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A Letter from the Editor

Dear Colleagues:

This issue of NWATE’s journal, The Northwest Passage, is the first in a long time that had one editor at the helm after overcoming a variety of issues. My co-editor, Dr. Marwin Britto, went on leave and travelled to exotic lands which meant that I would be the sole editor for this issue and the next. As well, Marwin’s university, Central Washington University, hosted both the NWATE website and the amazing on-line submission system that Marwin and his team developed last year. The responsibility fell on me to re-build the website and to re-align the submission system. Additionally, the annual conference was coordinated by a competent group under Dr. Maureen Siera from St. Martin’s University; however, the position of NWATE President and Vice President remained vacant for this year which meant that the conference organizers had little help from above.

So, I took on the role of editor and got on with the call for manuscripts. My university allowed me to build the NWATE website on our server and to host it for one year. I built the site and updated all the links which resulted in very few errors despite the fact that some authors still managed to access the old Central Washington University website. I went old school with the submission system and manuscripts were emailed to me and I sent them to at least two reviewers through email attachments. I also assisted the St. Martin’s University personnel with advertising and advice to make sure the conference was a potential success. We are hoping that someone will volunteer to be President and Vice President at the Annual General Meeting held during the conference dates this year.

Although my journey has been quite different than the preceding editors and the submission system was a tad bumpy, I hope that you will perceive that this issue of the journal still maintains the rigour, high quality, and strong reputation that previous editors, authors, and reviewers have established since the journal’s inception.

Andrew Kitchenham – Editor
(University of Northern BC)
The 11 articles in this issue of The Northwest Passage present a variety of perspective on teacher education in the 21st century. We see one example of a comprehensive review of a School of Education, an innovative approach to a planned research study, the importance of expert-novice dialogues, what motivates teacher candidates to teach, and an overview of transformative learning in relation to cultural immersion, to name but a few.

The first article, “Using exploratory interviews to re-frame planned research on classroom issues” (Ellis, Janjic-Watrich, Macris, & Marynowski, 2011) outlines “the use of an exploratory first interview to refine research questions or interviewing ideas prior to finalizing plans for a study about classroom issues or practices. Three researchers give accounts of their exploratory interviews concerning student ‘aliteracy,’ the school experience of immigrant students, and mathematics teachers’ experience of assessment and grading. The researchers endeavored to acquire an holistic understanding of their participants’ experiences by: using open-ended questions about both the topic and the participants’ lives in general; asking participants to complete pre-interview activities such as drawings or diagrams about either the topic or their lives in general; and framing the guiding data collection question as ‘How does the participant experience [topic of interest]?’ Each of the researchers either revised [her] research questions or changed [her] ideas about how to do the interviews based upon what transpired in these interviews” (Abstract, p. 10).

Next, Thacker and Hood (2011) in their piece entitled, “Changing teacher candidates’ perceptions of literacy in content classes: The role of expert-novice dialogues,” detail “an exploratory study of an assignment in a literacy across the curriculum course that assisted teacher candidates to recognize the distance between expert and novice readers in their content specific teaching. The study explores how teacher candidates discovered strategies necessary to build comprehension of discipline-based texts, particularly for novice readers. Data collection included multiple entries from [30] teacher candidate journals that were generated during partnered dialogues. Journals were analyzed for clues as to how teachers can better approach helping students to read varied disciplines’ texts with greater comprehension. Findings suggest that by placing teacher candidates in the position of both novice and expert readers, (1) they gained insight into how to scaffold instruction so that students become more expert readers of their content; and (2) they exhibited a willingness to work with these strategies because they empathized with struggling readers” (Abstract, p. 18).

Friesen (2011) discusses the issue of ethnicity and how it needs to be re-defined. The article “examines five key Aboriginal values that appear to be in transition to more nearly resemble those of other Canadian ethnic groups. These include dramatic shifts from traditional practices pertaining to individualism, bravery, revered cultural skills, and traditional interpretations of wisdom, and generosity. Educators need to be aware of these transitory realities if they are to formulate relevant school curricula and methodologies” (Abstract, p. 31).

Next, in his article, “Secondary education in Washington state: A historical look at teaching change in a changing world,” Traynor (2011) argues that “(h)igh schools are under increasing demands to ensure that all students graduate ready for careers and college. This is a difficult task given the ever-changing characteristics of the students, the colleges/universities, and the labor markets that receive them upon graduation. This article provides an analysis of the earliest high schools in the State of Washington at the turn of the 19th century. The analysis illustrates a series of shifts and adaptations undertaken by schools to meet the rapidly changing landscape in the communities in which they were situated. The study was done through extensive archival research on the earliest programs of study offered by Washington State schools and illustrates the changes that these schools went through during this time. This historical lens provides an important template with which to evaluate current school structures as they continue to look for ways to provide a meaningful education for all students” (Abstract, p. 41).

Addleman, Brazo, and Cevallos (2011) argue in “Transformative learning through cultural immersion” that their “qualitative study explored avenues to increase students’ intercultural competence through transformative learning. School of Education graduate students and faculty from a small, private
university traveled to Ecuador to participate in a cultural immersion practicum. In addition to these primary goals, the trip was designed to facilitate transformative learning about cultural conceptions, diversity, and the dynamics of student differences with the goal of understanding one’s own cultural framework and adapting to another culture to develop empathy towards culturally and linguistically diverse students in the United States” (Abstract, p. 54).

In “Exploring teacher candidates’ motivations to teach,” Siera and Siera’s (2011) “qualitative study explored teacher candidates’ motivations to become teachers. As part of the application process, students are required to complete an onsite essay about why they want to become a teacher. The authors examined application essays of 53 candidates to identify motivations for becoming a teacher. From the data, we identified tentative categories and themes that explained students’ motivations for pursuing a program in teacher education. Upon refinement, these categories seem to group into three, not always mutually exclusive, themes: Altruism (Developing the student and Making a difference), Personal Fulfillment (Making a difference, Sharing knowledge and experience, Dispositional motivators, Destiny to teach, and Serving as a role model), and Convenience of Teaching (Utilitarian). Understanding students’ motivation for teaching has implications for teacher education programs” (Abstract, p. 67).

Next, in their article entitled, “I feel fairly confident…: Investigating literacy candidates’ self-confidence through an on-line standards-based survey,” Walker, Finke, Butterfield, and Backlund (2011) outline “the perceived self-confidence of teacher education candidates who were pursing certification in elementary education or elementary education with an endorsement in reading. Using the state standards toward a reading endorsement as the basis for the statements, each candidate completed an on-line common core survey stating her/his confidence in teaching to the standard. To further support her/his self-rating, these candidates also added comments for each of the six common core standard areas. Results indicated that those pursing an endorsement in reading viewed themselves as more confident than those who were not. Additionally, the data provided strengths and weaknesses about the literacy program at this university. Based on these findings, further analysis of the data is warranted” (Abstract, p. 77).

In Aleccia’s (2011) article, “Selective abandonment as a strategy in professional learning communities,” he argues that “(b)ecause time is one of the biggest limitations of teaching, lesson planning, and curriculum development, K-12 teachers must maximize this variable in their instruction by focusing on central priorities and practicing selective abandonment. One of the best venues for this is the Professional Learning Community (PLC). These groups of teachers must agree on a limited number of content standards, tailor instruction to them, and devise appropriate assessment instruments to gather data on student academic achievement. Even though 47 states have agreed to use the Common Core State Standards, it will take time for common assessments to be developed. Thus, PLCs must work now to align assessments with the new standards. PLCs must regularly review these assessment results data and refine instructional materials to meet student needs. Further, building and district leaders must support their teacher PLCs and avoid the urge to institute new programs until teachers have aligned standards, instructions, and assessment” (Abstract, p. 88).

In “Programmatic navel gazing: One School of Education’s experiences of a comprehensive review,” Kitchenham (2011) “describes a small study conducted within the School of Education as part of its internal and external reviews of the undergraduate and graduate programs. Using data collected from teaching faculty self-reports, archival information, surveys, and focus groups, the findings are presented. Although the UNBC School of Education does perform well based on reports from a variety of stakeholders, the internal and external review information will assist the School in strengthening both undergraduate and graduate programs” (Abstract, p. 93).

Crichton, McCaffrey, and Brown (2011) in “Using a SMARTBoard smartly: Considering digital tools for interaction, collaboration, and storytelling,” outlines “a book project completed in an urban Grade 1 school. While the project itself is not unique, the authentic use of multiple technologies to support the process to develop it is. The terms interaction, collaboration, and student ownership are often used to describe inquiry-based teaching and learning, and the project described here illustrates what they might mean in actual practice. Further, this paper situates the book project within the literature of
Information, Communication Technology (ICT) and arts based instruction, providing an example of classroom-based technologies to enhance teaching and learning” (Abstract, p. 104).

Finally, Burton’s (2011) “Small ponds: The challenges facing gifted students in rural communities,” argues that “(g)ifted students in rural schools often face academic and personal challenges not faced by their urban and suburban counterparts, a result of the unique educational and community environment of rural settings. New technologies and programs have had some success in mitigating the effect of the lack of academic resources and opportunities available to gifted ruralites, but challenges arising from the educational, socioeconomic, and cultural environments of rural communities remain. This paper examines several studies of the educational and affective development of gifted ruralites, with reference to the author's experience as a student and teacher in rural and remote educational settings. It describes, and examines the causes of, the academic and socio-emotional issues facing gifted ruralites. The paper aims to raise teachers' awareness of these issues and link educational theory with in-practice examples that will help rural teachers educate and counsel gifted students in their classrooms” (Abstract, p. 112).

These 11 articles are of high calibre and demonstrate the varied and myriad issues of teaching in the 21st century and they begin to present some answers and raise further questions. The next issue of the journal will concentrate on preparing teachers for 21st century learning. Look for the official call on the NWATE journal webpage.

Andrew Kitchenham – Editor
(University of Northern British Columbia)
References


Using Exploratory Interviews to Re-frame Planned Research on Classroom Issues

Julia Ellis, Vera Janjic-Watrich, Vicki Macris and Richelle Marynowski
University of Alberta

Abstract

In this paper we describe and illustrate the use of an exploratory first interview to refine research questions or interviewing ideas prior to finalizing plans for a study about classroom issues or practices. Three researchers give accounts of their exploratory interviews concerning student “aliteracy,” the school experience of immigrant students, and mathematics teachers’ experience of assessment and grading. The researchers endeavored to acquire an holistic understanding of their participants’ experiences by: using open-ended questions about both the topic and the participants’ lives in general; asking participants to complete pre-interview activities such as drawings or diagrams about either the topic or their lives in general; and framing the guiding data collection question as “How does the participant experience [topic of interest]?” Each of the researchers either revised their research questions or changed their ideas about how to do the interviews based upon what transpired in these interviews.

The value of research on classroom issues or practices depends upon the use of pertinent research questions and productive approaches to any interviews undertaken. In this article we suggest that even before conducting pilot studies or undertaking large-scale field-testing of data collection activities, it can be helpful to “test the water” through an initial exploratory interview. In what follows, three researchers report on a first interview with a “field test” participant and explain how what they learned prompted them to re-frame or refocus either their research questions or interview plans. The particular processes employed in their interviews, and highlighted in this article, enabled the researchers to acquire a more holistic understanding of their participants’ experiences of the research topics and alerted them to important whole-part relationships. The understandings and insights the researchers acquired prompted them to either or both re-focus their research questions and/or alter their ideas about interview approaches. The three interviews were concerned with the phenomenon of student aliteracy, the school experience of immigrant students, and mathematics teachers’ experience of assessment and grading.

Qualitative research, constructivist paradigm, and hermeneutics

Qualitative research conducted in the constructivist/interpretive paradigm is necessarily hermeneutical (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Key themes from hermeneutics include the importance of clarifying whole-part relationships to inform more adequate interpretation, aiming for holistic understanding rather than reducing what is learned to pre-existing categories, and appreciating that the language and history of one’s community both enable and limit interpretation (Smith, 1991; Smith, 2002).

Key metaphors from hermeneutics include the hermeneutic circle and understanding interpretive inquiry as a spiral, with each loop in the spiral representing a separate data collection or analysis activity (Ellis, 1998). Each loop in the spiral can also be understood as a distinct hermeneutic circle with its own forward projective arc and backward evaluative arc. In a forward
projective arc, the researcher makes sense of what is encountered by drawing from previous experience or expectations—forestructure and pre-understandings in hermeneutic terms. In the backward arc this first interpretation is evaluated by re-examining the data for contradictions, gaps, or material not adequately explained by the first interpretation. The goal in the backward arc is to develop the most adequate interpretation that best addresses all that was found. What one learns, notices, or recognizes as a new question in the backward arc gives direction or purpose to the next loop or research activity.

If the first research activity in a study is conducted in the right way it has the potential to change the direction of the study quite dramatically (Ellis, 1998). Scholars in hermeneutics have clarified that beginning the research, or entering the hermeneutic circle in the right way requires: concerned engagement; humility; openness; a capacity for reciprocity and interactive, dialogic interviews; and availability to negotiation of meaning (Packer & Addison, 1989; Smith, 1991; Smith, 1993; Smith 2002). The particular interview processes employed by the researchers in this article were intended to enhance the likelihood of entering the circle in the right way.

**Processes employed in the interviews**

In a qualitative research course, doctoral students anticipating their dissertation research were encouraged to explore the use of three strategies in a first interview related to their research interests. First, regardless of their research questions, they were asked to frame a main question to guide data collection or the interview in the following format: “How does the participant experience the topic of interest?” Taking this broad view or goal for the interviews could help researchers learn about the participants’ experience holistically. All that was learned could be “mined” for how it related to the initial research question.

Another strategy was to invite participants to complete a pre-interview activity such a drawing, diagram or list that was related to either the research topic or the participant’s life more generally (Ellis, 2006). Examples are:

- Draw a picture of a good day and a not-so-good day with the event/experience of interest.
- Make a diagram to show the support systems in your life or work.
- Make a timeline showing critical events in your experience of the topic.

Participants were offered several pre-interview activities and asked to choose and complete one to bring to the interview. Pre-interview activity choices were related to either the research topic or the participant’s life in general. Learning about a participant’s life more generally could help a researcher to better understand the views the participant expressed about the research topic.

The third strategy was to prepare open-ended interview questions pertaining to the research topic or the participant’s life in general. Examples are:

- What has surprised you about this experience?
- What has been most difficult about this experience?
- What has been most beneficial about this experience?
- Over time, how has this experience changed or stayed the same?
If you only had to go to school/work three days a week, how would you spend the extra time?

The two strategies of using pre-interview activities and open-ended questions were intended to support participants in recalling and sharing stories related to the research topic or their lives more generally. Participants can only communicate their experiences through narratives (Carr, 1986). If the interview provides a facilitative and inviting space for participants to share many stories researchers can learn what a topic is about for participants—what is salient or meaningful in their experience of the research topic; that is, what is its significance—and can consider a number of whole-part relationships in interpretation.

In the following sections the three researchers provide accounts of their interviews and explain how these informed their plans for undertaking larger studies.

Researching aliteracy

Vera Janjic-Watrich, a longtime reading specialist and literacy consultant, was concerned about students who appeared to be capable readers but had turned away from and showed little interest in reading. Related literature suggests that this phenomenon, referred to as “aliteracy,” (Mikulecky, 1978) is spreading to young students (Botzakis & Malloy, 2005; National Literacy Trust 2005; Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, 2006). Janjic-Watrich wished to learn why some students “opt in” and some students “opt out” of reading in-and-out of school. To explore a research approach to this question, she interviewed a Grade 9 student about his reading experiences both in and out of school. In the following account Janjic-Watrich explains how the pre-interview activity was pivotal in the success of the interview and how the interview gave direction to a refinement of her research question.

For my interview I worked with a Grade 9 boy who is the son of a friend and colleague. For a pseudonym, my participant suggested “Superman” but I will call him Sam. Because I have been acquainted with the family for over 25 years I already knew a lot about Sam. He is bright, articulate and an honor student who grew up in a rich literacy environment, in an affluent home and has lived a traveled life with parents who are supportive, encouraging and both highly respected teachers in their fields. Although I speculated that Sam would be a reader, having come from a very supportive home where literacy is valued, I did not know for certain what his literacy attitudes, habits, and interests were concerning his reading in-and-outside of school.

Prior to the interview I offered Sam several pre-interview activities to choose from. Sam later explained his strong dislike for doing any kind of drawing activity and his subsequent choice of the only activity that did not require drawing. For his pre-interview activity Sam elected to complete the following metaphor: “Reading in school is_______ Reading outside of school is________”

I was entirely surprised at just how valuable the pre-interview activity was in supporting our inquiry process. Creating the metaphors gave Sam the opportunity to “plunge into the depths” of what the research topic meant to him in such a way that I would clearly understand how he experienced reading in-and-outside of school. The metaphors he wrote set the stage for the rest of the interview and gave focus and direction to our conversation. Sam’s metaphors were: Reading inside of school is like “knives stabbing your throat.” Reading outside of school is like “an imaginary escape where you won’t be harmed.” Sam’s metaphor of his negative experiences of reading in school was so strong and passionate that I don’t believe any of my questions could have released the same kind of intensity of expression from him about the topic of reading in school. Upon learning these central themes in Sam’s in and out of school reading experiences, I had to
quickly adjust my prepared questions so that they would make sense and be useful follow-up questions to Sam’s metaphors.

As the interview proceeded I learned much about what discouraged, impeded or failed to support reading in school and conversely what facilitated reading out of school for Sam. For example, in school Sam experienced inadequate time for reading. He stated, "At school you have the slotted little half hour or 15 minutes and then you are moving on to the next thing. And it is go, go, go, go, go." He also talked about inadequate opportunities for talking to the teacher or librarian about what one was reading, uncomfortable places for reading, no organized promotion of good books, and lack of social support for reading. Sam talked about peer disapproval for showing ability or interest in reading in the following way.

When our teacher says you have free reading period, most kids will just sit there and look at the book and then flip pages or they get a magazine and they don’t do anything. And for those who do read, most kids will bug you if it is a big book or if there is anything on it that they might figure out something to bug you about.

In contrast, Sam said the following about reading at home.

Reading at home you can get away from, if you are fighting with someone or something like that, it is so much easier, especially when you get into a good book, you can just sit there and read for hours…. At home you can relax in bed or snuggle up beside a fire and just read your book…. Well, outside of school you can literally escape whatever problems you have. Whatever things you might face, it just depends on whether you have a good book or not.

Through our interview Sam helped me to understand what made reading inviting at home and unlikely at school for him. What I learned prompted me to re-focus my research interest. Instead of asking “why has aliteracy become a phenomenon?” I instead wish to ask about the specific experiences of students who opt in or opt out of reading in-and- outside of school?

**Researching the school experiences of students who are immigrants**

Vicki Macris’s research focus on the experiences of immigrant students in Canadian schools has been given impetus by her own childhood experience of otherness, exclusion, displacement, culture shock and loss of everything familiar to her following her family’s repatriation to Greece. As a child she found her transition and subsequent integration into the Greek public school system to be extremely difficult and highly problematic because of inadequate support for her social, linguistic and culturally diverse learning needs. In the following account Macris writes about an initial interview she conducted with a 14 year old student who had immigrated to Canada and was attending an Edmonton school. She tells about the surprises in the interview and how these informed her planned approach for interviews with other students.

For my initial exploration of interviewing a student who had immigrated to Canada I worked with a 14 year old boy whom I will call, Enzo. Because Enzo had been in Canada for five years, I expected that he would be able to recall, reflect upon, and articulate his experiences of school in Canada. Prior to the interview I offered Enzo seven pre-interview activities from which to choose. The one Enzo selected was: “Draw two pictures to show what your schooling (your life at school) was like before you came to your new school in Edmonton and what your life is like now in your school in Edmonton.”

My initial surprise in seeing Enzo’s drawings was that the images he chose to create had little to do with schooling and much more to do with how he perceived and experienced his life in Canada in general and in Iraq (the last, of several countries he and his family left.) This was just the beginning of my concerns about not getting the answers I imagined I needed.

As Enzo and I sat together around his drawings he began by telling me much about his past.
He talked about how his family had been driven out of his birth country, Kurdistan. He explained that “no one here in Canada knows what Kurdistan is, so I tell them I’m from Iraq.” He talked about being “Kurdish and having no country” and how he feels a sense of belonging in Canada because “people are nice, they care...they are like me.” Enzo’s drawings and related stories ignited my own comments and further questions, thereby supporting an intense dialogue between us.

With the drawings as the centerpiece for starting our interview, Enzo spoke confidently and enthusiastically, taking the lead as he told me much more about his drawings. He described the tumultuous conditions and his (chaotic) schooling experiences and “escape” from Iraq through mountains and valleys in the context of bomb explosions and constant gunfire. His younger brother was killed in one of the bombings. He described his arrival to Canada as finding “the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.”

There were many shifts, twists, and turns in Enzo’s story telling. I had to allow Enzo the space and time to tell his stories in the ways that he would or could. It seemed to me that it was through recalling, telling and searching his stories that Enzo was finding the personal meaning of the experiences—personal meaning that might not be readily available at a conscious level for quick and easy expression. It wasn’t entirely easy to allow Enzo this time and space. When I thought the interview was drifting into other directions I sometimes wanted to draw it back to the questions I was searching answers for, but I consciously resisted. I let Enzo speak and, in time, I got the answers I thought I needed answered and so much more.

Over the course of the interview, Enzo did talk about some of his school experiences. He compared his schooling in Canada to his “circus” (his words) schooling in Iraq where children were “allowed to finish their smoke outside the classroom,” and where, he stated, “teachers didn’t care about education. What education?” Enzo had been to both public and private schools before coming to Canada. He said his mother had to pay so that he “could learn something.” Enzo told happy stories about support from teachers and a favourite classmate in his current setting. He explained how his schooling in Lebanon was essentially devoid of elements we consider as given here in Canada.

My interview experience with Enzo has not changed my research interest or purposes. It has, however, changed the way I will think about developing my interview questions for other students. After viewing the drawings in advance of the interview, I constructed 25 questions, but many of the questions were not asked because the interview took on an unpredictable life of its own. I came to the understanding that I must pose broader questions so as to allow my participants to navigate through their own personal histories, in their own time. I now know that I don’t need 25 questions; perhaps I only need four or five questions that will nourish dialogue, rather than quickly “steer it” in the direction I desire.

**Researching mathematics teachers’ experience of assessment and grading**

Richelle Marynowski wrote the following account about the re-framing of her research interest in response to a first interview she conducted. Her beginning research interest was in how mathematics teachers use assessments to create grades for students. With her previous roles and responsibilities/involvements with mathematics assessment at the provincial level, Marynowski understood the importance that has been placed on mathematics grades by students, teachers and parents. To field test her interview, Marynowski worked with a teacher she already knew as a friend.

In my interview with a high school mathematics teacher, Simone, I was interested in how she used assessments in her class to create grades for students. I wanted to learn how she understood the meaning of grades and how she saw her assessments as reflecting the students’ understanding of
the content of the course. In the interview I also endeavored to use open-ended questions that could help me acquire a more holistic appreciation of Simone as a mathematics teacher and as a person.

I used or adapted the 27 narrative inquiry questions suggested by Ellis (2006). I reworded some of the questions so that they were focused on mathematics teaching. For example, I changed the question, “What’s the most difficult thing you have ever had to do or is there something you’ve done that was really hard to do but you really wanted to do it?” to “What’s the most difficult thing you have ever had to do as a teacher or is there something you’ve done that was really hard to do but you really wanted to do it?” I left other questions as they were because I couldn’t see how to relate them to mathematics teaching. Examples of these questions were:

- If you had to go to work only three days a week, what are some of the things you’d like to do with the extra time?
- What would you like to be really good at doing?
- Do you ever get other people to go along with your ideas?
- In all of the things you are interested in or have spent time thinking about, what has puzzled you the most?
- In the world of nature or in the world of things or in the world of people, what is it that surprises you the most, or that you find the most fascinating?

Because I already knew Simone, I was surprised to learn much more about her as a person through the interview. Her responses to many of the open-ended questions repeatedly emphasized her strong spiritual side, her desire to be an even better mother and wife, and her interest in learning more in physics. These interests were repeated and pulled together when she replied to the question, “If you could spend two weeks with someone who does a special kind of work what kind of person would that be?” Simone responded:

… with a really… fantastic mother to see what they do to learn ideas,… or with… two weeks with… just someone who’s really in touch… with their spirituality and just kinda spend two weeks on a retreat somewhere with them or two weeks with an astrophysicist and see what they actually do.

From Simone’s interview responses I also learned much about her interests, experiences, and confidence with mathematics teaching. For example, when asked about daydreams she said “probably my daydream with my teaching is just having more time to plan and to just make better activities, more meaningful activities for my students so that’s probably my daydream is just to have all this time that I can just spend coming up with amazing things for things for my students.” When asked whether she ever gets other people to go along with her ideas, Simone laughed and said “yes” and told a story about getting everyone in her department to start using one of her activities with all of the Grade 10 mathematics classes. When asked, “What’s the most difficult thing you have ever had to do as a teacher?”, Simone stated “Every time I have to fail a student…. I hate that (whispered).” In further discussion Simone clarified her view that students’ failures relate “to work ethic and things like that; not intelligence level at all.” Simone also commented that she feels a failing grade is “hard on most students because they feel they are not good enough.”

As I reflected on Simone’s capabilities and interests as a mathematics teacher, and especially her views and feelings about the dynamics of students failing, I began to consider questions about teacher professional identity – how is a teacher’s professional identity developed and negotiated in a culture of assessment and accountability? I also wondered whether other mathematics teachers perceive their students’ performance as a reflection of their teaching or as a reflection of the students. Thus, my research interests shifted from questions about “how assessments are used in mathematics classes to create grades for students” to questions about “teachers’ thoughts about the
meaning of grades and whether these reflect students’ understandings” and “how a teacher’s professional identity is developed and negotiated in a culture of assessment and accountability.” Although my use of open-ended questions did not give me what I thought I wanted in the interview, Simone’s responses provoked wonderings that intrigued me more than what I had initially planned on discovering.

Discussion

The accounts of the interviews illustrate different ways that the use of pre-interview activities or open-ended questions contributed to holistic understanding of participants’ experiences of the research topics. In Janjic-Watrich’s interview with Sam, she immediately learned central themes in his experience with reading through his reflective response to the pre-interview activity. He provided the two metaphors, Reading inside of school is like “knives stabbing your throat.” Reading outside of school is like “an imaginary escape where you won’t be harmed.” With awareness of these key ideas Janjic-Watrich was able to modify her prepared questions to ensure that they were meaningful and would create good openings for Sam to tell stories about his experience.

In Macris’s interview with Enzo, the pre-interview drawings he prepared to show his life before and after coming to Canada served as a visual context to support him in telling his stories in the ways in which he needed. With the drawings as the centerpiece of the interview he was comfortable in taking the lead to tell the stories he wanted and in the order he wanted. Macris sensed that as Enzo pursued his story telling with all the twists and turns in topics he was searching for the meaning of these experiences. Importantly, with the drawings as a visual focal point to anchor the wide-ranging talk and stories, Macris was able to resist any inclinations to force the interview into a question and answer session. Instead she responded to his drawings and stories and a genuine dialogue developed.

In Marynowski’s interview with Simone, a mathematics teacher, she used open-ended questions about Simone’s life in general and about her experience of teaching mathematics. In hearing Simone’s stories and comments Marynowski noticed recurring themes regarding interests, motivations, and capabilities. Anything Simone did she wanted to do well or better: being a good mother and wife; deepening her spirituality; learning more about her interest area of physics; developing amazing things for her students to do in mathematics classes. Learning about Simone’s accomplishments, motivations, and frustrations in mathematics teaching supported a whole-part understanding of Simone’s beliefs about assessment in connection with her grading practices.

The learning that each of the researchers experienced in the interviews prompted changes in their research plans. Janjic-Watrich shifted her aliteracy question from being a “why” question to being a “what” question, that is, what are the in and out of school experiences of students who choose to opt in or opt out reading? Macris changed her ideas about the kinds of interview questions that will be needed, that is, not 25 questions but only four or five that will nourish dialogue rather than steer it in directions of interest to her. After Marynowski had the opportunity to appreciate the many whole-part relationships of which Simone was comprised both as a person and as a mathematics teacher, she turned her attention to teacher identity and planned to ask part-whole relationship questions about teacher professional identity in a culture of assessment and accountability.

As researchers contemplate anticipated studies and work to develop data collection plans, their research questions or purposes can sometimes feel either too broad or too narrow. The exploratory first interview approach described and illustrated in this article may be a helpful way to refine research plans or questions and ensure good use of resources and valuable findings in studies.
pertaining to classroom issues or practices.

