Narratives of Professional Learning: Becoming a Teacher and Learning to Teach

Mary Beattie

with contributions by Carol-Anne Sapiano, Ellen Shifrin and Ruth Weinstock

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto, Canada

Introduction

This paper is about professional learning in the context of becoming a teacher. It presents narrative accounts written by prospective teachers that show how they have created professional knowledge through inquiry. These narrative excerpts present the voices of prospective teachers as they deal with their most pressing issues and concerns, examine prior knowledge in the light of new understandings, and construct new knowledge through the processes of reflection, dialogue and inquiry. The details of the narratives are illustrative of the ways in which these prospective teachers have learned to question the taken-for-granted in their lives, to find patterns and connections, and to think critically and creatively. They show the people and the personalities behind the ideas and the issues, and provide glimpses of these individuals' personal hopes, beliefs, theories, worldviews, passions and preoccupations. They also provide insights into the processes of creating an ethically-based professional knowledge in teaching that is unique to each individual.

These narrative excerpts were written in the context of a year-long teacher education program in which prospective teachers were enrolled as a cohort in two consecutive courses in the foundations of Education, Teaching, Students, Schools and Systems, and Developing a Philosophy in Teaching. These prospective secondary school teachers specialized in the teaching of two subjects, one of which they had studied to the level of an advanced degree, and taken a number of university courses in the other. Many of these individuals had spent a number of years pursuing other careers before entering the teacher education program, and consequently brought a range of rich career and life experiences to that setting.

Contact details: atremblay@oise.utoronto.ca

In the context of the two combined foundations courses, individuals worked on a variety of activities and projects which engaged them in individual and collaborative inquiry: ongoing reflective writing; exploration and sharing of metaphors and images of teaching and learning; role-play and simulation activities; analysis of critical incidents in practice; storytelling; and cooperative research and group presentations. These activities provided them with multiple opportunities to share ideas with others and to hear views and perspectives different from their own. Within the framework of these activities, it was emphasised that:

- teacher education is an holistic enterprise involving the whole person;

- learning and the construction of meaning is a relational, social process;

- stories and narratives are primary ways of thinking, knowing and representing what is known.

As they developed relationships with their colleagues and the instructor of the course over time, participants learned that they could talk about the frustrations, dilemmas, failures and difficulties of becoming a teacher, as well as the joys and successes. Many prospective teachers admitted that when they first entered the teacher education program, they thought of learning as memorizing, and understood teaching as showing, telling and performing. They admitted feeling uncomfortable at the outset with the requirement to be reflective about past and current experience and practices, and with the expectation that they should be actively involved in the construction of their own professional knowledge. Many students admitted that they expected to be given 'the packaged goods approach' to becoming a teacher, and to feeling frustrated and disappointed when their expectations were not met. For many of these prospective teachers, it took time, trusting relationships, and the experiences of collaboration to understand the benefits of learning from and with others, and to accept an active role in their own professional education and in the transformation of their understandings.

The Theoretical Framework

A narrative and holistic orientation to teacher education is grounded in Dewey's philosophy of education and his belief that we learn from experience and reflection on experience. As Dewey (1966) has explained: '[the] educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming experience' (p. 50), and this holds whether one is in a setting of teacher education, a high school or a kindergarten. As instructor, I emphasize the necessity for participants to understand the foundational concepts on which the courses are based; that the emphasis on reflective inquiry in learning to teach was established by Dewey in his work on conceptions of time, space, experience and sociality (Dewey, 1916, 1934, 1938a, 1938b).

The research on reflective practice challenges and supplants the image of the prospective teacher as passive and dependent on the expertise of others, and suggests that prospective teachers' perceptions of teaching are shaped by knowledge gained from their own personal and school experiences (Calderhead, 1991). It puts forward the idea that they bring a wealth of knowledge to the teacher education

setting, and that this knowledge, acquired as a student, has to be examined and adapted in the process of creating a professional knowledge. Conceptions of teaching and learning are then reconstructed from a teacher's perspective.

The emphasis on reflection in teacher education and development is central to the work of researchers such as Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 1996), Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1988, 1993, 1994), Shulman (1987), Munby (1986), Munby and Russell (1996, 1992), Zeichner (1986), Zeichner and Liston (1987), Smith (1991), Smith and Hatton (1993) and Hatton and Smith (1995). It is especially central to the work of Schon, with regard to professional knowledge (Schon, 1983, 1987). The practices of reflective inquiry in initial teacher education are currently being emphasised in the work of researchers such as Beattie (1997b), Bullough and Gitlin (1995), Craig (1992), Conle (1996), Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), Valli (1992) and Zeichner and Liston (1987, 1990). These researchers present a challenge to the traditional and dominant view of teacher education as training, where there is a focus on the mastery of a certain set of strategies or techniques, and where theory that is externally produced - educational literature and public policy documents - is privileged over theory grounded in personal experience.

A body of literature has emerged in recent years which provides prospective teachers' perspectives in learning to teach, and allows their voices to be heard as they speak of their concerns, issues and ways in which they experience their learning and their lives in education. This work connects the voices of contemporary educators to the teacher stories and stories of teachers, such as those by Coles (1989), Paley (1981, 1986), Jackson (1968) and Ashton-Warner (1963). These voices can be heard in current work on teacher education that is based in narrative inquiry, such as in the work of Beattie (1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b), Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz and Maeers (1997), Clandinin (1986), Connelly and Clandinin (1988), Conle (1997), Knowles and Cole (1994) and Witherall and Noddings (1991). These provide teacher educators and prospective teachers with new possibilities and ways of hearing the details of professionals' ways of knowing.

