

ON BECOMING A REFLECTIVE TEACHER

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If teachers today are to initiate young people into an ethical existence, they themselves must attend more fully than they normally have to their own lives and its requirements; they have to break with the mechanical life, to overcome their own submergence in the habitual, even in what they conceive to be virtuous, and to ask the "why" with which all moral reasoning begins.¹

Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger*

As you proceed with your professional education, you will continually be confronted with numerous choices about the kind of teacher to become. Recent literature in education has clearly shown that teachers differ substantially according to their goals and priorities and to the instructional and classroom management strategies that they employ. These differences among teachers have usually been portrayed as contrasting "types." For example, much has been written in recent years about the differences between teachers who are "open or traditional," "child-centered or subject-centered," "direct or indirect," and "humanistic or custodial." These dichotomies attempt to differentiate teachers who hold different views about what is important for children to learn, preferred instructional and management strategies, and types of curricular materials, and about the kinds of school and classroom organizational structures within which they want to work. The kind of teacher you wish to become, the stands you take on educational issues, and the knowledge and skills you need for putting your beliefs into action all represent decisions you as a prospective teacher need to make.

Over a hundred years of educational research has yet to discover the most effective instruc-

tional methods and school and classroom organizational structures for all students. This, together with the fact that "rules for practice" cannot now and probably never will be easily derived from either college coursework or practical school experience, makes your choices regarding these issues and the manner in which you determine them of great importance.

With regard to instructional strategies and methods, you will literally be bombarded in your courses and practicums with suggestions and advice regarding the numerous techniques and strategies that are now available for the instruction of children in the various content areas. For example, you will be taught various strategies for leading discussions, managing small groups, designing learning centers, administering diagnostic and evaluative procedures, and teaching concepts and skills.

Furthermore, in each of the content areas there are choices to be made about a general approach or orientation to instruction over and

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above the choice of specific instructional techniques and procedures. You, ultimately, must make decisions about which approach or combination of approaches to employ amid competing claims by advocates that their approach offers the best solution to problems of instruction.

Undoubtedly, there is a great deal of debate in education today over how to go about teaching agreed upon content and skills and about the ways to manage classrooms and children. However, the question of *what* to teach, and to whom, precedes the question of *how* to teach. The selection of content to be taught to a particular group of children and of the types of instructional materials and resources to support this process are issues of great importance despite the fact that any school in which you are likely to work will have some set of policies. Although there are limits placed upon teachers regarding curricular content and materials, teachers usually have some latitude in the selection of specific content and materials within broad curricular guidelines.

For example, in the state of Wisconsin it is required that teachers teach the history of their state as part of the 4th grade social studies curriculum. Within these guidelines, individual teachers usually have some degree of choice about what to teach or emphasize about Wisconsin history and about what materials to use. This holds true in many curricular areas; even where schools have adopted particular instructional approaches and programs, such as in reading and math, teachers are still permitted some degree of personal discretion in the selection of content and materials.

You will also face a set of options about the kinds of school organizational structures in which you will work, and you will need to be aware that not all structures are compatible with all positions on issues of curriculum and instruction. At the elementary school level, for example, do you prefer to work in a self-contained classroom with one group of children or do you prefer to work closely with colleagues in a departmentalized context, such as is found in many individually guided education schools? Furthermore, you must begin to form positions about the kinds of school

and classroom structures that will support the kind of teaching you want to do.

In addition to these numerous choices and issues, there is another and more basic choice facing you. This choice concerns the way in which you go about formulating positions with regard to the issues mentioned above. To what degree will you consciously direct this process of decision making in pursuit of desired ends and in light of educational and ethical principles? On the other hand, to what degree will your decisions be mechanically directed by others; by impulse, tradition, and authority? An important distinction is made between being a reflective or an unreflective teacher, and it necessarily involves every prospective teacher no matter what your orientation and regardless of the specific position that you eventually adopt on the issues of curriculum and instruction.

You may be wondering what we mean by being a reflective teacher. In the early part of this century, John Dewey made an important distinction between human action that is reflective and that which is routine. Much of what Dewey had to say on this matter was directed specifically to teachers and prospective teachers, and his remarks remain very relevant for those in the process of becoming teachers in the 1980s. According to Dewey,² *routine action* is behavior that is guided by impulse, tradition, and authority. In any social setting, and the school is no exception, there exists a taken-for-granted definition of everyday reality in which problems, goals, and the means for their solution become defined in particular ways. As long as everyday life continues without major interruption, this reality is perceived to be unproblematic. Furthermore, this dominant world view is only one of the many views of reality that would theoretically be possible, and it serves as a barrier to recognizing and experimenting with alternative viewpoints.