References


Changing Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions of Literacy in Content Classes: 
The Role of Expert-Novice Dialogues

Peter Thacker and Sally Hood
University of Portland

Abstract

This manuscript details an exploratory study of an assignment in a literacy across the curriculum course that assisted teacher candidates to recognize the distance between expert and novice readers in their content specific teaching. The study explores how teacher candidates discovered strategies necessary to build comprehension of discipline-based texts, particularly for novice readers. Data collection included multiple entries from thirty teacher candidate journals that were generated during partnered dialogues. Journals were analyzed for clues as to how teachers can better approach helping students to read varied disciplines’ texts with greater comprehension. Findings suggest that by placing teacher candidates in the position of both novice and expert readers, 1) they gained insight into how to scaffold instruction so that students become more expert readers of their content; and 2) they exhibited a willingness to work with these strategies because they empathized with struggling readers.

It is the first week of Literacy across the Curriculum, a required course for teacher candidates pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching. The students do a think-aloud describing what they are imagining as they read a Haitian folktale, Bouki’s Glasses (Courlander, 1964). Upon finishing, M., fresh from an editor’s job with the Yale Review, raises her hand, “Professor, I’m a good reader. I don’t need to think while I’m reading. This isn’t useful to me.” Three weeks later, this same language arts teacher candidate reads from That Ubiquitous Sum: 1+2+3=... n, (Bezuska & Kenney, 2005). Again M. reflects on her reading: “I feel intimidated and inadequate. I’m not stupid-so why can’t I understand this?” A teacher candidate, a competent reader, discovers that all readers struggle at times and in the process develops sensitivity to teaching reading in her discipline.

This exploratory study examines an assignment that has visceral impact on teacher candidates, causing many to re-examine teaching students both content and reading skills. It also extends beyond viscerality by aiding teacher candidates to analyze strategies necessary to read in their content area and posit methods to help students gain these strategies. The major premise: We become experts through experience.

Rationale

All education school instructors of content literacy face the daunting task of convincing everyone from music to math teachers of the efficacy of including literacy scaffolding for readings in their classroom. A major change in teachers’ dispositions must transpire. The authors of this paper join with those who see literacy skills in service of deepening conceptual
understanding of a discipline. As Thorndike (1974) declared decades ago, reading is thinking. Recently, Zwiers (2008) when writing of the necessity for focus on academic language added the equally succinct line, “Language is content,” (p. 51). Researchers (Langer, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005) now argue that clarifying what makes reading of a particular discipline unique helps teachers to understand the importance of the task.

The authors have promoted content literacy with secondary teacher candidates, experimenting with methods to demonstrate that they “are in a strategic position to influence adolescents’ uses of literacy for academic learning” (Vacca, 1998, p. 30) and that literacy contributes to disciplinary learning. This exploratory study of an assignment placing students in the role of both expert and novice readers of disciplinary content caused teacher candidates to rethink their responsibilities as content specialists.

Literature Review

Braunger, Evans, and Galguera (2005) encourage approaching content teachers in a new way: “They must understand reading as a developmental process in which the knowledge and strategies needed to comprehend more sophisticated subject area texts develop, with appropriate support, in the process of extensive engagement with such texts” (p. 12). The authors go on to argue: “Teachers must be knowledgeable about all of their students’ content area literacy strengths and needs, about the demands of particular texts, and about the support necessary for particular students to learn from them” (p. 13).

Why is it important for teachers to move beyond understanding their content to understanding how students read their disciplines’ text? How does an expert read history or physics or algebraic story problems? Is it significantly different from how a novice reads that material? The research of Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) suggests that across many disciplines, experts approach tasks differently from novices, “Experts have acquired extensive knowledge that affects what they notice and how they organize, represent, and interpret information in their environment. This, in turn, affects their abilities to remember, reason, and solve problems” (p.19). Other researchers (Shulman, 1987; Nathan & Petrosino, 2003) go a step further, suggesting that experts lose sight of how novices learn subjects. They suggest that understanding one’s discipline is a necessary, but insufficient prerequisite to teaching novices. They insist that pedagogical knowledge is equally important to subject matter knowledge. In examining teachers of chess, math, and history, Nathan and Petrosino suggest an “expert blind spot” that keeps experts from remembering their approach to their discipline when they were novices. Braunger et al. (2005) go further, suggesting that expertise can actually be an obstacle to teaching. Unable to remember early experiences with disciplinary text, experts often ask students to approach text in a sophisticated manner for which many are unprepared.

A salient aspect of learning any discipline is the ability to read and interpret works from that discipline. Wineburg (1998) contrasts the reading of primary documents from the Civil War by an historian with a strong general background in history with one considered an expert on the war. He finds that what allows the non-expert to read well is: “His way of asking questions, of reserving judgment, of monitoring affective responses and revisiting earlier assessments, his ability to stick with confusion long enough to let an interpretation emerge” (p. 340). He suggests: “It may be the students’ response in the face of complexity—what they do know when they don’t know—which holds the key to their continued learning from the world we call the past” (p. 340). Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller (2001) research a ninth grade “academic
literacy” class in which students approach texts with a metacognitive eye, willing to grapple with texts they would have once found boring and inaccessible. Through a case study, these researchers demonstrate that a young reader taught to be cognizant of her reading difficulties can mediate incomprehension, building, moment by moment, a stronger understanding of a history textbook passage. Continued work over the past decade (Schoenbach & Greenleaf, 2009; Langer, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan 2008; Snow, Griffin, & Burns 2005) has explored the unique aspects of texts in science, history, literature, and mathematics, studying also how students interact with them. Snow and Moje (2010) note content-specific literacy courses cropping up in teacher education programs. Draper (2008) after interacting with teachers in music, theater, and mathematics, recommends that literacy instructors “push in” to discipline-specific methods courses. The authors will argue for the efficacy of teachers of varied disciplines continuing to interact through activities like expert-novice dialogues.

**Research Design**

The purpose of this “exploratory study” was to investigate the effects of an assignment on teacher candidates’ sensitivity to difficulties in content texts and willingness to consider strategies that might mitigate these difficulties. Exploratory research is a viable way for teachers and instructors to investigate something that interests or puzzles them in their own classrooms, because the research is integrated into their day-to-day teaching (Allwright, 1993). The authors used Allwright’s exploratory study framework as the research design for this study using qualitative methodology. The authors extended Allwright’s sixth step by conducting a formal data analysis. The following steps were conducted:

1. An area of interest was identified;
2. The area of interest was refined through reflection;
3. A specific topic was chosen as a focus;
4. A course assignment was used as an exploratory research tool;
5. The assignment was carried out in its entirety;
6. Outcomes of the assignment were analyzed and interpreted; and
7. Implications for future instruction were identified.

**Area of Interest**

A decade ago two Title 1 teachers, one of whom is an author of this paper, organized a workshop for reading and math teachers. They started with the assumption that teachers read differently from lay readers when approaching their discipline. Both reading and math teachers read math problems from a state achievement test. All wrote down their thinking while solving the problems. The ensuing discussion proved fruitful as one of the math teachers said, “This is simple. I look for the function, throw out all extraneous words, then solve the problem. This question was a ratio problem. That’s all I needed to know.” Conversely, English teachers found themselves perseverating on the connective “and,” wondering whether it meant plus or whether it was delineating a sequence of actions. The ambiguity created difficulty in deciding how to solve the problem. This productive foray into dialogue between teachers of differing disciplines provided a model for better understanding differences between novices and experts.
Focusing the Research Topic

When reading Braunger et al. (2005), the Title 1 teacher turned professor, was reminded of a potentially efficacious teaching strategy. He decided to explore whether placing teacher candidates in the position of both expert in their own field and novice in another would help them become better at scaffolding text so that students could approach reading with greater confidence.

Research Tool

The focus of this exploratory study was on the following assignment, created to explore novice/expert differences. The multifaceted assignment involved the following steps:

1. Students paired with a partner from a disparate discipline. For example, language arts and social studies teachers were coupled with science or math teachers.
2. Students searched for articles of fifteen to thirty pages, from discipline-related materials that they read to increase their disciplinary knowledge.
3. Each student created a journal in which she recorded reflections on the process. The first entry discussed why the student chose the selection.
4. One article from each interdisciplinary pair was read each week, each partner “thinking aloud” through marginalia or journal notes.
5. During each class session, before dialoguing with partners, individuals read their own, and their partner’s, marginalia, reflecting in writing on how they read differently.
6. Pairs read one another’s reflections, then conversed about their contrasting strategies.
7. Students wrote a reflection on what they learned about the particularities of their disciplines’ texts, strategies to employ to read their discipline with better understanding, and ways to bridge the gap between novice and expert in each content area.

Researchers’ Roles

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument used to collect data (Merriam, 1988). Both authors are currently professors in a School of Education at a private university. The first author was the professor of the course that was the focus of this exploratory study. He regularly teaches literacy courses at the university and has over thirty years experience as a reading teacher in grades 9-12. The second author has over five years experience teaching content-area reading courses to undergraduates and graduates. She also has conducted longitudinal qualitative research studies over the past twelve years. The first author invited the second author to assist with data analysis and interpretation.

Data Collection

Course members’ journals were the primary source of data collected for this exploratory study. One of the authors, the professor of the course, collected the journals at the end of the summer 2006 session after grades had been assigned. Course members participated in every aspect of the assignment described above without knowing about the study. However, after
grades had been assigned, all course members were contacted and gave the professor permission to use their journals in this study. Permission from the university’s Human Subjects Committee was granted to conduct this research. In order to preserve the anonymity of all participants, all names in this study are pseudonyms.

Thirty journals were collected from fifteen dialoguing pairs. Within the fifteen duos, there were four math/language arts pairings, three social studies/math, three science/language arts, one social studies/science, one foreign language/science, one music/language arts, one social studies/language arts and one health/social studies. Therefore, 30 teacher candidates participated in this study. All of the teacher candidates were taking the course, Literacy Across the Curriculum, required for the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in the School of Education at a private university. The university is located in a metro area in the northwest and serves approximately 3000 students.

Data Analysis

In this exploratory study, the authors made an effort to reduce data and synthesize them for interpretation (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative data analysis is grounded in the data collected; interpretations are built out of what is seen in the data, allowing themes to evolve as data are analyzed. The researchers followed steps outlined in Merriam (1988). They began by analyzing students’ insights by reading through each pair’s set of journals. Both researchers read through the same students’ journals at the same time. While reading the journals, they took notes on thoughts that students’ comments triggered, these sometimes being the students’ own insights. After reading each set of journals, the researchers shared findings through conversations. Through these conversations they expanded on original notes and began to make connections to theories in the reading education literature. They added these insights to their written notes. The analysis proceeded in this manner with each of the fifteen duos’ journals.

After that process was completed the researchers conducted a more intensive data analysis using Merriam’s framework (1988). The steps carried out are summarized below:

1. Word-processed the hand-written notes and comments written in the margins of the journals.
2. Read through the word processed notes and comments and grouped those that seemed to go together. This constitutes a classification system reflecting recurring patterns.
3. Took the reoccurring patterns and turned them into categories for sorting the data. Categories reflected what we saw in the data.
4. Cut units of information (the data) and coded them with the categories. Units of information bearing the same category placed in file folders.
5. Developed descriptions of each category.
6. Linked categories to develop hypotheses.
7. Integrated and refined categories and hypotheses to develop theories.

Results

As journals were read and themes emerged, the authors noted interesting patterns of response. When novices read their partners’ material, they were often taken out of their comfort level. This was not only a revelation to them, but also, often, to their partners. This discomfited reaction frequently engendered an empathetic reaction from one or both of the partners. From
this discovery of unexpected difficulty emanated comments positing potential strategies to make readings more accessible to students. As the authors attempted to categorize student commentary, they found that some followed the following stages: 1) recognition of the novice’s difficulty; 2) empathy for both the partner and for students who might also demonstrate similar patterns, then 3) a plan for methods that might mediate these difficulties. Students not only noticed difficulty, but immediately began thinking about how to teach in a manner that would help students read their discipline. The following themes were identified

**Recognition of Difficulty**

Most teacher candidates chose their articles with their audience in mind. Over and over the first piece they selected was one they expected to be accessible to their partner. The following comments reveal the teacher candidates’ effort to provide an interesting selection:

- *I was not sure about how well T. could read scientific articles, but he was interested in autism so I decided to focus the first reading in this area.*
- *I chose selections that I hope will dispel the general perception that history is about boring facts, memorizing dates, and dead people.*

The next set of reflections demonstrates that teacher candidates thought out their texts in terms of difficulty level:

- *I chose a chapter on jazz from a music text book which would be geared for a high school music appreciation class. I wanted to give M. something that wouldn’t scare her like the inner workings of modulations through augmented sixth chords.*
- *I chose a really good book about cosmology written for a general audience. I especially appreciated the light-hearted humor that the author brought to some pretty complicated discussions.*

These responses demonstrate a concern for finding accessible materials for an untutored reader. They also show a situational recognition of differences between novices and experts in the ability to appreciate and/or gain meaning from reading in particular disciplines. In this aspect of responding to the assignment, teacher candidate experts demonstrated they were not “blind” to differences.

Ironically, however, the expert’s perception of accessible text was not often confirmed in novices’ actual reading. While K. thought her partner’s interest in autism would mitigate difficulty, her partner fell apart quickly in his reading. In another example, one novice found:

*I struggled with the economic text unable to get past the initial paragraph without being lost in a sea of bewilderingly unfamiliar vocabulary. D. was shocked—he took it for granted and had no trouble understanding... Often some of the things he found most interesting, simple, or useful were completely lost on me.*

Novices found that their comprehension was more concrete. A language arts candidate felt lost when reading a science selection: “After reading the article, I found that I could get through the article getting only the gist of what Fisher was proposing. I could vaguely recall many of the formulas that he included.”

The biggest obstacles to comprehension were unknown terminology and too many new concepts presented at once. After reading her partner’s business article, one science teacher candidate noted: “I struggled immensely with D’s text, unable to get past the initial paragraph without being lost in a sea of bewilderingly unfamiliar vocabulary.”

A language arts candidate revealed his increasing disinterest while reading a technical
article:

I did find that I really struggled with it though. I found it very interesting in the beginning, learning about the different diseases and how they get transferred, but then it started to lose me. The statistics, which at first were great, started getting more and more dull. The reading also started getting more technical. I found that I really had to pay attention to what I was reading. That started not working as well, so I had to re-read almost every other paragraph. I finally started getting a little frustrated and ready to move on, so I skimmed the last couple of pages.

Novices reported confusion, frustration and disengagement while reading experts’ texts. They attributed these emotions to “information overload” and lack of knowledge about the field. Though many teacher candidates thought they were choosing accessible articles, their partners suggested areas in which they struggled.

Experts Decipher Differences in Comprehension

Experts found not only a sense of frustration among novices, but also that novices read with less attention to what was salient to them. They noticed that they made more connections to the text and that these connections allowed them to see a more global picture. One teacher candidate reflected:

L. and I asked very different questions. I attributed this to the fact that I am an experienced reader of historical texts. I have a large volume of background knowledge and am able to search for broader meaning and purpose because I know a fair amount about the Apacheria and military campaigns.

Another history teacher candidate suggested: “The expert reader will be able to read material and scaffold to concepts more abstractly than a novice reader. From a historical perspective, the expert reader will identify trends and apply them to future events.”

A third claimed that this abstracted reading of social sciences was a main difference in the way he and his partner read his article:

I found myself making larger connections to global policy. I was trying to ask why and how. Having background knowledge of this style of essay, I knew to sift through facts for larger meaning. What is the state of global policy? I asked myself this continually.

In contrast, the novice paired with this candidate fought to make connections: “After sharing our response journals, it was clear we approached the reading very differently. Struggling to stay involved with the text, I stretched to link experiences with anything I could.”

Experts repeatedly mentioned that they made connections to their disciplines, especially to background knowledge. They claimed that the connections made were more in-depth than those of novices. This finding fits Braunger et al.’s (2005) description of experts. The authors explain that it is not only the knowing of information that defines experts, but also how they retrieve specific information necessary for a given task. This conditional knowledge, or knowing when, where and why to use knowledge, is required to retrieve specific knowledge needed to achieve a task successfully. On the other hand, novices’ made peripheral personal connections because no discipline-specific connections could be made. This added to comprehension difficulty.
Empathy

As seen above, teacher candidates’ choices in articles for their partners revealed an inchoate sensitivity towards their partners and a desire to build interest in their content areas that was not always efficacious in terms of helping novices’ comprehension. However, novices’ incertitude often built experts’ appreciation of the difficulties that novice readers might encounter in classrooms.

The authors agree with the view that the concept of empathy is “the primary mode of human connectedness” (Courtright, Mackey, & Packard, 2005, p. 126). Nieto (2006) suggests that characteristics of effective teachers include empathy for their students. Of further interest is research that shows that college students develop higher levels of thinking as they progress through college and that this higher level of cognitive development contributes to an increased ability to feel empathy (Benack, 1988). The hope for the partnered dialoguing was that empathy for novice’s difficulties would hook into this developmentally appropriate growth in empathetic response.

Empathy has been seen as both cognitive and affective. Piaget (1965) suggested that in the cognitive process, one assumes the role of another through an understanding of his or her thoughts, feelings, and actions. Affective or emotional empathy involves an emotional response to others’ emotional responses (Stotland, 1969). What the authors have seen in the data is a combining of cognitive and affective responses, made more complex because, instead of just feeling someone else’s pain and relating it to their own, some of our candidates felt their own pain as they read unfamiliar text and related it to the possible experiences of readers of their own discipline. Here two novices reading math texts not only notice their own struggles, but think about what their future students might feel:

• The word theorem on page one has already begun to worry me, and I can sense how a student would feel if he was directed by his or her teacher to read something unfamiliar and intimidating (such as I feel with anything having to do with math).

• So reading the math article really made me feel that uncomfortable feeling of ‘Uh…I didn’t get it.’ Some of my students will probably feel that way at some point in my classes. So this activity raised my awareness of how my students will be learning and hopefully fixing their struggling reading.

Experts developed empathy after learning how their partners struggled with their texts. These empathic feelings were often followed with references to future teaching:

A key realization for me was L.’s emotional response to ratios. She said that she had a negative reaction and perhaps this is due to a fairly complex concept written in an unconventional form in a small amount of space. Having L. share this will help me to be more sensitive with my students.

For certain teacher candidates, the gap between novices and experts elicited understanding of novices’ feelings about reading difficult material:

After our discussion I was enlightened as to how differently a novice and an expert read text. As I was reading and making connections, I was thinking that if I didn’t have my background knowledge I would not have been thinking beyond the text in terms of mathematics. If reading is like swimming, the novice has bricks tied to her feet whereas the expert has flotation devices. Thus, a novice can feel overwhelmed and drown in the material whereas the expert is able to enjoy the water and easily float along.

It appears that experts saw readings in their disciplines in a new light as they
contemplated their texts with an eye towards the novice reader who had realized limitations to comprehension. Teacher candidates acknowledged that readers with less background knowledge may interpret text differently, losing essential comprehension. Both experts and novices found empathy for untutored readers approaching their disciplines’ text. Texts need to be accessible and relevant to a novice reader and, as seen in the following section, teacher candidates began to think of strategies to help novices approach difficult text.

From Empathy to Positing Strategies

Empathy is a worthy emotion. However, only through re-adjusting practice can a teacher create changes necessary to help students move from floundering to understanding. Teachers must modify their pedagogy. This recognition that expertise is a necessary, but insufficient quality to teach one’s discipline can be the catalyst for bridging novices to increasing expertise. In this study, teacher candidates posited strategies to help students gain understanding of their discipline’s texts. After difficulty reading out of her discipline, one English teacher candidate expressed that a teacher was to students’ learning:

This exercise showed me how influential a teacher can be in generating interest for the students while reading something they normally would not. Had this piece been given to me with a foreword or some sort of hook, I could have read with enjoyment.

A math teacher candidate perplexed by a history text suggested that modeling how to act as an expert reader in a discipline could provide important entry points into how to read in that discipline:

The expert needs to model both by words and deeds either math and/or history. The expert needs to have an analogy that the novice can relate to as to why the expert approaches the text in the manner he does. By talking with behavior and words, that is to practice what the experts preach, the text reading can apply across a spectrum of situations and relationships. What is essential in the disciplines of math and history is to focus on the when, where, how and what the expert reads. Then the novice can copy or simulate what the expert did to increase his comprehension.

The dialogue between expert and novice also seemed to broaden both’s views of possible interventions:

From reading this article and discussing it with S., I learned a few lessons that apply towards my career as a teacher. I should choose articles that only teach one or two new concepts. This article included too many equations, so I never got a good grasp on one of them.

Her partner found that she needed to pay closer attention to how to help students parse central concepts from readings:

I realized that my process of reading was not an authentic version of what I do when I’m reading to pull out significant science information. The purpose was entirely different... This ultimately is what I took from this discussion to apply to my teaching. I need to make sure to teach my students what the important parts are and how to find them.

Overall, experts became aware that they need to read the text before assigning it to their students. They noted that their disciplines may be less engaging to others and that this may cause distractions while reading. They also noted a wide variety of strategies to mediate problems in the readings.
From Recognition to Empathy and Thinking Strategically: A Case Example

As the authors read journal entries, they found numbers of teacher candidates whose narratives moved from recognition of difficulty to empathy to speculation about methods to help students’ reading comprehension. D.’s journal was a particularly enlightening narrative. D.’s musings took place after reading his partner’s reflections and discussing with her the differences in how they read both their selections. From the very beginning, D. was an empathetic teacher, intending to find a friendly article for his partner: “When I picked out my text selection for business content, I thought that it would be an easy read for J.” Yet, his reflection continues, noting the fallacy of his original premise:

I learned that I was incorrect. To my surprise, J. found the reading difficult. In particular, she had trouble with understanding the vocabulary. As a teacher, I really should pay attention to the fact that even though I know my content well, someone else may not. I should not assume that the terminology that is so familiar to me will be easily deciphered by my students. Therefore, I have to be especially careful when I select text materials.

Here we see both empathy and the beginnings of grappling with how D. will adjust his teaching to make the reading more accessible. In a later journal entry, D. once again reflects on the text, noting how its organization is foreign to his partner:

J. felt that many concepts in the text were unexplained, and thus confusing. J. had trouble understanding the charts and tables. She even skipped over reading some of the tables. Again, I misjudged the text. I thought that since she was a numbers person, she would understand the graphs and charts quite easily. She complained that the graphs and charts were not organized well and display items were not placed in alphabetical order.

Speaking for both himself and his partner, D. describes possible strategies to respond to this novice’s difficulty with the reading, moving from pre-teaching vocabulary to providing a limited purpose for the reading. Understanding the novice’s dilemma leads to new instructional decisions:

We both agreed that it would be helpful for me as a teacher to provide a list of vocabulary words prior to students reading the text selection. In addition, I should show readers how to find parts in the chapter where new terminology would be defined. We also thought that it would be a good idea to inform students about which information was relevant.

While D. had been confident in his reading of economics, missing that which would cause difficulty for those unpracticed in his discipline, he found himself awash in his partner’s physics text. Through this experience, he began to posit what separates experts from novices:

After discussing my thought with my partner, J., about reading the chapter called Describing Motion: Kinematics in One Dimension in the physics textbook, I learned several things. J. enjoyed some of the problems offered in the text, whereas I dreaded most of them. She was able to take the examples a step further and think of applications to the problem, but I struggled with the basics of solving the problems. Likewise, J. would ask questions in her head and was able to make good guesses about answers to problems presented in the text. Since J. is an expert in physics, the content material was meaningful to her, and she was able to make a personal connection to the examples and concepts provided in the chapter. She does not memorize formulas, but instead relies on derivations of them. Quite the opposite, I tried to remember and comprehend each
formula and was confused every time the text introduced a variation of the original formula.

This understanding of, maybe even empathy for, both expert and novice leads D. to suggest even another technique for making the reading more concrete and accessible:

*I think a teacher could make physics fun if he or she provided practical applications outside the textbook. For example, I am a whitewater rafting guide, and I have to use laws of physics to pull heavy rafts off of rocks in the river when they become stuck. We use ropes to extract stuck rafts, and one must know the appropriate angles in which to pull. Instead of providing physics examples that I could readily employ, the textbook chapter that I read was rather dry and boring.*

As D. sums up what he learned from the expert/novice dialogues, he demonstrates a change in attitude about his responsibility to pre-determine what might be difficult to understand in an academic reading and takes responsibility for scaffolding readings for students. He will no longer blithely assume that a reading will be easy for a student as he did when he first presented J. with an article. He is now committed to being a literacy teacher in his discipline:

*This assignment makes me aware that I must make sure that students are able to understand the content material in my subject area, and the text I provide should be interesting. Furthermore, since I was trying to comprehend everything in the textbook chapter, it would be helpful for students if I informed them about what they should pay attention to and what they can ignore. Also, it would be helpful to provide them with reading tips for my subject area.*

Conclusions

The expert-novice dialogues brought forward two important findings: 1) teacher candidates began to posit strategies to aid their colleagues in comprehension of their texts; and 2) by experiencing someone who was struggling with their discipline’s text, and/or by struggling with another disciplines text themselves, teacher candidates became more willing to work with these strategies.

There were many strategies discussed in journals. These fell into the following categories:
- Establishing a purpose for reading
- Relating text to the reader's interests
- Adapting the original text to make it more accessible to the reader
- Providing background information
- The importance of visuals

Both novices’ and experts' notes revealed patterns of how to assist future students with reading in their respective disciplines. As future teachers, they realized the need to make personal connections to their students' background knowledge, to point out important information to students before they read, to model how to read the text, and to utilize a variety of visuals to increase comprehension. The authors are currently following-up with course members through interviews to determine how they have incorporated comprehension strategies into their practice.

This study also suggests that teacher candidates developed a positive disposition towards incorporating literacy strategies into their classrooms Braunger et al. (2005) speak of a change in the stance of teachers who grapple with difficulty in text. They move from seeing themselves as experts to “accomplished novices,” recognizing the need to employ strategies when texts get...
difficult. In this study, the recognition of difficulty led teacher candidates to act as accomplished novices. Because they experienced difficulty first hand, they empathized with novices reading their discipline’s text. From empathy came a commitment to aid students to approach difficult text successfully.

It is critical for instructors of content area literacy courses not only to present reading strategies to their students, but also to show their students why they are important. Through the expert-novice dialogue, teacher candidates experienced that which students are likely to experience in reading history, chemistry, or algebra texts. This partnered inquiry raised the consciousness of teacher candidates about general strategies to employ as they aid students to read texts in their discipline. This deeper understanding of strategies was reinforced by teacher candidates grappling with difficulty when reading outside their discipline. The visceral frustration that many experienced reinforced the importance of understanding where students are struggling, then creating pathways to making texts meaningful. The dialogues built bridges to empathy and closer attention to what novices need to grow as readers.

When teacher candidates graduate from an institution ready to incorporate literacy skills into their teaching, students are well-served. As one teacher candidate commented: “Honestly, I really liked this assignment. It’s one thing to say, ‘Kids who don’t read literature well, really struggle like this.’ It’s a totally different thing to experience it.”

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Towards A New Ethnicity: Canada’s Western Plains First Nations

John W. Friesen
University of Calgary

Abstract

Although social scientists have for a long time refrained from employing the term "ethnic" when describing First Nations cultures, recent developments in those communities have necessitated a second look at this practice. If the ethnic designation is applicable to any group of people typically related through common filiation, or blood, and whose members also usually feel a sense of attachment to a particular place, a history, and a culture (including a common language, food, and clothing), then Canada’s First Peoples may also be considered ethnic. The educational implications of this reality are that the needs of Indigenous students are more nearly in line with those of other Canadian minorities than previously thought.

This paper examines five key Aboriginal values that appear to be in transition to more nearly resemble those of other Canadian ethnic groups. These include dramatic shifts from traditional practices pertaining to individualism, bravery, revered cultural skills, and traditional interpretations of wisdom, and generosity. Educators need to be aware of these transitory realities if they are to formulate relevant school curricula and methodologies.

It has long been the practice in academic circles to differentiate the cultural identity of ethnic groups from mainline cultures, the latter presumably having originated in France or in the British Isles. It may be time to dissolve this differentiation and abandon the notion that immigrants in Canada, other than British or French, somehow uniquely fit the definition of being ethnic. According to Bramadat’s (2009) definition, the incorporated characteristics of ethnicity are not only descriptive of the lifestyles of British, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish descendants, they may also be applied to the cultures of Canada’s First Nations. To wit: An ethnic group is any significant group of people, typically related through common filiation, or blood, whose members also usually feel a sense of attachment to a particular place, a history, and a culture (including a common language, food, and clothing).

These attributes are very much identifiable in Canada’s First Nations. The 600-plus Indian bands certainly have a sense of attachment to their origins, lay claim to unique histories, and struggle to hold onto a land base. Researchers have identified six culture areas in the country—eastern Maritimes, Woodland, Plains, Plateau, West Coast, and Northern - each of which fits the dimensions of unique ethnic identity. As the discussion gets underway it is necessary to explain that various terms will be employed to describe First Nations cultures—Aboriginal, Indian, Indigenous, and Native. This is because the political correctness movement has rendered it virtually impossible to find consensus regarding terminology describing these communities. It should be noted that both the American and Canadian governments still employ the term Indian.

