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Learning to Think Like a Teacher: A Study of the Need for More Help in Early Professional Socialization

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Learning to Think Like a Teacher: A Study of the Need for More Help in Early Professional Socialization

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Essential questions:

- How does an individual learn how to think about teaching as a thoughtful teacher does?
- How does a teacher education program help pre-service teachers learn how to teach effectively?
- What ideas/theories resonate with you as to how a student learns to think like a teacher? (Or, possibly, what helps someone learn to think like a nurse or engineer?)
Possible epigraphic quotations:

- “No man is an island.” -- John Donne
- “Two are better than one.” -- Ecclesiastes 4:9
- “Many hands [minds] make light work.” – My mom
- “If I could be any candy bar, I would be a Twix, so I would never have to be alone.” - A former high school student in a creative writing assignment
My interest in this research:

- Personal experience – learning to teach from others once I started teaching
- Hearing from pre-service secondary education teachers that they did not find pre-service education valuable
- Wondering what student teachers drew on as they made decisions during student teaching
- A desire to make pre-service education valuable
Other reasons for me (and you?) to be interested in this research:

- Loss of so many teachers in the first five years of teaching
- Increasing onus on pre-service programs to create teachers that can demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and dispositions

Gov. Strickland’s State of the State Address for 2009 – “The Chancellor of Higher Education will be empowered to reward university education programs that best prepare their students for success as teachers in Ohio”;
More on the responsibility on teacher education programs: “While the particulars of teacher education accreditation models remain under review and in a state of flux, the expectation that teacher education faculty be accountable for their work will only continue to increase. This accountability must incorporate evidence that program graduates’ work in classrooms results in student learning.” Benner and Cagle, 2006, AACTE; Darling-Hammond et al. 2005; Darling-Hammond & Youngs 2002

Continued quest to understand the role of reflection in learning to teach (Ward & McCotter, 2004; Zeichner & Liston, 1990)

Possible other reasons to be concerned about learning more about how pre-service teachers learn to teach?
Design of my original study:

- Followed four student teachers; weekly, full-day observations; weekly informal interviews; three formal interviews; interviewed those surrounding the student teacher
- Framed analysis around 3 theories of what helps teachers learn: Donald Schon’s idea of reflection-on-action, Deborah Britzman’s idea of negotiation and Daniel Lortie’s idea of replication in teaching
- What idea of reflection is incorporated in your learning program? Do you find it successful?
Most important finding for me:

- All of the student teachers **wanted more help** in learning how to teach – more observations of them teaching and more ideas on how to do a better job of teaching.

- **Note:** They did not do much written reflection – even though reflection was a tenant in their pre-service programs.

- **Possible conclusion:** There is more of a need for an “other” in learning how to teach.
Contradicting certain presuppositions:

- Idea that we should leave student teachers alone so they can “own” the classroom
- Teachers who are not really struggling will figure out how to be successful in the classroom
- Reflection is done alone
- Any other presuppositions or practices you see we have to work against to increase the use of the other in learning how to teach?
What were the student teachers looking for in my study?

- The students seemed to learn the most in the areas where they had the opportunity to work on the problem (Schon’s idea, the practitioner “understands the situation by trying to change it” (p. 151).

- The students wanted more help from someone who would sit and watch them teach and then reflect with them. The desired “other” differed from participant to participant.
How do we add more of the other in learning how to teach?

- More observations by supervising teachers? (Husu, Tomm & Patrikainen, 2008 – used stimulated recall interviews of videotaped teaching; student teacher looks at same incident multiple times – some with supervising and cooperating teachers)

- More training of cooperating teachers? “Working to change the traditional roles of teacher education participants is complex and challenging work.” (Szuminski, Zath & Benton 1999)

- Idea of a mentor teacher in the first year (or first four?) Ohio Department of Education, Governor Strickland’s State of the State for 2009: 4 year residence program; use of lead teachers, mentoring, coaching and peer-review; collaborative planning time; US Department of Education, President Obama’s “Education Plan”: both more mentoring with monetary compensation and shared planning time

- The Holmes study idea

- Other ideas?
Adding the other to reflection: Tried before in preservice education?

- Holmes study

- More standardized evaluations (Larrivee, 2008; surveyed “experts” on reflection and from those, developed standardized form that creates a shared language for evaluating levels of reflection)

- Small group reflection/dialoging critiques in preservice classes (Hewitt, Pedretti, Bencze, Vaillancourt & Yoon, 2003 - watch teacher on videotape and instructors stop it at four points, individual and then group responses to issues; Bannik & van Dam, 2007 – used “dynamic discourse approach”; type of microteaching but lesson written/designed by small group, one teaches, all reflect on videotaped lessons)

- Challenges to adding the other to reflection?

- Ideas for adding the other to reflection?
Possible Implications

- The isolation in teaching begins early – often by student teaching
- We need to research what an active “other” can do to help during student teaching
- The mentoring idea used in first year teaching could actually begin earlier – during pre-service education
- Other possible implications?
Sources:

References