Teachers who are unreflective about their work uncritically accept this everyday reality in schools and concentrate their efforts on finding the most effective and efficient means to achieve ends and to solve problems that have largely been defined for them by others. These teachers lose sight of the fact that their everyday reality is only

one of many possible alternatives. They tend to forget the purposes and ends toward which they are working.

Dewey defines *reflective action*,³ on the other hand, as behavior which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads. According to Dewey, reflection involves a way of meeting and responding to problems. Reflective teachers actively reflect upon their teaching and upon the educational, social and political contexts in which their teaching is embedded.

There are three attitudes that Dewey defines as prerequisites for reflective action.⁴ First, *openmindedness* refers to an active desire to listen to more sides than one, to give full attention to alternate possibilities, and to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us. Prospective teachers who are openminded are continually examining the rationales (educational or otherwise) that underlie what is taken to be natural and right and take pains to seek out conflicting evidence on issues of educational practice.

Second, an attitude of *responsibility* involves careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads. Responsible student teachers ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing in the classroom in a way that transcends questions of immediate utility and in light of educational purposes of which they are aware. If all that is taught in schools were imparted through the formally sanctioned academic curriculum and if all of the consequences of teachers' actions could be anticipated in advance, the problem here would be much simpler than it is in actuality. However, there is a great deal of agreement among educators of various ideological persuasions that much of what children learn in school is imparted through the covert processes of the so called "hidden curriculum" and that many consequences of the actions of educators are unanticipated outcomes that often contradict formally stated educational goals. Given the powerful impact of the hidden curriculum on the actual outcomes of schooling and the frequently unanticipated consequences of our actions, re-

flexion about the potential impact of our actions in the classroom is extremely important.

The third and final attitude of the reflective teacher is one of *wholeheartedness*. This refers to the fact that openmindedness and responsibility must be central components in the life of the reflective teacher and implies that prospective teachers who are reflective must take active control over their education as teachers. A great deal of research demonstrates that prospective teachers very quickly adopt beliefs and practices of those university and school instructors with whom they work. Many prospective teachers seem to become primarily concerned with meeting the oftentimes conflicting expectations of university professors and cooperating teachers, and with presenting a favorable image to them in the hope of securing favorable evaluations. This impression management is understandable and is a natural consequence of existing power relationships in teacher education, but the divided interest that results tends to divert students' attention from a critical analysis of their work and the context in which it is performed. If reflectiveness is to be part of the lives of prospective teachers, students will have to seek actively to be openminded and responsible or else the pressure of the taken-for-granted institutional realities will force them back into routine behavior.

Possession of these attitudes of openmindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness, together with a command of technical skills of inquiry (for example observation) and problem solving define for Dewey a teacher who is reflective. Reflection, according to Dewey,

emancipates us from merely impulsive and routine activity . . . enables us to direct our actions with foresight and to plan according to ends in view of purposes of which we are aware. It enables us to know what we are about when we act.⁵

On the other hand, according to Dewey, to cultivate unreflective activity is "to further enslavement for it leaves the person at the mercy of appetite, sense and circumstance."⁶

Choosing between becoming a reflective teacher or an unreflective teacher is one of the

most important decisions that you will have to make. The quality of all of your decisions regarding curriculum and instruction rests upon this choice.

You are probably saying to yourself, "Of course I want to be a reflective teacher, who wouldn't. But, you need to tell me more." The following sections of the paper discuss the three characteristics of reflective thinking in relation to classroom teaching, analyze whether reflective teaching is a realistic and/or desirable goal, and offer suggestions for how you can begin to become a reflective teacher.

FURTHER INSIGHT

We have pointed out that openmindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness are the characteristics of reflective thinking. Let us now discuss each characteristic in relation to classroom teaching.

