

ON DISCERNMENT:

THE WISDOM OF PRACTICE AND THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM

IN

TEACHER EDUCATION.

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An important question for teacher education, then, is how to develop the capacity for discernment...[and] the relationship between discernment, imagination and wise practice....

(Dunne & Pendlebury, 2002, p. 211)

1. The Context of Teacher Education

The Master of Teaching (MT) Program at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada is the focus of this chapter. The program is delivered over two academic years and culminates in a Bachelor of Education Degree. Students in the program have already completed a four-year degree program in a discipline. The MT Program is inquiry-based, learner-focused and field-oriented. Grounded in the Aristotelian notion of phronesis or practical wisdom, the program makes the relationship between discernment, imagination and wise practice central to teacher education.

The MT Program emerged in the mid-1990's in the midst of a changing educational landscape in the province of Alberta. Fiscal restraints imposed on all provincial universities by the Alberta Government meant that the teacher education program at the University of Calgary could no longer be the shared responsibility of

Education, Fine Arts and Kinesiology; it became the exclusive pursuit of the Faculty of Education. Additionally, a new memorandum of agreement between universities in Alberta and the provincial ministry of education (Alberta Learning) meant that all teacher education programs had to apply the new “Integrated Framework for Quality Teaching” (Province of Alberta, 1997). The framework provided a list of competencies, or Knowledge, Skills and Attributes, required for interim/initial teacher certification. Moreover, a new Dean of Education had been hired and he seemed determined to take student feedback seriously: very caring instructors, very ineffective program. Importantly, the University of Calgary itself was undergoing a change process with a growing emphasis on inquiry-based educational experiences for all its students.

Four faculty members were charged to review the current literature on teacher education and teacher education reform. The result was “The Blue Book” (Paul, Benson, Heyman & Kurtz, 1996) which recommended that any reform to the teacher education program be inquiry-based, learner-focused and field-oriented. There was some sense that teaching should be understood as a form of experience that is contextual, laden with values, and characterized as intentional and intuitive action. As such, a different relationship between theory and practice was called for. There was strong agreement that adult-learning principles be brought to bear and that self-directed and collaborative inquiry be emphasized as a way of integrating theory and practice. Finally, the authors of the Blue Book recommended that any new program should include teaching/learning experiences in community-workplace sites in addition to schools. In an open vote, the Faculty of Education accepted these broad recommendations.

In 1996 the “Prototype Team” was created to develop the details of a new teacher education program based on the recommendations accepted by the Faculty. The team of seven faculty, including myself as team coordinator, two classroom teachers, two graduate students and seventy-six prospective teachers working with twenty local schools set about creating a prototype of the new program. The term ‘prototype’ was significant as none of the team wished for yet another pilot program which would evaporate promptly in light of daily exigencies. In action research mode, we intended to live the program as we built it collaboratively with all our partners. There were a number of key questions to be tackled: What does the practice of teaching entail? What kind of learning experiences would prepare teachers to teach well? The questions invited us to consider the reality we imply when we use terms such as “teaching” and “teacher education”. What were we preparing students for? Who did we wish them to become?” What did they need to experience, know and care about? The result of two years of deliberation and practice was the Master of Teaching Program, graduating 400 students each year and currently the only teacher education program at the University of Calgary.

2. The Structure of the Master of Teaching Program

The Master of Teaching (MT) Program is a two-year (four semester) teacher preparation program that provides graduates with initial professional certification in the Province of Alberta, Canada as well as a Bachelor of Education Degree.

The program is inquiry-based in that it promotes exploration and examination of teaching/learning practices presented in real life “cases” or “situations”. It is learner-focused and it fosters ethical relationships between and among students, faculty and

classroom teachers that facilitate and support independent and group inquiry into teaching and learning. The program is field-oriented. It provides participatory and practical learning and teaching experiences in both schools and community/workplace settings.

Learning experiences in the program are integrated conceptually around a series of interrelated themes. Foundational, policy and curriculum studies are woven into a series of thematic units entitled, “Learners and Learning”, “Teachers and Teaching”, “Curriculum Contexts”, “Curriculum Studies”, “Praxis”, and “Integration”. Each thematic unit emphasizes particular knowledge and professional skills. As such, each unit incorporates a number of the Knowledge, Skills and Attributes (KSAs) required by the provincial ministry of education, Alberta Learning. When one KSA's is amplified in particular thematic units, it is not contained there but continues to echo throughout other units of study in the program.