A narrative and holistic orientation to professional learning is based on the education and development of the whole person who is becoming a teacher. The construction of professional knowledge is understood as a relational and interactive process where teacher, student and subject matter are interconnected (Schwab, 1971, 1983). Here, the particularities of personal and situational contexts are important. In the context of a curriculum for teacher education, this view challenges simplistic notions of a curriculum based on a set of theoretical and practical requirements, a course of study, or a list of competencies. It validates individuals' experiences of schooling, their personal biographies and family histories, and experiences of growing up in different cultural environments. It accounts for and works with the differences brought by individuals to the teacher education setting; the different cultures, genders and ethnicities to which they belong, and the societies, institutions and communities in which they have lived.

This perspective acknowledges the complexities and the realities of becoming a teacher; the realistic and often stressful, conflicting demands of juggling

3

too many roles such as that of parent, wage-earner and student of teaching. The details of these realities and the ways in which they are experienced by individual persons illuminate the human processes behind the research on teacher education. They show the creative and uniquely personal ways in which individuals deal with the dilemmas and challenges in their lives, rather than deny them, and use them as constructs (rather than obstacles) in the creation of a broader design.

The idea that learning takes place in relationships, and that the self is formed, given meaning and understood in the context of its relations with others, is central to the process of becoming a teacher and of learning to teach. Through respectful dialogue and conversations with multiple others, individuals come to know themselves and others, to know what they know and to construct professional identities. It holds also that by entering into a 'caring relation' (Noddings, 1984) with others, genuine dialogue can take place and empathy, inclusiveness, mutuality and trust can develop. The concept of a relational self - a self that is shaped and given meaning in the context of its relations with others - is supported by the work of philosophers such as Buber (1965) Gilligan (1982), Macmurray (1961), Noddings (1984) and Taylor (1989). In the context of professional learning and in the processes of responding to others and developing the abilities to be more response-able, prospective teachers move beyond the limitations of their own knowing; learning to learn from and with others and engage in the co-construction of meanings. Berscheid (1985, p. 60) has said:

> It is difficult to exaggerate the role other people play in determining what each individual knows about his or her world. To an extent far greater than most of us commonly recognize, what we know about our physical environment, and ourselves, is determined, either directly or indirectly, within our relationships with other people.

Within collegial relationships, beginning teachers can learn about themselves, about others and about teaching and learning, as they re-focus their attention from themselves and their teaching onto students and their learning. Through honest dialogue and conversation with colleagues, they can learn to accept perspectives other than their own, transcend the limits of their own knowing, cultures and life experiences, and learn how to create classroom communities where their students also learn and enact these qualities. These conversations provide ongoing support and continuous feedback for individuals as they grapple with the complexities of becoming members of the teaching profession in a large urban, multicultural, multilingual setting.

In a narrative, holistic conception of a curriculum for teacher education, narratives and stories become the frameworks within which experience is reflected upon, shared and reconstructed in the light of new insights, perspectives, experiences and understandings. When it is understood that personal, familial, social, cultural and organisational stories are temporal arrangements of the way things are, and that these taken-for-granted stories can be re-scripted, there is the potential for change and transformation in personal lives, classroom situations and social and organisational settings.

Narrative and story have long been regarded as an intellectual resource in the arts, where they have been used to describe and interpret the experiences of human beings down through the centuries. Bruner (1986) has explained that we construct ourselves through narrative and make sense of our lives by telling stories of our lives. Here, the knower is connected to the known, and knowledge-making is recognised as an active creative, interpretive process, in which the telling and re-telling of one's story provides a framework for the construction of professional knowledge in teaching (Beattie, 1995a, 1997a, 1997b; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

Based on MacIntyre's (1981) concept of a self — whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death, as narrative unites beginning to middle to end - the processes of inquiry and reflection on experience allow an individual to identify what has personal significance and meaning for him or her personally, and to forge a personal vision of reality that accounts for construction in relation to others; in the context of family and community, and the social and cultural systems that provide meaning to that individual's existence. Theory and practice are connected and integrated within the development of an individual's professional knowledge, as personal meanings and understandings are made explicit and placed alongside the concepts, theories and descriptions of practice that come from others.

Emergent Themes in the Research

Over a period of nine years, I read and responded to approximately 900 narratives written by prospective teachers. Three major themes emerged from these pieces of work. I selected narratives which illustrated the emergent themes, and in collaboration with their authors, edited and reworked these for a possible publication bearing their author's names and permission to publish. The three major themes were:

- Creating a Professional Identity: Connecting the Personal and the Professional

- Creating Relationships and Making New Relations: Learning From and With Others

- Creating New Narratives: Connecting Self, School and Society

To provide insights into these themes and the ways in which they were experienced by beginning teachers, each theme is illustrated by selections from one person's narrative.

❄ ❄ ❄

Theme 1: Creating a Professional Identity: Connecting the Personal and the Professional

The following excerpt of a narrative by Carol Sapiano highlights the interconnectedness of the personal and the professional in the process of becoming a teacher, and shows the deep connections between the intellectual, emotional, social

and moral dimensions of the person who is learning to teach. It shows how she uses her central values and purposes as a framework to guide her questioning, to identify the choices available to her, and to make decisions about practice. The account illustrates the way in which reflection and inquiry enable her to make connections between the way she has been taught and the ways in which she wishes to teach, enabling her to reconstruct and rescript her understandings of the role of the teacher and learner. Her increasing self-knowledge enables her to understand her efforts to encourage students' voices, to promote inquiry and critical thinking, and to pursue those as worthy goals in her work. It illustrates her quest to make more intimate connections to herself, to her students and to the social and educational communities to which they belong. It is a testimony to the faith she has in herself and in her students, and in her will and desire to pursue what she believes is possible for both.

❈ ❈ ❈

Accommodating the Self in Teaching

by Carol-Anne Sapiano

Teacher as Chameleon

I have learned that being an effective teacher is much like being a chameleon. Just as the chameleon is a beast that changes colour to adapt to disparate moods of panic, pleasure, or pain, so too must a teacher be able to adopt a multitude of personae in order to suit the needs of different environments. The practicality of being chameleon-like was most evident during the first few days of my practice teaching sessions in my teacher education year. Picture this - a room occupied by one student-teacher and approximately 25 students who are already at an advantage in their experience of working together as a class, before the arrival of their 'guest'. In order that learning takes place during their minimal time spent together, some adaptations must occur. Which is more pragmatic, having the 25 adjust their learning styles to the student-teacher's teaching style, or vice versa? Think about it...