Until very recently, most published Aboriginal cultural and historical research has originated from the efforts of non-Native writers who have emphasized the unique cultural practices of the First Peoples but avoided calling them ethnic communities. The primary traditional values of Aboriginal nations in western Canada have been sharply differentiated from
European-imported models. This perspective ignores the common features that all human cultures share, namely the need for a land base, language and stock, artifacts, social organization, governance or political arrangements, spiritual or religious systems, arts and music, forms of caring for the sick or needy, rules about property, and educational arrangements (Friesen, 1983). Bitting (2001) observes that a distinct EuroCanadian bias has limited objective assessments because the model of knowledge that predominates Western society and schools is grounded historically and psychologically in Europe. In educational terms this means that Aboriginal students have not always been perceived as having the same pedagogical needs as their non-Native counterparts, and this shortcoming needs to be rectified.

Non-Native research has drawn attention to traditional Indian value systems to illustrate how very different they were from those of incoming Europeans. Surveys of Indigenous values include respect for the workings of the universe; belief in connectedness; the importance of being, not doing; the importance of family; the concept of sharing as “taking, without consequences;” respect for individuality; and government by consensus (Burger, 1968; Frideres & Gadacz, 2001; Friesen, 1999; Jenness, 1955; Knudson & Suzuki, 1992; Patterson, 1972; Ross, 1992; Steckley & Cummins, 2008; Surtees, 1969).

Briefly described, these core values have been interpreted in the following ways. Respect for nature is best depicted in the sense of rendering obeisance to the universe, which is the stronghold of the Creator, the Great Spirit. Pelletier (1974) suggests that humans have been designated stewards in the domain of Mother Earth by the Creator, and assigned the task of respecting its rhythms and resident creatures.

The concept of connectedness implies that all entities in the universe have a common origin, albeit unique functions, and they are therefore interconnected and dependent upon one another. Related to this is a logically-derived obligation on the part of human beings to place more emphasis on their assigned roles while on earth, instead of engaging in otherwise meaningless acts of doing, often for their own sake.

The challenge of working out one’s spiritual assignment and eventual destiny is focused on primary relationships, particularly involving one’s family, band, and nation. The benefits of individual gifts such as wisdom, healing, food gathering, or engagement in the arts are intended to accrue to the people of one’s identity. They are not intended to encourage or become the source of individual pride since they are considered “community property.” The prized form of sharing, therefore, is being able to provide for others in the form of acquired resources that may be freely accessed by others. In that sense, a classic form of sharing is entrenched in the act of a family or band member helping themselves to the resources of a connected individual without asking to do so. In this sense respect for the individual is maximized in that the individual with available resources is honored in being able to provide for others, and the needy individual is respected by not having to request assistance. The same principle of common property applies to ceremonial paraphernalia; that is, an individual carrying a pipe is considered a pipe carrier, and an individual in possession of a medicine bundle is a bundle keeper. Member nations of several Plains Indian tribes have a tradition that if someone requests that a medicine bundle or teepee design be transferred to himself so that its power become his, that request cannot be refuse (Harrod, 1992).

Finally, the traditional habit of talking things through to consensus assures that everyone’s opinion is validated in deliberations, and everyone is on board with communal decisions.
These values have been challenged and significantly modified since the time of European contact, but as is the case with other cultures, change is to be expected. It could be argued that that the most far-reaching transformations have occurred in the last several decades, and have most notably included the replacement of working in harmony with the rhythms of nature with a capitalistic bent. The latter is deeply founded in the strong Protestant ethic encapsulated in the biblical mandate, “The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work” (Proverbs 21:25 NIV).

A Working Model

Malcolm McFee, a professor of anthropology at the University of Oregon, formulated a useful model by which to compare changing Blackfeet values (McFee, 1972). The results of the study are relevant to the western Canadian First Nations, particularly the three Alberta member First Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy—Kainai, Peigan, and Siksika - but also to nearby Cree, Tsuu T’ina, and Stoney First Nations. McFee identified five transforming Blackfeet values: individualism, bravery, skills, wisdom, and generosity, and indicated how each has been affected by contemporary cultural shifts.

(i) Individualism was a very highly valued characteristic in traditional Blackfeet culture in the form of individual achievement in tribally valued activities. Individuals so recognized gained social acceptance and increased prestige, and were assigned higher status. Respect for individualism was particularly manifest in the way children were brought up. Their rights were respected to the same degree as those of adults. Non-Native observers would have labeled the Blackfeet philosophy of raising children as child-centered or permissive. In contemporary times, Blackfeet parents have often experienced frustration from witnessing societal institutional disregard of children’s wishes by forcing them to conform to institutional expectations—like those existent in schools—without negotiating them. According to traditional Blackfeet beliefs, this approach robs “little adults” from becoming the people the Creator intended them to be.

(ii) Bravery, once manifest in war, hunting, and horse raiding remains a valued characteristic, but is now aligned with such activities as supporting the American war effort, engaging in sports and rodeos, participating in occasional fights, and taking up certain kinds of employment such as ranch hand or firefighter. In its contemporary form, exhibited bravery has little to do with economic or social achievement. Hard work in certain sectors does count.

(iii) Certain cultural artistic skills that were traditionally valued remain on the roster of importance today. These include dancing, singing, arts, crafts, and oratorical skills, all considered expressions of cultural identity. Crafts such as beading, basket-making, and leather work are also making a comeback among Native women.

(iv) Wisdom was traditionally viewed as the domain of elders—including medicinal, consultative, storytelling, and ceremonial elders. Elders had to be consulted for the conduction of certain rituals and ceremonies. One could go to an elder to discuss personal matters or to seek advice. Some elders were trained in the use of plants for medicinal purposes; young people were usually apprenticed to these men and women.
to carry on the trade. Although the importance of eldership deteriorated after European contact, in recent decades the status of elder has been renewed in importance. As time has gone on, the Montana Blackfeet have also come to appreciate modern knowledge emanating from college and university education. They realize that this form of knowledge is valuable and necessary in dealing with non-Natives and state and federal governments. According to McFee (1972) postsecondary forms of education will not assure employment on the Blackfeet reservation, however; jobs are basically procured on the basis of family nepotism or having the right political affiliation (Flanagan, 2000). This corresponds with my experience working in four different Native communities over the past forty years.

(v) Generosity, the final key Blackfeet value, today takes both public and private forms. Traditionally the notion of sharing resources was adhered to in the following terms: individuals with means were expected to feel honored if they were able to share their resources with their kin. Those without means were not required to ask for assistance; it was expected that they could access the resources of their kin simply by availing themselves of them. The highest honor in such a situation accrued to individuals with means (Erdoes, 1972). These individuals were expected to feel blessed in being able to help the needy, and the community respected them for it. More recently, this arrangement has proven somewhat dysfunctional. For example, in one case a young man with no means of support moved in with a family and contributed little or nothing to family coffers. The woman of the house believed that she could not ask him to move out because she would lose the respect of the community. Her solution was to ask a local non-Native individual to accost the uninvited guest and ask him to either help out the family or move out. Her plea to the non-Native individual was this; “Only don’t tell that I said for you to do it” (McFee, 1972, p. 100). It would be an insult of significant magnitude to be told that one was stingy, selfish, or unkind.

Another individual, clearly upset at the way the traditional practice of sharing was being interpreted by council members, remarked; “At election time they’re always willing to lend you a dollar, but after they’re in they won’t give you a nickel” (McFee, 1972, p. 101). Evidently, the traditional Blackfeet approach to sharing has been amended.

Applying the Model

When the territory of Nunavut was formed in 1999, members of the Inuit community were excited about the prospect of operating their own affairs. As one spokesperson put it, “We were so proud when we were told that we would have our own Inuit land, with Inuit rights, and our own way of life would come back” (Gregoire, 2009, p. 40). The Inuit were not prepared for what transpired. They were soon to discover that they would not be able to go back to their traditional way of life. The skills of tracking polar bears, harpooning seals, building igloos, and sewing skin boots were replaced by trendy clothes, indoor swimming pools, an urban graffiti project that incorporated traditional images, and the phenomenon of significant oil and gas exploration.

A recently released consultant’s report suggests that Nunavut has neither the human capacity nor the expertise to handle the necessary changes (Gregoire, 2009). Some Nunavut leaders believe that the process of devolution is a reality in Inuit territory, and a key to unlocking Nunavut’s economic self-sufficiency. The territory contains an estimated ten percent
of Canada’s oil reserves and 20 percent of its natural gas. In addition, the copper, diamonds, gold, and nickel that can be mined in Nunavut could yield additional income. In 2007, the government of Canada earned an estimated 33 million dollars from royalties and taxes in Nunavut (Gregoire, 2009). These developments indicate that the Inuit will face an uphill battle in pursuing the restoration of their traditional lifestyle. This experience is easily paralleled in Plains First Nations communities.

Although several decades have passed since McFee analyzed change in the Blackfeet community, the five characteristics of his model can easily be applied to developments among the First Nations of Western Canada.

**Individualism**

Individuals who are a part of the nine-to-five workforce often complain that individualism has virtually no place in today’s society. After finding a bearable occupation, all that is left to experience after thirty-five years of labor is retirement with a minimally subsistent pension, short, inexpensive vacations comprising visits to the children, and finally, the hope of spending one’s last years in a reasonably comfortable senior citizens’ complex. Dismal as this description may sound, it very much resembles the lifestyle of many retired Canadians. This unadventurous lifestyle is far removed from that traditionally practiced by Canada’s First Nations. Precontact tribal cultures greatly respected both age and individuality, whether it was evident in the medicinal skills or knowledge of an elder, the warrior skills of an admired scout, or a creative urge demonstrated by a young child. Unique abilities and talents were admired and encouraged.

When the Europeans arrived, they foisted their institutional forms on local Aboriginal residents, with the objective of “making the Indian over.” For many generations it appeared as though they were successful, but recent attempts to revive revered Indigenous customs and practices have been quite successful.

One example of a return to the past is evident in the arena of raising children. Significant changes are taking place in the way that child rescue and social work generally have been conducted. Walmsley (2005) emphasizes that the new approach is a family-focused orientation recognizing that a child’s needs are best met within the context of a family, and social intervention must be directed to enable families to care adequately for their children. When a child is at risk of neglect or abuse, social intervention can involve a range of family centered, home-based protective services that will parallel or even enhance locally respected practices. Thus the practice of respecting traditional Native individualism may be revived.

**Bravery**

The Indian cultural renaissance of the 1960s not only intensified the practice of traditional rituals and ceremonies, it also served to bring together the concerns of both American and Canadian First Nations (Lincoln, 1985). Better means of transportation, coupled with improved technologies and new avenues of funding, have enabled greater intertribal sharing of cultural practices that have involve talents similar to those valued today by the Blackfeet—dancing, singing, drumming, arts, crafts, and oratorical skills. Engagement in the employment sector, however, conjures up a more complex scenario. Some tribal leaders who recognize that capitalistic endeavors are essential to their band’s existence, only provide reluctant support to the
idea. In communities where capitalistic endeavors are lauded, those individuals who have been successful in related sectors of the workplace—logging, mining, ranching, or trucking—are being encouraged in their achievements.

Most First Nations leaders seem to concur that economic development is necessary to the maintenance of Aboriginal culture. Native historian Olive Dickason (2006) holds hope that elements of the traditional Indigenous way of life will endure even though the road to Indian economic self-reliance comprises a political and economic morass. Dickason refers to the Canadian federal government’s abandonment of its expectation that First Nations would assimilate and adopt mainline cultural practices.

One example of a First Nations move toward economic self-reliance is exemplified in the philosophy of Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Band in British Columbia. Chief Louie promotes the philosophy that First Nations communities should pursue every opportunity for economic and technological development that comes their way. His band is currently involved in a variety of businesses including a golf-hotel-residential complex, a vineyard, a campground, a construction company, a ready-mix concrete enterprise, and a gas bar and convenience store. In 2006 the band opened an eight million dollar interpretive center. Over the last decade the total band revenue has been seven times that received in grants from the federal government. Although the issue has not been specifically addressed by Chief Louie, it appears to be assumed that a semblance of traditional values will remain in place as the band endorses a capitalistic philosophy of development (Friesen & Friesen, 2008).

A similar approach to economic development has been adopted by the Peguis (Ojibway) band in Manitoba. A decade ago the band was operating 50 profit-making businesses including a cabinet-making plant, a hotel in downtown Winnipeg, a publishing house, and various retail outlets. Chief Louis Stevenson insisted that labor for commercial development should come from the community, and great effort was made to provide training for the needed trades. At the same time, the band revived a series of forgotten tribal rituals and ceremonies as a means of fostering the underlying spiritual identity of the community.

Capitalistic development in Native communities has been spurred on by the publication of Calvin Helin’s (2006) book, *Dances with dependency: Indigenous success through self-reliance*. A descendant of a long line of Tsimshian chiefs, Helin posits that the only way for Canada’s First Nations to get out from under the colonial structures of federal government domination is through economic self-reliance. Helin castigates band governance structures that allow leaders to operate without transparency or accountability to their people. He suggests the appointment of an ombudsman to assist in replacing authoritarian reserve governance systems with more democratic forms (Helin, 2006). It remains to be seen how the historical, cultural, and spiritual bases of the Tsimshian way of life will be transferred to the new mode of governance.

Skills

The close connection between the Blackfeet Nation and Alberta Plains First Nations is quite evident in the maintenance of their cultural and artistic skills. Ancient skills like dancing, drumming, and singing are quite evident in western Canadian First Nations celebrations such as pow-wows. Decorative art forms, as well as those with special spiritual significance, also reveal the effect of cultural influence and exchange, particularly in the use of silver and turquoise (Friesen & Friesen, 2006). Certain arts and crafts such as beading, basket making and leatherwork were traditionally considered expressions of cultural identity, and their renaissance
has strengthened the resolve for cultural renewal. Many Indigenous artists from every cultural area in Canada have attained worldwide recognition.

**Wisdom**

Precontact western Canadian Aboriginal cultures had in place a differentiated form of leadership practiced through the offices of chiefs and band councils. They also sponsored a series of temporary leadership forms; the Plains First Peoples, for example, appointed war chiefs or hunting chiefs as needed. Some Plateau First Nations appointed an individual to the office of salmon chief when fishing season came around.

There is a reemerging phenomenon among western Canadian First Nations that might be called “a return to the elders.” This role is made up of men and women, some of whom will have been apprenticed to carry out certain responsibilities in the healing arts or with respect to having authority to conduct certain ceremonies. Others, like storytellers or individuals who are sought out for counsel, will have “emerged over time” (Medicine, 1987; Steigelbauer, 1996). The cultural renaissance of the past decades has given new impetus to the practice of consulting elders, and their place of honor and respect among their people is being reinstituted.

Similar to the situation among the Montana Blackfeet three decades ago, western Canadian First Nations have begun to place increasing value on mainstream forms of education. A shift in the way Aboriginal youth were being educated occurred in the 1960s, when these young people began attending postsecondary institutions. At that time there were only 200 Status Indians enrolled in Canadian colleges and universities, but as the 21st century began, there were more than 27,000. Since then the number has risen to more than 30,000, although limited government funding has curtailed this trend. Native students have majored in a variety of fields, at first primarily studying teacher preparation and social work and later gradually expanding to other areas of study. In order to accommodate this trend, many postsecondary institutions have expanded their curricula to include courses and programs in Aboriginal studies. Many First Nations graduates return to their home reserves after graduation to make valuable contributions to their communities. Others have preferred to remain in urban settings where career prospects are better.

Educational options for Native youth have steadily increased over the past three decades. Many Aboriginal communities operate college programs on-site, thereby affording greater flexibility for higher education. Hare (2003) notes that similar developments have occurred in relation to the education of Aboriginal children. Today, increased options are available for Indigenous children; their parents may choose which form of education they think will best suit their offspring. On-reserve families may choose to send their children to provincial or private schools, either on-reserve or off-reserve, or they may opt for a community-run school that is tailored to meet local needs. In these schools, administrators will hopefully recognize the value of including Aboriginal content in school curricula and include elder input in the teaching milieu.

**Generosity**

The proliferation of public institutions that provide health, education, and welfare services has directly contributed to the loss of such private and family values as taking in strangers, sharing with the needy, or caring for the aged in the family home. These services are available in both Native and non-Native communities, although it could be argued that the
quality of services in both communities are in need of being upgraded. Mercer (2001) notes that initiatives have recently been introduced to incorporate traditional Aboriginal medical practices in providing health care.

Traditionally, all societies, Native and non-Native, relied on family and kinship connections in times of emergency or general need. Evidence exists that the traditional Aboriginal habit of “taking what one needs from those with resources” is still practiced. Those with means are expected to share. An employed Stoney (Nakoda Sioux) elder in his 80s kept on working because his grown unemployed children relied on him to provide meat. As he put it, “If there is none, I disappoint them, and I simply cannot do that” (Friesen, 1999, p. 55). It would appear that in some First Nations communities, the biblical injunction, “It is more blessed to give then to receive” (Acts 20:35b KJV), so easily disregarded by contemporary society, still exists.

Values in Transition

The gradual shift of values orientation in Western First Nations communities is a reality. Increased industrialization and improved technology, combined with a strong capitalistic spirit, will undoubtedly cause cultural change of great magnitude. In this respect Aboriginal cultures will cope as other Canadian subcultures do, by adjusting to the reality of change. Many Indigenous leaders, like the late Chief John Snow of the Stoney (Nakoda Sioux) Nation believe that the underlying spiritual base of First Nations cultures will remain. This will constitute a form of biculturalism—comprising a lifestyle that combines the best of both worlds. First Nations will increasingly buy into the vicissitudes of the industrial, technological world, while maintaining a steadfast foundation in spirituality. According to Chief Snow, faith in the latter is in short supply in today’s world, and when society is ready to appreciate this, the Native people will be ready to deliver that knowledge. Snow refers to an ancient prophecy which foretells the day when Indigenous people will teach other peoples and other nations the importance of life. Life in this prophecy means the sacredness of life in the whole creation, not only human life but that of other beings, the elements, forces of life in nature and in the cosmic world. This prophecy tells of a day when Indigenous people who have special knowledge of nature and Earth’s ecosystems will be respected and heard by all humankind (Snow, 2005, p. 243).

The changing ethos of Western Canada’s First Nations will incorporate an entity somewhat alien to their traditional way of life—the appropriation of capitalistic enterprises. This is already happening, but if their spiritual leaders are correct, the absorption of modern technology and industrialization does not have to replace their traditional outlook on life which includes these values: respect for the workings of the universe; belief in connectedness; the importance of being, not doing; the importance of family; the concept of sharing as “taking, without consequences”; respect for individuality; and government by consensus.

Only the future will tell if First Nations prophets are correct in their predictions. In the meanwhile, educators are faced with the challenge of trying to meet the needs of all of their educational charges, Native and non-Native. As with students of other minority backgrounds, educators must be ready to amend school curricula and methodologies to meet their needs. In this case, the challenge has to do with Canada’s fastest growing population sector.
References


Secondary Education in Washington State: A Historical Look at Teaching Change in a Changing World

John Traynor
Gonzaga University

Abstract

High schools are under increasing demands to ensure that all students graduate ready for careers and college. This is a difficult task given the ever-changing characteristics of the students, the colleges/universities, and the labor markets that receive them upon graduation. This article provides an analysis of the earliest high schools in the State of Washington at the turn of the 19th century. The analysis illustrates a series of shifts and adaptations undertaken by schools to meet the rapidly changing landscape in the communities in which they were situated. The study was done through extensive archival research on the earliest programs of study offered by Washington State schools and illustrates the changes that these schools went through during this time. This historical lens provides an important template with which to evaluate current school structures as they continue to look for ways to provide a meaningful education for all students.

With growing attention being directed at high school dropout rates nationally, the practices of high schools are under increasing scrutiny. Educational attainment has long been an important part of the fabric of American society. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in a 1787 letter to James Madison; “...above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to: convinced that on their good senses we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.” Today, this legacy continues as American educators strive to provide opportunities for millions of children.

While high schools look to reduce troublesome dropout rates, it is possible to imagine changes to programs of study offered to meet the demands of a diverse high school student body. Increasingly, communities are setting the goal that students graduate from high school ready for a career and college. The recently study out of Harvard University, Pathways To Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century (2010), argues that students drop out because “…too many can’t see a clear, transparent connection between their program of study and tangible opportunities in the labor market (p. 10-11).” A look at history can provide a helpful lens through which to view this issue since high schools historically have had to change to meet the changing world. Additionally, this history provides context for teachers to consider their role in helping students make connections between the work in school and the future work outside of school.

The story of the inception and subsequent rapid growth of high schools in the state of Washington helps to illustrate schools that changed to meet a changing world. For the purpose of this research, the period examined begins with publically funded high schools in the Territory of Washington (1874) until roughly the conclusion of World War I (1919). This article provides the context for growth and the accompanying need for change within the earliest high schools in Washington state and also provides examples of the evolving and changing programs of study that were offered to meet these changing needs. This historical story provides context to current
recommendation, such as those made by the Pathways study that support efforts to “…broaden the range of high-quality pathways that we offer to our young people, beginning in high school (p. 24).” The historical perspective outlined in this article is utilized to inform some possible lessons that might help schools continue to deliver programs of study that engage students and prepare them to be college/career ready.

Northwest History – Natural Resources and Trade Vehicles

The Pacific Northwest, until the outset of World War II, could be described, as a “colonial hinterland” (p.2) as Carlos Schwantes (1989) viewed it in his exceptional book, The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History. Schwantes uses this phrase to indicate the remoteness of the Pacific Northwest from main centers of economic and political power. Even though modernization of early 20th Century America, as well as the onset of the Second World War, brought significant change in the connectedness of the Pacific Northwest to the rest of the country and the world, this area remained relatively isolated. The description of the Pacific Northwest as a hinterland, however, becomes obsolete because of the rich resources that propelled the region into a role of supplying raw materials to the rest of the world (Berner, 1991; Fuller, 1960; Kensel, 1969; Nesbit and Gates, 1946; Schwantes, 1989). The explosion of the timber industry in Tacoma and other areas along the West Coast, the growth of the agricultural industry in the Palouse region of Eastern Washington (Nesbit and Gates, 1946), and the development of the mining industry of the Silver Valley (Kensel, 1969) accompanied by the completion of the railroad hubs of Tacoma, Seattle and Spokane (Fuller, 1938) all precipitated significant population growth and accompanying economic expansion.

Tacoma (1887) and Spokane (1883), as hubs for the Northern Pacific Railroad, and Seattle (1893), as a hub for the Great Northern Railroad all became transportation centers for goods from the Inland Northwest region, including mining, timber and agricultural products, and as a jumping-off point for the Klondike gold rush (1897) in Alaska (Schwantes, 1989). While manufacturing was to come later to the Northwest, it was the trade of the abundant natural resources that drove economic and subsequent population growth, which in turn led to the rapid growth of high schools in the region (Berner, 1991). From 1900-1920 Seattle and Spokane populations increased from roughly 80,000 to 315,000 and 20,000 to 104,000 respectively (US Census Bureau, 2000).

When the Hudson’s Bay Company constructed a sawmill on the Columbia River in 1828, it encouraged the timber and forestry industries that would change the face of the physical and economic landscape of the Northwest forever. Domestic and international trade also grew out of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma via the Pacific Ocean. The California Gold Rush of 1849, the Timber and Stone Act of 1878, and the corresponding railroad development, all added to the growth of the timber market in the Pacific Northwest (Ficken, 1987).

While the timber and lumber industry may have been a primary engine of Western Washington economic development, it was the fertile soil and quality weather of Eastern Washington that fueled the agricultural industry’s domination of the economic development in that region. Nesbit and Gates (1946) characterized this impact on Eastern Washington as “the development of a vigorous farm community” (p. 295) that grew, in production numbers, from $8.5 million in 1889 to $63 million by 1910 (p. 297). This growth led to the doubling of farm acres in the Palouse district during the last decade of the 19th century.

Even though Spokane and Seattle were not mining cities, both benefited from the growth
of the mining districts of the Silver Valley in Idaho, the Colville and Okanogan regions in Washington, the Okanogan and Kootenay regions of southern Canada, and the Klondike gold rush of Alaska. Seattle, through the lumber demands brought on by the California Gold Rush of 1849 and the outfitting demands of the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, and Spokane, through the outfitting demands generated out of the Silver Valley, were profoundly impacted by this economic growth.

The growing role of Seattle and Spokane as transportation hubs precipitated the evolution from the colonial hinterland described by Schwantes to that of a global economic power. These sources of growth: sea-port and railroad trade; agricultural, mining and timber resources, were the engines behind the rapid growth of the region. The rapid growth of the Northwest region reflected the national trends of growth and development at the turn of the 20th Century. Significant population increases, due to immigration and economic growth, spurred industrialization and caused significant change in the United States as well as the Pacific Northwest. This change did not escape the K-12 school system and was, in fact, responsible for a paradigm shift within public education and within secondary education more specifically. This shift was from a one-size-fits-all model to one with a diverse set of offerings from which to choose. The end of the 20th Century ushered in a pronounced period of change for secondary schools in the Northwest.

**Growth of High Schools and Accompanying National Policy Trends**

The National Education Association, at the turn of the 20th Century, played a significant role in the establishment of a national educational policy through the release of two reports: *The Committee of Ten* (1892) and *The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (1918). These two reports are arguably two of the most significant educational policy developments in secondary education in the United States. The Committee of Ten, led by Harvard President, Charles Elliot, came about in part due to the rapidly growing enrollments of American high schools. Herbert Kliebard (1995), talks of a “massive new influx of students into secondary schools beginning around 1890” (p. 7). High school-age youth were attending secondary schools at rates of 6-7% in 1890 but grew to 11% by 1900, 33% by 1920, and to over 51% by 1930 (p. 8). The purpose of the Committee was to articulate the principle subjects that should make up the secondary school curriculum. The group was charged with the task of reporting on “…the general subject of uniformity in school programmes and in requirements for admission to college” (National Education Association, 1893, p. 3).

The report of the Committee of Ten reflected a national motivation to develop a uniform system of secondary education. The objective of the report was to provide for a level of standardization and uniformity as “…it is obviously desirable that the colleges and scientific schools should be accessible to all boys or girls who have completed creditably the secondary school course” (p. 52). Prior to 1890, schools were a very local affair with very different models of delivery across the nation. It is important to make note of the Committee’s proposed national standardization for the secondary schools as it started a process continued by recommendations of the forthcoming Cardinal Principles Report. The differences in the content categories for instruction in particular, constitute a significant change in the design of secondary schools.

The NEA report titled *The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* was released in 1918. This report focused on a shift from the largely humanistic, classical, liberal arts approach of the college preparatory design presented by Committee of Ten to the new trend in the
availability of different programs of study that the *Cardinal Principles* report called for from American high schools.

The story that emerges relative to this phenomenon is paralleled by the story of the development of secondary schools in the state of Washington. Similar to the development nationally, the public schools went through significant growth which reflected both the general population growth and the growing demand for schooling beyond the elementary years. Also, the Washington story is one that reflects national policy trends and, in fact, pre-dates the policy of offering a diversified set of tracks with in some cases. That these modifications had already begun in Washington State is born out through the local context of Seattle and Spokane public high schools, both of which had diversified their program of studies reflecting the changing demands on high schools.

**Local Context – Growth of High Schools in Washington State**

The growth and development of public high schools in the state of Washington in many ways mirrored the development nationally and reflected dramatic change as a result. Rapid population growth stemmed from increased migration to the West, as well as the rapid economic development that accompanied the growing industries of the region. The following population figures for Washington State reflect the significant population growth that occurred during the late-19th and early 20th Centuries: 1880= 75,116; 1890 = 357, 232; 1900 = 518,103; 1910 = 1,141,990; 1920 = 1,356,621 (US Census Figures for Washington Territory and State). This represents a 1,706 % increase in population over the course of 40 years. These statistics reflect a rapidly changing landscape driven by the development of the resource-based industries which defined the regional development such as timber, mining and agriculture. These various industries created new opportunities and provided the population with wages, leading to the growth of urban centers and precipitating the development of the earliest public high schools in the state.

The population growth that Washington experienced helps provide a local perspective on the related growth of the national public school system as well. High schools in particular saw a massive increase in number and in total student attendance. The Commissioner of Education’s *Report* of 1889-1890 listed 2,526 public high schools serving 202,963 students nationally. By 1910, the number of schools had grown to 10,213 and by 1920, 14,325 schools were serving 1,851,965 students nationally (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1923, p. 497). These reports and accompanying national statistics illustrate the dramatic changes taking place around secondary education reform.

