

Are You Doing Inquiry Along These Lines?

TEACHER LORE: A NEGLECTED BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM AND SUPERVISION

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During the past two decades, teachers have received increased attention in educational literature, particularly in curriculum and supervision.¹ Today, calls for collaboration and partnership come from many other places in the world of educational research as well.² In a study group on John Dewey and progressive education, we sensed similarity with the current movement as we deliberated during the 1985-86 academic year at the University of Illinois at Chicago. At the same time, however, we sensed a dimension of progressivism less shared by many contemporary advocates of collaboration in supervision, curriculum, and school improvement. This dimension seemed best described as a faith that teachers already engage in research and theory in the daily development of practice.³ The ten or so members of the study group agreed that we knew teachers who functioned in this way. So we set out to find them.

¹See, for example, Alan R. Tom, *Teaching as a Moral Craft* (New York: Longman, 1984), William H. Schubert, *Curriculum Perspective, Paradigm, and Possibility* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), Shirley Grundy, *Curriculum. Product or Praxis?* (London: Falmer Press, 1987), Henry A. Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals* (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1988). See also work that stems from Joseph J. Schwab's discourses on practical inquiry, gathered together in *Science, Curriculum, and Liberal Education*, ed. Ian Westbury and Neil J. Wilkof (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), such as D. Jean Clandinin, *Classroom Practice. Teacher Images in Action* (London: Falmer Press, 1986), Freema Elbaz, *Teacher Thinking. A Study of Practical Knowledge* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), John Smyth, "Toward Critical Consciousness in the Supervision of Experienced Teachers," *Curriculum Inquiry* 14 (Winter 1984): 425-436, Noreen B. Garman, "Clinical Supervision Quackery or Remedy for Professional Development?" *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 1 (Winter 1986): 148-157.

²Ann Lieberman, ed., *Rethinking School Improvement* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986), Marvin F. Wideen and Ian Andrews, eds., *Staff Development for School Improvement* (London: Falmer Press, 1987), Frances S. Bolin and J. Falk, eds., *Teacher Renewal* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), Merlin Wittrock, ed., *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan and the American Educational Research Association, 1986), The Holmes Group, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (East Lansing, MI: The Holmes Group, 1986).

³This faith in teachers as theorists and researchers is evident in many works of John Dewey, for example, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916) and *The Sources of a Science of Education* (New York: Liveright, 1929), see also L. Thomas Hopkins, *The Emerging Self* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).

The "research" of these teachers was the practical inquiry they engaged in as they continuously asked: What knowledge and experiences are best for these students at this time, and how can I provide it for and with them? These teachers are theory builders, developing and refining their own set of values and beliefs about teaching, learning, knowledge, human beings, society, and the world generally. This set of values is the seedbed of their growing repertoire of teaching strategies and approaches, as well as the basis for critiquing it.

The teachers, we thought, could provide valuable insights. Instead of devising elaborate schemes of observation and extrapolating what teachers must believe based on those observations, we decided to extend to teachers a progressive faith acknowledging that they are researchers and theory builders in their professional lives. Therefore, we simply asked them what they have learned from their experience and what gives meaning and direction to their lives.⁴

With funding over the past two years from the Chicago Area School Effectiveness Council, we have been able to interview more than 40 teachers for anywhere from 1 to more than 10 hours each.⁵ As we begin our third year, we see at least four kinds of outcomes:

- rich portrayals of teachers' stories, convictions, and precepts (frequently corroborated through observation)⁶
- sets of central themes derived from interviews and reanalysis and reinterpretation of tapes and transcripts⁷

⁴Researchers, interviewers, and deliberators on the Teacher Lore Project at the University of Illinois at Chicago are acknowledged for their contributions: Bill Ayers, Patricia Hulsebosch, Anne Isaacson, Virginia Jagla, Mari Koerner, Carol Melnick, Suzanne Millies, Judith Ponticell, Ann Lopez Schubert, Grace Stanford, Gary Sykes, Thomas P. Thomas, and Norman Weston.

⁵Gary A. Griffin, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is acknowledged as founding director of the Chicago Area School Effectiveness Council, Elaine Schuster, Suzanne Millies, and Judith Ponticell are acknowledged as assistant directors, and R. Bruce McPherson is acknowledged as director during the first year, 1985-86. The Teacher Lore Project is one of several research projects given funding assistance by CASEC.

⁶Several doctoral dissertations have recently been completed on teacher lore, and others are in progress. These dissertations begin to carve out central dimensions of the topic: teacher knowledge and the use of students' nonschool experiences, teacher and parent levels of involvement, dimensions of teacher reflection in the pedagogical personality, assumptions, and repertoire of teachers; teachers' uses of imagination and intuition; and teachers' images of their work. Respectively, these dimensions are treated in the following dissertations. Carol R. Melnick, "A Search for Teachers' Knowledge of the Out of School Curriculum of Students' Lives" (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1988), Patricia Hulsebosch, "The Nature and Nurture of Parent Involvement" (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1988), Suzanne Millies, "A Study of the Mental Lives of Teachers" (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1989), Virginia Jagla, "In Pursuit of the Elusive Image. An Inquiry Into Teachers' Everyday Use of Imagination and Intuition" (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1989), Mari E. Koerner, "Teachers' Images of Their Work: A Descriptive Study" (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1989).