OPENMINDEDNESS

When you begin to teach, both as a student teacher and as a licensed teacher, you will most likely be asked to accept teaching procedures and strategies that are already being used in that school or classroom. Will you accept these without question, or will you explore alternative ways of looking at existing teaching practices? For example, celebrating holidays like Thanksgiving and Columbus Day helps to affirm the prevailing historical accounts of these days as well as the customs and traditions associated with them. As a teacher, would you be willing to reevaluate what and how you teach about holidays if some of the students in your class hold a different point of view about them? Would you modify your teaching to take into account their views and beliefs? Being a reflective teacher means that you keep an open mind about the content, methods, and procedures used in your classroom. You constantly reevaluate their worth in relation to the students currently enrolled and to the circumstances. You not only ask why things are the way that they are, but also how they can be made better.

The reflective teacher understands that school practices are not accepted because they are clothed in tradition. If, for example, most of the boys but only a few of the girls are being assigned to Industrial Arts, you should inquire as to why this is happening. You could then begin to formulate teaching and counseling plans (for example, career opportunities, workshops) that would allow students regardless of gender to benefit from the training that is available in those courses.

RESPONSIBILITY

Teaching involves moral and responsible action. Teachers make moral choices when they make voluntary decisions to have students attain one educational objective instead of another. These decisions are conscious actions that result in certain consequences. These actions can be observed when teachers develop curriculum and choose instructional materials. For example, until recently a textbook company had two basal readers in its reading series. One basal reader was somewhat racially integrated and the other had all white characters. When teachers consciously chose one basal reader over the other or did not modify the all white reader to correct the racial bias, they made a decision that affected not only their students' racial attitudes and understanding about different groups of people, but also their attitudes about themselves. In other words, teachers can encourage ethnocentric attitudes as well as teach an unrealistic view of the world community beyond the school community by failing to provide knowledge about other groups.

As a reflective teacher you are aware of your actions and their consequences. You are aware that your teaching behavior should not be conditioned merely by the immediate utility of an action. For example, it may be much easier to have your students answer questions or work problems on conveniently prepared ditto sheets than to have them do small group projects or hold classroom debates. It may also be much easier if you use one textbook to teach a unit on the Mexican American War than if you use multiple text-

books and other historical documents that would represent both governments' points of view. But immediate utility cannot become the sole justification for your actions and cannot excuse you from the consequences of your actions. Your actions must have a definite and responsibly selected purpose. You have an obligation to consider their consequences in relation to the lives of the students you have accepted the responsibility to teach.

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

A reflective teacher is not openminded and responsible merely when it is convenient. Openmindedness and responsibility are integral, vital dimensions of your teaching philosophy and behavior. For example, we have seen teachers publicly advocate a belief in integrating handicapped students into the regular class; however, when observing in their classrooms, we saw the handicapped students treated in isolation because the curriculum and the instructional strategies had not been modified to capitalize upon the students' strengths or to acknowledge the students' individual differences. The teachers often left handicapped students to sit in the outer boundaries of the classroom instead of changing the physical environment of the classroom—desk arrangements—to allow them to move about freely as other students would. As a reflective teacher, you do not hesitate or forget to fight for your beliefs and for a quality education for all.

The reflective teacher is dedicated and committed to teaching *all students*, not just certain students. Many of your peers say they want to teach because they love and enjoy working with kids. Are they *really* saying *any* and *all* kids, or are they saying kids that are just like them? The story of Mary Smith will help to illustrate our point. During a job interview with a rural school system, Mary Smith, a graduate from a large urban university, was composed and fluent in discussing teaching methods and curriculum. She also stressed her genuine love for and enjoyment of children and her desire to help them. Her "performance" was so compelling that she was invited to accept

a teaching position. Mary Smith, we must point out, believed what she said in the interview and eagerly looked forward to her teaching assignment. Her assignment was to a six room rural school, where the majority of the students spoke with a heavy regional dialect that she had never before heard. The students' reading and mathematics achievement according to standardized tests was three to four years below grade level. Their behavior and attitudes toward school were different from what she had been accustomed to. They regarded the schools as boring and irrelevant to their life style and their future, and they demonstrated their disregard for the school and the teacher by disobeying many instructional and behavioral "requests." Mary tried diligently for three months to get the students to cooperate and follow her instructions. At the beginning of the fourth month, however, she resigned her position. In her letter of resignation she stated that "these kids are not ready to accept what I have been trained to give them. Therefore, I will seek teaching employment where the students want to learn."

