ON CHANGING PERSPECTIVE: 
AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS' DILEMMAS

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But if the teacher can think what he is doing in the concrete situations of his life, he must be aware of the conventions used to organize reality. He must be conscious that the “fictions” used in sense making (in the schools as well as outside the schools) are mental constructs, man-made schemata, deserving only “conditional assent.”

Efforts to change our own teaching practice, or to help others do so, are difficult. Much of the difficulty can be traced to the “fictions” or personal constructs we employ to describe and make sense of our work. These fictions or constructs help make sense of our complex work lives, but if relied on too unquestioningly, they limit the range of possibilities we can entertain. Some researchers interested in promulgating changes in schools and schooling acknowledge the importance of teachers’ constructs or beliefs to the change effort. As Olson writes:

Current approaches to school reform stress tighter coupling of system plans and teacher behavior, but ignore dilemmas inherent in teaching which may place limits on efforts to manage teacher behavior. . . . We argue for reform through greater teacher awareness of the nature of their practice and the dilemmas they face in dealing with the diffuse demands of teaching. We argue for a close analysis of how teachers construe the classroom order as a basis for curriculum change and school reform.

A growing body of research now examines teachers’ beliefs and different methods for eliciting these beliefs. Most of this work seems to share Olson’s assumption that only by understanding how teachers view and do their practice can genuine change in schools occur. Indeed, curriculum developers who ignore the demands implementation places on teachers run the risk of having their efforts ignored or compromised. So far, though, we have not thoroughly examined how we can use, or have used, an increased understanding of teachers’ beliefs.

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In this paper, I suggest a way of characterizing teachers' beliefs, however solicited, in a way that can allow a fuller understanding of teachers' practices and more systematic comparison of teachers, as well as provide a clearer focus for change efforts. The impetus for this paper developed after a study that examined the beliefs of six teachers. Two of the teachers, during initial interviews and analyses, seemed to represent two different approaches to teaching. One could be characterized as child centered, the other as task oriented or, to use the dilemma identified by Lampert, psychological versus sociological views of teaching. Yet when my analysis proceeded to an examination of how these teachers organized and conceptualized their teaching activities, they showed far fewer contrasts than I had predicted. My own puzzlement and subsequent readings of others' work have led me to make these suggestions for work with teachers' own understandings.

TEACHING PERSPECTIVE

Studies describing teachers' beliefs as revealed in talk and practice are necessarily complex because the act of teaching and the life of the school-teacher are so complex, are acted on by many external forces, are influenced by history and personality, and involve multifaceted, extended contact with other people who also are affected by any number of forces. Those studying teachers' beliefs must assume that teachers do not act arbitrarily but are guided by the notions or theories-in-use that they have evolved in their lives and work. Some studies treat teachers' beliefs as internal and private structures that exist before action and assume, generally tacitly, that beliefs change little.

"Magdalene Lampert, "How Teachers Manage to Teach: Perspectives on the Unsolvable Dilemmas in Teaching Practice" (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1981)


"For critiques, see Ann Berlak and Harold Berlak, On the Uses of Social Psychological Research on Schooling," School Review 85 (August 1977) 577-588, Jan Nespors, "Issues in the Study of Teachers' Goals and Intentions in the Classroom (Austin, Tex. University of Texas at Austin, Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, 1984)"
Other studies attend much more to the dialectic between thought and action and the evolution of beliefs.

Some studies of teachers' beliefs have reduced the complexity of the enterprise by focusing on beliefs about only a few aspects of teaching. Pearson, for example, focuses on standards for student behavior in school. Bussis and others focus on teachers' organizing priorities. Bauch examines beliefs about teacher control and student participation. These studies are important in detailing the meanings made by teachers. These studies also describe teaching strategies and practices related to the different beliefs examined. In his paper, Pearson begins to explore the issues of "how beliefs interacting with other beliefs can present a coherent pattern of thought and action" and "how beliefs interact with one another," but he does not trace out these relationships to a major extent. The work of Elbaz, Clandinin, and Connelly focuses in depth on a few teachers and seeks to understand the personal beliefs expressed in school practices. The reader of these studies gains an empathic understanding of the teachers and the depth and development of their salient concerns.