**University Preparatory Department**

The history of secondary education in the state of Washington is embedded in the history of higher education in the state. It begins in 1862 with the establishment of the Territorial University of Washington in Seattle. The earliest available course catalogues from Washington’s Territorial University appear in 1874-1875. These catalogues include a two-year Preparatory, also called Academic, course of study. This constitutes the earliest high school program funded by public dollars in the Territory of Washington. For several years the University provided a senior preparatory department for high school students in the greater Seattle area (Bolton, 1933, p. 274). The course of study provided by the University was expanded to include multiple courses of study. As early as 1878 the University was providing Classical, Scientific, Normal
and Commercial Courses of Study (Territorial University Course Catalogue, 1878, p. 9; see Table 1).

The University’s work within the area of secondary education provides additional insight into the general status of the high school movement throughout the state. The University, in part, provided a preparatory department due to the fact that “…our common school system is in so imperfect a condition…” (Meany, 1946, p. 46) that students were not adequately prepared to undertake university studies upon entrance. It wasn’t until 1891 that the University adopted a policy of acceptance such that “Students holding diplomas from any Public High School of the State of Washington shall be admitted without examination” (University of Washington Course Catalogue, 1891, p. 11). The Board of Regents requested that the State Superintendent “…use his best endeavor to secure uniformity in course of study” (Regents Report, 1894, p. 25). This report articulates the impact that higher education standards were having on secondary schools’ programs of study. As of 1895, the Regents approved the high schools in the cities of Spokane, Tacoma, Seattle, New Whatcom and Fairview as adequate to advancing students for admission to the University (University Course Catalogue, 1894). With this action, the University discontinued its high school program.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Courses of Study, Territorial University of Washington, 1880 (Bolton, 1933, p. 275)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall Term</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caesar, Greek Lessons, History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Reader, History, Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, English Grammar, Arithmetic, Penmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Seattle Public High School(s)**

Seattle High School graduated its first class with twelve students in June of 1886. While the city had students enrolled in high school courses beginning in 1883, it wasn’t until 1886 that students eventually graduated (Report of the City Superintendent of Public Schools of Seattle, 1885, pp. 14), and graduation rates began a period of rapid growth (see Table 2). These align well to the rapid population growth of the city discussed earlier.
The first public high school in Seattle had a program of study which was described as a “scientific one, requiring three years’ time for its completion” (Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Seattle, 1884, p. 14). This course of study remained largely unchanged until 1891. At that time, the Seattle Public School Board adopted a much more comprehensive curriculum, one that reflected the differentiation of course and program offerings and one that reflected what was beginning to happen nationally. It would seem, in fact, that Seattle was at least ahead of the national policy initiatives, given that these reforms reflected a countrywide strategy that was not to be published until nearly twenty-five years later. The alternatives to the Classical Course of Study, known as the Latin Course in many cases, reflected the trend in high schools during this time to provide diversified options based on student interest and their projected needs following completion of high school. In pursuit of this, the district also adopted a three-year course of study in Industrial or Manual Arts Training. This course positioned the high schools as preparatory institutions for either future studies (college or university) or future work following the completion of high school study. With this in mind, the district added an Industrial Course, which was a modification of the Scientific/English course with additional work in shop and laboratory.

Table 2

Graduation figures for Seattle High School: 1886-1919 (Lash, 1934, p. 207)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>583</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>602</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Industrial course was “…valuable directly and incidentally” as it did “…much to fit young people for service in the ordinary vocations of life” (Board of Education Annual Report, 1891, p. 118). The employment of manual training, through coursework in subjects such as Carpentry, Iron Work – Forging and Machine Tool Work, was meant to develop the skills in the manual labor and domestic duties of the time, but to also “train the hands and eyes of the pupils while their minds are being developed” (p. 118). The course of study in Industrial training had a civic purpose as well, according to State Superintendent Barnard. “We should have skilled labor in this country to compete with the skilled labor of foreign countries” (Annual Board of Education Report, 1892, p. 98). Given the rapid growth of the mining and timber industries in particular, this perspective underlines the two parallel objectives of the Industrial Course of Study in Seattle High School: experiential education in manual arts would train the hands and
eyes as well as minds; the role of the high school in preparing students for life following their completion of high school. The elective trend that marked this period in public schools is reflected in the 1899 program of study adopted by the Seattle School Board (see Table 3). This

**Seattle Public Schools Program of Study (Seattle Board of Education Report, 1899)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>English Studies</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Scientific</th>
<th>Modern Language</th>
<th>Classical</th>
<th>Manual Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(^{st}) Year</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• Latin</td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• Eng, Latin or German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
<td>• Physiology</td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physiology</td>
<td>• Physiology</td>
<td>• Phys. Geog.</td>
<td>• Physiology</td>
<td>• Latin</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Phys. Geog.</td>
<td>• Phys. Geog.</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Phys. Geog.</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Carpentry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wood Carving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Physiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rhetoric</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• Latin</td>
<td>• German or French</td>
<td>• Latin</td>
<td>• Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plane Geometry</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• Plane Geometry</td>
<td>• Plane Geometry</td>
<td>• Plane Geometry</td>
<td>• Wood Turning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Civics</td>
<td>• Algebra</td>
<td>• Botany</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Pattern Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Botany</td>
<td>• Physiology</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(^{rd}) Year</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• Physics</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• Latin</td>
<td>• General History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physics</td>
<td>• Physics</td>
<td>• Review of Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Physics</td>
<td>• Physics</td>
<td>• Solid Geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review of Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Review of Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Zoology</td>
<td>• German or French</td>
<td>• German or French</td>
<td>• Review of Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Zoology</td>
<td>• Zoology</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• French</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(^{th}) Year</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• Chemistry</td>
<td>• German or French</td>
<td>• Latin</td>
<td>• Botany or Zoology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Chemistry</td>
<td>• Chemistry</td>
<td>• Mineralogy</td>
<td>• German or French</td>
<td>• German or French</td>
<td>• Civics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mineralogy</td>
<td>• Mineralogy</td>
<td>• Political Economy</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• Political Economy</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Political Economy</td>
<td>• Political Economy</td>
<td>• U.S. History</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• U.S. History</td>
<td>• U.S. History</td>
<td>• Descriptive Astronomy or Elementary Psychology</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive Astronomy or Elementary Psychology</td>
<td>• Descriptive Astronomy or Elementary Psychology</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Composition Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Machine Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This
trend was in response to the changing labor markets which had new demands as to the type of workers that were needed from a comprehensive high school.

The above described programs of study served as the framework for the Seattle Public School’s high school curriculum through the next couple of decades. These diversified offerings reflected the “…proper recognition to new-felt social needs and demands: eg. to physical well being, vocational training, and training for carrying on the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy” (Superintendent’s Report, 1921, p. 52). The role of the schools to prepare students for the activities which lay beyond high school, whether further academic or industrial studies or entry into the labor market, precipitated the need to “…classify these purposes by careful supervision into lines of high school work that the students can follow to their best advantage” (p. 57). These trends emerged in the courses of study across the Cascade Range in Spokane Public High Schools during this time as well.

**Spokane Public High School(s)**

Spokane graduated its first high school class of seven pupils in 1891. While students had begun attending classes beyond the eighth grade, it was not until June 26th, 1891 that a four-year course of study was completed (Biennial Report of Public Schools of Spokane, 1891, p. 151). Spokane experienced a rising demand for secondary education that accompanied the population and economic growth that marked the early 20th century in the Spokane area. The total population, at the beginning of 1890 in Spokane, was 19,922 people. Over the course of the next twenty years, Spokane experienced dramatic growth reaching a total population of 104,402 people by 1910. This five-fold increase in total population of the city was outdone by the thirty-fold increase in high school graduates. The first graduating class of seven students pales in comparison to the 1920 graduating class of 486 (Pratt, 1942, p. 38). See Table 4.

The numbers in Table 4 help highlight the growing demand on the school brought on by increased enrollment. The course of study found in Table 5 reflects the same offerings available to the first graduates in 1891, with one notable exception, the addition of the Industrial Course of Study. This program was added with similar reasoning as cited in Seattle, the new labor demands “…great changes…taking place in the social and industrial life” (Biennial Report of the Public Schools of Spokane, 1892, p. 43) and of a rapidly growing city. The growing student

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>245</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>288</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>392</td>
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<tr>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>137</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>420</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>26</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>483</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
population at the high school was able to experience an increasing list of courses and programs of study, as reflected in Table 5.

Table 5

*Spokane High School Programs of Study, 1892*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Latin Course</th>
<th>Scientific</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
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<td>• Int. Algebra</td>
<td>• Int. Algebra</td>
<td>• Int. Algebra</td>
<td>• Int. Alegbra</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Latin Gram. and Reader</td>
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<td>• English Grammar</td>
<td>• English Grammar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
<td>• Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Higher Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Civics</td>
<td>• Civics</td>
<td>• Civics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• German</td>
<td>• Higher Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Higher Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Higher Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Caesar and Prose Comp.</td>
<td>• German</td>
<td>• German</td>
<td>• German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Caesar and Prose</td>
<td>• Book-keeping</td>
<td>• Book-keeping</td>
<td>• Book-keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Higher Algebra</td>
<td>• High Algebra</td>
<td>• High Algebra</td>
<td>• High Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Botany</td>
<td>• Rhetoric</td>
<td>• Rhetoric</td>
<td>• Rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Natural Philosophy</td>
<td>• Natural Philosophy</td>
<td>• Natural Philosophy</td>
<td>• Natural Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• German</td>
<td>• German</td>
<td>• German</td>
<td>• German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cicero and Prose</td>
<td>• American Literature</td>
<td>• American Literature</td>
<td>• American Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Central History</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• General History</td>
<td>• General History</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Geometry</td>
<td>• Geometry</td>
<td>• Geometry</td>
<td>• Geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
<td>• English Literature</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
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<td>• Geometry</td>
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<td>• Geometry</td>
<td>• Astronomy</td>
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<td>• Virgil</td>
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<td>• Chemistry</td>
<td>• Chemistry</td>
<td>• Zoology</td>
<td>• Zoology</td>
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<td>• Psychology</td>
<td>• Psychology</td>
<td>• Psychology</td>
<td>• Psychology</td>
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<td>• Geology</td>
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Two years following the withdrawal of the Industrial Course of Study, the Courses of
Study again changed with the division of the Latin course into the Latin and Classical Courses of Study. The addition of the Classical Study reflected the trend of developing a course of study to meet the university admission trends during the time. The statistics on the number of graduates in each course of study from 1901-1902, demonstrate the prevalence of the Latin course as the primary choice by students during the time. The following breakdown reflects the distribution of students in the respective courses of study: Classical = 4, Scientific = 20, Latin = 83, English = 16 (Biennial Report of the Public Schools of Spokane, 1902, p. 54).

The Commercial course of study returned in 1904 as a result of the rapid growth of high schools. It was clear that “…this department of the public schools system is becoming more and more popular and its value greatly enhanced as its curriculum is being extended to include subjects of practical value to the masses, as well as culture and discipline” (Biennial Report of Public Schools of Washington, 1904, p. 15). The enrollment figures in the high school reflected “…the large preponderance of girls over boys…attributed partly to the fact that there is in this city an exceptionally strong demand for boys of high school age to work in stores and offices…and partly to the absence from our course of studies which involve the element of Manual Training” (p. 15). This statement reflects two main themes that emerged from the changing landscape of the Courses of Study: the high schools responded to the growing demands resulting from the mix of students attending the schools - those destined for college and those destined for the workforce; and the high schools responded to labor demands of the local economy. These efforts on the part of the schools provided skills which would be of service to students who desired blue collar jobs following the completion of high school.

The return of the Commercial course in 1904 was important in that “…over 40 per cent of the last entering class enrolled in this course” (Biennial Report of the Spokane Public Schools, 1906, p. 20). Such a significant interest in this course is remarkable, given its short lifespan of two years, and underlines the rising demand for this type of program in an increasingly industrialized Spokane. The Principal of Spokane High School at the time, David Cloyd, commented that this increase “emphasizes the fact that commercial interests are calling for well-educated and technically trained men and women who are looking to the High School for a thorough and extensive course of instruction” (p. 20). This demand extended beyond the mercantile-based curriculum of the Commercial Course to the more labor-based curriculum course of study in Manual Training added in 1906. This new program of study, in addition to the courses in the Commercial Program, added mechanical drawing and shop work for boys and domestic art and freehand drawing for girls (p. 27).

The enrollment statistics in 1916 at Lewis and Clark High School, Spokane’s first high school, reflect the demand that persisted for a diversified offering of courses of study at the secondary level. The Academic program (787 students), which consisted of the college preparatory track (Classical Course) as well as the more general courses of study (Scientific and General), was the most popular track. However, if one were to combine the Commercial (451 students) and the Vocational (Manual Training – 191 students and Home Economics – 362 students) it becomes apparent that there was a great deal of demand for both (Biennial Report of the Spokane Public Schools, 1916, p. 47). This reinforces two major themes that emerged from the curriculum at both Spokane and Seattle Public high schools, 1) the significance of a diversified program of study in response to the diverse demands of the students for their coursework, and 2) the demands of the community at large on their high schools to provide the skills and training necessary for students to be productive as a result of a high school education.

It is clear from an evaluation of the various courses of study, and from the comments of
the superintendents and principals in the annual report, that high schools served a broad role in their Washington communities. With the growing enrollment of students, and the expanding labor and commercial needs of the Spokane and Seattle communities, the schools were expected to meet the diversified needs that these two trends precipitated. These clearly were schools responding to the diversifying students and accompanying needs of the communities.

Conclusion

The above information helps to illustrate the fact that, historically, public schools were pulled in different directions as a result of the rapidly diversifying population at the high school level. Colleges demanded specific expectations: that these schools should provide a classical curriculum that would prepare students appropriately for the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in higher education. Local labor markets also demanded a new skilled worker from the high schools and as a result caused the evolution of a strictly classical program of study. The public schools were able to navigate these competing demands by the colleges and the labor markets by allowing students to choose a more specialized program to meet their individual needs. High schools students could now choose from as many as five programs of study.

While this article is not recommending a return to the tracking model of the early 20th century, there are important lessons that could be learned from differentiating student experiences through diverse programs of study that align well with trends in college and career readiness efforts undertaken by high schools. As suggested in the Pathways (2010) study introduced earlier, various “…well-developed, high quality vocational education programs provide excellent pathways for many your people to enter the adult work force (p. 38).” In particular, 21st century learning should engage in instruction that is aligned to students’ lives outside of school, integrates technology and pedagogy, and engages with partnerships that allow for meaningful career development (Christen, 2009). Additionally, recent research on college and career readiness standards has led the American College Testing (ACT) organization to provide guidelines that: encourage students to make connections between subject content and occupational skills; connect studies to the work world; explore career alternatives; provide career-related experiences and adult mentors (ACT, 2010). The various programs of study historically undertaken by Washington high schools may provide models of delivery that would allow schools to differentiate student experiences such that connections between academic skills could be made to career and college pursuits that demand a similar set of proficiencies.

The changes undertaken by high schools in the past hold important lessons for schools today, and therefore practicing teachers as well as pre-service teachers. This essay provides a parallel look, through an historical perspective, at the goals of graduating students who are college or career ready. Lessons from the earliest high schools in the state of Washington provide insights into creating a diversified set of opportunities for students as they proceed through school. This model may provide a template for high schools to consider as they continue to confront the changing needs of both their students and either the colleges/universities or the labor markets that receive them upon graduation. While this type of diversification is not without cost, it may provide a lens through which to look when creating an educational experience that aligns to students’ needs. Finally, it also provides a pedagogical perspective outlined in the
Pathways (2010) study for teachers to consider: “…that from late adolescence onward, most young people learn best in structured programs that combine work and learning, and where learning is contextual and applied (p. 38).” This perspective, despite the design of high school programs of study, is one that could and should inform the work of practicing and pre-service teachers.

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Transformative Learning Through Cultural Immersion

Rebecca A. Addleman, Carol Jo Brazo, and Tatiana Cevallos
George Fox University

Abstract

This qualitative study explored avenues to increase students’ intercultural competence through transformative learning. School of Education graduate students and faculty from a small, private university traveled to Ecuador to participate in a cultural immersion practicum. In addition to these primary goals, the trip was designed to facilitate transformative learning about cultural conceptions, diversity, and the dynamics of student differences with the goal of understanding one’s own cultural framework and adapting to another culture to develop empathy towards culturally and linguistically diverse students in the United States.

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Harper Lee (1960) wrote “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (p. 30). In the classroom, professors employ a variety of methods—books, critical analysis of research and literature, reflective writing, and small group discussions—to help students consider things from multiple perspectives (King, 2004; Whitney, 2008; Saavedra, 1996; Mezirow, 1997). In a cultural immersion experience, professors are not bound to a physical classroom—expanding the opportunities for facilitating transformational learning.

Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) students and faculty from a small, private university travelled to Ecuador to participate in a three-week teaching practicum to experience cultural immersion while working with school-age students. The trip was designed to facilitate analysis of cultural conceptions, diversity, and the dynamics of student differences with the goal of understanding one’s own cultural framework and adapting to another culture to develop empathy towards culturally and linguistically diverse students in the United States. In the university’s MAT program, students complete three practicums; the first is a 30-hour experience where the students are not members of the “majority culture,” in order to help them better understand the culturally and linguistically diverse students whom they will teach.

Over the past fifteen years, schools in the United States have experienced an increase in the population of culturally and linguistically diverse students. There are over five million students whose primary language is not English and who do not have sufficient English proficiency to be successful in school without additional support; these students constitute approximately 10% of public school enrollment and most are born in the United States (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel & Herwanto, 2005; NCELA). Demographers predict that in twenty years, one in every four students will fall into this category (Goldenberg, 2008). Preservice teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of these students.

In the following pages we will explore the literature in three areas related to intercultural competence: funds of knowledge, internationalizing teacher education, and transformative learning. We will then discuss the themes that emerged from the data collection through the lens of transformative learning theory. Finally, we will share our direction for future research:
scaffolding the elements of critical discourse in transformative learning.

**Literature Review**

As we become a more global society, teachers encounter greater diversity in their classrooms (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). A primary goal of internationalizing teacher education is to enhance students’ intercultural competence. Bennett (1998) defined culture, when used in this sense, as “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people” (p. 3), and he defined competence as “the potential for enactment of culturally sensitive feeling into appropriate and effective behavior in another cultural context” (2009, p. 5). We chose to examine the facets of intercultural competence that shared common elements with Gay’s (2002) culturally responsive teaching and Quezada’s (2004) summary of the internationalizing teacher education literature.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2008) addressed this goal in unit standard four: “This goal requires educators who can reflect multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students and families from diverse populations . . . to understand diversity and equity in the teaching and learning process” (p. 36). Gay (2002) stated that preservice education programs must prepare teachers who have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be “culturally responsive.” She defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” and listed the following five elements as essential components for accomplishing this task (p. 106):

1. Developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity
2. Including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum
3. Demonstrating caring and building learning communities
4. Communicating with ethnically diverse students
5. Responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction

Gay (2002) stated that this could be accomplished, in part, through coursework on multicultural education and the contributions of ethnic groups to specific content areas. However, cognitive knowledge alone is not sufficient for achieving intercultural competence. Research suggests that experiential learning is a necessary piece of the competence puzzle (Dantas, 2007; Davis & Mello, 2003; Quezada, 2004) and that the benefits of cultural immersion are numerous (Alfaro, 2008; Dantas, 2007; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007; Rios, Montecinos, & van Olphen, 2007). Quezada summarized the literature into three themes: instructional pedagogy, multicultural sensitivity, and self-efficacy. The MAT cultural immersion project was established to take advantage of these benefits as we equip preservice educators to teach students from diverse backgrounds.

We chose Mezirow’s (1997) transformative learning theory as a framework to explore MAT student learning during the Ecuador cultural immersion experience.

Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings. (p. 5) Mezirow stated that the goal of adult education is not merely to help students acquire information but rather to facilitate a critical thinking process that analyzes assumptions.
Funds of Knowledge

“Funds of knowledge” refers to the body of experiences, skills and abilities that individuals acquire throughout their life experiences. Funds of knowledge are accumulated over time and can be captured through interactions with students, their families, and community members because they are manifested through social and linguistic practices (McIntyre, Rosebery & González, 2001). Several studies have engaged teachers in participant observation, such as home visits, to explore students’ funds of knowledge in order to validate and include them in the school curriculum (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005; McIntyre, Rosebery & González, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992). These home visits are different from traditional home visits during which the teacher comes to report misconduct or to follow-up on interventions. Instead, the teacher goes to the student’s home with a desire to learn from the family and to gain insight into the life, skills, resources and knowledge that enrich and shape the student’s life and schema. The teachers assume a teacher-researcher role that allows for respectful interactions where both parties can mutually engage in constructive conversation (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992). By recognizing and using funds of knowledge in the classroom, teachers can support student learning by linking prior experience and knowledge to the new content and learning students encounter in school. This is an important skill given that schools often ignore traditionally marginalized students’ funds of knowledge and favor those of the mainstream culture (Bruner, 1996; McIntyre, Rosebery & González, 2001).

Internationalizing Student Teaching

Providing students with cultural immersion experiences furnishes a unique classroom setting for cultivating intercultural competence. Mahon and Cushner (2007) categorized the personal and professional benefits of immersion into cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. Quezada (2004) summarized the literature into three themes: instructional pedagogy, multicultural sensitivity, and self-efficacy. The researchers stated that these benefits are the result of cultural engagement and not cultural tourism. Many overseas tourism opportunities offer the chance to study, appreciate, and learn from a culture. Scholars argue that the deeper benefits of intercultural competence result from the difficulties and disequilibrium that students experience in their practicum and community placements; when students participate in many of the typical study abroad programs, they remain cultural tourists because they stay in dorm housing with a support system to help them navigate the challenges of living in another culture (Cushner, 2004, 2007; Dantas, 2007; Quezada, 2004). A more effective setting results from staying with host families and becoming involved in the community as well as the school—situations where the students experience disequilibrium due to factors like homesickness, lack of a support system, and adjusting to cultural differences (Mahon & Espinetti, 2007).

There is no agreement on the ideal amount of time that is required to develop intercultural competence (Dantas, 2007; Mahon & Cushner, 2007). One study included four preparation classes, one follow up class, and only eight days overseas, while longer programs typically place student teachers in the host country for one semester. To promote cultural engagement researchers encourage programs to incorporate preparation courses, reflective journals, and debriefing sessions that help students to assess their own culture, to become aware of possible difficulties that they will encounter upon entering another culture, and to learn to see
culture as “an answer and not a label” (Dantas, 2007; Mahon & Espinetti, 2007; Stachowski, 2007; Wilson & Flournoy, 2007).

Transformative Learning

According to Mezirow’s (1997) transformative learning theory the goal of adult education is not merely to help students acquire information but rather to facilitate critical reflection and analysis of assumptions through discourse. Transformative learning differs from traditional learning in that it reinterprets past experiences from a new perspective (Mezirow, 1991). Students are given more responsibility for their learning in a transformative environment. They are actively engaged in critical reflection and dialogue as they question and evaluate their assumptions and thought patterns. This process is not often experienced when students are living comfortably in the status quo because assumptions are often transparent. Cranton (2008) wrote:

We can only see the world through our own eyes, and our way of seeing includes distortions, prejudices, stereotypes, and unquestioned belief systems. Transformative learning happens when we encounter an event that calls into question what we believe and we revise our perspective. (p. 34)

In traditional learning, students view new content through a lens that has been established by years of experience, dialogue, teaching, and cultural modeling. In transformative learning, students evaluate the lens itself and look at their experiences through new glasses.

Mezirow (2001) theorized that transformative learning occurs as a result of critical thinking and discourse, triggered by a disorienting dilemma. Whitney (2008) suggested that the triggering issues bring to light “sites of tension where existing meaning schemes were not working to account for and deal with situations” (p. 157). The events can be either dramatic or gradual and cumulative (Cranton, 2008). These experiences are necessary for transformative learning according to Saavedra (1996).

Teacher transformation occurs through the creation of critical and reflective social contexts that place teachers at the center of their own learning. These contexts must provide occasions in which teachers can confront their own cultural, social, and political identities and the situations that have shaped and continually shape the expressions of those identities. (p. 272)

Transformative learning is not an immediate solution for a critical incident, rather a new framework for interpreting similar triggering events.

There are multiple approaches to transformative learning. This constructivist theory shares commonalities with Friere’s emancipatory approach; both value empowerment as a desired result of adult education, but where Friere’s progression moved toward social justice, Mezirow’s led to cognitive transformation (Baumgartner, 2001). Friere discussed three stages of consciousness growth: intransitive thought, semitransitive, and critical transitivity (Kitchenham, 2008). This continuum of growth moves from feeling hopeless and disempowered to solving individual problems to seeing and acting on the need for change at a societal level. Kitchenham stated, “The highest level of ‘critical transitivity’ is reflected in individuals who think globally and critically about their present conditions and who decide to take action for change...it is this last stage of critical consciousness that clearly influenced Mezirow” (p. 108). The theories of Kuhn and Habermas are also cited as influential in Mezirow’s thinking about transformative learning (Cranton, 2011; Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow’s theory has evolved based on growing research: the process of transformative learning is now seen as recursive rather than linear, a
triggering event can be defined as a single experience or a cumulative process, the importance of relationships is foundational to the process, and a person’s context and culture impacts his/her tendency to experience transformative learning (Baumgartner, 2001; Taylor, 2000).

In one study, King (2004) considered the effects of a graduate course as a triggering event for educators. The professor designed the course based on the theory of transformative learning and students reported multiple benefits including a greater depth of knowledge and self-efficacy. For example, “A bright woman with little confidence gained a new perspective of herself as a learner and began to take risks and make choices” (King, 2004, p.163). Many of the students who cited increased knowledge, clarified that it was in an area that “they thought they already knew.”

In another study, Saavedra (1996) worked with small groups of teachers as they discussed educational issues, achieving transformation through a cycle of inquiry. Saavedra identified specific conditions that facilitated transformative learning: exploratory discussions where all voices were heard, situations where the learners were responsible for their own learning, conflict, consensus-building collaboration that promotes new interpretations from differing perspectives, reflection, self-assessment, and continuing reflective practice.

Whitney (2008) examined the experiences of seven teachers at the National Writing Project’s Summer Institute through the lens of transformative learning. Based on recursive data analysis, Whitney suggested an eight-part model for transformative learning: triggering event, accepting the invitation to write and share, self-examination, a critical assessment of assumptions, resolving to reorient, trying new roles, building competence and confidence, and living in the new frame. In the “resolve to reorient” step, Whitney contrasted her findings to Mezirow’s theory, “I did not observe the formation of distinct action plans. Instead, I found that teachers consistently ‟resolved to reorient’ future actions according to changed perspectives” (p. 169). Whitney also emphasized the pattern of increased teacher self-efficacy as a result of transformative learning. The teachers “reported gaining specific competence to fit their reframed perspectives . . . this gain in competence was accompanied by an explicitly named gain in confidence as well” (Whitney, p. 173).

**Conclusion**

Reaching toward the goal of intercultural competence involves increasing knowledge, implementing new approaches to curriculum and instruction, building caring learning communities and effectively communicating with diverse students (Gay, 2002). Transformative learning theory suggests that reflection and discussion about critical incidents is a possible means to this end. Cultural immersion provides a brief opportunity to view the world from a different perspective—to increase empathy for students from diverse backgrounds and improve our ability to scaffold their learning.

**Methods**

**Setting and Participants**

The study followed 18 MAT students through a three-week practicum in Quito, Ecuador. Four students were in their second semester of a four-semester program. Fourteen students were within weeks of graduation. Participants ranged in age from their early twenties to early forties. There were three males and fifteen females. One student was Hispanic, the rest Caucasian.
Four of the students were bilingual or had advanced understanding of Spanish. Nine students tested at an intermediate understanding of Spanish and six were just beginning their study of Spanish. Twenty-nine percent of the participants had lived in another country or traveled to multiple continents. Thirty-five percent had traveled to another continent, eighteen percent within North America; an additional eighteen percent had never traveled outside of the United States.

All students were placed in home-stays with middle class Ecuadorian families. Participants worked in a K-12 private school in Quito where they volunteered in classrooms devoted to the teaching of English. Students were placed at the appropriate authorization level although content area endorsements were not always matched. Participants spent mornings in the classrooms assisting teachers as they taught English to classes of approximately eighteen to twenty-two children. Students spent their afternoons at a language institute where they received Spanish instruction two hours a day. Two weekend trips took the group to locations in the Andes to broaden their view of Ecuador and to enjoy the culture of smaller towns.