There are many teachers like Mary Smith, but the reflective teacher is not one of them. The reflective teacher is wholehearted in accepting *all* students and is willing to learn about and affirm the uniqueness of each student for whom he or she accepts responsibility. If you are a reflective teacher, your teaching behavior is a manifestation of your teaching philosophy and you are unswerving in your desire to make certain that the two become one and the same.

IS REFLECTIVE TEACHING A REALISTIC AND/OR DESIRABLE GOAL?

Throughout this century many educators have argued that teachers need to be more reflective about their work. The argument is often made that schools and society are constantly changing and that teachers must be reflective in order to cope effectively with changing circumstances. By uncritically accepting what is customary and by engaging in fixed and patterned behaviors, teachers make it more unlikely that they will be able to

change and grow as situations inevitably change. Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that no teacher education program, whatever its focus, can prepare teachers to work effectively in all kinds of classroom settings. Therefore, it becomes important for you to be reflective in order that you may intelligently apply the knowledge and skills gained in your formal preparation for teaching to situations that may be very different from those you experienced during your training.

At the same time many questions have been raised about whether reflective teaching is a realistic or even necessary goal to set before prospective teachers. The purpose of this section is to examine briefly three of the most common objections that have been raised about the goal of reflective teaching and to demonstrate how, despite these doubts, it is still possible and desirable for teachers to work toward a more reflective orientation to both their work and their workplace.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO TAKE THE TIME TO REFLECT?

Many have argued that the nature of teaching and the ecology of classrooms make reflective teaching unrealistic and even undesirable. For example, it is frequently pointed out that classrooms are fast-paced and unpredictable environments where teachers are often required to make spontaneous decisions in response to children's ongoing reactions to an instructional program. Phillip Jackson has estimated that teachers engage in approximately 1,000 interpersonal interactions on any given day and there is no way to describe life in the classroom as anything but extremely complex.⁷

Furthermore, institutional constraints such as high pupil-teacher ratios, the lack of released time for reflection, and pressures to cover a required curriculum with diverse groups of children who are compelled to come to school shape and limit the range of possible teacher actions. The point is made that teachers do not have the time to reflect given the necessity of quick action and the press of institutional demands. According to this view, intuitiveness (as opposed to reflectiveness) is an adaptive response and a natural consequence of

the fast-paced unpredictable nature of classroom life and is necessary for teachers to be able to negotiate classroom demands.

Phillip Jackson expresses serious doubts about whether teachers could even function at all in classrooms if they spent more time reflecting about the purposes and consequences of their work.

If teachers sought a more thorough understanding of their world, insisted on greater rationality in their actions, were completely openminded in their consideration of pedagogical choices and profound in their view of the human condition, they might well receive greater applause from intellectuals, but it is doubtful that they would perform with greater efficiency in the classroom. On the contrary, it is quite possible that such paragons of virtue, if they could be found to exist, would actually have a deuce of a time coping in any sustained way with a class of third graders or a play yard full of nursery school tots.⁸

While classrooms are indeed fast-paced and complex environments, it does not automatically follow that reflective teaching is incompatible with this reality and that teachers by necessity must rely primarily upon intuition and unreflective actions. Several studies⁹ have convincingly shown that the quality of teacher deliberations *outside* of the classroom (for example, during planning periods or team meetings) affects the quality of their future actions *within* the classroom. As Dewey points out, "To reflect is to look back on what has been done to extract the meanings which are the capital stock for dealing with further experience."¹⁰ Reflection which is directed toward the improvement of classroom practice does not necessarily need to take place within the classroom to have an impact on classroom practice. Despite the fact that reflection as has been defined in this paper does not occur in many schools even when there has been time set aside for that purpose,¹¹ the possibility still exists.

Furthermore, the fast pace of classroom life does not preclude a certain amount of reflection within its boundaries. Those who have written about reflective teaching have never argued for

"complete openness of mind." On the contrary, reflective teaching involves a balance between thought and action; a balance between the arrogance that blindly rejects what is commonly accepted as truth and the servility that blindly receives this "truth." There is clearly such a thing as too much thinking, as when a person finds it difficult to reach any definite conclusion and wanders helplessly among the multitude of choices presented by a situation, but to imply that reflection necessarily paralyzes one from action is to distort the true meaning of reflective teaching.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ACT ON THE RESULTS OF REFLECTION?

