

Are You Doing Inquiry Along These Lines?

ECOLOGY OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

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I would like to relate a critical personal and professional event as a contextual frame of reference for the ideas and concepts advanced in the following article. Although only a micromoment in my professional career as an educator, this event took on a meaning that became a dominant and constant analytic lens for my view of school and society.¹

Sometime in my junior year of college, it became apparent I would not get into medical school. My interest in biology did not hold up in organic chemistry: After two Ds and a C in comparative anatomy, I decided to be a biology teacher. When I told my older brother—already a seasoned New York City junior high school social studies teacher and guidance counselor—of my decision to become a high school biology and general science teacher, his words of advice were: "If you want to get an A in every education course, always answer every question with some variation of the phrase, 'Education must be designed to meet the needs of the learner.'" In 1962, this was an accurate statement of the child-centered education reform movement most closely identified with John Dewey and the progressive education movement.

Now, after almost 80 years of U.S. educational policy designed to meet the development needs of the child, recent reform reports call for the extension of development as an aim of education to include teachers.² Although there are numerous pedagogical schools of thought and models of teaching, the overriding principle that binds modern educational practice is the concept of human development as an aim of education.³ If that aim is to be extended

¹Barry A. Kaufman, "Psychological Implications of Discovery Learning in Science," *Science Education* 55 (1977) 73-83; Barry A. Kaufman, "Piaget, Marx, and The Political Ideology of Schooling," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 10 (January-March 1978) 19-44; Barry A. Kaufman and Gail M. Kaufman, "Reconstructing Child Development for Curriculum Studies: Critical and Feminist Perspectives," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 2 (Summer 1980), 245-268.

²Academy for Academic Development, *Teacher Development in the Schools: A Report to the Ford Foundation* (New York: Academy for Academic Development, 1985).

³Lawrence Kohlberg and Rochelle Mayer, "Development as the Aim of Education," *Harvard Education Review* 4 (November 1972): 449-496.

or broadened to include teachers, we need a model of development that applies to teachers' professional career needs. This article proposes an ecological model of human development, originally advanced by Kurt Lewin⁴ and more recently elaborated on by Urie Bronfenbrenner,⁵ as a framework for teacher development in the schools. It argues that an ecological perspective of human development contains the necessary characteristics and criteria to provide both for school-based teacher development opportunities and for clinical research grounded in the daily practice of teaching.

STUDENT NEEDS AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Since the turn of the century, American educational reform has focused on the needs and interests of the child.⁶ O'Neil summarizes elements of the educational ideology of the child centered movement as follows:

- a belief in the unique personality of each individual
- a belief in education as the development of personal effectiveness
- an open system of experimental inquiry; learning how to learn, problem solving; critical thinking
- ultimate intellectual authority residing in knowledge derived through experimental verification and/or democratic decision-making procedures
- student-directed learning along with collaborative educational planning between teachers and students
- the teacher as organizer and facilitator of learning activities and experiences
- the individual as a relatively autonomous psychological unit operating in response to constantly changing personal and social conditions⁷

The child-centered movement, focused on student needs, changed the role and image of the ideal teacher from the moral transmitter of knowledge and social virtues to the lover of children. The teacher became nurturer and gardener charged with the responsibility of facilitating human growth and development.

Rugg and Withers summarize the characteristics and expectations of the ideal child-centered teacher. Such a teacher

- is a professional altruist
- facilitates human potential
- respects individual differences

⁴Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science* (New York: Harper, 1951)

⁵Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979)

⁶Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1896-1957* (New York: Vintage, 1964)

⁷William F. O'Neill, *Educational Ideologies* (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear, 1981)

- applies principles of educational psychology and child development
- teaches to the whole child—cognitive, emotional, social
- uses effective communication with children
- adapts curriculum to the developmental needs of students⁸

Although 20th-century educational policies reflected a child-centered approach, teacher education was organized to provide a scientific pedagogy based on empirical research to meet these needs. Schiffer identifies three models of postcredentialed continuing education for teachers, designed to improve student learning, which came into practice since the mid 1950s:

- Inservice education, to train practicing teachers in the appropriate instructional methodologies for a new curriculum/text series or for new approaches to classroom management or student assessment adopted by a school district.
- Staff development, to provide professional development opportunities based on assessed needs of a school district; teachers, site and central administrators, and noncertificated personnel become involved in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Teacher centers, featuring programs of continuing teacher education administered by classroom teachers and organized to respond to assessed teacher need without district or administrative participation.⁹

