I quickly freehanded it! It was enjoyable to watch the reactions of the class as they passed by and saw the wagon slowly developing. Many students asked what we would be doing with it. It was a great springboard to get the students excited about Ms. Falls' upcoming lessons on the Westward Migration! I also told the children that their work would be put on the board - this was good to create excitement toward "best work" for display.

Mentor: Absolutely! I am excited about the learning environment that is being created!

Shasta: Thanks for allowing me to work on the board today!

Mentor: We are partners in learning!

At the position of *Maturing Efficacy* (Figure 2) the preservice teacher's efficacy focus related even more to self-as-teacher as she assumed more classroom responsibility. Her final reflection demonstrated her confidence as a teacher through a humanistic rather than custodial approach that we encountered at the beginning of her rotation through this classroom.

Reflection #6

Shasta: A new student came today and she was very quiet. She may be watching and trying to figure out the community and her place in it. The rest of the class was helpful in acclimating her. Jovani did well today. She participated and her demeanor was positive and cooperative.

Final Reflections

Shasta: I felt as though these children were teachable, not that others were not, but these children were different, the environment was different, and I was becoming different. I could feel a shift in me from the traditional teacher to the desire to learn as much as I could about becoming a teacher who fosters this type of

community.

As a preservice teacher I have learned volumes from my mentor teacher and the students in this “community” in the several weeks that I have spent with them. I have learned that children can rise to higher levels of thinking and behavior than I had expected and that by providing a sense of community, learning is better facilitated.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate the potential for understanding teacher efficacy as a developmental process in addition to a set of beliefs that are situational and domain specific. As evidenced by this study, preservice teacher efficacy evolved from a budding sense at the onset to a maturing sense of efficacy toward the end of Shasta’s experience. From a Vygotskian perspective, learning leads development and in Shasta’s case we see her teacher efficacy developing from her learning in the classroom. Her reflections and interactions with the mentor teacher showed a gradual shift from her primary focus on the mentor teacher’s actions. The development continued over the course of her interactions as she learned to take up the role of classroom teacher.

From her primary focus on the mentor teacher, Shasta made a progressive shift to the relationship of the mentor teacher with the students, to her own pedagogical practices related first to her curricular choices and then to her self as teacher. The progression proceeded to the end of her experience where her primary focus had shifted to her self in relation to the community of learners. What was consequential for Shasta was that as her learning and development progressed, her efficacy as a teacher expanded and deepened to the point where she perceived herself not as the lone dispenser of knowledge, but as a member of a community of learners.

As suggested from Bandura (1993), this developmental process of teacher self efficacy will reoccur in different domains and situations and under different contexts. We imagine that Shasta will start this process again in her first year of teaching; however, her new onset of efficacy will likely be beyond the initial starting point of her entry in the field as a preservice teacher. As in Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, the new actual level of development will occur beyond the initial level as learning and development have moved Shasta further along the scale from actual to potential development.

Furthermore the linkages drawn by Shasta from her past experiences with the classroom members will become related past activities that she can use in her implicated future in her new classroom. In this case efficacy was context relevant, and how Shasta was able to translate that efficacy into the next context provides an opportunity for further research. Our initial foray into investigating the role of self-reflection on development of preservice teacher efficacy demonstrated the utility of reflection and reflective dialog in facilitating efficacy development. Since this position on efficacy is an emergent construct, more classroom research needs to be done to further theorize Vygotsky’s work in this area. Additional research on the role of reflection and reflective dialog

as it relates to efficacy would add greatly to the body of knowledge for teacher educators.

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SCAFFOLDING REFLECTIVE THOUGHT: REQUIRING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, AND THE COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE AND PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAINS

by
Carol Brazo

CAROL BRAZO is on faculty at George Fox University.

Abstract

This qualitative study focused on an intentional scaffolding of reflective thought in a Master of Arts in Teaching program. The study examined the usefulness of focused reflection in helping pre-service teachers develop their vision for professional practice. The study followed sixteen students from the beginning of their program through their first practicum. Students were required to consider professional identity, reaction (emotional responses), relevance (cognitive responses) and responsibility (psychomotor reactions) to critical incidents in their program and in their practicum. Evidence from the study revealed that professional identity evolved as did the students' ability to reflect upon their experiences through the grid of reaction, relevance and responsibility.

Reflective thought is a cornerstone of teacher education programs. The cycle of plan, teach, reflect, plan, teach, reflect is the rhythm of our lives as educators. How is it then, that pre-service teacher reflections often lack insight? Why do both student teachers and university faculty so often leave the writing or reading of reflections believing that it is nothing more than a professional hoop through which they must jump?

These questions provoke much thought and discourse within the ranks of teacher educators. It is the tension of assigning work and grading lackluster work that provoked this study. A focused scaffolding of reflective thought is essential if we are to move from reflections that tend to be an hour-by-hour account of what transpired to a thoughtful and critical examination of events in the classroom and how they express the theoretical underpinnings of a teacher's practice. This study explores the intentional scaffolding of student teacher reflections in an MAT program.

Reflective Thought in Education

Reflective thought in educational circles is defined many ways. Dewey (1910, 1933) provided early definitions stating, "reflective thinking is the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it leads" (p. 9).

Calderhead and Gates (1992) were in agreement when they compressed the definition of a reflective teacher to one who is able to analyze her own practice and the context of that practice. Calderhead and Gates' discussion of reflection also required a teacher to take responsibility for their action.

Hultgren (1987) stated that learning to become a reflective teacher entails a series of experiences in both course work and practicum settings that allow the student to see how their own inner lives are tied to the actions they take everyday in the arena of teaching. Ross (1990) drew us further in our understanding of reflective thought by further delineating the elements of reflective thinking into a series of actions. Ross described reflective thought:

recognizing educational dilemmas; responding to a dilemma by recognizing both the similarities to other situations and the unique qualities of the particular situation; framing and reframing the dilemma, experimenting

with the dilemma to discover the implications of various solutions; examining the intended and unintended consequences of an implemented solution and evaluating it by determining whether the consequences are desirable (p. 98).

Schön (1987) defined reflective practice as “a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful” (p.31). Schön further explained that reflection in action would involve “making sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations of practice”(p.39). This final definition was perhaps the simplest and most complex, involving both thinking and doing while incorporating meaning making. This definition leads us to action, to both discovery and doing. Schön’s definition is the one we used in this study.

Today, reflective teacher education programs are flourishing (Giovannelli, 2003; Richardson, 1990; Schweiker-Marra, Holmes & Pula, 2003; Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Verkler, 2000). This does not mean that they do not struggle to retain their emphasis upon reflective practice. In a positivist driven academic world, reflection has been difficult to measure. It does not fit a positivist research paradigm (Richardson, 1990). This has made its survival in the academy problematic.

There are many theoretical bases that claim reflective practice as a strategy for producing strong teachers. This study was influenced by readings in poststructural feminisms. In an arena of education where student teachers are encouraged to hear their own voices and to analyze their own actions, feminist pedagogy provided reflective practice a strong framework from which to work (Goodman, 1992).

Feminist poststructural theory has many goals that are in keeping with reflective practice. Lusted (1986) reminded us that pedagogy is “the transformation of consciousness that occurs at the intersection of three agencies: the teacher, the student and the knowledge they create together” (p.3). This definition requires the teacher to be reflective about the interaction that occurs within the community of learning. It requires a willingness to act, to allow one’s consciousness to be transformed.

Luke and Gore (1992) informed us that the goal is to “recognize not only a multiplicity of knowledges present in the classroom as a result of the way difference has been used to structure social relationships inside and outside the classroom, but that these knowledges are contradictory, partial and irreducible”(p. 112). Reflective thought is not static. It is a moving, acting, participating element of professional life. The discourses we deal with, that our students struggle with, may never find solid resolution. We know in parts, in pieces.

A practice steeped in reflection is defined by action. There are several methods of implementing reflective practice found in educational literature. Tann (1993) suggested that observation is essential. Harkening back to Dewey, she reminded us that it is only when a student observes and understands the significance of what she has observed, that true reflection is possible.

Another construct to encourage reflective thought came out of the University of Central Florida (1997). Students there were encouraged to remember and use the three Rs of reflection. The three Rs were as follows:

1. Reaction: (Affective domain, to feel). As you examine this evidence, how do you feel about it?
2. Relevance: (Cognitive domain, to think). How is the evidence related to teaching and learning? How is the evidence meaningful or how does it contribute to your understanding of teaching and learning? What are some alternate viewpoints or perspectives that you now have and/or what are some changes/improvements you might make based on the experiences you’ve had?
3. Responsibility: (Psychomotor domain, to do). How will the knowledge gained from the event or experience be used in your profession? Give

possible examples as well as possible alternatives, other perspectives, or other meanings that might be related to the evidence. What are some questions you still have regarding this topic? (p. 31).

The three Rs of reflection were a tool used with students to help them gauge their progress in focused, challenging thought. It was short, understandable, and an easy grid through which to analyze their own thoughts and actions.

How does one assess student reflection? Schweiker-Marra, Holmes and Pula (2003) found that reflective thought was only successful when students were provided instruction and techniques for reflection. To provide that level of scaffolding, Tann (1993) gave a three-phrase process by which students could assess the depth and breadth of their reflection. The first phase was in the planning of instruction. The second phase was the engagement phase. The third phase was the reasoned analysis phase. This phase included:

- Selection of a key event;
- Articulation of and working through associated emotions;
- Problematization of event (by generating multiple causes and consequences through association and brainstorming so as to avoid the temptation of clinging to hunches);
- Crystallization of issues (categorization and interpretation of alternative hypothesis);
- Validation (testing for consistency, confirm interpretation with others, relate to previous learning, compare with others' experiences, consult available authorities);
- Appropriation (test understandings, extract and internalize significance, plan own further learning) (pp. 58-59).

It is this third phase of Tann's grid that was used. The three Rs of reflection are found in this more sophisticated model. Students were taught the three Rs as an easy reference for reflective thought.

Reflective thought must be focused. The focus of reflective thought in this study was professional identity. It is essential that students explore this new role that they have chosen for their professional lives.

Professional Identity

Professional identity, how one sees self as teacher, is a complex process. Definitions are numerous but this study was limited to those who see the self as evolving and not unified. Erikson (1968) discussed identity as not something one has, but as something that develops over the course of one's lifetime. Palmer (1998) described teacher identity as one subtle dimension of a lifelong process of self-discovery. Knowles (1993) talked about professional identity as the way in which people think of themselves as teachers. Gee (2001) described identity development as an ongoing process that occurs in an intersubjective field. Gee saw the process as dependent on context at any given moment.

When approached through the lens of an evolving self, the building of professional identity in an individual's life is one of conflicting and concurring discourses at the site of self (Weedon, 1987). Identity is socially constructed, fluid, and complex (Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom, 1996). Volkmann and Anderson (1998) related this understanding of self to the professional identity of teachers. They discussed identity as in flux, as a balancing act between one's own self-image and the roles one feels professionally obliged to play.

It is in this context of an evolving self, that much of the work on professional identity is being done. Coldron and Smith (1999) discussed professional identity as fluid, not a stable entity. They described the tension between the practice of the individual teacher and the structures in which they operate. Dillabough (1999) stated that professional identity is never fixed, but flows from relationships with power, language, practice, and environment. Kerby (1991) reminded us that professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation; a life long process of

learning, a project that never approaches a completion date.

Why this emphasis on professional identity in a study on reflective thought? Bullough (1997) wrote:

Teacher identity—what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning as self-as-teacher—is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision-making. Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self (p.21).

Reflective thought is useless if not used to further an individual's understanding of what it means to see self as teacher. Using the tools of reflective thinking, individuals can begin to understand the many discourses that battle at the site of self to frame our understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the reflective abilities of pre-service teachers when trained through the scaffolding of reaction, relevance, responsibility and professional identity. The research questions were:

- Will student reflections be enhanced by using reaction, relevance, responsibility and professional identity as the standards of reflective thought?
- Will students use the grid of reaction, relevance, responsibility and professional identity to make sense of conflicting discourses?

Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2002) discuss the goal of a research project as a “quilt of stories and a cacophony of voices speaking to each other in dispute, dissonance, support, dialogue, contention, and/or contradiction” (p. 188). This is the goal of the research study. A quilt of stories, woven together with visual, physical, and written images that are defined and redefined by both the researcher and the students whose stories they tell.

In an effort to obtain that level of textual layering of voices and experiences, a form of life history was used as the design. While it was not possible to trace the entire history of the students in this study, the nature of the study is a slice of life which tracked the professional development of a group of individuals as they made a change in their vision of professional practice. Marshall and Rossman (1989) defined the life history design as follows:

The systematic student of culture views the life history as an account of how a new person enters a group and becomes an adult capable of meeting the traditional expectations of that society for a person of that individual's sex and age(p. 96).

Each data collection point was triangulated by researcher observations, student reflections on both process and product, and the 3 R's of reflection (University of Central Florida, 1997 & Tann, 1993).

The study participants were enrolled in a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program. The students were in a cohort model. The researcher was their cohort leader. Students were invited to be part of the study based on their admittance to the program.

In the cohort study group, there were fourteen females and four males. All eighteen cohort members chose to participate. As time progressed, two males dropped out of the program, leaving sixteen students in the study group. Ages ranged from 20 to 48. Seventeen identified themselves as Caucasian, one identified herself as Hispanic. In a discussion about their socioeconomic roots and identity, fourteen described themselves as middle class while two described themselves as lower class.

There were 100 student reflections submitted for study. Two students wrote two reflections each before exiting the program. Sixteen students wrote six reflections each. Out of those 100 reflections, each one was analyzed by category. The four categories were professional identity, reaction, relevance and

responsibility. Under each category, themes emerged from student reflections. Student reflections were analyzed according to category and theme.

Results

Question One: Will student reflections be enhanced by using professional identity, reaction, relevance, and responsibility as the standards of reflective thought?

Students were asked, in each reflection, to respond to “How did this experience change my image of teaching/teacher?” In reading student work over these seven months, it is apparent that part of the M.A.T. program insists on a changing image of teacher. Students should be reflecting with greater depth on their own professional identity to stay in the program. Bullough (1997) advocated that the exploration of professional identity be at the center of teacher education. It is through the lens of self as teacher that meaning making occurs.

When exploring the question of will the experiences allow students to reflect with greater depth on their own professional identity, it is interesting to visit many of the first reflections. Student Nine is representative of many students who based most of their reflection on themselves as learner or student. While life long learning is a standard bearer of the professional educator, these students had yet to identify themselves in the role of professional educator. As they moved through the first half of their program, their views of themselves as educators began to take shape. Many students began to use the future phrases of “when I become a teacher” and “the type of teacher I want to be”. These reflections illustrated the fluidity of identity that Coldron and Smith (1999) discussed.

Some students noted shifts in their professional identity. Student Six talked about her image of teacher shifting from teacher as knower and authoritarian to mentor and coach. Student Nine talked about a broadening image of teacher:

Before I thought my “image of teacher” would start out broad and narrow down as I learned more and more about the type of teacher I want to be. At this point, “teacher” seems to be getting broader by the second. I’ve come to realize that different cultures see “teacher” in different ways, and since I will be involved with these cultures, I need to be flexible enough to accommodate those values. What I mean is this: teaching encompasses not just multiple intelligences, not just hands-on methods and authentic assessment....teaching encompasses the world in such a way that cultures come together, learn from each other.

One student sees teaching like a collage artist, someone who has great influence on the molding and shaping of a class and goes on to talk about how much the medium (or class) also determines the shape an artwork takes. Some are beginning to wonder if they can handle all the responsibilities of teaching. These movements in identity and thought illustrate Dillabough’s (1999) discussion of identity flowing from relationships, power, environment and language. Students are using language, dissecting power, and reinventing the relationship between student and teacher in their own minds.

Students also note character traits necessary for teaching. Common themes include empathy, compassion, honesty, and patience.

One of the problems seen regularly in our students was that they often entered the classroom, encountered real problems with real students, and failed to tie those competing discourses to any theory or course readings that formed their academic foundation in education. Using the University of Central Florida’s (1997) grid of reaction, relevance, and responsibility did enhance the student’s reflective ability. The very presence of a structure by which they would be assigned a grade forced them into a disciplined method of observation. Requiring students to consider the relevance of their experience in the light of theory

returned theoretical underpinnings to the classrooms in which they taught. Structure was a factor.

When looking at the arena of reaction, powerful emotions were at work. Themes were as diverse as pride and annoyance, weariness and liberation. Students looked for reasons for their emotions. In the activity of tracking their emotional responses to each event we learned what students feared, like Student Three who talked about his fear of working immersed in another culture:

As I left the classroom Saturday my main feeling was one of anxiety. What I had felt and seen in the workshop disturbed me. The thought of living in Tunisia, China or many other foreign countries that are radically different was a thought that created much fear and apprehension for me. I am comfortable in my own routines and culture here. I think that having that feeling as I left is a good thing. It has made me really think about how frightening it is to move to a different country.

His emotional reaction of fear and apprehension were good tutors in what it means to live in a foreign place. The class discussion covered the difficulty of such an endeavor and Student Three acknowledged how difficult it must be for ELL students. His emotional reaction would continue to educate him for a long time to come.

Student One discussed the need for emotional reactions when he wrote:

You can only learn so much from reading about issues or talking to people who face those issues on a daily basis, but it is immersing yourself in the situations that have the potential to make you FEEL the way others feel that really teach you. It is the difference between reading a book about mountain climbing and climbing a mountain. Until you're in the middle of a situation, you can't really say how you'll react, in spite of how much research or anecdotal knowledge you may have accrued.

Student understanding of reaction and the power of it was solidified in their reframing of the learning events in their reflections. These deconstructions enhanced their reflective thought.

When considering the relevance of any activity, students discussed contributions to learning and connections to coursework and theory. Again, the structure forced students to consider relevance. The presence of a rubric and the first grading based on the rubric, moved students to a stronger consideration of relevance by the second learning activity. Themes were varied including point of view, environments, community, student driven instruction, multiple intelligences, visual and linguistic connections, behaviorism, tension in learning, strategies, logistics, and the uniqueness of human beings. Theorists and distant colleagues named included Skinner, Dewey, Socrates, Jensen, Kessler, Montessori, Whitman, Palmer, Rockwell, and Kozol.

These students provided a broad and sweeping view of relevance. Student Twelve stated:

When Kessler talks about community she never mentioned specific cultural differences. Now I realize I need to try to get to know the students as much as possible so I can create common ground...as Larry referred to in class with the double ice-berg model.

Student Four reminded us of Dewey's commitment to experiential learning:

Dewey said that to understand the best, students have to experience it—this is so true for ESL/ELL students. They have to get out and experience the language—draw, make pictures, create art with clay, sing, write in journals, talk about what they read. After they experience it, they will blossom.