One difficulty in reading these varied, excellent studies is that comparing them is hard even when we ignore the different methodologies used to solicit and describe beliefs. Beliefs are construed differently, and beliefs about different aspects of teaching are examined. The approach used by Tabachnick and others, Lampert, and Sharp and Green provides one solution to the problem of conceptualizing teachers' beliefs. These researchers have all used the notion of perspective as developed by George Herbert Mead. This notion does not violate assumptions shared by most of the teacher-beliefs researchers.

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9 James Pearson, "Are Teachers' Beliefs Incongruent with Their Observed Classroom Behavior?" *Urban Review* 17 (No. 2, 1985), 128-146.
12 James Pearson, "Are Teachers' Beliefs Incongruent with Their Observed Classroom Behavior?" *Urban Review* 17 (No. 2, 1985) 143.
15 Magdalene Lampert, "How Teachers Manage to Teach Perspectives on the Unsolvable Dilemmas in Teaching Practice" (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1981).
cited. A perspective is "a coordinated set of ideas, beliefs and action a person uses in coping with a problematic situation." The notion of perspective can thus embrace the different ways of conceptualizing beliefs, recognize the interaction of thought and action, and acknowledge the ambiguities inherent in teaching. Further, in Mead's terms, the person's identity emerges from the integration of "me" and "I." "Me" is essentially a member of a social group and represents the values of the group, while "I" is the force who determines action, making a unique imprint on the environment rather than simply reacting to it. The "I" is continuously involved in on-going action, while the individual becomes aware of self through the objectified "me" which organizes the response of others to the "I." The notion of perspective then recognizes both the role of social conditioning and individual choice.

Also, Tabachnick and others use an analytic scheme that attends to many facets of teaching perspective. In this work, these researchers rely heavily on the dilemma language presented by Berlak and Berlak.

The dilemmas Berlak and Berlak identify cover many aspects of teaching perspective. As they have noted, studies that focus on only a few elements of teaching perspective fail to capture the complexity of the ways teachers talk and think about education. In their work to develop a framework for analyzing extensive interview and observational data, Berlak and Berlak developed a language expressing 16 major dilemmas in education.

Language sharpens perception and understanding of experience, but it simultaneously distorts and obscures. The dilemma language of schooling is an effort to represent the thought and action of teachers as an ongoing dynamic of behavior and consciousness within particular institutional contexts of schools for the young. The dilemmas are not to be conceived as entities that may be physically located either in persons heads or in society. Rather they are linguistic constructions that, like lenses, may be used to focus upon the continuous process of persons acting in the social world.

The 16 dilemmas used by Berlak and Berlak attempt to isolate crucial aspects of schooling debated by the educational community, by society at large, and by individuals. No analytic system can be exhaustive, but the Berlak and Berlak dilemmas do capture major issues that are now important in education and schooling.

A teaching perspective can be revealed in practice and in discussions of practice. Burns and Koziol present evidence from their own and others'
studies to indicate that teachers can and do accurately report on their own instructional practices. Observations, descriptions, and discussions of practice all reveal how teachers resolve dilemmas. Since the dilemmas mark off current issues, all teachers must take positions on the dilemmas, whether or not they do so consciously. Discussion with teachers can make clear some of the deliberations teachers go through to resolve dilemmas. Teachers may resolve dilemmas differently in different circumstances. Also, teachers may not perceive some dilemmas as dilemmas, which will be revealed in their discussion. As the Berlaks demonstrate, teachers may, too, reconceptualize a dilemma in a transformative way so that the two apparently contrasting poles are integrated into a new whole.

In the study that led to my puzzlement, I interviewed teachers about their typical practices. I developed a portrayal of each teacher that each read and corrected if necessary. I then analyzed think-aloud protocols as the teachers read through descriptions of problem situations in classrooms. I used the dilemma language of Berlak and Berlak, supplemented by categories from Bussis and others, and Tabachnick and others, to describe the teachers’ perspectives. The dilemma language proved to be a fruitful analytic tool for me, as it was for the Berlaks. Also, the dilemma language provided a way for structuring studies of teachers’ beliefs or perspectives that allowed for comparisons across studies while still allowing for a wide range of methods and conceptions.

