

# BALANCING THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

*Richard P. Lipka and Thomas M. Brinthaupt*

One of the most rewarding and demanding vocational journeys is surely the selection of teaching as a profession and living one's life as a teacher. Who are those individuals who choose to dedicate themselves in service to others, at a time when the teaching profession is under attack from seemingly every corner? Why would anyone decide to take such a journey? There are numerous ways to consider the career of teaching and the factors associated with becoming a teacher. For example, past writers have successfully examined philosophical and sociological issues in the teaching profession (e.g., Broudy, 1972; Dreeben, 1970; Lortie, 1995).

In this book, we have attempted to address the question of becoming a teacher from the perspective of the teacher's self and identity concerns, especially as it applies to teachers of preschool through grade 12. By recognizing and addressing the instrumental role of self in teacher development, our contributors have provided a set of excellent road signs and maps for the journey to becoming a teacher. Their contributions provide us with a compelling view on teacher development that has been sorely lacking and much needed.

As Jersild (1955) so aptly stated: "The teacher's understanding and acceptance of [him or her] self is the most important requirement in any effort [he or she] makes to help students to know themselves and to gain healthy attitudes of self-acceptance" (p. 3). During the past forty years or so, Jersild's message has been lost in the din of the "cult of efficiency" movement sweeping the field of education. We seem to have forgotten that the quality of life for the student is directly tied to the quality of life of the teacher. Does it matter how teachers perceive and evaluate themselves as individuals? What are the personal and social obstacles and dilemmas that teachers must face? To answer these questions, we structured this book to reflect some of the major transition

points in becoming a teacher and asked our contributors to focus explicitly on how issues of self and identity bear on these different points.

The book starts with two chapters on deciding to teach. The emphasis here is on who goes into teaching and why they do so, from a self perspective. The second part addresses making the transition and becoming a teacher, focusing on preservice education and teacher training. In the third part of the book, we examine the first years of teaching, in particular issues pertaining to inservice education and developing an emerging identity as a teacher. Finally, we consider the characteristics of the master teacher and the process of reexamining and affirming one's identity as a teacher.

A common theme (or perhaps we should say "plea") that all of the contributors bring to this book is the importance of balancing the personal development of teachers with their professional development. As several contributors argue, these two aspects are not mutually exclusive. Rather they serve to complement each other. In fact, however, the major way that these two parts of a teacher's identity complement each other is unidirectional—few people would argue that training a teacher to become a competent technician is the best way to open up new avenues for personal and self-related exploration. Our contributors argue for placing personal (self-related) issues up front, from the start, and throughout one's career as a teacher. Doing so results in a recognition of one of the major (for the most part missing) pieces to the puzzle of what it means to be a teacher.

## DECIDING TO TEACH

Who decides to go into teaching and why? In chapter 1, Professor Tusin discusses the many demographic factors related to selecting teaching as a career. Included among these factors is a most disturbing finding of a decline in persons of color becoming teachers at a time when the United States continues to become more ethnically diverse. Later in the chapter the emphasis shifts to the development of the teacher's vocational self-concept with the attendant processes of self-concept formation, exploration, differentiation, self-fulfillment, and self-efficacy. As she puts it, selecting and pursuing an occupation as a teacher is essentially a process of implementing a "concept of self as teacher." The chapter ends with a discussion of student self-concept development and how a healthy sense of self for students is dependent upon interactions with teachers. Tusin illustrates the necessity for teachers' personal sense of self to be actualized to the point that they can en-

ter into meaningful and growth-facilitating relationships with students. She ends her chapter by pointing out the need for a greater focus on the self-perceptions of beginning teachers.

In chapter 2, Professor Zehm provides an excellent overview of the kinds of self-related perspectives stressed by Tusin as needed in pre-service teacher preparation programs. Zehm forwards the proposition that a person's decision to become a teacher involves not only the acquisition of a knowledge base, but also the conscious development of a refined sense of self. Zehm makes a case for formally adding self-concept and self-esteem to the preservice teacher preparation sequence. Numerous reasons are offered, with the most compelling being the replacement of test scores and grade point average for admission to teacher education with coherent, structured experiences that ask students to seriously address the question: "Do I really want to become a teacher?" Zehm then situates the self-development perspective in a historical context and introduces the reader to a number of the seminal works in the field of teacher education.

Zehm's chapter also examines contemporary issues involved in a self-development perspective. Zehm suggests that self-development could be effectively utilized as a "gatekeeping" function. That is, critical criteria for teacher selection might include "personal" aspects such as one's level of maturity, self-esteem, personal responsibility, and overall emotional and psychological fitness. It is noteworthy that such criteria have been used for some time by graduate programs designed to train counselors and clinicians. It is also noteworthy that teachers get very little (if any) training for dealing with the behavioral and psychological problems of their pupils. This section of the chapter also offers interesting insights into the attractiveness of the teaching profession to individuals from dysfunctional families. The chapter ends with a coherent discussion of promising approaches (such as the emphasis on personal stories and critical reflection) that could be embedded into any preservice teacher education program. Other contributors to this book provide more details about some of these approaches.