With their concentration on relevance, the reflective depth of student work is enhanced.

When faced with the question of responsibility, students discussed individual

responsibility and stakeholder responsibility. Emerging themes covered professional responsibilities, safe environments, political activism, critical thinking, working for the good of all children, the value of travel, multiculturalism, empowering student choices, the need for specialists, empathy, and the continually broadening role of teacher. Their ability to tie their reflections to future action is an essential element of reflective thought (Osterman, 1990). It remains to be seen if they will feel the strong call of those responsibilities once they enter their new career. Their responses were liberally dosed with the phrases, “in the future” and “it is a teacher’s responsibility”. What will occur when they finally see themselves when they hear the word “teacher”? Will those responsibilities fit comfortably?

Question 2: Will students use the grid of reaction, relevance, and responsibility to make sense of conflicting discourses?

Under the heading of reaction, several students gave evidence of conflicting discourses. When involved in a role-play, multiple students spoke of the liberation they felt in abandoning their personhood and taking on a role. There was freedom from self to enter into an emotion packed event and take on a new persona. The question remains, why was it necessary to take on a new persona in order to feel safe in an emotional discussion?

Student Fourteen had spent time living on the street as a homeless teenager. When working on the collage of her life, she expressed the following sense of conflicting discourses:

My dining room table became my canvas for the next few weeks. When I was mounting the pictures I allowed myself to feel the pride in my accomplishments. There was a time in my life when I didn’t think I would ever turn out to be successful. Looking at my life laid out before me, I felt so proud of myself and all of my achievements! I am becoming a more confident and self-assured person without needing validation from outside sources. I finally feel a sense of peace that being part of this program is exactly where I am supposed to be.

This student was using a new lens to look at her achievements and was able to argue with the view of self as non-achiever.

When looking at the category of relevance several discourses appeared to be in conflict for my students. The discourse of western education vs. multicultural students was a common thread. Some students entered the program with initial ideas that there was one right answer and one right way to teach. As they progressed through foundational courses, they embraced the concept that there were many ways to teach and multiple forms of intelligence that needed multiple forms of instruction. When they reached their first practicum and the Tunisian classroom role-play, they were forced to consider the conflicting discourse that some cultures want to be taught in a specific way that is in direct conflict with all they had been taught thus far. This is an essential experience for students who will shortly leave their theoretical preparation and immerse themselves in student teaching. They must be able to handle conflicting discourses. These activities set them up for the dissonance they will shortly experience in the classroom.

How did they make sense of the dissonance? Some returned to theory, citing Dewey and Kozol. One returned to Kessler’s work and asked questions of it. Some worked to balance the expectations in their culture against the expectations of parents and children of other cultures. All of these responses fell under the category of relevance. The reflections were rich with analysis, questioning, and meaning making.

The category of responsibility yielded interesting evidence of students working through conflicting discourses. Several students mentioned an added awareness of their political responsibilities. For several this was an uncomfort-

able awakening. They discussed their long held desire to remain outside the political arena. They weighed that against children not getting the resources they need and found they might be forced to participate in a forum they had avoided. For Student One, teaching became a uniform one puts on that makes them larger than life:

I know I have an overly-romanticized vision of teachers (i.e. superhuman qualities) but I also know that they have faults, prejudices and struggle with their role, at school, home and in the community. It's similar to the idea that as soon as a soldier, police officer or firefighter puts on the uniform, they instantly become larger-than-life heroes. The common assumption is that when someone with a teaching license steps behind the desk, they are wise, caring, understanding, and patient. The person who becomes a teacher must work hard to have those attributes and develop those skills prior to taking up that place behind the desk. That is the biggest thing that has been reinforced for me as I have started this journey to becoming a teacher: It's as much a process of developing internal modes of thought and behavior to positively affect students' lives, as it is to learn and apply the technical concepts of teaching.

This discourse was at odds with his understanding of who he is and his own shortcomings.

Other students mentioned the conflict between achievers and struggling students and the need to find balance. There is also an underlying theme of teacher as superhuman. This theme has students wanting to know every student, every family, every learning style, every bump in each child's learning experience and being able to fix it all. This discourse is in conflict with the reality of their busy lives. This conflict was often ignored in their reflections. The idealism was all there. The conflict between a perfect world and the real world does not yet surface in their writings. It is important to note and to plan for in the future. When students bump up against the reality of a 24-hour day, we will need to discuss how we might learn to live with these two conflicting discourses.

Students used the tools of reaction, relevance, and responsibility to make sense of conflicting discourses. Could the reflections have been stronger? Yes. Are there students not acknowledging conflicting discourses consistently? Yes. It is a beginning. These are students who are half way through a teacher education program. If the end is truly found in the beginning, this strand of reflection will grow and deepen.

Discussion

The discussion of any research project must take on the philosophical underpinnings of the researcher. To report results is to use language to categorize. To deconstruct the results is to work towards a continuing revelation of who the subjects are, who they were at the time of the study, what they thought, and how they moved on from that moment of consideration. Lather (1992) states: "The goal of deconstruction is to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play—to demystify the realities we create and to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal" (p.120).

It is in that spirit this discussion takes shape. The students in this study have not remained the individuals who finished the sixth data collection point. They have moved on to think, consider, dream and make decisions about their professional identities in a series of additional arenas: who they are as instructors of content area specialties, who they are as teacher-researchers, and who they are as professionals who have stepped into their own classrooms.

The structuring of reflective thought had an immediate affect on the quality of student work. It is an obvious conclusion and one all teachers would anticipate

seeing. Grades drive graduate students. To tie grades to following a structured expression of reflective thinking at the graduate level is a strong indicator that reflective thought will follow that structure. If that were all it did, it might be worth it. In this study, student reflections were rich in the textual layering suggested by Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2002). They did provide that “cacophony of voices speaking to each other in dispute, dissonance, support, dialogue, contention and/or contradiction” (p.188). They told the stories that had begun to define them. The scaffolding of reflective thought allowed students to consider the experiences of their professional lives in light of those distant colleagues who were shaping their cognitive understanding of the role they were choosing. Their comprehension deepened as their connections to theory were made in the reality of their own classrooms.

Early in the study, we chose Schön’s (1987) definition of reflective practice as “a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful” (p.31). The students in this study participated actively in a structured dialogue. They grew in their abilities to deconstruct the experiences in their classrooms and in their own identity development.

There were limitations. The study would have been stronger had the longevity of the study been increased. The study would have been stronger had participants bridged both undergraduate and graduate programs. The study would have benefitted from additional researchers.

How has this research changed me as a teacher educator? It has ignited change. Those in the student teaching section of their programs, write reflections weekly on a critical incident and they structure those reflections around the grid of professional identity, reaction, relevance and responsibility. Today I assess reflections that are rich in analysis, synthesizing their experiences with the theories that inform them. Students are actively discussing, orally and in writing, their professional identity and how difficult it is to meet conflicting expectations. The discussions have spurred me on to structure classes that devote additional hours to tending to the soul of our educators. Contemplation and reflection are no longer a luxury in my classroom. Today they are necessities.

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CRITICAL REFLECTION IN A LEARNING COMMUNITY

by
Jennifer Jacobs

JENNIFER JACOBS is on faculty at Texas State University-San Marcos.

Abstract

As schools become increasingly more diverse and inequities present within schools contexts continue to occur, the ability of teachers as well as teacher educators to engage in critical reflection is crucial. Critical reflection includes problematizing practice and situating ideas within the larger historical, social, and political context. Learning communities can become venues to support the development of critical reflection. The purpose of this manuscript is to describe the critical reflection that took place within a learning community of teacher educators and specifically how discourse within the learning community influenced the development of this critical reflection. Features of the discourse that fostered critical reflection included: a safe context, modeling, probing, and reframing.

Introduction

Historically, reflection is named as an integral goal of teacher education and effective teaching practice (Valli, 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Dewey's (1933) work describes reflection as a process of inquiry needed to solve a problem through the use of questioning, deliberation, and analysis before taking a course of action. Feelings of perplexity and doubt are central throughout the reflection process. In the 21st century, reflection is still a key goal of teacher education especially as teaching contexts continue to become more culturally and linguistically diverse and achievements gaps and inequities are present within education contexts (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2007). In order for schools to transform into more equitable and culturally responsive contexts, reflection must move beyond technical reporting to become more critical (Jacobs, 2006; Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, & Lopez-Torres, 2003; Howard, 2003).

What Is Critical Reflection?

Although the term reflection permeates the language of many teacher education program missions, only a subset of the reflection literature includes a critical component (Adler, 1991; Smyth, 1989; Zeichner, 1993). Critical reflection involves moving beyond the technical and descriptive to reflecting on the effects of one's actions on others, taking the broader historical, social, and/or political context into account, and questioning one's practice (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Van Manen (1977) shares a hierarchy of reflection moving from technical to practical and finally to critical reflection that focuses on the moral and ethical, looks at the wider historical, social, and political contexts, and addresses issues of equity and justice. Mezirow (1990) defines critical reflection as "critique on the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built" (p.1). Brookfield (1995) explains that critical reflection involves ideological critique by examining issues of power and uncovering hegemonic assumptions. These characteristics of critical reflection lend themselves to looking at issues of social justice and equity (Howard, 2003). Critical reflection can serve as a tool to question what has been taken for granted in schools and analyze how issues such as race, ethnicity, and culture influence students' learning experiences. Before engaging in culturally relevant practices, teachers and teacher educators need to engage in critical reflection to examine their own positioning. This includes reflecting on how race, culture, social class,

language, gender, and sexual orientation have influenced their view of the world and beliefs about education (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Not only must teachers, but also teacher educators must be willing to engage in critical reflection for professional development as they inquire into issues of social justice and schooling (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Howard, 2003).

What Are Learning Communities?

Originally discussed as learning organizations in the business literature (Senge, 2006), learning communities have become popular within the educational context. Also termed communities of practice, they are characterized as 1) possessing a shared concern or domain of interest that provides the community with a unique identity, 2) engaging in joint activities and discussions, and 3) developing a shared practice that includes developing strategies for solving problems (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Hord (2003) describes learning communities as having (1) supportive and shared leadership, (2) shared value and vision, (3), collection learning and application of learning, (4) supportive conditions, and (5) shared practice. Learning communities work to solve problems, discuss individual situations and needs, talk about common concerns, act as sounding boards, develop personal relationships and patterns of interacting, tell stories, and coach each other (Wenger et al., 2002). As the learning community meets over time, they “develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches” (p.5). Within the context of schools, learning communities specifically include a shared focus on student learning and a collective responsibility for this student learning (DuFour, 2004; Lieberman, 1995; Newmann, 1996).

Often the collaborative work of learning communities is grounded in inquiry and reflective dialogue (Hord, 2003). Knowledge within the learning community “resides in the skills, understanding, and relationship of members as well as in the tools, documents, and processes that embody aspects of this knowledge” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 11). Wenger (1998) points to the fact that, in order for collegial learning to take place within a learning community, there must be deliberate attention to both practice and the community itself. Learning communities can become venues for problem solving and inquiry as the community encourages greater supported risk taking (Englert & Tarrani, 1995; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

In order to engage in the complex process of critical reflection, teachers and teacher educators must be given opportunities to dialogue with others and begin to question their reality in a systematic way (Freire, 1973; 1992). Discourse is about “finding agreement, welcoming difference, ‘trying on’ other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing” (Mezirow, 2000, 11-12). One possible setting to engage in critically reflective discourse is a learning community (Jacobs, 2007; Servage, 2008). The purpose of this manuscript is to describe the critical reflection that took place in a learning community of teacher educators and specifically how discourse within the learning community influenced the development of this critical reflection.

Methodology

As part of my dissertation I recruited a group of teacher educators all engaged in prospective teacher field supervision at a Research One University. As I sent emails to possible participants I was purposeful in asking for supervisors who wanted to bring an equity focus to their supervision pedagogy (Patton, 2002). The idea of equity focus included discussing issues of race, class, gender, language, sexual orientation and ability within the supervision context. Agreeing to be a part of this study involved the supervisors coming

together as a group eight times over the fall semester for two hours each session. These teacher educators included five doctoral students (four White women-Veronica, Susan, Dana, and Tara; one White male-Kevin) and an adjunct professor who was a retired teacher and administrator (White woman-Janice). This research focused on the questions, What type of critical reflection occurred within the supervisor learning community? How did the learning community foster critical reflection? Understandably, a group of supervisors simply coming together eight times over a semester does not characterize them as a learning community. However, the group identified themselves as a learning community and was aligned with the characterizations in the literature (e.g. shared vision, supportive condition, shared practice, joint activities, etc.).

Learning Community Context

The first four learning community sessions focused on building knowledge related to equity and supervision with topics such as: identity, levels of reflection, deficit thinking, and supervision philosophy and strategies. Within the first four sessions, as the facilitator, I took more of a lead role by choosing the topics and readings for the sessions as well as planning specific activities. Activities involved engaging in role-playing scenarios, reading short articles, and reflective writing. For example, the supervisors mapped out the different areas of their identity and that strongly influenced their beliefs about teaching and supervision. After each activity and reading, the group engaged in discussion. The supervisors also learned about a Coaching for Equity Cycle (Jacobs, 2007). This cycle of supervision follows the traditional clinical supervision steps of platform development, pre-observation conference, observation, and post-observation conference, but includes prompts at each step to help teachers recognize the inequities in schools, as well as those within their own teaching practices. For example, a supervisor might help a prospective teacher look for at representation in the curriculum of diverse ethnic groups or patterns in discipline referrals based on gender or race.

After these first four sessions, supervisors began to enact the Coaching for Equity Cycle with one of their prospective teachers. These cycles included one platform development conference and three experiences observing the prospective teacher with a pre- and post- conference. Therefore, the focus of the second four sessions became sharing experiences and challenges as well as providing advice and support related to their work with the prospective teachers. My role changed by no longer dictating the content of the meetings, but simply providing the structure to support these conversations. I adapted several protocols from the National School Reform Faculty that allowed the supervisors to share their experiences such as challenges, questions, etc. through framing questions, sharing a key moment, etc. The other supervisors would then share advice and ideas related to that specific issue. During this time I acted as one of the participants by asking questions and sharing advice.

Data Collection and Analysis

The main source of data collection was the audio-tapes of each of the eight learning community sessions. These tapes were then transcribed verbatim. A second source of data included a journal entry written by the field supervisors after each session. Supervisors wrote about what they learned, what influenced their learning, and what ideas challenged them. Finally, I kept a researcher's journal to reflect on my role as a facilitator and on the dialogue during the meetings. For analysis, I first looked across the data for examples of critical reflection within the learning community discourse using the definitions set forth in the literature. At first I isolated these examples of critical reflection to look at any themes within the type of critical reflection that took place (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I then went back to the complete transcript and looked at the dialogue occurring around the critical reflection. This data was coded

and themes were culled based on how the learning community influenced the critical reflection. At times this critical reflection was isolated, however, many other times the critical reflection was prompted by the learning community dialogue. I also looked across the reflections as the learning community members named influential pieces of the learning community sessions that influenced their thinking. At times, the written reflections served to triangulate the themes found within the meeting transcripts. I engaged in member checking regularly with the learning community during the sessions as well as upon completion of the study.

Snapshots of Critical Reflection in a Learning Community

Critical reflection involves looking beyond the now to the greater historical, social, and political context. This means questioning assumptions, taken-for-granted thinking and practices, and looking at power dynamics. So what did critical reflection look like in the learning community of field supervisors thinking about equity and supervision? Since the focus of this work was bringing an equity lens to supervision practice, one might think that the focus of the reflection was on practice and work with the prospective teacher. However, critical reflection often included a personal focus on self. Therefore, even though the critical reflection was related to the greater historical, social, or political context, at the same time critical reflection involved looking within for the basis of beliefs, assumptions, and tensions with supervision practice. Three examples are shared to provide snapshots of critical reflection in the learning community.

Snapshot #1: Kevin

Kevin felt uncomfortable bringing up issues of race in supervision conversations with prospective teachers. He began to engage in critical reflection about the reasons behind these feelings related to the larger social and political context. The first place he looked was to his own experiences.

The more time we spend meeting and discussing Coaching for Equity, the less comfortable I am feeling about the process. I think this might come from my own upbringing. Dealing with controversial issues and asking people to question their own beliefs almost seems disrespectful to me. Being raised to be nice and considerate meant being non-confrontational and respecting the right of others to be different. From my father I got the impression that race was something that should not be acknowledged. I guess this is the foundation of my outlook on race and political correctness. My father didn't give me a lot of directives in my life. This was one of the few. Maybe my bringing up issues of race with those who aren't fully prepared to discuss it comes from this event in my past. How do I get beyond this? (Reflection 5)

Critically questioning another person to reframe and possibly question their beliefs would have been viewed as rude in Kevin's family. Also, his understanding of race and feelings of colorblindness were connected to experiences with his father. Even though Kevin still felt discomfort and tension about the process of Coaching for Equity, he continued with his work and continued to engage in critical self-reflection.

Snapshot #2: Susan

Susan was specifically feeling challenged by the fact that prospective teachers were often colorblind and did not want to talk about culture or race in supervision conferences. At the same time Susan was worried about her ability to engage in these discussions herself.

And every time that I try to move to culture or race they won't go. They say that they don't see their students as different that they look at each student as an individual. I understand their thinking that looking

at people as different can lead to stereotypes and we don't want to do that either but by not acknowledging difference then they're ways that they could be more effective teachers. But then in thinking about myself as part of the privileged class being a white woman, I wonder how equipped I am to actually move them in a direction of teaching for social justice. That is not to say that I don't have ideas about what that entails, I started thinking about how incomplete my own ideas about it would be because how can I actually understand the experience of somebody else. And then it's like how can we gain experience of somebody else? Do we read a book? I'm not going to be out and be able to live in all of their cultures. And then I'm also wondering so how do we effect someone else's beliefs about difference and teaching for social justice. And you know I feel really a moral obligation to expose the interns to this and to try and move them down that path. Then am I just trying to hoist my beliefs upon them and do I have the right to do that? (Session 4)

As Susan examined her pedagogy as a supervisor and comfort talking about issues of race with prospective teachers she intertwined her self and practice in relation to the larger historical, social, and political context. She also acknowledges thinking about her work as being connected to a moral obligation.

Snapshot #3: Veronica

In this example of critical reflection, Veronica reflects on her practice as a supervisor and connects to the self by questioning her own follow through with what she expects of prospective teachers.