> For starters, each new classroom, principal, school board, and student will be a surprise. As I've grown to understand it, there doesn't seem to be much room for assumption in this because things are always changing. Doing things differently or adapting to meet these changes isn't as difficult as it appears. It's just a matter of exploring these new frontiers, getting comfortable, and generating a 'recipe book' of ways to handle transition, whether it's the destreaming phenomenon, alternative lesson plans, an attitude that welcomes change, or simply a willingness to try new things. (Professional Journal, December 3, 1994)

Teacher as Zen Buddhist Yashiko

One of the greatest compliments I have ever received from students is their assertion that my presence as a teacher tends to be enigmatic. What one particular class of Grade Twelves discovered during my stay with them was that I was everything *but* what they had been conditioned to expect of an English teacher. I used Socratic strategies minimally, refused to preach my knowledge and expect them to embrace it without question. What I did was to encourage freedom of thought, speech, action and 'alternative' learning. I also made space for the emergence of student voices and opened windows in their minds. I tried to accomplish this by challenging what

they accepted as truth, baiting them, tantalizing and teasing them with ideas that raised their curiosity to a point at which they had no option but to independently pursue them. I tried to 'answer' their questions with other 'guiding' questions so that they could learn to take responsibility for their own learning. I know that my questions sometimes frustrated them because many had grown accustomed to depending on teachers to learn for them by unconditionally providing the answers to questions instead of having them think for themselves.

> My experiences with students both in class and out of it have helped me realize that teaching, in all its grandeur, is simply about making a connection with students.

> Opening this channel of communication includes above all else, listening to the emerging voices of learners as unique individual persons and validating both their experience and their self-worth. The most valuable lessons to be learned are not found in English, the Sciences, Math, Physical Education, Music, Languages, Technology, Family Studies, Social Sciences or Religion per se. These serve as the machinery with which to probe and explore the lessons in <u>life</u> that students will carry with them past graduation. Taking a stand and defending it, thinking creatively, critically and independently, getting along with others regardless of differences, being aware of one's strengths and limitations, and respecting, caring for and believing in oneself - these are the lessons that matter. (Professional Journal, October 22, 1993)

At times, I wanted so much to give in and 'solve' their problems. Then I remembered the words of wisdom given by a Zen Buddhist Yashiko, a term somewhat similar to the North American concept of a mentor. His advice to me was 'Observe ... Think Much ... Speak Little ... Allow the Young to Grow in Knowing ...' At the time, I wondered skeptically about how students could grow if the teacher spoke little. We discussed the concept at length after which I came to the realization that discovery and not memorization was fundamental to a student's acquisition of knowledge because only through discovery did students actively participate in their own learning and, hence, to grow in their experience.

In our conversation, Mr. Lau (Yashiko) did not solve the problem for me. Rather he guided me through my 'confused' phase by breaking the problem down into manageable parts, encouraging me to consider each part in isolation and then the basic premises of all of the parts in the context of my original problem. From this enlightened yet humble and simple man, I learned the importance of learning to learn - the fundamental curriculum that lies beneath curriculum.

> By spending time with students outside of class I found that, in order to really help them improve, I had to help them to realize that the process of improving has more to do with self-esteem and independence than it does with essay writing. My motto in these sessions was 'You've got what it takes, you just haven't learned to use it yet'. Rather than drawing attention to and emphasizing their weaknesses (as was done to me) this teacher believes in helping students to strengthen themselves, and of using reminders of their strengths to encourage the attainment of their goals.

> On the last day of my first practice teaching session students approached me with a card signed by all of their classmates. In it, they weren't thanking me for the innovative lessons, creative presentations, or for the hours I had spent researching and reading in order to fulfill what I had perceived to be my foremost responsibilities as a teacher. Instead, they thanked me for sharing my stories, and for laughing, but most

of all for pushing them, mentoring them, believing in them... (Professional Journal, October 22, 1993)

Throughout my journal writings I have asked 'but how is it that students allow a teacher into their lives this way?', and found answers in the traditional Japanese relationship between mentor and student. This relationship is based solely on trust - trust that the mentor has *earned* and not been endowed with by virtue of his title. Simultaneous images of mentor and chameleon come to mind as there is no one prescribed method of earning the trust of students. All classes are not the same and the mentor must *observe* the likes and dislikes of students, that which elicits respect and conversely that which denies it (respect). The chameleon must *adapt* to these observations keeping in mind that she chose this profession for others and not for the self. This is the *thinking* that finally makes sense for me - the invisible agenda that took me nearly eight months to work out. By reflecting back on my teaching experiences and my attempts to interpret these in journal writings, the colors became clearer and more vibrant. An excerpt from my journal shows how I was trying to work it out:

> The students' trust in my experience, comes slowly as the result of honesty, Job's patience, demonstrated knowledge of subject matter, confidence, well-roundedness, concern for the welfare of each individual student, ability to remain cool, calm and collective during crises, open-mindedness, availability to students as listener, identification of self as learner, respect for students and their experience, and much much much much much much much much much much much much much much more... (Professional Journal, April 10, 1994)

The literal translation of Yashiko from ancient Japanese is 'enlightened one' which necessitates the inclusion of a spiritual dimension to this image of teacher. A further excerpt from my professional journal shows how I was learning about this in the context of my life as a teacher:

> I am a Roman Catholic whose faith is alive in all that I do. This doesn't mean that I attempt to convert every person I meet. What it does mean however is that I lead my life in a way that reflects my spirituality. My faith is a very simple one, really. It has everything to do with respect for oneself and for others - a value I hope to instill in each and every one of my students, Catholic or not. My insistence on students' respect for others includes both women and men, heterosexuals and gay persons, all races, creeds and cultures equally. (Professional Journal, February 13, 1994)