Data Collection

This qualitative study explored through reflective thought the transformative learning process of graduate preservice teachers in an international practicum. Faculty organized preparation workshops, on-site reflections, discussions, and debriefing focus groups to explore the areas of critical thinking, transforming practice, and promoting justice. The data that were collected, coded, and qualitatively analyzed in this study included student applications, blogs, reflections, and focus groups. Participants wrote three reflections while in Ecuador. In the first reflection, students were asked to compare what they were seeing and experiencing in Ecuador with their lives back in the U.S. They delineated the adaptations they were making and their cognitive and affective responses to those adaptations. The second reflection occurred around day ten of the twenty-one days. Students were directed to deconstruct a critical incident in the first ten days and to discuss it in light of cultural adaptation. During the final week, students reflected on their teaching experiences at the private school and the differences in strategies and methodology. They considered how those differences might be used in their classrooms in the U.S. Ten to twelve days after returning to the U.S., the students participated in a focus group discussion, which was recorded and transcribed. Two focus group discussions were held to accommodate the two geographical locations of participants.

Data Analysis

After organizing the student applications, reflections, blog postings, and focus group transcriptions, the data were analyzed using a recursive approach of initial coding, focused coding, memoing, creating visual representations and determining themes (Bailey, 2007). During initial coding, we noted key phrases, words, and topics while recording thoughts and insights. We labeled sections of text, phrases to paragraphs in length. During focused coding, the initial labels were grouped into larger categories. Then, we read the data again and coded for these categories. Throughout this process the researchers kept memos to record possible links between concepts, visually depict ideas and themes, further define categories and raise questions. After categorizing and coding the data, the researchers suggested possible themes that were evidenced throughout the student data.
One of the student application codes was based on the extent of past travel experiences. Students who had lived outside the United States or traveled to multiple continents shared themes of disequilibrium resulting in transformative learning. On the opposite end of the continuum, students who had never left the United States shared only positive comments about the hope of becoming a better teacher through authentic experience. The most common patterns from the initial coding of reflections, blogs, and focus groups included community, positive and negative emotions, challenges and disequilibrium. Less frequent patterns included differences from home, metacognition, connections to school and teaching, the value of experiential learning, self-efficacy, and learning about one’s self and own culture. These codes were organized into three larger categories: disequilibrium, community, and self-efficacy.

Results and Discussion

Intercultural Competence Themes

Student growth mirrored the benefits described in the cultural immersion literature: multicultural sensitivity, self-efficacy, and instructional pedagogy (Quezada, 2004). The following student quotes represent common patterns from the student reflections, blogs, and focus groups.

Multicultural sensitivity. Many of the students’ reflections demonstrated multicultural sensitivity, particularly as a result of critical incidents. Challenges related to language learning, isolation, miscommunication, poverty, and culture shock provided opportunities for critical reflection.

I learned many, many things from this experience! I learned what it feels like to be a second language learner in a new environment where I was forced to speak my "second" language. I had the shut down feelings after too much processing. I decoded language. I looked for contextual clues. I used my dictionary all of the time. I now have a glimpse into how my ELL students will feel sometimes in my classroom I will be able to relate to them so much better now. Ecuador did this for me (Reana).

Self-efficacy. Students noted increased self-efficacy in many areas including Spanish, teaching, intercultural competence, and the ability to confront and resolve problems. In response to the immersion experience, Reana stated, "I feel more confident in my ability to teach. I also feel much more confident in my ability to help my ELL students in the future." Kristie alluded to the increased self-efficacy she had experienced in Ecuador as she reflected on the many life-changes she would encounter upon returning home, "It made achievements and dreams seem to be more realistic and within reach."

Instructional pedagogy. Students reflected on the importance of relevant, hands-on, experiential, and community building instruction to better meet student needs. After describing her perspective shift from learning Spanish for college credit to learning for survival, Laura created a plan of action based on a new point of view, “This is how I want to present my subject material in my classroom. I want students to feel the desire, see the need, feel the 'want' to learn. This understanding of relevance is what leads to success.” Many students also addressed the lack of cultural balance in U.S. classrooms. Sydney discussed this through the lens of the classroom environment:

What I take from this experience is an awareness of how “American” classroom culture rewards some personalities, but discourages others. As teachers, no matter what culture
we are from, we must continually look at our students and ask ourselves if we are providing the best learning environment for each student.

**Culturally responsive teaching.** At first, the data patterns also reflected Gay’s (2002) elements of culturally responsive teaching: increasing knowledge, implementing new approaches to curriculum and instruction, building caring learning communities and effectively communicating with diverse students. On closer inspection, however, the student data only supported initial steps toward these outcomes. For example, student reflections did not demonstrate a pattern of growth for the first element, “developing a cultural diversity knowledge base,” as described by Gay (2002):

- Developing a knowledge base for culturally responsive teaching is acquiring detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups. . . . knowledge about the contributions of different ethnic groups to a wide variety of disciplines and a deeper understanding of multicultural education theory, research, and scholarship. (p. 107)

The participants in the Ecuador study took initial steps toward this goal by learning about one ethnic group as a result of experience rather than curriculum and instruction. There was less overlap with the remaining elements, which focused on skills such as analyzing textbooks, revising curriculum, deconstructing mass media portrayals, connecting appropriate instructional strategies to diverse students, and accommodating students’ interaction styles based on “knowledge about the linguistic structures of various ethnic communication styles as well as contextual factors, cultural nuances, discourse features, logic and rhythm, delivery, vocabulary usage, role relationships of speakers and listeners, intonation, gestures, and body movements” (p. 111). This framework of goals seems to be more closely related to classroom instruction outcomes rather than experiential learning outcomes. Although university coursework is the path to many of these goals, cultural immersion sets the stage for culturally responsive teaching through gains in multicultural sensitivity, self-efficacy, and instructional pedagogy.

**Transformative Learning Themes: Critical Incidents and Disequilibrium**

The students described a variety of events and conversations that demonstrated different levels of transformative change but travel itself does not guarantee transformative learning. Two people can embark on the same trip and experience very different results. What are the necessary elements for transformation to occur? Mezirow stated that the opportunity for students to critically reflect on their experiences, assumptions, and critical incidents is necessary for transformative learning. Baumgartner (2001) summarized Mezirow’s learning approach in four steps:

1. Experience a disorienting event or personal crisis
2. Reflect critically and evaluate assumptions
3. Dialogue about process and perspective
4. Take action based on a new perspective

Reflecting on critical incidents and wrestling with the resulting disequilibrium were repeated patterns in the data. Most of the preservice teachers experienced different levels of disorienting events and critical reflection; fewer reported that they had evaluated their assumptions, dialogued about the process, or planned a course of action, the latter steps in Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory.

As we analyzed the preservice teachers’ applications to the Ecuador program, a common
thread appeared between the students who had traveled outside of the United States: disequilibrium. Although one typically associates disequilibrium with negative emotions, the following example from a student application painted disequilibrium in a positive light, “Being exposed to these different cultures certainly threw off my equilibrium, but in an exciting way, and I developed an open-mindedness which has allowed me to embrace and respect other cultures” (Heather). Many of these students talked about “embracing” disequilibrium. These thoughts from Ann, who had travelled extensively, beautifully portray the need for the disequilibrium that travel can provide.

Most of us spend a great deal of our lives trying to avoid discomfort at all costs. . . . It is not a life of comfort, but an experience of disequilibrium, that I crave. Because it is in those moments of profound discomfort that I am challenged to act with the kind of conviction a life of simplicity and contentedness could never require of me. It is in those experiences that I am required to see myself though someone else’s lens, that the most terrible parts of myself are revealed, and that I am confronted with the opportunity to change. It is in those moments that I am asked, not simply to allow others to hold a different perspective from my own, but also to challenge myself to stand in a different place entirely, and to know what that soil feels like between my toes.

Mezirow suggested that the disequilibrium that students experience as a result of a critical incident is a necessary step in transformative learning. “A critical incident, which by its very nature cannot be planned, can serve as a catalyst for transformative learning” (Grabove, 1997, p. 94). During the middle of the second week in Ecuador, the students were asked to describe a positive or negative experience that they had been thinking about for hours or days. They described the emotions that they connected to these incidents, compared U.S. and Ecuadorian cultures, asked questions, named assumptions, and analyzed the experiences through the lens of theory. For some students this process led to enhanced funds of knowledge, a plan of action, or change in point of view.

The critical incident reflections followed a pattern that included both description and reflection. The students would typically begin by describing an incident followed by their feelings and response to the incident. Every critical incident reflection included one or more emotional responses with a negative to positive ratio of approximately 2:1. Fear, loneliness, confidence and empathy were repeated responses. The reflections then moved to a more analytical stage as the students compared the incidents or their thoughts about the incidents to their own culture and pondered questions that were often left unanswered. Many of the students concluded their journal reflections by connecting something that they had learned to their own practice in the classroom.

Positive critical incidents included hiking in the mountains, a scenic drive, and words of approval about language acquisition. Eight students described disorienting dilemmas including topics like communication struggles, loneliness, poverty, language challenges, and safety. Charles, Terrie, and Susie reflected on different aspects of the same critical incident: a mugging. Charles wrote about safety issues from a position of shock and self-recrimination as he told of being mugged while walking with a friend. Terrie reflected on the fear and anger that result from being violated and pondered the effects of those who “live in fear of [their] safety every day.” She also shared her reaction to the host culture’s view on the incident:

It was interesting how Diego spoke with the group and alluded to the fact that, ‘this is the way it is,’ and that he had warned us. I realize he can only speak from his situation, his information and his life journey; however, considering we are a part of a cultural
immersion program I would expect more understanding of our needs and reactions. As Susie processed the mugging, she reflected on the different cultural views of “being approached for money,” the assumptions that led to her response, and the difficulty of reconciling the two. Susie’s reflection provided an example of Mezirow’s transformativ learning stage, “Transform a habit of mind”—A student becomes aware of his/her habitual ways of thinking and analyzes them through critical reflection. The next three quotations represent her steps through transforming a habit of mind: describing the critical incident, reflecting on her reaction and emotions, and analyzing her assumptions through critical reflection.

**Different cultural views.** I keep thinking about the second talk that Diego had with our group. His perspective about being approached for money (robbed) is so much different than my own. When two members of our group were robbed I think we all felt violated; this is the extent to which our culture condemns and fears robbery. And yet, Diego seems to look at it as simply a way to meet a need. (Susie). Mezirow (1998) defined basic reflection as “turning back” on experience, “simple awareness of an object, event or state, including awareness of a perception, thought, feeling, disposition, intention, action, or of one’s habits of doing these things. It can also mean letting one’s thoughts wander over something, taking something into consideration, or imagining alternatives” (p. 185). He differentiated between reflection and critical reflection by adding assessment as an integral component of the latter. All three students reflected on the critical incident but Susie moved from reflection to critical reflection through the process of evaluating her assumptions.

**Personal assumptions.** Knowing that the law in Ecuador says that stealing is only a crime if you hurt someone in the process, I find myself somewhat divided. My feelings, which dictate my immediate response, are that stealing something from someone else is wrong and should be punished. I am, admittedly, from a ‘pick yourself up by the bootstraps’ family. My father was self-employed and worked hard; still, we never had more than just what was necessary. From the perspective I was raised in, even taking money from the government instead of doing whatever work it takes to provide for the family is stealing from one’s neighbors who pay taxes. I have thought to myself many times that this is a position of pride in self-sufficiency and perhaps some selfishness in wanting to keep everything that is worked for. (Susie)

Susie’s reflection demonstrated an ability to assess her experience and assumptions logically. Mezirow (1998) stated that the analysis of assumptions provide “the emancipatory dimensions of adult learning, the function of thought and language that frees the learner from frames of reference, paradigms, or cultural canon (frames of reference held in common) that limit or distort communication and understanding” (Mezirow, p. 192). She did not settle for an easy answer but rather continued to wrestle with the inequity.

**Difficulty reconciling opposing views.** Despite my ability to look at the beliefs I was raised with and be critical; my emotional side does not seem to be able to get past the cultural belief that is widely accepted in the States, that stealing is a crime. On the other side, my analytical mind is able to understand Diego’s point of view. I have seen so much need here in Ecuador. Everywhere we have gone I have seen people living in conditions which I could not imagine; I have seen beggars everywhere and in Quito there are even children as young as 4 or 5 selling and begging on the streets. . . . I do not have answers. (Susie)
Future Directions

In future research, we hope to explore longitudinal data from the participants about their instructional pedagogy, specifically related to diversity. We would also like to explore the connections between MAT coursework and the cultural immersion experience in order to enhance student growth toward Gay’s (2002) definition of culturally responsive teaching. Finally, we will examine ways to provide structured opportunities for students to experience the reflective discourse step in Mezirow’s transformative learning process. In the current study, students often mentioned that they talked with family or friends about their critical incidents. The responses that they received and recorded were often in the form of advice, condemning or affirming opinions, and suggested solutions. We would like to introduce a discourse framework that includes open questioning in order to assist students with critical reflection and analysis of their assumptions without the presence of outside solutions or advice. Mezirow stated that the necessary components of discourse are “a focused, critically self-reflective, collaborative inquiry into how one’s own habits of mind have framed his or her points of view. Little is known about such programs and there is a great need for research on this model of adult education” (Mezirow, 1998, p. 196). Cultural immersion offers the context for disorienting dilemmas but without critical reflection and discourse, they often lead to anxiety instead of transformation. Students reflected on their critical incidents in written reflections but did not all have a framework for discussing the events to validate their own perspectives and explore new ones.

Conclusion

Travel is often promoted as life changing, illustrated in this quote from a Travel & Leisure article, “Some travel to change their lives, others the world. But, a truly transformative trip has the power to do both” (Kelso, 2010). If students travel as cultural tourists, they will return home with a wealth of stories and new experiences to enhance their teaching. When they travel for the purpose of cultural engagement, they return with new understandings and perspectives—the result of climbing into another’s skin and walking around in it.

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Exploring Teacher Candidates’ Motivations to Teach

Maureen Siera and Steve Siera
Saint Martin’s University

Abstract

This qualitative study explored teacher candidates’ motivations to become teachers. As part of the application process, students are required to complete an onsite essay about why they want to become a teacher. The authors examined application essays of 53 candidates to identify motivations for becoming a teacher. From the data, we identified tentative categories and themes that explained students’ motivations for pursuing a program in teacher education. Upon refinement, these categories seem to group into three, not always mutually exclusive, themes: Altruism (Developing the student and Making a difference), Personal Fulfillment (Making a difference, Sharing knowledge and experience, Dispositional motivators, Destiny to teach, and Serving as a role model), and Convenience of Teaching (Utilitarian). Understanding students’ motivation for teaching has implications for teacher education programs.

Purpose

What are teacher candidates’ motivations to become teachers? A presentation at the 2009 AERA conference sparked an interest to examine students’ motivations to become teachers. All applicants to the teacher education program at the authors’ institution are required to write an onsite essay about why they want to teach as well as what characteristics they have that they expect to help them be successful in the profession. We decided to analyze these students’ essays to determine what patterns we might identify in their motivations for choosing teaching.

The purpose of this study was to discover what motivates our teacher candidates to pursue a teaching career. We also wanted to learn if responses differed across categories of students. Our education program has both undergraduate and graduate students, elementary education and secondary education students, male and female students, and traditional and nontraditional age students.

Theoretical Framework

A plethora of studies have investigated teacher candidates’ motivations to choose teaching as a career. The majority of the studies were done between the 1960’s through the 1990’s, before the increased accountability of NCLB. A number of current studies have been done in other countries including Australia, Great Britain, and Slovenia (Jarvis & Woodrow, 2005; Krecik & Grmek, 2005; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2008, Williams & Forgasz, 2009). One rationale for these current studies is that an understanding of the reasons individuals choose teaching can benefit the recruitment and retention of teachers.

Richardson and Watt (2006) summarized the literature from the 1960’s through the 1990’s on why people were motivated to become teachers. They identified the following themes: the desire for social mobility, the influence of family, the attraction of time
compatibility, the appeal of a stimulating career, the ability to influence others, the desire to work with young people, the desire to work in a people-oriented profession, and the attraction of job-related benefits.

Sinclair (2008) presented an overview of the literature on motivation to teach. The majority of the studies were done in the 1990’s. She identified these 10 motivators in people who are attracted to teaching: desire to work with students, altruism, influence of others, benefits or convenience of teaching, a “calling” to teach, a love of teaching or particular content knowledge, the nature of teaching work, desire for career change, the perceived ease of the job of teaching, and the status teaching provides. Sinclair (2008) surveyed 211 primary student teachers enrolled in four-year initial teacher education courses in Sydney Australia universities. Using the Motivational Orientations to Teach Survey (MOT-S), the questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the first semester of courses and at the end of the first semester. Factors on the survey were grouped into 11 dimensions, six were intrinsic motivations and five were extrinsic motivations. Findings confirm that students have multiple motivations to teach. These students were statistically significantly more motivated by intrinsic motivations than extrinsic motivations. Students were more motivated and enthusiastic about teaching, confirming their career choice of teaching. Their motivations were affected by coursework (negatively) and practicum experiences (positively).

Based on studies done about the motivation to become school teachers, Kyriacou and Coluthard (2000) grouped reasons into three main categories: altruistic reasons – reasons focusing on benefit to society or others, intrinsic reasons – reasons focused on aspects of the job itself, and extrinsic reasons – reasons focused on aspects of the job not inherent in the work itself such as having the summer off. Manuel and Hughes (2006) concluded the desire to work with and contribute to young people’s lives, the quest for personal fulfillment, and the devotion to their subject matter are the major categories. The first corresponds to Kyriacou and Coluthard’s altruistic reasons, and the latter two to Kyriacou and Coluthard’s intrinsic reasons. Williams and Frogasz (2009) focused more on attributes that career changers believe they bring to teaching, leading them to conclude that intrinsic motivators are a strong influence, especially for those individuals who enter teaching as a career change.

Watt and Richardson (2007) developed the FIT-Choice scale (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) for teacher candidates. Based on expectancy-value theory, their instrument measures factors related to personal utility value, social utility value, task demand, and task return. This scale provides an integrated approach to examine motivations for choosing teaching as a career.

Richardson and Watt (2006) used their FIT-Choice scale to conduct a large-scale (N=1,653) Australian study of students choosing teaching as a career. They found that people choose teaching because they believed they will demonstrate teaching ability, it will be intrinsically rewarding, they had positive learning experiences, they will have job security, and it will influence others.

Johnson, McKeown, and McEwen (1999) studied gender differences in the perspectives of males and females choosing primary teaching (elementary). Females placed more weight on intrinsic aspects of teaching; males were more influenced by extrinsic factors.

Given that most of the extant research was conducted a generation ago or in other countries, the current study was undertaken to see if similar patterns of motivations to teach would be found among teacher candidates at a small, United States university.
Methods and Methodology

Data were collected using qualitative methodology. As part of the application process to our College of Education, students are required to complete an onsite essay about why they want to become a teacher. In addition to providing insights into the stated motivations, the essay also provides information about candidates’ writing and thinking abilities. We examined these essays written by 53 candidates to identify motivations for becoming a teacher that might be revealed in the writing. These application essays were from candidates who were at the student teaching phase of the program. Those nearing completion were chosen in order to reduce the influence of any possible non-persistent applicants. The authors examined each essay to identify the motivations apparent in the writing. Initial analysis was conducted independently, with joint analysis occurring as we moved into the identification of themes. Analysis approaches from grounded theory were applied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Onsite essays were read for key words that described students’ motivation for choosing teaching. Statements were collected and categorized. No attempt was made to use pre-established categories from the extant research. Recurrent categories emerged from the data. As we continued to read the essays, these categories were refined. As we examined the data, we identified tentative themes that explained the students’ motivations for pursuing a program in teacher education. We began to associate statements in student’s writing to those themes.

We re-examined the essays to continue the analysis to determine what patterns may exist of differential motivations for elementary and secondary students. (That is the only sub-grouping for which we felt we had sufficient numbers of responses to establish patterns.) From these analyses, we expect to develop a tentative theory of how the motivations may be related to the life situations of the applicants.

Data Sources

We analyzed the onsite essays from program admission applications of students who were student teaching in the Spring of 2010 to determine their motivations for becoming teachers. Approximately 90% of students who apply are admitted. In our pool were undergraduate students, graduate students pursuing an MIT (Masters in Teaching), and certification only students. Within these groups were elementary education majors and secondary education students. There also was a group of alternative route students who take an accelerated course of study. Students typically complete the program in two years, taking a mix of core education courses, either elementary or secondary methods courses, and courses in their endorsement (subject) areas. We require two endorsements in our program.

The make-up of our students is a mix of traditional college age and non-traditional aged students, and many are first-generation college students. Because we have an extension program at the nearby military bases, we also have a number of students who are military personnel or who are spouses of military personnel.

Results

The following seven categories of response were identified from the candidates’ essays: Developing the student, Making a difference, Sharing knowledge and experience, Utilitarian, Dispositional motivators, Destiny to teach, and Serving as a role model. The categories are ordered roughly from the more frequently mentioned to the less frequently mentioned aspects of motivation. The categories of statements give insight to motivations, but do not necessarily
reflect motivators directly. The categories developed tend to be fairly discreet, although some overlap may exist. We will report the type of statements identified for each of the categories along with illustrative statements representing each of the categories. Individuals who made each statement will be identified with an alphanumerical code – for example: (P-2).

Developing the student

Statements that fell into the category of developing the student tended to focus on helping students to achieve their potential in some way. This included helping students to learn, being able to motivate students to do well, getting students excited about learning, and inspiring them.

We found candidates were motivated by the belief that they would be able to further the development of their future students. They expressed their interest in making the contribution to students’ development in a variety of ways. One candidate explained her intent to support her students by “helping them to be the best people they can be. . . . I will assist them in reaching academic and personal goals. . . . I enjoy watching the students succeed” (P-5). The motivations include both academic development and the more personal aspects of development. On the academic side, one candidate, a former engineer, mentioned students’ infatuation with technology and spoke of his desire to make a connection between academics and interests. “I can help the students ‘connect the dots’ between the technology they love and the underlying math and science they study” (P-20).

Another strong aspect of this motivation was the interest in expanding or broadening the development of the students. From the belief in the potential of students to achieve “I have confidence in every student’s ability to perform well” (P-13), through an acknowledgement of the teacher role in that development, “educators must steward our students’ belief in themselves” (P-2), our teacher education candidates showed an interest in helping students to aspire to greater development. Whether it was to “Inspire learners to go beyond their expectations” (P-21) as one applicant put it or to further development, many of the candidates shared this sentiment, “It is my desire to infuse the same love of learning into each and every one of my students” (E-4).

Making a difference

Statements that fell into the category of making a difference tended to include ideas about making an impact either on the student or more broadly on society. Some specific ideas were the desire to help people, to contribute to student success, to promote the value of education, to develop lifelong learners, or to improve society.

It was interesting to observe the way that candidates expressed this concept. Although it appeared in many statements, it took on a number of forms. In some cases it appeared as a rather limited focus on the individual student as seen in the following two candidates’ statements: “I have a passion to see young people succeed. . . . One of the joys of my life has been helping teens reach the goals they have for their life [sic]” (P-6) and “I want to light a fire in children’s minds” (E-1).

A number of the candidates took a broader view of the how they could make a difference for their students that reflected some influence that extended beyond the individual students. Statements from candidates such as “to contribute an experience to my students of intellectual enrichment that is truly empowering . . . but also how to become better teachers to themselves” (P-12), “My goal as an educator is to encourage, excite, motivate and inspire students to continue learning long after their formal instructional years” (P-22), “Education is the key to freedom and
opportunity” (E-7), and “It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide that learning and achieve the goals of the family and school. . . [I] believe in education as a key to success” (P-7) illustrate this broader view.

For many of the candidates, the influence was seen as even broader and was articulated as a chance to contribute to the community or society. That more global view can be discerned in the following: “From early in my life, I wanted to be a teacher; I believe in service to one’s community” (P-10), “Professional educators perform a great service to society. They pass on knowledge and values to children and make the world a better place” (P-19), and “Teaching is the most important way to have a positive impact on society’s future members. . . I feel I have an obligation to make this world a better place” (S-1). Although a bit trite, the sentiment is well illustrated in this statement, “I truly believe that teachers are the backbones to society. They are the ones who educate the future generations of our world” (E-8). There is a clear recognition and valuing of the chance to have an impact on society.

Sharing knowledge and experience

Statements that fell into the category of sharing knowledge and experience reflected two major concepts: to share content knowledge or to share knowledge and experience in general. The idea that they had enthusiasm for their content area and wanted to share that, or that they believed they could make their content area meaningful to the students was a part of this as was the notion that they had had experiences which would be beneficial to share with students.

There is a long-term perception that many individuals go into teaching because of a love of the subject matter. This idea does appear in our data; “I have loved science and reading since I was very young” (P-17) and “My technical knowledge, my eagerness to share that knowledge and my adaptive communication skills . . .” (P-20) reflect this idea. However, our candidates more frequently cited a broader interest in sharing as their motivator. It may be in part a result of the fact that our program includes a significant number of older, new career candidates. As a result, statements like [my ability to contribute is] “grounded in many years of richly adventurous life experiences” (P-12), “Relating book knowledge to real world situations will help many students understand the need to learn” (P-16), or “I can share my job experience, work ethic, and lesson that I have learned in life” (S-1).

Many of the comments integrated that interest in sharing knowledge with an interest in making their content accessible to the students in a meaningful and motivating way. One candidate wrote “Knowing that a concept in my mind was successfully translated into words, filtered through my students’ sense and individual perceptions, and arrived intact in their minds is a true feat indeed - and something too easy to take for granted” (P-15), while another simply stated “One mark of a great teacher is to show the practical application in life of not only the subject content, but of the learning process in general” (P-22). Both comments capture the bigger picture.

Utilitarian

Statements that fell into the category of utilitarian motivators generally reflected one of two concepts. First were responses that teaching was a “family friendly” profession, and second was the idea that the candidate recognized personal characteristics that made them well suited to be a teacher.
The utilitarian motivations tended to be things that showed a benefit to the candidate. Statements illustrating this included, “I chose teaching as my preferred profession because it is a respectable job to have” (E-20), “Another draw for becoming a teacher is the family friendly schedule” (E-10), “It is not the salary that motivates me to teach, although there are good health benefits and vacation time, which adds to the reason why I have chosen this profession” (E17), and “With this profession I will be able to give 100% in the classroom as well as at home,” (E-8) a statement made by a candidate referring to summers off. While this last statement illustrates this simple benefit motivation it may represent a naïve view of the demands of teaching.

A somewhat less self-interest type of utilitarian motivation came from those candidates who had reflected on their characteristics and the requirements of the profession and had made a logical determination that they are well-suited to be teachers. Their statements reflected this view in an almost detached voice: “Being an educator is not an easy profession. I do best when I am challenged” (P-19), “I also seek the stimulation and challenges that will come with the job. I have spent years watching how hard teachers work” (P-25), and “I have many strengths that would make me a great asset to the students I work with. My characteristics include intelligence, being organized/analytical/problem solving, appreciating/embracing different perspectives/alternative ways of doing things, creativity, kindness/compassion/sensitivity mixed with the enforcement of rules/boundaries” (P-10). Each of these statements supports the idea that the candidate recognized personal traits that are matched to the demands of the profession.

**Dispositional**

Statements that fell into the category of dispositional motivators included that they loved children or that they loved working with students, they wanted to make learning fun, they were excited about learning or the field, they wanted to build relationships or that they demonstrated a sense of caring.

At the simplest level dispositional motivators reflected a love of children: “I am crazy about kids” (E-6), and “I just love to be with children, and watching how they grow and learn amazes me” (E-3) convey that basic idea. Often, this was reflected in a desire to make learning fun as illustrated in these statements “I think I can show them that science is fun and interesting” (P-18), “learning can be fun and exciting” (P-16), and “despite the mask of indifference students often wear in class, they become transparent when the ‘light bulb’ comes on as a new piece of knowledge makes a connections with their current understanding” (P-20).

Many of the remarks in this area extended the concept, revealing a desire to share a disposition, at times to the point of developing similar dispositions in their future students. Examples of this included “I think that the greatest gifts that I have to offer as a teacher are my natural wonder of and curiosity about the world in general . . . [These] help me to meet individuals right where they are” (P-12), “I can contribute my passion for relationship building. I do not want just to teach. I want to build trust and respect with students” (P-23), and “I want to be looked up to as someone who can make a lasting impression on the life and educational future of a young child” (E-8), are all statements grounded in this concept. Another candidates shared that “3 key components that will help me to positively impact the lives of the students that I teach… a tenacious value of empathy, a resilient sense of patience, and a transparent passion for teaching the skills to allow my students to be lifelong learners and to find success” (P-13).
Destiny to teach

Statements that fell into the category of a sense of destiny to teach reflected the idea that the candidates felt a calling to be a teacher, they always wanted to be a teacher, they loved school, they had members of their family who were teachers, or they were influenced by a favorite teacher.