## MAKING THE TRANSITION

Once a person has made the decision to teach and begins teacher education, he or she enters an often amorphous transition period or marginal status. Professor McLean begins chapter 3 with a most compelling observation—while teacher educators and beginning teachers have very different knowledge bases, to conceptualize those differences

as “deficits” in the beginning teacher is useless at best and at worst keeps beginning teachers powerless in the process of their own professional development. With this as the referent, McLean explores three theoretical perspectives that place emphasis on the person in the process of becoming a teacher. First, McLean discusses “Constructivism,” a perspective with roots in the works of Jean Piaget, in terms of the development of knowledge and its emphasis upon the psychological changes within the individual as he or she acquires new knowledge. The individual seen as thinking and acting in complex, contextual, and emotional ways characterizes the second perspective known as the “Practical.” The literature within this perspective captures how teachers acquire their personal practical knowledge and how this changes throughout their careers. Drawing more from sociology and philosophy, the third approach, the “Critical Pedagogists,” suggests that teachers and teaching can only be understood in terms of the wider social and cultural context.

After extensive contrasts and comparisons of the three perspectives, McLean homes in on their strongest commonality—that of the need to develop ongoing self-reflection and self-analysis. The remainder of the chapter explores the thesis that to help beginning teachers become reflective practitioners requires teacher educators that are themselves reflective practitioners. This thesis calls for a reconstruction of contemporary teacher education. The chapter concludes with an extensive discussion of one strategy for this reconstruction process. This strategy focuses upon the telling and sharing of stories and autobiographies of teachers and teachers-to-be. It is clearly aligned with the “Self as Narrative” work of Freeman (1992), who argued that “one sensible way of studying the self is to study the changing narratives which people use to tell about who and what they have been and become” (p. 21).

Professor Borich uses chapter 4 to explore the dimensions of self-concept that have the potential to extend our current-day notions of effective teaching. As other writers (e.g., Beane & Lipka, 1986) have noted, Borich demonstrates that teachers with clear self-concept and positive self-esteem function effectively within the teaching role as significant others for students. They also create a classroom environment that fosters clear self-concept and positive self-esteem in their pupils. A theme throughout his chapter is what Borich calls the “behavioral dialogue.” This refers to the modeling, feedback, and interaction dynamics present in the teacher-student interaction. Borich notes that teachers’ extreme self-concerns can actually work against their establishing an effective behavioral dialogue. The idea that the self might in-

terfere with teaching effectively or with acquiring an identity as "teacher" is an intriguing one.

Borich emphasizes the absolute necessity for teachers to have work environments and significant others in their lives (e.g., administrators, teacher educators, colleagues) providing the facilitating conditions necessary for the promotion of a healthy, functional view of self as teacher. The absence of effective and healthy social support systems for beginning teachers will undermine the efforts of the person who is trying to make the transition to "teacher" and leave behind his or her marginal status. Clearly, an emphasis on the "external" or social aspects of teacher self and identity is critical in facilitating those efforts.

### THE FIRST YEARS OF TEACHING

Once the "teacher-in-training" makes the transition to "new teacher," a whole new set of issues and implications arise for those interested in a self perspective on teaching. As the teacher is inducted into a professional environment, he or she must learn to assimilate the key aspects of that environment and at the same time attempt to get that environment to accommodate to his or her needs. In chapter 5, Professor Tickle offers us the opportunity to explore the affective realms of teaching that have an impact on the educative experiences of the teacher self, the student self, and the development of individual identities in this new environment. Reflecting some of the points made by Zehm and Borich, Tickle notes that taking the self into account in teaching can be a challenging, threatening, and anxiety-provoking venture.

Focusing upon teachers early in their careers (i.e., those with 2-4 years of teaching experience), Tickle describes a "Self-Appraisal for Professional Growth" unit situated in an in-service teaching degree program. Utilizing the features of action research, teachers are asked to build a comprehensive image of self-appraisal. This includes an emphasis upon aspects of self as a professional as opposed to the more traditional approach of the appraisal of teaching practices by oneself. The emphasis upon the former rather than the latter is predicated upon the conception of teachers as those who have an understanding of self, have a sense of self-realization, and use the self as an instrument in both their own and their students' development. In competition with the necessary development of self is the international preoccupation for national curriculums and national standards/assessments. As Tickle and several other contributors point out, such preoccupation deflects time

and other resources away from teachers' efforts to develop the important dimensions of self as professional.

In chapter 6, Professors Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin focus on the mutual interplay of teacher and institution as the induction and adjustment process proceeds for new teachers. A key aspect of this process is the "transition shock" that occurs as beginning teachers search for and establish their identities in schools. Oldtimers tend to attach less value to the newcomer's university experiences and training than to their own insights obtained through "real-world" experiences and trial and error. Throughout their chapter (and paralleling the other chapters of this book), Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin describe some of the major personal and institutional forces that work against establishing a sense of self or identity as teacher.