My spirituality manifests itself in the example I try to set as a role model in the classroom. I do not hesitate to use sacred texts and myths in my English class, encouraging students to explore their human values, to *feel* their power and, thus, to draw inspiration from them. I hesitate to call myself a religious person because that would limit my spirituality to an observant participation in a specific ritual and would restrict my image of mentor to the Roman Catholic sphere. In my experience both in public and separate schools, I sensed a yearning in students for an opportunity to be able to integrate the spiritual into their lives. In a drama class I was teaching, students asked silently for guidance by choosing to enact a tableau entitled 'Important Things' to the song 'True Believers' by Kevin Jordan. The lyrics speak of a generation of lost adolescents who are confused about spirituality because they lack role models in a hypocritical society of 'believers'. The next day

I responded to my Grade Twelves in their language of silence quoting the Koran which I found on the compact disc sleeve of the ever popular new-age soloist, Enigma, saying:

> I tried to find Him on the Christian cross, but He was not there; I went to the Temple of the Hindus and to the old pagodas, but I could not find a trace of Him anywhere.

> I searched on the mountains and in the valleys but neither in the heights nor in the depths was I able to find Him. I went to the Caaba in Mecca, but He was not there either.

> I questioned the scholars and philosophers, but He was beyond their misunderstanding.

> I then looked into my heart and it was there where He dwelled that I saw Him; He was nowhere else to be found.

> Jelaluddin Rumi (from the album The Cross of Changes: Enigma, 1993 Virgin)

Once more I failed to conform to their expectations because I didn't preach to them or attempt to indoctrinate them, I merely observed, guided and encouraged them in the spirit of Yashiko (mentorship).

❀ ❀ ❀

One thing I've learned about myself is that I'm not like any other English teacher — I'm myself. I tried denying my creativity for a very long time in my attempts to come to grips with my own identity as a person who is also a teacher.

In musicians' terms, "I denied my own music and, thus, denied my own person". I rejected this essential part of myself in the pursuit of the professional and found that this robbed me of the energy and vitality necessary for professional growth. Having discovered this, I now see that my approach to English is artistically eclectic. I integrate visual art, music, dance, and drama into the curriculum to bring it alive in its appeal to the senses. I've never understood why such strategies are restricted to art and drama classes. I intentionally break these unspoken rules and it feels amazing because it has the intended effect — it *inspires*.

I take risks when I bring my creative self into the classroom but it is by doing so that I have found my niche. I want my students to take risks too, and it is only when they take calculated risks and ownership that their ideas and plans become truly theirs. It is then that the "magic" of *real* learning takes place before my very eyes.

I remember when I really learned the importance of this. I was teaching piano to a number of students and one evening I was surprised to hear the door-bell ring since I was not expecting anyone. I opened the door to find Sasha (one of my piano students) waiting outside. I had forgotten all about his tutorial that evening. Nevertheless, we sat down and began as though it were a regular day. As Sasha

moved through Mozart's Seventh Symphony overcoming all of his previous problematic areas with the grace of a professional, my own doubts faded. Sasha had come to me two years previously with minimal musical background and a resentment at having been forced into piano lessons by his parents. As he played before me, I felt his sense of oneness with the piece — an experience that only few musicians come to know in their involvement with art.

As he concluded, I stood up and applauded. He looked up at me with an expression of utter disbelief which (as I applauded even louder) was transformed to one of joy. "I never knew I could do this. I've come a long way haven't I?," he said. I had patiently guided him through the frustrations of being a new learner to the rewards of a disciplined musician. "This is what I am", I thought to myself. "It's in me. I still have a great deal to learn, but I am a teacher."

Theme 2: Creating Relationships and Making New Relations: Learning From and With Others

Ellen Shifrin's narrative below illustrates the dynamics of the movement from 'connection with the self' to 'connection with others', to 'connection towards shared meaning-making and understanding'. It provides insights into one prospective teacher's efforts to be sensitive and responsive to students, to learn from and with them, and to teach in a way that 'provides ongoing stimulation, excitement and challenges' for both the student and the teacher. Ellen explores the metaphor of 'teaching as like being in a good relationship', and describes her understanding of the teaching-learning relationship as one that enables students to be actively engaged in their own learning and inquiry. This excerpt from her narrative is a description of what she considers to be some of the components of good relationships, and the value and relevance of good relationships in enhancing the quality of students' experience in classrooms and schools. Ellen shows that it is within good teacher-student relationships that a teacher learns to sense and articulate students' motivations and needs and to win their allegiance and commitment both to the curriculum and to the relationship. Ellen shows that when teaching is understood as a relational endeavour, the role of the teacher shifts from that of an 'all-knowing', 'all powerful', 'superior' being, to that of guide and co-learner. For Ellen, the struggle to become a better teacher involves learning about students' interests, values, concerns and purposes, learning to collaborate with them to realize mutually established agendas, and learning to share power, authority and decision-making as much as possible.

❀ ❀ ❀

Moving Beyond Power, Control and Manipulation

by Ellen Shifrin

After almost eight months at the Faculty of Education I was still in limbo, trying to decide where to go, whether I even wanted to remain a teacher. I knew where I did NOT want to go: I did not want to teach in the traditional public school system. From time to time I considered becoming something else, but I have been a teacher of one sort or another for twenty years. So it was only with great difficulty that I even <u>imagined</u> doing something else. But there were (and are) aspects of teaching that bothered me The following story and reflections from my practice teaching journal illustrate my struggle with the issues of power and control.