Many of the candidates showed awareness of a sense that their motivation to teach has roots that transcend their own desires. This was exemplified by the remark “Every person has a calling; mine is to be a teacher... I believe that being a teacher will truly make me happy” (E-1). Another candidate, a career changer, put it this way, “Now that I can choose how I spend the remainder of my career, I want to be in a classroom” (P-9). And for some candidates, there was an acknowledgment that the impetus came from outside, “The profession actually chose me” was the statement of a candidate who referred to a comment made by a HS peer she was tutoring (S-2). One candidate simply said, “I believe I also have a God given gift of the ability to relate to young people” in explaining his choice (P-23).

The influence of the family tradition of teaching often functioned as a strong motivator. “Coming from a family of educators... I grew up in an education rich environment... My intent has always been to be an educator... I have a gift for teaching” (P-21). And for some early resistance is overwhelmed by that latent family influence: “My parents, as they are both educators... offered up the suggestion of becoming a teacher... I ardently replied no... [Now] I believe I could contribute much as a high school science or mathematics teacher... My parents’ suggestion all those years ago was correct” (P-24).

Sometimes, along the way, a special teacher had a powerful impact. Two candidates expressed this impact well when they reflected “I want to be there for them in the same way some of my past teachers were there for me—with passion, drive, understanding and enthusiasm” (E-9), and “I knew that I wanted to teach, and after I had Ms. A----, I knew I wanted to teach third grade... Years later I nominated Ms. A---- for Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers, and she was selected... [I hope] I am able to inspire someone in the positive manner that Ms. A---- influenced my life” (E-10).

Serving as a role model

Statements that fell into the category of serving as a role model made explicit reference to the desire to be able to influence student through their role as a teacher.

The following statements capture this sense: “Nearly every student can relate a story as to how one teacher made a difference in their life. I want to be that teacher” (E-14); “I will be a positive role model and foster an environment where students can enjoy learning and thrive” (P-4); “I believe the personal integrity and self-respect of any teacher is of the utmost importance in providing a positive role model to children” (P-17). Clearly, these statements reveal the value of a strong role model in making a difference in students’ lives and the motivation to become such a role model.

Discussion

The categories identified in the candidates’ application essays seem to group into three, not always mutually exclusive, themes: Altruism (Developing the student and Making a difference), Personal Fulfillment (Making a difference, Sharing knowledge and experience,
Dispositional motivators, Destiny to teach, and Serving as a role model), and Convenience of Teaching (Utilitarian).

Altruism speaks to the importance of helping young people succeed. It is the recognition that teaching is a worthwhile career because of the impact teachers have on children and society. They have enjoyed their experiences working with children and want to continue to have those interactions in a way that contributes to those children’s development. They feel a social responsibility to give back to society. They want to help others. This is consistent with Krecic and Grmek’s (2005) identification of altruistic reasons as those which reflect inner motivation to gain satisfaction from the results of one’s work. Similarly, the statements in the current study associated with altruism resonate with Kyriacou and Coulthard’s (2000) characterization of altruistic reasons as focused on the socially worthwhile, the desire to help children succeed, and improvement of society.

Personal fulfillment is often the intrinsic motivator for our teacher candidates. They imagine teaching from their perspective as a student. They liked school; it was fun. They also played school as a child. Another aspect of this theme is their expertise in their subject matter. They love their content and are eager to share it with young people. Often they have had life experiences from which they have gained insight, and they want to share those insights. Many of our teacher candidates are interested in teaching because of strong teacher role models in their lives: coaches, family members, and other teachers who influenced them. The motivators we found are parallel to those identified by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) as intrinsic reasons, as seen in the satisfaction of the functions of the job activity and interest in using and sharing their subject matter knowledge. Krecic and Grmek (2005) labeled this theme as self-realization, including ideas that epitomized personal and professional growth, and the performance of useful and influential work. Manuel and Hughes (2006) found personal fulfillment to be the most frequently cited intrinsic motivator identified by pre-service teacher candidates.

The convenience of teaching theme recognizes there are pluses and minuses to the profession. Teacher candidates are cognizant of the problems teachers encounter, and low pay, and a status that may be seen as low by some while honorable by others. The element of fit is also a prominent factor – they saw their personal characteristics as equipping them to be a good teacher, lending a sense of comfort in their choice to be a teacher. These reasons include ideas that were identified by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) as extrinsic reasons, and as material reasons by Krecic and Grmek (2005). They focus on things external to the job, such as the vacations, hours, and job security.

As we compared the themes we identified to those reported in the literature, we see strong resemblances of these themes to the motivation factors identified in those studies.

Watt and Richardson (2008) found that teacher motivations are influential from the outset of their entry into teacher education programs, evolve through their educational studies, and influence their teaching careers. In light of this, and based upon the motivations expressed, we believe there is a need to examine our teacher education program, particularly to refine the role coursework and practicum experiences play in preparing students for the realities of the teaching profession, realities that are sometimes, but not always, reflected in their reasons cited for choosing to enter the teaching profession.

Alexander (2008) discussed the ability to profile the teaching profession: to examine who is drawn to teaching and why; who experiences success or feels personal satisfaction in teaching and who does not; what relationships may exist between teachers’ motivations and pedagogical practices; and how this impacts students. Given the motivations identified in this study it would
seem important to undertake additional studies to explore the interconnections among these variables.

Hoy (2008) observed that “The motivations of teachers are as complex and evolving as the challenge of teaching itself” (p. 497). There is tension between the realities of teaching and the altruistic motivations for entering the profession. Hoy argued that teacher preparation programs need to address these tensions: between serving and surviving, between caring and control, between deep investment and protective distance. Our limited study identified motivations to become a teacher that echoed these tensions. As a result, we concur that benefits can accrue from teacher preparation programs examining ways to reconcile these tensions.

Implications

Our research adds to the growing body of recent research on student motivation. Students’ motivations appear not to have changed with the complexities and demands of teaching today. In spite of the continuing challenges and demands of teaching, students displayed essentially the same motivations for entering the teaching field as their predecessors. This raises the question of whether students are aware of the challenges and demands of the teaching profession. Another concern is that although their years in the classroom as a student give them some understanding of teaching, is it a credible understanding of teaching and all that it encompasses. Do students form their conceptions of teaching based on their own memories of being a student? And are these memories realistic? As teacher educators, how do we help students separate their fantasies about teaching from the realities of being a teacher?

Motivations to teach are multifaceted and complex. Students need to consider more than just expertise in their academic subjects and pedagogy. They need to understand how their own goals and motivations for teaching affect their well-being and the well-being of their students. In response, teacher education programs must consider these complexities in designing and delivering their programs. One of the challenges for teacher education is how to structure programs to meet the needs of teacher candidates, to meet state and federal requirements, and to give students a realistic picture of teaching. To inform this design, we plan to query our students at the end of student teaching to see if their motivations for teaching have changed and how their program may have contributed to any change. We expect those data, in conjunction with the data from the current study, to be helpful in determining possible ways to better meet the needs of teacher candidates.

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“I Feel Fairly Confident…”: Investigating Literacy Candidates’ Self-Confidence through an On-Line Standards-Based Survey

Sharryn Larsen Walker, Janet Finke, Carol Butterfield, and Judy Backlund
Central Washington University

Abstract

This article presents the perceived self-confidence of teacher education candidates who were pursing certification in elementary education or elementary education with an endorsement in reading. Using the state standards toward a reading endorsement as the basis for the statements, each candidate completed an on-line common core survey stating her/his confidence in teaching to the standard. To further support her/his self-rating, these candidates also added comments for each of the six common core standard areas. Results indicated that those pursuing an endorsement in reading viewed themselves as more confident than those who were not. Additionally, the data provided strengths and weaknesses about the literacy program at this university. Based on these findings, further analysis of the data is warranted.

The literacy program faculty at a regional university in the Pacific Northwest has been involved in collecting and analyzing evidence to document teacher candidate growth based on State Professional Standards in the field of Reading. Current research in the field of education provides some information about collecting evidence and documenting the impact of programs on pre-service teachers. Everhart and Hogarty (2009) believe there is a need for “teacher education programs to sharpen their focus on what constitutes good practice so that beginning teachers will be prepared for the politics and culture of the induction year in a host of school contexts” (p. 400). Fallon (2006) reports that teacher educators need to move toward using data rather than anecdotal records to make policy decisions. Using data to inform teacher educators about teacher preparation programs provide opportunities for improving programs, and in turn, better preparing beginning teachers.

Measuring Program Effectiveness

Researchers have considered what should be measured as well as indicators for program effectiveness. Wineburg claimed that many teacher education institutions “expended a great deal of energy and resources on data collection, but had no clear sense of what should be measured, how the data collection should be done, or what real purpose the data served” (as cited in Ludlow, et al., 2008, p. 321). However, there seems to be agreement that teacher education programs need to develop ways to measure the effectiveness of programs in order to meet the demands of accrediting agencies. Currently, surveying teacher candidates is a form of data collection used at many institutions.

Surveys

Chai, Khine, and Teo (2009) reported survey data that explored the significance of pre-service teacher beliefs and what influences those beliefs. They found that many beliefs were
congruent with the culture of the pre-service teachers. This contrasted with Paulsen and Wells’ (1998) study that found differences in epistemological beliefs based on major fields of study. Ludlow et al. (2008) described a series five of surveys that had been developed to investigate teacher candidate’s experiences over time. The survey data were used to guide teaching practices, inform policies, and explore issues related to the curriculum and university/school relationships. The different surveys provided insight into teacher candidates’ perceptions, beliefs about teaching, perceptions about preparedness, and reports of practices/teaching strategies. Survey data allowed researchers to compare self-perceptions and actual practice. In their use of entry and exit surveys, these researchers were able to track changes in teacher candidate beliefs, concepts of learning, and self-perceptions of performance. For example, Ludlow (et al., 2008) also reported that although teacher candidates generally felt well prepared, “exit surveys consistently indicated that teacher candidates felt under prepared in the multiple disciplinary areas that form the elementary school curriculum” (p. 331). Emphasis on sound psychometric properties and strong validity were emphasized.

Williams and Alawiye (2001) also surveyed student teachers’ self-perceptions. Their goal was to create an “internal assessment mechanism that would provide teacher preparation program administrators information about the effectiveness of programs” (p. 114). This survey looked at teacher qualities such as teacher candidate knowledge of subject manner, teaching methods, planning ability, resources used, multicultural understanding, management, and attention to individual differences. They were also able to analyze student teacher perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher preparation program. Williams and Alawiye (2001) determined that the teacher education program “offered to pre-service student candidates in the teacher preparation program is adequate” (p. 118) and provided insights about possible program improvements.

It is also believed that pre-service teachers need to understand their personal epistemological beliefs (Chai et al., 2009). Surveys inquiring into these belief systems provide opportunities for teacher candidates to become aware of and reflect on their beliefs, motives, and strategies and potentially create “an epistemologically conducive learning environment” (p. 296).

On-line Assessments

In addition to paper and pencil surveys, the use of on-line survey data has been examined (Amobi, 2003). Everhart and Hogarty (2009) explored the use of on-line assessment products that were being used for program assessment and accreditation purposes. They found that “online assessment products can collect and assess candidate work and performances in a formative manner” (p. 408) and provide “data that shows the strengths and weaknesses of teacher education programs” (p. 408). It is important to consider the functions of an on-line assessment system. Additionally, it is essential for the users to have an understanding of how to interpret the data in ways that are meaningful and useful for improving teacher education programs and prepare teachers for K-12 students.

Professional Standards

Teacher education programs are based on professional standards. Darling-Hammond (2006) suggested that teacher education programs should include performance assessments based on professional teaching standards. Additionally, Everhart and Hogarty (2009) emphasized that
on-line assessments provide “individual, aggregated, and disaggregated data” (p. 403) that can be aligned with professional standards. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) calls for teacher candidates to demonstrate professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Teacher education programs have been working to provide accreditation agencies with clear and convincing evidence.

Rinaldo et al. (2010), in an effort to address standards related to dispositions, measured change in teacher candidate behaviors. Teacher candidates completing the 21-item survey provided evidence that they believed their own professional dispositions did change during the educational program. The findings in this study seemed “to imply that candidate beliefs are positively affected by the teacher education program offered by the college of education” (p. 50). Although this survey was based on professional dispositions standards, most of the surveys reported on in the literature are not based on professional standards and do not connect survey results to standards. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore teacher candidates’ perceived confidence levels in the knowledge of literacy teaching based on State Professional Standards in Reading through an on-line common core survey.

Method

Setting

This study took place at a regional university located in the Pacific Northwest. The teacher education program at this university graduates approximately 300 elementary education majors each year. Each elementary education certification candidate also seeks an endorsement in another area with literacy, bilingual/TESL, and middle level math/science being among the most common.

As this teacher education program was approaching its reaccreditation process, each major and minor area aligned its assessment system with the NCATE, state, and professional standards for each degree or endorsement area. As part of the data collection within the literacy program, faculty devised a common core on-line survey to gain insight into the elementary education major candidates’ and literacy/reading endorsement candidates’ perceived confidence in knowledge of Reading Professional Standards. Using the six common core understandings that encompass the State Reading Endorsement Standards, a 26-item survey was developed. Each survey item aligned with a specific standard within the common core. All survey data were collected anonymously.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two groups. First, all candidates seeking endorsements in elementary education enrolled in their second literacy methods course completed the survey in the last week of class. Between November 2008 and June 2010, 247 elementary education majors completed the on-line survey. Twenty-three percent of these candidates indicated they were intending to acquire a minor in literacy.

The second group to take this survey included those working toward an endorsement in reading. After successfully completing the four literacy methods courses required of all elementary education majors and at least six of the eight required courses in the literacy minor, these candidates enrolled in an end-of-program practicum. They took the previously mentioned on-line common core survey during the last week of that field experience. Between November
2008 and June 2010, 80 elementary education majors working toward a reading endorsement completed the on-line survey.

A strong majority of the pre-service teachers who took both surveys were female, with approximately 85% taking courses on the main campus. The remaining 15% were enrolled in one of two branch campus sites. All of the candidates enrolled at one of the branch campus sites were working toward a minor in literacy.

Description of On-Line Common Core Survey

In order to glean the self-perceptions of the confidence levels in teaching literacy survey items were developed using the six State Common Core Standards for the Reading Endorsement as the basis for the items. The first items on the survey were background gathering, including which literacy courses had been taken in the elementary education major; whether or not the candidate was obtaining a minor in literacy; and which campus the candidate attended.

Next, the sub-headings of the six common core areas were converted into “I can” or “I know” statements. For instance, in Common Core Area 1-Foundational Knowledge, the standard “demonstrates knowledge of the major theories of language development and learning in the teaching of reading, writing, and instruction” was converted to “I can demonstrate knowledge of the major theories of language development and learning in the teaching of reading, writing, and instruction.” A complete list of the statements with the accompanying means for the groups is located in Table 1.

The pre-service teachers rated themselves on each of the 26 items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not confident) to 5 (very confident). On the recommendation of the assessment coordinator for the college, a five-point scale was used so as to provide “middle ground” to those who might see themselves in that position. All candidates were asked to rate themselves on each confidence statement. Following each common core area, the candidates were asked to summarize their current levels of confidence for the set of standards in a comments section. Within those comments, they were asked to cite specific examples from their coursework or fieldwork, which supported the statements made. The survey was formatted within Qualtrics, a survey-developing software.

Data Collection

The archival data were collected from the two previously described groups as part of a non-graded course requirement. A week before the survey was to be completed each candidate received an email stating s/he would receive a direct link to her/his own survey. The day before the survey was to be completed each candidate then received the email with the survey link. In order to increase the rate of response to the survey, the candidates met with their instructor or supervisor in a computer lab during class or seminar during the last week of the course. Candidates who were absent were reminded to complete the survey as soon as returning to class. The software system used was able to track those who completed the survey, and therefore the faculty was able to ensure that those absent had submitted their perceptions.

The survey consisted of three (3) background items, 26 confidence-level statements, and six (6) comment boxes. The software system compiled the data collected, providing means, variances, standard deviations, and total responses for each item. Table 2 presents two sets of means, one for each common core area for each of the groups.
Table 1

*Mean Scores of Confidence Levels for Elementary Education Majors and Literacy Minors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Statement</th>
<th>Elementary Education (M) n=247</th>
<th>Literacy Minor (M) n=80</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Core 1-Foundational Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 I can demonstrate knowledge of the major theories of language development and</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning in the teaching of reading, writing, and instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 I can demonstrate knowledge of the essential components of reading (phonemic</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 I can demonstrate knowledge of various factors that affect language development</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and reading acquisition [e.g., cultural, environmental, linguistic, physical, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 I know the current state standards (GLEs) in reading, writing, and communication.</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Core 2-Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 I can demonstrate knowledge of selecting assessment tools to match the</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructional purpose.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 I can demonstrate knowledge of interpreting assessment results to inform</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Common Core 3-Instructional Strategies and Curriculum Materials</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 I can demonstrate knowledge of a wide-range of instructional strategies.</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 I can demonstrate knowledge of how to select and use a wide-range of</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.36</td>
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<td>curricular materials.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 I can demonstrate knowledge of how to plan systematic explicit instruction for</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the essential components (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehension). This includes knowledge and use of appropriate materials, explicit,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>personalized instruction based upon the assessed needs of the student.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 I can demonstrate how to model and explicitly teach students to use word</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identification, word meaning, and context clues to read for meaning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Common Core 4-Creating a Literate Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 I can demonstrate knowledge that students’ interests, reading skills, and</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>backgrounds are considered when using reading and writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 I can demonstrate understanding that creating a literate environment fosters</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>interest and growth in all aspects of literacy including student choice in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>selection of reading materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 I can demonstrate understanding of the research base that grounds</td>
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practice in creating a literate environment.

4.4 I can demonstrate knowledge of the need for a variety of instructional materials and reference sources [e.g., large supply of books, technology-based information, and non-print materials representing multiple levels, broad interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds]

4.5 I can demonstrate knowledge of selecting and adapting a variety of print, non-print and classroom-based instructional materials for literacy, including those that are technology-based and are appropriate to the developmental needs of the student.

4.6 I can demonstrate knowledge of the various ways to use text forms and features to teach reading [e.g., conventions of written English, text structure and genres, figurative language, and textual links.

4.7 I can demonstrate the process of and purpose for modeling think-alouds and read-alouds.

**Common Core 5-Professional Development**

5.1 I understand the importance of respecting socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity in the teaching process.

5.2 I understand the importance of keeping current in the field of literacy [e.g., reading professional journals and publications, data analysis and assessment, participating in professional organizations, conferences, professional book studies].

5.3 I understand the importance of collegiality through observation and discussion.

**Common Core 6-Instructional Methodology**

6.1 I read and know how to apply the results of scientifically-based reading research (qualitative and quantitative) to instructional practices.

6.2 I collaborate with family members regarding students’ literacy development.

6.3 I use a wide range of assessment tools and practices that range from individual and group standardized tests to individual and group informal classroom assessment strategies, including technology-based assessment tools.

6.4 I identify students with reading difficulties and identify the next step for instruction.

6.5 I can select appropriate materials and demonstrate the ability to plan and implement effective reading instruction for all learners.

6.6 I provide students with opportunities to become independent learners and to self-advocate when appropriate.

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*Note.* Each group took the on-line survey independent of the other. It is not pre-post data.

**Findings**

Because the data presented here is not pre/post and the means in each group is independent of the other, care must be taken in making comparisons between groups. However,
generalizations between the groups, not statistically significant differences, may be drawn. In Common Core Area 1-Foundational Knowledge (Table 2), elementary education majors enrolled in their second literacy course indicated a mean on their confidence as 3.85 on a 5-point Likert Scale. However, those seeking an endorsement in reading that had at least six more courses in the content rated themselves with an mean of 4.16. A typical comment made by the elementary education majors about their confidence levels were similar to one made by this candidate, “I feel fairly confident, but not as confident as I would like to be.” Conversely, a representative comment from one seeking a reading endorsement was, “I believe I have a fairly (good) knowledge of the foundational knowledge of the reading processes and instruction.”

The trend continued within Common Core Area 2-Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation in that the literacy minors rated themselves as more confident than those majoring in elementary education. Literacy minors evaluated themselves with a mean of 4.34, while the elementary education majors rated themselves with a mean of 4.16. Within this area, a candidate minoring in literacy commented, “I feel comfortable aligning my assessment up with my objectives and state standards. I believe informal assessments should be used often and should dictate instruction.” An elementary education major voiced a similar insight when stating, “I have found that it is crucial to administer the assessment and use the data collected from the student as well as the student’s demeanor to initiate a plan of learning.”

Common Core Area 3- Instructional Strategies and Curriculum Materials indicated that again those pursuing an endorsement in reading perceived themselves as more confident. With a mean of 4.36, those minoring in literacy wrote much about their confidence in this area. For instance, one candidate wrote:

I am most confident in the area of reading strategies. I feel this is the standard that has been focused on the most in every class. Being able to put the strategies into practice during reading practicum has given me the confidence. Before my reading practicum, I felt like all I had was just a bit of strategies and I was not sure how to implement them into my instruction. I have been designing lessons to teach the reading skills that are the focus for the week. I use many of my textbooks and reference tools when planning my lessons.

The elementary education majors were similarly as vocal. While their mean was lower (4.21) in this core area, one candidate expressed a sense of doubt when writing:

In my 309 [the course number of the second literacy course taken], we were given a lot of reference regarding strategies, including using our texts and the internet. Therefore, I feel confident in this area. However, explicitly teaching students word identification, meaning, and context clues I am not sure of until I am in the field.

The notion of creating a literate environment is the basis of Common Core Area 4. The seven items within this category yielded the widest difference between the means. The elementary education majors rated themselves with a confidence level of 4.16, while the mean for the literacy minors was 4.56. One elementary education major noted that “I have used research-based strategies in my 309 class…In using think-alouds, I haven’t practiced it, but I understand the benefits of using it to help the students learn to use higher thinking.” A literacy minor wrote of the importance of “considering the interests and background of every student,” while showing the students “my love of reading.”

In Common Core Area 5-Professional Development, literacy minors (4.78) again rated themselves as more confident than elementary education majors (4.48). One literacy minor
Table 2

Means for Elementary Education Majors and Literacy Minors Each Common Core Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core Area</th>
<th>Elementary Education Majors (M)</th>
<th>Literacy Minors (M)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>n=247</td>
<td>n=80</td>
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**Common Core 1-Foundational Knowledge**
Candidates have knowledge of the foundations for reading and writing processes and instruction.
(4 items)

- **Elementary Education Majors (M)**: 3.85
- **Literacy Minors (M)**: 4.16

**Common Core 2-Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation**
Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the assessment/evaluation/instruction cycle and how to use a variety of assessment tools and practices to plan and evaluate effective reading instruction.
(2 items)

- **Elementary Education Majors (M)**: 4.13
- **Literacy Minors (M)**: 4.34

**Common Core 3-Instructional Strategies and Curriculum Materials**
Candidates have knowledge of a wide-range of instructional practices, approaches, methods, and curriculum materials to support reading and writing instruction.
(4 items)

- **Elementary Education Majors (M)**: 4.21
- **Literacy Minors (M)**: 4.35

**Common Core 4-Creating a Literate Environment**
Candidates create a literate environment that fosters reading and writing by integrating foundational knowledge, use of instructional practices, approaches and methods, curriculum materials and the appropriate use of assessment.
(7 items)

- **Elementary Education Majors (M)**: 4.19
- **Literacy Minors (M)**: 4.56

**Common Core 5-Professional Development**
Candidates view professional development as career-long effort and responsibility.
(3 items)

- **Elementary Education Majors (M)**: 4.48
- **Literacy Minors (M)**: 4.78

**Common Core 6-Instructional Methodology**
Candidates demonstrate a deep understanding of the pedagogical knowledge and practice specific to the teaching of reading and writing.
(6 items)

- **Elementary Education Majors (M)**: 3.86
- **Literacy Minors (M)**: 4.18

*Note.* Each group took the on-line survey independent of the other. It is not pre-post data.

commented that she felt more confident because of the weekly discussions about current articles from *The Reading Teacher*, a requirement in one of the courses toward the endorsement. This candidate stated that she was able to connect what was read in the articles to what was implemented in the classroom. The comments from the elementary education majors were more
general as illustrated by this comment, “I believe that teachers must be up to date in the content areas that they specialize in because teaching is a profession.”

Finally, in Common Core Area 6-Instructional Methodology, the literacy minors again rated themselves higher. With a mean of 4.18 for the group, a literacy minor supported her confidence level by stating, “I learned in all my literacy courses, but feel that I mostly learned from the discussions about my practicum.” In this area the mean for the elementary education majors was 3.86, while one candidate commented, “I do not have much experience with students with reading difficulties, but do feel I can create effective lessons in reading and writing.”

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher candidates’ perceived confidence levels about literacy teaching based on State Professional Reading Standards through an on-line common core survey. Two groups of participants were surveyed; those who were enrolled in their second required literacy course, and those who had taken at least an additional six literacy courses and were enrolled in a literacy practicum. The means for each of the perceived confidence levels within of the six common core areas of the State Professional Reading Standards for each group was presented. Sample comments to support those perceived confidences were also shared.

Overall, those pursuing an endorsement in reading rated themselves as more confident than those who had taken just the second of their required literacy courses within the elementary education major. This finding was expected, as it was reasonable to assume that those pursing the reading endorsement would feel more confident because they had taken more courses within the content area. Additionally, the confidence levels, coupled with the content and volume of comments made to support the numeric ratings (results in process), mirrored the content and processes of the respective course sequence to date for those taking the survey.

Although the intent of the survey was to gain an understanding of the confidence these candidates felt in the teaching of literacy, the data provided information for the faculty about the program itself. Based on the confidence levels and their accompanying comments several perceived strengths of the program were revealed. First, both groups rated themselves high in the specific items within several common core areas related to understanding students. All of these teacher candidates felt confident in considering the issues of diversity, while understanding the backgrounds and skills of the students they teach. Additionally, these teacher candidates felt confident in demonstrating their ability to use a variety of instructional strategies and materials within a strong literate environment, as evidenced by their ratings and comments within Common Core Areas 3 and 6. Finally, both groups rated themselves as confident in the notion of “teacher candidate as professional” from items within Common Core Area 5. Both supported this notion with their knowledge of the profession and the importance of collegiality in professional development. These perceived strengths can be an important reporting piece in the reaccreditation process.

Perceived strengths must be balanced with perceived weaknesses. Both groups rated themselves as low in confidence when communicating and working with parents. Their numeric ratings and comments within Common Core Areas 5 and 6 supported their notion that they had not had much experience in working with parents at this pre-service level. Another area of perceived low confidence was within Common Core Area 1, “know the state GLEs [Grade Level Expectations].” The comments supporting this confidence level suggested that the candidates felt...
they needed to have the GLEs memorized as opposed to knowing where to find them. Finally, the candidates rated themselves less confident in Common Core Area 6 in their knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research knowledge.

Using the data collected from the common core survey, the faculty has discussed and made strides to address the perceived low-confidence levels of these pre-service teachers. First, opportunities to interact with parents and families have been incorporated into at least one literacy course in which the pre-service teachers host a “family reading night,” as part of a service-learning component within the course. During this event, the pre-service teachers read or tell stories to small groups of families in an intimate setting. This activity has received positive comments from the pre-service teachers and family participants alike. In another course, communicating assessment data with parents is simulated in order to build teacher candidate confidence in communicating with parents.

In order to address the knowledge of the GLEs, the literacy faculty has agreed to use a common vocabulary with the pre-service candidates and make explicit that “knowledge of the GLEs does not mean that they are to be memorized.” However, the teacher candidates should know where to access the GLEs and how to use them in support of their teaching. Furthermore, the faculty has worked to make explicit the terms of qualitative and quantitative research within their teaching. This has been accomplished by pointing out how the “research-based strategies” used in teaching became so and how the two types of research inform practice. As additional data is gathered from current teacher candidates through the administration of the common core on-line survey, literacy faculty will be able to assess teacher candidate growth, gain insight into the effectiveness of the literacy minor program and, as a result, work toward program improvement.

**Further analysis**

While the original intent of this survey was to garner the perceived confidences of two groups, the data collected has been useful in making program improvements. However, there are several ways in which this data can be further analyzed. Future data breakouts could include examining the pre/post confidence levels of those candidates pursing an endorsement in literacy, those candidates at the different branch campuses, and those by year in order to see if the changes made by faculty have addressed the perceived areas of weaknesses. Additionally, both sets of groups provided many comments in support and explanation of each of the common core areas. Qualitatively analyzing candidate comments may provide more detailed support to the means displayed. Finally, the survey may be distributed to those elementary education majors near the completion of their student teaching experience.