AN ECOLOGY OF PERSPECTIVE

Studies of teachers’ beliefs that seem to end up as primarily descriptive studies, including my own, have continued to haunt me as my commitment to an action research has grown. Too often, a subtle, or not so subtle, judgment seems implied in the categorizations developed in many studies. Also, the descriptions often do not suggest ways to foster the growth and development of teachers’ thinking. We do not end up knowing how teachers could work to widen their spheres of action because we have no knowledge of the constraints that might limit their practice. We do not know why teachers hold a certain belief or use a certain strategy.

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24See, for example, Chris Argyris, Robert Putnam, and Diana Maclain Smith, Action Science (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985), Frederick Erickson, "Mere Ethnography Some Problems in Its Use in Educational Practice," Anthropology and Education Quarterly 10 (August 1979): 182–188.
The dilemma language, used to examine a teacher’s perspective, can begin to explain how that teacher can be assisted in efforts to grow because it can be used to trace out relationships among aspects of the teaching perspective. To visualize the possible interactions among dilemma resolutions, I use a notion borrowed from ecology, the notion of niche. The niche that an organism occupies can be described as an imaginary $n$-dimensional hypervolume. Measurements on each axis of this imaginary figure mark off the conditions needed by the animal. The “space” enclosed in this hypervolume represents the life space of the animal, the range of conditions it can function in and the range of functions it carries out.

We can think of each Berlak and Berlak dilemma as one axis for a 16-dimensional hypervolume. Each dilemma resolution could be plotted on its appropriate axis and the resulting hypervolume would represent the teaching perspective, the range of actions and conceptualizations available to the holder of these resolutions. Probably the major advantage of considering a teaching perspective as analogous to a 16-dimensional hypervolume is that the image reminds us we cannot understand teachers’ practices by knowing their typical resolutions of only a few dilemmas. A perspective results from resolutions of all dilemmas.

It is impossible, of course, to graphically represent an imaginary hypervolume. The principles can be illustrated using simple two-dimensional figures. We can let the horizontal axis of a graph represent Dilemma A versus $a$. If Teacher 1 (Figure 1a) resolved this dilemma toward the $a$ pole, the actions and conceptualizations consistent with the alternative resolution would be unavailable to her, as represented by the horizontal lines through this area. We could let the vertical axis on a graph represent Dilemma $B$ versus $b$. If Teacher 1 resolved this dilemma toward the $b$ pole, the vertical lines indicate the areas of actions or beliefs closed off to her (Figure 1b). When we combine these two graphs (Figure 1c), we see a two-dimensional area representing the space of actions or conceptualizations that Teacher 1 can function within. These actions and conceptualizations are consistent with dilemma resolutions toward the $a$ and the $b$ poles.

We could propose a second teacher, Teacher 2, with contrasting resolutions to these same two dilemmas. His resolutions would be toward the $A$ and the $B$ poles, eliminating actions and conceptualizations typical of $a$ and $b$ resolutions. Figure 2 shows how his resolutions could be visually represented.

The representations, of course, quickly get more complex as we add axes, and the possibilities for conflicts or inconsistencies increase. For example, a typical resolution of one dilemma might prohibit a teacher from acting or thinking consistently with her typical resolution of another dilemma. In that case, typical dilemma resolutions would not form one discrete hypervolume but would create partial volumes with no overlap, indicative of conflicts because no space would be left for the teacher to act consistently with
all her typical resolutions. Seeing teaching perspective in this way also gives us more ways to think of how to assist in change efforts because it helps us to analyze the perspective of a teacher and look for the conflicts that produce dissatisfactions or frustrations.

FIVE DILEMMAS AND TWO TEACHERS

These five dilemmas represent only a fragment of the Berlaks' conception, but they illustrate how to interpret teachers' descriptions of their practices using the dilemma language. The dilemmas chosen are ones that proved particularly useful in explaining observations of two teachers, Alice and Dora.

Whole child versus child as student. This dilemma refers to the realms that the teacher assumes responsibility over. Teachers with a typical whole-child emphasis will concern themselves with the "children's aesthetic, intellectual, physical, social-emotional and moral development." Teachers with a child-as-student resolution will concern themselves primarily with the children's learning of academic school subjects.