The Master of Teaching Program

is characterized as

Learner-focused Inquiry-based Field-oriented

Located in

Thematic Units of Study

<i>Learners & Learning</i>	<i>Teachers & Teaching</i>	<i>Curriculum Contexts</i>	<i>Curriculum Studies</i>	<i>Praxis</i>	<i>Integration</i>
(Semester 1)		(Semester 2)		(Semester 3)	(Semester 4)

Grounded in

Learning and Teaching Experiences
in

Campus

Integrated Lecture Series
Case-based Tutorials
Professional Inquiry Seminars
Independent Studies

Field

School-based Practica
Community-Workplace Experiences
Field-based Inquiry Seminar
Independent Studies

*Regular and ongoing narrative assessment occurs in each component of the MT Program
(Faculty of Education, 2003)*

Take, for example, the KSA referring to the prospective teacher's understanding of the contextual variables that affect teaching and learning. This KSA is directly emphasized in "Teachers and Teaching" (regulatory variables such as the Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Ethics), "Curriculum Studies" (regulatory variables such as the Alberta Learning Program of Studies) and "Praxis" (social and cultural variables that exist in different

school communities). The question of context is also echoed throughout "Learners and Learning" where students are asked to reconsider learning theories in light of the learners they encounter in their particular field placements. In this manner, the program is recursive; its helical curriculum allows student teachers to revisit areas of study, each time deepening and expanding their understanding.

Students are organized in both cross-route (i.e. early childhood education, elementary and secondary) and route-specific (only early childhood education, elementary or secondary) groups throughout the two years of the program, depending on the purpose of the particular thematic unit under study. For example, students are heterogeneously grouped during Thematic Unit 6: Integration when they participate in case inquiry into educational ethics.

Thematic Units

Learners and Learning: Exploration of the phenomenon of learning in psychological, sociological, philosophical and pedagogic terms. Understanding the self as learner is also emphasized. (Heterogeneous grouping)

Teachers and Teaching: Exploration of the phenomenon of teaching in terms of its purpose, history, practices, theories and its personal and ethical dimensions. Understanding self as teacher is also emphasized. (Heterogeneous grouping)

Curriculum Studies: Exploration of curriculum development and teaching practices specific to early childhood, elementary and secondary education.

Curriculum Contexts: Exploration of the political, social and cultural contexts in which curriculum is enacted. (Heterogeneous grouping)

Praxis: Exploration of teaching as a collaborative, inquiry-oriented reflective practice in the context of a 13-week practicum.

Integration: Exploration of the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching. (Heterogeneous grouping)

The thematic units are delivered in both campus and field-based experiences. The six program strands include: lecture series, case tutorials, professional seminars, independent inquiry, field experience and field inquiry seminars. Students must be successful in each strand in order to complete a thematic unit. Strands are interwoven and complement each other. The lectures provide important historical background information, identify major schools of thought, introduce current research and discuss controversial positions related to each thematic unit of study. Case tutorial engages students in the collaborative examination of specific, concrete cases and complex or ambiguous situations that characterize teaching in order to decide how a teacher ought to act in such instances (Kessels and Korthagen, 1996). Professional seminars seek to promote self-conscious learners and teachers by helping students become aware of the different and often competing values that support and frame various kinds of educational practice. The intent is to help students construct and articulate well-informed, warranted rationales for becoming particular kinds of teachers (Faculty of Education, 2003). Through their own independent inquiries students deepen their understanding in a particular area of the educational field. The independent inquiries (two per year) may be driven by the learner's own questions, developing areas of interest, and/or identified areas of need (e.g., disciplinary specialty). Field experience consists of regular periods of observation-participation and immersion in a school and community/workplace site. Each year, field experience involves a long-term (one-year) commitment to a school site. A cohort of students is assigned to a school where they spend two days each week in semesters 1, 2, and 4 and four days a week during semester 3. Field inquiry seminars,

held on campus or at the school site, provide opportunities for students to reflect on their field experiences within a community of practice setting.