When I want them [prospective teachers] to question larger issues in society... when I want them to constantly question their own learning in the process, I sometimes wonder... I expect that from them. I expect it from me but am I really doing it? And what does that really look like? That's a big question in my mind? Instead of slipping nice and easily into that authority role which I'm really good at, am I willing to take the risk to look vulnerable in front of my own students? (Session 2)

Veronica is really speaking about fostering critical reflection within prospective teachers and is she really doing the same herself. At the same time she begins to reflect on how her beliefs and feelings related to authority and power influence this behavior.

Critical reflection for the learning community members involved an interconnection between issues of self, practice, and the larger historical, social, and political context. Even though the second half of the learning community sessions focused on problems of practice as the participants engaged in supervision with a prospective teacher, the critical reflection still involved looking within the self. Often this look at the self involved questioning the origins of assumptions as well as searching for the origins of discomfort with practice. Critical reflection was prevalent within the group, but how was this critical reflection fostered?

Supporting Critical Reflection Within a Learning Community

When analyzing the data, several key features arose as influencing critical reflection among the learning community members. The features within the learning community that fostered critical reflection included the creation of a safe context, modeling, probing, and reframing. Even in their individual reflections, the supervisors would often specifically describe these features in how the learning community supported their critical reflection.

Safe Context

Within their written reflections and discussions in the learning

community, the supervisors identified relationships as fostering a safe space to support their critical reflection. These relationships made the learning community a secure place to ask questions and take risks. Safety was a huge concern for the supervisors since their dialogue often included the disclosure of tensions, weaknesses, or incomplete ideas that were being tested and revised. As Veronica shared, “I think this group helps to make me think more deeply and keep these important issues at the forefront of my mind so I can try to find answers. Even though answers always seem to create new questions.” (Reflection 2) Veronica shared with the community that after realizing they would honor her ideas and treat them with respect, she was able to make herself vulnerable and engage in critical self-reflection.

There are very few places that you can share conversations like this with people. I think it’s important to be able to share whatever it is that you’re thinking. I think that’s a huge thing to understand it’s going to be safe. (Session 3)

Similarly, Kevin explained that hearing the other group members share their vulnerabilities and tensions gave him the confidence to do the same. “Because I got to hear all of you guys talk about it and it made it a little bit more okay to take that risk” (Session 8). Several of the supervisors talked about how they could anticipate the support they would receive from the group as they experienced challenges within their practice outside of the learning community. Feeling safe and having relationships with the learning community members provided a foundation for critical reflection.

Modeling

Modeling served as one of the ways that the learning community supported the development of critical reflection. Through the dialogue within the learning community, the participants could hear others engage in critically reflective thinking, in a way scaffolding the process for other group members. This was particularly powerful due to the members’ varying background knowledge and experiences with critical reflection as well as equity issues and supervision. Modeling became a way that community members could make their reflective process explicit to each other.

Kevin shared that one of the reasons he engaged in critical reflection related to his previous life journey and its influence on his experience Coaching for Equity was due to the fact that other group members modeled critical self-reflection. “I think other people reflecting on their self-awareness makes me reflect more on where I am. It helps me do a better job of holding up the mirror to myself.” (Session 8) For example, in Session 3, Veronica began to reflect how her thinking about equity had been part of a long journey starting with a critical pedagogy class 13 years earlier. Dana built off this and began to reflect on how she was thinking about these issues as an anthropology major. From this, Kevin began a similar self-reflection about his journey.

When Veronica was talking about the critical pedagogy class she took in 93, I thought that my background over the last almost decade has been in Educational Leadership and the equity there is more from a tally mark vision meaning these are the people I have on staff. So it is very black or white so I’m wondering if that’s sort of the foundation for my view of equity as black or white because that’s what has been preached in the majority of my classes. As opposed to her [Veronica] background has been more one of reflecting and thinking about children. (Session 3) Even though Veronica was not modeling purposefully, her thinking aloud about her own journey toward equity issues prompted Kevin to do the same.

The learning community also used modeling by sharing examples of critically reflective questions. For example, Kevin shared that when other group members asked him probing questions, this modeled a type of critical self-

reflective questioning he could begin asking within his own head. Kevin shared: Veronica has posed a lot of questions that have really made me stop and think, Where am I really on this? You know, because she's very evolved. She's said a lot of things which have made me focus in and think, 'Where am I on this? Why am I here on this? Why I am not here on this? What do I need to do?', and Where do I need to go next?' (Session 8)

Another example of modeling critically reflective questions occurred after Dana shared some of the challenges she experienced during a supervision conference with two prospective teachers. These prospective teachers claimed to be diversity experts based on the area of the state where they grew up. Dana felt curious about how to push the prospective teachers to problematize their thinking. Veronica modeled some possible questions.

I kind of think that with this one you kind of have to meet them where they are and start to talk with them about, you've got a few avenues to talk about you know what their life was like. Why is it that the people here in Chambers [town where university is located] have different perceptions than they do? What do they think about that? Why is it different? Why might that be important? It seems to me that you've kind of start to try and meet these students where they are and bring it to be relevant to their lives and get them to question their own life a little bit. What was this like for you? How might have it been different if you grew up without this? And why is it that you think the people here are different? What is it about them that's different? Why is that important to you? Why is that not important to you? Maybe that could start to open up a few conversations even. (Session 5)

As opposed to Veronica's previous modeling, this modeling was more purposeful in supporting another learning community member in their critical reflection. Later on in her written reflection, Dana shared how this modeling influenced her to critically reflect on her work with these two prospective teachers.

I like Veronica's suggestion that I get them to define "insiders" and "outsiders" between where they are from and the town where they currently are student teachers. Who are the "us" and "them" in that city? What if they teach in an area that is more high poverty than where they are from in their city? How would they have to approach their teaching work in that situation? My students believe they are diversity experts, and perhaps they are (I have to trust their perceptions). How will I help them interrogate this belief to find the validity in it? Maybe they'll discover something they didn't consider before? (Reflection 5)

Throughout the written reflections and dialogue from the learning community sessions the members talked about how hearing another group member reflect on an idea or belief really made them look inward or engage in reflection on their own way of thinking.

Probing

The learning community members engaged in probing by posing questions to push certain members to greater critical reflection. For example, Janice reflected:

It was brought home to me, when another supervisor in the group questioned what I was saying, how I was operating on assumptions I had made after reading the vignette. I will now try to approach situations by asking questions to clarify or elaborate rather than simply assuming. (Reflection 1)

Probing by questioning influenced the supervisors' depth of thinking and helped some to rethink or critically reflect upon their beliefs and assumptions about equity and supervision.

Probing used within the discourse of the learning community helped to push the supervisors' inquiries to deeper levels of reflection. As the facilitator in Session 4 I pushed Veronica after she shared her definition of the term equity by asking her "Where do you think your definition and beliefs about equity originate? This prompted her to say,

I personally think it comes from a combination of my life experiences. Like who I am as a person, what I've chosen to engage in, why I've chosen to engage in it. I think personally there are some elements. I've personally chosen to engage in this because of the parts of my life are on the fringes. You know how you were talking before about body image as a child and that's like being on the fringes? And I think the places in life when we're on the fringes, we can have a lot of movement or growth or a lot of change if we're willing to really engage in those spaces. Or we could just be in the middle like everybody else and never really question the fringes. And to me my investment in equity comes from trying to engage in the places in my life where I'm on the fringes. Does that make sense? (Session 4)

Another example occurred as Veronica talked about the tension she faced over whether she was privileging her position and beliefs about the centrality of equity in supervision discussions.

I think we then run the risk of valorizing our own position in a lot of ways. Although we may think our position is wonderful but not everybody is going to think our position is wonderful. I personally think that is going to be the biggest challenge. Not trying to convince everybody that you're right. Not trying to convince everybody that my position about all this stuff is right and understanding the limitation of my own position. (Session 2)

Dana responded to this statement with a probing question about Veronica's beliefs. Dana and Veronica were in a previous graduate class together and Dana seemed surprised by Veronica's statements. After probing with this question, Veronica critically reflected on where these beliefs could be originating.

Dana: How did that happen for your Veronica? I'm just going to tell you when I first met you that was not the person I met. What happened to you?

Veronica: What do you mean?

Dana: I remember when I first met you I didn't hear these things coming out of your mouth.

Veronica: About equity you mean? Questioning my own place? I have to say that one of my personal biases is that as a woman I really think there's a gender component here when we talk about the intersections. I really think there's a gender component because as a woman I never have really seen myself in a position of authority in a position of certainty, in a position of power. And so I think it's easier for me to question those positions then someone who views themselves as legitimately as being a part of that position. I really think there is a gender component. It is part of my intersection anyhow. (Session 2)

Veronica reflects critically about her positioning and the power she feels as a woman and how this influences her beliefs about authority, especially in the supervisory context.

Another example of probing occurred after Susan shared the dissonance she was feeling about her role as a field supervisor.

Well, no. I mean I'm realizing you know how flawed I am and how much I need to grow and I'm really realizing how my knowledge of others is very limited and so I'm wondering how do I gain this knowledge?

What are the resources for my coming to understand all these different students that are out in their classroom? (Session 4)

Veronica responded to this by asking Susan probing questions related to her beliefs and action in regard to equity issues as prompts for critical reflection.

In my opinion it's an ongoing process of continually engaging with people who are other and putting yourself in that position of being the other. What experiences have you consciously sought out, put yourself in a position where you are the other? And/or had conversations with people who are the other and talked about these types of issues? If there's someone you feel comfortable with who you might consider the other and having these conversations. (Session 4)

Probing occurred when learning community members pushed each other to think more critically about their ideas. Since the context was viewed as safe and the members had built relationships, this probing was not interpreted as an attack, but as a natural part of the dialogue.

Reframing

Supervisors also used the strategy of reframing in order to promote greater critical reflection by pushing each other to look at an idea or issue from an alternative perspective. For example, Kevin talked about his discomfort bringing up labels such as race, class, and gender within his supervision practice as he felt this led to stereotyping. He was not sure if bringing up equity issues and specifically labels was counterproductive for prospective teachers.

Do our efforts in education to name the needs and backgrounds cause us to consider those things before we think about the individual needs? Will Sally and Laura change their view or awareness of race, gender, SES as the year progresses? If so, is this a good thing? Is my work Coaching for Equity going to benefit them by opening their eyes or will it in reality be counterproductive? Isn't diversity about considering the individual? I am feeling perplexed. (Session 5)

Veronica reframed Kevin's questions pointing to the institutional and historical context and the impact on inequities especially regarding race. She reframed using an argument that being colorblind was not necessarily benefiting students.

I'm thinking that when you deal with individuals it's a good thing. It's good to deal with people as individuals, but in some ways dealing with kids as individuals allows you to negate the issues of race that are bigger than the kids. The institutional issues. The life that a child who is Black will live compared to the life that a child who is White will live. And if we treat everybody as an individual then in some ways, I'm not quite sure how to put it, but if it's not doing them justice or whatever. We're not acknowledging those institutional levels where some of this stuff happens. I personally think that to bring those things up, there are ways that it can become a stereotype but there are also ways that can be very productive because if you look at everyone as an individual in essence you're saying I'm colorblind. The world is not colorblind. The world is not blind to people who have more money and people who have less money. And if we try to make the school this place where that's not acknowledged then we are devaluing the life of a lot of those kids that walk in those doors every day. It's a tension. I know it's a tension. I understand your tension. (Session 5)

Later Kevin wrote in his journal about how Veronica helped him reframe this idea and think about the larger institutional context.

When I bring up the topic of equity and the pre-interns seem less than receptive, I need to focus in on what Veronica shared: looking at how

institutional bias can lead to inequity. I think I need to do a better job of scaffolding to help them understand where I am coming from. Better questions might help me accomplish this. Placing the pre-interns in the shoes of the students might be a good strategy for helping them think about equity. I am still committed to Coaching for Equity. I think being more reflective about my beliefs about equity will help me be a better coach. (Reflection 5)

Supporting group members in rethinking their frame of reference was another way that the learning community encouraged critical reflection and exploration of tensions. Susan often shared that she did not feel qualified or have the right as a white woman to have conversations about equity.

I'm White, I'm a waspy type person. My SES is not so middle you know. So how do I really understand what it is like to be black or Hispanic or male. You know, I mean you can read about it but it's never going to be my experience. Yet how can I move toward being equitable knowing that I may never achieve the ultimate but you know at least moving in that direction hopefully. (Session 6)

In response to Susan's statement, both Veronica and Dana offered different ways to problematize and reframe her ability to engage in conversations about equity in supervision. Veronica shared that Susan should begin to think of herself not as someone without a race, but that White is a race.

I think one of the things that has helped me start to do that is to begin to think of White as a race. To think about all the assumptions that come along with a race to think about the assumptions that come along with being White. How do you start to infuse some of this with the students that you're working with so that they don't throw up that wall of resistance? (Session 6)

Dana also encouraged Susan to think about her own areas of otherness and how this qualifies her to talk about equity.

To me, once you get in touch with that feeling you can apply that to all kinds of otherings—that feeling of being marginalized or excluded or silenced or dismissed or what's another word—delegitimized. I think that as a White woman our culture teaches us that we are privileged because we are white. Um, but there's so much silencing of who we are as women—in academia, in our lives, maybe our socio-economic backgrounds, some experiences along those lines. It's almost like we need to get in touch with how we've experienced our own pain. It's hard because we want to believe everything is fine. (Session 6)

Both Veronica and Dana reframed Susan's belief that she lacked the qualifications due to her positioning to talk about issues of equity. Instead of being someone who was unqualified, Susan and Dana shared the possible expertise that Susan really did hold.

Reframing helped the supervisors to take an idea and make it more critical based on how another supervisor was able to present that topic from another angle.

The features of a safe context, modeling, probing, and reframing supported the learning community members in their critical reflection. The context of this learning community is complex in that members are not only engaging in their own critical reflection, but are also able to assess and address the other members' assumptions, ideas, and needs to support their critical reflection as well.

Discussion

As seen in the above themes, critical reflection became an integral part of this learning community. The snapshots of critical reflection show that looking

inward was interconnected with looking outward to the greater historical, social, and political context. Therefore, when trying to make reflection more critical in working with teachers as well as teacher education colleagues, the trees cannot be lost when looking at the forest. One key to developing critical reflection may be increased attention to individual self-reflection. Within learning communities, prospective teacher coursework, and professional development, there must be space for self-reflection. Even when looking at practice, how does the self connect? One important aspect to consider is that the content of this learning community lent itself to critical conversations. Would critical reflection have looked the same if the content of this learning community did not focus on equity? Would critical reflection have emerged as a key component of the learning community work? How can the self be brought into other professional development discussions? Or in fact, should equity issues be brought into all of our conversations? For example, with the topic of differentiated instruction, do teachers get to think about their prior experiences struggling or excelling in school? Do they think about their beliefs about having special education students in the regular classroom or being responsible for such diversity? Are there opportunities to look critically about who is being referred for special education services in relation to race, class, and gender?

Another important piece of critical reflection in learning communities as well as in teacher education is to be explicit about various types of reflection. Teachers need to understand the different levels of reflection moving from technical to more critical. Facilitators of learning communities can be upfront from the beginning about the goal of moving toward greater critical reflection. Learning community members can begin to become meta-cognitive about their level of reflection. Supporting this goal could involve showing and discussing different examples various levels of reflection. Another idea is to have community members brainstorm questions they may ask each other to push greater critical reflection. These questions could be posted and available for members during conversation as well as written work.

Relationships and the safety felt within the group were key features of the learning community context. The features of modeling, probing, and reframing may not have emerged if a safe venue for discussion did not exist. For example, group members may have not felt comfortable probing or reframing the thoughts of other supervisors if worried about being viewed as not capable or as starting conflict. Given that these activities were important features, the degree of critical reflection could have been substantially limited without a safe environment. Even though relationships were present, the atmosphere was not necessarily congenial. The use of modeling, probing, and reframing supported a more collegial dialogue where group members pushed each other, but in a professional way. There were not overt, angry conflicts within the community, but instead the learning community used the tools of modeling, probing, and reframing to create enough dissonance of ideas to push more critical thinking. Wenger (1998) speaks of the balance between fostering community and collegiality within communities of practice. Learning communities are contexts that include complex interactions between concepts such as challenge and agreement, success and failure, and discord and peace. Relationships need to be attended to and fostered; however, there is also the need for critical reflection and critical inquiry occurring within the dialogue. The sense of community must be strong within the group to feel the learning community is a context where risks can be taken.

The features of modeling, probing, and reframing have implications for the practice of the learning community including facilitation as well as organization. Learning communities or facilitators could create protocols based on these features that to guide discussions. For example, each member may

model a way they handled a specific situation with a parent or to purposefully reframe an idea shared by another community member. If the community has a facilitator then they must purposefully use these features within their facilitator pedagogy. The features of the learning community emerged from the data of the community sessions, however as facilitator, I often used some of the same features to prompt critical reflection in the group. An important consideration is that within this learning community there were several group members with more background knowledge related to equity. These group members often shared their sophisticated knowledge about equity when probing group members or modeling self-questioning. The addition of this background knowledge helped support the group in moving toward deeper critical reflection. What if these group members were not present? This may be the time for the facilitator to use and model these tools in addition to discussing them openly with the learning community.

The features (safe context, modeling, probing, and reframing) present in the supervisors' discourse points to the importance of learning communities in the process of critical reflection. The discourse supported a deeper level of reflection within the supervisors than if left alone to reflect. In this learning community, critical reflection was not simply an individual process, but became a process of collaborative inquiry.

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PEER COACHING RE-ENVISIONED: A MULTILAYERED APPROACH TO FACULTY COLLABORATIONS

by

Karen Foster, Deb Theiss, and Dawna Lisa Buchanan-Butterfield

KAREN FOSTER, DEB THEISS, AND DAWNA LISA BUCHANAN-BUTTERFIELD are on faculty at University of Central Missouri.

Abstract

In an age where many teachers are still isolated in their individual classrooms, this study implemented and examined a framework for collaborative self and peer reflections between three university literacy professors. Two sets of student collected data, videotaped lessons and critiques, and student responses to a survey provided information on the three-tiered peer coaching process between “critical friends” that proved to be tremendously beneficial for students and teachers alike. This qualitative study encouraged the researchers to consider future studies involving critical peer coaching at the university level. The experience suggested to them a transformative model for incorporating peer coaching among university colleagues. In addition, they agreed that engaging students actively as data collectors and participants had a powerful and favorable impact on the educational experience for all parties. By taking the risk of making their teaching transparent and explicit in front of and for their students, faculty demonstrated in a very meaningful way how teachers are, in fact, lifelong introspective learners.

Background

Making changes in the work place requires opportunity for collaboration among professionals. In a non-threatening environment, individuals are encouraged to take risks and critically reflect on their actions. Peer coaching is an intentional partnership focused on regular observation and feedback to improve instructional strategies that will increase student learning (Munro & Elliott, 1987). The model of cognitive coaching in such a relationship concentrates on the cognitive aspect of learning and the interdependence it has to professional growth in a supportive environment (Costa & Garmston, 1995). The ultimate goal is to establish a network for continuous improvement, leading to self-evaluating, self-monitoring, and self-regulating learners (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004).