Child as person versus child as client. A resolution toward the child as a person means that the teacher relates to the child as a fellow human being, acknowledging their common humanity. The alternative resolution means that the teacher sees the child as a client and the recipient of needed professional services.

Personal knowledge versus public knowledge. On the personal pole of this dilemma, the knowledge viewed as most important is that knowledge related to the student's life. Berlak and Berlak identify a form of this position with such "romantic" educational writers as John Holt or A. S. Neil. A public-knowledge position considers worthwhile knowledge to be knowledge that has developed through time as part of the culture. This knowledge exists separate from the individual student. Public knowledge can be considered either from a humanist or from a basic-skills orientation.

Learning as holistic versus learning as molecular. When we view learning as holistic, we assume that learners actively construct knowledge, arranging individual bits of information into a whole that gives meaning to the elements. When we view learning as molecular, we assume that learning occurs best when learners master carefully sequenced individual bits of information. We assume that once these individual parts are mastered, the learner will automatically grasp the whole.

Learning as individual versus learning as social. To view learning as an individual activity is to consider the encounter between child and subject matter or child and teacher of sole importance to learning. The ideal teaching

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situation, then, would be one teacher for each child. To view learning as social is to consider interaction and discussion among learners as necessary for effective learning.

**Alice and Dora: Contrasting Resolutions**

The teachers' dilemma resolutions discussed here were, of course, tempered by resolutions of other dilemmas not considered. Whenever possible, direct quotes from the teachers are used. The quotes are taken from a portrayal that each teacher had the chance to read and amend as she wished. After my initial interviews with these two teachers, the differences between them seemed large. My analysis of their typical teaching perspectives started with the dilemma resolutions that revealed the most immediately striking differences: whole child versus child as student and child as person versus child as client. Alice viewed her children as students and as clients. Dora viewed her students as whole children and as persons.

**Alice.** Alice had returned to graduate school after two years of teaching, partly, she said, because "I wanted to know what to do with these kids with academic deficits, skill deficits." As she talked about her teaching, she focused on the academic learning tasks the students needed to master and referred only to helping her students learn the required material. She also showed concern for a classroom where students worked diligently and consistently on their assigned tasks. She said, of her first year teaching a combined 5th–6th-grade classroom:

I feel good that, if I didn't do anything else that first year, I managed to keep the 6th-grade boys under control. I think they knew what their limits were, and I think they wanted to work for me.

Alice expressed concern about the kind of teacher she wanted to be. Her words suggest that she saw only two options, presented to her by some external questioner. As she explained it:

The usual question asked is, "Would you rather be a more well-liked teacher, or more effective and not as well-liked because you're a task-oriented teacher?" This is a real familiar thing they put to you. "Would you sacrifice being their favorite teacher in favor of being more academically oriented?" Personality is important because it has a lot to do with how the kids respond to you.

As she described her work, Alice seemed to be trying to be an academically oriented teacher, striving to teach her student the skills vital for their future success.

At the school where she had taught, students were placed into ability groups for instruction in math and reading. Other subjects were taught in the homeroom to students of mixed-ability levels. Alice described her schedule:

In general, morning was the time to work. I knew from 9:00 to 12:00 it was going to be straight work, and it would be work on my part and work on their part to get...
through as much of the material as well and as quickly as we could. The afternoon was a little more low key, for them and for me. We had less paperwork, more discussion, more films. It was a lot more relaxed.

Alice noted that in the afternoon, the teachers often planned activities that might lead to class discussion, but that it was difficult to get pupils to participate, even though they discussed, as she said:

things more of interest to kids, like getting along with friends or drinking. Of course, this was a parochial school, too, where you can get in more moral implications such as “God wants us to be friends.”

The students that she felt she had failed with were the ones who just did not do the required work—the ones she could not motivate. She described her frustrations with one student:

[She] has the abilities but just isn’t putting out. And I don’t know what to do to get her to put out. A lot of it should be coming from her now because there are some things that are hard to teach. It’s hard to teach responsibility, pride in one’s work. I’ve tried more behavior projects with her all year to try to get her to improve her handwriting and classroom work. She just doesn’t think. We’ve tried so many reinforcers, and nothing works.