Hour	Monday	Tuesday	Wed'day	Thursday	Friday
9:00		Case Tutorial 9:00 - 11:50	Field	Field	Study Day
9:30					
10:00	Lecture 10:00 - 11:50				
10:30					
11:00					
11:30					
12:00					
12:30					
1:00	Prof. Inquiry Seminar 1:00 - 3:50				
1:30					
2:00		Field Inquiry Seminar 2:00- 3:50			
2:30					
3:00					
3:30					
4:00					

MT Program, Year 1, Campus and Field Schedule (Faculty of Education, 2003)

Assessment in the MT Program takes the form of an ongoing conversation between instructor and students about what constitutes good work in teaching and learning to teach. In order to honour the complex and collaborative quality of teaching, learning and learning to teach, assessment is based on a credit/fail system (Faculty of Education, 2003). Assessment must improve teaching and learning, promote fairness, and honour prepared accomplishment. Feedback is provided on the basis of student assignments that include field journals, case reports, independent inquiries, biographies

of learning and a final exit presentation during which students declare and describe the nature of their commitment to teaching. Students are engaged in ongoing conversations with their instructors and receive regular feedback and advice on their written and oral work in the program. The final assessment for each thematic unit of study is narrative in form and describes the strengths of the student's work, the areas in need of improvement and possible directions for their future inquiry. Classroom teachers and university instructors are responsible for the narrative assessments.

The structure of the MT Program is not unlike a myriad of post-degree teacher education programs that have emerged in the 1990's. It may be the conceptual links that underlie the program, however, that distinguish it from others.

3. Making Conceptual Links: Developing the Capacity for Discernment

The MT Program embraces practical wisdom and in so doing attempts to prepare teachers that can dwell within the rough ground of experience, appreciate its complexity and deep interpretability, and respond ethically. Put simply, the program attempts to develop the capacity for discernment (Dunne & Pendlebury, 2002). *Discernment speaks to a teacher's capacity to see the significance of a situation, to imagine various possibilities for action and to judge ethically how one ought to act on any given occasion.* In the MT Program, developing the capacity for discernment takes the form of a reflective process wherein prospective teachers narrate and reflect, in written and other forms, about their direct and indirect experience in practice settings and in case studies. Those reflections on experience are characterized by three conceptual moments: the play of thought between concrete particulars and abstract generalizations (Phelan, 2001),

imaginative rehearsal of action (Dewey, 1985), and the ethical claim of partiality (Nussbaum, 1986).

Curriculum as Lived

Semester 2 dawned! Two new units of study: Curriculum Studies and Curriculum Contexts. Teresa, an elementary route student, continued to observe and participate in her school placement two days each week. Her partner teacher responded to her field journal both in writing and conversation. Teresa brought forward issues and questions emerging from her experience in that Grade 3 classroom for further discussion in weekly field seminars. Her independent inquiry for the semester took the shape of a child study of Martin. She observed him closely in a variety of learning contexts and collected many artifacts to represent his learning: copies of his written assignments, audiotapes of his oral reading and conversations about stories; photographs of his social studies projects and his art work. In conversation with classmates and her professional seminar instructor (advisor on her independent inquiry), Teresa tried to make sense of Martin as a learner: What were his particular gifts? Under which conditions did he learn best?

Martin grounded Teresa's study of curriculum in case tutorial as he became the lens through which she encountered official curriculum documents, readings about the theory and practice of disciplines including Language Arts, Social Studies and Mathematics, and conversations with her case tutor and peers. In a hypothetical case on language learning, she prepared a response to parents who were concerned about their daughter's spelling errors and critical of the teacher's whole language philosophy. As she examined the artifacts of the case-samples of the child's writing, a letter from parents, statements from research and excerpts from official curriculum documents, she thought of Martin and his struggle to become literate. In the context of case discussion she and her peers identified and argued about the range of responses that the teacher ought to make to the parents.

The case discussion was further complicated when that week's lecture invited students to consider how curriculum philosophies and practices are always embedded larger political, social and historical contexts beyond their control. Teresa began to wonder how the image of her grandmother in a one-roomed, prairie schoolhouse shaped her understanding of herself as teacher and her work with Martin. She felt drawn to the plight of children like Martin who were borderline illiterate. Was her passion for their well being reflective of some sort of missionary zeal? Or was it some form of gender socialization?