Teachers need regular feedback if they are to apply effective teaching strategies in their classrooms (Munro & Elliott, 1987), just as students need feedback to enhance their learning (Marzano, 2000). Observation provides opportunity to learn from one’s colleagues about working with students. Feedback time involves conferencing about shared goals (Farrell & Little, 2005). There is a need to reflect on inconsistencies for change to occur. Arredondo (1995) quotes John Dewey’s statement that “We learn by doing if we reflect on what we do” (p. 21). Reflection allows individuals to correct distortions in their beliefs, helps them problem solve and leads them to challenge contradictions (Merriam, 2004; Kreber, 2004). Transformative learning can occur when participants act on the insights discovered in the reflective process (Mezirow, 1997; Lin & Cranton, 2005).

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) identified the three elements of reflection as cognition, critical thinking, and narrative inquiry. The cognitive focuses on how the teacher uses knowledge in planning and decision-making and how such knowledge is organized. This “thinking-about-thinking” or metacognition is a purpose-driven, self-regulated behavior. The individual

ponders the action as well as the decision making necessary to carry out the action. This helps him/her make sense of what is going on and allows him/her to use the information to guide future action (Rogers, 2001).

Schon (1987) stated that much of the information gained from this experience is tacit and difficult to examine. When individuals begin to question their own tacit assumptions, they clarify their own beliefs and are able to look critically at their methods and practices (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). Peer coaching is a confidential process involving two or more professional colleagues serving as teachers to one another who encourage reflection on their current practices, help refine and build new skills, conduct classroom research, and/or solve problems (Slater & Simmons, 2001). Having access to this information promotes longitudinal and detailed feedback, while at the same time, fostering collaboration (ASCD (<http://webserver3.ascd.org/ossd/peercoaching.html>)).

Types of Peer Coaching

There are several different types of peer coaching including the following: technical coaching, collegial coaching, challenge coaching, team coaching (Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995), specific coaching, and non-specific coaching (Mayer & Gray, http://kolea.kcc.hawaii.edu/tcc/tcc_conf96/meyer.html):

1. Technical coaching refers to the specific feedback received to implement workshop ideas in the classroom. This overcomes the “one time workshop” problem with no follow-up or practical application.
2. Collegial coaching helps with general reflection and analysis of classroom practices.
3. Challenge coaching uses feedback for the resolution of an identified problem area.
4. Team coaching uses the team teacher as the peer coach, teaching in the same classroom.
5. Specific coaching focuses on a certain area, pre-determined by the teacher and/or principal, similar to technical or challenge coaching above.
6. Non-specific coaching is open ended and could be compared to collegial coaching or team coaching. This study can be considered non-specific collegial coaching.

Within each of the six types listed above, five critical teaching components are necessary if the application level is to be reached within the percentage that each contributes (Gottesmann, 2000). Although all five are important, having ninety percent of peer coaching contribute to long term use is very impressive.

1.	Theory	5 percent
2.	Demonstration	10 percent
3.	Modeling & Guided Practice	20 percent
4.	Feedback	25 percent
5.	Coaching	90 percent

Cognitive coaching includes a cognitive or developmental dimension (Costa & Garmston, 1995; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007), which provides for a collegial relationship to support teachers in critically reflecting about their work. The ultimate goal is to help them become self-regulated, self-monitoring learners. There are three major goals in this process. The first is establishing trust in the relationship and the environment which builds a non-threatening reciprocal partnership that stimulates growth in professional development. In the second, it is understood that all learning requires thoughtful consideration. The power of learning is enhanced by the broadening of perspectives and

the use of intellectual inquiry. Finally, cognitive holonomy is the ability to act autonomously and, simultaneously, to work interdependently.

Studies report increases in cognitive development, job satisfaction, and inferred increases in student learning as a result of cognitive coaching (Garmston & Hyerle, 1988; Edwards, 1992; Ling Li, 2004). Cognitive peer coaching can increase the enjoyment and excitement of professional development as well as lead to changes in cognitive thought processes and a transference to working with students in the same non-judgmental way in the classroom (Costa & Garmston, 1995). Members of peer coaching groups have greater long-term retention of new strategies and can help one another to improve instruction (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

The perspective of others can help an individual to focus on changes in their behaviors. A "critical friend" provides feedback to an individual or a group (Costa & Kallick, 1993). This trusted peer asks thoughtful questions, provides different perspectives to interpret data, and gives specific feedback about a person's work (Carrington & Robinson, 2004), as well as leaving room for self-evaluation. Using a critical friend to give feedback during collaborative action research can offer expertise concerning research methodology or instrument development, while providing needed input about the process or data collection (Bambino, 2002).

Peer Coaching Process

Much of the research on peer coaching addresses models utilized in either the elementary school setting or across other disciplines, such as criminal justice, library services, business and medicine. (See <http://www.bcm.edu/fac-ed/ePCR/index.cfm?PMID=6470> to view the critical pairs method of peer coaching practiced at the Baylor College of Medicine).

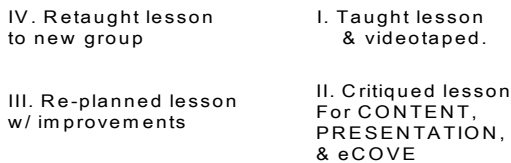
At New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, two criminal justice professors tried peer coaching in a different way. They enrolled in each other's course as a student, took notes, took exams, and collaborated for an hour after each class. Each peer kept two sets of notes. Notes in the right column were from the student's standpoint: what content was covered, questions, and what information was needed to study for exams. Notes in the left column were from the viewpoint of an educator. In their collaboration, questions about the content were covered first. Then, observations about when and why students' attention wandered and what study aids helped focus students' reading were discussed (Mayer & Gray, http://kolea.kcc.hawaii.edu/tcc/tcc_conf96/meyer.html).

Hurston & Weaver (2007) describe a model especially designed for experienced university faculty and they make an important distinction between experienced and new faculty. "While younger faculty members may need to develop both content expertise and teaching expertise, mid-career faculty members need opportunities to redefine and enlarge the scope of their professional careers; and the senior faculty needs opportunities for creating a legacy" (p. 3). They define "senior" faculty as "mid-career or senior faculty members who have received tenure and have been teaching for ten years or more" (p. 20). Little has been done to develop programs tailored to the interests of senior faculty or to meet the unique needs of those who are post-tenured, even though statistics show that older faculty (over 50 years of age) represent the largest and most stable number of professors across the country. Reasons include the increased flexibility of retirement age and the general trend towards longevity. Hurston & Weaver (2007) encourage peer coaching at this level as a "formative, collegial process whereby pairs of faculty voluntarily work together to improve or expand their approaches to teaching" (p.4).

In the current study, all three literacy educators met most of Hurston and Weaver's (2007) criteria for mid-career or senior level faculty. They were

interested in how to establish an effective peer coaching process that would value the expertise of each instructor while offering supportive insight into areas that could be improved, prospective areas for professional development, and engaging students in the critical process of meta-reflection regarding practice. Essentially, they selected specific areas of academic interest to link into a three-part lesson. Children’s literature was identified as the base content, and focused on the genre of pourquoi tales, traditional stories about how things came to be the way they are. Technology that supports alternative routes to comprehension, retelling and sequence were selected for the second part of the lesson. Finally, a kinesthetic language arts demonstration of grammar was designed as the third part of the presentation. Instructors met to plan the lesson, design a student survey, agree upon the tools and criteria which students would use to collect data and develop a process for debriefing through videotaped interviews. The first videos were recorded during the actual lesson, followed by interviews with individual professors discussing what they thought they had accomplished or noticed during the session. Subsequent videos recorded the three professors talking with one another and offering suggestions, insights and questions regarding the experience.

Figure 1: Peer Coaching Process: Summer, Fall, and Spring, 2006-2007



With input from the expertise of each professor, a 45 minutes team-taught lesson was generated. Each professor had 15 minutes of direct instructional time. The children’s literature professor selected the genre of pourquoi tales. Her main contribution was introducing pourquoi tales in general and reading *The First Strawberries* (Bruchac, 1993) aloud. She had collected examples of other pourquoi tales and distributed them among the students, intending that each group read one aloud. Although students glanced at the books, they did not read them carefully.

Next, the reading methods professor demonstrated story frames and how to use Sketchy™ (GoKnow® Inc, 2007) to animate the main elements of *The First Strawberries*. First, she sang a summary of the story to the tune of the “Adams Family” and then taught students how to animate it with Sketchy™. With much excitement, students worked and shared the results of their table’s pourquoi tale on the ELMO projector.

Finally, the language arts professor modeled and had students act out dramatic sentences with each word of a summary sentence about their pourquoi tale. For example, the model from *The First Strawberries* was “The angry woman walked away”. Four students at the front of the room stepped out to exemplify one of the words. After this model, table groups presented a dramatic sentence with their pourquoi tale. After introducing the concept with manipulative materials on the ELMO projector, the members of the audience

diagrammed the dramatic sentences on dry erase boards. These were then shared with the whole group.

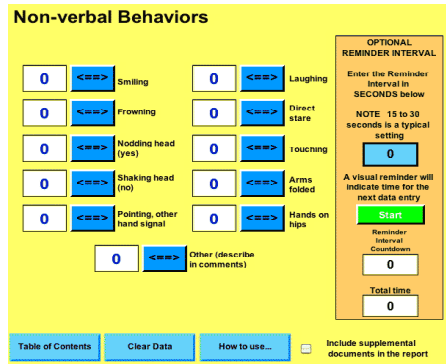
The eCOVE[®] Observation Software, Basic Edition (Tenny, 2007) is designed to gather objective data that targets certain teaching behaviors. This provides an avenue for feedback to the teacher and a source of reflection on teaching. There are twenty-two different data screens that can be used to capture the observation using a laptop or hand held computer. Teaching behaviors may be counted (e.g. types of questions asked) while other data collections include timed interactions (e.g. percentage of teacher talk time versus student talk time).

The literacy professors chose five eCOVE[®] tools that they wanted feedback on to self-and peer-evaluate their teaching and learning interactions with university students: 1) verbal tics; 2) nonverbal behaviors; 3) teacher talk time vs. student talk time; 4) student question responses; and 5) positive vs. negative responses. University students helped in the data collection, observing each professor during the teaching segment of the lesson. Students were placed in five groups, each responsible for collecting one of the data screens during the professors' teaching intervals.

Figure 2: eCOVE[®] Data (tallies or % of time)

eCove™ DATA SCREENS:

1. verbal tics
2. nonverbal behaviors
3. teacher talk time vs. student talk time
4. student question responses
5. positive vs. negative responses



Website: www.flowing_thought.com (J.Tenny) 5

A brief time was spent between the different parts of the lesson to have students report the findings of their data collection as well as give insights into their observations of the professor during the teaching segment. The professors' videotape of the lesson provided them with additional opportunity to review the film and reflect on the data collected during the observations.

In a follow-up peer coaching session, the professors discussed the results of the data collections, reflecting on their own teaching strengths and weaknesses during the lesson, as well as reflecting on action for future teaching. The eCOVE[®] data on teacher talk time vs. student talk time provided the most information for the methods professor and the literature professor. Both identified the need for increasing the amount of active engagement for their students and balancing the amount of teacher talk and student talk. Increasing opportunities for engagement of students enhances learning and increases overall achievement for students (Au, Raphael, & Mooney, 2008). The professors were able to adjust their teaching in future team teaching lessons to include more interactive small group work. This resulted in students being more actively engaged in the teaching and learning process and provided a greater balance between teacher talk and student talk.

After reviewing the first videotaped lesson, the children's literature

professor vowed to improve the amount of time that students held an active role. During her first session, the teacher talk time was 98 percent, leaving only two percent for student talk time. Students did not actually read the *pourquoi* tales at their tables, making subsequent activities difficult to perform. Also, she stood behind the podium, making it difficult to see the pictures in the book. Even though she still read *The First Strawberries* to the students during the second session, teacher talk time was reduced to 50 percent, leaving 50 percent for student talk time. Additionally, she clarified her instructions so the *pourquoi* tales were actually read aloud by each table group. Finally, the book was projected on the ELMO when read aloud, so students could see the words and pictures.

The reading methods professor decided that she was trying to do too much within her 15-minute time period and needed to increase the amount of student engagement time for learning activities. This professor was praised for doing the best job of focusing on the students in the classroom. The second time she taught her lesson, she omitted the song and slimmed down the teacher input regarding what a story frame entails. This allowed students to have more time to write, create, and perform the animated video on the palm pilot.

The language arts professor gained valuable information from the eCOVE[®] data for nonverbal behaviors. Prior to the data collection she was not aware that she used “OK” repeatedly during the lesson which can detract from the lesson’s content. After reviewing the first videotaped lesson and hearing the reports of the student data collectors, the language arts professor became aware that it was distracting to say “OK.” It was also pointed out that although it appeared that the students understood how to diagram the dramatic sentences, students from her language arts class were coaching others with the correct answers. Also, she was pointing to the diagramming chart, but this was later deemed as necessary for one of the lesson’s objectives. In the second lesson, she replaced “OK” with “Do you have any questions or need clarification?” This time students were not coaching others, so the diagramming on the dry erase boards clearly showed their understanding of this new skill during the second team-teaching lesson.

Summer, fall, and spring terms in 2006-2007 were used to replicate this lesson. The final teaching session occurred at a professional literacy conference in Denver, and although there were some technological difficulties, the three segments of the lesson were much better and flowed seamlessly from one part to the other. Objectives for improvement had all been met. To read the entire lesson in detail, see “*Pourquoi Tales on the Literacy Stage*” in *The Reading Teacher* (Foster, Theiss, & Buchanan, 2008).

Student Surveys

In addition to the eCOVE[®] data reported verbally immediately after each 15 minute segment of teaching, and the review of the video-taped lessons, students were asked to complete an online student survey to be submitted to each professor near the end of the semester (Krause, 2007). Using open-ended questions focused on student perceptions of the instructor and her individual course, short answers were typed in the boxes. Questions included such items as the following: “What were the instructor’s main goals and strategies for this course?” “Do you think strong vs. weak students are viewed/treated differently? If so, how?” “How does your professor feel when you give excuses for not doing well on an exam?” “Overall, how effective has this professor been?” (Choices ranged from highly effective to highly ineffective).

Figure 3: Student Survey (short answers)

1. What are the instructor's goals and main strategies to achieve them?
2. What is the professor's philosophy of teaching?
3. What % of time is spent on lecture, discussion, Q-A, & group work?
4. Which technique do you wish was used more?
5. Which technique do you wish was used less?
6. Respond to exams in the course. Does your grade reflect what you learned?
7. Independent of exams, how do you assess your learning?
8. Do you think strong vs. weak students are view/treated differently? If so, how?
9. How does this professor feel if you are late to class?
10. How does this professor feel if you ask obvious questions?
11. How does this professor feel if your attn wanders or you act bored?
12. How does this professor feel when you miss class?
13. How does this professor feel when you ask for an extension or make-up exam?
14. How does this professor feel when you give "excuses" for not doing well on exam?
15. What could this professor do to improve instructor-student relationships?
16. What could this professor do to make this course more meaningful?
17. What could this professor do to support your learning better?
18. What could this professor model in her teaching that you could apply in your future classroom?
19. Other areas that you would like to communicate?
20. Overall, how effective has this professor been?
 - Highly effective
 - Effective
 - Neutral
 - Ineffective
 - Highly ineffective

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After the students completed the surveys, results were printed and the professors met in a coaching session to read and analyze them. Because they had presented together, the colleagues were aware of each other's personalities and teaching styles and were able to help interpret student responses. Suggestions and improvements were also shared. Three main points of information were gleaned from the student surveys. Responses affirmed the effectiveness of the teaching in all three courses – children's literature, reading and language arts. Because of the open-ended response format, students offered more detailed and in depth insights on the process of teaching and learning. This gave the instructors much more information than the traditional Lickert scale required to evaluate faculty at the university. Finally, it was very clear to the instructors that the university students understood the content and goals for each of the three courses.

Evaluating the Experience

The peer coaching experience proved to be positive and informative in several ways. All three participants agreed that the collegial nature of the planning, instruction and debriefing processes created a "safe" and constructive environment for learning. Confidentiality was established as part of the trust which resulted in this multilayered process, as each instructor had opportunity to observe her own strengths, areas for improvement and areas for further development in the context of a shared experience. Hurston & Weaver (2007) noted that this format is ideal for experienced faculty as it allows for those with similar levels of experience to focus on "real, individually selected, practice-centered problems...it fosters analysis of the specific context in which teaching takes place" (p. 8).

The reflection and discussion resulting from reviewing the videos, survey data and collected student data offered explicit, (sometimes quite

simple) directions that individual instructors could choose to pursue or further consider. In a subsequent lesson, each instructor was able to adapt her part of the experience in direct response to information obtained from the first, and upon again reviewing the results, was able to note positive changes in both instruction and learning outcomes. A benefit was the opportunity to observe one another's teaching styles, student attitudes and instructional approaches in an environment that was proactive yet critical. (Hurston & Weaver, 2007).

The culture of the university classroom is still one in which there are few "visitors" outside of students. Opening the door to collegial teaching allowed for an environment where each participant expected to learn, improve and reflect on her practice, without the pressure of administrative (promotion/tenure) judgment or the possibility of outright failure. Students were engaged as part of the process and thus were supportive of the entire enterprise. The participants felt energized and refocused about important aspects of their instruction, and the experience offered them further opportunity for advanced collaboration (such as writing together) and further investigation through new studies. Hurston & Weaver (2007) note that such experiences can also offer powerful positive effects on morale, self-renewal and satisfaction that "one is improving the organization as a whole" (p. 10).

Although many advantages are cited above, there are also some disadvantages. The negative aspects of this model's peer coaching included the large amount of time invested, increased vulnerability in front of colleagues and students, as well as the stress of being videotaped and orally evaluated.

Figure 4: Evaluating the Peer Coaching Process

Advantages	Disadvantages
Different perspectives	Time
Pooled experience	Vulnerability
Pooled expertise	Stress
Self-reflection	
Improved teaching	
Appreciating each other	
Support & friendship	

Conclusion

Reflection allows for the examination of one's work, actions, thoughts, and beliefs. Through reflection, self-analysis can be made about beliefs and presuppositions of actions so that decisions can be made to impact future actions. The trio of faculty involved in this cyclical study were able to accomplish reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action (Schon, 1987), and reflection-for-action (Killion & Todnem, 1991). They found that reflection served as a tool for self-analysis and self-improvement (Black, 2005; Bafumo, 2007).

