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We rationalize and debate endlessly over what to teach the kids, but how often do we rationalize and debate over what to be for the kids?

--Micki White, student teacher, April 1996

The focus of major educational reform efforts remains on increasing required course work, requiring competency testing, and raising admission standards. Yet ethical matters lie at the heart of teaching. To address teaching as ethical practice, we must conceive of teaching as vocation rather than profession. We must offer teacher education students the kinds of experiences and assignments that will enable them to grapple with key questions of values, caring, and ethical practice. Teacher narrative is one means of focusing future teachers on not only what they should know or do but on who they can be.

Clearly, we must address teaching as ethical practice from preservice through inservice education. First, extreme examples of unethical practice draw attention to the importance of moral principles--teacher-student affairs, selling grades, and promoting cheating on standardized tests. Beyond these scandals lie more subtle practices--teachers who are prejudiced, do the least amount of work they can, or humiliate students. Teaching requires ethical practice in the service of children. Second, as concern with character education increases, teachers must understand and model ethical behavior themselves. Addressing ethical practice must begin in teacher education. Teachers must find ways to address the human, value-laden aspects of their work. As Yeazell (1986, 173) noted, "Many of education's questions and competing demands cannot be resolved without appealing to moral principles. Questions of classroom time and management, resources, and student needs raise moral issues for teachers."

RESEARCH ON ETHICAL PRACTICE

Ethical practice remains largely neglected in the literature on teacher education (Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik 1990). This neglect stems from the framework of teaching as a profession. A profession, especially as reformers define it, focuses on specific bodies of knowledge, well-defined skills and techniques, and correct behaviors. The language of teaching as profession is laden with such terms as accountability, alignment, quality control, rigor, and standards. The positivist-behaviorist, management-oriented perception of profession, demanding certainty and measurable outcomes, distracts from the exploration and encouragement of ethical practice. As Huebner (1996, 268-69) noted, "Teachers are often blind to the moral dimensions of their practice because educational language tends to call attention only to those problems that can be solved technically."

Even teachers who are aware of moral aspects of their work seldom have time and opportunity to reflect on these aspects. Reform efforts attempting to professionalize teaching emphasize predictability and conformity, standards of practice, rules and procedures, technology, the knowledge base, and prestige or status. Reformers argue that an insistence on higher grades, more rigorous standards, and measurable performances will raise teaching to the level of the medical or engineering professions. However, emphasizing "public recognition, greater autonomy, larger rewards, and the like takes one

away from the everyday personal and moral dimensions of teaching" (Hansen 1995, 8). Future teachers must know about issues not addressed in dominant teacher education reforms. How can they relate to students as people so they will best learn and grow? Why and how should they keep alive a passion for teaching? Why should they take active roles in ongoing school reform? What is right and wrong in current school practices and structures? Who shall they be? Palmer (1998, 10) affirmed that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher."

Teaching must be seen as a profession very different from medicine or law, because teaching includes a unique moral dimension (Fenstermacher 1990). I would go one step farther, however, and advocate teaching as vocation--a "calling." In contrast to profession, this sense opens educational language to humane, personal, and ethical concerns. Vocation, unlike profession, recognizes the importance of process and product in the development of teachers, acknowledging inherent uncertainty, risk, and fallibility. Teaching is a "practice whose impact and consequences tend to emerge over time, often in uneven and unpredictable ways" (Hansen 1995, 14). Vocation also puts caring at the center of teaching, because the purpose of the calling is to help others learn. To understand teaching as vocation implies different kinds of reform for teacher education; that is, methods for getting at personal and moral dilemmas in practice, the unpredictable process of learning to teach, and the centrality of caring in everyday practice.

Hansen (1995, 1) described teaching as secular vocation, "a summons to be of service." Teachers discover "that strictly occupational or functional language is inadequate. They may find themselves resorting to language with spiritual overtones, speaking, for example, of their hopes for and faith in their students" (Hansen 1995, 5). Proefriedt (1994, 9) also endorsed a view of teaching as "reflective vocation," reflecting on his own growth as a teacher as "much like learning to be a person." Understanding teaching as vocation allows for personal, value-filled conversation about and activities related to teaching. Proefreidt (1994, 9-10) called it "a discourse shaped by the everyday problems in the classroom and by concerns with educational purpose, with issues in the lives of young people that affect their capacity for learning, with reflections on one's own strengths and weaknesses as a person and as a teacher," which seemed "a more realistic starting point for constructing a model for teacher education than the prevailing notion of a professional body of knowledge about teaching, translatable into prescriptions for teacher behavior in the classroom." Vocation offers a framework, inviting the search for meaning and purpose, for personal as well as occupational success, for questions of identity and ethical practice.

Teaching as vocation is less easily captured in competency tests or portfolios filled with prescribed lesson and discipline plans. The language is not objective; rather, it allows terms like passion, art, and altruism into teacher education. Vocation even allows teachers to talk and write about themselves. Huebner (1996, 270) captured a vocational view of teaching in which "talk about teaching can also include talk about feelings. Hope and disappointment, joy and pain, love and anger, pride and guilt, and other feelings that accompany the activity of teaching need not be repressed. Feelings can be indicators that ethical quandaries are present and need to be brought to consciousness."