At one point during the second week I had one of the Gatsby classes read and write in their reading logs for about ten or fifteen minutes… all but two of the students were doing it, the room was generally quiet. But there were a couple of students still horsing around, talking, clearly not doing as everyone else was. And that can be disruptive not only to me but also to the rest of the class. So I went over and asked the fellow who was turned around talking to turn around, face his own desk, and start doing the work, to take advantage of the time to read a bit. He did it. I felt really weird about doing that though. The power of it felt most uncomfortable. I said something, he did it, with some reluctance. I had to work a little harder with him than with most of the class, but nevertheless he bowed to my superior place in this system.

Another incident occurred later in the week. One of the girls, who might have been away for the first class that I taught, expressed the opinion that she did not like to interrupt her reading with writing down 'first thoughts' in a response journal. We talked about it a bit, and I tried to explain to her, obviously not successfully, about the process, its flexibility, its purpose. Finally, I said that just because she had never done this before doesn't mean that it's not an accepted practice, that it has been a proven way of increasing appreciation for a book, and that many teachers use this regularly. Reluctantly, she stopped questioning.

> But the power, the manipulation, the control - all these are ways of operating that I really want to get away from. I don't want to have control, to be the 'top banana', to manipulate students and material and myself in such a way to convince anyone that it is valuable and even interesting and enriching to do this or that, to push my way of being on anyone else.

(Professional Journal, March 3, 1991)

I am on the 'side' of the student, probably because I have never ceased being one.

Throughout my life I have returned to the classroom or studio to learn from other teachers. How can one possibly consider entering the 'system' when one feels more like a 'growing-up' than a 'grown-up?' The answer is, of course, one cannot.

Can one even be a teacher at all? I look to my ideals in order to begin to answer that question.

Good Teaching = Good Relationship

Consider the following simile:

Good teaching is like being in a good relationship. It is stimulating, one-on-one, caring, full of trust, fun, process as important as the goal, honesty, sharing, exploring, cooperation, taking responsibility ...

Some of these aspects of teaching existed already in my teaching. Some of them were (and are) still not developed. In order to define where I was as a teacher and where I was headed, I will explore the above image through definitions, stories and reflections.

Summerhill: A Learning Experience Story

Less than a year after I finished high school I decided to try university again. In April I gave notice to my employer and set to work in order to regain entry into university. Accomplishing this necessitated rewriting three matriculation exams to elevate my score from six hundred and seventy-odd to a minimum of seven hundred. I passionately hated high school, so this was no easy chore.

My parents, thrilled that I wanted to study, hired a cousin to tutor me. It turned out that my cousin was smart not only in school but also in 'real life'. Today he is a psychologist. His future orientation became crystal clear to me through his first act in the tutoring process: he gave me a copy of *Summerhill* to read. My life changed. I was totally enthralled. Education could be like this? Not forced, not stupid, not only about what the adults wanted? Here was a whole new world indeed.

At Summerhill adults shared power with students. They allowed kids to find their own way, rather than shoving accepted norms down gagging throats. This school seemed to be based on a philosophy of caring, of listening to each unique person, of treating each student and teacher as though they genuinely mattered. Because many 'problem' kids wound up at Summerhill, the adults were required to possess huge quantities of patience. The goal here was not to turn out good grades, but to help each student find a path on which they might begin their travels in life, a way to happiness in its fullest sense. Summerhill was my first view of a possible utopia.

Defining Relationships in the Classroom

One-on-one: one teacher, one learner, both of whom are also doing the other activity, i.e. the teacher is learning and the learner is teaching. (My definition)

In a one-on-one approach, the teacher and the learner can both ask, answer, discuss, lead and follow, in a fully engaged way. The teacher, in the 'mature' role, finds what will engage the learner. The learner's task is to understand and respond so that they are satisfied and/or challenged. It is not my intention to elaborate on techniques for accomplishing this, but it seems that, in many cases, a one-on-one

situation is the most intensive way to learn. In the Summerhill story we see a disinterested learner becoming enthusiastic and engaged as a result of a teacher who finds a way in.

The next excerpt from my practice teaching journal documents one such opportunity for this kind of teaching in one of my practice teaching sessions.

> One of the students was quite upset with a grade I had given her on the reading response journal. She had misunderstood what I had asked them to do. Now this is a smart girl, knows how to play the game, and who is clearly interested in doing the right thing in order to get good marks. I explained to her that at this point there was nothing I could do, since I was leaving and there was no time to re-do and re-mark. I also said that if I was going to be here longer, I would give her an opportunity to hand it in again, now that she understands what was expected, that I would have worked with her more so that we might have understood each other better.
>
> (Professional Journal, March 3, 1991)

That moment of one-on-one interaction was invigorating and full of lessons. Care is another part of the good teaching-good relationship analogy. If teachers really care, students can accept their teachers' imperfections with (some) equanimity.

> Caring: care: 'to feel concern or interest; to take care or thought'; careful: 'applying care, attention, or pains to what one has to do, painstaking; circumspect' and, caring: 'To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself' (Mayeroff in Noddings, p. 9); and, 'Apprehending the other's reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one caring'.
>
> (Noddings, p. 16)

Creating Learning Experiences Through Caring and Sensitivity

In a much earlier camp teaching experience in (1965) I had somehow created a significant experience for a child, but at the time I didn't know how or why. I wrote this story because the event was significant then. I reflect on it now in the context of becoming a teacher.

Andrea

One day I learn that they are sending me a girl I'll call Andrea who has been the camp problem. Andrea had been coming to overnight camp since she was about five! She gives everyone a hard time. I am nervous about having her in the class.

To everyone's amazement, she responds beautifully to the discipline of ballet. She is only briefly difficult in class and now settles in to master the basics. I am probably giving them a class that is slightly beyond them, because that way the kids get to do turns, and this is working well. They come, they are more or less on time. They work hard And Andrea is becoming increasingly pleasant elsewhere too. The staff and the camp director are pleased.

Why should this work? A camp counselor, a camper who doesn't want to be at camp, a ballet class. Presto, everyone's happy. I don't know what I did to make Andrea happy. Maybe it was the little bit of added positive attention given to her. Perhaps it was the discipline that Andrea responded to. Or maybe she enjoyed moving her body in a rhythmic, structured way. There was satisfaction in reaching a difficult child.