This qualitative study encouraged the researchers to consider future studies involving critical peer coaching at the university level. The experience suggested to them a transformative model for incorporating peer coaching among university colleagues. In addition, they agreed that engaging students actively as data collectors and participants had a powerful and favorable impact on the educational experience for all parties. By taking the risk of making

their teaching transparent and explicit in front of and for their students, faculty demonstrated in a very meaningful way how teachers are, in fact, lifelong learners.

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REFLECTING ON AN URBAN FIELD EXPERIENCE: LEARNING FROM PRESERVICE TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTED STORYLINES AND SILENCE

by
Martha J. Strickland and Beatrice A. Adera

MARTHA J. STRICKLAND AND BEATRICE A. ADERA are on faculty at Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg.

Abstract

Utilizing the sociocultural constructed meaning of one's experiences as a "storyline," (Gee, 2005), this study used reflection activities to expose preservice teachers' perceptions of urban education. Forty-three elementary education preservice teachers participated in a 10-week field experience during the semester prior to their student teaching. Background questionnaires, concept maps, interviews, and focus groups were used to examine student construction of their urban field experience. Data were analyzed using Gee's building tasks to expose the storylines that framed their understanding before, during, and after their experience. The resulting storylines exposed movement in participants' personal construction of urban education from broadly ungrounded negative content focused on behaviors and environment, to ambiguity and self-questioning focused on relationships. The storylines moved from watching behavior to experiencing relationships. In addition, an element of shared silence emerged precipitating an unanticipated reflective process.

As student populations increase in diversity, and the majority of the teaching force remains White, monolingual, and female (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Gay, 2000; Hollins & Guzman, 2005), teacher educators face the challenge of preparing new teachers to effectively facilitate learning across racial and cultural borders (Weis & Fine, 2003). An urban field experience paired with intentional reflection has proven to be an effective combination for addressing such a challenge (Posner, 2000). The impact of such an endeavor on preservice teachers, however, remains fuzzy at best. Clift and Brady (2005), in their analysis of research on field experiences, noted several key research components needed to clarify the impact of such an endeavor including the need for a researcher who is not the instructor, the use of instruments outside of surveys, a more substantive theoretical framework grounding the research study, and clear identification of research participants and field experience students.

This study sought to address these concerns through the introduction of the solitary visual conceptual activity of concept mapping alongside the collective verbal activities of interviews, and focus groups as reflective tools while grounding the research design within the sociocultural theoretical perspective of cultural models as storylines (Gee, 2005). Additionally, the researchers remained outside the instruction process, and background questionnaires provided the sociohistorical backgrounds of the preservice teachers, enriching data analysis.

An urban field experience often serves as an initial exposure of most preservice teachers to diverse student populations. Milner (2003) argued that many teachers often hold stereotypical perceptions of racially diverse students often relying on their misconceptions extracted from family biases or media coverage. Research, however, has shown that active participation and daily involvement in urban classrooms has the potential to shape preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and understanding of students from cultural and

racial backgrounds different from their own (Ndura, 2006; Pohan, 1996). To affirm the possible efficacy of this type of experience, Kyles and Olafson (2008) maintained that preservice teachers with previous experiences in diverse settings were more likely to view diversity as a resource, often demonstrating appreciation and sensitivity to diverse learners.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice has also been found to provide preservice teachers with a venue in which their beliefs and teaching practices are challenged to the point of breaking free from traditional practices and routine behaviors (Posner, 2000). As preservice teachers engage in authentic classroom activities during a field experience, reflective practice serves as their venue for linking theory to classroom practice (Ferguson, 1989). Embedding deliberate and intentional reflections during the field experience has been shown to enhance reflective practice of preservice teachers (Willard-Holt, 2000; Willard-Holt & Bottomly, 2000). Participation in regular reflective activities has also been noted to enable preservice teachers to ascertain the impact of their personal beliefs and social characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, language, disability) on their role perception and interactions with diverse learners. Liou (2001) asserted that involvement in critical reflective activities was likely to trigger positive change, raise awareness, and promote deeper understanding of teaching among preservice teachers. Thus, it may be said that a reflective process helps them confront their attitudes and beliefs as they reaffirm or challenge existing notions and prejudices (Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Manouchehri, 2002).

Viewing intentional and deliberate reflection and an urban field experience as symbiotic was an important aspect of the present study. Despite the hopeful research findings resulting from this approach, there are other findings which suggest otherwise. Hollins and Guzman (2005) found that despite openness to cultural diversity, many preservice teachers, especially those from mono-cultural upbringings, were more likely to feel inadequate and uncomfortable in diverse classrooms and were likely to focus more on the challenges exhibited by diverse learners at the expense of learning. Recently it has been noted that more research is needed to better integrate the socialization of the preservice teachers into the exploration of their beliefs and conceptual understanding (Mahlios, Soroka, Engstrom, & Shaw, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

In light of this, it is the researchers' contention that key to exploring the preservice teachers' conceptual understanding during an urban field experience is capturing their conceptual construction as a dynamic construction. Adopting a sociocultural framework, their construction of meaning is set in their understanding of their past, present, and projected future experiences, (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). One way that researchers have found to effectively explore a person's meaning construction in context is to identify the cultural models he or she brings to the moment. Cultural models (Quinn & Holland, 1987), schemas (D'Andrade, 1992), or a cultural frame of reference are constructed using past experiences, present interactions, and future projections. These constructions embody people's beliefs and actions.

An exploration of the cultural models one brings into any context requires an examination of culturally shared assumptions and the personal meanings of the shared assumptions (Strauss, 2005). Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) proposed the cultural model as an effective tool for understanding the culturally shared assumptions one brings to make sense or make meaning of experiences in an educational setting. Other researchers (Gallimore & Goldenberg; Ogbu, 1990) have noted that the concept of the cultural model is helpful in understanding children of diverse backgrounds in

the classroom setting. Additionally, it has been noted that preservice teachers' awareness of their own cultural models and the meanings they construct within a given context has been identified as a prerequisite to culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000). In light of this past research, this study's researchers postulated that revealing such cultural models before, during, and after the field experience would be valuable as this exposure has the potential of impacting teacher-student interactions within a diverse classroom.

Cultural models have been identified by educational researchers in a variety of ways. Stigler and Hiebert (1999), in their analysis of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), noted the key to teacher improvement begins "by becoming aware of the cultural scripts teachers are using" (p. 101). Addressing the need to see people's culturally shared assumptions as dynamic and not static, Gee (2005) conceived these as "storylines," or ongoing constructions that attempt to connect situated meanings and possibilities in new encounters which describe how the world works in a dynamic process. He suggested that these storylines are constructed within dialogues using seven identifiable building tasks: building significance, building activities, building identities, building relationships, building politics, building connections, and building significance for sign systems and knowledge. In other words, Gee provides a unique approach to gleaning how a person is constructing what he or she is experiencing within the larger context of their sociocultural history thus keeping his or her conceptual understanding as a dynamic construction within context. Recognizing the value of exposing preservice teachers' storylines as they prepare to effectively interact with students from diverse cultural background, these building tasks were used to analyze the preservice teachers' reflections.

Considering that although teachers' belief constructions in context have been called for and yet largely overlooked within studies which examined preservice teacher perceptions of diversity, this study proposed using a variety of reflective tools to unveil the storylines that preservice teachers employ as they encounter a new experience, an urban field experience. The purpose of this qualitative study was twofold. First, this study intended to explore the efficacy of the reflection activities of concept maps, semistructured interviews, and focus groups in exposing preservice teachers' storylines. Second, this study intended to examine the constructed storylines of a mono-cultural cohort of preservice teachers at a suburban university for insights into structuring future impactful urban field experiences. In summary, the results of this study were intended to inform program planning and contribute to the present discourse on embedding diversity training within the teacher training programs through listening to storylines exposed through reflection activities.

Method

This qualitative study explored how 43 preservice teachers made meaning of their first urban field experience. Visual reflections (concept maps) and verbal reflections (focus groups and semi-structured interviews) provided rich descriptions and triangulated the data (Jensen & Winitzky, 2002). Participants who consented to participate in this study included 43 undergraduate students enrolled in an elementary education program. The study was completed during their final semester prior to student teaching. There were 39 females and 4 males ranging in ages from 19 to 35, including 42 White and one self-reported as "Mexican-Caucasian." Of the 43 participants, 14 (33%) reported having lived outside of Pennsylvania at any time, and of those only 7 (16%) had lived outside of the northeast region of the U.S. Their school experiences were mostly suburban 37 (86%) with limited experience in the rural and urban settings. Only one student reported having an urban schooling

experience. Eighteen (42%) of the participants reported having traveled outside the United States, travel which comprised solely of a week or two to Europe, Canada, Mexico, or the Bahamas. Twenty-seven (63%) reported a 2-day classroom observation in an urban classroom as the only urban experience they had with the other 16 (37%) reporting having had no urban experience at all prior to the beginning of this study.

In qualitative research, it is important to mention the socio-historical backgrounds of the researchers since they play a role in how they interact with the data. One researcher had formal schooling experience in multiple U.S. rural and suburban regions but none in an urban setting. However, she had extensive experience working cross-culturally. Early in her professional elementary teaching career she was assigned to teach at an international school in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. This assignment required a year living and studying in France and three years teaching grades 1 and 2 in a rural part of West Africa. Subsequently she travelled as an international education consultant working in over 30 countries throughout the world (developing, Western, and third-world countries) for over 15 years. The co-primary investigator was born and raised in Kenya. She attended both public and private schools and completed her undergraduate studies in Kenya prior to relocating to the United States to pursue graduate studies. She has resided in the States for the last 9 years and has 6 years of teaching experience as a Special Education teacher in a suburban school district in Texas.

Context

This study took place at an extension campus of a large university in the northeast. The preservice teachers were located in one of four elementary schools in the nearby urban setting. These schools predominantly served students from culturally diverse backgrounds reporting student populations of around 60% African American and 18% Hispanic students. In addition, each elementary school reported more than 75% of students as qualified for free or reduced lunch. The preservice teachers participated in a 10-week field experience within these local urban schools during the semester prior to student teaching. Each participant was assigned to a cooperating teacher for two 5-week rotations, spending 4 mornings a week for the first 4 weeks of each rotation followed by full days during their final week at each site, totaling approximately 120 hours in the urban classroom. In addition, participants completed a field experience assignment in which they worked with at least two struggling learners in their assigned classrooms to determine the effect of appropriate instruction on student learning. This assignment gave participants the opportunity to make decisions with regards to improving student performance and also to self-evaluate as they reflected on their performance as a teacher.

Instruments

Aligned with the findings of Jensen and Winitzky (2002), this study used concept maps as well as semi-structured interviews to collect the data. To provide rich description and to triangulate students' cognitive awareness and storyline organization, background questionnaires as well as focus groups were utilized in this study. The background questionnaires were completed at the beginning of the study and were used to gather the sociohistorical context of each student. This consisted of asking about places lived, places visited, schooling experience, and any other "diverse experiences" the participant had in his or her background (Stigler, Gallimore, & Hiebert, 1999).

Concept maps were used to expose the participants' conceptual and content knowledge organization as well as the interrelationships among concepts (Markham, Mintzes, & Jones, 1994). Each participant was asked to

complete a concept map describing his or her perception of their urban field experience before the first day of the field experience (pre-field) and at the end of the experience (post-field). Within their concept map, they were encouraged to include their perceptions of teachers and students as well as teaching, learning, and the physical environment of the school of their appointed field experience.

Alongside concept map construction, each preservice teacher participated in a short semi-structured interview at the beginning of the experience and at the end of his or her field experience. To protect the time of the professor and course, these were kept to 5 minutes during which time each participant was asked to describe his or her experience. Additionally, focus groups, involving a random sample of 20 students, were held midway through the urban field experience. Participants in groups of 4 or 5 were brought together to talk about their experiences. These conversations were transcribed, effectively enriching the data collected from the semistructured interviews and concept maps.

Data Analysis

The data consisted of two sets of concept maps from all 43 participants, participant background questionnaires, and transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. Data were analyzed in three phases (Baldwin et al., 2007). The first phase involved multiple readings of the pre-field and post-field concept map statements, interviews, and focus groups with inductive coding done by each researcher separately of patterns, keywords, and metaphors across the data (D'Andrade, 2005). The second phase involved looking at the data for personal meanings and associations to expose the participants' storylines. This was accomplished through coding for building tasks with construction of the storyline exposed in the process. The building tasks included building significance, building activities, building identities, building relationships, building politics, building connections, and building significance for sign systems and knowledge (Gee, 2005). The third phase emerged from the findings of the second phase and involved the researchers unveiling the storylines within the data as well as the silences or that which was left unsaid. Researchers concurrently met throughout the study and compared their interpretation of the data. The interpretations yielded an overall strong inter-rater reliability of .85 to .96 (Creswell, 1994).

Most terms found both in the concept maps and the interviews appeared to be evaluative in nature. In the pre-field concept maps and interviews, a few words emerged as commonly shared knowledge. Participants associated the term "less" with the students, teachers, as well as the physical context of the classroom. The words associated with the term "less" giving it situated meaning included "lack of materials and resources," "not a lot of centers and books," "less technology," "less decorations," and "not good materials." Associations with the concept of "less" as used to describe the teachers included phrases such as "no experience," "not much help from the school," "less freedom," "less control," and "less qualified." Relating their shared assumptions of the students, the term "less" was coupled with "lack of parental involvement," "no respect," and the concept of "needy."

The pre-field interviews revealed that preservice teachers envisioned their upcoming experience in either positive or negative terms, therefore, the interview data was coded for positive and negative connotations. The evaluative statements reflected the participants' positive or negative perceptions of the five prescribed components (teacher, teaching, learning, students, physical environment), or reflected statements of basic facts that were not evaluative in nature (e.g., diverse environment). Additionally, statements which reflected both

positive and negative perceptions were coded as mixed. Overall, prior to their initial exposure to the urban classroom, participant perceptions included 47% negative, 18% positive, 22% mixed terms or statements and 13% coded as basic facts (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of Concept Map Data

<i>Pre-field</i>									Total n
Concept	Pos	%	Neg	%	Mixed	%	Fact	%	
Teachers	11	22%	21	41%	12	24%	7	14%	51
Teaching	9	35%	9	35%	6	23%	2	8%	26
Learning	9	24%	18	47%	8	21%	3	8%	38
Students	4	9%	23	52%	10	23%	7	16%	44
Phys Environ	3	7%	26	57%	10	22%	7	15%	46
Totals	36	18%	97	47%	46	22%	26	13%	205
<i>Post-field</i>									
Teachers	10	33%	7	23%	13	43%	-	0%	30
Teaching	10	36%	6	21%	9	32%	3	11%	28
Learning	7	27%	11	42%	6	23%	2	8%	26
Students	12	36%	9	27%	10	30%	2	6%	33
Phys Environ	8	25%	11	34%	11	34%	2	6%	32
Totals	47	32%	44	30%	49	33%	9	6%	149

Using Gee's (2005) building tasks as the framework for analyzing the data, we exposed the preservice storylines as they anticipated entering their first urban field experience which was introducing diversity that was unfamiliar to the majority of them. Their pre-field concept maps and their interviews revealed what they valued or what Gee would call their building significance, as well as their building connections (Gee) between their past experience and their anticipated one. The prevalence of the terms "less" and "more" exposed both the connections they were making with their past schooling experience as well as the value they placed on classroom management. As they related their image of classrooms they were about to enter they connected in their concept maps the classroom context with more "noise," "diversity," "challenging," and "behind in grade level" and they connected less with "materials and resources," "control," "support," and "parental involvement."

In their interviews the preservice teachers talked about how they would find more "behavioral problems," and "noise" and less "creativity" and "control" and connected that with describing the urban classroom teacher as one who is "less qualified," and "needing more control" in his or her classroom. The shared belief that these teachers should focus on "basically rewarding or paying more attention to the student" and "keeping control" was clearly communicated throughout the pre-field interviews. Therefore, the pre-field storyline which emerged described the context the preservice teachers were about to enter with a sense of "less," exposing their socially constructed understanding of urban schools and teachers as deficient. Additionally, the "less" construction particularly focused on classroom management issues which were characterized as needing to control behavior.

Focus group discussions held midway through their semester field experience centered on two terms: "classroom management" and "yelling." These two terms were often mentioned within the same narration suggesting

some form of association. When viewed in a positive light, classroom management was coupled with the following terms: “reward system,” “routines,” “expectations of the teacher,” “controlled,” “she was on top of them [students],” and “she seemed to have a handle on how to run her room.” When expressed as negative, classroom management was coupled with such terms/phrases as “powerful struggle,” “no set procedures,” “not educated as we are now,” and “reward system.” The term “yelling” or “screaming” also appeared throughout the focus group transcripts. This was consistently associated with the teacher being “out of control,” “frustrated,” “stressed,” “burned out,” or statements such as “result of a broken system,” and “teacher is not experiencing any success.”

The focus group transcripts revealed that the construction of identities and relationships moved to the forefront of the preservice teachers’ storylines. All participants, without exception, talked about the role of the teacher at this time. Unlike the pre-field discourse which focused on control of behavior, this time they constructed the teachers’ role as a relational communicator as seen in such indicative phrases as “she was very personable,” “she was easy to communicate with,” and “she was always contacting the parents.”

The focus group data also exposed some self-questioning related to how the preservice teachers were challenged by the contradiction between what had been anticipated; their storylines with which they entered the field experience, and their present experience. This questioning was particularly embedded within two concepts: how participants defined the cooperating teachers’ yelling behaviors as well as their personal construction of the field experience itself. Cooperating teacher behaviors as described by participants midway through the urban experience exposed statements concerning yelling and sarcasm, using statements such as “you don’t see things change” and “you fall into the trap of yelling” in relation to their immersion in this environment. One participant expressed concern regarding the absence of learning, stating that the teachers appeared to be more concerned about managing student behaviors than teaching. She even challenged her own cultural model of behaviorism, posing the question, “Who cares if they are walking in a straight line? Really? Who cares?” Another participant also clearly questioned her previously constructed storyline of classroom management as noted in the following statement: “Maybe movement is okay – learning is not just about looking at what they’re doing.”