Another objection that has frequently been raised is that even if teachers do reflect on the purposes and consequences of their actions, they are not able to act on the results of their inquiries if the desired course of action is in conflict with the dominant institutional norms of their school. According to this view, teachers are basically functionaries within a bureaucratic system; they have prescribed roles and responsibilities, and in order to survive in that system they must always give way to institutional demands. In other words, why bother with reflection if you always have to do what you are told to do anyway? Encouraging prospective teachers to reflect about their work is viewed as a hopeless endeavor, because whatever habits of reflectiveness are developed during preservice training will inevitably be "washed out" by inservice school experience as teachers are forced into standardized patterns of behavior and into conformity with bureaucratic norms of obedience and loyalty to those in authority. As Wayne Hoy and William Rees¹² point out, the forces of bureaucratic socialization in schools are strong and efficient.

As was mentioned earlier, there is little doubt that schools as institutions and the societal contexts in which they are embedded exert numerous pressures on teachers to conform to certain behavioral norms, to cover certain curricular content and to use particular methods of instruction and classroom management. However, while they

are necessarily constrained by these institutional pressures and by their own individual biases and predispositions, teachers do to varying degrees play active roles in shaping their own occupational identities. If, for example, you were to survey the teachers within a given school, it would probably be fairly easy to identify a dominant "teacher culture" in that school, which defines a set of viewpoints about curriculum, instruction, classroom management and organization. Yet, at the same time, you will inevitably find differences and conflicts among teachers in that school in terms of their beliefs, their instructional methods, and the ways in which they have organized their classrooms. Not all teachers in a given school are alike, and the very existence of these differences within the same institutional conditions is evidence of the potential for teachers to act upon their beliefs even if they conflict with the dominant viewpoints in a given setting.

In reality, the habits of mind and pedagogical skills that you develop now in your formal education for teaching will not necessarily be "washed out" by school experience. The world of teaching necessarily involves a constant interplay between choice and constraint. No matter how prescribed the curriculum and whatever the degree of consensus over behavioral norms for teachers in the settings in which you will work, there will always be some degree of conflict over what is natural and right and some amount of space for you to act alone or with others to reshape the nature of the school in which you work. There are more than a few teachers who do not fit the bureaucratic mold that is frequently portrayed in educational literature, and there is potentially enough room for most teachers within their prescribed roles for some degree of reflection to take place.

IS IT NECESSARY TO REFLECT?

A third objection that has been raised about reflective teaching is that it is not necessary to be reflective in order to be an effective teacher. Advocates of this position point to the many highly regarded teachers in our schools who succeed without apparently reflecting on the purposes

and consequences of their work. For example, Phillip Jackson studied fifty teachers who were identified by their principals and by general reputation as being outstanding teachers, and he concluded that these exemplars of educational practice approached their work in classrooms largely through intuition rather than through any process of rational analysis.

This conclusion has been confirmed by much of the recent research on teacher thinking¹³ by studies of teacher-pupil interactions¹⁴ and by Dan Lortie's¹⁵ study of the "ethos" of the teaching profession. According to many education researchers, teachers for the most part, including good teachers, do not seem to be especially reflective or analytic about their work. On the contrary, a substantial number of teachers seem to accept uncritically what is currently fashionable. As a result, the position is often taken that it is unnecessary to be reflective because one can be a good teacher without being so.

There are several responses that one could make to this objection. First, there are numerous problems with the conclusions that many researchers have drawn about the predominance of intuitive behavior. Specifically, while it may be true that many teachers rely primarily on instinct and feeling while in the classroom, there is no basis for concluding that good teachers do not put a lot of thought into their work both before and after instruction. Many of these researchers have failed to study what teachers actually do in their classes and how they construct and justify specific activities. What actually goes on in the minds of good teachers—when it is studied—is still not well understood. Furthermore, there are some real problems with the view that university scholars are as a group more reflective than teachers, especially when these conclusions are drawn by those who identify themselves as being most reflective. In our view there is no convincing evidence that those in universities are any more or less likely as a group to be reflective or analytic about their work than teachers are.