This is where I have a tendency to put it on the child. I feel I’ve tried as much as I can. Something has to come from her. I’m at the point where I’m getting mad. She has been stagnating the last four months. I feel she is always going to have problems in school. She’ll whip off a paper so fast and not even think about what she’s doing. And I know she can do it.

These quotes reveal Alice’s concern for the child primarily as a student rather than as someone with a life outside school, perhaps with talents and interests not easily demonstrated in school. Alice was concerned that the child master the public knowledge of the required subject matter, or surface curriculum, and learn to behave appropriately in the classroom. She apparently viewed her role as that of the trained professional who helped the child, the client, master the material in the most efficient way possible.

Dora. Dora had returned to graduate school after five years of teaching 3rd grade. It had been a difficult decision for her, and during her first semester of study, she missed teaching acutely. When she talked about her teaching, she remarked:

One thing important to me—reinforced here at college—is the skill of relating with each other. I think their math and reading skills will fall into place. The skills of getting involved in life—I want each child to feel important and be able to do something.

Another aim Dora often mentioned involved helping her students to become more independent, more able to work on their own without constant supervision and feedback from her. She valued students who tried to work
Debora J Trumbull

out a problem on their own instead of asking her for help each time they had trouble. Related to the aim that students feel good about themselves, Dora worked to decrease competition in her classroom. She worried about its negative effects on the successful and the unsuccessful. She also referred to incidents when she had worked to help her 3rd-grade students be considerate of others' feelings.

She explained that she worked hard to relate to each of her students. To further the development of these relationships, she tried to learn more personal things about each of her students. She mentioned only one student she thought she had failed: "I couldn't reach that child. I just tolerated her. It's kind of a goal for me to reach every child."

Dora supplemented work on the public knowledge of the required curriculum by reading from, and organizing events around, the book series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. As she said, "Every classroom has a theme, and I use the theme of Laura Ingalls Wilder."

Dora seemed much more open to viewing her pupils as whole children than was Alice. Dora was concerned about her students' feelings and their recognition of each others' needs and feelings. She worked to help them learn to work independently of her. She related to her students not as clients but as fellow human beings who would share an interest, hobby, or enjoyment with her. Therefore, she tried to discover shared areas with each student. Dora believed it was important for her students to learn proper classroom conduct, but as she described the rules for classroom conduct, they were designed to allow the classroom to function smoothly. Also, she made efforts to involve the students in determining rules and punishments.

The contrasts between these two teachers clearly relate to the first two Berlak and Berlak dilemmas listed. Alice viewed the children she worked with as students: Her concerns were for proper school behavior and the accomplishment of prescribed academic tasks. She tended to see herself as the accomplished professional who would use all her skills and strategies to help the student-client. Dora expressed more interest in the whole child and worked to relate to the children as persons, not as clients.

While conducting the interviews, even before I began formal analyses, I was struck by the differences between the classrooms these two women described. As I began detailed analyses, I expected to find continuing differences between the two teachers' described practices. But I did not find nearly as many differences as I had predicted. As I worked through the analyses, it was clear that resolutions of other dilemmas had led to many similarities in practice between these two women.

Alice and Dora. Similar Resolutions

When discussing the academic work in their classrooms, both Dora and Alice concentrated on covering the prescribed school curriculum, sharing this
public knowledge (rather than personal knowledge) resolution. For example, when Alice criticized a required text, it was not because the content did not relate to her goals or her students' interests. Rather, her criticism was that experiments in the text required materials or facilities not available in her school. Although Dora expressed interest in knowing about her students as whole children, like Alice she did not refer to using the personal interests of her students to structure instruction. The supplementary work Dora used in her classroom was focused around a book series, also public knowledge, rather than around the private knowledge of her students. Even when Dora described ways she elaborated academic exercises, such as putting on plays based on the reading, she justified these activities because they created a more enjoyable classroom, not because they enhanced cognitive or personal development.