The use of an on-line survey with items based on the endorsement standards can be adapted for any content area. The perceived confidences provide feedback to faculty and program areas about perceived strengths and weaknesses of programs. This feedback from teacher candidates can then be used to make adjustments in courses, course requirements, and fine tune current teaching practices, as well as provide more data for the program accreditation process.
References
Taming the Crammed Curriculum:
Selective Abandonment as a Strategy in Professional Learning Communities

Vincent A. Aleccia
Eastern Washington University

Abstract

Because time is one of the biggest limitations of teaching, lesson planning, and curriculum development, K-12 teachers must maximize this variable in their instruction by focusing on central priorities and practicing selective abandonment. One of the best venues for this is the Professional Learning Community (PLC). These groups of teachers must agree on a limited number of content standards, tailor instruction to them, and devise appropriate assessment instruments to gather data on student academic achievement. Even though 47 states have agreed to use the Common Core State Standards, it will take time for common assessments to be developed. Thus, PLCs must work now to align assessments with the new standards. PLCs must regularly review these assessment results data and refine instructional materials to meet student needs. Further, building and district leaders must support their teacher PLCs and avoid the urge to institute new programs until teachers have aligned standards, instructions, and assessment.

Here’s an all-too-common scenario in K-12 education: the state or provincial office of education decrees that yet another topic must be added to an already-bloated curriculum. School districts dutifully relay the decree to building administrators and, finally, classroom teachers. And teachers must then perform pedagogical prestidigitation to squeeze the new topic into what they’re already teaching their students while preparing them for the crucible of high-stakes testing.

It’s no secret to educators that one of the biggest limitations in teaching and lesson preparation is time. But this is a variable that can be stretched only so far. This limitation is also true for curriculum design. Indeed, Tyler (1949), whose groundbreaking work in curricular development is legendary, noted that schools must be very clear about what they will address in the curriculum and what they won’t. This is crucial for the intellectual well-being of students by providing the opportunity for judicious depth rather than expansive breadth in the curriculum. And, as we know, the common pattern during the last 70 years has been to add to the curriculum while removing nothing. These additions include Computer Literacy, Consumer Education, Driver’s Education, Service Learning, and Sexually Transmitted Infections. The list is seemingly endless—and still proliferating. Each of them has value, but what’s the priority? Which topics—and in which sequence—best serve the majority of students?

The Need to Focus on Central Priorities

Something, of course, must give. And the process of curricular cutting we need to implement must work to benefit students and increase their academic achievement. That process,
selective abandonment, a term coined by Arthur Costa (Lovely & Smith, 2004), involves a conscious choice of limiting the curriculum to fewer topics with more in-depth investigation by students. During this time of fiscal downsizing, with steadily shrinking resources, the received wisdom is that we must do more with less. But what exactly does that mean? For policy makers, the answer is obvious: fewer resources and leaner budgets. For practitioners, the answer is also obvious, though difficult to implement: determining what’s crucial for students to learn and then focusing on this material exclusively. That means implementing selective abandonment regarding the curriculum.

With the publication of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education titled *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the stage was set for the rapid adoption of content standards by states. In their haste not to be left behind, however, many states ended up with standards that lacked focus, coherence, and, most important, brevity. Some states had content standards amounting to lengthy laundry lists, a form of curricular wish list legerdemain that served as rich fodder for politicians’ re-election bids but was notoriously weak in sequence and continuity in the K-12 continuum.

Indeed, Marzano and Kendall (1999) found that proliferating content standards, if rigidly adhered to, could theoretically delay high school students’ graduation by five years. In essence, what we have is a crammed curriculum that has become the repository of specialized interests. Clearly, we must focus on what’s essential to teach our students. The breadth of what’s addressed in the curriculum is not nearly as important as the depth of curricular topics (Holmes Group, 2007). We must focus on the central priorities of preparing our students to be ready for postsecondary life and jettison the peripheral matters (Conley, 2005, 2010). But what’s the best way to apply selective abandonment to what’s taught in our schools? And how do we tame the crammed curriculum?

**Using Professional Learning Communities**

One of the most powerful ideas in education to be developed during the last decade of the 20th century is the Professional Learning Community (PLC). Formalized as a concept by DuFour and Eaker (1998), PLCs have had a strategic impact on many K-12 schools in the last two decades. Schmoker (2011) asserted that one of the most important professional activities teachers can do is to reduce the number of state content standards to a manageable number, and here is where PLCs can help. If teachers in grade-level PLCs at the elementary school and content-area PLCs at the secondary school focus on agreeing what content standards are the most crucial for their pupils, then they can gather appropriate instructional material and devise specific assessment instruments to measure student academic achievement. And, according to Schmoker (2011), this should be done consistently each quarter of the academic year.

**Are We Ready for the Common Core Standards?**

As Conley (2011) noted, 47 states as well as the District of Columbia have agreed to replace their state content standards with the recently developed Common Core State Standards. Rolled out in June of 2010, the Common Core State Standards were developed with funding from the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). The Common Core State Standards are more streamlined than the cumbersome collection of content standards that most states developed.
during the late 1980s and 1990s. For example, the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts consists of six expectations as opposed to the pages and pages of standards for English/Language Arts developed by most states.

What is even more noteworthy is that 45 states have joined the two assessment consortia composed of groups of states that are developing new assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Some teachers might perceive the Common Core as a move to nationalize K-12 curriculum, but this is not the case. The Tenth Amendment, of course, reserves all matters not specifically mentioned in the Constitution to state and local governments—including education. Indeed, as the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) noted, local educators will decide how the standards are to be met, and teachers will continue to create lesson plans and tailor instruction to the needs of individual students. The Common Core does not prescribe particular works of literature, for example, in the English/Language Arts standards. The means of achieving the ends of the standards are left to teachers, and here is where PLCs play a paramount role.

What’s to be Done?

Even though the United States Department of Education is funding the development of common assessments tied to the new Common Core, this process could be lengthy. We can’t afford to wait until there are approved assessment instruments in place. As Schmoker (2011) advocated, PLCs should focus on the deciding on a manageable number of standards in each discipline, gathering engaging instructional resources, and developing common assessments for the short term. As Shulman (1988) noted, we should follow the doctrine of the “union of insufficiencies” which involves creating multiple modes of assessment to capture an accurate status report of student achievement. Thus, PLCs should create a variety of assessment instruments: paper-and-pencil tests composed of selection items, essay writing responses, oral presentations, case study exercises, debates, lab demonstrations, to name only a few.

In addition, PLCs should meet quarterly to review data with a teacher leader or a building administrator. During this session, PLC members should look for common patterns in the gathered data. Is instruction preparing students for the assessments used? Does instruction need to change or do the assessments? This is the type of just-in-time response that will make the curriculum based on realistic content standards not only relevant to student academic needs but also nimble and able to be changed as needed for the benefits of students. And just like a well-constructed lesson plan, PLC members must monitor and adjust regularly to ensure that both instruction and assessment are doing what they should. This isn’t glitzy and glamorous, but it is necessary to ensure steady progress of student academic achievement. As Hargreaves and Fink (2006) presciently observed, frequent changes merely for the sake of change have a debilitating effect on schools. Although Hargreaves and Fink were speaking specifically of moving administrators around frequently, it also applies to promiscuous change in curriculum and assessment. Just as school leaders need time to implement a vision into the day-to-day operations of a school or district, PLCs need time to refine instruction and assessment so students may benefit. And abandoning this important professional activity to chase after the evanescent siren song of the latest program fad is irresponsible and counterproductive for student academic achievement.
The Need for Administrative Buy-in and Support

So many innovative instructional programs that trumpet themselves in the pages of journals and the education trade press slam the targeted readers with overkill hyperbole about the programs’ effectiveness. And yet the truth is far less sexy and glamorous. Fewer content standards, consistently taught through a lean, focused curriculum, and regularly measured with appropriate assessments will bring steady improvement. We must also check the results of student assessments regularly and monitor and adjust as needed.

We need to make PLCs the focus on staff development. The most important thing is a realistic, rigorous curriculum well taught with realistic, rigorous assessments. This focus on PLCs needs to be championed by both building and district administrative leadership teams. As Schmoker (2006, 2011) noted, school and district administrators need to become deaf to the siren song of new programs and instead maintain a consistent focus on helping PLCs select a manageable number of appropriate content standards, create high-quality instructional materials, and develop common assessment instruments to measure student academic gains regularly. In addition, teacher preparation programs must also introduce the concept of the PLC to preservice teacher candidates so they will be aware of the power of PLCs in focusing on content standards, instruction, and assessment.

In his 1941 classic, The Future of Education, Sir Richard Livingstone wrote that “[t]he test of successful education is not the amount of knowledge that pupils take away from school, but their appetite to think, know and their capacity to learn” (p. 28). As teachers, we must do the hard work of preparing our students for their postsecondary life. This is the key to preparing the next generation to be informed, responsive citizens. And, we hope, to whet their appetites, as Livingstone asserted, to be lifelong learners who think deeply about what it means to become solid critical thinkers, adroit problem solvers with a realistic curriculum taught thoroughly and well.

References


Marzano, R. J., & Kendall, J. S. (1999). *Essential knowledge: The debate over what American students should know.* Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory.


Programmatic Navel Gazing: One School of Education’s Experiences of a Comprehensive Review

Andrew Kitchenham
University of Northern British Columbia

Abstract

This article describes a small study conducted within the School of Education as part of its internal and external reviews of the undergraduate and graduate programs. Using data collected from teaching faculty self-reports, archival information, surveys, and focus groups, the findings are presented. Although the UNBC School of Education does perform well based on reports from a variety of stakeholders, the internal and external review information will assist the School in strengthening both undergraduate and graduate programs.

In 1990, the Education Advisory Committee recommended to the interim governing council of the University of Northern British Columbia that an undergraduate teacher education program be established with a special emphasis on meeting the needs of Aboriginal people. Three years later UNBC created a Master of Education program; however, it was not until December 2000 that the proposal for a Bachelor of Education program was forwarded to the governing body, the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT), which was in charge of all new and existing teacher education programs in the province. The teacher education program’s was “a dynamic, continually developing resource that [was] responsive to the ever-changing needs of society” (Education Program Degree Proposal, Dec. 2000, p. 3) which was “based on the strong belief that high quality teachers are graduated when there is: 1) collaboration among faculty members within the university community; 2) collaboration between the Education Program and local school districts; 3) collaboration between the Education Program and the larger communities of people; and 4) a strong connection made between theory, research and practice” (p. 3.). After a two-year consultation period, the BC College of Teachers approved the two-year post-Baccalaureate degree program for elementary and secondary streams and the elementary program started in 2002 followed by the secondary program in 2003.

Adhering to the 1993 Teaching Profession Act and the subsequent 2003 Teaching Profession Amendment Act (BC Ministry of Education, 2003), the University of Northern British Columbia, along with all teacher education programs in the province, provided Attainment of Standards Reports (ASRs) to the British Columbia College of Teachers. These reports outlined the criteria on which teacher candidates would be recommended for certification. A recent fact finder report, however, indicates that the BCCT may no longer be serving its original mandate and could be disbanded in the near future as “it is not currently regarded as an independent and credible entity” (Avison, 2010, p. 32).

Trinity Western University and Malaspina University-College (now, Vancouver Island University) agreed to be the first institutions to submit their ASRs to the BC College of Teachers (Kitchenham, 2006; Kitchenham & O’Neill, 2006). Shortly after that time, the remaining institutions submitted their respective Attainment of Standards Reports. The University of Northern British Columbia’s School of Education concentrated on the BCCT Standards 1 to 10 (of 13 standards in total) as evaluation criteria for recommending their teacher candidates for
certification (BCCT, 2004). In 2007, UNBC’s Attainment of Standards Report was approved by the British Columbia College of Teachers. In 2008, the BCCT revised the standards and reduced the number of standards that teacher candidates had to meet from the original 13 to eight standards for professional educators. As part of the university’s requirements, the School of Education undertook an internal review of its two Bachelor of Education programs and its two Master of Education programs. As the BCCT required an external review of the teacher education program within five years of its inception, the School of Education invited them to conduct an external review of the Bachelor of Education programs following the internal review. Additionally, two Deans of Education were invited to evaluate the Master of Education programs so that they could report their findings to the university. This article discusses our experiences of both the internal and external reviews.

The Review Process

Internal Review

In the Fall of 2009, I was asked to conduct an internal review, in consultation with the Chair of Undergraduate Education and the Chair of Graduate Education, of both programs and to prepare a report to be presented to the faculty members in the Spring of 2010. The Chairs asked all professors and instructors to prepare material that would assist me in the process and to complete any surveys that were requested. Additionally, I created, implemented, and analyzed surveys for the present undergraduate students and for cooperating teachers who sponsor our undergraduate students in their field experiences.

Instructor binders. As part of the internal review for the Bachelor of Education program, all tenured and tenure-track professors and term and sessional instructors were asked to indicate which of the BCCT Standards they were meeting in their courses. This information was recorded in binders for each course. All 400-level courses adhered to the original 13 standards while all 300-level courses adhered to the revised eight standards. The tables below summarize the percentage of courses that met each standard.

It is clear that the Year Three (300-level) instructors stress the importance of meeting the affective needs of the children so that the students see the benefits of caring for the pupils in their respective classes (Standard One), of being well prepared to plan, teach, and assess their students (Standard Five), of possessing a broad range of knowledge to prepare to teach and to implement teaching strategies (Standard Six), and of acquiring a strong knowledge of child development and how to apply that knowledge in the teaching and learning process (Standard Three). It should be noted that the Year Three courses encompass the first two semesters of the four-semester teacher education program so that there is a great deal of foundational work that is conducted with the students.

The Year Four faculty also ensured that the students learned about understanding children’s growth (Standard Six), have a broad knowledge base from which to draw when planning and teaching (Standard Three), have a good grasp of effective pedagogical techniques (Standard Seven) and promising practices in assessment (Standard Eight). It should be noted that the Year Four courses encompass the final two semesters of the four-semester teacher education program so that there is a great deal of teacher preparation work that is conducted with the students so that they are fully prepared for their final 10-week practicum.
Table 1

Percentage of Year Three (300-level) Courses Meeting Specific BCCT Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR 3</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1 Educators value and care for all students and act in their best interests.</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 Educators are role models who act ethically and honestly.</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3 Educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development.</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4 Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and communities in schools.</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5 Educators implement effective practices in areas of classroom management, planning, instruction, assessment, evaluation and reporting.</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6 Educators have a broad knowledge base and understand the subject areas they teach.</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7 Educators engage in career-long learning.</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8 Educators contribute to the profession.</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Percentage of Year Four (400-level) Courses Meeting Specific BCCT Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR 4</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1 Professional educators value and care for all children, acting at all times in the best interests of the children</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 Professional educators demonstrate an understanding of the role of parents and the home in the life of students.</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3 Professional educators have a broad knowledge base as well as an in-depth understanding about the subject areas they teach.</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4 Professional educators are knowledgeable about Canada and the world.</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5 Professional educators are knowledgeable about BC’s education system.</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6 Professional educators understand children’s growth and development.</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7 Professional educators implement effective teaching strategies.</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8 Professional educators apply principles of assessment, evaluation and reporting.</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9 Professional educators act as ethical educational leaders.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10 Professional educators engage in life-long learning.</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11 Professional educators have a responsibility to students.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S12 Professional educators have a responsibility to parents and the public.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13 Professional educators have a responsibility to the profession.</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ascertain an overall sense of how the faculty was meeting the standards, I combined the original 13 and the revised eight standards into three broad themes: Background Knowledge, Professional Qualities, and Capacity to Teach (see Table 3). In this way, one could see how much emphasis was being placed on these three important parts to training an effective teacher.
Table 3

Percentage of Year Three (300-level) and Year Four (400-level) Courses Meeting Specific BCCT Standards by Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Revised</th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Knowledge</td>
<td>S3, S6</td>
<td>S3, S4, S5, S6</td>
<td>33.1/41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualities</td>
<td>S1, S2, S4, S7, S8</td>
<td>S1, S2, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13</td>
<td>49.0/37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to Teach</td>
<td>S5, S7, S8</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.8/21.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, one-third of the Year Three teaching faculty stressed the importance of acquiring significant background knowledge to plan effective lessons while approximately 40% of the Year Four teaching faculty maintains that emphasis. Additionally, almost half of the Year Three instructors ensure that the students have a strong understanding of the key qualities required to be a professional educator and over 35% of the Year Four instructors do the same. Not surprisingly, approximately 18% of the Year Three instructors create a strong capacity to teach for their students since the teacher-candidates have a two-week practicum in their second semester of the program and do not teach 100% of the time. Interestingly, a mere one-fifth of the Year Four tenured and tenure-track professors and term and sessional instructors emphasize the skills needed to plan, implement, assess, evaluate, and report on the teaching process given that the final two semesters are meant to prepare students for the final 10-week practicum.

Table 4

Types of Assignments Used for Evidence in Year Three (300-level) Courses by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit plans</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article review</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals, Essays</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation, Report</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article analysis, Curriculum Map, Role Play, Poster, Debate, Book Review,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Rules, Practicum Debrief, Management Plan, Group Project,</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, Diagnostic Assessment, Pamphlet, Board Game, Reflection</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, all tenured and tenure-track professors and term and sessional instructors were asked to indicate what artifacts (assignments) students were asked to produce to meet those selected standards. This information was also recorded in binders for each course. Table 4 and Table 5 summarize those artifacts as reported by the teaching faculty.

The traditional assessments of knowledge and mastery were evident in the assignments required by Year Three teaching faculty: tests (20.9%), lesson plans (15.4%), unit plans (10.9%), case studies (10.0%), essays (3.6%), research article reviews (5.5%), and oral presentations (2.7%). What was also evident was that there was clear redundancy across the courses since 15% of the faculty required lesson plans and 11% asked for unit plans.

As would be expected, the assignments used by Year Four faculty to meet the BCCT standards were more closely related to preparing teacher-candidates to enter the teaching profession. To wit, reflection was stressed by approximately 16% of the faculty and portfolios by approximately 13% of the instructors. However, the more traditional assignments were also present in the Year Four courses: unit plans (11.6%), tests (8.3%), and lesson plans (7.5%). This finding reinforces the previous comment that there is overt redundancy in the courses as lesson plans and unit plans are over-taught which results in the students being required to repeat assignments across years and across same-semester courses.

**Surveys.** At the conclusion of each academic year, we survey the graduated Bachelor of Education teacher candidates. Additionally, in the Spring of 2010, we surveyed the current students in the Bachelor of Education Program.

Based on these results, it would appear that the students (n = 43) are pleased with their past and present programs. For instance, in Spring 2010, 60% or more of the students believed that the courses had prepared them for the following BCCT Standards: Value and care for all students and act in their best interest; act as a role model who acts ethically and honestly; understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development; value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families, and communities in schools; implement effective practices in planning; implement effective practices in instruction; possess a broad knowledge base; and engage in career-long learning. Conversely, over 30% believed that the course work had not prepared them in relation to the following BCCT Standards: implement effective

### Table 5

*Types of Assignments Used for Evidence in Year Four (400-level) Courses by Percentage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit plans</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional literature analysis</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEPs, Website Review, Planning Binder, Report</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation, Planning Web, Marksheet, Mini-lesson, Course outline</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, Seating plan, Term plan, Discussions, Resumés, Resource Package, Essay</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play, Parent plan</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
practices in assessment; implement effective practices in evaluation; and implement effective practices in reporting.

Similar results were shown for how the students believed the degree to which their field experiences met specific BCCT Standards. For instance, 60% or more of the students believed that the field experiences had prepared them for the following BCCT Standards: Value and care for all students and act in their best interest; act as a role model who acts ethically and honestly; understand the implement effective practices in instruction; possess a broad knowledge base; understand the subject areas you teach; engage in career-long learning; and contribute to the profession. Conversely, over 20% believed that the field experience had not prepared them in relation to the following BCCT Standard: implement effective practices in evaluation, and implement effective practices in reporting.

These results are cause for consideration. Although the School of Education appears to be performing well in meeting most of the BCCT Standards, it is disturbing that over 30% of the 2010 graduating class believed that the course work and over 20% believed that the field experience had not prepared them to implement effective teaching practices. Clearly, more work and discussion needs to occur to ascertain where improvement could be noted.

We also surveyed the cooperating teachers who sponsor our practicum students during their field experiences. Overall, we found that the cooperating teachers believed that the School of Education had prepared the teacher candidates to meet the BCCT Standards.

In particular, 75% or more of the cooperating teachers (n = 37) believed that the School of Education had prepared the students to value children and parents, to plan and teach effectively, and to possess strong background knowledge. They believed that the following BCCT Standards had been met: Value and care for all students and act in their best interest; act as a role model who acts ethically and honestly; value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families, and communities in schools; implement effective practices in planning; implement effective practices in instruction; possess a broad knowledge base; and understand the subject areas you teach. Conversely, only 15% believed that the School of Education had not prepared the students in relation to the following two BCCT Standards: implement effective practices in evaluation, and implement effective practices in reporting.

When we consider how the cooperating teachers believed the degree to which the field experiences prepared the students to meet specific BCCT Standards, there was overwhelming support. Seventy-five percent or more of the cooperating teachers believed that the field experiences had prepared the teacher candidates to meet all eight BCCT Standards: value and care for all students and act in their best interest; act as a role model who acts ethically and honestly; understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development; value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families, and communities in schools; implement effective practices in planning; implement effective practices in instruction; implement effective practices in assessment; implement effective practices in reporting; possess a broad knowledge base; understand the subject areas you teach; engage in career-long learning; and contribute to the profession. Based on these results, the School of Education is preparing our teacher candidates to meet the BCCT Standards in their field experiences.

**Teaching and research strengths.** All faculty members were asked to comment on the teaching and research strengths as well as the areas of improvement in teaching and research. These comments were collated and summarized based on the criterion of whether a similar comment was made by at least five faculty members. Table 6 summarizes teaching and Table 7 summarizes research strengths and areas of concern.
Table 6

Teaching Strengths and Areas of Concern for the UNBC School of Education Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas of Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One faculty member received UNBC Excellence in Teaching Award.</td>
<td>1. Many concepts taught over and over in very similar courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Four faculty members have been nominated for the UNBC Excellence in Teaching Award.</td>
<td>2. Same content is taught to elementary and secondary students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Majority of faculty maintains membership in the BC College of Teachers.</td>
<td>3. Too many courses are taught by sessional instructors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Faculty ensure that courses reflect current trends and research in their respective areas of expertise.</td>
<td>4. More tenured faculty need to teach in the undergraduate program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Strong relationships with students.</td>
<td>5. Stronger connection to standards-based teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sessional instructors bring recent experience.</td>
<td>6. A stronger connection between present practices of assessment in the school system and what is taught in the BEd Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mentoring of junior faculty members.</td>
<td>7. Lacking in tenure-track positions, especially at regional campuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. High rate of graduation in the BEd and MEd programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Overall, faculty receives above 4.0 (out of 5.0) for their course evaluations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A major strength in the School of Education is the teaching abilities of its faculty members. The vast majority of the instructors and professors receive teaching evaluations above 4.0 (out of 5.0) in both undergraduate and graduate classes. Several faculty members have been nominated for the university’s Excellence in Teaching Award and one faculty member received the prestigious award, becoming the first School of Education recipient since its inception. Almost all comments stated as a teaching strength were also re-worded as an area of concern. For instance, many members indicated that their courses reflected current trends and research in their respective areas of concern but others indicated that there was a mismatch between what instructors and professors taught as assessment practices and what was reflected in the schools. Additionally, over 60% of the undergraduate and graduate courses are taught by term and sessional instructors which is a definite strength given the recency of their teaching experience; however, many respondents indicated that more courses needed to be taught by tenured and tenure-track members who bring research and service experience to the teaching and learning processes. Lastly, the overwhelming majority of the faculty commented on the redundancy in the undergraduate courses as so much content was taught over and over across the courses and identical content was taught in the elementary as the secondary stream. Both of these last points were commented on in the aforementioned student survey and in the binder content.
Table 7

*Research Strengths and Areas of Concern for the UNBC School of Education Faculty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas of Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Three SSHRC grants in three years by three separate faculty members as principal investigators.</td>
<td>1. Majority of publications are authored by four or five faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. One faculty member received the Excellence in Research Award.</td>
<td>2. Some faculty members have one or two refereed publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Three Full Professors and four Associate Professors.</td>
<td>3. Majority of federal funding/grants comes from a few faculty members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The entire School of Education faculty publishes four to five refereed publications per year.</td>
<td>4. No defined research culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Majority of faculty members are tenured.</td>
<td>5. No real expectation to publish more than one article every few years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Most faculty have strong research backgrounds</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7. Majority of graduate faculty supervise project and thesis students in the program and a few faculty members serve on doctoral committees.</td>
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<td>8. A few faculty members have served as External members or External Examiners on thesis defenses at UNBC and other universities.</td>
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<td>9. Graduate students and faculty have co-published in refereed journals and books, and co-presented at learned conferences.</td>
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<td>10. Faculty members have been invited to serve as external program reviewers for other universities.</td>
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The School of Education has no real defined research culture. A few faculty have begun the process of establishing a strong culture; however, many faculty members are stretched due to the rapid expansion of the graduate programs so that they do not have a great deal of time to devote to research. There are, however, definite strengths within the program since one faculty member received the institutional Excellence in Research Award and became not only the first School of Education member to receive the honour but also the first UNBC faculty member ever to receive this award and the Excellence in Teaching Award. Additionally, the majority of graduate faculty members supervises Master of Education students, serve on Master of Education committees or on committees in other disciplines, and a few serve on doctoral
committees. As well, a few have either co-published with their graduate students refereed journal articles and book chapters or co-presented with their graduate students at learned conferences. Additionally, some faculty members have received national competitive research grants which are difficult to obtain in the Social Sciences in Canada. There are definite concerns within the School of Education. Most notably, most publications are attributed to four or five faculty members which represents about one-third of the tenured and tenure-track faculty and most research grants are received by the same faculty members. Additionally, a few tenured faculty members have four or five publications.

**External Review**

In April 2010, a group of external reviewers came to the campus to evaluate the undergraduate and graduate programs. Three representatives from the British Columbia College of Teachers concentrated on the Bachelor of Education program and two Deans of Education from two difference Canadian universities spent most of their time evaluating the two Master of Education programs: Multidisciplinary Leadership and Counselling. The School of Education now offers a third program, a Master of Education in Special Education through online delivery but it was under development at the time of the external review. All five group members received an advance copy of the internal review document.

The BCCT group members scrutinized the internal review document and binders that each faculty member was asked to complete that included how he or she met a specific standard with example artifacts and assessment criteria. Additionally, the members met with the undergraduate teaching faculty in a town hall meeting format. The BCCT committee also had meetings with our regional campus on which an elementary program is offered every two years, with cooperating teachers, and with present students.

The Deans of Education also examined the pertinent sections of the internal review document and met with a small group of graduate teaching faculty. They were primarily interested in how many faculty taught graduate-level courses and how many supervised graduate students or served on graduate committees. Additionally, the two members met with present and past graduate students to ascertain their perspectives on the Master of Education program. Lastly, they met with individual faculty members who preferred to share their comments in a more personal setting.

In this next section, some of the results from the external review will be presented. It should be noted that much of the information gathered by the external review members was kept confidential.

**Conclusion**

At the time of writing, the British Columbia College of Teachers Committee report had not been given to the School of Education. Since the external review of the undergraduate program was the first of all the teacher education programs in BC, the committee argued that they needed more time to establish a standardized formatting method. Almost 12 months later appears to be a great deal of time; however, the School of Education acknowledges that the time allotted is reasonable since all of the committee members are working on the report on a volunteer, part-time basis since each member has her own responsibilities associated with the College of Teachers.
The two Deans of Education were able to produce a report within weeks of conducting their part of the external review. Overall, they believed that the UNBC School of Education was performing well. They did, however, have 10 clear recommendations which included: (1) conduct Regional Advisory Committee more frequently, use Aboriginal protocols, and follow up on the suggestions to ensure that their voices were heard; (2) conduct online surveys for both undergraduate and graduate programs for each semester, conduct exit surveys when all graduates complete their respective programs, and share the results of all surveys for pertinent faculty members to make program delivery model changes, if needed, and ensure that the students know of the changes so that their voices can also be heard; (3) develop a clear research culture in concrete ways such as dedicated research space for graduate students, development of a visiting scholar program, and use distance technologies to attend research conferences; (4) utilize the model used in the regional offering of the Bachelor of Education program, in which strong partnerships are established with the neighbouring Aboriginal communities; (5) actively recruit Aboriginal faculty and students; (6) Indigenize all aspects of the undergraduate and graduate programs rather than relying on specific courses or outside agencies; (7) use symbols, language, and art to welcome overtly Aboriginal undergraduate and graduate students; (8) train all faculty to utilize e-learning and blended learning delivery models and use the existing expertise of the one faculty member who is an expert in distance delivery models rather than rely solely on the cost-prohibitive delivery to regional sites; (9) conduct faculty meetings more regularly than once a semester and invite upper administrative officers to the meetings so that faculty can voice their opinions and concerns related to tenure and promotion accommodations, teaching in remote communities; and distance technologies; and, (10) have faculty work with other disciplines and departments in an effort to refresh their research perspectives.