In professional seminar Teresa read works by Nel Noddings (2002) and Madeline Grumet(1988) and began to wonder about the relationship between gender (literally and figuratively), teaching and the curriculum. Caring, even, seemed to be anything but straightforward. In her Biography of Learning at the end of semester 2, she wrote of her struggle during field experience to create more responsive, meaning-centered forms of pedagogy in a system that seemed bent on emphasizing measurement of predetermined outcomes....

The Play of Thought

For to be able to choose a form of behaviour appropriate for the situation, one must above all be able to perceive and discriminate the relevant details. This cannot be transmitted in some general, abstract form. (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996, p. 19)

Student teachers see field experience as the place where they really learn to teach, the “most concrete moment”, as it were, in their teacher education programs (Britzman, 1990). They are anxious not only to apply what they have learned but also to accumulate a store of methods from their classroom teachers. In other words, field experience is often seen as providing access to the real (Field, 1998). In the MT Program, field experience is viewed as a site for cultivating perception, or learning to see, NOT as a site in which to acquire immediate proficiency in a so-called “real” world. As such, inquiry in the MT Program refers to the reconstruction of experience (Dewey, 1934). The reconstruction process requires prospective teachers to first learn how to make intelligent reports of what happens to them as they observe, prepare for and engage in teaching (Nussbaum, 1990). Creating an intelligent report of experience involves prioritizing the particular by writing narratives of experience and then engaging in a continual search and re-search for the significance of the experience in light of reading and in the context of conversations with one’s self and others. In field inquiry seminars, instructors and students focus on their respective narratives of field experience. They burrow down in the depths of particular instances, finding images and connections that allow them to see its significance (Nussbaum, 1986). As Ricouer (in Nielsen, 1995) tells us, “All verbal

significance must be constructed; but there is no construction without choice, and no choice without a norm” (p. 10). The construction of significance, and the subsequent judgment about how one ought to act on such an occasion, invites student teachers to pose value rational questions such as: What is desirable? Who gains? Who loses? (Flyvberg, 2001).

While formulated knowledge or theory contributes to prospective teachers’ understanding of each concrete situation under discussion, their seeing is always in particular and cannot be determined in advance. The ethical appropriateness of the pedagogical response is inseparable from the concrete particulars of the situation. However, the concrete situation has the power to change the student’s general theoretical understanding. The experience of a particular child can remind and reinforce the student teacher’s understanding of child development and the importance of literacy. This is the play of thought of practical wisdom: a back and forth movement between particular experiences and general conceptual understanding: between a prospective teacher’s understanding of a particular child and her knowledge of cognitive development; between identifying appropriate ways for that child to learn to read and her more general, theoretical understanding of literacy. Each reconstruction of experience in field journals or seminar discussions provides opportunities to revise their understanding of particular students or particular pedagogical moments. Inquiry, then, is potentially transformational, an endowment of meaning with significance rather than a manipulation of predetermined meaning.

Student teachers' back and forth movement between field and campus experiences echoes the play of thought by inviting them to gather images of practice and to interpret

those images variously with their peers and tutors. In field inquiry seminars they may read those images in terms of particular school cultures and in light of their peers' experiences in other settings. In this manner, the specifics of context become evident as students realize that not all approaches are appropriate to a particular occasion, in a particular classroom, with a particular child. Attunement replaces application as the primary relationship between theory and practice. In the context of case inquiry, the emphasis is also on creating meaning in situ as students are confronted with the specifics of time, place and circumstance of a particular situation. Initially, students are asked to retell the case story, to examine the context in which the event unfolds, to perceive what is at stake in the situation and to begin to think about how they might act in light of that perception. However, the notion of expanded horizon is important here. Students are challenged to go beyond their initial perception of each case. They move in a spiraling fashion from their initial, individual response into a conversation with peers, classroom teachers and pupils, the research literature, and popular culture. The process of case inquiry culminates in a written analysis that utilizes the many voices of others to arrive at ethical judgment and action. By engaging student teachers in extensive deliberation about practice, the hope is that they will begin to understand that teaching can never be a simple matter of following a procedure or method as one follows a recipe in cooking; it is always a matter of perception (Risser, 1997) and experimentation.

[T]he living relation between abstract and concrete is maintained by means of experimentation.... Inquiry always involves abstraction, since it always involves hypotheses that articulate alternative courses of action (Hickman, 1998, p. 174).