Alice revealed a resolution toward learning as molecular (rather than holistic) when she described how she would plan her teaching in the future. In one of our interviews, she reported that she had learned so much in her master's degree program that she had thought seriously of sitting down to write out all she had learned. Asked what some of these things were, she said in future she would be a better teacher because she would be more organized. I would ask myself exactly what I want to cover in English and how I am going to make sure they know the material. I feel more responsible as a teacher then, more accountable. I can honestly say, "Yes, they know this because here's what I've decided are my criteria for mastery. This means they know it and they've done it."

A lot of what I did before was very arbitrary. "Well, I suppose we know this. Let's go on to the next thing. Let's start verbs." That's the trouble with basal series. They jump from subject to subject, and they never give you a way for finding out if the kids really know it.

Dora's resolution of the learning as molecular versus holistic dilemma was not as clear in her talk. There was some evidence that she tended toward a molecular view when she described math teaching. She individualized instruction by having students cover the required material at their own pace. Dora described a math challenge activity she had planned for the better students. She put some difficult problems on the board and was surprised that all the students, even ones without what she assumed were the necessary prerequisites, worked hard on the problems and enjoyed doing so. She offered no explanation for this event and seemed genuinely puzzled by it. It is the kind of event that a holistic view of learning could explain. Dora also failed to use a learning-as-holistic position to justify her supplementary class activities.

Both Dora and Alice revealed resolutions toward learning as an individual, not social, activity. Neither referred to using group activities to enable students to study, discuss, and evolve meanings through group interactions and deliberations. When either referred to using groups, they either implied a social learning theory (the assumption that the better students would serve
As models for the poorer students) or saw the group as a miniature classroom, with a better student serving as the teacher authority for the poorer students.

As the more detailed examination of these teachers' ideas indicates, their positions on certain dilemmas limited the resolutions they could consider for other dilemmas and constrained the decisions they could make to implement some of their espoused priorities. Dora's strong concern with children as whole people (not just students) and as persons (not clients) was expressed and enacted primarily in her non-academic classroom activities. Her emphasis on public knowledge and individual and, probably, molecular learning evidently prevented her from using cognitive and academic work in the classroom to enact her concerns. Because Dora equated the academic goals with covering the required subject matter and viewed learning as individual and molecular, she was limited to using more traditional didactic teaching strategies and methods. So, although some of her ideas contrasted sharply with Alice's, many of their described teaching practices were similar.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE EFFORTS

Dilemmas do not represent static ideas waiting at bay in the mind, but an unceasing interaction of internal and external forces, a world of continuous transformations. Because they are capable of becoming aware of these internal and external forces that bear on their own de facto solutions, persons are capable of altering their own behavioral patterns and/or acting with others in efforts to alter the circumstances in which they act.27

Not only did these teachers' dilemma resolutions limit their classroom choices, but resolutions of certain dilemmas interfered with their abilities to think through some of their conflicts. Both of these teachers, as the interviews progressed, discussed conflicts they had felt in their teaching. At least some of the conflicts seemed to arise because some of their dilemma resolutions prevented them from implementing their other goals.

Alice and Dora seemed to have made some of their resolutions automatically, apparently, they had not consciously chosen a position based on a recognition and understanding of any dilemma. Thus, they did not seem to connect some of the frustrations they talked about to a conflict between goals or dilemma resolutions. Each of the teachers revealed some conflicts that could have been used as starting points for discussing changes in conceptualization and practice.

Alice

Alice identified two kinds of teachers, the academic task master and the one better liked. She was not entirely sure she liked what she saw as the characteristics of an academically oriented teacher. At one time, she mused:

27Ann Berlak and Harold Berlak, Dilemmas of Schooling (New York Methuen, 1981), p 133
Sometimes I thought I didn’t have the personality for teaching And the reason is—and don’t take this the wrong way—but when I was growing up I was a real high achiever. I was the nice little girl who sat and did everything the teacher said and always got A’s. Quiet—and I don’t want to say smart or bright—but on the ball. I don’t know what it is to fail, to goof off, to be told to do something in the classroom and not be able to do it. So sometimes I have trouble empathizing with kids who are falling behind.

Alice was aware of the difference between classrooms she now worked in and the ones she had experienced as a student. When she was a student, her upper elementary classes were “really under control. Everybody sat at their desks, and we didn’t have a lot of activities as such or a lot of freedom as kids do now. I picked up a lot of that.”