The three words found threaded throughout post-field concept maps and interview transcripts to describe teachers or teaching were “yelling or loud,” “caring,” and “creativity.” These were frequently associated with contrasting terms. In the post-field accounts, the associations with “yelling” were words such as “impatient,” “stress,” “unhappy,” and “needing a system.” Terms used in contrast to “yelling” were words/phrases such as “caring,” “not getting a lot done,” “supportive,” “love for children,” and “relaxed and welcoming.” The term “caring” was associated with words such as “relates to students,” “loving,” “warm,” “empathy,” and “good.” Terms used in contrast with “caring” included words such as “inappropriate” and “yelling.” “Creativity” was associated with terms such as “fun,” “good lessons,” “positive,” “patient,” “hands-on,” and “cooperative activity.” The terms set forth in contrast to “creativity” included “teacher-directed,” “strict,” “use only textbooks,” “scripted lessons,” and “dull.” In the post-field concept maps the negative associations included “no set routines,” “out-of-control,” “lack of respect,” “sarcasm,” and “negative attitude.” The contrasting terms were “low-key” and “teacher in control.”

The post-field concept map statements revealed that three prescribed components (teacher, teaching, and students) were more positive (Table 1). The more positive perceptions were of the teachers (33%), teaching (36%), and the students (36%). Additionally, it must be noted that the 33% of all the

statements were classified as mixed since they included both positive and negative terms indicating a sense of ambiguity, which will be explored in the discussion section of this paper.

The terms and phrases recorded post-field revealed the preservice teachers' storylines focused on the urban classroom teachers' identity and role within the classroom. Their construction of teachers with such relational terms as "care" and "low-key" was present throughout their post-field interviews and concept maps. This focus on teachers as relational also extended to descriptions of the relationship between preservice teachers and mentor teachers as noted in such indicative statements as "she was a good role model," "we clicked," and "the teachers were open with their classroom and eager to have me here." such statements were found throughout the post-field interviews. This is explored further in the following discussion.

Discussion

Our analysis of pre-field and post-field concept maps revealed that some key words were consistently used to describe the teachers and students. We identified the key words and explored the associations being made among the key terms in an effort to expose the cultural beliefs and models of the participants. Their cultural assumptions were uncovered by exposing their storylines using Gee's (2005) building tasks. A shift in framework was revealed as well as the introduction of ambiguity and self-questioning, which emerged as participants explored their surprises and challenges. The storylines at the beginning of this experience included negative phrases that stood alone or were operationalized using definitive and static associations. Although most components of these storylines continued to be present in the post-field data, the reflection activities provided the opportunity to hear how participants situated their construction of the urban field experience.

Jones and Vesilind (1996) found that preservice teachers' organization of knowledge was fluid and sensitive to particular events during their field placements maintaining that prospective teachers reconstruct their prior beliefs and definitions of key terms throughout the experience. This aligned with our finding that participants' choice of terms and phrases at the end of the experience emerged as mixed and dynamic in orientation. The final concept maps and interviews reveal a shift from framing all within the story of behavior to framing interpretations and observations within the story of relationship. This was exposed simultaneously through the association of terms chosen and the contexts in which they are used.

In this study, the urban field experience provided the opportunity for preservice teachers to experience settings which, in most cases, differed from their own experiences. Participants' descriptions of the urban classroom focused heavily on their cooperating teacher and the students. Before their field experience, participants generally anticipated that the teachers would be disorganized, lacking in classroom management skills, or constantly yelling to get their point across. The teachers were perceived as being frustrated, stressed, overwhelmed, and very loud yellers who occasionally lost their tempers. Participants argued that teachers were likely to burn out due to the daily stress of dealing with academic and behavioral challenges posed by their diverse learners. They also maintained that some teachers exhibited poor attitudes that were likely to generate negative energy in the classrooms, arguing that teachers spent more time dealing with discipline issues than teaching. In addition, they reported that teachers set low expectations for the students, arguing that some teachers were in the schools for the wrong reasons. In sum, many anticipated that their cooperating teachers would be lacking the necessary experience and cultural responsiveness for being

effective in this setting.

Baldwin et al. (2007) reported that teacher candidates anticipated the students would be difficult to handle, lacking in intelligence, and neither motivated nor interested in learning. Participants in this study perceived that the students would exhibit behavior problems using behavioral terms such as “loud,” “talkative,” “outspoken,” “hyperactive,” “have attitudes,” “no respect,” “rowdy,” “disruptive,” and “violent” to describe the students. They posited that the students would have varied developmental levels with most of them performing below grade level. Phrases such as “may need extra support,” “may slip through the cracks,” “written off,” were used to describe the students. Additionally, students were described as unhappy, turned off by learning, lacking in interest or desire to be at school, disconnected. One participant even indicated that some students come from cultures that did not value education and viewed it differently. These findings concur with Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck (1996), who reported that many preservice teachers perceived students of color as being difficult, unmotivated, and holding poor attitudes toward schools.

The word choices in the final concept maps, however, shift from a static to a more dynamic mixed description of the urban classroom. An element of self-questioning also emerges from the focus group transcripts. Listening to their reflections, the researchers noted that the preservice teachers’ reflections moved from a focus on watching behaviors to listening, centered on relationships. Although not all participants shared this reframing, exposing this process suggests the efficacy of the reflection activities which provided for this revelation.

An exploration of the storylines using Gee’s (2005) building tasks also revealed a pregnant silence. The ways of knowing remained noticeably silent throughout the data. As the preservice teachers narrated their construction of this urban field experience, they readily constructed meaning of activities, made connections, and constructed associations or relationships among concepts, as revealed in the pervasive vocabulary, such as words related to behavior, teachers, and students. Phrases which talk about what or how the children they observed were learning were missing. Although some key teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, hands-on activities, and interaction were introduced, the focus was mainly on student behavior, as noted by the pervasive nature of behavioral terms used to describe the students. Within these descriptions there was no mention of these students as learners and this pregnant silence was disturbing.

Researchers have noted that shared cultural assumptions are not always verbalized (Gee, 2005; Strauss, 2005). If cultural models are assumed to be universally shared, they may be left unsaid (Quinn & Holland, 1987; Strauss). Therefore, the preservice teachers’ silence regarding students’ learning reveals their possible shared assumption that it is universally understood that students were learning. Although it is not surprising to find preservice teachers focused on student behavior, this revelation precipitated an ongoing dialogue on the role of the instructor and mentor to hear such silences. The sociolinguist’s understanding of exposed storylines as dynamic constructions (Gee) suggests a need to intentionally move students from a personal storyline construction process that is embedded in watching to one that is embedded in relationship. In so doing, this study suggests that there is the opportunity for the preservice teacher to move from watching classroom management issues to relating to the teacher and learners inside diverse classrooms. This further postulates that this will move the preservice teacher from hearing yelling to hearing the learning process as it is pursued in each urban classroom.

Implications

Although limited in size and scope, this study suggests several key implications for teacher educators today as the student population increases in diversity and the accreditation agencies require appropriate teacher preparation to address the challenges introduced by this demographic shift. First, this study suggests that listening in on the preservice teachers' construction of an urban field experience through the reflective tools of concept maps, interviews, and focus groups provides researchers and instructors with a multidimensional look at the cultural models of prospective teachers.

Second, these reflective tools not only provide the instructor with the students' storylines but also reveal the subtle shifts and conflicts within these storylines. Opportunities for reflection throughout the experience reveal the construction and deconstruction of the knowledge process concurrent with the field experience. This dynamic process may provide the necessary foundation for valuable discourse around culturally responsive pedagogy pursued by teacher educators as they prepare teachers for today's classrooms.

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF NEW TEACHERS THROUGH MENTORING, INDUCTION, AND TEACHER SUPPORT

by

Diana Brannon, Judy Fiene, Lisa Burke, Therese Wehman, Dan Jares, and Mary Jo Young

DIANA BRANNON, JUDY FIENE, LISA BURKE, THERESE WEHMAN, DAN JARES, AND MARY JO YOUNG are on faculty at Elmhurst College.

Abstract

Districts today are implementing more forms of support for new teachers than ever before. New teacher orientations held before the school year begins are commonplace in schools. Mentoring programs are becoming frequently utilized to address new teachers' needs. These programs are usually weekly or monthly meetings between a new teacher and a more experienced one within the district. These mentoring programs are being implemented with varying levels of success. In this study, researchers used surveys and interviews of new teachers to discover what types of support they felt were most beneficial. New teachers expressed the need for mentoring programs to focus on specific new teacher needs, be flexible in meeting times, include peer observations, be well organized and planned, and be provided by a caring, competent, seasoned professionals. Schools need to provide new teachers with multiple forms of continued support and constructive feedback to ensure new teachers' success and retention.

Providing new teacher induction is an important practice that is common in schools around the world (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). Teacher induction and mentoring programs have been found to reduce the rate of new teacher attrition, increase job satisfaction, and efficacy (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Mentoring has been the main form of teacher induction used in the United States since the early 1980's (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999).

Many people think of teacher induction and mentoring as the same things. The terms are often used interchangeably. However, teacher induction is a comprehensive process that provides professional development that trains, supports, and helps retain new teachers. Mentoring is only a component of a full induction program. It focuses on one-on-one help between a veteran and new teacher often focusing more on new teacher's "survival" than teacher development (Wong, 2004).

Regardless of how it is defined, teacher induction means different things to different people. Some schools provide as little as a one day orientation, while others provide extensive new teacher orientation weeks and 1 or 2 year long weekly, structured mentoring programs (Wayne, Youngs, & Fleischman, 2005). Because there is such diversity in the definition and implementation of new teacher programs, we decided to study the mentoring programs in our area.

We contacted 35 school districts in Illinois to gather information about their mentoring programs. We also surveyed by e-mail first and second year teachers who graduated from Elmhurst College about their induction experiences. Finally, we conducted a focus group of new teachers including teachers from Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Special Education to discuss their experiences with induction and mentoring. We quickly learned that the vast majority of teacher induction programs in our area focus mainly on mentoring. Our findings for Illinois reflect teacher induction programs across the United States. When writing about teacher induction

programs in the United States, Wong (2004) found that mentoring programs still predominate.

Variations in Formal New Teacher Support Programs

Our research found that most districts that offer a more formal mentoring program typically offer some sort of new teacher orientation followed by weekly or monthly meetings with an assigned mentor. In this article we will discuss what our research found about what schools are currently doing to mentor their new teachers, how effective new teachers feel their school's mentoring programs are, and provide suggestions for what schools can do to meet the needs of first year teachers.

New Teacher Orientation

Many schools begin the year with a new teacher orientation. Although the concept of a new teacher orientation is commonplace, what schools are doing as an orientation varies greatly. Some districts offer a one day orientation that provides a brief overview of the district, staff, building, and general procedures. Other districts offer 5 day or more intensive orientations covering content from snow days to terrorist threats.

Common new teacher orientation topics include general procedures, technology, busing, the school's medication policy, supply needs, school resources, emergency procedures, building tours, introduction of staff, schedules, rules and procedures, an introduction to the mentoring program, curriculum, and district goals. The new teachers that we spoke with found the orientations helpful. However, many who participated in programs that were 4 days, 5 days, or longer expressed some concern about the length taking time away from their ability to better learn the curriculum and prepare for their classes. As one teacher explained:

"It was good because I felt more comfortable with the little things going in but it was like high school. I just got my curriculum before all of these meetings started. I was kind of like let me sit down and look at my stuff."

Mentoring programs were offered by many, but not all of the districts that we studied. The mentoring programs that we reviewed can be divided into categories. There are weekly or monthly programs, formal or informal, and also casual support programs. Some districts offer weekly mentoring programs. These programs were considered helpful by most new teachers. However, the weekly meetings risk becoming a bit redundant and overwhelming for new teachers if not made truly purposeful. "I think for me, the weekly meetings are too much. Sometimes I don't need to talk to the person every Friday from 8-9 or whatever, I needed them on Wednesday, not to say I couldn't go, but by Friday I was ok, so I just felt like it was a little too structured in that regard."

Other mentoring programs met monthly including a formal checklist or schedule of topics to be discussed. Having a formal list of topics by week or month is often helpful as one new teacher explained, "There were always things on that checklist that you never thought of but were really helpful."

Monthly Meetings with Topics Focusing on the New Teachers' Specific Needs

One of the most popular types of mentoring with the new teachers was monthly meetings that were based around their needs. "The mentoring program that I went through was one that took place once a month, usually after school but sometimes during our planning period. Topics varied depending on issues that arose and for the most part, she created the agenda of relevant information but at times, there were issues/topics/concerns that I needed addressed. That was really helpful."

Some districts have very informal meeting schedules and programs. They assign a mentor and let the new teacher and mentor work out the details on their own about what they will do and how they will do it. One teacher explained that “My mentor and I decide what we need to discuss, instead of being given topics.” Another teacher shared that her mentor program was only “as needed”. “My school set up mentors this year for new teachers, but there were not any special meetings between them, they just knew of a teacher they could go to if they needed something.” Many of the districts that we surveyed do not offer any mentoring programs. Although this is unfortunate, new teachers are often able to overcome this by finding a mentor on their own. “We don’t really have a mentoring program in my district. When I started two years ago I was lucky enough to get a job where I student taught, so I looked to my student teaching mentor for guidance when needed. My school is also quite small and all the teachers are great, so I felt comfortable going to anyone for ideas/help.”

A couple of the districts we studied offer additional support to new teachers through half day monthly meetings or workshops. “Each month, first year teachers meet with their mentors for half the day to touch base on the topics of brain based learning (differentiation), assessment, lesson design, and rubrics.” “We had new teacher meetings that were twice a month at the beginning of the year just covering topics that were coming up like conferences and how things are run. Then we had one at the end of the year about how to close up and what we need to do. I felt they were very beneficial because they were talking about things that were really necessary that I would have had questions about and needed to go to someone else to ask. So, those meetings were great. That was an opportunity basically to meet up with other new teachers.”

Observations

More and more districts included some sort of observation and evaluation as part of their mentoring programs. Most new teachers appreciated having this opportunity. “We did that in the first and the second semesters. We had to watch a veteran teacher teach a lesson and we also had our mentor come and watch. That was very helpful because I saw from another teacher something they did that I didn’t do.”

Most new teachers participate in some form of new teacher induction. As we have discussed, there is great variance in the types of programs available and their success. Therefore, we asked our alumni new teachers to share what they felt made a good mentoring program to learn more about the mentoring experience directly from those being served. New teachers who had guidelines and structure built into their induction program found it to be very valuable. For some, structured meetings were provided toward the beginning of the school year and then tapered off as the school year continued. A binder that included topics to be covered throughout the school year helped them to prepare for each meeting with their mentor (e.g. report cards, parent/teacher conferences, closing out the year, etc.). Additionally, the teachers found it helpful to have information given to them upfront as opposed to gradually throughout the school year. “My mentor gave me a calendar at the beginning of the year, pretty much telling me everything that she was going to do the entire school year . . . She gave me a blank calendar and . . . we tried to match as much as we could. So it was nice to have that.”

This illustrates how a mentor can help with long-term planning. By the mentor stating that she would like to “match as much as we could,” shows how this mentor is providing additional support. This added help takes this teacher’s first year mentoring experience to a deeper and more personal level. Having a mentor who not only provides essential information, but is

also there to show the novice teacher how it is to be used is an example of how a positive mentoring relationship can be effectively formed.

Teachers also expressed appreciation when their mentor teacher genuinely cares about their progress. It is important to these teachers to know that their mentor is helping them not because they are “assigned”, but because they truly want to see the teacher succeed. “She was willing to do it and she cared about what she was doing. So, anytime I needed to drop her an e-mail or ask her a question about something we were teaching . . . it was easy to just run up there and talk to her.”

Another teacher explained the importance of having a mentor who wants to be involved by sharing her experience. “I would have been more content to go across town to another teacher who would volunteer to do it.” These types of exchanges show the importance of the mentoring process being an authentic relationship rather than just a responsibility that needs to be fulfilled.

Support for Collaboration and Collegiality

New teachers strongly believe in mentors being connected with their teaching responsibility. Teachers who had mentors that were also a member of their grade level team felt much more supported. One middle school teacher shared, “We had a team meeting every single day so my team was my support system. We were all very comfortable with each other because my [mentor] teacher was also my team leader.” This situation is ideal. The collegiality found in this type of environment affords the teacher the opportunity to use other members of the team for additional support and friendship.

These examples show that the things that really make a difference in new teachers’ success from their viewpoint are often more affective in nature. New teachers want mentors who go beyond the outlined program to truly walk side by side with them. They also want mentors who care about them and make them feel part of the team. This makes sense considering that in their study of first year special education teachers, Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler (2005) found that “. . . strongly forged relationships and the accompanying feelings of emotional well-being are protective factors and critical to retention” (p. 29). Or, as one of alumni who did not have a mentor put it, “It does get lonely. If you have someone assigned as a mentor you always have a friend to go to.” It seems that this is a key factor to the success and satisfaction of many new teachers.

What Schools Can Do

Many induction programs assign mentors whose main job is to help acclimate new teachers to the culture of the school. Although this is helpful, it does not result in a sustained positive impact on teaching behaviors. Simply assigning a mentor alone does little to remedy the situation of new teachers becoming discouraged and leaving the profession (Wong, 2004). Districts need to provide new teachers with a focused and structured induction program that includes the opportunity for them to observe other teachers teaching, collaborate and share ideas, gain support from the administration, and be part of a learning community.

New teachers have a lot of tasks they are expected to have mastered on the first day of school. Not only are they responsible for their students’ learning, they also have to plan and map out the curriculum for the year, manage classroom behavior, work and collaborate with their colleagues, and build relationships with the families of their students. These skills are studied and discussed in teacher education programs. However, they are developed on the job. For many new teachers, implementing all that they have learned about

expert teaching can be overwhelming. Therefore, districts need to provide extensive support for new teachers to help them make the transition from student to teacher.

New teachers need to be able to look to multiple people for support throughout their building and district. This includes teachers, administrators, and support staff. Everyone has different strengths, knowledge, and experiences to offer. As one new teacher explained, "I know I am going to go to this person if I have a question as to how to solve this problem where I am going to go to her if I have more of an organizational problem." The more that new teachers are part of an entire community of induction, rather than limited to rely on only one person, the better.

New teachers need "survival skills" such as school procedures, behavior management, parent communication, and basic curriculum to be covered at the beginning of the year. When these types of issues are addressed early on, new teachers feel more confident to focus on pedagogy and best practice, rather than just survival as the year continues. Therefore, school districts need to add elements of comprehensive induction to their mentoring programs to help promote learning and professional development.

Constructive Feedback

New teachers need supportive and consistent feedback regarding their teaching. As one new teacher explained:

"I had a lot of teaching assistants and a support teacher in and out of my room all the time for the special education students that I had. I kind of used them as a guide. Sometimes some of them would see me more than once a day so first period and eighth period I could try things a little bit differently if I realized something wasn't right. I kind of asked them for feedback and that seemed to go over well . . . that was my kind of my way of figuring things out."