Sharing and Cooperation

As a teacher, I encourage students to assume responsibility for themselves, although I am often met with great resistance. It is always a joy when students accomplish this or when they seem to have it 'naturally'. The following 'Romeo & Juliet' story taken from my professional journal of 1986-87 illustrates a spirit of cooperation, sharing, trust and the importance and honouring of process and honesty.

Teaching Romeo and Juliet

We began the dance course in the Renaissance era, at the turn of the seventeenth century. As this coincides with Shakespeare's era, I decided to place the dances in the context of one or more of his plays. Two plays contain the instruction to dance; Romeo and Juliet is one of them.

As soon as the rehearsal schedule was set, I suddenly realized that I had absolutely no idea how to direct a scene. But with the students' help - they were taking a directing course - we managed to make Shakespeare's words live, and to maneuver the actors around the stage. Since the raison d'être was to show off the students' skill in historical movement and dance, we kept everything else simple.

As time progressed the students were doing so well that we decided to give a studio performance. About a month before performance date we had to schedule extra rehearsals. The only time available to all was eight o'clock in the morning! We arrived bleary-eyed with large Styrofoam cups of coffee, but once in the studio we worked, hard. By 9:30, when regular classes began, we had accomplished a lot.

One morning one student took a taxi; another student learned about tact and responsibility; we all learned about cooperation, giving and receiving, and about depending on one another. The performance was a great success. As a teaching-learning experience it is one of my fondest memories. A spirit of cooperation guided all as we worked toward the goal of presentation.

Three teaching years after graduating, I am more comfortable in my discomfort about teaching in high schools. I continue to explore; I take more risks now than I ever did. Nothing is ever the same and this provides ongoing stimulation, excitement and challenges.

❄ ❄ ❄

Theme 3: Creating New Narratives: Connecting Self, School and Society

Ruth Weinstock's account of professional learning illustrates her recognition of the temporal nature of structures, procedures and ways of being. This excerpt from her narrative presents a portrait of a teacher who is a community builder and creator of a new script for teachers, classrooms, schools and learning communities that is based on 'relationships and relevance … and that balances the human need for interdependence with respect for individual difference'. Ruth describes the artistry involved in weaving disparate elements together, finding common ground with others, and creating shared understandings, values and meaning. It presents a portrait of the teacher as a team-member engaged in shared leadership, connecting her personal vision with that of others, and collaborating with others to bring about positive change.

<div align="center">❀ ❀ ❀</div>

Creating Community

by Ruth Weinstock

I am a middle child, one of three. My two sisters are six years apart, which meant that at various times in their development they were at odds with each other and, at other times, they were the best of friends.

When they were at loggerheads, my mother would sometimes use me as the buffer zone between them. If we were in the car, I would be seated in the middle to prevent tiffs. My 'middle position' in the family has shaped my perspective, my values, and the roles I have undertaken in life.

As a child, I became willy-nilly, a peacemaker, a negotiator, a meeting-ground between two very different and very strong personalities. I have felt over and over again in my life the influence of this early training in joining disparate elements at odds with one another and finding common ground.

The Teacher as Matchmaker: Seeking Common Ground

In the late 1970s I was hired as Publicity Manager of Harbourfront, a cultural-recreation centre on Toronto's waterfront. Because I had no extensive prior experience doing publicity, I adopted a working approach based on what I knew best. I felt my task was to find some common ground between the programs Harbourfront had to offer and the subject matter that the radio and TV producers and newspaper writers were willing to cover. To me, my work was a game of matchmaking, bringing together the media's need for a good story with our need for inexpensive public awareness.

I pictured my work in terms of a Venn Diagram - a matter of finding where the media's purpose and Harbourfront's purpose, though disparate, could intersect.

The image of the Venn Diagram - the seeking of common ground - is one I have found useful and applicable in many personal and professional situations. It can be seen as a metaphor for the creation of a community and, as a teacher, it was one of the first tasks I undertake when I meet with the diverse group of individuals that will become 'my' class. In this way, differences can be respected, but the people in the class can also spend time together with a profound sense of common purpose. My conscious approach to community building is one of the strengths I have as a teacher, because I strive to balance the human needs for interdependence with respect for individual differences.

Many aspects of the experience at Harbourfront prepared me for life as a teacher. Harbourfront then was an organization made up of many different departments - from development to dance, from a school of urban studies to a department sponsoring ethnic events. Each department felt its activities were worthy of media coverage and each one demanded attention - just as students in a class do. At the end of my first year there, I was asked to write a description of my job for an evaluation. I realized that the key words that defined my job were *relationships* and *relevance*. In order to glean the information that I needed to do my work, I needed to form relationships with and gain the trust of, a broad spectrum of my co-workers, all of whom had their own disparate agendas. I also had to quickly assimilate and summarize mountains of information, select key items and be able to demonstrate their relevance to a highly skeptical and resistant media audience. I had to convince the media, over a period of time, that I understood what they were all about and that my judgment could be trusted, just as the teacher must daily build relationships in a classroom and make the material relevant to her students.

Thus, my work put me in the middle - between my colleagues at Harbourfront on the one side and the media on the other. It demanded of me the same skills of listening and mediation that I had acquired in the back seat of my parent's car years before.

Getting Angry: Defending Communal Ideals in the Classroom

As a student teacher, in a practice teaching situation, I saw a wrong that needed righting. A young girl ran up to me in class after the bell rang, excitedly telling me that she had changed her mind about the book she was going to read, as she had found a new and more wonderful one. I gave her my full attention, not realizing that while we were in conversation her extremely expensive calculator was being swiped.