Although organizationally distinct, all three models view the teacher as an *object* of change prepared to meet the needs of the student. But this has changed rapidly in the last several years. There is an emerging consensus that the central feature of the current teacher reform movement involves restructuring the organizational culture of the school and redirecting resources toward the professional development needs of educators. In contrast to the earlier inservice programs, the current professional development movement is predicated on a view of the teacher as a *source*, rather than an *object*, of change.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

The most recent wave of educational reform calls for major policy changes that focus on restructuring the organizational culture of the school to support teacher development. Although invisible, teaching cultures are very powerful. Sarason describes school culture as the structures and patterns by which settings are organized, the patterns that govern social relationships in the setting, and the work-related beliefs and knowledge teachers share about

⁸Harold Rugg and William Withers, *Social Foundations of Education* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1955).

⁹Judith Schiffer, *School Renewal through Staff Development* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1980).

appropriate ways of acting on the job.¹⁰ If the development of an educator as a professional is marked by getting better at one's work and by accepting the obligation to reinvest that improvement beyond oneself, then there is an inseparable relationship between the professional and the professional culture.

Feiman-Nemser and Floden have summarized what has been learned about the culture of teaching:

- rewards coming from the students
- desire to close the classroom door and teach
- formal authority assigned to the principal
- limited stimulation and support from colleagues¹¹

The culture of teaching is based on a norm of surplus altruism in which the only place teachers experience power and autonomy is the classroom. Because the reward system for teachers is perceived as coming through students, teachers just want to be left alone to teach.

There is more to becoming and being a teacher than what takes place in the classroom, however. Teaching is a clinical profession based on craft knowledge derived from practice, not from an applied behavioral science. Clinicians such as lawyers, physicians, and psychotherapists are practitioners who seek both to help clients and to contribute to the general knowledge of practice. In clinical professions, craft knowledge is derived from direct practice and applied to the process of improving practice. Craft knowledge, or what Shulman calls the wisdom of practice, emerges from specific cases and not from the application of underlying theoretical knowledge.¹²

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Clinical professions require cultures that are organized to motivate the developing person and encourage him or her to engage in progressively more complex activities with others in that environment. From an ecological perspective, human development is role specific in that an individual's actions are adaptations to cultural expectations. In other words, human development is role development; it is development in environmental context. From an ecological framework, the call for restructuring the professional environment or organizational culture of the school makes possible new patterns of activities and relations for everyone who functions in a place called school.

¹⁰Seymour B. Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*, 2d ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982).

¹¹Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Robert E. Floden, "The Cultures of Teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3d ed., ed. Merlin C. Wittrock (New York: MacMillan, 1986) pp. 505-526.

¹²Lee S. Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations for the New Reform," *Harvard Educational Review* 57 (February 1987): 1-22.

In the simplest sense, ecology means the context in which a person, persons, or organization develops. For teachers, how one defines that context of development depends on relationships with students, colleagues, and the profession of education.

Figure 1 depicts the contextual relationships that make up the ecology of teacher professional development.¹³ The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next. At the innermost level, the teacher's immediate context is the student in the classroom. The next level is the colleague, and extending far beyond that is the teacher's relationship to the profession.

Lambert characterizes the teacher-client, teacher-colleague, teacher-profession relationship by saying that as teachers develop professionally over time, their relationship to their work shifts in the following three ways.

- The way in which teachers view the classroom gains increasing depth and complexity. Teachers bring greater experience and knowledge to the act of teaching; they observe classroom events and phenomena, transform instruction in response to those observations, and project improvements.
- The skills and knowledge that teachers discover and construct, as practitioners isolated in their own classrooms, become the basis for the exchange and critique of ideas they share with their peers.
- Teachers seek ways to contribute to the knowledge base, status, and future of the profession.¹⁴

Student as context for teacher development

Schon notes that "the professional-client relationship is essential to what is meant in our society by a profession."¹⁵ In the clinical profession of teaching, the teacher-student relationship lies at the core of the ecology of teacher development. Being and becoming reflective professionals, teachers are always client-focused and centered on the goal of improving practice. From an ecological perspective, the teacher-student relationship is both the source and the object of craft knowledge. The teacher-student relationship also defines the central goals of the practice of teaching: learning and development.