Vocation honors the affective in teaching. As Westerhoff (1987, 193) noted, "We are at our best when we make our lives and our search for meaning available as a resource for another's learning. To be a teacher means more than to be a professional who

possesses knowledge and skills. Teaching is a human relationship."

To help future teachers see teaching as a vocation in which one struggles with ethical issues like grading, discipline, and diversity allows them to see teaching as an ongoing process rather than a destination that ends with graduation, certification, or tenure. Teacher education must acknowledge that enacting ethical practice is a daily challenge and educators will continue to make mistakes. Becoming a teacher "is to be called forth into the journey of life, or the making of meaning and values. Thus, it is impossible to have a fixed understanding of a teacher, or of oneself as a teacher" (Huebner 1987, 21). Teaching as vocation allows for examination of competing moral demands and uncertainty. Imagine that a suspected abusive parent calls to inquire how a child is doing, and the child is not doing well academically. The teacher knows what he or she says may cause injury to the child. How much truth does the teacher tell the parent? Ethical practice is complex, unsure, and demanding; no technical panaceas or absolute standards are available. However, enabling ethical practice among future teachers requires ways of approaching such dilemmas and engendering a consciousness of the moral, relational implications of such decisions.

Because a vocation is a calling to serve others, caring is necessary. Indeed, caring and commitment to service is what attracts most teachers to the vocation and causes them to stay. Teacher education should acknowledge and connect to this altruism (Bolin 1987). As Proefriedt (1994, 103) noted, "The ethical concerns that are part and parcel of the teacher's work constitute an argument against a teacher education constructed as primarily scientific, instrumental, and specialized."

Lortie's (1975) seminal study of teacher thinking portrayed the idealism and caring that propel educators. Cohn and Kottkamp (1993, 227), building on Lortie's work, reported that teachers identified as poor teachers those colleagues "who do not care about their students and who therefore work 'only for a paycheck.'" Viewing teaching as vocation allows teacher educators to build on the caring future teachers bring with them to teacher preparation.

Rogers and Webb (1991) called for centrality of caring in teacher education. Caring directs teachers "to analyze and evaluate all recommendations in light of our answers to questions concerning the maintenance of community, the growth of individuals, and the enhancement of the subjective aspects of our relationships" (Noddings 1986, 510). As Noblit, Rogers, and McCadden (1995, 683) explained:

Without caring, teachers must depend only on the instrumental dimensions of instruction: knowledge of subject matter, guidelines for planning, effective teaching strategies. And ultimately, they must rely heavily on discipline and classroom management techniques.... However, the focal point around which teaching should be organized is not the instrumental but the relational. Without this connection, a teacher may have subject-matter knowledge and the technical ability to teach, but the opportunities will be scarce, because what the teacher does not have is the student.

Teachers who care about students care about what they learn and how. Ethical teachers bring subject matter alive; they challenge students to experience widely and think deeply about important matters. Even higher-level thinking is dependent on caring (Thayer-

Bacon 1993). Fried (1995, 17) argued, "This quality of caring about ideas and values comes closest to what I mean in describing a 'passionate teacher.'" The ethic of caring is, in fact, a more demanding, if less predictable, taskmaster than competency testing or career ladders precisely because it involves uncertainty, ambivalence, and complexity. Should a teacher grade differently for a victim of child abuse? Can a teacher become too involved with students' problems? Should a teacher tell administrators about a colleague's alcohol problems? Such questions have no easy answers. Ethical practice demands a teacher's intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical engagement. Even the most caring teacher will still make mistakes. Caring cannot be reduced to behavioral objectives, but we can talk about, describe, and encourage it. The idea of teaching as vocation can put the ethic of caring back into teacher education.

TEACHER NARRATIVE

The language of vocation is a starting point. Reframing teaching as vocation necessitates different kinds of approaches and changes in teacher education that go beyond academic entrance and exit standards or technical knowledge, enabling teachers to envision and enact ethical practice. The approach that seems most promising is the use of teacher lore or teacher narrative (Coles 1989; Florio-Ruane 1991; Gomez and Tabachnick 1992).

All secondary education students at Oklahoma State University must write a capstone paper during their teacher internship. We take a variety of approaches, depending on the subject area, and plan a conference at the end of the semester at which students share their papers. In spring 1997, I took a teacher-lore approach with my secondary English student teachers. Students wrote stories from their student-teaching experiences and developed questions or issues for research. The resulting papers dealt, directly or indirectly, with ethical concerns. One student, for instance, explored the question of how much he was responsible for students who fail. Several students addressed the plight of children who fall through the cracks in school systems and the ways personnel demonstrate insensitivity to diverse students' needs. Future teachers examined their own attitudes and behaviors, exploring personal ethical dilemmas, discovering the vulnerability and risk involved in ethical practice, and learning what caring means in the classroom.