Our own experience in talking with teachers has convinced us that the really good ones do reflect upon their work and that educational

researchers have failed to capture much of what goes on in the minds of teachers. In fact, studies of attempted school reform provide some evidence that teachers *do* reflect. For example, those who have studied the processes of change in schools have generally concluded that teachers are very selective about what they will incorporate into their classrooms, and in our view this selectivity refutes the position that there is little thought and judgment underlying teachers' work.¹⁶

There is one further reason for rejecting the view that reflective teaching is not necessary. Scheffler clearly summarizes this view:

Justification for reflection is not . . . simply a matter of minimal necessity. It is rather a matter of desirability, and a thing may be desirable, not because it is something that we could not do without, but because it transforms and enhances the quality of what we do and how we live.¹⁷

As Scheffler's statement points out, you may be able to get by, by putting little thought into your work, but if you want to strive to be the best teacher that you possibly can, then there is in reality no alternative to reflective teaching. Many teachers profess that they want their students to be thoughtful about the work that they do in school so that they will eventually develop an independence of mind that will enable them to be active participants in a democratic society. If we hold these goals for our children, the place to begin is with ourselves. If the schools of today were all that they could be, one could safely ignore our arguments. But if there is more that we can do to make our schools and our society more enriching, humane and just, then we need reflective teachers to play an integral role in this process.

HOW TO BEGIN

You may be asking, "How can I become reflective, especially given the fact that I haven't started teaching yet?" The suggestions that we will now offer will help you get started. Remember, becom-

ing a reflective teacher is a continual process of growth.

Many educators have correctly pointed out that even before you enter a formal program of teacher preparation you have already been socialized to some extent by the twelve years or more you have spent as a student. You have spent literally thousands of hours assessing schools and classrooms and have by now internalized (largely unconsciously) conceptions of children, learning, the roles of teacher and student, curriculum, beliefs and assumptions concerning almost every issue related to schooling. From our point of view, a good place to begin the process of reflective teaching is to examine these numerous predispositions that you bring with you into formal preparation for teaching. Consciously or not, these will affect how you will perceive what will be presented to you in your teacher education program and how you will interpret your own and others' actions in the classroom.

It is important for you to begin to discriminate between beliefs and assumptions that rest upon tested evidence and those that do not, and to be cautious about putting confidence into beliefs that are not well justified. Some of our ideas have, in fact, been picked up from other people merely because they are widely accepted views, not because we have examined them carefully. Because of the nature of teaching, we may often be compelled to act without full confidence in a point of view or an approach to a problem. This is unavoidable. However, if we remain tentative about our beliefs, the possibility will remain that we may revise our thinking if future evidence warrants it. On the other hand, if we are dogmatic about our beliefs and refuse to entertain the possibility that we may be in error, the avenues for further growth are closed off. There are no greater errors that prospective teachers can make than those that stem from an unbending certainty in one's beliefs.

In *Dilemmas of Schooling*, Ann and Harold Berlak propose several specific steps for proceeding with a reflective analysis of the assumptions and beliefs regarding schooling that one brings into one's teacher preparation.¹⁸ The first step is

to begin to articulate your current beliefs regarding a host of specific issues and to examine the assumptions that underlie these beliefs. For example, what knowledge and skills should be taught to different groups of children? How much control should a teacher exert over children's learning and behavior? To what extent should teachers transmit a common core of values and beliefs to all children, and to what extent should the curriculum attend to the cultural knowledge and background experiences of children? The issues here are endless. The above examples are only intended as illustrations of the kinds of questions that can be considered.

The next step is to compare your own beliefs with the beliefs of others. It is important for you to seek actively to understand the beliefs of others (peers, instructors, friends) within your formal courses and, more generally, by reading, observing, and talking to others in both professional and nonprofessional settings. Prospective teachers who are sensitive to the tentative nature of their beliefs take pains to examine any issue from more than one perspective.

Once you have begun to identify the substance of your own beliefs and have become more conscious of alternatives that exist or could be created, it is important for you to do some thinking about the origins and consequences of these beliefs. For example, how has your own biographical history (for example, unique factors in your upbringing, your school experience as a pupil) affected the way in which you currently think about issues of schooling? Which of your current beliefs have you examined carefully through weighing and then rejecting alternative points of view, and which do you hold merely because they are widely accepted by those with whom you associate? Also, which of your current beliefs are the result of outside forces over which you have no control, and which beliefs are merely rationalizations masking an unwillingness to risk the difficulties and/or the possible displeasure of others that would result from their implementation?