Many new teachers try to gain feedback about their teaching from students, aides, or other specialists who consistently see them teach. This can be helpful. However, it is much easier and effective for new teachers to "figure things out" from the feedback of colleagues who are trained to observe and provide insights, suggestions, and encouragement on a consistent and scheduled basis. This takes away the fear many teachers have of being observed. It turns observation into a positive, meaningful, learning experience.

A final consideration when developing or implementing any induction program is the duration of the program. Most programs last for one year. Although this is helpful, many new teachers express concern about what they will do when they need support after their first year.

As one teacher put it: "I think you really need to have a formal first year mentor program but then maybe a second year informal type program. Next year will be my second year and I'm just left. I can talk to people, but I'm just left in the open." This serious and practical concern is why many districts are beginning to offer two year mentoring programs. The first year often focusing more on "survival strategies", while the second focusing more on the pedagogy of teaching and best practice.

Our study found that many districts are only just beginning to address the issue of new teacher induction. However, more and more programs are designing detailed and extensive new teacher orientation and mentoring programs. Although we have seen a lot of improvement in teacher mentoring programs over the last decade, our findings support those of Wayne, Youngs, & Fleishman (2005): "Fewer than 1 percent of teachers get what the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) calls a 'comprehensive' induction package: a reduced number of course preparations, a helpful mentor in the same field, a seminar tailored to the needs of beginning teachers, strong communication with

administrators, and time for planning and collaboration with other teachers” (p. 76). Therefore, more work needs to be done to address the needs of new teachers, even though many districts are off to a good start.

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TEACHER REFLECTIVE PRACTICES: THEORIES, CONTROVERSIES, AND NEW DIRECTIONS

by
Nancy Jo Schafer

NANCY JO SCHAFFER is on faculty at Georgia State University.

Abstract

Many teacher education programs aspire to produce reflective teachers who can reflect on their pedagogy in order to improve their teaching and student learning. This paper examines the nature of reflective practice by first looking at its history. Second, it reviews a number of frameworks developed to promote the reflective practices of teachers and examine research findings about their effectiveness. Next it examines the controversy surrounding reflective practice. Finally it examines a new direction in reflective practice that holds promise for teacher development, namely communal reflection. Unlike tradition models of reflective practice that seek to develop a teachers' ability to be able ultimately to reflect independently, communal reflection occurs as a shared activity involving other teachers over a period of time.

The irony of life is that it is lived forward but understood backward.

~Soren Kierkegaard

It may seem intuitive that teachers must reflect on their practice in order to improve upon it. Mills and Satterthwait (2000) state that "the ability to reflect is often held up as an important attribute of an effective teacher" (p.29). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), in agreement with this, maintains that "accomplished mathematics teachers regularly reflect on teaching and learning" (NBPTS, 1998, p. 12).

Reflective practice is a hallmark of many teacher education programs. Most teacher preparation programs promote to some degree the training of their student teachers' reflective ability to improve their learning of the pedagogical process (Berg & Freese, 2002; Bleakley, 1999; Dinkelman, 2000; Loughran & Gunstone, 1997; Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pasch, Colton, & Starko, 1990). Some teacher education programs' use of reflective practice is relatively indirect in that student teachers are not trained on a particular approach of reflective practice, but rather they engage in a variety of reflective practices often with the guidance of a coach after formal observations. Conversely, some teacher preparation programs use reflective practice in more systematic and integral ways. These programs directly teach a particular framework for reflective practice as an essential process of the teachers' professional development. Methods often used to promote reflection include: journaling, case studies, peer discussions, conferencing, video reflections, and portfolios.

As wide spread as the use of the term reflection, it is still ill-defined. This makes it both hard to research its effectiveness and to promote its use. Interestingly, Pultorak (1999) points out that many researchers see reflective teaching as redundant statement. However, he makes "a distinction between teaching that is reflective and teaching that is technically focused" (p. 3). This is more relative today as more urban schools adopt scripted programs to meet the NCLB mandates. Reflective practice is generally seen as a process of being conscious of the complex undertakings of teaching, critically examining them, and acting upon this consciousness in the hopes of improving both one's ability to teach and in turn the students' ability to learn (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley,

2003; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Laboskey, 1994; Schön, 1987). Notably, Zeichner and Liston (1996) argue “that not all thinking about teaching constitutes reflective teaching” (p.1). They emphasize that to be a reflective practitioner teachers must question goals and values, consider the context of their teaching, and examine their preexisting assumptions. Loughran (2002) asserts that one common element of many definitions of reflection is the notion of a “problem”. In that regard, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) assert the following three major assumptions that underlie the process of reflective practice:

Assumption One. Those involved in reflective practice are committed to both problem finding and problem solving as part of that process. In problem finding, the assumption is that often the problems we are presented with in practice are murky and ill defined. Therefore, we need to be open to discovering new problems or different ways of looking at old problems.

Assumption Two. Reflective practice means making judgments about what actions will be taken in a particular situation. Because these actions usually involve seeking changes in ourselves, other people, or in systems, there is an ethical dimension to reflective practice.

Assumption Three. Reflective practice results in some form of action, even if that action is deliberate choice not to change practice. Without this action phase, the reflective practice process is incomplete. The lack of attention to this phase as a critical part of reflective practice often frustrates practitioners who are committed to reflection, but see it as a dead-end endeavor when nothing tangible results. (p. 233)

There also has been debate over whether there is a difference between the terms “reflective practice” and “critical reflection”. Critical reflection is at times used interchangeably with reflective practice. Hatton and Smith (1995) state that “the term critical reflection, like reflection itself, appears to be used loosely, some taking it to mean no more than constructive self-criticism of one’s actions with a view to improvement” (p. 35). Dinkelman (2000) defines critical reflection as “deliberation on moral and ethical dimensions of educational practice” (p.195). Others would argue that all teacher reflection requires consideration of moral and ethical dimensions of teaching to truly be reflective (Fendler, 2003).

Not only is reflective practice promoted for its promise to improve teachers’ ability to teach, but it is also promoted as a way of “professionalizing” the teaching profession. Teacher as reflective practitioners are seen as professionals who can solve educational problems, not simply as technicians that who are only able to implement “top-down forms of educational reform that involve teachers only as conduits for implementing programs and ideas formulated elsewhere” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 4).

This chapter examines the nature of reflective practice by first looking at its history. Second, it reviews a number of frameworks developed to promote the reflective practices of teachers and examine research findings about their effectiveness. Next it examines the controversy surrounding reflective practice. Finally it examines a new direction in reflective practice that holds promise for teacher development, namely communal reflection.

History of Reflective Practice

Three individuals have influenced to some extent most of the theoretical frameworks for implementing reflective practice in teacher preparation programs. They are the writings of John Dewey, Donald Schön, and Max van Manen. The following is a brief overview of their theories and contributions to reflective practice.

John Dewey (1859 – 1952) is arguably one of the most important American educational philosophers of our time. In his 1910/1991 book, *How We Think*, he defines and proposes how to promote reflective thinking. Dewey asserts that reflection is more complex than simply thinking. Specifically he states, “Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends constitutes reflective thought” (p.6). He further explains that reflective thought involves two phases: “(a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (2) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light future facts which serve to corroborate or nullify the suggested belief” (Dewey, 1910/1991, p. 9).

For Dewey, reflection serves a purpose: solution of perplexity or problems. According to Dewey, to engage in reflective thought a person first must face a problem that must be examined for a solution. However, the solution must also be examined by “turning the thing over in the mind” in search of evidence that supports it or proves its irrelevance; without this examination we have uncritical thought void of reflection (Dewey, p.13). Dewey’s concept of reflection is not a series of steps to be followed, but rather a holistic approach to problem solving that involves logic as well as curiosity, intuition and passion (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). As such, Dewey advances teachers as professional decision makers who can reflectively solve perplexities in order to make effective educational choices as oppose to technicians in need of exact procedures to follow.

Donald Schön (1930-1997) first developed theories of reflection in the field of architecture, engineering, and management before applying them to education. His biggest contribution to reflective practice is in distinguishing between two categories of reflection he coined: *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action*. Reflection-on-action occurs outside the actual teaching event, when a teacher contemplates and tries to solve perplexities of a past or future teaching experience. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) assert that this form of reflection is an analytical exercise designed to result in “new perspectives on experiences, changes in behavior, and commitments to action” (p. 235). Reflection-on-action can be developed by teachers through a number of methods including teachers keeping portfolios, writing in journals, reviewing themselves on videotape, and discussing teaching with mentors or peers.

In contrast, reflection-in-action is reflection during the actual act of teaching. It is reflecting in the heat of the moment. Schön describes reflection-in-action for teachers as:

In each instance, the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of phenomena and a change in the situation. (Schön, 1983, p.68)

Reflection-in-action allows teachers to be flexible and meet the unexpected needs of their students and the situation. This type of reflection is often tacit and harder to teach and research. Schön spoke about the importance of what he called framing and reframing reality. A frame is the perspective and context in which a problem is seen and understood. Reframing is seeing the problem from a different perspective. For Schön (1983), “when a practitioner becomes aware of his frames, he also becomes aware of the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality of his practice” (p.310).

Schön’s influence is seen in many teacher education programs that promote reflective practice as a cyclical process. This cyclical process starts with reflection-on-action prior to the actual teaching event, where the teacher

plans for the teaching event based on past experiences. Next is reflection-in-action, which involves reflecting on the lesson and the students' learning as the lesson unfolds. Finally, there is again reflection-on-action, where the teacher reflects on the lesson that has just occurred in order to learn and thus improve future pedagogy. This cycle is then continued in the ongoing process of teaching and learning.

van Manen (1977) sees reflective practice as a hierarchical process involving three levels: technical reflection, practical reflection, and critical reflection. The first level, technical reflection, involves deliberate rationality, and entails application of "educational knowledge and basic curriculum principles for the purpose of gaining a given end" (p. 226). van Manen sees the higher second level, practical reflection, as reflection focused on "an interpretive understanding both of the nature and quality of educational experience, and the making of practical choice" (p. 226). At this level teachers are concerned with more than just implementing curriculum; they are also concerned with understanding how the curriculum affects learning and with making choices to improve the teaching and learning experience. At the highest level, critical reflection, the focus is concerned with "the question of the worth of knowledge and to the nature of the social conditions necessary for raising the question of worthwhileness in the first place" (p. 227). At each level of van Manen's framework, reflection becomes more abstract and ethically based.

Findings

Out of the theories of reflective practice come various frameworks developed to increase a teacher's ability to reflect in order to improve her or his pedagogy. Many of these frameworks use a cyclical process that involves (1) reflecting on past experiences in order to plan for an actual teaching event, (2) reflection-in-action during a teaching event, (3) reflection-on-action after a teaching event in order to improve future teaching, and (4) then repeating this cycle for increased learning. Most traditional frameworks used in teacher development aim to develop teachers as independent reflective practitioners. The following is a review of five frameworks and research findings about their effectiveness.

Boud, Koegh, and Walker (1985) define reflection as: "those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations" (p.19). Similar to many frameworks, Boud and Walker (1990) propose a three-phase model for reflection that starts with preparation, then reflection-in-action during the experience of teaching, then engaging in the "reflective process" after the actual experience. This reflective process focuses on three stages: "retuning to the experience, attending to the feelings connected with the experience, and reevaluating the experience through recognizing implications and outcomes" (Boud & Knight, 1996,p. 25). This is a cyclical model that intertwines experience and reflection. While an experience is happening there is an interaction between the learning milieu (i.e., social-psychological and material environment) of that experience and the past experiences the person brings to the current experience. Boud and Walker (1990) propose two types of reflections-in-action: that of "noticing" what is occurring in an experience, and that of "intervening" within the experience. Regardless of which type of reflection-in-action a person chooses, it will affect future experiences and the cycle continues.

In reviewing previous work, Boud and Walker (1998), state that "reflection needs to be flexibly deployed, that it is highly context-specific and that the social and cultural context in which reflection takes place has a powerful influence over what kind of reflection is possible to foster and the

ways in which this might be done” (p. 191). They assert that one of the benefits of creating a local context in which to promote the development of reflective practice is that a local context can filter out the negative influences of the larger context. Local context also enables the building of trust, the setting of boundaries, and it allows for the making of meaning.

In their study, Herrington and Oliver (2000) examine the use of a multimedia program as a way to help pre-service teachers learn mathematics methods in an authentic learning environment. As one of their goals, they hope to create a learning environment that promotes reflection. They use Boud, Keogh, and Walker’s (1985) three stages of the “reflective process” to evaluate interviews of eight secondary pre-service teachers after completing the multimedia activities. The goal is to see if the learning environment promoted reflection. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Herrington and Oliver report evidence of students reflecting in all three stages of the reflective process. They use this evidence to support the use of authentic multimedia learning environments.

Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pasch, Colton, and Starko (1990) report a study examining what promotes reflective pedagogy and how to measure it. This study is a part of a student-teaching program called the Collaboration for the Improvement of Teacher Education (CITE). Specifically, they examine pre-service teachers’ ability to develop reflective thinking about curriculum, methods, and sociopolitical issues. As a part of this study, Sparks-Langer et al. developed a framework for reflective thinking to analyze pre-service teacher interviews for reflective thinking and language. This hierarchical framework is ranged from the lowest level, Level 1 (No descriptive language) to the highest level, Level 7 (Explanation with consideration of ethical, moral and political issues).

In Sparks-Langer et al’s. study, pre-service teachers are broken into three groups based on their previous course work: high achieving students, average achieving students, and low achieving students. All groups show that they are beginning to apply pedagogical principles in making teaching decisions. A one-factor ANOVA confirms that there is a difference between groups with the high achieving group outperforming the other groups on the reflective thinking interview. However, very few students in any of the groups display Level 7 (Explanation with consideration of ethical, moral, political issues thinking).

In a subsequent article, Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) state that there are three elements that are important to promoting teacher reflective thinking:

The first is the cognitive element, which describes how teachers process information and make decisions. The second, the critical element, focuses on the substance that drives the thinking—experiences, goals, values, and social implications. The final element of reflection, teachers’ narratives refers to teachers’ own interpretations of events that occur within their particular context. (p.37)

Sparks-Langer and Colton assert that the few occurrences of Level 7 of the Framework for Reflective Thinking may have been because “the program did not have a coherent, critical-theorist orientation in the social foundations courses” (p. 41).

Laboskey (1994) points out that people come to the teaching profession with long held beliefs that are not sensibly derived or tested and are hard to change. It is for these reasons she asserts that it is difficult to get student teachers to evaluate their beliefs in light of the context and the individual needs of a situation. Laboskey’s fundamental goal for teacher education “is to teach

novices to temper their judgments, to replace unsubstantiated opinion with what Dewey (1910/1991) called ‘grounded beliefs’—grounded belief that is constantly in flux and open to revision” (p. 9). The ability to have judgments constantly in flux and open to revision is necessary for good teaching. The phases that teachers go through in order to make effective judgments and to solve educational problems are illustrated in Laboskey’s Conceptual Framework for reflective teacher education and include: Teacher’s Initial State (Belief-knowledge, Values-Attitudes, Skills, and Emotions), Impetus, Acts of Reflection (Content, Process, Attitude, Condition), New Comprehension and finally Solving Education Problems. Laboskey develops this framework as a first step. The second step is to use this framework to develop and test specific reflective practices that may lead to new comprehensions.

Laboskey (1994) uses this conceptual framework to guide a study that looks at conditions needed to encourage student teachers to reflect. She first determined the student teachers’ “reflectiveness” prior to the study using the pre-study questionnaire that she developed. Based on the result of the pre-study questionnaire, student teachers are categorized as either Reflective (Alert Novice) or Unreflective (Commonsense Thinker). The interventions to promote student teachers’ reflectiveness are case investigations (like a case study but less rigorous) that require the student teachers to set a problem, gather data, analyze the data, and report conclusions. All stages of the case investigations are reported in writing so that they can be analyzed for reflection. Student teachers are then given a post-study questionnaire. Laboskey reports that student teachers who are reflective in the beginning of the study remain so, as do the unreflective student teachers. The fact that the student teachers’ reflectiveness remains for the most part constant suggests that teaching teachers to be reflective practitioners is difficult if not questionable.

Giovannelli (2003) uses Laboskey’s research method to analyze student teachers’ reflective disposition to determine if it is related to teacher effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness is established using the Survey of Teacher Effectiveness, which is a performance assessment that is broken down into four domains: classroom management, instructional behavior, classroom organization, and teacher expectation. Results of this study suggest that student teachers’ reflective disposition had a small but statistically significant effect on their effectiveness as a teacher.

Hatton and Smith (1995) developed a hierarchical framework which combines the theories of Schön and van Manen as well as others. They assert that this framework may be “a developmental sequence, starting the beginner [pre-service teacher] with the relative simplistic or partial technical type, then working through different forms of reflection-on-action to the desired end-point of a professional able to undertake reflection-in-action” (p. 45). Unlike van Manen who places critical reflection as the highest level of reflection, Hatton and Smith assert that reflection-in-action is the most complex form of reflection. Their logic is that reflection-in-action applies the abilities of other specific forms of reflection (technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical) in the complex context of teaching and thus is at the highest level of reflective teaching.

In a study, Hatton and Smith (1995) analyze written reports, self-evaluations, videotapes of teaching and “critical friend” interviews (critical friends are dyads of pre-service teachers who work together for planning, reflecting, and peer support) of pre-service teachers in the third and fourth year of their teacher preparation program for evidence of reflection. The results show that teachers did engage in reflection, however, a majority of that reflection was at the *descriptive level* (60%-70%) and there are only a few instances of reflection at the *critical level*. Students report that critical-friend interviews are the most effective strategy for fostering reflective practice.

Loughran's (1996) reflective framework is a three-part framework, which is both collaborative and systematic in nature. Student teachers are assigned to a mentor teacher. Together they reflect before, during, and after a lesson in order to improve the student teacher's pedagogy. This process involves a gradual building up over time of the intensity of reflective conversations with the student teachers. Initially, the teacher educators observe the class, and then have a conference with the student teachers giving them positive feedback and offering alternative strategies. This has the dual purpose of developing trusting working relationships and also improving the student teachers' pedagogy. During the middle phase of this framework, teacher educators observe the student teachers in action, but they also walk around monitoring the children and asking them questions. This is followed by a post-teaching conference where the teacher educators offer the children's views to the student teachers. In the final phase the teacher educator engages in reflective shared planning and debriefing to help the student teachers develop a better understanding of the teaching and learning experiences. This final stage of the process then continues (Loughran & Gunstone, 1997). Loughran (2002) asserts that "Effective reflective practice is drawn from the ability to frame and reframe the practice setting, to develop and respond to this framing through action so that the practitioner's wisdom-in-action is enhanced and, as a particular outcome, articulation of professional knowledge is encouraged" (p. 42).