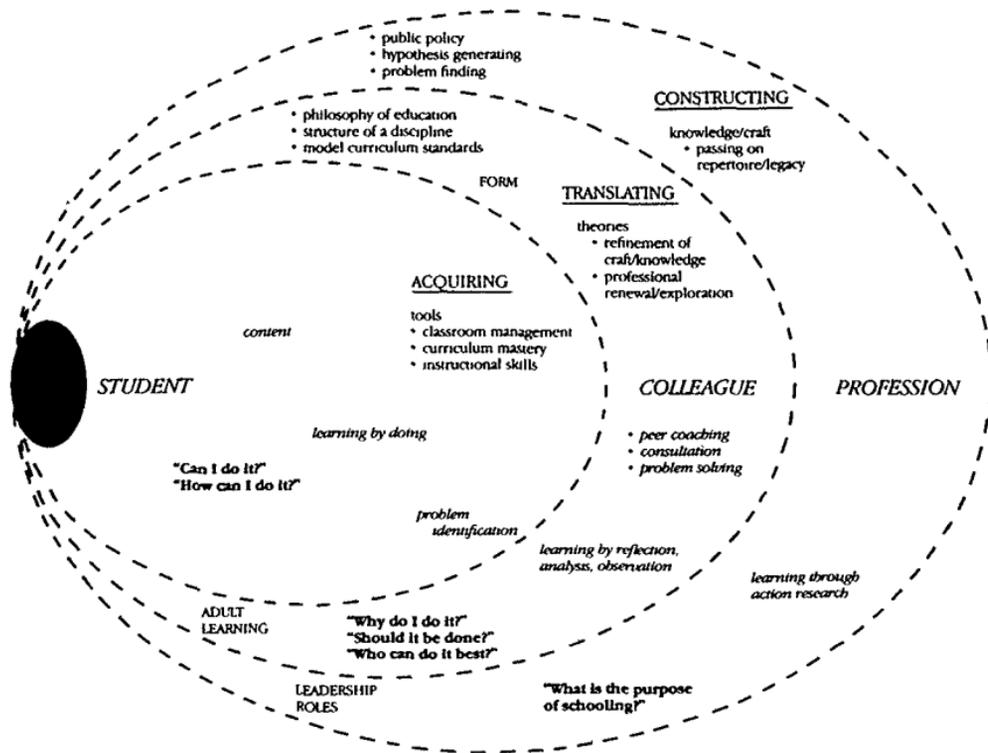
Clinical teaching is organized to improve student learning and enhance human development and competence. The link to craft knowledge between

¹³I want to thank and acknowledge the contributions of Priscilla Hopkins from the Marin County Office of Education Professional Development Project in the construction of the diagram and text presented in Figure 1. Duplication and dissemination of Figure 1 should cite Kaufman and Hopkins as coauthors

¹⁴Linda Lambert, *Professional Development Project* (San Rafael, CA: Marin County Office of Education, 1987)

¹⁵Donald A. Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 290.

Figure 1. The Ecology of Professional Development



the teacher and student is *acquiring* the fundamental clinical skills related to curriculum and instruction that will enhance opportunities for learning and development. Reflective questions within the teacher-student ecology consist of "Can I do it?" "How can I do it?" "What is the problem?" "Is there a better way?"

Colleague as context for teacher development

The skills and knowledge that teachers acquire as client-centered reflective practitioners are the basis for the colleague as the object of the second contextual relationship. Schools organized to support learning and development for students and teachers require resources that support opportunities for peers to exchange ideas and knowledge on ways of getting better at what teaching is about; that is, human learning and development.

Lieberman characterizes the culture of the school, in terms of collegial relations, as akin to an organizational third world.¹⁶ The centralized administration of resources is currently not organized to support and enhance the potential of the teacher-colleague relationship. This prevents the relationship from being a basis for improving the practice of teaching for human learning and development.

Too frequently, teachers are isolated from one another and forced to operate with minimal available resources to exchange, share, discuss, coach, think out loud, and test ideas. Without a collegially based organizational culture, clinical observations and impressions, which are supposedly designed to support peer communication, remain mere personal insights that cannot contribute to the craft knowledge of effective teaching practice.

In all probability, enormous quantities of case literature on effective teaching are hidden in literally thousands of classroom teachers' file cabinets—curriculum resource units, lesson plans, examinations, and so on—never shared with colleagues because schools are not structured for collegial interaction.