The girl immediately began to accuse the boy who sat behind her, whom I'll call Fred. Fred had quickly disappeared down the hall, surrounded by a swarm of classmates. I called out after him and he hesitated. It was too far away for me to see, but it was within the realm of possibility that before returning to me, Fred had passed the calculator to one of his friends. My associate appeared and, with the victimized girl bleating out accusations, we asked Fred into the department office to empty out his pockets and bags. A male teacher who knew Fred well joined us.

Fred kept up a steady stream of patter, some of it ingratiating, some vituperative, while he emptied out his pockets and emptied his bag. Chattering non-stop, he also gave us a detailed dissertation on how to successfully steal and fence stolen school property and explained why, in this case, he had clearly departed from these 'rules' and therefore was innocent. His argument ran back and forth from one idea to the next like a ricocheting pinball.

I listened to this stream of alternating viciousness and charm and saw a classic conman. We were being had. I couldn't believe my ears when the two teachers on staff soft-pedalled every word they said to him. While it was clearly unwise to accuse Fred without any evidence, they obviously felt helpless in pushing their case, even to the extent of being reluctant to ask him to 'help' them find the calculator by 'asking around'. Their softness infuriated me and I found myself taking a much harder tone with Fred than they were prepared to. The other teachers seemed almost horrified that I would do this. What brought our altercation to an end was Fred's taunt, 'What are you going to do - call the police? They won't come, not for a calculator'. I could see that he was right. We had to let him go. The system was stacked in favour of the Freds of the world.

After Fred had gone, I urged his regular classroom teacher not to ignore the incident, but to assume that knowledge of the theft would travel in class. Could he address the kids on the subject of the sheer immorality of aiding and abetting criminal activity. I felt, at the very least, this would support the victim and also be seen as an act of openness, rather than glossing over a difficult situation. At first he wasn't thrilled at the idea of opening a can of worms, but eventually agreed and did a wonderful job the next day of stating the case for ethical behaviour.

In discussing my evaluation, my associate remarked on and complimented me for getting angry, as prior to this she had believed that I was 'soft-spoken' and, perhaps, also soft in nature. To me, teachers must be part of creating and maintaining a moral universe, one in which the bad guys do not triumph and in which most kids have a fair chance. It drives me nuts to think that, without intending it, teachers could be passively allowing an ethical universe to disappear inch by inch, leaving those students who want to go by the rules to fend for themselves, without our support.

The Teacher as Community-Maker

I find myself given to seeking explanations, looking behind systems at the assumptions that they are built on. I often question, examine and reflect on the subtext of what humans say and do. I am interested in how all things human come to be the way they are and how it is possible to engender change and growth, for I do not accept that the way things are is the way they must be.

My nature may lead me in two conflicting directions, but it also leads me to try to find ways to somehow make sense of these opposites and integrate them. I find myself able to step back and 'see', if not accept, both sides of an argument and able to entertain many points of view, traits which I've found very useful in teaching. This does not mean I operate without an ethical base. Nor does it mean

that I cannot make decisions (although, admittedly, some decisions come hard). It simply means that one of the tenets of my morality is a thoroughgoing mistrust of dogma.

This last statement is exceedingly important to me. Dogma is an anathema to me. Dogmatic thinking raises my hackles; certainty and closed mindedness scare me. I mistrust doctrinaire research that 'proves' that we ought to teach using X or Y approach. Experience shows that over the years one orthodoxy or another, one set of assumptions, beliefs, trends and truths have been supplanted by other 'truths'. What is newest isn't necessarily better for the individuals in my class or for me. The best gift I can give my students is to continue to enlarge my perspective as a human and to maintain my belief in 'both/and' over 'either/or' thinking. In seeking to be this kind of human being, my students will be my best teachers.

❊ ❊ ❊

Summary

Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves ... Re-vision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.

(Rich, 1980, p. 35)

The narrative accounts present the voices of prospective teachers relating their increasing understandings of teaching as moral, ethical and socially responsible work. They illustrate a willingness of individuals to review choices available to them, to question the status quo, engage in critical and creative thinking, and re-script the stories of their current and future professional lives. Through the processes of reflection and inquiry, these prospective teachers have questioned their life-histories, their socialisation, and the ideologies and 'official stories' being enacted around them. The accounts show how self-directed inquiry provides a framework for asking questions about work, searching for the patterns that give it meaning, and replacing a hierarchical script which isolates the teacher from students with one where the teacher creates webs of relationships, and collaborates with students, colleagues and community members. A collection of 'I's with individual agendas is replaced by an attitude of 'We'; competition is replaced by collaboration, and individualistic purposes, values and agendas are replaced by collaborative vision-making and the creation of shared values.

Prospective teachers here show how they have sought to create democratic classrooms, to balance freedom and control, and to work towards shared decision-making. These beginning teachers have worked towards finding a balance between teaching the subject matter and teaching the whole person and between structures which enable students' learning and those which restrict it. They have worked to create environments which help students to develop the skills, understandings and capacities for active participation in a democratic society.

The narrative accounts show that the creation of a professional identity is a unique process for each prospective teacher, and that the process involves the examination and transformation of existing knowledge and the adaptation of such knowledge, skills and attitudes to the professional situations at hand. For each individual, what has to be learned is intimately connected to what is already known. All beginning teachers have to acquire a variety of teaching strategies, learn different ways of creating safe and equitable classroom environments, learn to respond to the needs of diverse groups of students, and to engage large groups of students in the curriculum content of the classroom. Within the structure provided by their existing knowledge and self-directed inquiries, these teachers have built competence and self-confidence, and created a coherent body of pedagogical practices and professional knowledge.

Current scholarship in education and pedagogy has raised new awareness about the presence of many voices, viewpoints, ways of knowing and being in schools and society, and of the necessity for teaching methods which acknowledge this. For prospective teachers, it is imperative that they develop their own authentic voices at the outset of their professional education, that they acknowledge the value of being influenced but not overwhelmed by the voices of others, and that they learn ways to allow multiple voices to be heard in the educational arena. As they work to create classroom and school communities where their own students learn to become full participants, these teachers continually develop their abilities to rescript and enact new narratives of student-teacher relationships, of teacher–teacher relationships, and of classroom-school and community relationships. With such effort, these teachers create conditions for their own ongoing learning and for the continuous creation and recreation of the narratives they tell and enact in their lives.