It should be noted that the faculty members were asked to comment on the Dean’s report at the annual retreat in August 2010. Those comments were given to the undergraduate and graduate program chairs to be incorporated into their mandatory report written in response to the External Review recommendations and given to the Dean and Provost. At the time of writing, that report had not been completed; however, some elements had been incorporated into the School of Education faculty members’ teaching, scholarship, and service. Most notably, we have established a research office with dedicated space for graduate students and research assistants; we have established an online Master of Education in Special Education that is delivered primarily through Elluminate to 20 students across two provinces and one territory; several faculty members have received monies to investigate community-university partnerships involving Aboriginal communities; we have hired an Aboriginal Coordinator of Aboriginal descent and have incorporated Aboriginal ways of knowing in some courses; and some research collaborations have begun with other disciplines within and without the university.

In the end, this programmatic navel gazing has made us a stronger faculty and has strengthened our undergraduate and graduate programs. We see where there are redundancies in our Bachelor of Education program and acknowledge that our Master of Education programs have expanded at a faster rate than we can handle. Overt changes have not occurred across both undergraduate and graduate programs but we have started the process for change. Certainly, the innovative on-line Master of Education in Special Education is a step in the right direction since it has incorporated many of the changes included in the Deans’ Report and is coordinated by the person who received both the Excellence in Teaching and the Excellence in Research Awards and is taught by several strong teachers and researchers.
References


Using A Smartboard Smartly:
Considering Digital Tools for Interaction, Collaboration and Storytelling

Susan Crichton
University of Calgary

Jennifer McCaffrey and Barb Brown
Calgary Catholic School District

Abstract

This paper shares a book project completed in an urban Grade 1 school. While the project itself is not unique, the authentic use of multiple technologies to support the process to develop it is. The terms interaction, collaboration, and student ownership are often used to describe inquiry-based teaching and learning, and the project described here illustrates what they might mean in actual practice. Further, this paper situates the book project within the literature of Information, Communication Technology (ICT) and arts based instruction, providing an example of classroom-based technologies to enhance teaching and learning.

Interactive whiteboard technologies, typically Smartboards™, have become standard equipment in many schools. As early as 2005, school boards have purchased these devices as flagships in technology integration plans, almost suggesting the number of interactive boards in classrooms somehow reflected innovation and adherence to reformed or changed teaching practices.

However, by 2010 educators were consistently questioning how “smart” these purchases actually were, asking (1) what had been gained or lost as these boards took increasingly large amounts of privileged real estate in overcrowded classrooms, and (2) whether teaching and learning had actually been improved. It was the desire to answer these questions that brought the authors of this paper together. Susan was delivering the keynote address for a Reggio-Inspired Educators conference in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and Jennifer was offering a session entitled “Using Your Smartboards™ Smartly!” Susan attended Jennifer’s session, hoping to see an example of the power of interactive whiteboards in actual practice. It was there the synergy behind this paper was born.

Literature Review

When Papert (1980, p. viii) suggested a new perspective for education research by “creating the conditions under which intellectual models will take root,” he recognized the computer as “the Proteus of machines. Its essence is its universality.” He further suggested computers could “be carriers of powerful ideas and the seeds of cultural change [further] they can help people form new relationships with knowledge” (p. 4). Thirty years later, educators are still grappling with what this might look like in classroom and what would be required to foster and sustain these relationships in a thoughtful, scalable way.

Along the way teachers have seen computers move from lab settings directly into their
classrooms, along with a variety of peripheral devices to support teaching and learning – interactive whiteboards among the most pervasive and obvious. While researchers (Schmid, 2010; Schrum & Levin, 2009; and others) have suggested educational technologies have the potential to change teacher practices and support the educational reform called for both nationally and globally (ISTE, n.d.), the evidence has been spotty and inconsistent. Cuban’s 2001 work, Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom, shone light on the problem, suggesting information communication technologies (ICT) were not making the significant impacts they had promised.

Therefore, educators found themselves in a conundrum – on one hand they were being called upon to embrace educational reforms and integrate ICT to support and enhance teaching and learning, and on the other hand they were searching for evidence of the value of their investment in ICT infrastructure – in terms of time, physical space in the classroom, and impact on dwindling discretionary budgets. Specifically, if teachers were participating in professional development activities focusing on computer software and hardware what were they not learning about or honing their skills on? If interactive whiteboards were taking up an entire classroom wall and desktop computers were sitting on table tops, to what degree was student work not being displayed or manipulatives not out and available for student use? If money was being spent on ICT, in what other areas of the curriculum was funding reduced – art materials, sporting equipment, musical instruments?

Further, researchers probed the use of ICT to support “personalizing learning - differentiating the curricula, including expectations and timelines, and utilizing various instructional approaches so as to best meet the needs of each individual” (Schmid, 2010,¶10), recognizing technology “is the conduit for teachers to move to a learning approach that features materials developed for each individual student.” Personalization is embedded in most contemporary educational reform in North America, but when coupled with the ICT skills required to support it, the teachers’ workload increases, often causing some teachers to revert to traditional practice and use the ICT for rather ordinary teaching and learning activities.

Since 1998, there has been a recognized set of ICT standards for students, teachers, and administrators that form a baseline of necessary knowledge, skills and abilities (ISTE, n.d.); however, most school jurisdictions wrestle to adopt them universally across their systems and have been embraced by all teachers in every classroom. Inherent in the ISTE standards is the understanding that ICT must be imbedded within daily teaching and learning rather than being sidelined to the occasion trip to the computer lab. Initiatives such as one-to-one laptop projects for both teachers and students (Pegler, Kellew Wyn, & Crichton, 2010; Maine International Center for Digital Learning, 2007) have gone along way to making ICT more accessible and ICT integration into teaching and learning more possible.

Art educators (Eisner, 1998), specifically those in Reggio-inspired schools, have been early adopters of ICT. Their philosophy is based in the deep understanding that children must have a voice in their own learning and that they must experience the world around them, documenting their learning through a range of materials (e.g. art, media, etc.). Increasingly, they are recognizing the potential of technology to document learning in meaningful ways, stressing the importance of making learning visible (Project Zero, 2003). “Documentation is an essential component of the Reggio Emilia philosophy and is vital to the process of on-going professional development for educators there. It situates teachers in the position of researchers of themselves and of the children whose lives they share” (Tarr, 2010, p. 10). Reggio Inspired schools are typically considered arts based schools, but those who have seen them in action.
would suggest they are vanguards of reformed education while building from the work started in Reggio, Italy after World War II.

The project shared in this paper is offered as an example of exemplary teaching and is situated in a Reggio-inspired, arts based school in the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) - the largest Catholic School Board in Alberta. CCSD has been operating for more than 125 years, with 106 schools serving approximately 45,000 Catholic students from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Calgary became Canada’s third largest municipality in 2006, and the CCSD is committed to addressing the diverse learning needs of its increasingly multicultural students. CCSD currently operates four schools where the arts form the foundation for all learning and students with unique abilities or interests in the arts can congregate and participate in an arts-intensive program. This is consistent with the Alberta’s commitment to charter and alternative schools. The demand for these specialized programs throughout the City of Calgary is high and attracts those students with both unique abilities and a passion for a creative learning environment. CCSD schools specializing in the arts enable students to enhance the depth and breadth of their expression and intuitive response to the fine arts. The integration of fine arts in core curriculum requires highly skilled teachers and has the potential of increasing student engagement, creativity and making learning interactive and meaningful.

While stellar in terms of ICT and curriculum integration, the project shared in this paper is ordinary in terms of the teaching and learning going on in this teacher’s classroom on a daily basis. Jennifer has been teaching for eight years, and would be classified as an expert teacher (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch & Enz, 1999) – one who understands their students’ learning needs and effortlessly adapts their teaching style to support them.

Project Description – Jennifer’s Description

The grade ones and I went to the library for our weekly visit. Our wonderful librarian had chosen the book *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems to read to the children. I had never even heard of the book or read it. The children were entranced. They loved the story about the little girl and her bunny, and they were really excited about the photographs and the illustrations in the book. They immediately told me that they wanted to make a book like *Knuffle Bunny*.

I quickly got to thinking about the lovely community in which our school resides. We’re fortunate to be an inner city school, in the community of Bridgeland, with some gorgeous homes and business in the immediate area that are rich with local history. I’d been ruminating on an idea to incorporate this into our curriculum with community but had been unsure how to approach this. I was thinking of ties with our Social Studies curriculum. In Grade One we study community and our local history and compare urban and rural areas, and I thought an activity building from the *Knuffle Bunny* story might be a great way to demonstrate what we thought was important to make up a community.

I quickly decided to take a field trip to Bridgeland and have the children photograph the urban area that is something similar to the New York City vibe reflected in the photographs illustrating *Knuffle Bunny*. Further, I had to consider how to get the children’s drawings onto the photographs, at it was the integration of hand drawn pictures with the black and white photographs that give the *Knuffle Bunny* illustrations their charm. I decided that we would use the Smartboard™ as a combined light table and collaborative drawing surface. This would allow the children to view all their photographs, edit them, organize them into a sequence, and then
draw their images directly on top of the images. With the help of a few parents and armed with cameras, we headed off to Bridgeland. The only direction I gave the students was to take pictures of what they thought was important to illustrate our community. Some of the parents were surprised that I had the children handle the cameras themselves, but I was confident all would be well. The children had been previously exposed to cameras, and they already knew how to work with them. We’d covered that earlier in the year.

The group I was with took pictures of the skyline of downtown Calgary. One of the boys asked about the sign memorializing the Calgary General Hospital, which had been imploded several years ago. While I was explaining what imploding meant, another boy got excited and started shooting pictures in a different direction. He had seen a green balloon floating over the field, and he followed the balloon’s progress through his lens, taking pictures until it floated over the buildings behind us and disappeared into the sky. The other children with him encouraged him and helped him with a running monologue of the balloon’s journey. They ran after the balloon and tried to catch it but no luck. Philosophically, they shrugged it off, saying the balloon was too high and started chasing shadows instead.

**The Process**

The next day, I loaded all the pictures onto the laptop and we reviewed them together. The children talked about different parts of the trip and told each other why they took different pictures. When we got to the pictures of the balloon, the student who had taken those pictures jumped up. He was very excited about the balloon and told the other students the story of what had happened. They thought it was really exciting and wished he could have caught it. Then one of the students said, “That’s what our story should be about!”

We reviewed the elements of a story at the grade one level. They began to shout out ideas and plots. We voted for the individual story elements, and the majority ruled. The children sequenced the story outline on the Smartboard™. We completed the outline for our story, and they chose the title, *The Boy and the Balloon*.

The next day the children sorted through all of the photographs and decided which ones would be in our book. Then they put them in order on the Smartboard™, correlating them with their story outline. I converted those photos to black and white images as the children wanted their pictures to look like the ones in *Knuffle Bunny*. Then I created a file in Notebook – the Powerpoint-like software included with Smartboards™. Notebook let me create a page for the text and a page for illustration, and it basically provided the organizational structure for the finished book.

Our next major step was to draw on top of each of the photographs. As a class, we had decided that Nicholas was our main character – the boy with the balloon, but we needed to decide what he would look like. The children were insistent that Nicholas must be easily identifiable on each and every page of the book or it wouldn’t make sense to the readers. The challenge was to decide how to do that. Interestingly, the children never suggested that only one person would do the illustrations. Instead, they decided that they should all contribute to the
process. I suggested that everyone draw a Nicholas, and then they could decide as a class what
to make him look like from there.

They all drew their own Nicholas, and we reviewed them as a class. Overwhelmingly,
they choose one of the girls’ drawings of Nicholas. The children asked her to show them how to
draw him, and then they would decide which colours to use so he would be the same on each
page. They were insistent that their readers should be able to tell the character was Nicholas
throughout the book.

The girl created the standards criteria for how to draw Nicholas. She went up to the
Smartboard™ and drew her Nicholas. The class voted on the colours to use for his skin, hair,
shirt, shorts and shoes, and she demonstrated to everyone how to draw him. I saved the drawings
and photographs together as one image in Notebook and then exported them into PowerPoint.

I prefer to use PowerPoint for documentation and knew it was easy to insert text and images
together. Moving the images from Notebook into PowerPoint wasn’t as effortless as I had hoped. The
drawn images did not always come over whole and it took a few tries to get them into the PowerPoint.
It was also time consuming, as I had to copy one Notebook page at a time into PowerPoint. A further
frustration was that we could not edit the content of the previous Notebook pages. However, it was
easier to insert additional pages and type in the story in PowerPoint. The children dictated the dialogue to
me for each page, and I typed it in front of them, projecting it on the Smartboard™.

Our last step was to create a cover page with our title and names. Despite having the
official title of The Boy and the Balloon, we always referred to the book as the Nicholas Book
within our class as he has become part of our classroom. Later, when I told the children I was
sharing their work with other educators, they asked the girl who had designed Nicolas to make a
short video using Notebook, illustrating how to draw Nicholas – just in case anyone else wanted
to know how.

I thought it very important for every child to have a copy of the book with her / his name
on the cover. Fortunately, our parent council generously agreed to fund the printing costs. The
book was quite expensive to print as all sixty pages are in colour with a spiral binding. When Susan and I came in contact and she asked for a copy for the University Library, the children
were over the moon. As one student said, with a megawatt smile plastered to her face, “How
many six year olds get to have a book at the University?” Susan “paid” for her copy of the book
by providing each author with a pencil with a carved African animal on it. One of the boys had
requested a lion when she had asked what they might want in terms of compensation.

Reflections - Jennifer

It’s fundamentally important to me to allow the children to guide our projects as much as
possible. There are, of course, constraints within the curriculum and other realities of our day,
but I try to listen to the students, and frame the project work around their interests and needs.
When it comes to story writing, I avoid prompts or story starters. Experience has shown me that
children write rich stories when they are based on their experience. I follow the old adage - write
what you know. While many adults would expect the children to write a story that had a
tale, happy ending, it was not true in The Boy and the Balloon. In their story, Nicholas
didn’t catch the balloon, which was real to the children and reflective of their experiences.

As part of my pedagogical philosophy, I believe it is important for children to have
ownership of their classroom. We build the bulletin boards slowly throughout the school year,
filling them with the children’s work. Much of the space is used for documentation – pictures,
writing, sketches, observations and recorded conversations of the children’s experiences and
learning processes.

The children have input as to where the furniture is placed in the classroom, and they are
given access to all the objects that fill our classroom. Vases of rocks and shells, mirrors and bird
nests are put at their level and they are encouraged to explore them and make sense of their place
in our classroom environment. They feel it is their classroom, and they immediately tell visitors
that. They feel pride in their work and how it is displayed. The pride they expressed in the
Nicholas book project affected me as an educator. Technology made it possible for the children
to be creative in ways that produces authentic, quality work. The technology contributed to
shaping their personal identities as writers and allowed collaboration and interactions in ways
that would previously have been impossible or very difficult, expensive and / or time consuming.

Technology is an important part of my curriculum. I integrate it whenever possible, and
the children are familiar with the tools and software we have in our class. We use digital
cameras from the first days of the school year, and the children learn to edit those photos. We
use slideshows to reflect upon our class experiences following field trips, classroom visits and
inquiries.

I try to use technology in context. During the completion of the Nicholas book project,
the children used digital cameras to take the pictures, and they worked with the images in a
slide show format, displayed on the Smartboard™, to organize them and make editing choices.
The Smartboard™ was used to design Nicholas and then to illustrate the photographs - this was
very purposeful and well considered, recognizing the power and potential of each piece of
technology. We could not have achieved the same book without using appropriate technologies
– both hardware and software.

Had we done the drawings by hand, it would have been very difficult for the children to achieve a consistent
Nicholas on every page. This was very important to them. Further, it was essential to me that all the children
have an active role in the collaborative project – truly there was no token participation. I know the standards
criteria created by the girl who designed Nicholas would have been very difficult to duplicate on paper for six year
olds. Also, it would have been challenging, to say the least, to have them get the perspective right with their
drawing to put on top of the photos. This also was a critical piece of their learning. If Nicholas
was climbing the stairs, the vantage point had to be different from the perspective required when
Nicolas was sitting on the bench with his mother. The children recognized this and used the
affordance provided by the interactive
whiteboard to accomplish this task. They could make the edits and corrections, as both they and the group felt were necessary.

The immediacy of the technology was important too. Children can look at their photos right after they take them. Then they can use the computer to crop them or adjust the images. It takes only minutes to upload pictures for the children to view. There is a convenience as well – brainstorming onto the interactive whiteboard and exporting that as a document, allowed me to type the story directly from the brainstorming into PowerPoint. We could then add the photographs relatively effortlessly and efficiently. Because this work was completed on the board in front of the children, they were involved in every part of the work – both the process and product were transparent to them.

**Reflections - Susan**

By the time I became involved in the project, the book was complete. As I listened to Jennifer describe this project at the conference, I could hear the passion in her voice and picture the students’ involvement. Equally important, this was not just one project for Jennifer. Because she has the technology right in her classroom, she uses it constantly – it is part of her workflow.

When I visited the classroom and met her students, their pride in their work was evident. They spoke eloquently about Nicholas and their individual roles in the creation of the book. When I paid for my copy of the book, they were delighted but not surprised. They knew they were authors, and they knew they deserved compensation – especially if their book was to have a real home in the University of Calgary library. Our next step will be to have the students come to the University and meet with the librarian who catalogued the book and to see it actually sitting on the shelf.

Since visiting Jennifer and drawing attention to her work, the Calgary Catholic School District has invited her to present professional development sessions to administrators and teachers. Each time the educators receive the work warmly and recognize that this project is an authentic and well integrated use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. They agree that the expenditure of the Smartboard™ and other technologies has been a good investment.

**Conclusion**

As teachers navigate the changing landscape of educational reform, ICT does offer both the promise and potential of innovation. Others can duplicate the project we described in this paper, and we are hopeful that it, and others like it, will be repeated in other classrooms. As teachers become more comfortable with the technologies in their classroom and begin to use them for extraordinary as well as ordinary things, we do believe educational practices will change.

We recognize that this takes time and support and inspiration. We feel teachers need to see authentic, meaningful projects such as *The Boy and the Balloon* and begin to picture themselves doing this work with their students – it is truly only then that teachers and students will own the tools and become confident that they are full participants in an ICT enhanced teaching and learning environment. Once this happens, we can move from the rote use of technologies to simply duplicate ordinary tasks with expensive tools and begin to maximize ICT creative potential.
References


Small Ponds: The challenges facing gifted students in rural communities

Julian Burton
University of Connecticut

Abstract

Gifted students in rural schools often face academic and personal challenges not faced by their urban and suburban counterparts, a result of the unique educational and community environment of rural settings. New technologies and programs have had some success in mitigating the effect of the lack of academic resources and opportunities available to gifted ruralites, but challenges arising from the educational, socioeconomic, and cultural environments of rural communities remain. This paper examines several studies of the educational and affective development of gifted ruralites, with reference to the author's experience as a student and teacher in rural and remote educational settings. It describes, and examines the causes of, the academic and socio-emotional issues facing gifted ruralites. The paper aims to raise teachers' awareness of these issues and link educational theory with in-practice examples that will help rural teachers educate and counsel gifted students in their classrooms.

I attended high school in a small town in southern Alberta, and was encouraged by my teachers to enrol in an International Baccalaureate program when I was fifteen. I declined not for lack of interest, fear of failure, or apprehension about the increased workload, but simply because I did not want to move; the nearest school offering IB courses was a hundred miles away. Six years later, I found myself working as a high school teacher in a small fishing village in Alaska. King Cove was an extreme example of a rural community: a town of 867 people with no road access, two flights away from the nearest city. The town's single school offered a handful of electives taught by inexperienced staff and no academic extracurricular activities, and community programs were nonexistent.

Both of these experiences illustrated to me one of the many competing definitions of "ruralness": that of isolation from the opportunities available in larger communities (Lewis & Hafer, 2007). Rural communities have alternately been described in terms of simple geography (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008), socioeconomic characteristics (Gjetlen, 1982, cited in Lawrence, 2009), and culture (Howley, 1998). Happily, none of these considerations must necessarily conflict; in fact, they can be taken together to create a complete definition of "ruralness" that is helpful in understanding the experience of growing up in rural schools and communities.

Though the educational experience of any student in a rural community is likely to be different in many ways from the experience of his or her urban peers, this difference is perhaps most notable for gifted students. Rural gifted students across the continent often suffer not only from a serious lack of appropriately challenging educational activities, but from cultural and
socioeconomic pressures specific to rural communities which can make the experience of growing up gifted even more challenging than it ordinarily is.

Educational Factors

Gifted children in rural communities, even more than their peers in urban and suburban areas, often face a distinct lack of appropriate educational opportunities; Gentry, Rizza, & Gable’s 2001 study found that elementary and middle school gifted students were far less likely to find challenge or interest in their studies than their urban and suburban peers. There are several reasons for this, the simplest being the financial and logistical challenges involved in providing such opportunities in rural areas. Low student populations mean less funding per school, and yet each school is required to maintain mandated courses. This can make it very difficult for schools to offer specialized options (Howley, Rhodes, & Beall, 2009). Low populations also mean fewer teachers, yet the same mandated curriculum must be taught regardless of the size of the staff. It can be difficult to convince teachers to take on additional responsibilities when they are already overworked by having to fill multiple roles with diminished or nonexistent planning time. Lewis & Hafer (2007) also note that the small faculty sizes of most rural schools make it very unlikely that any teachers on staff will have training or experience in gifted education. Finally, any given exceptionality, including giftedness, may be represented by only a handful of students in a rural school, which can both diminish the perceived need for services and make it untenable to provide differentiation on the same model as that used in larger schools (Luhman & Fundis, 1989).

There are several significant consequences of the lack of academic opportunities for gifted students in rural schools. First, as is always the case when gifted children are chronically underchallenged in school, there is a significant danger of underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2002). This is only intensified by the lack of intellectually stimulating extracurricular activities available to rural students. Gentry et al (2001) found that rural gifted students reported having fewer challenging opportunities and a corresponding lower level of school enjoyment when compared to their urban and suburban peers. Second, several studies (Rimm, 2002; Gross, 2002) have found links between gifted students' emotional well-being and the companionship of peers of similar ability, and it can be difficult, without the aid of gifted programs and academic activities, for bright students to find intellectual peers or friends who share their interests. Finally, a lack of exposure to educational options can translate to a lack of knowledge regarding possible life paths. Lewis & Hafer (2007) note the importance of career education and counselling designed to introduce students to nontraditional career paths they may not otherwise encounter in their education or community.
Socioeconomic Factors

Rural (and especially remote rural) communities tend to have socioeconomic climates very different from those found in urban or suburban communities. Barbara Kent Lawrence (2009) reminds us of the "brain drain" and the constant push-pull bright young ruralites experience: what is socially defined as a successful life often requires the economic mobility and high-status jobs that are available in large cities, at the cost of local roots. Those who choose to stay in local communities not only have to accept a lower economic status and fewer options for their future, but must endure the disapproval of a society that views their choice as underachievement. The emotional distress that the "stay or go" dilemma can create may be further exacerbated by a difference in expectations between family and school; it is not uncommon for rural families to expect their children to remain in the community even as teachers are encouraging them to look elsewhere for opportunity (Howlee, Rhodes, & Beall, 2009).

Demographics reinforce the idea that to stay in a small town is to resign oneself to a life short of one’s potential. In most small towns, the incidence of emigration is highest among young adults, who find themselves attracted to the social and economic advantages offered by urban communities. This demographic process, which has been relatively constant for over half a century, has resulted in rural communities with an age structure characterized by few young adults, decreasing numbers of children, and a large number of older adults (Johnson, 2006). Certainly, I have found that many high school graduates in rural communities in which I have lived – especially those generally seen as having "potential" – left as quickly as they could. Most were gone for good; as Howley, Rhodes, & Beall (2009) note, the majority of young people who leave rural communities never return.

It would be wrong to suggest, of course, that the social idea that talented people can only forge successful lives in the big city is completely devoid of any factual basis. Howley (2009) argues that the social definition of success as requiring a "professional" career may need to be adjusted; however, it is difficult to argue the fact that there are fewer opportunities in rural communities for careers which utilize and reward intellectual ability. Rural areas often display a significant homogeneity in the types of careers which are present within the community, and the majority of these careers are traditional in nature and require little or no higher education (Jacobs, Finken, Griffin, & Wright, 1998). I knew students in Alaska who wanted to be mechanics, fishermen, fashion designers, and lawyers, and it was painfully obvious which ones would have to move away to reach their goals. Individuals who do manage to find professional positions in rural communities may find their skills and education do not bring the same returns they would in an urban area (Artz, 2003).
Cultural Factors

Further challenges for gifted students in rural areas arise from issues of culture - both rural culture specifically and the wider culture’s views of rural life and people. Howley (1998, cited in Lawrence, 2009) noted that some cultural values typical of rural communities, such as the importance of family and community and a strong work ethic, are beneficial to education. Others, however, can be detrimental.

Traditionalism and what Lawrence refers to as "fearful dependence on the past" (2009, p 464) can dampen ambitions, particularly for gifted individuals with nontraditional interests. Students interested in career or educational paths that are uncommon in their communities may be discouraged (Lewis & Hafer, 2007). Negative reactions of peers, parents, and community members to young people whose ambitions run counter to prevailing norms can create difficulties for young people not only in making important life choices, but in what Barbara Kent Lawrence (2009) refers to as "the process of trying to form a valued self".

This traditionalism can be amplified by other concerns. Gifted female ruralites who choose to pursue male-dominated career paths, for example, can be subject to a double dose of social disapproval for bucking both gender stereotypes and rural traditionalism (Jacobs, Finken, Griffin, & Wright, 1998). The pressure to conform to traditionalist expectations can cause intense stress when planning one’s future. It can also lead to gifted students redirecting their intelligence and creativity toward socially unacceptable and even self-destructive behavior (Sawyer & Delgado, 1995).

There is also a significant cultural component to the "brain drain" phenomenon described earlier. Literature, music, and other popular media continue to provide talented students with the stereotype of the young adult who "escapes" small town life to chase dreams in the big city. High-achieving students also often internalize a desire from within their own communities to see "somebody from a small town make it big" (Carr & Kefalas, 2009, p 37), which can add additional pressure to leave in pursuit of socially-defined career and life success.

The final cultural consideration is that of the common view of rural people and life. Gifted ruralites come from a "subordinate and less valued culture" (Lawrence, 2009, p 468) which serves as a "standard of backwardness" (Howley, 2009, p 537). Rural people are seen as ignorant and unsuited for intellectual pursuits. At one time, it seems, even gifted education professionals felt comfortable describing rural students as "uninformed, lacking in social and learning skills", "provincial", and "[culturally] deprived" (Plowman, 1967, p 4). During my own year at Cornell University, an institution which prides itself on diversity but nonetheless draws half its population from large Eastern cities, I found that many of my peers seemed not to comprehend how a "redneck" who attended a rural public school could have gained entrance to an Ivy League university alongside the prep-school-educated children of urban elites. Lawrence (2009) points out that this negative image of ruralites can easily be internalized as a negative self-image, leading to rural students adopting a fatalistic outlook along the lines of "I can’t achieve more; I’m just a dumb hick".
Conclusions

As Lewis & Hafer (2007) point out, there can be significant benefits to being educated in a rural community, for gifted and non-gifted students alike. Class sizes are often smaller, community memberships more stable, connections with classmates and teachers stronger, and school and town communities more supportive. However, the potential negative effects on gifted young people of the educational, socioeconomic, and cultural environment of a rural area are many, and it is vital that teachers and parents be aware of them. Serving the needs of gifted students from early education through career and university counselling is as important in rural areas as in urban, and the particularities of growing up as a gifted ruralite must be understood if this goal is to be achieved.

References


CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

For

NORTHWEST PASSAGE: Journal of Educational Practices Fall 2011 issue

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1) NORTHWEST PASSAGE CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS - Theme: Preparing teachers for 21st century learning and learners

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Northwest Passage: Journal of Educational Practices, the official peer-reviewed journal of the Northwest Association of Teacher Educators (NWATE), seeks articles for its themed issue on 21st century learning and learners. This issue will be the first time that the journal has produced both a Spring and Fall issue. We are also seeking examples from the field rather than only teacher education. Consider topics and themes below:

1) Mobile learning in the classroom

2) 21st century skills

3) Field experience and supervision in the 21st century classroom

4) Student teaching and 21st century learning

5) The use of technology to enhance the 21st century curriculum

6) Spotlight on 21st century teachers

7) Diversity, Multicultural and Special Education

8) Classroom issues in addressing 21st century skills

9) Teacher Professional Development and 21st century learning and learners

We are interested in promoting an inclusive dialogue and invite submissions from faculty, graduate students, and practicing K-12 teachers and administrators.

PAPERS MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA E-MAIL NO LATER THAN MAY 31, 2011 to Dr. Andrew Kitchenham at kitchena@unbc.ca.

Andrew Kitchenham - Editor

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