Along with doing this analysis of the origin of your beliefs, you should begin to consider the

possible consequences for yourself and others of holding particular beliefs. For example, what meanings (intended and unintended) are children likely to take from particular beliefs if they were actually implemented in the classroom? In considering the likely consequences of various courses of action it is important to consider more than the immediate utility of an action. The costs associated with what works in the short run to help you get through a lesson smoothly at times may outweigh the benefits to be gained.

Because of the intimate relationship that exists between the school and society, any consideration of the consequences of an educational action must inevitably take one beyond the boundaries of the classroom and even the school itself. There is no such thing as a neutral educational activity. Any action that one takes in the classroom is necessarily linked to the external economic, political and social order in either a primarily integrative or a creative fashion. Either a teaching activity serves to integrate children into the current social order or it provides children with the knowledge, attitudes or skills to deal critically and creatively with that reality in order to improve it. In any case, all teaching is embedded in an ideological background, and one cannot fully understand the significance or consequences of an activity unless one also considers that activity in light of the more general issues of social continuity and change.

For example, what are the likely consequences for the life chances of various groups of children if you present school knowledge as certain and objective to some groups of children and stress the tentativeness of knowledge to others? In other words, if you teach some students to accept what they are told and others to question and make their own decisions, how will this affect the social roles they hold later, and which group of children will you be preparing for which social roles? This example is cited to make the point that one can at least begin to identify the connections between everyday classroom practices and issues of social continuity and change. Because of the numerous forces acting upon children over a period of many years, we

can never be certain of the effect that any given course of action by one teacher has in the long run, but it is certain that, despite the complexity, linkages do exist. It is important at least to attempt to think about the consequences of our actions in a way that transcends questions of immediate utility.

Finally, once you have begun to think about the origins and consequences of the beliefs that you bring into your formal education, the issue of "craft" also needs to be considered. What knowledge and skills will you need to gain in order to implement successfully the kind of teaching that follows from your educational beliefs? If you as a prospective teacher are reflective, you do not passively absorb any and all of the skills and knowledge that others have decided are necessary for your education as a teacher. The craft knowledge and skills for teaching that you will gain during your formal preparation will originate from two major sources: your university instructors and supervisors, and the teachers and administrators with whom you will work during your practicum experiences in schools. If you are reflective about your own education for teaching, you will give some direction to the craft knowledge and skills that you learn in your training.

Within the university your socialization for teaching is much more than the learning of "appropriate" content and procedures for teaching. The knowledge and skills that will be communicated to you through your university courses are not neutral descriptions of how things are; in reality, they are *value governed selections* from a much larger universe of possibilities. Selections that reflect the educational ideologies of the instructors with whom you come into contact. Some things have been selected for your pursuance while other things have been deemphasized or even ignored. These selections reflect at least implicitly answers to normative questions about the nature of schooling, the appropriate roles for teachers and students, how to classify, arrange and evaluate educational knowledge, and how to think about educational problems and their solutions. But just as you will find di-

iversity in the educational perspectives of a group of teachers in any given school, within any university program different university instructors will emphasize, deemphasize and ignore difficult points of view. As a result, it often becomes necessary for you to make decisions about the relevance of conflicting positions on an issue and to seek out information that supports views that may have been selected out by your instructors.

Therefore, if you want to give some direction to your education and to play an active role in shaping your own occupational identity, it becomes important for you to be constantly critical and reflective about that which is presented to you and that which has been omitted. That which is presented to you may or may not be the most appropriate craft knowledge and skill to help you get where you want to go. You need to filter all that is offered to you through your own set of priorities. At the same time, identify and use the instructors' stances about educational issues as alternatives that can help you develop your own beliefs. Generally, the same critical orientation that we have encouraged you to bring to bear upon your own prior experiences and beliefs should also be applied to that which is imparted to you by university instructors. Specifically, what are the origins and consequences of the viewpoints presented, and of the alternatives that are available or could be created?