In medicine, law, and mental health, the cultural norm assumes the allocation of resources for case conference opportunities allowing an exchange and analysis of clinical material, case literature, case studies, hypothesis generating. Recent research literature seems to suggest that schools with a cultural norm that supports teacher-colleague interaction contribute to more effective school practice and enhance student and professional learning and development.¹⁷ The link to craft knowledge between teacher and colleague lies in *translating* what one knows, as a reflective practitioner, to peers. Reflective questions include "Should I do it?" "Why should I do it?" "How do I know what I know?"

¹⁶Ann Lieberman, personal communication, 1987

¹⁷Judith W. Little, "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success," *American Educational Research Journal* 19 (Fall 1982) 325-340

Profession as context for teacher development

As reflective practitioners, teachers require a professional environment that is organized to enhance learning and development, support inquiry into practice, and allow for the exploration and dissemination of ideas that contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. Professional knowledge, or Shulman's notion of the wisdom of practice, becomes the basis for teachers to contribute to the future of the profession.¹⁸

In other clinical professions, it is the norm to acquire membership in national and international associations organized to communicate the evolving knowledge base derived by an invisible community of like clinicians who share their findings through journals, conferences, and seminars. Because of a long history of isolation and an accepted culture of powerlessness, however, teachers generally do not seek membership in such associations.

The link to craft knowledge between the teacher and the profession is *constructing* new theories of learning and development grounded in practice through action research. Although the teacher-as-researcher movement is well under way and documented in recent educational literature,¹⁹ organizing resources to support action research inquiry at the school site, as described by Argyris, is far from a cultural norm and expectation.²⁰ Support for teacher colleague professional development opportunities is indeed beginning to take hold as a norm in numerous schools.²¹ But support for scholar teachers who could conduct action research and assume leadership roles in research based professional organizations is still in a formative period.

NEXT STEPS

The potential of professional development is severely limited when resources are not organized to support teachers who contribute to the learning and development of the entire community of practitioners. From an ecological perspective, resources for the continual professional development of teachers need to be provided within all three contexts. However, the dominant focus continues to be the student-centered context, in which teachers are seen as objects of change to meet the needs of the learner.

I have advanced the idea that schools need to create conditions and provide resources that sustain the continuous development of students *and* educators. Several local school districts in Marin County, California, have

¹⁸Lee S. Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching. Foundation for the New Reform," *Harvard Educational Review* 57 (February 1987) 1-22.

¹⁹Jon Nixon, ed., *A Teacher's Guide to Action Research* (London: Grant McIntyre, 1981); Jim McKernan, "The Countenance of Curriculum Research," *Journal of Curriculum and Superstition* 3 (Spring 1988) 173-200.

²⁰Chris Argyris, *Action Science* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985)

²¹Ronald S. Brandt, ed., "Staff Development through Coaching," *Educational Leadership* 44 (February 1987). 3-36

initiated ecologically organized professional development programs. Rather than using a uniform staff development program for all teachers based on student assessment data, these districts are using the differentiated contexts of student, colleague, and profession to create a renewing school culture.

Annual needs analysis surveys, budget allocations, and professional development opportunities acknowledge and support the diversity of development in a given school. Although the developmental contexts of student, colleague, and profession provide an organizational foundation for districts using an ecological approach to create a site specific renewing culture, there is wide diversity in the patterns of professional development opportunities and distribution of resources. This diversity serves to support the premise that no two school cultures are alike, even in districts where demographic profiles (student socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, achievement scores, curriculum, teacher and administration experience, etc.) show little variance from school to school.

The next step in the process is to document the organizational and resource patterns of professional development opportunities available at the school site within the ecological contexts of student, colleague, and profession. Although much has been written about an ecology of school renewal, the existing literature does not address specific developmentally differentiated contexts such as student, colleague, and profession.²² If the ideas and next steps advanced in this article are similar to or complement other ecologically organized approaches to teacher professional development, I would welcome the opportunity to learn of them and to share experiences and ways to support our mutual efforts.²³

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Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1988. 361pp. \$32.00.

This text presents a general overview of the issues and social context of the school curriculum. Also treated are teaching effectiveness research, instructional strategies, evaluation, technology, and curriculum leadership

²²John I. Goodlad, ed., *The Ecology of School Renewal*. Eighty-sixth Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Education, Part I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

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