⁷Considerable debate has persisted in our group on how to interpret central themes and whether such efforts enhance or distort the work. When a search for central themes is assumed

- an emergent set of categories of literature on teaching, curriculum, supervision, and evaluation directly or indirectly related to teacher lore⁸
- a rationale for the importance of teachers' experientially derived insights that relates to Deweyan progressive perspectives and contemporary correlates of them⁹

Increasingly, we are convinced that these four categories of results will contribute to a grass-roots knowledge base that can inform supervision, curriculum development, and teaching. The knowledge base will be heuristic and as such will stimulate reflection that informs practice.

Moreover, we are coming closer to a definition of *teacher lore* that embraces the commentaries and stories of teachers and reveals sources of

to be worthwhile, we observed that teacher commentary, reflection, and stories reveal (1) a situational and context based mode of problem solving as opposed to decision making based on highly generalized guidelines, (2) enjoyment in being with students, compassion for them, and a willingness to draw insights about teaching and curriculum from student experiences, (3) a sense of mission about the importance of teaching; and (4) a desire to continuously revise their sense of meaning and direction in light of continued self-education and in view of attention to justice and developmental appropriateness in student lives.

⁸Categories of relevant literature, and examples of each, include (1) curriculum history, Harold Spears, *The Teacher and Curriculum Planning* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1951); (2) supervisory theory, Thomas J. Sergiovanni, "Landscapes, Mindscapes, and Reflective Practice in Supervision," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 1 (Fall 1985): 5-17; (3) lore of childhood, Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of School Children* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1959); (4) first-person counterculture accounts of teaching, Herb Kohl, *36 Children* (New York: Signet, 1968); (5) history of teacher autobiography and reflection, Jesse Stuart, *To Teach, to Love* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1936); (6) teacher rendition of successful methods, Beatrice Gross and Ronald Gross, eds., *Will It Grow in a Classroom?* (New York: Delta, 1974); (7) autobiographical theorizing, William F. Pinar and Madeleine R. Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1976); (8) feminist biography and autobiography, Janet L. Miller, "Women as Teachers/Researchers: Gaining a Sense of Ourselves," *Teacher Education Quarterly* 14 (No. 2, 1987): 52-58; (9) biographical interpretation of teacher thinking, Richard L. Butt and Danielle Raymond, "Arguments for Using Qualitative Approaches in Understanding Teacher Thinking," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 7 (Spring 1987): 62-93, (10) critical ethnographies of teaching, Linda McNeil, *Contradictions of Control* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); (11) co-biography with teachers, William Ayers, *The Good Preschool Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1989); (12) educational criticism and connoisseurship, Thomas E. Barone, "On Equality, Visibility, and the Fine Arts Program in a Black Elementary School," *Curriculum Inquiry* 17 (Winter 1987): 421-445

⁹See Deweyan citations in footnote 3, and John Dewey, *Logic, the Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Liveright, 1929); John Dewey, *How We Think* (New York: D. C. Heath, 1910); John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938). For more recent variations, see, for example, Steven M. Corey, *Action Research to Improve School Practices* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1953); Lawrence Stenhouse, ed., *Curriculum Research and Development in Action* (London: Heinemann, 1980); Wilford Carr and Stephen Kemmis, *Becoming Critical* (London: Falmer Press, 1986). In Dewey and contemporaries who consistently build on his work appears to reside assumptions that range throughout the scope of philosophical discourse (e.g., metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, ethics, aesthetics, logic, politics, and theology) and provide a rationale for including teachers' experiential insights as a necessary and neglected dimension of a knowledge base for curriculum, teaching, and supervision.

meaning and direction in their lives and work.¹⁰ We hope that this study will provide both precedents and resources for other teachers. We would be grateful to learn of others who are working in this area of inquiry and any others who may be interested or have advice to offer.

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Giroux, Henry A. *Teachers as Intellectuals. Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning*. Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1988. 249 pp. \$39.95/\$14.95.

In this collection of previously published essays, Giroux continues his quest to make his theoretical work more concrete. He shows how teachers can empower themselves by asking foundational curriculum questions in the context of their own work. Giroux leads readers to rethink the language of schooling, to consider the politics of voice through literacy and writing, to imagine teaching as intellectual work and education as cultural politics, and to develop a language of critique, possibility, and democracy.

—William H. Schubert

¹⁰For more elaboration on the topics discussed in this article, see William H. Schubert, "Teacher Lore: A Basis for Understanding Praxis" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988). A revised version of the paper has been invited for inclusion in *The Stories Lives Tell. Narrative and Dialogue in Educational Research and Practice*, to be edited by Carol Witherell, Anna Duran, and Nel Noddings. The paper also acknowledges the relevance of sources from literature (fictional accounts of teaching in print and film), phenomenological perspectives, e.g., Max van Manen, *The Tone of Teaching* (London: Heinemann, 1986); the sociology of teaching, e.g., Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); literary and philosophical nonfiction, e.g., Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger* (New York: Wadsworth, 1973), practitioner-oriented presentations on teaching as art, e.g., Louis J. Rubin, *Artistry in Teaching* (New York: Random House, 1984) and Gilbert Highet, *The Art of Teaching* (New York: Knopf, 1950), and historical studies, e.g., Harry S. Broudy and John R. Palmer, eds., *Exemplars of Teaching Method* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965).

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