Finally, one important part of your education for teaching will be the time you spend observing and working with teachers and administrators in school practicums. When you participate in a practicum you come into a setting (someone else's classroom) after certain patterns have been established and after certain ways of organizing time, space, instruction and so forth have become routine. Cooperating teachers, who make many of these decisions, will often not take the time to explain to you how and why these decisions have been made, partly because the routines are by then part of the taken-for-granted reality of their classrooms. Consequently, prospective teachers often fail to grasp how what they see came to be in the first place and are often incapable of creat-

ing certain structures on their own once they have their own classrooms. This is a serious lapse in an education student's learning because it is difficult to understand any setting adequately without understanding how it was produced. If you want to understand the settings in which you will work, you will need to question your teachers about the reasons underlying what exists and is presently taken for granted. The following questions illustrate the things you should seek to understand: Why is the school day organized as it is? Why is math taught every day but science taught only once per week? How and why was it decided to teach this particular unit on pollution? How are children placed into groups for reading and what opportunities exist for movement among groups? These regularities exist for particular reasons and it is up to you to seek an understanding of how what is, came to be.

You will also need to ask your cooperating teachers about the ways in which particular decisions are being made while you are there. Although many of the basic patterns of classrooms will be established before you arrive, others will still be developing. The basic problem here is for you to gain an understanding of the thought processes that underlie your cooperating teacher's current actions. Importantly, many researchers have discovered that unless education students initiate these kinds of discussions with their mentors, the logic behind classroom decisions is often missed by prospective teachers.¹⁹ Experienced teachers may take many important factors for granted, and unless you actively probe for what underlies their behavior you will miss much of what is significant about the nature of teacher decision-making.

Seymour Sarason proposes that two basic questions be asked of any educational setting. One is what is the rationale underlying the setting? And the other is what is the universe of alternatives that could be considered?²⁰ We strongly feel that asking these questions is necessary in order for you to gain the maximum benefit from your practical experience in schools. If you choose not to follow our advice but to take a primarily passive role as a student teacher, your

learning will be limited to that which you happen upon by chance. If you want to be a certain kind of teacher and to have a particular quality of impact on children, you will need to ensure that your education for teaching will help you get where you want to go and that where you want to go is worth the effort. As you gain more experience you may frequently change your mind about the kind of teacher you want to become, but taking an active part in your own professional preparation will at least give you some control over determining the direction in which you are headed.

We have attempted to alert you to some of the numerous issues that you will have to confront during the next few years of your education for teaching. We have argued that there is a fundamental choice for you to make: whether you will give some direction to your training or let others direct it for you. In doing so, we have argued that reflective teaching is both possible and desirable. If the teachers of tomorrow are to contribute to the revitalization and renewal of our schools, there is no alternative. However, as in all decisions, the final choice is up to you.

NOTES

1. Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1973), p. 46.
2. John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (Chicago: Henry Regnery and Co., 1933).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
7. Phillip Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
9. For example, see John Elliott, "Developing Hypotheses about Classrooms From Teachers' Personal Constructs," *Interchange* 7:2 (1976-1977) 1-22.
10. Dewey, *How We Think*, p. 87.
11. Frequently, discussions that occur among teachers during planning sessions, team meetings, etc., focus almost entirely on procedural issues (for example, *How will we teach what has already been decided to teach?*) to the neglect of curricular questions, such as "What should we be teaching and why?" See Thomas Popkewitz, B. Robert Tabachnick, and Gary Wehlage, *The Myth of Educational Reform* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) for an example of how this occurs in exemplary "individually guided education" schools.
12. Wayne Hoy and William Rees, "The Bureaucratic Socialization of Student Teachers," *Journal of Teacher Education*, 28. (January-February, 1977) 23-26.
13. Christopher Clark and Robert Yinger, "Research on Teacher Thinking," *Curriculum Inquiry*, 7 (Winter, 1977): 279-304.
14. Jere Brophy and Thomas Good, *Teacher-Pupil Relationships: Causes and Consequences* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).
15. Dan Lortie, *School Teacher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).
16. John Goodlad and M. Frances Klein, *Behind the Classroom Door* (Washington, Ohio: Jones Publishers, 1970).
17. Israel Scheffler, "University Scholarship and the Education of Teachers," *Teachers College Record* 70 (October, 1968) 1-12.
18. Ann Berliak and Harold Berliak, *Dilemmas of Schooling* (London: Methuen, 1981).
19. B. Robert Tabachnick, Thomas Popkewitz, and Kenneth Zeichner, "Teacher Education and the Professional Perspectives of Student Teachers," *Interchange* 10:4 (1979-80) 12-29.
20. Seymour Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971).