Narrative helps teacher candidates connect personal experiences, feelings, and ideas to significant educational issues in ways that transcend college lectures or lists of effective teaching behaviors. Mary Anne, for example, reflected on the issue of tracking. She challenged past assumptions based on learning as a new teacher:

Tracking seemed to work well for us.... It prepared us for school and life's work. What it did not prepare me for was life's reality. The reality that some kids cannot spell simple words by the time they graduate high school. The reality that a lot of kids do not care about school. The reality that while, since 1st grade I was told I was smart, they were told they were dumb.... Currently I have two slow classes to teach and two average classes to teach. Both of these labels leave me yearning for a solution.... None of these kids are average in fact. They are all unique. And a lot smarter than they are given credit for, too.

Mary Anne interviewed teachers and researched detracking, concluding it is a goal to which schools should aspire. This conclusion demanded a new way of thinking and enacting ethical practice (Isenberg 1994).

Teacher narrative opens educators to the risk and vulnerability required by ethical practice. Teacher education can achieve much by preparing students honestly for this uncomfortable aspect of vocation. In another student paper, Vaughn faced her own attitude toward diverse students. She remarked on her perception of herself as politically correct, but found herself "lacking that wonderful characteristic which special education teachers have that enable them to deal wonderfully with people that have difficulties learning, walking, talking, some even eating and using the restroom. I felt uncomfortable and impotent in my ability to help them. I feared the day when I might be placed in a classroom with a student with a disability." Vaughn described her interaction with and growing admiration for a young girl with cystic fibrosis. This child had tremendous character. She refused grades for work she had not completed. Vaughn researched the disease and learned to look beneath surfaces, facing her own insecurities and the tragedy of adolescents with fatal illnesses. No textbook, measure of competency, or national testing can prepare a teacher for this experience. As Huebner (1987, 24-25) noted:

The fallibility and insecurity that accompany teaching have been covered over by the metaphors of teaching as a profession, as a technology, or a method, or an activity of schooling. Difficulties and struggles of teaching are assumed to be a result of inadequate method, not an inherent consequence that accompanies a vocation. In the life of real people, vulnerability is a pre-requisite for and consequence of the journey.... We cannot take on a calling without risk.

Susan, for example, was intimidated by a young man in her class. She admitted mishandling the problem: "When I began student teaching, I took little time to think about my students and their needs.... Many of my problems with Johnny could have been avoided.... I was a naive student teacher, who did not realize that there were preventative measures that could be taken." She interviewed teachers and researched handling discipline problems. The "answer," she concluded, was caring and building a relationship even with difficult students. Ethical practice requires teachers to confront their own weaknesses, ignorance, and faults. Becoming a good, caring teacher requires personal, ongoing struggle (Hansen 1995).

Teaching narratives can promote the ethic of caring (Jalongo and Isenberg 1995). Caring moves student teachers to learn more, to improve their practice. Lisa wrote about her discovery that two of her tenth graders were gang members: "They were hanging around a group of boys who all dressed alike in their baggy jeans and similar jackets. We saw and heard one of their friends threaten another student for disrespecting his gang or 'dissin' his set.' ... Gangs are not that uncommon. I just did not think it would involve kids that I care so much for." Lisa conducted research by making rounds with a juvenile officer, visiting neighborhoods where gangs thrive. She also interviewed her school's principal and fellow teachers. She did not find "the answer," but she understood the situation better by the end of student teaching. She would not give up on kids in gangs:

I want to show that love every day of my teaching career. No one can tell me that it won't do any good because love can always do some good no matter how slight it may be. I'm not saying "all we need is love" to stop gangs and stop the violence, but showing love is just one way I can do my part. If we all do our small parts, we can see that the little things do add up.

Certainly, the results of these narrative-research papers do not constitute conclusive evidence for the value of teacher lore or the possibilities of framing teaching as vocation. We need long-term research to see how such undertakings affect teachers over time. Future educators often come to teaching with an altruism on which teacher education should build, with an openness to and concern about ethical practice that can be encouraged and enlarged, and with stories that need telling and examining. Teacher education that fails to address teaching as a special calling, demanding personal dedication and strong ethical practice, impoverishes teaching and, ultimately, children.

DEVELOPING AN ETHOS OF TEACHING

I would not--and could not, as a teacher educator--argue that the concerns of teaching as profession do not also belong in teacher education. It is important for future teachers to be highly qualified in subject areas, have intellectually challenging courses of study, meet high standards for certification, and demonstrate competency in managing classes and organizing lessons. What matters most, however, is the teacher's ethos, character, attitude, practice--all of which teacher educators can profitably screen, discuss, research, and promote. Teacher narrative, coupled with reflection and research, offers one means. As Talbott (1995, 372) observed, "The teachers we remember for changing our lives did not convey some decisive fact. Rather, we saw in them a stance we could emulate, a way of knowing and being we could desire for ourselves." Being and becoming, caring and learning to care, commitment and vulnerability--to understand and celebrate teaching as ethical practice is to make education students aware of these paradoxes. To understand teaching as a vocation opens the way for ethical practice to become a major theme of teacher education.

ADDED MATERIAL

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