It is important, however, that student teachers have the opportunity to experiment in a safe environment; this is where imaginative rehearsal comes into play (Dewey, 1934).

The Imaginative Rehearsal of Action

"Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct"

(Dewey, 1934, in Garrison, 1997, p. 121)

The MT Program is premised on the notion that teaching is an intentional, situational act. The non-repeatability of situations, however, means that a teacher is always improvising...not simply going back to the textbook but by discerning the details of the particular situation. The element of risk is always present simply because teachers' intentions have to bump up against the intentions of multiple others--students, colleagues, policy-makers. While we can hope that our actions will strike a chord in others who will carry it forward to some completion, we can never be certain if our pedagogical intentions will be played out, however many times they might have done so in the past (Dunne, 1997). The unpredictability of action is only surmounted by its irreversibility; there is no going back! Flexibility, improvisation and a clear understanding of the contingencies of any particular situation, therefore, characterize practical knowledge (Dunne, 1997).

In response to cases and events drawn from their field experiences, student teachers learn to improvise by generating hypotheses that articulate alternative courses of action, knowing of course, that their inquiry is initially directed at effecting change in an imagined world. It provides student teachers with a safe place in which they can think through situations in light of conflicting goals and endemic uncertainty about how to

achieve desired outcomes. Student teachers can rehearse, as it were, realizing but without having to deal with the potentially harmful consequences of their judgements and actions. Freed from the constraints of time and the pressure of having to act in the moment, student teachers can reflect at length not only in terms of “what works?” but also in terms of “why?” -- the meaningfulness of their chosen actions in the short and long term (Dunne, 1997). Ironically, the absence of action in imaginative rehearsal actually underlines the relationship between pedagogical thought and action.

The space that imaginative rehearsal creates is one wrought with possibility but one that is also grounded in actuality. During their exploration of curriculum studies in semester 2 of the program, students learn to conceive of and develop learning experiences in the form of lesson and unit preparation. As part of their process, they identify and study a topic of interest to them. An example might be “structures”. In addition to learning the deep structure of the phenomenon as a teacher might as part of her preparation, students are invited to recount their experience of learning—how did they first encounter the topic? What was compelling about it? What aspect of the world did the topic open up for them? What challenges in understanding did the topic present? What do they now understand about the topic? How do they now feel about it? Rehearsal in this sense is a recounting or retelling in order to cultivate insight into how a learner *might* encounter the topic at hand. Later on, students are asked to confront the possibilities they see in the same topic by imagining how three learners in their field classroom might encounter it. How might Darren, who clearly loves to draw, find an entry point into the topic? How might Deirdre, who already knows a great deal about structures, extend and enrich her understanding?

By engaging in a substantial inquiry project in semester 4, student teachers come face to face yet again with the actualities of practice while wondering about alternative possibilities

The intent is to have students set out to understand the dynamic relationship between current research literature (the "oughts" and the "shoulds" of the various disciplines) and the lived realities of teachers and students in their various learning contexts. For example, students might pose such questions as: "What are the issues facing teachers as they assess students?" or "What teaching approaches do students welcome when taking the Mathematics 30 course? Or "What are some of the conditions under which teachers might better implement the principle of "full inclusion"? (Faculty of Education, 2002, p. 53).

By engaging in this way, student teachers become better informed about the ethical and normative standards and traditions that exist while at the same time they begin to understand their responsibility to re-interpret those norms anew in situations that call for decisions (Smits, 1997). The (im)possibilities for moral agency and subjectivity thus emerge through the process of imaginative action.

When imaginative rehearsal gives way to action in the program, it is gradual and graduated. Student teachers observe and participate in small group settings during semester 1, moving on to prepare (with guidance), teach and assess a series of only four consecutive lessons in semester 2. In the major field experience (13 weeks) during semester 3, they progress gradually from teaching lessons planned by the classroom teacher, to lessons and units of study prepared in collaboration with the teacher, to those they prepare and enact alone. By slowing down the process of entry into so-called "solo-

teaching” and by continuing to emphasize deliberation in school-based cohorts and through “living case” tutorials on campus, the relationship between the actual and the possible remains intact.