The authors describe three key elements affecting the emerging identity of the new teacher placed into this setting: biography, establishing the self in teaching, and establishing the self in schools. In the biography section of the chapter, the authors show how those work and teaching experiences one has prior to becoming a teacher (such as summer camps, Sunday school, coaching, etc.), as well as the experiences with teachers one had as a pupil, can be an important part of the teacher's rite of passage. In the self in teaching section, Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin detail some of the richness and demands of that amazing work context known as the "classroom." They emphasize classroom management as a key ingredient in the formation of "self as teacher," noting that the new teacher's concerns with managing one's class and controlling one's students is not ultimately how teachers come to define themselves. The chapter ends with a treatment of "self in school" and the code of culture we associate with interactions with administrators, peers, and students. This is the arena where a good deal of professional assimilation and accommodation takes place. Most unsettling is the observation that one of the chief ways to address the dialectic tension between self and school culture is to remain silent—for beginning teachers to literally form a society of the silent in order to fit in! As in most other groups and organizations, it seems that one must wait to assert oneself (and one's self) in school.

## REEXAMINING AND AFFIRMING: THE MASTER TEACHERS

In the final part of the book, we address the selves of the "oldtimers," particularly those teachers who have emerged through the socialization and professionalization process with a well-defined and

healthy sense of self. Not coincidentally, these teachers also turn out to be those we call "masters" of their trade. In chapter 7, Professor Agne explores the concept of "caring" as it relates to the self of the master teacher. Very early in her own teaching career, she realized that children learn by absorbing who you are, not by memorizing what you say, to them. For Agne, caring must be examined through the use of the principles of a caring belief system. After initiating the definition of caring as trusting, accepting, respectful, democratic, self-disciplined, and so on, she fully explores what stops or distorts the caring belief system. For Agne, the issues of fear and control in a consumer-driven society serve as the greatest barrier to caring, as teachers and students deal with such commodities as grades, promotions, and degrees.

Agne argues that it is only when we come to realize that people are perfectly imperfect and there is nothing to "fix," will the coming of age of the caring ethic be realized in our schools. Master teachers have acquired deep-caring styles because experience, careful observation, and self-awareness (coupled with a commitment to the understanding of the teaching/learning process) have taught them that caring works. As Agne notes, these are individual attributes that cannot be internalized through instructional methodology. The chapter closes with a treatment of what the caring belief system looks like in the classroom. Central to this classroom description is a set of questions that teachers must ask themselves. These questions help to frame the issues and explore potential solutions that engender personal growth, healing, productivity, and transforming environments.

In chapter 8, Professor Hamachek addresses the question: What sorts of behaviors and self-perceptions tend to distinguish expert or master teachers from the rest? To answer this question, Hamachek looks for distinguishing patterns drawn from the dimensions of personal characteristics, intellectual characteristics, interaction styles, and instructional approaches. Reading his treatment of the personal characteristics literature leads us to the humbling insight as to the tolerance and humanity possessed by students in our nation's schools. Students are desirous of teachers who are human in the fullest sense of the word, yet they fully realize that to be fully human does not mean being totally perfect! Exploring the other three dimensions leads Hamachek to the conclusion that expert/effective teachers enjoy life. As individuals they are reasonably at peace with themselves and they possess realistic yet high expectations for themselves and their students. They generally enjoy their work, possess a quality sense of humor, and tend to be viewed by their students as firm but fair.

Hamachek argues that the teacher's "self" is always present as the second, private curriculum in the classroom. The chapter ends with a comprehensive treatment of how self-understanding helps to make an individual a better teacher. Hamachek's treatment of self-understanding introduces the reader to the concepts of "intrapersonal intelligence" and "emotional intelligence." Underlying these concepts are components such as self-reflection, self-evaluation, self-awareness, unconscious processes, mood management, self-maturation, empathic skills, and relationship skills. Seeing the role of self in teaching in these terms can serve us well as teacher educators and researchers of teaching and teachers. In short, Hamachek clearly reminds us that in the absence of functional self-knowledge we lack the ability to overhaul or to fine-tune those aspects of ourselves that may be blocking our teaching effectiveness. As he puts it, one must look "in here" for answers to effective teaching rather than "out there."

In summary, this book explores the journey from selection of teaching as a career to developing the skills, attitudes, and beliefs that we associate with masterful teaching. We end as we began with the belief, supported by abundant evidence, that those teachers with the clearest and most positive sense of self are in the best position to facilitate the growth, development, and education of the millions of young people who greet us each morning at the schoolhouse doors.

## REFERENCES

- Beane, J. A., & Lipka, R. P. (1986). *Self-concept, self-esteem and the curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Broudy, H. S. (1972). *The real world of the public schools*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Dreeben, R. (1970). *The nature of teaching: Schools and the work of teachers*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Freeman, M. (1992). Self as narrative: The place of life history in studying the life span. In T. M. Brinthaupt & R. P. Lipka (Eds.), *The Self: Definitional and Methodological Issues*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jersild, A. T. (1955). *When teachers face themselves*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *School teachers: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.