How could I have helped Alice to think in more depth about her frustrations? Her focus on children primarily as students and as clients limited the kinds of interactions she could hold as valid. Combined with her focus on covering the prescribed school curriculum, she created a world that allowed for only a circumscribed range of activities, actions, and interactions. To open up the possibilities, I could have helped Alice to examine some of her dilemma resolutions in detail and realize that other legitimate, justifiable resolutions were possible.

For example, I might have helped Alice to look at children as more than students, to look for a range of reasons for their behavior. When she described children, she used categories that referred only to academic ability, effort, and classroom behavior. Therefore, it was easy for her to view her unsuccessful efforts with them as “failures,” and thus frustrating. If she attended more to children as whole persons, she might learn to look further for reasons children do not do well and in so doing take some pressure off herself. If she could view learning as more holistic and recognize the possible importance of students’ personal knowledge, she might be able to conceive of more strategies to use when working with problem students.

The distinction she made between the two kinds of teacher also left her with almost no options. Not considered directly in the Berlak dilemmas, her view is of learning as work, hard work. One gets no sense that actual learning could be enjoyable work or could involve effort that is itself a reward. Her acceptance of motivation as being largely extrinsic (a resolution not illustrated in this paper) contributed in a subtle way to her conceptualization of learning as hard work.

Dora

When Dora talked about her teaching, she expressed most frustration with her efforts to encourage her students to read more library books. She had employed several different systems, all relying on some form of token to provide extrinsic motivation for the students to read at least a required number of library books. She was dissatisfied with each system but had not yet come
up with alternatives. Her acceptance of the public, prescribed knowledge of the school curriculum and her view of learning as molecular and as individual prevented her from designing a reading program that would present children with books and topics that interested them. From her descriptions of her classroom discipline procedures and the additional fun activities she used, she was able to help her students to develop work patterns that could allow them to work independently of her and in groups. Her resolutions of other dilemmas, though, prevented her from using this resource to reach cognitive, academic goals.

It was ironic that Dora, who worked so hard to get to know each child personally and form a bond with each, did not use her knowledge of her students to adapt the curriculum to their particular interests. It is also ironic that she trusted the children to control many aspects of their classroom behavior and discipline, yet would not give up control of their academic work.

Perhaps in working with Dora I could have helped her to examine in more depth observations she had already made about her students and about her systems to encourage their library reading. She knew much about each student's interests, and she knew how to structure student projects. She could then use the knowledge and skills she had to develop reading projects that would work successfully and not have to depend on some form of token. She seemed to be not fully aware of her own strengths, and because of several dilemma resolutions, she could not see how she could use these strengths for academic learning.

Another facet of the dilemma language described by the Berlaks and evident in my work with other teachers is that transformative resolutions of dilemmas provide teachers with a wider range of options and reduce some of the tensions inherent in teaching. One teacher in my study employed a transformative resolution of the public-knowledge-versus-personal-knowledge dilemmas in her teaching of reading. She organized reading groups around topics of interest to her students, using award-winning books in each topic area rather than basal readers. The students explored areas of interest to them and in the process read much supplemental material relating to their interests. This teacher had no problem motivating her students to read library books.

CONCLUSION

The use of the dilemma language and its theoretical framework presented here by no means exhausts its potential for better understanding teachers and their teaching and developing more effective strategies to assist in teachers' development. This brief account has largely ignored the personal biographies of the two teachers and has not considered the differences between the two women's teaching situations. I have also refrained from speculating on the origins of their teaching perspectives.
I have attempted to examine some of the complexities in teachers' perspectives that affect efforts to help teachers change or resolve conflicts. When we view a teaching perspective as a dynamic complex of beliefs and assumptions about a wide range of aspects, any change to one part of that system will affect, and will be affected by, the other parts of the system. Successful efforts to help teachers change, then, will have to consider the whole teaching perspective.

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This volume explores the premise that various ideals and aims of education form the basis for thinking about the curriculum. Chapters on rationalizing the curriculum, conceptualizing curriculum phenomena, procedures for curriculum making, and explaining and critiquing curriculum practices are accompanied by 19 cases and disputes in which students are invited to confront real world issues keyed to the topics discussed. This is a book to engage the reader, not just to present curriculum theory.