Loughran and Gunstone (1997) find that very few studies they reviewed involve quantitative research to address the issue of reflective practices. A small number of studies look qualitatively at teachers' feelings and beliefs about being involved in reflective practice to improve pedagogy. A general finding of these studies is that teachers felt that reflection helps improve their pedagogy. Unfortunately, once the structure of the study is removed, some teachers report that their systematic and continual use of specific reflective practice model fades over time. Loughran and Gunstone report that:

The interesting aspect of the research is how, despite obvious acceptance, enthusiasm and ownership by participants, the impetus for change dramatically diminished when the external support ceased. It appears as though the nature of teachers' work and their workplace itself creates demands which continually affect those involved in change despite their best intentions. (p.159)

Loughran and Gunstone assert that perhaps the overall culture of these schools do not change in a way that individual and collaborative reflective practices are absorbed as a natural occurring activity within the school community.

Berg and Freese (2002) conducted a two-year study, which examines the effects of Loughran's reflective practice model on pre-service and in-service teachers' planning and teaching activities. The researchers report that they collected and coded audiotapes and videotapes of lesson planning sessions, teaching sessions, and post-teaching reflection sessions. The results of their study show that mentors and pre-service teachers seem to gain from Loughran's systematic and collaborative reflection model. It appears this process helps pre-service and mentor teachers consider the "situation-specific nature" of teaching and to become more reflective over time.

The reflective frameworks reviewed in this section endeavors to help teachers to become reflective practitioners who are able to analyze their teaching, and thus, improve upon it. Research findings are limited and mixed. Teachers' self-reports show that they believed that reflective practices helps to improve their pedagogy, however, in many studies teacher reflection is found to be relatively low-level and fixed.

Reflective Practice Controversies

Although reflective practices are widely accepted by teacher preparation programs, there are controversies that surround the alleged benefits of reflective practices. One of the biggest criticisms is that if reflective practices lead to so many good results for teachers' development and students' learning, why is it so hard to get teachers to adopt reflective practice and even harder to get them to continue to use it for ongoing improvement of their pedagogy?

Another debate among researchers concerns whether reflective practice theory tends to make people separate the teaching experience into that of mind and body (thought and action) or artistry and technique. This type of division has been criticized since John Dewey's time for avoiding the complexities of the teaching and learning process. In this regard, Tomlinson (1999) criticizes Donald Schön's reflection-in-action as promoting a dualistic model of thought and action that boosts "still further the traditional tendency to see conscious deliberation as vital to intelligent action and capability in teaching" (p. 410). Tomlinson is concerned that the explicit knowledge obtained by reflective practices overshadows the implicit knowledge which he feels is inherent in the learning environment. He also feels this separation of thought and action is not real but imposed by the theory. He quotes Gilbert Ryle as insisting that, "When I do something intelligent, [...] I am doing one thing not two" (p. 450).

Schön (1983), himself, points out criticisms of how reflection may interfere with action:

1. There is no time to reflect when we are on the firing line; if we stop to think, we may be dead.
2. When we think about what we are doing, we surface complexity, which interferes with the smooth flow of action. The complexity that we imagine unconsciously paralyzes us when we bring it to consciousness.
3. If we begin to reflect-in-action, we may trigger an infinite regress of reflection on action, then on our reflection on action, and so on ad infinitum.
4. The stance appropriate to reflection is incompatible with the stance appropriate to action. (p. 277-278)

Schön dismisses these arguments by providing an analogy of a tennis player who gives himself a moment, perhaps a split-second, to plan his next move and is better off for this reflection than if he allowed the game to happen without consciously participating in its outcome.

Bleakley (1999) also criticizes reflective practice as being "in danger of being widely adopted in higher education without rigorous interrogation of the central notion of 'reflection' itself" (p. 315). It is not that he does not think reflective practice has merit, but rather it does not have an empirical basis. He is also afraid that reflective practice is becoming a catch-all title for an ill-defined process and that reflective practice will become a set of procedures that do not require any reflection to be carried out. To make learning more palatable we often reduce its complexity to a technical recipe to be followed. The nature of reflection-in-action is that it is ambiguous by nature, in fact there would be no need to reflect (think on one's feet) if it were not.

Fendler (2003) highlights various criticisms of reflective practice. One criticism is on the overuse of reflective practices in teacher preparation programs to the excess of point of reflecting on one's ability to reflect on reflective teaching. Although this sounds humorous, it is not meant as a pure exaggeration. Fendler also accuses reflective practices as serving "to reinforce existing beliefs rather than challenge assumptions" (p. 16). Because of this, Fendler asserts that reflective practice serves to thwart educational reform

movements. Finally, Fendler is critical of many reflective practice frameworks because they often avoid issues of social justice.

New Directions in Reflective Practice of Teachers

The traditional approaches to reflection reviewed thus far in this paper aim to guide teachers to be reflective practitioners, eventually able to engage in reflection independently in order to improve their pedagogy and student learning. Although the training of a teacher as a reflective practitioner may be done in collaboration with a mentor or as a part of a teacher development program, this collaboration is short term with the ultimate goal being that teachers can independently solve their own educational dilemmas. Kumaravadivelu (2003) states:

First, by focusing on the role of the teacher and the teacher alone, the reflective movement tends to treat reflection as an introspective process involving a teacher and his or her reflective capacity, and not as an interactive process involving the teacher and a host of others: learners, colleagues, planners, and administrators. (p.12)

Frameworks that focus on teachers as individual reflective practitioners assume that teachers have alternative approaches from which to reframe their educational problems in order to solve them. Zeichner and Liston (1996), however, state that “teachers often lose sight of the fact that their everyday reality is only one of many possible alternatives, a selection from a larger universe of possibilities” (p. 9). Dewey expresses the need for past experiences and knowledge in which the problem is contextualized in order to have alternative action. Dewey (1910/1991) asserts that, “unless there has been experience in some degree analogous, which may now be represented in imagination, confusion remains mere confusion. There is nothing upon which to draw in order to clarify” (p.12).

An approach to teacher reflective practice that has promise for helping teachers reframe their educational dilemmas is *communal reflection*. Communal reflection occurs when teachers come together in a professional learning community to reflect and problem-solve in order to improve their pedagogy and student learning. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is socially constructed and occurs as a function of activity, context, history, and culture (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, learning requires social interaction and co-participation, which is what professional learning communities (PLC) afford teachers. In this vein, Collier (1997) suggests that “reflection is a social arena for public exchange and examination of ideas” (p.4). Specifically, Cobb, Boufi, McClain, and Whitenack (1997) define communal reflection as a “collective activity of making what was previously done in action an object of reflection” (p. 258).

Three promising PLCs that involve communal reflection are Lesson Study, Critical Friends Groups, and Teacher Video Clubs. In addition to allowing a space for communal reflection, all of these professional development approaches are ongoing, integral parts of teachers’ practice. They serve as a bottom-up approach to educational reform where teachers are seen as professionals able to solve their own education dilemmas. In an interview, James Stigler, author of *The Teaching Gap* and coauthor of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), states that high-quality teacher professional development is site-based, an ongoing part of teacher work, curriculum-based, directly related to teacher practice, and collaborative (Willis, 2002). The three frameworks reviewed below have promise for such professional development.

Lesson Study is a Japanese approach for improving instruction. Specifically Lewis, Perry and Murata (2006) state that lesson study involves

the “observation of live classroom lessons by a group of teachers who collect data on teaching and learning and collaboratively analyze it” (p. 3). Lewis points out that there are four key features to a Japanese lesson study which include (a) the sharing of long-term teacher goals, (b) the targeting of critical lesson content, (c) the focusing on student learning and development, and (d) the observing of live teaching of a research lesson (Lewis, 2002). In interviews, Japanese teachers report that the lesson studies provide opportunity for collaboration which is essential for the improvement of instruction. Lesson study is not a one-time professional development activity with the objective of improving a single lesson, but rather ongoing teacher activity that allows teachers to collectively reflect on the improvement of instruction. The typical lesson study cycle involves: (a) studying curriculum and formulating goals, (b) planning for instruction, (c) conducting research by observing and collecting data, and (d) reflecting collectively with colleagues in order to improve instruction and learning (Lewis, Perry & Hurd, 2004).

Lewis and Tsuchida (1998) report that Japanese teachers who are interviewed regarding what allows teaching in Japan to go from “teaching as telling” to “teaching for understanding” repeatedly report that it was the influence of lesson study. After years of research, Lewis, Perry and Hurd (2004) report seven benefits of successful lesson study: “increased knowledge of subject matter, increased knowledge of instruction, increased ability to observe students, stronger collegial network, stronger connection of daily practice to long-term goals, stronger motivation and sense of efficacy, improved quality of available lesson plans” (p. 19). Lesson study serves as a vehicle for a public form of collaborative reflection that serves to improve instruction, and it has promise as a bottom-up reform method.

The notion of Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) was initiated by the National School Reform Faculty “as a job-embedded form of professional development focused on learning in community through the collaborative examination of student work and teacher practice” (p. 1). CFGs are “not a recipe-for-success workshop, but a coaches’ training program for building collaboration and reflection among colleagues” (Bambino, 2002, p. 25). CFG involve 8-12 teachers who come together on a regular basis to reflect on educational dilemmas involving teachers’ work and students’ learning. Teachers in CFGs utilize numerous protocols that guide them through the analysis of their work. Protocols are structured approaches that help teachers analyze student work, address text (such as professional articles), and tackle teacher dilemmas in an efficient and productive manner. Bambino (2002) credits CFGs as being “the catalyst for changes in teaching, learning, culture, and climate of learning communities in a great variety of schools” (p.27).

Key (2006) reviewed the research literature on CFGs and found it to be sparse. Although there is abundant literature describing CFGs, Key only found sixteen research articles, which include eight dissertations, three peer-reviewed articles, three conference papers, and two reports. Although most of the research reviewed by Key touts CFGs’ benefits, a study by Curry (2003, as cited in Key, 2006) cautions that its benefits may be limited because of waning interest in its long term use. Additionally, it is reported that the use of protocols may inhibit some from pursuing particular lines of inquiry. Overall the limited research does support the benefits of CFGs as an ongoing professional development method that encourages communal reflection.

Another collaborative approach to reflection and analysis that has promise for improving teacher pedagogy is teacher video clubs. Video clubs are a type of professional development activity in which teachers come together to watch and discuss videotapes from their classrooms in order to improve their pedagogy (Frederiksen, Sipusic, Sherin, & Wolfe, 1998; Sherin, 2000; Sherin,

2002; Sherin & Han, 2004; Thomas et al., 1998). The process of communally reflecting on teaching and learning is contextualized by the viewing of videotapes of authentic classroom activity.

Sherin and Han (2004) maintain that “teachers cannot be expected to learn simply by being told what to do” (p. 163). Their study examines change in teacher discourse while participating in teacher video clubs. They find that teacher discourse changes over time in two ways: (a) the primary focus of teacher discourse changes from teacher action to student actions and ideas, and (b) discussions of students’ thinking changes from simple restatement of students’ ideas to detailed analysis of student thinking. Their study, along with other studies on video clubs (Frederiksen et al., 1998; Thomas et al., 1998), does not systematically look at how participation in video clubs ultimately affected classroom activity. Video clubs show promise as space for teachers to come together to communally reflect on contextual events of the classroom, and in doing so give teacher space to reform teaching.

Discussion

This paper reviewed reflective practice’s history, traditional frameworks for reflective practice and related research findings, controversies surrounding these approaches to reflective practice, and finally a new direction in reflective practices, namely communal reflection. It is hard to imagine that good teachers do not reflect on their practice. Although it may seem intuitive to some that reflective practice helps improve teachers’ pedagogy, there is still relatively little research that supports this. Further, even fewer studies report the effects of reflective practice on student learning outcomes.

Most teacher educational programs use reflection for teacher development to some extent, whether it is highly systematic, or whether it is loosely implemented. The goal of most of these approaches is to develop teachers’ capability to *independently* reflect in order to improve their pedagogy. A new direction for reflective practice that may have potential for impacting the immediate and ongoing needs of teachers, as well as impacting reform movement in education is *communal* reflection. The three approaches (Lesson Study, Critical Friends Groups, and Teacher Video Clubs) reviewed in this paper use communal reflection as a tool for professional development.

In addition to allowing a space for communal reflection, all of these approaches advance the need for collaboration and professional development that is an ongoing integral part of teachers’ practice. They serve as a bottom-up approach to educational reform, where teachers are seen as professionals able to identify and solve their own and each others’ education dilemmas through communal reflection and in doing so have the potential for changing education and as a result improve both teacher work and student learning. However, there is still a need for more empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of communal reflection as a professional development approach, particularly what attributes lead to its effectiveness.

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Review of
HABITS OF MIND ACROSS THE CURRICULUM:
PRACTICAL AND CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS EDITED BY
ARTHUR L. COSTA AND BENA KALLICK, ASCD 2009
Reviewed by Thomas Hansen

THOMAS HANSEN is an independent consultant and a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago.

It is important to consider whether we should use the “habits of mind” with our teachers and with our teacher candidates. These applications of the tenets proposed by Costa and Kallick build on what was put forth in the 2000 series on the habits of mind and covers several different subject areas. Assembled here are units and plans for using the “habits” in reading social studies, the performing arts, math, foreign language, character education, poetry, and physical education. Although some of these are the older terms for the subject currently taught in the schools, we all know what they refer to. Teachers of these subjects provide ideas for adapting the habits and using them to help students succeed.

To back up a bit, it is important to review the habits, understanding that this movement draws apparently from a variety of sources, such as Carl Rogers, character education, socialization, and just good old-fashioned perseverance. Whether Costa and Kallick realize it or not, the tenets of their habits emanate from these and related streams in education. There are 16 habits, and they are listed and explained for us briefly on page x of this volume. One important habit is “thinking interdependently.” The authors remind teachers to “Work together!” They give these other hints related to this habit: “Being able to work with and learn from others in reciprocal situations; working in teams.”

The first chapter here also gives us a reminder of how the habits are to be used in teaching, and it is written by Costa and Kallick. It is not necessary to repeat all 16 habits here. Instead, I would recommend teachers or teacher educators read one of these texts to see if it a set of strategies which you might wish to attempt to teach your students. Like many approaches to teaching—and hints to teaching better—teachers may wish to adopt this on a program-wide or building-wide basis to get more persons involved in learning, teaching, and using the strategies.

Because so many teachers at all levels are now using group projects, team learning, discussion groups, and similar approaches to teaching material and skills in classrooms, I would suggest that you ask classroom teachers—or education students—to try a few of these strategies to see if they will help students focus on what they are supposed to be doing. Understanding that there is a strategy, and a purpose, to the activity assigned to them can help some students gain ownership in the process.

I have two strong recommendations regarding this volume. First, I would advise teachers to read one or more of the original works from the older series as background. This would seem to be the best way to implement and design one’s own more applicable strategies and units for use in the classroom. If teachers or student-teachers would like to work on designing units with other teachers, that can be beneficial also. This could also be a wonderful series to read in a workshop setting. Professional development based on the possible uses of the habits of mind could be a beneficial use of time. After all, teachers will be discussing applications and strategies for their own classrooms.

Second, I would remind readers that these are samples of units only. The chapter on “foreign language,” for example, is not very helpful. It makes lots of abstract claims that are not necessarily supported in the literature and

gives us very little specific help for teaching language. Increasingly, the terms “world language” and “second language” are being used now, and the addition of units on more authentic scenarios for language learning are emerging. For example, instead of having students scream “red” when asked what color salsa is, they could be making salsa (in Spanish) and experiencing it with native speakers of the language visiting the classroom and then going to nearby homes or stores to taste several different recipes for salsa—some that are mild and some that are very spicy. Learning how to make and use salsa in different dishes, as explained in Spanish by native speakers could also help the students. Such real-world experiences could allow students to use other habits, such as “thinking flexibly” and “remaining open to continuous learning.”

Teachers of many subjects will be able to think of ways to make good use of the habits in their own teaching and units. As one more interesting way to vary our curriculum and our methods, teaching with the habits of mind could offer many teachers some innovative ways to approaching their important daily work.

Review of
CONTENT-AREA CONVERSATIONS: HOW TO PLAN DISCUSSION-BASED
LESSONS FOR DIVERSE LANGUAGE LEARNERS BY DOUGLAS FISHER,
NANCY FREY, AND CAROL ROTHENBERG, ASCD 2008
Reviewed by Thomas Hansen

THOMAS HANSEN is an independent consultant and a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago.

While not a very advanced-level text, this short paperback will have two practical uses and is a book I can recommend. The authors present a good introduction to some of the issues of teaching lessons when there are English language learners of diverse backgrounds in the classroom.

First, the text would be very helpful for classroom teachers who do not have training in the needs of English language learners and how to go about those meeting those needs. The book does present the basics of instruction in English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education, including the “Five performance levels of English language proficiency” (p. 13) as put forth by the international organization called Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. The book also shows us the great diversity of the English language learners in any given classroom—based on differences in motivation levels, proficiency levels, and other factors. Some English language learners speak their own language very well and have reading knowledge in one or more languages because of study in their home countries. Other students have lower levels of proficiency and perhaps very little literacy in their first language. Explanations and reminders such as these are quite helpful for teachers who have not taught classes housing many English language learners.

For these reasons, teachers who already have the Illinois ESL or bilingual education endorsements would most likely consider the book much too basic for their purposes. However, they might profit from using it in discussions they are leading in staff development sessions as master teachers or group facilitators. Combined with their more technical background, these leaders could make good use of the introductory-level information presented here, and needed by their peers who may not yet have the background in ESL or bilingual education.

Second, the text would be beneficial for administrators and for teacher-educators who would like a quick introduction to some of the most important

vocabulary, concepts, and approaches to helping English language learners. The book is not overly technical and does not overwhelm us with background information. For example, the book does list in a very clear grid some of the differences between social and academic English proficiency (p. 37) as outlined by Scarcella and Rumberger but does not even mention Cummins or others one might expect to be discussed more thoroughly, given the topics at hand. The book also provides hints for organizing the classroom physically and in terms of curriculum to encourage more speaking.

However, two big mistakes occur in this section. There is an example of the famous “Find someone who...” activity (pp. 77-78) for the first day of class, an event which could close down some English language learners for the rest of the year. In fact, this kind of old-fashioned activity conducted by teachers who have never taken a psychology class before can bring on the symptoms of illnesses like panic disorder, social phobia, or other problems. These kinds of embarrassing activities are to be avoided at all costs. The second bad idea is the interviews of the total strangers. Some students do not want to interview, or be interviewed by, people they have never met before—especially not with a roomful of people watching and listening. Again, some students may experience symptoms of illnesses like panic disorder or social phobia. As educators, we need to close down these kinds of activities in classrooms. For that matter, they are a terrible idea in college courses and in professional development sessions also.