Imaginative rehearsal requires community of inquiry. There can be no deliberation without others; the intellectual stimulation and moral challenge that others present to one’s ideas are at the core of practical wisdom. In the MT program, community is fostered in case tutorials, seminars, in school-based cohorts and in larger cadres tutored by a particular group of instructors. Typically, students stay together in these groupings for a minimum of one year, sometimes longer. A community not only facilitates the generation of a larger pool of possible ideas for action during deliberation, it also reminds prospective teachers of the web of relations in which they will have to act as teachers. The material existence of other student teachers, classroom teachers and teacher educators reflects the larger professional community to which they will belong. It is to this community that they will promise to engage in ethical action; it is from this community that they will ultimately have to ask forgiveness when they fall short. An emphasis on the role of others in learning to teach represents a reversal of the contemporary social emptying and the absence of a social center in many educational institutions (Wexler, Crichlow, Kern & Matuszewicz, 1992). The intent is to move student teachers toward commitment and affection (vs. disaffection) as each begins to believe in, articulate and work toward something, together. At the end of the program, in the form of an Exit Presentation, students are asked to make a declaration to their peers about what they believe the profession calls forth in them. Each student develops "a

metaphoric representation that focuses on the moral and ethical imperatives inherent in becoming and being an educator" (Faculty of Education, 2002, p. 59).

The Ethical Claim of Partiality

“Perceptions and beliefs are rooted in worlds of our own making that we accept as reality” (Schon, 1987, p. 222)

In the context of deliberation, student teachers encounter multiple interpretations of any given situation and they learn that not only are there no interpretations in general, but that interpretations are always situational. Every interpretation is an event in itself, involving a dialectical relationship between their fore-understandings and values and the “text” (practice) that presents itself. Prospective teachers are invited to become aware of and raise questions about “what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for [them] and what is trivial and secondary” in any given situation (Taylor, 1989, p. 28). They are invited to consider those attachments that shape their decisions in light of the grounds that support them and the further conclusions to which they lead. This is the learner-focused dimension of the MT Program.

An invitation to consider one's attachments, however, requires a learning environment in which difference is fore-grounded both structurally and conceptually. To this end, students are grouped heterogeneously across disciplines and routes (elementary combined with secondary) for part of the program. As a result, students become more conscious about how their particular disciplinary background has shaped their way of knowing the world, the normative categories that they use to make sense of their experience of self, other and the world generally. When a psychology student using

terms like "personality", "individual" and "development" encounters a political science student using terms such as "society", "social justice" or "body politic" in a case discussion on individual differences in learning, both can come away recognizing that different frames make for different values, desires and identities. Encountering difference across the disciplinary frames allows students to begin to see the disciplines as living frameworks for understanding rooted in different languages of practice. In addition students also begin to recognize the existence of diverse conceptualizations of reality within any one discipline. Cognitive theory and behaviourism are examples in psychology. By contextualizing so-called empirical facts within particular theories the constructed nature of those facts is more evident and questions can arise as to why certain theories dominate our thinking about reality.

The practice of heterogeneous grouping can enrich students' understanding of their own discipline as a stance or position, no better or worse than other disciplines, each with its own limitations and possibilities in given pedagogical contexts. This awareness is at once humbling and empowering in the sense that one can question and manipulate and possibly change those frameworks and their concomitant practices. The constructed nature of knowledge becomes apparent. What does it mean to know as a chemist? Why are the metaphors of "development" and "stage" so prevalent in educational psychology? A meta-narrative thus emerges that compliments the students' previous immersion in the discipline during their first degree. The distinction between fact and value appears less decisive than it once did. This in turn has implication for how student teachers begin to think about knowledge and curriculum.

However, simply grouping students heterogeneously is insufficient. We cannot assume that prospective teachers transfer the meanings gleaned from such discussions and use them to read their own experiences of practice. The difficulty with this assumption is that it neglects the role of emotions in how students and teacher educators assert, live-in and defend particular spaces. There is a certain emotional labour that is required if student teachers are to understand the import of their values. This becomes very evident when they first enter the MT Program. The thematic structure of the program, its inquiry orientation, the emphasis on collaborative work and the absence of grades disturbs their taken-for-granted understandings about knowledge, learning, evaluation and teaching. They are puzzled by the absence of courses and worry that without those cartons of abstract knowledge in educational psychology or language arts methods, for example, that they will never learn to teach. For weeks into the program, they long for the familiar course structure with its clarity of expectation and role. Their discomfort increases in the context of field experiences where they often encounter overworked teachers, diverse learners and an extensive curriculum. When they try to implement practices such as inquiry-based learning they find their desires interrupted by students, teachers and institutional policies that emphasize curriculum coverage and standardized tests.