References

Ashton-Warner, S. (1963) *Teacher*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Beattie, M. (1995a) *Constructing Professional Knowledge in Teaching: A Narrative of Change and Development*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Beattie, M. (1995b) New prospects for teacher education: Narrative ways of knowing teaching and teacher education. *Educational Research*, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 53-70.

Beattie, M. (1997a) Collaboration in the construction of professional knowledge: Finding answers in our own reality. In H. Christiansen, I. Goulet, C. Krentz & M. Maeers (Eds.) *Recreating Relationships; Collaboration and Educational Reform*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Beattie, M. (1997b) Fostering reflective practice in teacher education: Inquiry as a framework for the construction of a professional knowledge in teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 111-128.

Berscheid, E. (1985) Interpersonal modes of knowing. In E. Eisner (Ed.), *Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing*. Chicago, Illinois: The National Society for the Study of Education.

Bruner, J. (1986) *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Buber, M. (1965) *I and Thou* (R. Smith, Trans.). New York: Scribner's.

Bullough, R. & Gitlin, A. (1995) *Becoming a Student of Teaching*. New York and London: Garland Publishing.

Calderhead, J. (1991) The nature and growth of knowledge in student teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 7, No. 56, pp. 531-535.

Coles, R. (1989) *The Call of Stories; Teaching and the Moral Imagination.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1995) Beginning teaching. Stories of position, and positioning, on the landscape. In D. Clandinin & F. Connelly (Eds.) *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1996) Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes. Teacher stories - stories of teachers - school stories - stories of schools. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 24-30.

Clandinin, D. J. (1986) *Classroom Practice: Teacher Images in Action.* London: Falmer Press.

Conle, C. (1996) Resonance in preservice teacher inquiry. *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 33, pp. 297-325.

Conle, C. (1997) Images of change in narrative inquiry. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 205-219.

Christiansen, H., Goulet, I., Krentz, C. and Maeers, M. (Eds.) (1997) *Recreating Relationships; Collaboration and Educational Reform*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1986) *On Narrative Method, Personal Philosophy and Narrative Unities in the Story of Teaching.* Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 23(4), pp. 292-310.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1988) *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin D. J. (1990) Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 2-14.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1993) Reflective practice. Thoughts from the community. *Orbit*, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 1.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1994) Telling teaching stories. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 145-158.

Craig, C. (1992) Coming to Know in the Professional Knowledge Context: Beginning Teachers' Experiences. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy in Education*. New York: Macmillan.

Dewey, J. (1934) *Art as Experience*. New York: Capricorn Books.

Dewey, J. (1938a) *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier.

Dewey, J. (1938b) *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt.

Dewey, J. (1966) *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Free Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Goldberg, N. (1986) *Writing Down the Bones*. Boston: Shambhala.

Hatton, N. & Smith, D. (1995) Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 33-49.

Jackson, P. W. (1968) *Life in Classrooms*. New York,: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Knowles, G. & Cole, A. (1994) *Through Preservice Teachers' Eyes*. New York: Macmillan.

Knowles, G. and Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991) Shaping pedagogies through personal histories in preservice teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 93, No. 1, pp. 87-113.

McIntyre, J. (1998) Personal and Professional Renewal: Exploring Relational Learning Among Consultants Within a Group Context. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Toronto.

Macmurray, J. (1961) *Persons in Relation*. New York: Harper and Row (original work published 1954).

Munby, H. (1986) Methaphor in the Thinking of Teachers. An Exploratory Study. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 18, pp. 197-209.

Munby, H. & Russell, T. (1996) Transforming research into teaching. In M. Beattie, H. Gruneau & D. Thiessen (Eds.) *Interpersonal Sources of Development for Beginning and Experienced Teachers*. Toronto, Ontario: Among Teachers Community Publication, OISE/UT.

Munby, H. & Russell, T. (Eds.) (1992) *Teachers and Teaching: From Classroom to Reflection*. London: Falmer Press.

Noddings, N. (1984) *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Paley, V. (1981) *Wally's Stories: Conversations in the Kindergarten*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Paley, V. (1986) *Molly is Three: Growing Up in School*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rich, A. (1980) *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. London:Virago,

Schulman, L. (1987) Knowledge and teaching; Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 1-22.

Schon, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

Schon, D. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco and London: Jossey-Bass.

Schwab, J. (1971) *The Practical: Arts of Eclectic*. School Reviews, 79, 493-542.

Schwab, J. (1983) *The Practical 4: Something for Curriculum Professors to Do*. Curriculum Inquiry, 13(3), 239-265.

Smith, D. (1991) Educating the reflective practitioner in curriculum. *Curriculum*, Vol. 12, pp. 115-124.

Smith, D. & Hatton, N. (1993) Reflection in teacher education: A study in progress. *Education Research and Perspectives*, Vol. 20, pp. 13-23.

Taylor, C. (1989) *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Valli, L. (1992) *Reflective Teacher Education: Cases and Critiques*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Witherall, C. & Noddings, N. (1991) *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Zeichner, K. (1986) Preparing reflective teachers: An overview of instructional strategies which have been employed in preservice teacher education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 11, pp. 565-575.

Zeichner, K. & Liston, D. (1987) Teaching student teachers to reflect. *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 23-48.

Zeichner, K. & Liston. D. (1990) *Traditions of Reform and Reflective Teaching in US Teacher Education*. Michigan: National Centre for Research in Teacher Education, Michigan State University.

Readers who wish to pursue more deeply the ideas presented here, or to read more preservice teachers' narratives can do so in the recently published book, *The Art of Learning to Teach: Preservice Teachers Narratives*, Columbus, OH: Prentice-Hall.