The discomfort student teachers feel is critical, however, in developing their sense of how, as university students, they enact and embody dominant values and assumptions about teaching. Moreover, in the context of field experiences, they begin to develop a sense of the limits that are often placed on teachers when they try to counter those dominant values. While prospective teachers often express a feeling of being

overwhelmed by some of these realizations, it is the emotional labour that results which enables them to question cherished beliefs and assumptions and to take responsibility and action. However, this means that teacher educators and classroom teachers have to allow student teachers to feel overwhelmed, at least temporarily.

Experience has something of adventure.... Adventure interrupts the customary course of events, is related to the context that it interrupts. As an undergoing and return, an adventure lets life be felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength.... [S]omething is undergone and through it one changes. (Risser, 1997, p. 85).

In the context of Biographies of Learning, which are written at the end of each thematic unit of study, students provide an account of their "adventures". They recount critical moments of insight, identify questions for future inquiry and reexamine their reasons for wanting to become teachers. Typically, their struggle to persist in an educational system that does not honour the notion of inquiry is palpable in these writings. Part of the process of learning to teach in the MT Program becomes learning to redirect one's desires and attachments (Butler, 1997) so that they can eventually teach in the larger educational system. They begin to cultivate themselves in a different direction, beyond idealism, in some cases, and certainty, in others, towards a greater understanding of their own critical subjectivity in all its limitation (White, 2000).

An understanding of the claims values makes upon a student teacher reframes bias as a moral issue, a call to ethical action. Far from hindering action, the student teacher comes to recognize that it is those very values that enable it.

4. Conclusion

I have been going through a process of reinventing myself. These re-inventions are usually slow, occasionally painful, and often aborted. They are informed by my experiences in the field, my discussions and writings about our case study readings, and the filtering of the chorus of voices and views that I am witness to each week. While I question past assumptions-and develop new assumptions which I will in turn examine-I am recognizing that my beliefs, my values, my personal big "T" truths and this self-exploration is impacting my entire life. When I signed up for teacher education I had no idea that such a storm would ensue. (Student teacher, MT Program)

Discernment is always more than knowing. It sometimes requires courage that enables a student teacher to persist in a truthful though otherwise unprofitable or unpopular direction (Dunne & Pendlebury, 2002). It may require a sobriety that allows one to acknowledge one's limitations and yet prevents one from being easily swayed by impulse or first impressions (Dunne & Pendlebury, 2002). It requires patience in sticking with a problem, a sense of balance that keeps both details and "big picture" in focus. It requires a letting go of instrumentality and a willingness to relinquish control and certainty of outcomes. In a world that desperately wants to be sure of itself, practical wisdom offers no guarantees. However, it does allow us to recover the ontological dimension of teaching and learning to teach by reintroducing questions such as: Who am I? Where do I fit? What can we best live by and live together as social beings in our schools (Nussbaum, 1990)? Teacher educators that invite student teachers to engage in this manner "...seem to proffer only their dreams for interpretation, and then no

guarantee. They are interested in mistakes, the accidents, the detours, and the unintelligibilities of identities....” (Britzman, 1998, p. 60).

It has been exceedingly challenging to sustain the MT Program during recent years. Critics and supporters exist in the ranks of policy-makers, teacher educators, classroom teachers and student teachers themselves. To many the notion of practical wisdom appears esoteric and abstract. In fact, some have experienced an explicit statement of program philosophy as an infringement on academic freedom. To others, the historical preoccupation with technique in the form of methods courses has overshadowed the program’s attempt to take up practice interpretively. Graduates’ propensity to critique the educational status quo and to articulate alternative possibilities has made them unintelligible as beginning teachers.

I have come to understand that developing the capacity for discernment in student teachers is challenging, time consuming but immensely rewarding. I have also come to understand that done with inadequate understanding, it is an extremely weak form of teacher education. Practical wisdom opens up tremendous possibilities for how we think about teaching and learning to teach. In the case of the MT Program, only time will tell if the wisdom of practice will prevail in teacher education.

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